

The newspapers of the day voiced this feeling of their readers in tones which, though a little blatant, were certainly in tune with the times. They wrote elaborate reviews of the events of the past century, and forecast with rosy adjectives the progress of the next. Truly yet naively they advised, "Save up your to-day's papers. They will be interesting a hundred years from now."

The *Clinton Age* declared that the "old century that is now past and gone was the greatest in the history of the world, and the dawning one promises to eclipse the records of the past, in the advance in scientific improvements, researches and in many other ways, including education". Another paper was sure that Cedar Rapids, "The Parlor City", would be "more reluctant to say farewell to the year and the century that has just passed away but for the belief founded on practical assurance that the year and the century ushered in will be better and will treat us even more kindly than its predecessor has done."

The *Iowa State Register* of Des Moines predicted that "horseless carriages", however rakish, could never travel faster than ten miles an hour, and seemed to regard mastery of the guitar a social accomplishment par-excellence. "At this time", the editor urged, in a more serious vein, "it is well for the individual to stop long enough to 'take stock' and to lay his plans for the future. National life is composed of the grand total of the units and each

individual however obscure and humble enters into the great composite of life and events which is called history. Life has never been so complex as it is to-day. If we could instill one lesson on this morning of the birth of the new century it would be the lesson of simplicity. This is the need of the hour and if this should be the direction given to life in the growing century the integrity of our institutions would never be menaced."

Iowa City, according to the *Weekly Republican*, was proud of the past and crowing for the future. "There has not been a working day in the past year but what every able-bodied man resident in Iowa City could find plenty of work and at very remunerative wages." The paper praised the new "Collegiate Building" (Liberal Arts), as being "perhaps the most elaborate and expensive Building within the limits of Iowa City, and undoubtedly, next to the Capitol building at Des Moines, the finest state structure in Iowa." Of the new \$100,000 courthouse not yet completed it predicted that the structure would "be the most gorgeous piece of work in the county", and called attention to the adjacent jail, with its "several magnificent new steel cells". Stimulated perhaps by these improvements, the editor ventured to voice the needs of the new day by favoring "a rattling, substantial, harmonious, everlasting, pushing organization of business men with business interests to serve."

But all the prognostications were not so sanguine.

It seems that there are always some people who would rather look backward than forward, and find more beauty in the sunset than the dawn. Such a man, being quoted in a weekly newspaper, furnished food for argument by declaring that he did not believe the twentieth century would be as "prolific in inventions and in other respects as the nineteenth." He said that there were more inventions in the nineteenth century than in all the other centuries together, citing the sewing machine, the friction match, electrical appliances, surgical instruments and drugs, the modern printing press, the X-ray, ocean cables, the railroad, and the phonograph. He did not believe that the twentieth century could be any better than its predecessor "except, perhaps, in perfecting the flying machine and improving on the present noted inventions and making further applications of electricity and other agents of motive power."

What were the people of Iowa doing on this remarkable day of prophecy that flooded the snowy prairies with all the glory of "brightest and healthiest winter weather"? Probably most families were huddled indoors about the "Radiant Home" which glowed like a big ruby in an ornate setting. Folks were stuffing themselves with food without much of a strain on the family budget, for those were the "good old days" when frozen meat hung in the woodshed and hump-shouldered jars sagged the pantry shelves; when mince pies were three for a

quarter, eggs seventeen cents a dozen, butter twenty-two cents a pound, dressed rabbits two for a quarter, corn thirty-six cents a bushel, oats twenty-four, and wheat seventy-two.

Mayhap the ladies were in the kitchen talking among themselves as they washed the dinner dishes. They told of their experiences with Jello, the "new desert that pleases all the family." They recommended Peruna or Cherry Pectoral according to the advice of their favorite senators who had pictures and testimonials in the advertisements. They praised the town photographer who invariably advertised that "you are sure to be satisfied, whether comely or homely — we take your picture just the same — and endeavor to do only the very best kind of work." Undoubtedly they exchanged January sale news, and found that there was a big reduction on "cloaks, capes and collarettes", that high topped kid shoes were \$1.29 a pair, that ladies' scarlet underwear was reduced to 75 cents, that black taffeta was \$1.10 a yard, serges 69 cents, and silk and wool plaids 47 cents. (Twelve yards was considered enough for a dress.) They learned that men's high class eighteen- or twenty-dollar suits were reduced to \$12, and that fifteen-dollar suits, "suitable for the man of business or the social lion", could be had for \$9.90. A "swell raglan" cost only \$6.98.

The men were probably in the parlor or the "sitting room", their dark mustaches looking as artificial as the waxed flowers on the corner what-not.

They swapped stories about the weather, and all agreed that the day was the coldest of the winter. In Cedar Rapids and Iowa City the mercury had dropped from 21° above to 10° below zero. Some one reported that at Des Moines it reached 3° below, while Dubuque boasted 11° below, at Davenport the temperature hovered at the zero mark, Clinton was frozen at 7° below, and Monticello received the icy laurel wreath for a minimum temperature of 19° below zero.

