

# OUR CENTURY

## 1909

### AT A GLANCE



PD FILE

The Industrial Exposition of 1909.

### Cleveland becomes America's city

There could be little doubt that Cleveland was America's boom town after the Cleveland Industrial Exposition in June. It drew 215,000 visitors, breaking all records for such events.

The Chamber of Commerce sponsored it so Clevelanders could "understand the message of stack, hammer and wheel, and to realize the extent and variety of Cleveland-made products."

Because no hall in the city could accommodate 280 industrial exhibitors, a 57,000-square-foot temporary building was built on the site of what now is City Hall. A bridge over Lakeside Ave. connected it with the Central Armory. The exhibits were lighted by 20,000 electric lamps.

The expo's slogan, "Onward, Cleveland, Onward!" was less successful. A minister denounced it as a parody of "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and Willoughby adopted it as "Onward, Cleveland, Onward to Willoughby!"

If New York could do it, so could Cleveland. City Council in March awarded a franchise to the Cleveland Underground Rapid Transit Co. to build and operate two levels of subways beneath up to 34 miles of streets.

Any franchise backed by the Johnson administration was anathema to the Council, which quickly circulated referendum petitions. With the Republicans urging a "no" vote, the subway proposal went down to a narrow defeat in the November election.

Mayoral elections were spirited in the suburbs as well as Cleveland. In the heavily Republican village of Bay (later the city of Bay Village), Democrat A. Horace Wolf upset Mayor Reuben Osborn by four votes.

The issue: Sunday baseball. In the summer, complaints from the village's ministers led to the arrest of two teams for playing on the Sabbath, but a grand jury refused to indict the players. Wolf was in favor of Sunday baseball, Osborn opposed it; the national pastime triumphed over church and party.

Over at League Park, the Naps already had a strong pitching staff with Addie "Perfect Game" Joss and Dusty "No-hitter" Rhoades. At the start of the season, they added the legendary Denton "Cy" Young. Though Young had won 20 games for the Red Sox in 1908, he was 42 years old and the Boston general manager figured he was over the hill.

He wasn't. Young won 19 for the 1909 Naps and Napoleon Lajoie redeemed his off-form 1908 season by batting .384. Shortstop Neal Ball turned in an unassisted triple play. But the rest of the team fizzled. Fans heckled, "They ought to be known as the Napkins, the way they fold up."

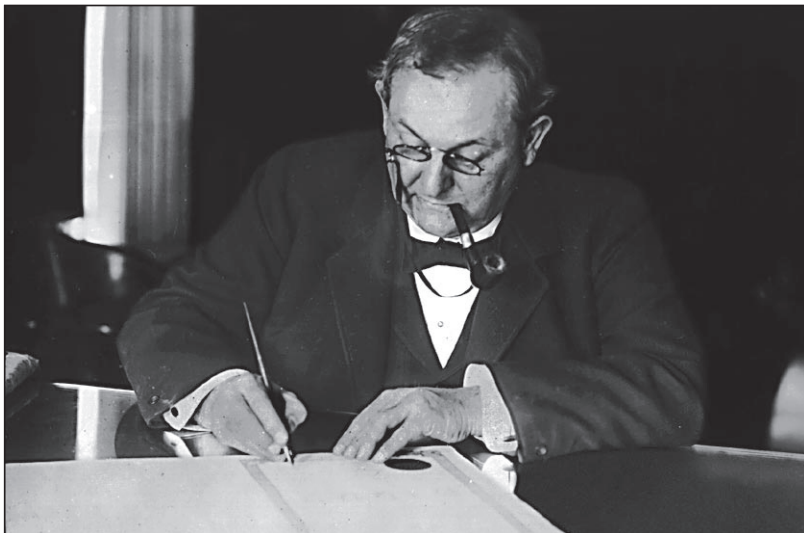
In August, Lajoie quit as manager, though he continued to play an outstanding second base. The team ended the season in sixth place.

Nature went on a rampage: In February, a storm wrecked electric lines and halted telegraph and telephone service. A windstorm in April killed seven people and did \$2 million damage; 12 churches and 17 schools were destroyed.

Then, on June 17, Clevelanders were treated to a rare double astronomical phenomenon. At sunset came what the Rev. Frederick L. Odenbach, watching from his observatory in the tower of St. Ignatius College on W. 30th St., called "some of the finest solar eclipses ever seen in this part of the world." That night, watchers were able to spot the tail of the newly discovered Brooks Comet.

A youngster named Muni Weisenfreund got his big break when an emergency allowed him to play a major role in a Yiddish production at the Perry Theater. Years later, as Paul Muni, he won an Academy Award for best actor for the 1936 movie, "Story of Louis Pasteur."

New this year: The Electrical League of Northern Ohio, first trade organization for the electric industry in the country.



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Mayor Tom L. Johnson at work.



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New Mayor Hermann Baehr, with former Mayor Johnson.

# Popular mayor tumbles

### Fred McGunagle

For eight years, Tom L. Johnson had won the hearts and the votes of Clevelanders and the reputation, as Lincoln Steffens put it, of "the best mayor of the best-governed city in America."

