

# Bright Future For Birmingham Seen

That Birmingham is facing a brilliant future in general community development seems more than a reasonable certainty in view of past growth divulged in successive annual reports compiled by village managers. While these reports are not available prior to the publication issued in 1922, the facts and figures representing progress along civic lines within such limits are adequate for justification of a most optimistic prophecy.

The new seven man commission which came in with the adoption of the new charter last year marks another distinct advance in administrative progress. The changes in the village governing body since its inception following the incorporation of the original territory in 1861 form interesting contrasts.

Under the dictates of the first charter the town board consisted of seven men headed by a village president. With the decision that a new charter was a necessity in 1885, a slightly smaller board was chosen, with only six men in office. During the following 32 years this self-same charter, while not always of sufficient breadth to care for the many new problems constantly arising in the growing village was deemed adequate as an outline to Birmingham's civic activities.

As early as 1915 however, a completely new charter was seen as an absolute necessity, and work

upon its compilation was immediately begun. Adopted in October 1917, it was not until the following February that the new document took official effect. One of the most important clauses in it called for the appointment of a village manager, an official whose need had been sorely felt in the years before. The size of the commission was again reduced, village affairs being placed in the hands of a board of three men. In accordance with the new plan adopted last year however, seven members now compose the commission under an alternate election plan which assures the presence of experienced legislators on the board at all times.

Costs of village administration have shown substantial gains in proportion to the increase in population and necessity for various improvements during the past decade. Exclusive of the members of the commission, the administrative body responsible for all expenditures, now consists of 20 members among whom are included various inspectors, village engineer, fire and police chiefs and village attorney, treasurer and manager. Twenty years ago a tenth of this number was found sufficient.

In 1922 the total cost of village operation totaled \$69,267.77 as contrasted to \$237,808.99 in 1927, marking an increase of more than \$168,000. The general tax levy in 1922 was \$24,109, while last years figures reached

\$266,047. In the first manager's report the net surplus resulting from the deduction of operating expenses from total income shows a balance of \$6,022. In 1927 the figure representing this sum was \$51,997.

During 1927, due to a heavy expenditure in the development of the water department there was a deficit of some \$17,000, although there remains a net operating surplus of \$57,014.

The contrast of figures representing the activity of the village police and fire departments forms another interesting angle in Birmingham progress. In 1922 the police arrested 515 law violators; in 1927, more than 1300. The fire loss in 1922 was \$9000, while the same item in 1927 was only \$3964.

Building department figures show evidence of marked strides in construction progress in the village during the past six years. In 1922 permits were issued for buildings with estimated valuation of \$271,975. During last year the village issued permits for \$1,911,090 worth of new building work.

The cost of highway maintenance and construction, according to the managers report of 1922 amounted to \$10,875. During the year 1927 this work cost the village \$56,528. While the actual paving of new streets in the village was limited to mere repair work, during the next five years many former gravel and dirt streets were either paved with

concrete or tarvia coated. The 1922 report on highway costs includes such items as grading and scraping, street lighting, sewer construction and repair and sidewalks construction.

Under the present village plan of administration, the general organization is divided into six departments working in co-operation with the commission and the manager. These departments are: health, police, fire, building, water supply, and street maintenance. It is expected that the present system of administration will prove efficient and adequate for some years to come with only minor changes a probability. The engineering department is a recent innovation expected to fulfill a long felt want in a variety of construction services in Birmingham.

One of the unusual features of the report of 1927 as contrasted to those of previous years is a series of recommendations made by James W. Parry, present village manager. He declares that several projects are imminent and necessary in consideration of future progress along civic lines, and lists among these the suggestions for a renumbering of the houses in the village, a sanitary sewage disposal system, further consideration of the water supply, and several charter revisions. Each of these improvements would mark strides into Birmingham's promising future, according to Mr. Parry.

## Remember?



PADDY WILSON

A gentle Irish soul was "Paddy" Wilson, cemetery Sexton, and man about town, with a wheelbarrow and Mattie Baldwin's orders for a general clean-up.

Where "Paddy" came from is not known nor is it important. Mourners at burials will well remember his energetic shovel. With the words "Earth to Earth," Paddy would raise a generous shovelful of dirt high over his head with unerring aim. The third of stones and earth on the casket some feet below could be heard for several hundred yards. The somber proceeding was all in the day's work for Paddy.

Paddy was seen plodding down the street one day with a rake and wheelbarrow when a pedestrian stopped him.

"Where are you going with that, Paddy?"

