

# OUR CENTURY

## 1925

### AT A GLANCE



PD FILE

At the opening of Cleveland Air Field in July 1925.

### Crowds turn out for 1st air-mail flights

The site proposed by City Manager William R. Hopkins was criticized for being too far from town — Brookpark Rd. and Rocky River Dr. — but Council approved a \$1,125,000 bond issue for what was billed as the largest airport in the world. On July 1, 100,000 Clevelanders turned out for the dedication.

Only 100 of the 1,014 acres had been cleared, and the only buildings were three small air mail hangars costing about \$200,000. Four eastbound and four westbound air mail flights each day were the only air traffic, except for the Ford Motor Co.'s daily freight trips to Detroit. Historian William Ganson Rose reports that "flyers swept in from dark skies and hopped off on the first night mail routes, heavily laden with bank clearings, love notes and business letters at 10 cents an ounce."

An estimated 200,000 people watched the arrival of the first night mail on July 2. As traffic grew, the fields north of Brook Park were filled each evening with parked cars of families watching the planes land and take off. After dark, their place was taken by young couples.

The \$4.6 million Main Library of the Cleveland Public Library opened May 5, anchoring the south end of the 1903 Mall Plan. As designed by Walker & Weeks, the exterior almost was identical to the Federal Building (now Federal Courthouse) to the east. The Beaux Art interior included 15 high-windowed reading rooms and 47 miles of shelves, the third-largest capacity in the country.

By 1928, the library's 28 branches and 1,181 distributing agencies — schools, factories, stores and fire stations among them — circulated 7.7 million books, or 7.2 books per Clevelander, the highest per-capita figure in the country.

Tris Speaker batted .389, highest in his 22-year career, but after a fast start, the Indians faded for the second straight year. They finished sixth, 27½ games behind the Washington Senators.

The Cleveland Bulldogs, defending National Football League champions, also faded. The team disbanded at the end of the season.

But the city had a new team in a new league, and it won the championship. The Cleveland Rosenblums, owned by Max Rosenblum of clothing store fame, defeated the Brooklyn Arcadians two games to one in the spring of 1926 to win the American Basketball League playoffs.

The two games in Public Hall drew an average of 10,000 fans who paid 75 cents to \$1.65 for tickets.

A noted geographer, Dr. Paul J. Goode of the University of Chicago, predicted that Cleveland eventually would become one of the three great centers of the world. Looking around them, Clevelanders could believe him.

A new claimant for the title of Cleveland's highest skyscraper opened, the 23-story Engineers Bank Building (later Standard Trust, now Standard). Even as it opened, the modernistic, 23-story Ohio Bell Telephone Building (now the United Church of Christ Building) was under construction between Prospect Ave. and Huron Rd.

Only a few blocks from the skyscrapers, 19th-century Cleveland was being torn down. More than 1,000 buildings were being razed to make way for the new Union Terminal, the 52-story tower above it and the surrounding buildings planned by M.J. and O.P. Van Sweringen.

Cleveland's old railroad stations, especially the Civil War-era terminal on the lakefront, were becoming a civic embarrassment. When Will Rogers arrived for a lecture in October, he was expected to get off at the Euclid Ave. station. The reception committee finally found him at the Broadway station, where he was leaning against a post chewing a straw and watching the freights go by.

At the Masonic Temple that night, he told the audience he was tired and sat down on the edge of the stage, where he proceeded to poke fun at the city's rail stations and the delays in completing the new terminal.

## City manager plan a flop

### Corruption, politics still rule despite Hopkins' leadership

By Fred McGunagle

It had the support of "all the best people" — the Board of Real Estate Dealers, the Chamber of Commerce, the Civic League (forerunner of the Citizens League). But as the city manager plan entered its second year, Clevelanders were starting to have second thoughts.

As proposed, the plan would take politics out of city government. Instead of an elected mayor answerable to dozens of diverse groups, there would be a professional manager answerable to a policy-making board, much like a corporation.

The board would be a revised City Council of 25, smaller than the old Council but elected from only four districts. It would end the evils of politics — just as Prohibition was to end the evil of the saloon.

And just like Prohibition, the city manager plan in Cleveland turned out to be a disaster.

A cynical patronage deal between Republican and Democratic bosses ensured that the politicians would be more firmly in control than ever. The city manager was accused of acting like a czar. Councilmen went to prison for corruption and a former councilman expected to turn state's evidence was murdered just before his court appearance.

The plan was passed by voters in November 1921, to take effect with the elections of 1923. "They were immensely proud of themselves for having solved their municipal ills by taking this new cure in one big dose," Richard L. Maher wrote in "Our Fair City," a 1947 book. "They didn't bother to set up a watchdog. They left the plan to shift for itself."

