

OUR CENTURY

1927

AT A GLANCE

'Flying Fool' Lindbergh makes aviation history

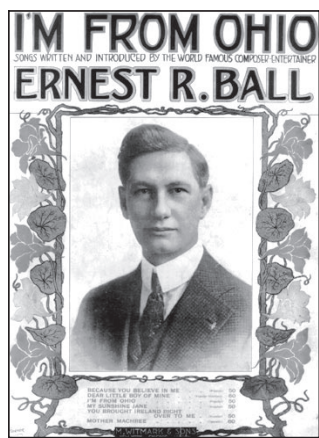
It was the wildest celebration since the Armistice.

"All the Kentucky derbies, all the World Series baseball games, all the world championship prize fights and all the big college football games rolled into one could scarcely fire the imagination of two continents the way this lanky American youth has," The Plain Dealer reported May 22, 1927.

The youth was Charles Lindbergh, somewhere over the Atlantic in a tiny plane whose motor included 18 valves made by Thompson Products Co. of Cleveland. When confirmation of his landing in Paris reached Cleveland at 4:21 p.m. on the 21st, the paper related that "factory whistles shrieked the glad news all over town."

"Hundreds gathered about the windows of a downtown department store where there was a large picture of the 'Flying Fool.' Everywhere downtown, flying flags helped prove that the day was being celebrated as a national event."

Lindbergh came to Cleveland on Aug. 1 for a banquet in his honor, part of a national tour, which clearly discomfited him. He predicted that planes would provide regular trans-Atlantic service in no more than three or four years, creating faster communications.



Ball

Ernest R. Ball, a former student at the Cleveland Conservatory, wrote Broadway musicals and some of America's most beloved songs, including "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" and "Let the Rest of the World Go By." When he died of heart disease at the age of 48, violins played his songs at his funeral in St. Alban's-on-the-Heights Church, and a sextet sang one of the most famous, "Mother Machree."

The Plain Dealer reported: "Everyone wept, most of all his 71-year-old mother."

This Speaker and Ty Cobb had been cleared of charges that they fixed a Cleveland-Detroit game in 1919, but the effects lingered. Speaker reconsidered his retirement, which he had announced after the 1926 season, but signed with the Washington Senators for 1927.

Coach Jack McCallister replaced Speaker as manager of the Indians, but the team missed Speaker's on-the-field leadership. The team never was in contention, finishing sixth with a record of 66-87. That was 43 games behind the Yankees, whose 110 victories set a record that stood until the Indians won 111 in 1954. This was the year that Babe Ruth, playing in Yankee Stadium — "the house that Ruth built" — hit 60 home runs and the Yanks' "Murderers' Row" went on to sweep the Pittsburgh Pirates in the World Series.

Ban Johnson, the sportswriter who had founded the American League in 1901 and been its president since, was in failing health. To replace him, the owners chose E. S. "Barney" Barnard, who had succeeded Jim Dunn as president of the Indians when Dunn died in 1922. After the season, Dunn's widow sold the Indians to a group of Clevelanders headed by real estate executive Alva Bradley. Bradley named Billy Evans, a former umpire and sportswriter, as his general manager, and Roger Peckinpugh, who once played shortstop for the Tribe, as field manager.

Since 1911, two Chinese secret societies, the On Leong Tong and the Hip Sing Tong, had engaged in periodic "tong wars," climaxing in the 1925 arrest of three Hip Sing members for the brutal murder of an On Leong member. Safety Director Edwin Barry used the Terminal Tower construction as an excuse to have the Ontario St. Chinese settlement condemned and razed.

That, plus mass arrests of Cleveland Chinese, brought protests from the Chinese government, and forced the city to issue an apology. But the tong wars ended. The two tongs cooperated in establishing a new Chinese settlement around E. 21st St. and Rockwell Ave., and the Chinese became one of Cleveland's most law-abiding ethnic groups.

