

# OUR CENTURY

## 1932

### AT A GLANCE



PD FILE

Workers put the last stone in place on the Lorain-Carnegie Bridge.

### Fire set by arson gang killed 12

Shortly after midnight on June 7, a terrific explosion shook E. 9th St. and Superior Ave. Flames and black smoke poured from the six-story Ellington Apartments as nightgowned residents screamed for help from windows. One woman leaped to her death from the fourth floor.

Twenty fire companies and nearly all of the police on duty rushed to the scene. So did catcher Mickey Cochrane of the visiting Philadelphia Athletics and a Philadelphia sports-writer, who rescued four people before the firefighters arrived.

A crowd estimated at 10,000 watched the firemen pour thousands of gallons of water into the building seemingly with little effect. By the time the fire was out, it had killed 12 residents, 10 of them women.

Police suspected arson but lacked evidence. They got a break when an arrest in Pittsburgh broke up an arson-for-hire gang. Members admitted being paid by Ray Turk, who had collected on a \$15,000 insurance policy for his first-floor store. He was convicted of murder, but the charge was reduced to manslaughter on appeal.

The largest crowd in baseball history — 79,979 paid — turned out for the first baseball game in Cleveland Stadium, on July 31. They saw a dandy, as Lefty Grove of the Athletics outdueled the Indians' Mel Harder 1-0. Players complained they couldn't see the pitches because of white-shirted fans in the center field bleachers.

The crowd turned out to be more than one-eighth of season attendance. Playing their remaining 32 remaining home games in the Stadium, the Indians drew 468,953 fans, or 15,000 fewer than in 1931. They played 19 games there in 1933 and then returned to League Park.

The team won 87 games in 1932, but finished fourth, 19 behind the Yankees. Wes Ferrell won 23 games — the fourth straight year he had won 20 — and Earl Averill hit .314 with 32 home runs.

Tom Manning had broadcast some Indians games over WTAM from 1928 to 1931. In 1932, Ellis Vander Pyl took over on WHK, but he was soon replaced by Jack Graney, who had been an Indians outfielder from 1920 through 1922.

Graney was to be the voice of the Indians through 1954 — but not in 1933. At the end of the 1932 season, Indians President Alva Bradley banned broadcasts because, he said, they hurt attendance.

The Lorain-Carnegie (now officially the Hope Memorial) Bridge was described as one of the most beautiful in the country when it opened in December. Drivers thought the \$6.1 million, 4,558-foot-long bridge was beautiful because it relieved traffic jams on the High Level (Detroit-Superior) Bridge.

Also new were the 1,200-foot Fulton Rd. Bridge over Big Creek, the 1,132-foot Brecksville Bridge over the Cuyahoga River and the 1,666-foot Bedford Bridge over Tinker's Creek and Broadway. All made it easier for Clevelanders to reach their new homes in the suburbs.

Cleveland did annex one suburb, however — Miles Heights, with its 2,000 people in the Lee-Miles area. It was to be the last suburb to vote to join the central city.

The National Air Races drew their usual big crowd over Labor Day. Streets around the airport were packed with families watching from their cars. Jimmy Haislip won the Bendix Trophy, arriving from the West Coast in 10 hours, 19 minutes. Jimmie Doolittle won the Thompson Trophy, careening 50 miles around the pylons at an average speed of 252.69 mph. (In 1942, he would fly a more hazardous course when his unescorted carrier-based squadron bombed a shocked Tokyo and escaped to what President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced as "Shangri-La.")

For the year, Municipal Airport counted 26,522 takeoffs and 81,023 of what still had to be described as "hardy" passengers.

Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court had a backlog of 19,204 civil cases as of Feb. 1 and had been able to dispose of only 18,000 in the previous year. The Plain Dealer blamed the public, "which has become more and more conscious of its right to sue for sums ranging from \$1,000 to a small fortune as the result of almost any incident from the scraping of automobile fenders to the things which are said and done after an ace has been trumped in a game of bridge."

Also new this year: The Forest City Publishing Co.

## Food, shelter were the issues

By Fred McGunagle

It happened less than a week before the Feb. 16 special election for mayor. But it wasn't a political action. Or was it? In 1932, shelter — like food — was a political issue.

Bailiffs arrived at Joseph Iachino's house on E. 139th St. with eviction papers and began to cart out his possessions over his protests that his wife was sick. His neighbors muttered angrily. Suddenly they seized the furniture from the outnumbered bailiffs and carried it back into the house.

Police, remembering an earlier eviction riot at which two people were killed, rushed to the scene. Eventually, the truckload of belongings was taken to the precinct station for the night and Iachino's wife was taken to the hospital over her objections. The Unemployed Council, a Communist group, called a rally to protest.

Ray T. Miller and Daniel Morgan

*The Sunday Letters to the Editor page will return next week.*

didn't need that clash to tell them what was on the minds of the voters. It was the bitterest election Clevelanders could recall. The overriding issue was relief. Perhaps 100,000 Clevelanders were out of work, and most of the rest were on short weeks, had taken pay cuts or both.

Miller, the county prosecutor who had made his reputation sending Republican councilmen to jail, charged that Morgan was a stooge for Republican boss Maurice Maschke. Morgan, who had been city manager until voters threw out the system in November 1931, charged that Miller would be a stooge for Democratic boss Burr Gongwer.

