

OUR CENTURY: 1900

CLEVELAND'S HISTORY MEETS THE FUTURE

At the front in politics, industry

Editor's note: For the next 100 Sundays, beginning today, this page will look back at each year of the 1900s. In chronological order and with an emphasis on Greater Cleveland, Our Century not only will examine the events that made news, but will attempt to give a sense of what life was like in times long past. Although many sources were drawn upon for the material used in Our Century, special note should be made of two important works: "Cleveland: The Making of a City," by William Ganson Rose, and "The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History," compiled and edited by David D. Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski.

AT A GLANCE

Rockefeller's largesse helped Cleveland



Rockefeller

Oil baron John D. Rockefeller's charitable ways continued to benefit his hometown. On Feb. 20, the Alta House, at the time a nursery and settlement house, was dedicated in the city's Little Italy neighborhood. Alta House, still located at 12515 Mayfield Rd., was named after Rockefeller's daughter, Alta Rockefeller Prentice. Rockefeller also donated \$100,000 for construction of the arch that still spans the lower end of Superior Ave. in Rockefeller Park.

Lakewood was Cleveland's largest suburb, with a population of 3,355.

Deeming that increased traffic had made the roads unsafe for bicycles, Probate Judge Henry C. White appointed a commission to oversee the construction of a series of bicycle paths throughout the county. Bike riders paid a \$1 annual fee to finance their construction.

Two large office buildings opened in 1900. On April 1, the Williamson Building opened on Public Square. The 18-story structure, named for one of Cleveland's most famous pioneer families, housed the Cleveland Trust Co., the Midland Bank and the Federal Reserve Bank. The Williamson Building was demolished in 1982 to make way for the BP America Building. In September, the Rose Building opened at 2060 E. 9th St. Owned by the prominent philanthropist Benjamin Rose, it was Ohio's largest office building. A Plain Dealer advertisement described it: "No gloomy halls; all convenience in shape of electric lights; hot and cold water, quick elevator service, drinking fountains on every floor."

A partnership between Worcester R. Warner and Ambrose Swasey was converted into a corporation, the Warner and Swasey Co. One of the world's largest producers of turret lathes and telescopes, Warner and Swasey would become one of Cleveland's largest and most successful businesses. Bendix Corp. acquired the company in the early 1980s, and its huge plant at E. 55th St. and Carnegie Ave. was closed. The building now is a service garage for the city of Cleveland.

George H. Hulett, whose family left their Conneaut farm for Cleveland in 1846, was a renowned inventor of labor-saving machinery. In 1900, Hulett patented an iron-ore handling device that would revolutionize the shipping end of the iron-ore business. The Hulett Unloaders still stand on Whiskey Island.

Some prices Clevelanders paid in 1900: A pound of ham — 13 cents; a pound of butter — 19 cents; a pound of chicken — 8 cents. Eggs were 16 cents a dozen, roses, 50 cents a dozen.



PLAIN DEALER FILE
The Williamson Building, about 1901.

Cleveland today is the nation's 25th-largest city. At the cusp of the new century in 1900, it ranked as the seventh-largest, and easily had surpassed Cincinnati as Ohio's population center.

In 1890, Cleveland's population stood at 309,970. A decade later, that figure had swollen to 381,768. The population of Cuyahoga County was 439,120.

Cleveland's population included about 120,000 immigrants, with the largest ethnic group being Germans, followed by Irish. The city was home to 5,988 blacks in 1900. There also were 103 Chinese, 11 Japanese and two Indians.

Most were lured to the southern shore of Lake Erie by the prospect of decent-paying jobs in a city that was emerging as an industrial giant.

In 1900, steel was the city's most important industry, employing 7,000 workers.

Cleveland also was the nation's largest producer of wire, twist drills, malleable iron and highly refined gasoline. It was among the top cities in the production of auto parts, paints, printing presses, chemicals, sewing machines and small hardware parts, and ranked third behind Chicago and New York in the manufacture of women's and children's clothing.

As Cleveland prospered, the city naturally became a huge banking center: 32 banks were founded between 1900 and 1903, many of them neighborhood banks.

As it is today, Public Square was the heart of Cleveland's downtown in 1900. Only a few years earlier, Clevelanders regularly had hitched their horses to posts ringing the square, but the horseless carriage was changing that. In fact, as far back as 1900, downtown business leaders began



PLAIN DEALER FILE
Cleveland's Public Square around 1900 at the time of the Grand Army of the Republic Parade.

complaining the smoke from these contraptions was damaging Public Square's beautiful trees.

Then, like today, progress had its price.

"Honest John" Farley was Cleveland's mayor in 1900. A former member of City Council, Farley first was elected mayor in 1883, but after serving one term, he left office to accept

an appointment by President Grover Cleveland as collector of internal revenue. In 1889, Farley was elected to another two-year term and, late that year, asked the state militia to help Cleveland police maintain order during a streetcar strike.