Reaching new heights



PLAIN DEALER FILE

M.J., left, and O.P. Van Sweringen, the shy bachelor brothers and development millionaires who brought Terminal Tower to Cleveland.

Joy of thriving Public Square, Union Terminal cut short by Depression

By Fred McGunagle

If the high point in Cleveland's history were to be dated, it would have to be Aug. 18, 1927. And the height was 708 feet.

That was the date the Terminal Tower was "topped off." From much of the city and from higher-elevation suburbs, Clevelanders could gaze up at an American flag, the symbol of a booming country floating above the symbol of the city that led the boom.

In an era when the president said, "The business of America is business," the Terminal Tower was called "a cathedral of business." The same year Charles Lindbergh flew the Atlantic, Babe Ruth hit 60 home runs, movies talked and the Dow-Jones Industrial Average passed 200, the tower was a visible sign of America's and Cleveland's direction: Onward and upward.

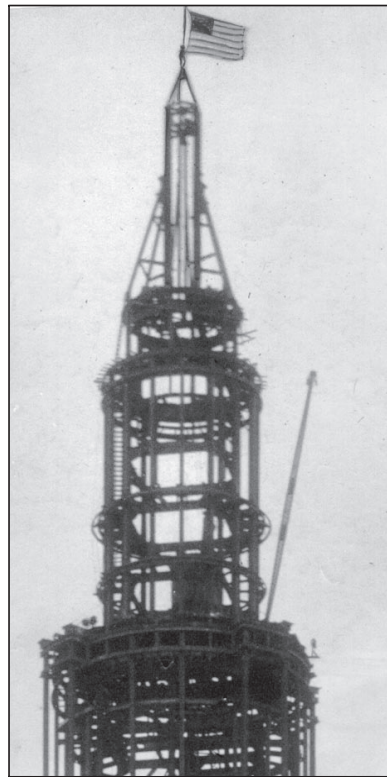
A Page One editorial cartoon in the Plain Dealer showed the tower breaking through the clouds, bedecked with banners marked "Happiness," "Wealth," "Growth" and "1,000,000 Population." The caption was, "When dreams come true!"

The tower, second-tallest building in the nation after New York's Woolworth Building, was but a small part of a mammoth office-hotel-department store project. It stood above its reason for being — a railroad station and "city within a city" taking shape underground.

The whole project cost \$179 million, the equivalent of at least \$1.5 billion today. Its only rival was Rockefeller Center in New York, which began as the Terminal project was being completed. And it was all the creation of Cleveland's new heroes, O.P. and M.J. Van Sweringen, the bashful bachelor brothers who had become railroad tycoons.

No official ceremony marked the tower's topping off; that would come with the opening of the terminal bringing the Vans' railroads and Shaker rapid transit into the heart of downtown. By the time it did open, nearly three years later, the Depression had devastated the country and the city, and the Vans were on their way to financial ruin.

