

OUR CENTURY

1924

AT A GLANCE



PD FILE

Crowds watch a radio broadcast from the newly opened Union Trust building.

GOP convention comes to Public Hall

Cleveland basked in the national spotlight in June as the Republicans brought their 1924 convention to the big new Public Hall.

"Flags and banners which drape downtown streets give the city a carnival air," said The Plain Dealer.

There was little suspense about the party's nominee for president. Vice President Calvin Coolidge had succeeded to the office when Ohio's Warren Harding, disgraced by Teapot Dome and other scandals, died in 1923. The vice presidential choice was another Ohioan, Charles G. Dawes of Marietta.

Later in the summer, the Progressives also came to Public Hall to nominate Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin as their candidate. John W. Davis, the Democratic candidate, made an appearance in Public Hall in October, when he pleaded for an end to religious hatred, an allusion to the revived Ku Klux Klan.

Times were good, and in November, voters decided to keep cool with Coolidge.

The 20-story Union Trust Building (later Union Commerce, now Huntington), which opened in May, was the second-largest office building in the country, with more than 30 acres of floor space.

Clevelanders also could take pride in their own "Great White Way." Fifteen-thousand turned out for the dedication of the new street light system on Superior Ave.

For the first time since Tris Speaker became manager in 1919, the Indians had a losing season. They finished sixth, though Joe Shaute won 20 games and Charley Jamieson batted .358 with a league-leading 222 hits.

Stan Coveleskie also had his first losing season and in the off-season, Cleveland traded him to Washington for Byron Speece. Speece won only three games for the Indians in two seasons; Coveleskie won 20 for the Senators in 1925. He retired in 1928 with 215 career wins and was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1969.

A record 21,000 people jammed Public Hall on opening day of the 23rd annual Cleveland Automobile Show. Fifty-eight manufacturers displayed 240 models of "pleasure cars" costing \$380 to \$13,800. For the first time, there were no electric cars among them, although there were electric trucks among the 30 truck models across the street in Central Armory.

The Overland Champion's seats could be removed and made into a bed in three minutes. Another convenience, offered by an accessory manufacturer, was running water; the basins were attached under the car's running board and supplied by a tank bolted to the frame.

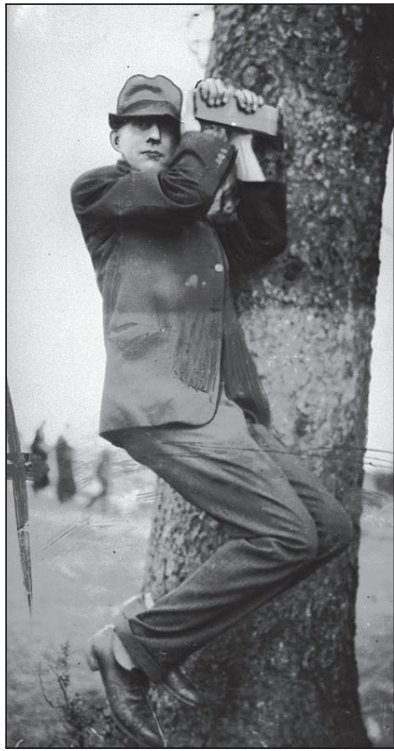
Cleveland now had three radio stations. WTAM came on the air at 7:30 p.m. with Louis Rich's orchestra.

WJAX opened its day at 9 a.m. with "Bond Gossip" and, after grain and livestock reports, finished its morning schedule at 10:42 with "United States Weather Forecast." It was back on the air from 2 p.m. ("Stock Quotations") to 3:43 ("U.S. Liberty Bonds").

WHK aired "Musical Reproductions" from 12:30 to 1 p.m. and came back from 6 to 6:30 p.m. with "Topics of General Interest, Books from Cleveland Public Library and Kelly's Big Six Orchestra."

