Birmingham before today

By MINNIE HUNT SALTZER

OLD CAMPAIGN DAYS

The method used now in presidential campaigning is vastly different from that of former years. Then we had torch-light processions, pole-raisings, etc. The Republican party used either tamarack or pine poles, and the Democrats used hickory poles.

There was always a great deal of rivalry in regard to the height of the poles used for this purpose. If the Republicans had the first pole-raising the Democrats made an effort to outdo them, and vice versa. In order to accomplish this the poles often had to be spliced, and steel bands were fastened around the place where the splicing came. The flag at the top of the rope would be the Stars and Stripes, and beneath this flag, the one bearing the names of the candidates for president and vice president would be placed. A brass band would play while the pole was being raised, and the flags being run up. Then there would be campaign speeches and more band music before the crowd dispersed.

During one campaign General Russel A. Alger came to town and made a political speech. He arrived from Detroit on the mid-day passenger train, and a large crowd of townspeople were at the depot to welcome him. I remember how very dignified he looked when he stepped down from the platform of the train, and how excited everyone seemed to be.

During the Grover Cleveland and James G. Blaine campaign the Birmingham Republicans had a torch-light procession. Of course such a procession was more effective in those days of poorly lighted streets than it would be today, with our present mode of street lighting. The Franklin band, which was organized in 1885, headed the procession. The men and boys in the procession wore dark colored oilcloth capes and caps. These were trimmed in red. The marchers carried lighted torches.

A large crowd was assembled at the old Grand Trunk depot, and the procession marched to the depot to meet the train which brought the speakers for the campaign program.

After the speakers arrived they were seated in carriages, and the procession again formed in line with the band leading, followed by the carriages escorted by several of our leading Republican townsmen on horseback. The line of march was up and down the principal streets of the village. This occasion formed one of the highlights in the old Birmingham celebrations.

Wore White "Plugs"

During the Cleveland-Blaine campaign the Republicans wore white "plug" hats, with white bands, and the Democrats wore the same kind of hats, with black bands.

My uncle, N. H. Leet of Highland Park, was making a trip on a train that fall, and he placed his Republican hat on the seat beside him. Another passenger entered the coach and sat down on my uncle's hat. I have since wondered if, perhaps, he might not have been a Democrat.

Ed lamb was a harness maker who had his shop near the present site of the Huston Hardware store. He was a very jolly man and a staunch Democrat. Mrs. Lamb was one of the town's leading dressmakers. One fall the Democrats had a pole-raising, and, not to be outdone by the Republicans, Mr. Lamb procured enough red "bandana" handkerchiefs to reach from the lower flag on the flag pole to the place on the flag rope where it fastened around the pole near the ground. He and Mrs. Lamb fastened these handkerchiefs to the rope, and when the larger flags were raised, with the handkerchiefs flying beneath, the effect was very colorful.

After Mr. Lamb retired from the harness making business he became the janitor of Hill high school. He was very well liked by the school children and they always called his "Dad" Lamb.

George Mabell was probably our most widely known Birmingham Democrat, and Capt. J. Allen Bigelow one of our outstanding Republicans.

The McKinley Election

Before the general use of the telephone and the coming of the radio we depended on telegraph communications for our election returns. I recall especially that at the time McKinley was elected president several of the Birmingham Republicans went down to Detroit to listen to the returns. One of the men who went was T. A. Ward. The Ward children and my brother and I had raked up a high pile of leaves at the side of the street in front of our homes, at the intersection of Bates and W. Brown streets, and Stella Ward and I decided to sit up and wait for the election returns. With no radio to help us pass away the time, and all the neighborhood wrapped in slumber, we doggedly kept each other awake.

Mr. Ward returned home in the wee small hours of the morning and jubilantly announced the McKinley had been elected.

My father had always been a Democrat, and, though she then could not vote, my mother was a Republican, as was her father, Horace S. Leet. It so happened that my father had voted this time for our Republican candidate.

Thomas Koontz, who lived just south of W. Brown on Bates street, was a Democrat, and W. D. Clizbe, who then lived on Southfield avenue about a block south of W. Brown, was a Republican. My father had been a snare drummer since he was ten years old, and had drummed for the Birmingham soldiers to drill during the Civil War, when he was about 14 years old.

So when we learned that the Republicans had gained the victory over the Democrats, Stella and I awakened the Ward children and went over to my home and persuaded my father to get up and dress, and bring out his snare drum. Then we lighted the bonfire and my father stood on his porch and drummed with a vim.

Mr. Koontz was awakened by the drum, and, looking out saw the neighborhood lighted up. He tore into his clothes and came dashing up the street to meet at the fire. When he discovered the source of all the excitement he was, being a Democrat, very much disgusted and returned home immediately.

Roused the Neighbors

Mr. Clizbe heard the drum and saw the reflection from the bonfire, and he dressed and hurried up Southfield avenue to W. Brown street. He knew that Mr. Ward had been to Detroit for the returns, and when he located the bonfire he, being a Republican, returned to his home much pleased. Mrs. Clizbe, who always got lots of joy out of life, was quite amused over the incident.