"Shure 'n I'm Mattie Baldwin's city scavenger now," was the sorrowful reply.

Married at the residence of the bride's parents on Wednesday, April 8, 1885, Mr. Clinton Dewey of Detroit to Miss Lottie Tom of this place, the Rev. G. W. Lowe officiating. Lottie has long been a resident of this place, and her many friends unite in wishing her a pleasant trip over the billows of the matrimonial sea.

(43 Years Ago)

## A Merchant's Stunt

When Ben Franklin began his sage writings under the title of "Poor Richard's Almanac" he hit the nail on the head. The publication met with instantaneous approval in and around old Philadelphia, and it took only half an eye to see that Ben had given the public what they wanted in the line of literature.

Back in old Birmingham in 1889 a well known merchant, one J. Allen Bigelow took over the Franklin idea and put it on a sound-merchandising basis for the promotion of bigger and better business in his general store, long since replaced by Charles Shain's establishment on west Maple avenue. Capt. Bigelow, a civil war veteran, lost no time in capitalizing upon his scheme, and began writing adages with plenty of local color, proverbs both of the slightly subtle variety and of obvious sharpness, all clothed in brevity. Upon the first twelve pages of the book, which was of pocket size, appeared calendars for each month. Surrounding this statistical display, reading from left to right and up and down as well, were printed the aphorisms numbering about five to the page. Usually, at the top of the page, a helpful hint appeared; for example, with September's advent the little red school houses beckoned, and Captain Bigelow reminded "Send your children to Birmingham and school, and buy your school books and stationery at BIGELOW'S!"

Copies of the almanac found their way into many of the old homesteads of Birmingham, but the first printing failed, in numbers, to meet the demand produced by the immediate popularity which met little volume, and in consequence the following year found a more optimistic edition.

During later years Bigelow asked for contributions for the year book. In the earlier efforts, however, the contents were almost entirely original, and reflected a remarkable acumen and human understanding. The 1882 edition opened the year with this pointed bit of sapience: "Book agents and

patent right men thrive well if floused at the expense of the county."

With the February calendar comes a "high pressure" mackerel advertisement together with "Hickory nuts and jokes are very similar," and "One nice Christmas beef has been known to yield 16,749 pounds of choice meat."

One tightly packed paragraph under the March date in the same edition carries much advice upon a multitude of subjects, "Trim your grapes, buy onion seed of BIGELOW, give something to the poor, then you know whom you are lending to, and after many days harvest your crop; and if you walk three abreast on the sidewalk, you may expect to meet some who are ill-mannered enough not to turn out."

A domestic monition follows, "If your neighbor and wife are disputing, keep out of sight and see to the chickens on your own roost."

Captain Bigelow was one of the village's greatest fishermen 50 years ago, and it is not surprising that his almanac should have such a quip as this within its pages: "Where is the fisherman who never saw the largest fish, and once had him on his hook?"

He is dead.

Still another "When oak leaves are as large as a mouse's ears then fish for pickerel."

In true Poor Richard style and under the month of June: "Hug the shore when the ice is thin. Hug delusions when your sweetheart objects."

With the "Glorious Fourth" in sight he says, "Get your celebration clothes out and see that the Father of the Country is well represented." Two lines below: "Cut your July grass and eye-teeth at the proper time."

In September business seems to have been at low ebb, for at the top of the almanac page we read, "This is Bigelow's month for fishing; go thou and do likewise, and be happy."

Here are several typical offerings found in the last few pages of the 1882 issue:

"Pay as you go and don't go

## Remember?



NATE FALLS

Nate Falls, well remembered citizen of Birmingham of fifty years ago, Nate is seen grazing the landscape directly in front of the horse garage (then called a livery stable), a famous landmark in the old village.

Anyone having a county atlas of Oakland county for sale, can find a purchaser by inquiring at Whitehead and Mitchell, if the price is not above the stars.

Wedding bells rang but loudly and merrily when Mrs. Will Blackcase and A. Rifenberg were united in matrimony at the home of Mr. and Mrs. George Curran, (25 Years Ago).

any further than you pay."

"Watermelons and the Fifteenth Amendment were created for the same purpose."

"Learn a trade; then you are boss of hard times and proprietor of perfect independence."

"Which had the hardest time - Daniel in the Lion's Den, Robinson Crusoe, or the boy who spoke his first piece?"

"Lock the door and throw the key away and you'll find a way to pick the lock when the time comes."

"Young man, cultivate your moustache, your politeness and a cheerful disposition."