Maurice Maschke and Burr Gongwer knew how to shift for themselves. Maschke had been Republican boss since 1914. Gongwer, who had been The Plain Dealer's politics reporter during the Tom L. Johnson administration, had succeeded Newton D. Baker as head of the declining Democratic organization. The two agreed that Maschke would get 60 percent of city jobs and Gongwer the other 40 percent. On Maschke's orders, City Council elected William R. Hopkins city manager.

The choice was widely applauded. Hopkins, often described as "a square-jawed Welshman," had served a term as a Republican councilman in 1897-99 and thereafter was a successful industrial developer and businessman. His vision of the future moved citizens; although he failed to

make Cleveland a stopping point on a worldwide dirigible route, he did open Cleveland Municipal Airport (which, in 1951, was renamed Cleveland Hopkins Airport).

Harry L. Davis, the former mayor and governor, led a fight in 1927 to knock out the manager plan. Both parties, newspapers and civic groups rallied to its defense. "The manager plan was saved; or, rather, Hopkins was saved, for he immediately assumed greater powers than before," Maher wrote. "Clevelanders learned they had a manager who was not interested in background roles. He was



William R. Hopkins, the city's first city manager, at work.

determined to be the star — and he was."

That was fine with Maschke, as long as Hopkins hired the people Maschke wanted hired and took care of Maschke's friends.

M.J. and O.P. Van Sweringen were very much Maschke's friends. In the process of building their railroad and transit empire, along with the Terminal Group of buildings, "the Vans" wanted a railroad bridge in a place that interfered with plans for straightening the Cuyahoga River.

Hopkins objected, but Maschke

straightened out the city manager — or so he thought. While Maschke was out of town, Hopkins tried to force the issue. Maschke hurried back and, Maher reported, "summoned the members of the Council, cracked the whip for the Van Sweringens, and Hopkins was defeated."

When another vote to scrap the manager plan was put on the ballot in 1928, Maschke did little. It was Hopkins and the Democrats who led the battle that saved it, though by a narrower margin than before. Hopkins began handing out jobs to Democrats and independents as he pleased.

The margin was even narrower in 1929, but while the Democrats campaigned to save the manager plan, Maschke campaigned to elect a Republican Council, which didn't need help from Democrats and independents.

He succeeded, and in January 1930, Council fired Hopkins by a vote of 14-11.

In his place, Council — really, Maschke — picked Daniel E. Morgan, a respected state senator but also a loyal Republican.

Adding to the public's disillusionment with the system was a series of land scandals. Thomas Fleming, who had become Cleveland's first black councilman in 1907 and ran the black wards for Maschke, was sent to the penitentiary for graft. So was Councilman Liston Schooley, chairman of

the powerful Finance Committee, along with his son.

Councilman William Potter and City Clerk Fred Thomas were indicted but escaped conviction after three trials. Potter was then charged with perjury and was rumored to have made a deal with Prosecutor Ray T. Miller to implicate other councilmen. On Feb. 8, 1931, the day before his trial was to start, he was found in a Glenville apartment with a bullet through his head.

That November, voters threw out the city manager plan. Law Director Harold Burton took office as acting mayor until a special election could be held.

In his chapter on political reform in "The Birth of Modern Cleveland, 1865-1930," Thomas Campbell offers a final word on the manager plan. Unlike the earlier reforms of the Tom L. Johnson era, he wrote, it was "not rooted in the ideology that was committed to the American dream of greater equality for all citizens."

"Indeed, these structural reforms, with their emphasis on efficiency and bureaucracy and the anti-foreign and anti-union attitudes of the business leadership of these years, left an underlying hostility among the white ethnics that has endured for many years."

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City Councilman William E. Potter, identified at right, enters a not-guilty plea in front of Judge Samuel E. Kramer in 1929. Potter was involved in a wide-ranging scam on land purchases.

### LOOKING AT A YEAR

**May 25:** Tennessee high school teacher John Scopes is indicted for teaching Darwin's theory of evolution to his science class. Two months later, Scopes is found guilty of violating a law that bans the teaching of theories denying the divine creation of man. He is fined \$100.

**June 6:** Kansas-born mechanic Walter Chrysler forms his own automobile company.

**July 18:** Adolf Hitler publishes "Mein Kampf."

**Aug. 8:** More than 40,000 white-robed Ku Klux Klansmen march on

Washington, D.C. Heavy rain forces cancellation of a ceremony planned at the foot of the Washington monument.

**September:** A new dance, the Charleston, becomes the rage of the nation.

**Born:** Robert F. Kennedy, Marga-

ret Thatcher, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X (Malcolm Little), Idi Amin, Richard Burton, Rock Hudson (Roy Scherer), Paul Newman.

**Died:** William Jennings Bryan, American reform politician Robert LaFollette, revolutionary Chinese leader Sun Yat-sen.

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