During the same campaign the Republicans had a pole-raising south of the intersection of Woodward and Maple avenues, on the east side of Woodward. When the pole had been placed and everything was in readiness for the flags to be raised, one of the men in charge invited a group of young women (of which Carrie Lee, Stella Ward, Belle Ward, Maude Campbell and I formed a part) to raise the flags, and we felt quite proud to be able to do our bit in the celebration.

My mother's stepmother, Arvilla Garfield Leet, was James A. Garfield's cousin. When he was a candidate for the presidency my mother was very much enthused over it. One real dark night my father offered to bet my mother a dollar that she dared not go out to the gate at he Hunt farm, on W. Maple Rd., and give three cheers for Garfield. My mother took the bet and started out toward the gate. My father slipped out the side door, and when she reached the gate he let out a blood-curdling yell. My mother screamed and ran for the house as fast as she could, thus losing the wager and putting a damper on her Republican enthusiasm for the remainder of that evening. The Hunts were all Democrats, which made the affair all the more disturbing to my mother, but when Garfield won the election, the tables were turned and she had the last laugh.

And referring to the Hunt farm reminds me that over 60 years ago my grandmother Hunt traded 15 acres of her farm, at the southwest corner of W. Maple and Lasher roads, which has been known for years as the John K. Adams place, for a yoke of oxen. Lehman Case was the other party in the trade, and both he and my grandmother considered the exchange a very fair one.

SEND THE ECCENTRIC as a CHRISTMAS GIFT. We have printed up some very attractive Gift Cards to herald your gift of a year's subscription, enclosed in "Do Not Open Until Christmas" envelopes. Come into The Eccentric office, or telephone 11 for further information. —Adv. 36-37-38

WE HEARD IT SAID BY—

Mrs. William E. Brewster, of Cranbrook Cross Road: "I'm not alone in my belief that The Eccentric is a good newspaper. A friend told me the other day that the first page itself was worth more than the subscription cost."

My New York

by JAMES ASWELL

NEW YORK.—Randomusing: A romantic fillip passing the house in which Mark Twain lived in lower Fifth Avenue, reflecting upon the 100th anniversary of his nativity . . . A grand, strange old man, about whose real opinions so little was known . . . indeed the years obscure much more than we realize of our great men . . . Take the case of Washington Irving . . . For years I have lived a stone's throw from a tea-roomish restaurant tableted to commemorate Irving's occupancy . . . Yet I am told this is sheer moonshine; that he never set foot in the place, according to authoritative antiquaries, living instead in a rooming house in 2nd Street, five blocks away, which has no plaque at all . . .

Bernard Simon, one of the more scholarly drama publicizers; prepared a lengthy disquisition upon the ill-fated Irish patriot, Charles Stewart Parnell, to induce a revival of interest in the love affair which blasted Parnell's political career and retarded home rule a generation in Ireland . . . The piece was replete with bibliography and learnedly distilled color . . . But the play, "Parnell," which I think you will like if it runs until you next get here, had another facet of sad circumstance . . . Elsie Schauffler, who wrote it, died during rehearsals and missed that breathless first-night agony of not knowing whether a hit or a flop had come from her pen . . . There is probably no other experience like it on this earth, playwrights assure me . . .

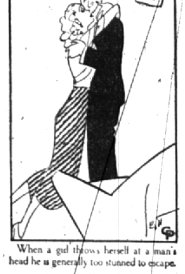
Samuel Goldwyn, the butt of so many dialectic jokes, is never called "Sam" by his closest associates, even those who have been with him for years . . . It's always "Mr. Goldwyn" . . . One who knows him well assures me that despite his frequent slaughtering of English he has an instinctive taste where movie plots and situations are concerned, and certainly he has produced more first-rate films than many Hollywood big-wigs who are reken more solemnly by the anecdote manufacturers . . . I thought Dark Angel, for example, excellent entertainment . . .

Fred Allen, asked whether he sang any songs in his movie impersonations, quipped: "I'm saving my voice for television—in order to get accurate recording of the blue notes" . . .

If I were still composing newspaper feature stories for my keep, I'd devote one to Laurence H. Hart, of Washington, D. C., the only full-time, professional George Washington in the world . . . Or perhaps Bob Ripley could do better by this curious gentleman, who goes about the country impersonating the papa of the land . . . He's out on Long Island now, appearing in some hundred schools in wig and knee-breeches and answering any sensible question put to him in Washington's own recorded words! . . . He has embellished many a parade, convention and patriotic rally and plied his trade in some 600 schools throughout the land and I am told he makes a good living from it . . . His stationery heralds "Laurance H. Hart, Impersonator of George Washington." . . . He's thinking of incorporating himself . . .

Emil Coleman, the professor of polite jazziques, told me he got his first Manhattan job on a fluke . . . Penniless, he wandered in to Bustanoby's, that old-time oasis, and the orchestra leader was too busy scratching music on a lead sheet to interview him . . . But a piano player was needed and quickly . . . He got the job—and the boss was none other than Sigmund Romberg headed for later musical renown . . . So many first jobs are landed like that in a dizzy spiral of luck; and, come to think, so many firings occur for similar reasons.

SALLY'S SALLIES



When a gal throws herself at a man's head he is generally too stunned to escape.