



Theses and Dissertations

1983

Provo in the Jazz Age: A Case Study

Gary C. Kunz

Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>



Part of the [History Commons](#), and the [Mormon Studies Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Kunz, Gary C., "Provo in the Jazz Age: A Case Study" (1983). *Theses and Dissertations*. 4859.
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/4859>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

0
1.02
.K85

L2

PROVO IN THE JAZZ AGE:

A CASE STUDY

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of History

Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

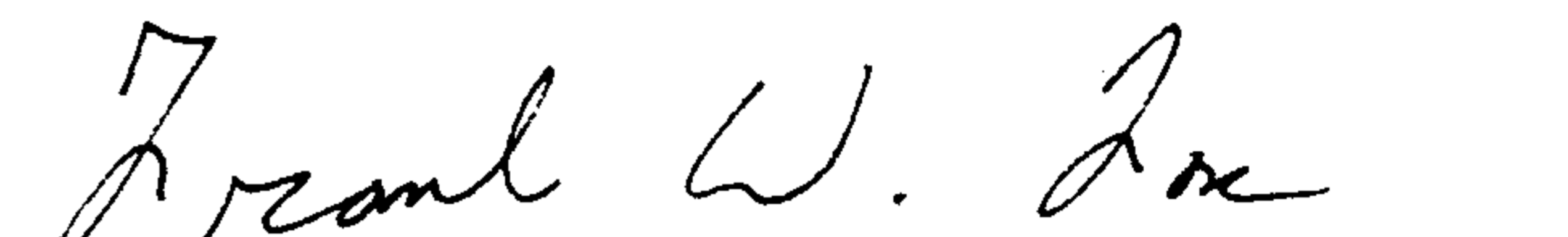
by

Gary C. Kunz

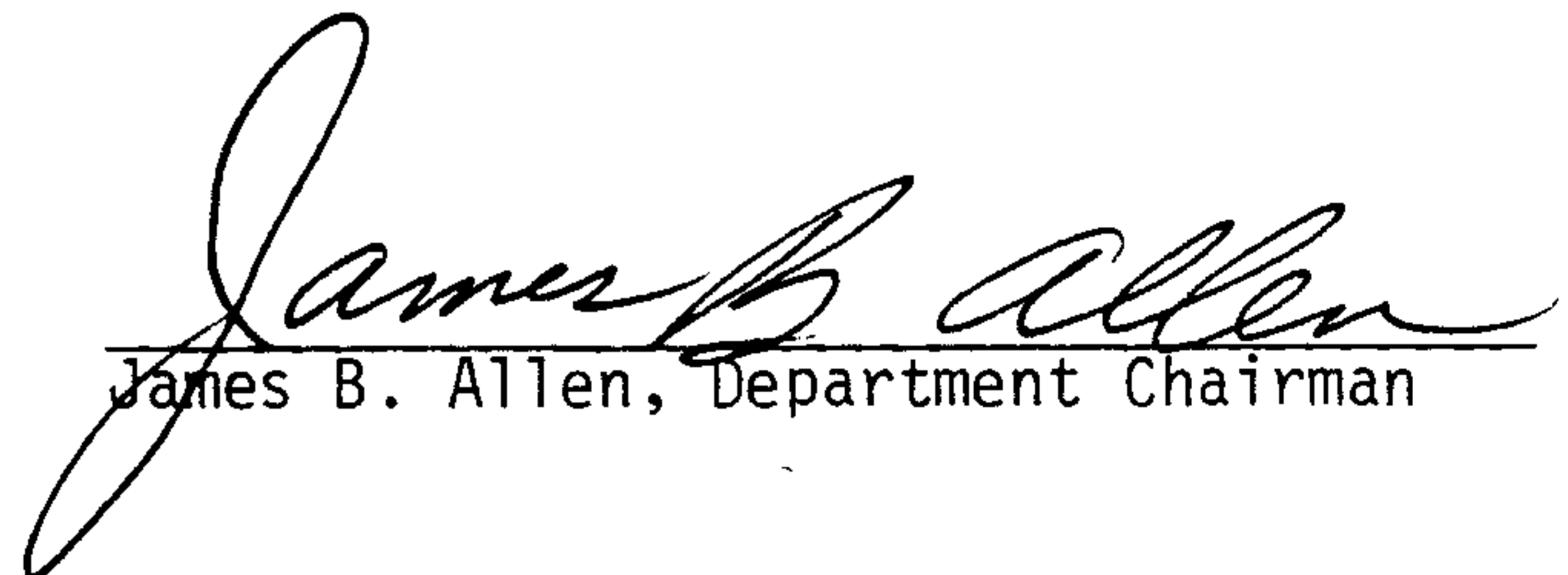
August 1983

This Thesis, by Gary C. Kunz, is accepted in its present form by the Department of History of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.


