

# OUR CENTURY

## 1933

### AT A GLANCE

#### Former mayor Davis wins election

Once more, Cleveland had an election for mayor. Once more, charges flew, and once more, Clevelanders jammed political meetings. There were 40 such meetings on the Friday before the election — 19 Democratic and 21 Republican.

Harry L. Davis, the former mayor and governor, was the Republican choice to oppose Ray T. Miller, who had become mayor in February 1932 following repeal of the city manager system. U.S. Rep. Martin L. Sweeney, a maverick Democrat, drew 60,000 votes in the primary and continued to assail Miller.

In the largest turnout ever, Davis won by 14,000 votes. Despite the national trend, Cleveland was back in Republican hands. The new mayor's first act was to head to Washington to appeal for federal work-relief funds.

The Indians weren't immune to pay cuts. Star pitcher Wesley Ferrell's salary was cut by \$6,000. Playing in the immense new Stadium — 470 feet to the center field bleachers — the team's home-run production was cut drastically as well. Earl Averill hit only 10, compared with 32 in 1932. In midseason, the team moved its home games back to League Park.

With attendance down and the team struggling to play .500 ball, President Alva Bradley fired manager Roger Peckinpaugh with a line that was to become immortal: "We only hire the manager. The public fires him."

The new manager was a surprise: Walter Johnson, the Hall of Fame pitcher who had not fared well managing the Washington Senators. He didn't fare well with the Indians, either: Their record was 75-76 with a \$70,000 loss for the season. Some of the owners, notably the Van Sweringens, had been wiped out, but civic-minded Clevelanders came to the rescue by buying their stock.

The Depression had doomed organized pro basketball in Cleveland, though the Rosenblums continued to play touring teams. In hockey, the Indians finished last in the International Hockey League. At the end of the season, they were sold to Al Sutphin, who changed their name to the Falcons.



Owens

Two speedy youngsters were giving the city somebody to cheer for. Jesse Owens of East Tech High School set three scholastic records at a track meet in Chicago, including 9.4 seconds in the 100-yard dash. Stella Walsh ran a women's record 60 meters in 7.3 seconds.

The city had a new sport, one that was sweeping the country. The six-day bicycle race in January was such a success that 12 more races were held before World War II forced an end to the series.

In 1925, Balto had been the lead dog on a sled that sped anti-toxin through a blizzard to save Nome, Alaska, from a diphtheria epidemic. Two years later, he was discovered on display in a "dime museum." Cleveland schoolchildren contributed pennies to help buy him for \$2,000. He was given a hero's parade before settling in at the zoo.

When Balto died in March, he received an honor not given to human heroes. He was stuffed, mounted and put on display at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. (He is to make a six-month trip back to Alaska late this year.)

To qualify the Brookpark Rd. Bridge for more federal highway money, Cleveland ceded 40 acres north of the airport to Riveredge Township. The \$382,000, 1,919-foot bridge connected Riveredge with Parkview across the Rocky River Valley.

When Cleveland later annexed the airport land and the bulk of Riveredge was annexed by Brook Park, the 40-acre section was orphaned. The tiniest suburb eventually was bought as an airport clear zone and divided between Cleveland and Fairview Park, which had annexed Parkview.

The Plain Dealer, which had bought the Cleveland News in 1932, stopped publication of the Sunday News in January 1933, thus becoming Cleveland's only Sunday and morning paper. The afternoon News remained staunchly Republican while The Plain Dealer continued to be staunchly Democratic.

# Economic suffering continues

## Banks close, payrolls are cut, but beer flows again

By Fred McGunagle

As bad as 1932 had been, 1933 was even worse. The economy seemed to be in a death spiral, with business failures causing layoffs, causing more business failures. Cuyahoga County unemployment hit 219,000 in April. More than 30,000 families were on relief. The city opened Wayfarers Lodge to care for some of the homeless; others built shantytowns, including one that was burned down by police because it was an eyesore to those attending events at the Stadium.

The city could not meet its April 26 payroll; many city employees temporarily went on relief. Mayor Ray T. Miller's budget cut city workers' pay 30 percent, raised license fees and closed the Police Women's Bureau and Blossom Hill Home Girls' Farm. Earlier, the city had mothballed its two fireboats and passed an admissions tax that helped drive movie theaters out of business.

Worst of all were the runs on banks. Nationally, more than 5,000 had failed in the previous three years, costing depositors more than \$3 billion in savings. With worried depositors demanding their money, state after state was forced to declare bank "holidays." In Ohio, withdrawals were limited to 1 to 5 percent of savings per day.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt wouldn't take office until March 3, four months after his election. He refused to sign off on a rescue plan proposed by lame duck Herbert Hoover. By Inauguration Day, all 48 states had limited withdrawals. Banks refused to honor checks. Counties could not collect taxes. The Community Chest was having trouble getting funds to charities and the state Workers Compensation Fund was running out of money to pay injured workers.

