

WHY THEY WERE HAPPY HERE 50 YEARS AGO

No Progressive Movements. No automobile horns and mad drivers. No real estate booms.

The National House. The fact that a day did not whizz by like a fire engine. No traffic policemen silent or otherwise. No Woodward avenue controversy. No street paving assessments.

No radios, world series ball games and trans-Atlantic flyers. No newspapers with screaming headlines, crime waves or bobbed haired flivverees.

No bobbed hair at all. No discussions over women smoking cigarets, wearing short skirts or driving a car. No bridge games, golf enthusiasts or persons gone crazy on a bigger and better world.

No parking problems, companionate marriage or debating teams. No cross-word puzzles, people who imitated dope addicts nor who thought it swank to use the word "swank."

No Progressive Movements. No cigaret ads testifying that Babe Ruth would crawl on his hands and knees for 74 miles to have some blown his way.

Cigarets, on the other hand, that guaranteed 43 severe and body shaking hacks to every back-load.

No young intellectuals, futuristic painters nor poets of the home.

No jazz music, nor jokes about prohibition and the Scotchman.

No Progressive Movements. No dependable alarm clocks. No wrong Number department on the Telephone company. No cafeterias.

No stories someone heard from a traveling salesman.

No collar ad men on every billboard, stories of the World War or national credit system.

No Anniversary Editions.

No Progressive Movements.

All Is Quiet Now

"All is quiet on the Potomac!"

No, this is not part of a report from the front during old Civil War days. It's an exact replica of an old line that used to appear in an Eccentric column 50 years ago. No further explanation of this apparently inapplicable observation was necessary in those days. Every reader well knew the significance of the words, and when, in some obscure corner of the paper, they appeared without further comment most readers got a good chuckle from them. "Most of them" is the correct expression, for there were others who found the line less humorous. Here's the story:

A certain section of Birmingham said to be near the present area bordering along Brown Street gained a peculiarly distinctive reputation for itself in and around the year 1875, through the persistent belligerency of several of the householders in that vicinity. An Eccentric representative in the course of a casual stroll through that section early one summer evening was rudely awakened from a journalistic reverie by a volley of angry expletives emanating from a back door of a near by residence.

That the affair was to be no monologue became immediately evident when a fresh burst of even more acrimonious expressions came crashing through the silence from quite another quarter. The gentleman of the press, nonplussed, stopped, not through characteristic curiosity, but quite thoroughly awestruck. Then too, the adjectives were quite 'out' of common place vocabularies, and journalists are ever in search of more colorful terms of diction. Within a remarkably short space

of time, back and front doors alike framed stages for a high calibre verbal battle.

"You'll keep those chickens off my property or there'll be feathers flyin' high, wide and handsome you darn, ol'..." whereupon the peculiar compliment paying would get underway.

"Tell yer wife to keep her washin' in her own back yard or I'll be washin' the buggy spokes with one of yer tablecloths yuh old billy goat!"

The tirade became resplendent in volume and argumentative technique alike, and the news-nosier lingered, impressed.

A few evenings later he again turned for a twilight saunter into that same district, hoping, for the sake of general peace and harmony, that the raucous experience of the previous evening had been extraordinary and most unusual. But no summer's evening breeze in the tree tops could produce the ever growing murmur which accosted his ears before he came within a block of the district. As he drew nearer the turbulence seemed more marked than ever before. Feminine voices were easily distinguishable in the melee, and descriptive connotations from neighbor to neighbor were most unneighborly.

The press squired turned homeward, wrote a line or two for the next week's edition, and retired, only to dream of wild days and nights at the front in the Civil War, of shot and shell screeching over the old Potomac.

A few weeks passed during which amicable relationships were fairly well effected in the word wracked neighborhood. An organ salesman with a smooth tongue

ORIGINAL ECCENTRIC CLUB



The Birmingham Eccentric received its name from this group of men. They composed the old Eccentric club of Birmingham and they in turn took the name from a

club in one of Jules Verne's novels. Those in the picture are; bottom row, left to right: Frank Randall, Stewart E. Opdyke, Almeron Whitehead, John F. Alger, Me-

Alister Randall, top row: William C. Jenks, George H. Mitchell, Eben L. Parker, and Walter North. The picture was taken in about 1878.

A TEMPERANCE PLEDGE

A pledge I make, no wine to take;
Nor brandy red, that turns the head;
Nor whisky hot, that makes the sot;
Nor fiery rum, that ruins the home.
Nor will I sin, by drinking gin;
Hard cider too, will never do;
Nor lager beer, my heart to cheer;
Nor sparkling ale, my face to pale.
To quench my thirst I'll always bring,
Cold water from the well or spring;
So here I pledge perpetual hate,
To all that can intoxicate.
Selected from "Dr. Chase's, The Book for the Million."—1887.

swept the dollars from pockets, and within a month or two almost every house along the street boasted of an organ, fewer of organ players. The acumen of the Eccentric representative again became apparent with the next edition in which the Potomac, its warlike significance lost, gave way to a new title, Organ Avenue.

But organs can become boring, well chosen words, never. So when the night birds were the sole disturbers in the district under surveillance, the Eccentric decided THAT was news, and felt full justification in the unpretentious, if printed notice:

"All is quiet on the Potomac!"
On one of these warm days last week we raised our office window and a very blue streak of air the full size of the window, and smelling somewhat of brimstone, came rolling in. We immediately took Hades, our trained vampire, from his cage and sent him out to investigate. He was back in eight minutes with the information that the German foreman in the Avadanche office at Grayling had "spied" a big job form. (43 years ago).

TOWNSHIP TAX SHOWS CHANGE

A comparison of the tax roll of Old Bloomfield Township with the almost disarming figures which represent the cost of running the township in recent years should bring a gentle sigh, and perhaps a wish for much, much greater antiquity in taxation methods to Birmingham's present day residents.

During the past 86 years, according to a carefully preserved tax roll of 1842 found in the township office here Bloomfield's assessed valuation has hopped from \$12,770 to more than \$30,000,000, while the tax rate has tripled in the same period of time.

In the fine old handwriting of Rial Irish, Bloomfield Township's supervisor in 1842, a total of 29 resident land owners have their property described and appraised in the age-yellowed document. On the last pages of the roll the taxes of these 29 are arranged in a neat column to facilitate addition, and at the bottom of the array of figures emerges the grand total of \$222,821. State and county demands added \$863,56; highway costs were \$75,50, bringing the total roll to \$1161,88.

Today the total is close to the million dollar mark!

It must be remembered however, that much of the land in Bloomfield Township in 1842 was still government owned and therefore non-assessable. Land grants were being given out describing enormous tracts and it was not unusual to find farmers with many hundreds of acres. At that time the valuation was estimated at \$3 to \$4 per acre. Today some of the same property is selling according to frontage at \$1000 per foot.

Under Mr. Irish's valuations the tax rate was about \$11 per thousand, and the levy was made according to total assessed valuation. Today the rate is \$33 per thousand on a somewhat lower assessment-basis.