H. Carleton Marlow, Committee Chairman


Frank W. Fox, Committee Member

11 July 1983
Date


James B. Allen, Department Chairman

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to express my thanks to the History Department at Brigham Young University for giving me the opportunity to pursue my graduate education. The help that Mariel P. Budd has given me and the many graduate assistantships that the History Department has awarded me have been deeply appreciated. I would like to express my appreciation to the two members of my committee, Drs. H. Carleton Marlow and Frank W. Fox, for their invaluable aid in the preparation of this thesis.

To Dr. Fox goes my thanks for his aid in my classwork and his aid in my orals.

To Dr. Marlow goes a very special thanks. It was he who suggested this topic. It was he who helped and encouraged me through five revisions. It was he who helped me with much of the readings preparatory to doing the research for this thesis. It was he who helped me prepare for my orals. And, perhaps most of all, it was Dr. Marlow who befriended me when I most needed a friend who understood during those many lonely moments of graduate work.

Without the guidance of these two men, this thesis would have never reached completion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		
One	INTRODUCTION	1
Two	PROHIBITION	8
Three	PROGRESSIVISM	26
Four	BOOSTERISM	43
Five	ADVERTISING & INSTALLMENT BUYING	59
Six	POPULAR CULTURE	67
Seven	BAD TIMES AHEAD	85
Eight	POLITICS	93
Nine	CONCLUSION	108

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

America began as a predominantly rural and agricultural nation and it remained such well into the 1920s. In spirit and in politics, as well as in many other aspects, rural America dominated American society. Thomas Jefferson called the farmers of America Gos's chosen people. Jefferson went on to warn against the growth and development of "workshops and manufacturing," hoping that such urban blights would remain forever in Europe.¹

However, by the twentieth century, America was changing from a rural to an urban nation, both in population location and in spirit. In 1929, urban America held 48 percent of the nation's population and less than 25 percent lived on small farms.² The change from a rural to an urban society was both a physical and a spiritual change.

¹Thomas Jefferson, "The Importance of Agriculture," in Great Issues in American History: From the Revolution to the Civil War, 1765-1865, ed. Richard Hofstadter (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), p. 170.

²Rebecca Brooks Gruver, An American History, vol. 2, 3rd ed. (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1981), p. 662.

One historian, writing on the change, said, "Rapid urbanization and greater mobility had a profound impact on middle-class behavior and conduct."³ Another said, "The United States was born in the country and has moved to the city."⁴

It was during the 1920s that urban America began to assume the preeminence that it would hold for the rest of the century. It was during the twenties that the city would come to dominate American social, cultural and behavioral modes.

This transformation from a rural to an urban society did not occur without stress. Rural America, having long held the reigns of political, economic and social power, did not quietly relinquish its power and influence as the cities grew in size and importance. Rural America gave up its hold on society reluctantly and often erected high and strong barriers against what it perceived as the rising development of urban evils: Modernism in religion, Darwinism, Freudianism, alcoholism, skepticism and sophistication.

One historian commented on the rising conflict:

In the years after World War One the older America of the Protestant, old stock culture felt deeply threatened by the burgeoning city and erected barriers against change. The census of 1920 revealed that for the first time most

³Ibid., p. 663.

⁴Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 23.

Americans lived in urban areas, a frightening statistic for those whose way of life had prevailed for three centuries.⁵

In the minds of many historians the rising urban areas originated and practiced most, if not all, of what made the twenties unique. Much of the social behavior that characterized the twenties happened in the newly influential cities. "Flappers," bootleggers, jazz, gangsters, mass advertizing, Darwin, Freud, mass production, and "flaming youth" all happened in large urban centers. Such urban behavior was strongly denounced by rural leaders.

For example, Carl N. Degler and others, in The Democratic Experience explained:

The twenties have been called the "Jazz Age," characterized by wild parties, aggressive females, and heavy drinking. But while the decade had these aspects, they were largely limited to the upper middle class of the largest metropolitan areas.⁶

Morison, Commager, and Leuchtenburg, in The Growth of the American Republic, said that rural America:

. . . attributed to the metropolis all that was perverse in American society: the revolution in morals associated with the flapper and Sigmund Freud, the corner saloon, the control of government by urban immigrants, and the modernist

⁵ Samuel Eliot Morison, Henry Steele Commager, and William E. Leuchtenburg, The Growth of the American Republic, vol. 2, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 435.

