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Re-discovering ILLINOIS

by LESTER B. COLBY
ILLINOIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

When I sit down to write the story of Canton I find that I have at hand some very remarkable facts. For twenty-six weeks I have been traveling about Illinois, from Cairo to Rockford and from Quincy to Danville seeking truths that may be recorded and woven into the "Story of Illinois."

But nowhere have I found a story of greater human interest or one that I believe will be of wider inspirational value than the story I have found in Canton. I seem to have found an epoch of the human mind; a revelation of what a change can be wrought with united effort.

Hundred Years Old
Canton was one hundred years old this year. The city climaxed its centennial in August with a three-day celebration. But as I rode about this hundred year old city of 12,000 people today I noted that almost all of the really worth-while public things showed amazing newness.

Could it be possible, I asked myself, that this city had plodded along for a century, working individually, pegging away, each-man-for-himself, expanding slowly and with circumscribed limits—then suddenly to start to bloom? It didn't seem possible.

Fresh paint, newly turned earth, bright concrete, woodwork that still smells of the forest. I found them on every turn. Something seems to have come over Canton. Only organization and unity of purpose could do a thing like that. I sought to find out why.

New and Better Way
I do not hope here to be able to record all the things that have brought about this new Canton. I would not want to criticize those pioneers of a past era or question their motives or purposes. But I do want to say that the men of Canton have found a newer and better way. It is important to record that Canton, after a hundred years, has had an amazing awakening.

Canton this year wanted \$15,000 so that everything might be free and good-fellowship reign at its centennial. It got it. Canton decided that it wanted \$5,000 for its Y. W. C. A. and \$20,000 for its Y. M. C. A. It got it. Canton decided that it wanted a 108 acre park, an eighteen-acre athletic field with football ground, a baseball diamond, a fine swimming pool of concrete, a wading pool, a park house, shrubbery and a place set apart for a gun club. It got them all.

Canton decided that it wanted more paving. So it got, this summer, 33 blocks of concrete at a cost of \$250,000.

Col. B. M. Chipperfield, who has been active in "selling" the people of Canton on the idea that parks and playgrounds and swimming pools are investments in practical business makes comment:

"We pronounce the name of this city Can-ton. It isn't Can't-on—not any more."

"When the work was started," said C. H. Hippler, "there were some who protested at the cost. Today those same persons take visitors to the park and the playgrounds and the pool and boast about it. 'It's ours,' they say with pride."

Origin of Plow Works
"Way back in 1842 a New England blacksmith, William Parlin, made his first plow in Canton. It later became the Parlin & Orendorff plow works and today the P. & O. plow works of the International Harvester company. Its annual business is around \$2,300,000. It covers four square blocks and employs 1,200 men. It makes 150,000 farm implements a year of which 100,000 are plows.

The company has an expansion plan which calls for an expenditure of \$400,000 in Canton in three years. Recently it asked the Canton City Board to close three blocks of public street to permit it to go on with its building program. It was done, almost instantly. Canton, I was told, co-operates with its business institutions, confident that its industries are assets.

"I believe that the general spirit of good will and co-operation between the people of Canton and its industries, Canton's new activities and energy in public things is very largely due to its Chamber of Commerce," said C. B. Reed, superintendent of the plow works. "There was a time when things were much more difficult."

In many cities I have found a feeling against what the people call "absentee ownership." Canton seems to think that the International Harvester plant is an integral part of itself even though the ownership lies in Chicago. When Cyrus McCormick, Jr., vice-president in charge of manufacturing, came down a few weeks ago he found himself a citizen.

Public Co-operation
It may be that the amazing and remarkable change in the public viewpoint of Canton, among many other things, is due somewhat to A. F. Greenwood, Managing Secretary of the above mentioned Chamber of Commerce. He came to the work direct from store management in one of the largest merchandising organizations in the United States.

He has sought, he says, to sell the idea of public co-operation and united organization on the solid basis that it is good, practical, sound business. He hasn't talked sentiment. If the boys are not playing ball in the summertime, he says, it's bad business.

The most pugnacious remark I heard in Canton was from a lawyer who said:

"Until we got busy and built our public playgrounds there wasn't a damned place for the kids to play."

In that remark I felt that I got a broad insight into the Canton that was as compared with the Canton that is. I had been about Canton, in a car, and had noted that so many of the things that go to put cheer in life and health in the body are new things. It was not pointed out to me; I saw it.

Such things usually develop slowly, over a long time. Here they seemed to have come quick; sudden. That was why I asked questions.

In these twenty-six weeks of investigating towns and cities I have learned some things about why they grow and progress—or why they do not. I have found that, while there are many things to think about, back in the heads of the average would-be locator of an industry are always thoughts like these:

"Is this the sort of city I'd want to live in?"

"Will my employees be happy and contented here?"

"Is this a good place in which to raise a family?"

Happiness Essential
Happiness of mind and body, I believe, are of overpowering importance in city building, wielding even greater influence than freight rates and transportation. That's why I believe the awakening of Canton to united effort and friendly organiza-

tion can be an inspirational lesson to all of Illinois.

It was Canton's centennial, its hundredth year of existence climaxed by a mighty birthday party that brought 40,000 people to its new park for a gala three-day celebration, that was the final grand argument for continued co-operation in everything that affects all.

So as it starts Year One of its second century Canton has written on the cornerstone of its edifice:

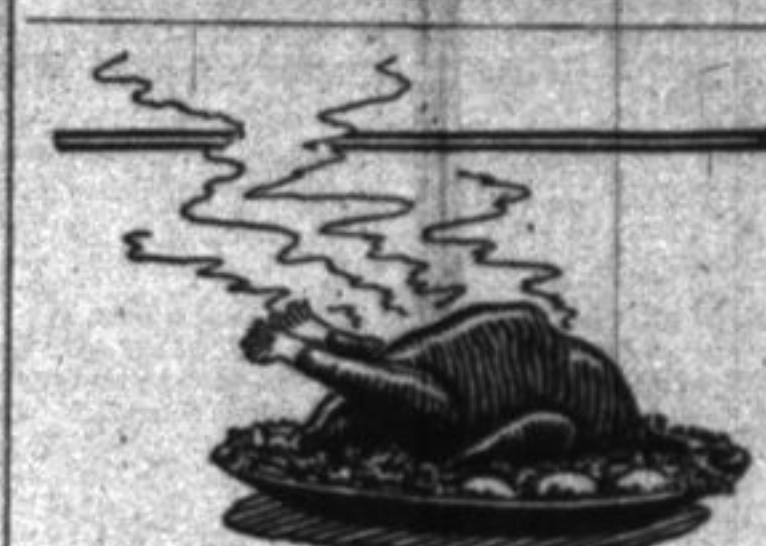
"You can't do it alone."

Canton seems to have a newborn happiness in the knowledge that it is in accord. The new concrete, the newly turned earth, the swimming pool, the woodwork that still smells of the forest—what a story they tell. They've used a lot of paint in this last twelve-month in Canton. I feel better toward people for learning the story of Canton's fresh grip on things. Year One, Second Century—a new beginning.

FACTORS AIDING IN CHINESE PROGRESS

Two important factors that are expected to contribute much in the transition of China, which, according to President K. W. Kuo of the Southeastern university at Nanking, is slowly moving towards a more modern and efficient national life, are a good roads movement and a plan for the construction of long distance telephone lines between the principal cities. The extension and improvement of the various ways of communication, with the introduction of scientific methods and mechanical power, are certain to hasten the development of China's natural resources and the progress of her commerce and industry.

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