At noon on Saturday, March 3, Roosevelt finally took the oath of office and immediately declared, "So let me first of all assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

Proclaiming that "the money changers have fled from their high seats of our civilization," he announced an immediate four-day national bank holiday, after which sound banks would be allowed to reopen. He summoned Treasury officials and bankers to a meeting the following morning.

"Say, this Roosevelt is a fast worker," humorist Will Rogers wrote in his Page One Plain Dealer column. "Even on Sunday, when all a president is supposed to do is put on a silk hat and have his picture taken coming out of church, why this president closed the banks and called Congress in extra session."

His banking bill — written by the same money changers he had figuratively kicked out of the temple — was passed so quickly that senators didn't get a chance to read it first. It forbade banks to redeem deposits in gold, in



PLAIN DEALER FILE

Above, Mr. and Mrs. John Kovach — happy, finally, after a devastating year — and their baby, Dorothy, on the first day of the Union Trust bank payoff in July 1933. At left, a crowd in the Chester Ave. lobby of Union Trust Co., the same day. Cleveland, the nation, and, to some extent, the world were in the throes of the Depression.

effect taking the country off the gold standard and inflating the dollar to the benefit of debtors.

The restrictions on withdrawals were eased gradually and by the following week, all Cleveland banks had reopened except for Guardian Savings and Trust Co. and Union Trust Co. Eventually, President J. Arthur House of Guardian and Director Kenyon V. Painter of Union Trust went to prison for violating banking law. They joined President Sterling Smith of Standard Trust Co., who had been convicted of embezzlement after his bank failed in 1931.

The banking bill was the first of a flurry submitted by Roosevelt. Over what became known as the "hundred days," Congress created the Public Works Administration, the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps, and passed the National Industrial Recovery Act, the Agricultural Adjustment Act and everything else Roosevelt wanted. Congress also submitted, and states quickly ratified, the "Lame Duck Amendment," moving the inauguration of future presidents to Jan. 20.

"It just shows you what a country can do when you take their affairs out of the hands of Congress," Rogers cracked. The line would have been

funnier except for what was happening the same month in Germany. Facing many of the same problems as the United States, the Reichstag voted dictatorial powers to the new chancellor, Adolf Hitler. Within two weeks, his regime was setting up concentration camps for political dissidents and Jews were fleeing the country.

One of the bills rushed through the new Congress was an amendment to the Volstead Act raising the legal alcoholic content of beer from 0.5 percent (called "near beer") to 3.2 percent. Roosevelt signed it on March 22. "And I hope you got the smile at the end," he told photographers, who recorded the signing in the White House.

Five days earlier — on St. Patrick's Day — the state Senate had approved submission of a ballot issue repealing Ohio's 14-year-old Prohibition amendment. Voters overwhelmingly passed it in November. In December, Utah became the 36th state to approve the 21st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ending national Prohibition.

Beer already had returned to Cleveland, by coincidence on April 4 — the day a movie theater strike ended with projectionists agreeing to

a 25 percent pay cut. Marquee blazed again on Playhouse Square, Cleveland's "White Way."

The Plain Dealer's Roeliff Loveland wrote: "Filled restaurants, filled streets, grinning taxicab drivers, smiling waitresses, jingling cash registers — and all because of an amber-colored fluid of 3.2 percent alcoholic content by weight or 4 percent by measure had become legal."

Police reported little trouble. "On the other hand," Loveland observed, "there was evidence that after four or five big hookers of the brew, one was apt to regard foreclosure notices, tax bills, etc., etc., in a less mournful manner."

The morning after, however, the foreclosure notices and tax bills were still there. The country may have had a new president who finally was taking action, but the movie projectionists still had to swallow their 25 percent pay cut and policemen and garbage collectors still had to pay their bills with paychecks that were 30 percent smaller.

And they were the lucky ones. They had jobs.

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.

### LOOKING AT A YEAR

**Jan. 30:** Adolf Hitler is named chancellor of Germany.

**Feb. 15:** While giving a speech in Miami, President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt narrowly avoids assassination. Shots fired by the would-be assassin kill Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak.

**March 23:** The German Parliament gives Hitler dictatorial powers. A week later, he announces a boycott of Jewish merchants.

**June 16:** Roosevelt signs into law the National Recovery Act, giving the government great control over private industry in the effort to end the

Depression.

**Aug. 29:** Nazis begin arresting large numbers of Jews and sending them to concentration camps.

**Nov. 7:** Fiorello LaGuardia is elected mayor of New York, wresting control of City Hall from Tammany Hall.

**Dec. 5:** Prohibition ends.

**Born:** Michael Dukakis, Michael Cain, Brigitte Bardot, Jerry Falwell, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Willie Nelson.

**Died:** Calvin Coolidge, writer Ring Lardner, French artist Georges Braque.

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