Miller called for money from the state gasoline tax to be diverted to relief. Morgan countered that, even if the legislature agreed, "that would take away the money for road maintenance and throw thousands of men out of work."

Miller responded: "He [Morgan] says his heart is bleeding for the poor and the unemployed. But while he is trying to make relief for the unemployed, the principal issue to detract



PLAIN DEALER FILE

In 1932, an "army" of World War I veterans and their families — 20,000 people in all — converged on the Capitol, set up camp and demanded early payment of a promised cash bonus. The early years of the Depression hit Clevelanders hard, too.



PLAIN DEALER FILE

Mayor candidate Ray T. Miller casts his vote in 1932.

attention from the fact he is the Maschke candidate, he is allowing his henchmen to reach into the pockets of part-time laborers and take part of their hard-earned money for his campaign chest."

Morgan shot back that the county Democratic organization was using state money for ditch-digging projects to put Democrats on the payroll. Meanwhile, police arrested a dozen people for vote fraud. Republican Councilman Herman Finkle was found to have 20 transients sleeping on cots in his office so they could use the address when voting.

Thousands of Clevelanders campaigned for the candidates, many in hopes that the winner might get them a job. Others were involved because ward clubs, with their dues of 10 cents a month, were one of the few affordable social outlets. The Plain Dealer listed 54 political meetings scheduled for Feb. 9 alone.

As expected, the vote was close. Miller led with 102,632 votes to 94,227 for Morgan. The Republicans had carried their traditional black and Jewish strongholds. (Blacks were loyal to "the party of Mr. Lincoln.") But Miller carried the West Side. For the first time in 17 years, the Democrats controlled City Hall.

Under the new charter, Miller took office four days later. He immediately faced the task of submitting a budget in which revenue came nowhere near needs. Less than half of property taxes were collectible and the city, like the county, faced default on its bonds.

Since 1929, national unemployment had risen from 1.5 million (3.2 percent) to 12 million (24.1 percent).



PD FILE

This contingent of Pennsylvania workers marched to Washington, D.C., to ask Congress and the president for aid. By 1932, 12 million Americans were out of work and going hungry.

Steel production had fallen from 88.5 percent to 19.5 percent of capacity. More than 5,000 banks had failed, with a loss to depositors of \$3.2 billion. More telling were the statistics reported by Associated Charities: Of 245 families in one Cleveland neighborhood, 45 had no means of support and 22 literally lived on garbage.

Unable to feed its own citizens, the city was unprepared for the arrival from Detroit of several hundred veterans headed for Washington to demand early payment of a World War bonus. Officials quickly rounded up trucks to carry them to Akron, where they were fed and promptly shipped off to Youngstown.

They eventually camped on the Mall in Washington, where some remained after the Senate had voted down the bonus payments. In July, President Herbert Hoover finally sent the Army to evict them at bayonet point and burn their shacks.

Hoover's popularity was at rock bottom. Homeless people lived in cardboard shacks in "Hoovervilles." Newspapers were called "Hoover blankets." As the Democratic convention opened, Cleveland's Newton D. Baker was given a good chance to win the nomination to oppose Hoover. He was the logical choice in case of a

deadlock among New York Gov. Franklin Roosevelt, 1928 nominee Al Smith and a host of favorite sons.

Just when a deadlock appeared likely, John Nance Garner released his Texas delegation and it switched to Roosevelt. Garner got the vice presidential nomination as a reward. They campaigned on a platform calling for a 25 percent cut in government spending.

The national election in November was about the same issues as the Cleveland election that started the year, and once more voters swept out the incumbents. Roosevelt carried 46 states. Democrat George White won the Ohio governorship.

Cuyahoga County results were far from a landslide — 185,680 for Roosevelt to 166,277 for Hoover — but Democrats won most county offices and 12 of 17 seats in the state House of Representatives.

Now there would be a change, voters told themselves. Then they realized that under the Constitution, Roosevelt would not take office until March. For four months, Hoover would be a lame duck president, unable to take effective action.

The nation drifted into a long, cold winter with nobody in charge.

*McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.*

### LOOKING AT A YEAR

**Feb. 11:** In a meeting with Pope Pius XI, who had been extremely critical of him, Italy's Fascist leader, Benito Mussolini, throws himself to his knees and kisses the pope's hand.

**March 2:** Charles Lindbergh Jr., 20 months old, is kidnapped from the family's New Jersey home. The child's body is found on May 12.

**April 10:** Incumbent Paul von Hindenburg wins the German presidency, defeating Adolf Hitler by 6 million votes. But Hitler's National Socialist Party doubles the number of seats it holds in the Reichstag.

**July 2:** New York Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt wins the Democratic nomi-

nation for president, promising "a new deal for the American people."

**Sept. 1:** Under fire for many instances of alleged wrongdoing, New York Mayor Jimmy Walker resigns.

**Nov. 8:** Roosevelt scores a landslide victory over Republican incumbent Herbert Hoover.

**Born:** Edward Kennedy, Mario Cuomo, Elizabeth Taylor, Peter O'Toole, John Updike, Omar Sharif, Johnny Cash.

**Died:** American composer John Philip Sousa, New York show producer Florenz Ziegfeld, Swedish industrialist Ivar Kreuger, former French premier Aristide Briand.