⁶ Carl M. Degler, et al., The Democratic Experience, vol. 2, 4th ed. (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foreman and Company, 1979), p. 196.

skepticism of the literal interpretation of the Bible.⁷

Rebecca Gruver wrote in An American History of the youth rebellion of the 1920s:

Rejecting the deprivation of the war years, they became increasingly preoccupied with material success and pleasure and with the physical comforts offered by the new mechanized, standardized, urban life style.⁸

Norman Graebner, Gilbert Fite, and Philip White explained the urban influence of the 1920s:

Cities not only produced most of the wealth, but they set the patterns of conduct and action for a great majority of the citizens. Music, literature, clothing styles, entertainment exemplified by the radio and movies, and mass communication all found their source in urban America, and these influences tended to standardize the thinking and actions of most people.⁹

Frank Freidel and Alan Brinkley noted:

The modern, secular culture of the 1920s did not exist alone. It grew up alongside an older, more traditional culture with which it continually and often bitterly competed. One was the society of an affluent, largely urban middle class, committed to a new set of values, adopting a new, increasingly uninhibited life style, linked to a new national cultural outlook. The other was a society of less affluent, less urban, far more provincial Americans--men and

⁷Morison, p. 435.

⁸Gruver, p. 663.

⁹Norman A. Graebner, Gilbert C. Fite, and Philip L. White, A History of the American People (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970), p. 976.

women who continued to revere traditional values and customs and who feared and resented the modernist threats to their way of life.¹⁰

David Shannon said:

It is interesting that the emphasis on popular and nostalgic social history of the 1920s is on aspects of urban life, almost to the exclusion of the country and the small town.¹¹

Forrest McDonald commenting on the urban origins of the Jazz Age said that ". . .the life of a flaming youth was open only to those who were young and rich and lived in the big cities, and whose parents would permit it."¹²

In J. Joseph Huthmacher's Trial By War and Depression: 1917-1941 it was the cities that introduced the new "loose" standards of conduct that disturbed rural America during the twenties.

But to many tradition-bound, fundamentalist, old-stock Americans, the temptation proved easier to ascribe the disturbing transformation going on about them to "loose" standards of conduct that prevailed in the cities, and particularly among the foreign and "colored" elements that inhabited them.¹³

¹⁰Frank Freidel and Alan Brinkley, America in the Twentieth Century (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), p. 187.

¹¹David A. Shannon, Twentieth Century America, vol. 2, 4th ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally Company, 1977), p. 127.

¹²Forrest McDonald, The United States in the Twentieth Century, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1970), p. 38.

¹³J. Joseph Huthmacher, Trial By War and Depression: 1917-1941 (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1973), p. 82.

Paul Carter wrote of a rural "crusade" to stop urban evil. "In the Twenties it flowered in three new rural evil crusades against urban wickedness: Prohibition, Fundamentalism, and the campaign to stop Al Smith."¹⁴

The Fundamentalists, according to Milton Plesur,

. . . attacked the new modernism with its unorthodox views of the origin of man, religion, and education. In their eyes, modernism was the city with all of its sin. The decade was a pathetic last ditch stand of a rural, traditional orthodoxy doing battle against the new wave of the future: the mores of the megalopolis.¹⁵

Most of the social behavior that characterized the twenties, according to many historians, happened in the cities. Rural America was fundamentalist, dry and even boring, while urban America was nonspiritual, wet and exciting. What most people remember about the twenties happened in the cities, many writers claim.

The purpose, therefore, of this paper is to look at one rural area in America and see if the thesis of rural non-participation in the Jazz Age is accurate. Provo, Utah is the subject of this study. Evidence of urban behavior--bootleggers, "flaming youth, boosterism and jazz--would suggest that the traditionally held thesis is subject to question.

¹⁴Paul Carter, The Twenties In America (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), p. 73.

¹⁵Milton Plesur, ed., The 1920s (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1969), p. 8.

Provo, Utah during the Jazz Age is a good location for such a study. It is a college town, having Brigham Young University located just northeast of the center of town. It was a rural community with the main industry being agriculture.

Provo was an isolated community surrounded by high mountains and deserts and far from urban influences during the twenties. The largest town in Utah was more than sixty miles to the north, a two hour drive in those days. Denver, Colorado was more than 500 miles to the east and San Francisco, California was 800 miles to the west. Provo had few roads running through it and two railroads.