It was a chilly topic and they soon took up another, talking spiritedly of the new inventions and wondering what the world was coming to next. Perhaps one of the company tilted back in his chair and told a story which was certainly "of the moment". It seems that a man looked out of the window and said to his wife, "Did you see that auto — auto — auto-New Orleans that rushed by just now?"

"No," she answered, "but I did see an automobile."

"Sure, that's it! I knew those pesky things were named after one of our Southern cities, and New Orleans isn't such a great distance from Mobile, so I wasn't far out of the way at that."

Then of course followed an animated discussion as to the merits of the new "steam autos". A store was quoted as having the "safest, surest, speediest and most stylish of steam carriages", but the men were skeptical.

Perhaps the gentlemen were civic minded — inter-

ested in beautifying the straggling streets of the town; in replacing the wooden and brick sidewalks with concrete; or in erecting three-story brick buildings with elaborate stone trimming to take the place of the sham-front, frame structures which faced Main Street. At any rate every one was looking forward and feeling very modern, making all sorts of speculations as to the coming Utopia — unless of course somebody dampened their spirits with the current comment, “Talk is cheap — especially if a man patronizes a five-cent barber shop.”

As conversation dwindled the children on the dining-room sofa came in for their share of importance. They were looking at the pictures in the daily paper, and quickly passed over the ordinary advertisements illustrating their mammas with round muffs and rambling flower gardens on their saucer-sized hats; or their fathers in short top-coats that belled at the bottom, derby hats, and the inevitable canes. What interested them most were the baking powder and coffee advertisements, usually labeled “Not made by a trust”, and portraying magnificent premiums which could be obtained for “ten cents and ten coupons”. The boys selected a valuable knife with “two blades, a cigar cutter, a glass cutter and a cork screw.” The girls wavered between the “latest Parisian Cluster Brooch, set with a very pretty colored center stone surrounded by Parisian diamonds, very handsome and brilliant”, and a pair of hat pins “set with jewels very brilliant and

showy; a very useful addition to any lady's jewel case."

When the choosing was exhausted they were momentarily interested by an advertisement of a local cigar store which showed old Father Time enjoying a huge black stogy, and holding the box out for them to share. At the turn of the page their attention was attracted by a picture of the new Edison phonograph. It was praised as being "better than a Piano, Organ, or Music Box, and it sings and talks as well as plays, and don't cost as much." They all pushed each other to get a chance to see. There — they'd like to have the twentieth century beat that!

But of course all the New Year's celebrations were not as quiet or as typical as this family gathering. Perhaps some tousle-haired newspaper man realized this, and as he sat in his office clipping items from the sea of papers which surrounded him. A half-ironical, half-humorous smile played about his mouth as he thought that some day folks might depend on his scrap-book as a cross-section of society on that "never-to-be-forgotten" date.

He found that on January first Des Moines was particularly gay and bright. The Savery advertised that a delicious New Year's dinner would be served from 5:30 to 8 P. M., and the "famous twentieth century electric sign" would be on exhibition. Foster's Opera House was pleased to present David Belasco's "most perfect and popular play", "The Heart of Maryland".

The Y. M. C. A. was a center of interest, being the scene of a big reception graciously sponsored by fifty of the well-known ladies of the city. The parlors were elaborately decorated in olive and white, evergreens and holly were laced through the chandeliers, and pink and white carnations adorned the tables. Music was furnished by the Capitol City Commercial College Mandolin Club and other local talent. Over a thousand persons attended, and all agreed that the "Y. M." was one of the "jolliest places in town".

In another part of town the Central Church of Christ held "open house" all day. Appropriate refreshments were served, and toasts were offered to the new church, the young men, and everything which augured for a successful future.

The Octogenarian Society gave an informal reception in honor of Noah Brockway Bacon, who was one hundred and one years old. His age was the more remarkable because he had lived in three centuries — one full year in the eighteenth, one hundred in the nineteenth, and one day in the twentieth.

It was interesting to find that many friends made their annual New Year's calls together, though the custom was beginning to decline. The pioneer fathers of Des Moines, Phineas M. Casady, George M. Hippee, and Hoyt Sherman, had made their calls in this way for years, but at the first of the twentieth century they adopted the practice of sending cards together through the mail.



Dr. George W. Adams, the new president of Des Moines College, arrived from Kalamazoo, Michigan, very appropriately on New Year's morning. In an interview he said, "Yes, I think that Des Moines College has a great future before it, along with all the other small colleges of the country. I am a believer in the small college. It is the only place in which a student can get the training in character that is necessary for him, no matter what profession or business he proposes to take up."

The man with the scissors was quite intrigued with the two leading social events at Clinton. One of these was the reception and ball given by the "Twentieth Century Dames" at the Wapsipinican Club rooms. This was a new organization composed of the elite of Clinton's society, and the ball was their first party. The rooms were profusely decorated with pale roses set upon small tables which were covered with green and white satin centerpieces. There were numerous divans and artistic couch covers about, which lent an "oriental atmosphere to the whole".