Farley was a competent mayor, but his presence was dwarfed by the two most dominant figures in the history of Cleveland politics — Tom L. Johnson and Marcus Hanna.

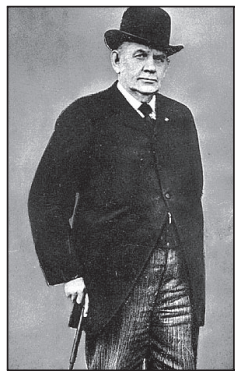
Johnson was a populist, civic reformer and street railway line owner who later would become mayor (see next week's page).

Hanna was the owner of the mining giant M.A. Hanna Co., the most powerful Republican leader in the nation and the man who, in 1896 and 1900, was credited with engineering the elections of Canton's William McKinley as president. Hanna also owned a successful street rail line, which led to repeated clashes with Johnson over fares and rail rights.

The 1900 presidential election pitted McKinley against William Jennings Bryan, who spoke before a throng in downtown Cleveland on Oct. 15 of that year. During his speech, Bryan criticized Hanna and complained about a proposal that the United States build a permanent army of at least 10,000 men.

Hanna was dealt a rare setback during the campaign when he failed to stop the nomination of Teddy Roosevelt as McKinley's vice president. The two disliked each other intensely. Roosevelt once remarked, "I think there is only one thing I do not understand, and that is Ohio politics."

Despite the bad blood between Hanna and Roosevelt, McKinley was re-elected by a comfortable margin.



Hanna

Although Hanna wielded most of his power at the national and local levels, he was not without considerable influence in the state capital. As 1900 arrived, Republican Asa Bushnell was governor of Ohio, and al-

though Bushnell was from a different wing of the GOP than Hanna, he reluctantly appointed Hanna to fill the vacant Senate seat three years earlier.

Bushnell's term expired in early 1900, and he decided to return to his business interests in Springfield. The election in late 1889 to choose Bushnell's successor pitted Republican George K. Nash against Democrat John McLean and four minor-party candidates.

The Medina-born Nash was a Civil War veteran and lawyer who earlier had served as Ohio attorney general and Franklin County prosecutor. He also was a Hanna loyalist who owed much of his success to the party powerbroker.

In the election for governor, Nash defeated McLean, then the owner of the Cincinnati Enquirer, 417,199 votes to 368,176 votes.



PLAIN DEALER FILE
Woodland Rd. and E. 40th St. as it looked in the early 1900s. The picture was taken from the Case-Woodland schoolyard, possibly on Election Day. A voting booth for Precinct R, Ward 12 is at the center of the photo.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Jan. 31: The Marquess of Queensberry, creator of the rules of boxing, most of which still are used today, dies at the age of 66.

Feb. 5: The United States and Great Britain sign a treaty giving the United States the right to construct a canal across the isthmus of Panama.

March 14: Congress passes the Currency Act, establishing the gold standard for all U.S. money. The move deals a setback to the pro-silver

forces, led by William Jennings Bryan.

March 24: Ground is broken for New York City's first subway. The \$36 million project will link Manhattan with Brooklyn by tunneling the East River.

June 29: In China, the Imperial Court issues what is interpreted as a declaration of war against foreigners, clearing the way for a worsening of the Boxer Rebellion and the murder of hundreds more Chinese Christians.

Sept. 3: With Boer resistance collapsing, Britain annexes the Republic of South Africa.

Oct. 15: Mark Twain returns to the United States following a trip through Europe, Africa and India. The trip led to publication of Twain's manual, "A Tramp Abroad."

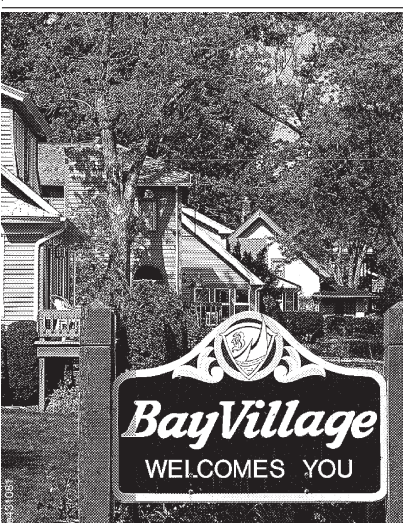
Oct. 2: Ban Johnson forms baseball's upstart American League. It will begin play the next spring, with the Cleveland Blues as a charter member.

Nov. 6: President William McKinley is re-elected.

Born in 1900: Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Heinrich Himmler, Adlai Stevenson, Martin Bormann, Spencer Tracy, Helen Hayes, Margaret Mitchell.

Died in 1900: Oscar Wilde.

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