The seven buildings known as the

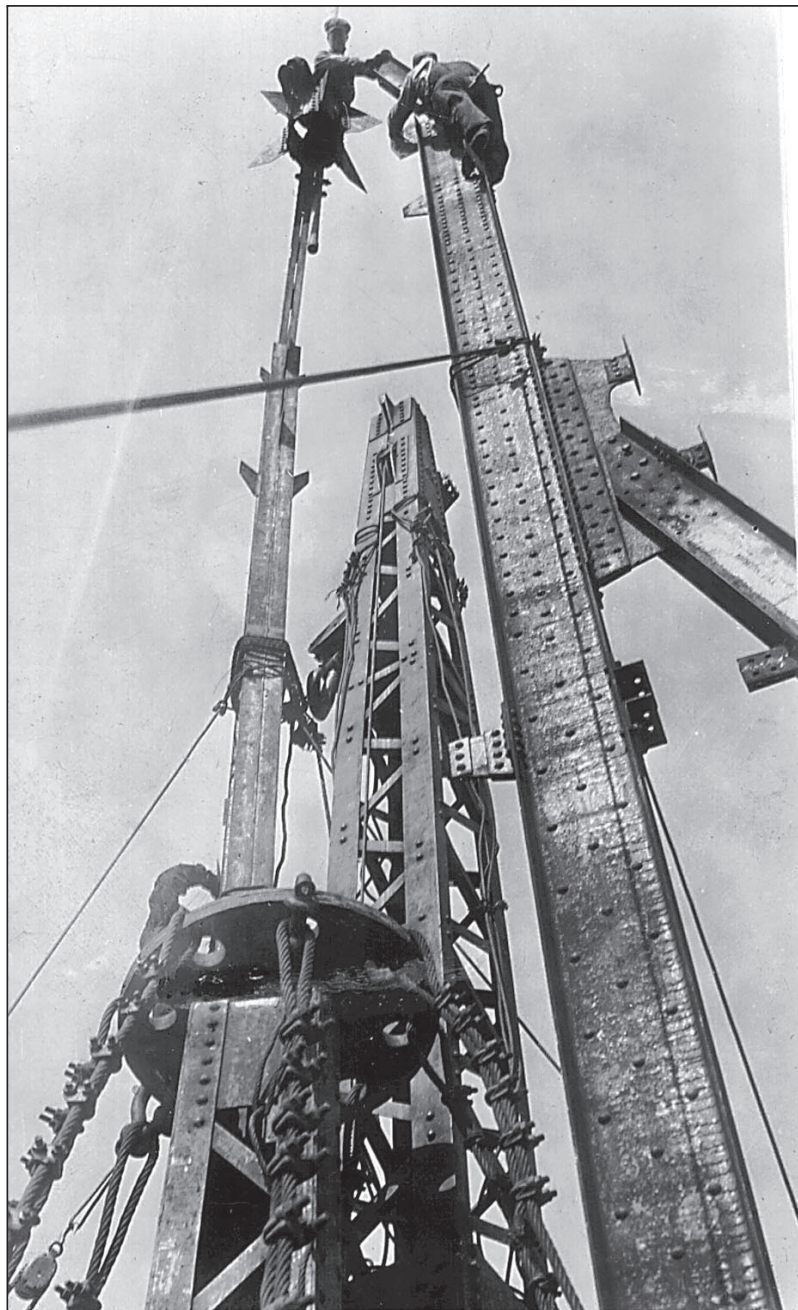


PD FILE

A close-up of the tower, the day it was topped with a flag.

Terminal Group accounted for only \$31 million of the \$179 million total project cost; the rest was for the station, bridges and new railroad lines. But even 70 years later, the scope of the seven buildings is mind-boggling. In a city, which only had a half-dozen buildings of 18 stories or more, the Vans added the tower, three other 18-story office buildings, a 758-room hotel and department store of 14 stories each, plus a six-level, 494,000-square-foot Main Post Office. The Hotel Cleveland (now the Renaissance Cleveland) actually had opened in 1918; the Vans bought it and made it part of their development.

The office space was projected to take care of the city's office needs for the next 10 years. As it turned out, it would be a quarter-century before downtown saw another major new



PLAIN DEALER FILE

The last structural steel work is done on the Terminal Tower — Aug. 17, 1927, the day before the tower was topped with the American flag.

building. The tower contained 661,000 square feet and each of the three joined office buildings on Prospect Ave. — the Midland Bank Building, the Medical Arts (later Republic) Building and the Builders Exchange (later Guildhall) Building contained 900,000 square feet. (Today, the three collectively are known as the Landmark Office Towers.)

The project required demolishing more than 1,000 buildings between Public Square and the Cuyahoga River, plus the construction of railroad bridges and bridges to carry W. Prospect Ave. and W. Huron Rd. and W. 2nd, 3rd and 6th streets. Design started in 1922 and demolition in 1924. Foundation work, which required drilling 250 feet to bedrock — the deepest foundations in the world — began in 1926. The last building, the post office (now the M-K Ferguson Building), did not open until 1934.