The other affair was the Locomotive Firemen's Annual Ball. This was held at the Davis Opera House, and the building fairly burst with noise and fun. A novel decoration was the showing of the "head end of a locomotive thrust through the large flags used as curtains on the stage. The engine was numbered 1900 until midnight, when the figures were changed to 1901."

From a Creston paper of January first the self-appointed historian gleaned the following item of the perennial conflict between public interest and private gain. "But for the generous provision of providence, Creston tonight would be without light. The mellow rays of the moon furnish the illumination for the city this evening, the Creston Gas and Electric Company having parted company over the making of a new contract. Both sides are firm, and when the moon hides its face the introduction of lanterns will probably occur."

Another misfortune, but one which achieved the proportions of a tragedy, occurred at Burlington. The clipping reads: "Everybody was rejoicing over the fact that the 20th century was beginning so auspiciously for Burlington, when above all the din of bells and fireworks and noisy shouters, there roared forth the mighty voice of the water works whistle, to which the fire-bell tolled a harsh accompaniment. Many heard and heeded not, until the rush of the carts from the stations, and the reddening glare that lighted the whole city, startled them, and ere long they crowded toward the scene of destruction in motley array." It was about 12:30 A. M. when the alarm was sounded for the Connor Mercantile Company, a large overall and shirt factory. Trouble with the fire plugs became apparent and it was decided that the only thing that could be done was to try to save the adjacent buildings. The fire was intense, however, and soon the wholesale

dry goods store of Schramm and Schmieg was belching smoke. By two o'clock the only thing that was left to show for the buildings was a total loss of \$130,000 and a mass of smoking ruins. Many a New Year's party was broken up by the conflagration, and men in evening dress climbed over the slippery roofs of near-by stores, extinguishing the pieces of burning tar paper which fell there, or worked side by side with volunteer firemen in laborer's garb. One immaculately dressed young man, silk hat, white gloves and all, stepped in the way of one of the hose nozzles and was thereafter an amusing spectacle for the crowd. The owners of the embers were interviewed, and both declared that they would start rebuilding immediately. Every one rejoiced in this attitude which was so "genuinely American, and typical of the spirit of the new century."

The preserver of Iowa news twenty-eight years ago found that not all of the residents of Council Bluffs spent the day celebrating. The local typographical union took time to meet and appoint a committee to "push along the fight for free textbooks before the next general assembly."

He noted that there were midnight services in the churches of all the larger towns of the State. The Catholic pontifical high mass in the cathedral at Dubuque was particularly solemn and impressive — a special devotion ordained by the Pope which would not occur again for a period of one hundred years.

"The Friendly Islands first saw the Twentieth

Century", reported the Boone *Daily News*. "They were considerably in advance of other peoples, as they had been living in the Twentieth Century some hours before the rest of the world saw its light. The first dawn of the Century broke upon a point just to the east of the Friendly Islands along a line conforming in general to the meridian of 180 degrees east and west longitude from Greenwich. On this meridian is the date line, and it is at the date line that the change of day comes which navigators in the Pacific Ocean experience. When the Twentieth Century dawned in the Friendly Islands it was only breakfast time in Boone while San Francisco was still asleep."

Boone was favored on New Year's evening by a "rare treat" at the Arie Theater, which consisted of a "refined and artistic entertainment, including feats in magic, spiritualistic tests and wonderful illusions." There were also presented the "latest moving pictures, war scenes, calcium light views, the great Oberammergau passion play and beautifully illustrated songs." The prices of ten, twenty, and thirty cents were calculated to attract a large audience.

At Sioux City, one of the wettest spots in Iowa, a significant concession was made in the interest of temperance. "All saloons" were ordered to be "kept closed on New Year's." On the evening of New Year's day Sioux City was entertained at the Grand Opera House by the appearance of Mrs.

Fiske in "Becky Sharp", the play which was based on Thackeray's great novel, "Vanity Fair". And in the announcement of the Sioux City Traction Company that after January 1, 1901, no more complimentary or free transportation would be issued to any one, the observer of twentieth century conditions might have sensed the spirit of a new era.

In Cedar Rapids the corner of A Avenue and Third Street was the scene for a novel ceremonial, perhaps the first of the new century. There the Elks gathered to lay the cornerstone of the "splendid new Jim block", which was to boast three stories and a basement, and to be faced with brick, with plenty of stone trimming. The lodge had leased the entire upper floor and it was therefore deemed proper that members of that order should officiate. At exactly midnight "a gun was fired into the still zero air, and while the bells of the city tolled and clamored joyously, the corner stone was dropped into place." After the ceremony the men put on their hats and quickly dispersed for warmer and more convivial haunts.

And so, in various ways, the first day of the twentieth century came and ended in Iowa. The people launched joyously into a new era, wondering how many of the toasts and rosy auguries would come to pass. To none was vouchsafed the privilege of envisioning the changes, the sadness and the happiness, that the first quarter of the century would bring. But as the stars slipped by in their courses

and the dawn broke redly in the east — as people yawned themselves to bed — all could find comfort in the thought that they were qualified to tell those stories beginning, “Why I remember on the first day of the twentieth century when . . .”

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