In 1909, tragically, it all came apart. Before the year was over, he had lost his office, his fortune, his health and the goal closest to his heart—a municipal transit system.

Johnson had reached his pinnacle in April 1908, when privately owned "Con-Con" streetcar company agreed to lease its lines to the city with 3-cent fares for all riders. Johnson proudly drove the first car down Denison Ave. and Fulton Rd. to Public Square.

But a strike by employees of the old company, a severe recession and a referendum move by business leaders threatened the continuation of the system.

Johnson, who had led the fight to give citizens the power of referendum, dismayed many of his supporters by trying to block the vote. Then he angered riders with service cutbacks.

Carl Lorenz, City Hall reporter for the Waechter und Anzeiger newspa-



Maschke

per, was an admirer of the mayor. But in his 1911 book "Tom L. Johnson, Mayor of Cleveland," he wrote that by now "some of Johnson's best friends had become his opponents."

"Delegation after delegation visited City Hall to demand relief from the mayor against Tom L. Johnson, the street railway manager. . . . The clamoring delegations found a haughty man, defiant and impatient."

The franchise was repealed by a narrow margin, and the municipal system was forced into receivership. Service went from bad to worse.

In the spring of 1909, Johnson awarded a franchise for a 3-cent line on Payne Ave. to Herman Schmidt, one of his supporters. Once more, his enemies circulated referendum petitions and the "Schmidt grant" was narrowly defeated at a special election in August. Clevelanders had grown tired of the long, bitter fight.

With the transit system in chaos, Johnson was forced to close the Depositors Savings & Trust Co., which

he had opened because other banks would not lend to the municipal system. Its depositors got their money back, but the stockholders—Johnson, his friends and admirers—saw their investment nearly wiped out. Johnson was forced to put his Euclid Ave. mansion up for sale.

"For some months he had been declining in health, his wife was ill in another city, his daughter had passed through a sad experience and the outcome for the next election was gloomy," Lorenz wrote. "By an almost superhuman effort he managed to appear in public as the old Tom L. Who knows what this sick and defeated man suffered in the silence of his home, which was no home at that time?"

Johnson was forced to accept the "Tayler Grant"—a compromise proposal by federal Judge Robert Tayler—turning control of the system over to private ownership with supervision



PD FILE

A younger Johnson, right, and W.B. Hale in character as the Cheeryble Brothers at a costume party in 1889.

by a city traction commissioner and fares limited to 4 cents or seven tickets for a quarter.

The Republicans saw their chance. They nominated Hermann Baehr, the county recorder, to run against Johnson. The Plain Dealer editorially attacked Baehr as "a representative of the courthouse machine headed by Maurice Maschke" and demanded to know: "Do the voters prefer 'Johnsonism,' which means no graft, no corruption, . . . the best municipal government ever given an Ameri-

can city; or do they prefer 'Baehrism,' which means no one knows what—except Maschke?"

In what was described as "the shortest and dullest mayoralty campaign since Mayor Johnson came to Cleveland," Baehr received 26,000 votes to 23,000 for Johnson. The Republican East Side voted heavily while the turnout was light on the Democratic West Side, except for German voters who favored one of their own.

Johnson immediately declared, "I announce my candidacy for mayor two years from now." But it was bravado. His health was failing. He traveled to Europe, where he was honored by a round of dinners. Back in Cleveland, he threw himself into writing his autobiography, "My Story."

He barely had finished when, on April 10, 1911, he died from liver and kidney failure; 200,000 people, many in tears, turned out for his funeral procession past buildings decorated with crepe and pictures of "Mayor Tom."

Shortly after, his book came out. "The greatest movement in the world today," it began, "may be characterized as the struggle of the people against Privilege."

It concluded: "The defeats of the moment loom large and so obscure the vision of the workers sometimes that they are not always able to see that the direction of the general movement is invariably forward. But it is a forward movement and this is the word of cheer I would send to those taking part in it. It is in the nature of Truth never to fail."

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.



PLAIN DEALER FILE

Johnson, next to the man with bow tie and pipe in center, at a baseball game.

### LOOKING AT A YEAR

**Jan. 29:** The world's tallest and largest office building, the Metropolitan Life Building, opens in New York.

**Apr. 6:** Navy Commander Robert Peary plans the U.S. flag at the North Pole.

**June 1:** Civil rights leader W.E.B. DuBois forms the National Negro

Committee to push for suffrage and an end to racial prejudice.

**July 24:** French aviator Louis Bleriot pilots the first plane to cross the English Channel.

**Aug. 22:** Five men are killed and dozens injured during a picket-line battle between striking steelworkers and Pittsburgh-area law enforcement

officers.

**Nov. 14:** President William Howard Taft selects Pearl Harbor as the site of a naval base in the Hawaiian Islands.

**Dec. 21:** Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud explains his theories of psychoanalysis in a lecture during a speaking tour in the United States.

**Born:** Barry Goldwater, Andrei Gromyko, Benny Goodman, Ethel Merman, Al Capp, Jessica Tandy, Katharine Hepburn, Joseph McCarthy.

**Died:** Apache leader Geronimo, Sioux leader Red Cloud, novelist George Meredith, railroad tycoon Edward Henry Harriman.



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