Three other buildings would be erected later on the terminal's air rights: the Frank J. Lausche State Office Building in 1979 and the 12-story Skylight Tower and Ritz-Carlton Hotel in 1991.

In 1927, Cleveland had more to brag about than the Vans' project. The 22-story Ohio Bell Telephone Building opened, as did Halle's \$5 million, six-floor Prospect-Huron Annex. Both had required the razing of stately old homes on Huron Rd. The \$1.5 million, 300-room Auditorium Hotel was added to the city's convention facilities. New on the cultural front were the Drury and Brooks theaters of the Play House and the Fine Arts Garden at the Art Museum.

The Metropolitan Opera came to Public Hall. So did conventions like the National Machine Tool Association and the North American Saengerbund, bringing visitors from around the nation to marvel at Cleveland's development. The latter's Saengerfest (songfest) included a massed chorus of 4,000 trained voices as well as Metropolitan Opera star Lawrence Tibbett and Bruno Walter directing a 7.2-piece orchestra.

The Chamber of Commerce proudly counted 2,250 industrial plants in the city. The Cleveland Public Library circulated 7.7 million volumes — or 7.2 per citizen, the highest per capita rate in the country. Cleveland's death rate dropped to 9.65 per 1,000, lowest among the nation's large cities.

Beneath the surface, though, there were problems. Professor Ronald Weiner of Cuyahoga Community College, whose history of urban development from 1825 to 1929 soon will be published by Ohio State University Press, says stagnation had been setting in since the end of World War II.

Population grew by 100,000 during the decade, but it was mainly due to births. Congress had restricted immigration, and movement from other parts of the country had halted except for the blacks coming to the Central area.

When the Depression hit, the entire nation, shuddered. But Clevelanders felt an even greater psychological blow because their hopes had been so high — as high as the flag fluttering 708 feet above Public Square.

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

March 21: Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist troops march through Canton, China as Chiang tries to unify the divided nation.

May 21: About 100,000 Parisians greet Charles Lindbergh when he lands in Paris after his solo flight from New York.

Aug. 2: President Calvin Coolidge announces he will not seek another term in 1928.

Aug. 23: Italian-born anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti are executed in Massachusetts.

Oct. 6: "The Jazz Singer," the first

talking film that starred Al Jolson, opens in New York.

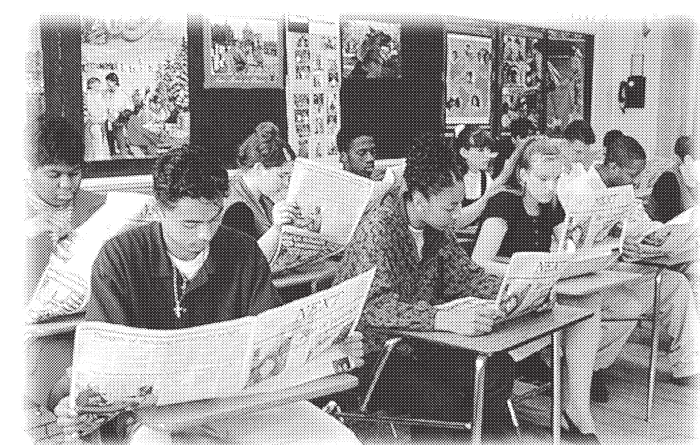
Dec. 4: The music world's hottest sensation, Edward "Duke" Ellington, opens a long and successful run at the Cotton Club theater in New York.

Dec. 19: Troops loyal to Chiang Kai-shek crush a Communist upris-

ing in Canton.

Born: Althea Gibson, Cesar Chavez, Roy Cohn, Ramsey Clark, Neil Simon, George C. Scott, Coretta Scott King, Robert Bork.

Died: Girl Scout founder Juliette Low, accused murderer Lizzie Borden,



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