Sixty-nine theaters advertised movies, including Clara Kimball Young in "A Wife's Romance" at the Penn Square and Tom Mix in "Lone Star Ranger" at the U-No. Live theater also flourished. John Barrymore starred in "Hamlet" at the Hanna, "Abie's Irish Rose" was in its 20th week at the Colonial and Bessie Barriscale topped the bill at B.F. Keith's 105th St.

The Cuyahoga County Public Library opened and by year's end, had eight branches and 15 stations.



CLEVELAND PRESS COLLECTION

Above, high winds from the disastrous 1924 tornado wedged a piece of wood in a tree so deep, it supported this man. At right, looking north on Broadway several days after the tornado, Lorain resembled a war-torn European city more than a Ohio town.

Disaster hits Lorain



Tornado kills 85; leaves city looking like a war-devastated wasteland

By Fred McGunagle

It came and went so fast that, quite literally, the residents of Lorain didn't know what hit them that Saturday afternoon. It was not until they stumbled from their homes to see death and destruction that they realized it had been a tornado.

It wasn't until a man who had been passing through on a train got to Cleveland and ran to a telephone that the rest of Northeast Ohio found out and rushed to Lorain's rescue.

The tornadoes that struck on June 28, 1924, wrought destruction over 200 miles of Ohio and Pennsylvania. First reports listed seven deaths in Sandusky, seven in Cleveland, one in Akron, three in Mantua and five in Pittsburgh. An apartment house collapsed in Bay Village. Sixty cottagers had to be rescued from the rising Rocky River.

But it was Lorain that took the worst hit. The State Theatre collapsed on the moviegoers inside. Hundreds of homes were in ruins, as were nearly all of the businesses along Broadway. The main bridge over the Black River was washed out. Police had no idea how many bodies were inside wrecked buildings and how many boaters had been lost. First estimates were as high as 300 killed and 1,500 injured.

Cleveland responded. "While police were speeding around the city in flying squad cars to impress every available physician into service, the Nickel Plate railroad was making up a special relief train to leave at a moment's notice," The Plain Dealer reported.

Police and fire departments from Cleveland, Elyria and western suburbs rushed to Lorain. National Guard units were dispatched from Cleveland and Toledo, cutting their way through fallen trees in the dark.

The Plain Dealer's description: "Imagine confusion with emergency ambulances clanging and hooting through streets that looked like brickyards, bumping over pile after pile of debris, becoming entangled in wires,



CLEVELAND PRESS COLLECTION

Refugees at Longfellow Junior High School in Lorain.

cutting tires with glass — all in the dark, except for headlights — men walking, stumbling against fallen roofs and crumpled tin, snared in twisted wires as they plowed on to help.

"With someone holding a kerosene lamp, a councilman or other official would swear in everybody within sight as deputy sheriffs. Reporters, photographers, ambulance drivers and citizens became police officers."

Part of Lorain High School was crushed by a falling smokestack; the rest became a temporary morgue. Dazed relatives stumbled over corpses as they tried to identify their loved ones with the aid of flashlights.

The Plain Dealer's Ralph Donaldson toured the city in daylight. "It took four years of constant shelling to make some cities of France look the way Lorain does today," he wrote. "The refugees in Lorain in 1924 are just as destitute as were the refugees in Arras in 1918. Hundreds of families are without shelter and food. Most of them stood in line at the nu-

merous soup kitchens, but some built fires from the splinters of their homes and cooked scanty meals.

"It was not an uncommon sight to see men, women and children picking their way through a maze of fallen wires and trees carrying bed clothing, suitcases and even pictures to someplace where they had found temporary shelter, just as French refugees, returning to their homes in the devastated areas, picked their way through barbed wire entanglements to see if any of their precious belongings had escaped shell fire.

"Everywhere there are signs of military activity. Armed guards with fixed bayonets are detailed at strategic points to direct relief traffic and exclude curiosity seekers. Brig. Gen. John R. McQuigg established his headquarters at the Antlers Hotel. A constant stream of civilians seeking military credentials passed through his office."

Some of the crumpled houses were upside-down. The municipal pier looked as though it had been hit by a

500-pound bomb. Six autos had been blown into the lake. A thousand feet south of the lake, Donaldson saw a canoe wrapped around a telephone pole.

A National Guard officer told of a young man who had worked all night on the rescue crews finding a demolished auto with two bodies in it. They were his father and mother.

"He simply stood silent for a minute, took out their bodies and sent them to a hospital."

A Plain Dealer correspondent found a man wandering on a country road. "He had lost his wife, his home, bought with his life savings, and his nerve. He wept constantly."

Principal P.C. Bunn was at the high school, where he had been working all night with the dead and wounded. He told heart-breaking stories: "A woman would come, weeping," he said, "inquiring for son or daughter. And then we would lead her into where the dead children lay so cold and still, and she would throw herself upon a body with agonizing groans."

But he added: "The most beautiful thing I have ever seen in this world was the promptness and the kindly spirit which Cleveland came to the help of Lorain. It was beautiful — I can think of no other word."

The final toll was less than feared. Thomas P. Grazulis' "Significant Tornadoes, 1890-1989," lists 85 deaths and 300 injuries in the "Sandusky-Lorain Tornado," which may have been separate tornadoes. They included eight dead and 100 injured in Sandusky, where damage was \$1.5 million, including 25 wrecked factories, which hours before had 1,000 workers in them. Four were killed east of Lorain, including three in Avon.

The rest were in Lorain, including 15 killed in the State Theatre and eight in the municipal bathhouse. Damage totaled \$11 million. The tornado was ranked as a Force 4 on the Fujita Scale, meaning winds were between 207 and 260 mph.

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Jan. 21: Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin dies of complications from a stroke at age 54.

Jan. 31: The first Winter Olympics begin in Chamonix, France. The United States wins one gold medal in the games, which are dominated by the Scandinavians.

Feb. 12: Composer George Gersh-

win dazzles a New York theater audience with his first playing of "Rhapsody in Blue."

April 5: German Nazi leader Adolf Hitler is given a five-year prison sentence for his role in an abortive putsch in a Munich beer hall the previous November.

June 30: Will Rogers ends a year of

exile from the entertainment business with a return to the New York stage. "I don't make jokes," Rogers tells the crowd. "I just watch the government and report the facts."

July 30: Paavo Nurmi, the "Flying Finn," wins his fourth gold medal at the Olympics in Paris.

Sept. 2: Bill Tilden wins his fifth U.S. Open tennis title.

Nov. 4: President Calvin Coolidge is easily elected to a full, four-year term, defeating Democrat John W. Davis.

Born: George Bush, Jimmy Carter, Shirley Chisholm, James Baldwin, Marlon Brando, Sidney Poitier, William Rehnquist.

Died: Woodrow Wilson, Samuel Gompers.

Cleveland philanthropist & businessman Lehigh Lincoln Wade II (1857-1926) used to carry a collection

of diamonds in his pocket, pulling them out to dazzle friends and family. These were part of the collection he assembled with the help of Mr. George R. Kunt of Tiffany's. Mr. Wade was particularly interested in color in gems as a quality in its own right, and he desired to provide his collection with an example of both the usual and rarer colors of each gem species. His collection of some 100 stones, including diamonds of every color, were



Gift to Tiffany's Wade II

donated to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History in 1924. In later years, additional pieces were added by members of his family and various buyers. Today, the Museum's Wade collection of gems and jewels is considered to be one of the finest in the country.

Come, experience the dazzle of colored diamonds, rubies, jade, emeralds, pearls, sapphires, opals and a thousand glittering treasures, including lapidary, set work and jewelry, in a new gallery named for the Wade family. The Wade Gallery of Gems & Jewels is another extraordinary addition to Cleveland's extraordinary cultural community.

The Wade Gallery of
Gems & Jewels



1 Wade Hall, University Circle
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www.cmh.org