Provo was also a predominantly religious community, the majority of citizens being active members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also known as the Mormon or LDS Church. While many Mormons denounced drinking as immoral, many others thought differently.

CHAPTER TWO

PROHIBITION

During the entire decade of the twenties, a federal law prohibited the manufacture, sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages. This law was known as the Volstead Act. Many writers have seen prohibition as originating in and drawing its greatest support from rural and fundamentalist areas, while receiving its greatest opposition from urban centers. Many history books give the reader the impression that rural areas obeyed and supported prohibition of alcohol while urban areas did not.

For example, Gruver wrote that "Support for prohibition centered in rural America."¹ Roderick Nash said:

For the drys, drinking was not only the root of most social evil, but a symbol of cities, sexual freedom, and the eroding ethics of modern life in general.²

Arthur Link followed the same theme:

While in the postwar period this small-town idealism [to make the world better] often lent its

¹Gruver, p. 664.

²Roderick Nash, The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930 (New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1970), p. 145.

energies to campaigns against economic exploitation, in the 1920s it directed itself almost entirely against urban and ethnic tendencies such as the consumption of alcoholic beverages.³

Morison echoed a similar view when he said, "States with large urban populations sabotaged prohibition laws just as northern states once nullified the fugitive slave acts."⁴

Freidel and Brinkley saw the same conflict between a rural and urban America.

[P]rovincial, largely rural, overwhelmingly Protestant Americans continued vehemently to defend [prohibition]. To them, drinking and the general licentiousness with which they associated it were an assault upon their conservative code of morality.

Drinking symbolized the modern city and all its vices.⁵

In Twentieth Century America, David Shannon saw the same rural-urban conflict:

[Prohibition] was observed in rural areas and small towns. In cities with a large foreign born population speakeasies operated fairly openly.⁶

Link spoke of the urban "right" to drink in American Epoch:

³ Arthur S. Link, "What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the 1920s?" in Perspectives on 20th Century America, ed. by Otis Graham, Jr. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1973), p. 105.

⁴ Morison, p. 439.

⁵ Freidel, p. 189.

⁶ Shannon, p. 134.

Certainly the overwhelming majority in the large cities, native and foreign-born alike, thought that they had an inalienable right to drink. Consequently, neither local nor state officials nor the masses of people in these cities supported enforcement.⁷

Joan H. Wilson asked if the cities were indeed all wet and the country all dry, and concluded that "the stereotype of the small-town, non-drinking Protestant is not completely without foundation."⁸

This image of dry towns and wet cities is now to be tested in Provo with some attention to surrounding Utah County as a whole.

On the 25th of April, 1921, the Provo Herald carried the following banner headline: "BIGGEST STILL RAIDED WITHIN TWO BLOCKS OF COURTHOUSE." The still was located at the home of Frank Lyons, 368 East 200 South, in Provo. The captured still was described as "the finest yet captured in Utah County," which suggests that earlier stills had been raided although no mention of them appeared in the local paper. Most of the liquor had been carried off by the

⁷Arthur S. Link and William B. Catton, American Epoch, vol. 2, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 307.

⁸Joan Hoff Wilson, ed., The Twenties: The Critical Issues (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1972), p. xxi.

bootleggers prior to the raid, and police only found two quarts of booze in the raid.⁹

That same autumn (September 26, 1921) banner headlines read: "BOOTLEGGING AT GENEVA." Geneva was a dance hall located on the shore of Utah Lake about seven miles northwest of Provo, near the location of the present Geneva Steel mill. L. R. Hebertson, manager of the dance hall, told Herald reporters:

There hasn't been a dance at Geneva this summer when Salt Lake bootleggers didn't come down, loaded with liquor, which was sold to dancers and others.¹⁰

The following summer (July 4, 1922) the Provo sheriff raided a still, hidden in the bushes on the east shore of Utah Lake. On a raft in the reeds and bushes along the shore of the lake, the sheriff found a "cleverly concealed still." Although no liquor was found by the raiding party, the still was nevertheless destroyed by the sheriff.¹¹

Two days later, front page headlines announced "DRINKING AT VIVIAN PARK CHARGED." Vivian Park was a dance hall located about ten miles northeast of Provo in Provo

⁹"Biggest Still Raided Within Two Blocks of Courthouse; Mash And Moonshine Captured," Provo Herald (hereafter referred to as the Herald), April 25, 1921, p. 1.

¹⁰"Bootlegging At Geneva," Herald, September 26, 1921, p. 1.

¹¹"Moonshiner Uses Raft In Lake," Herald, July 4, 1922, p. 1.

Canyon near the present location of the picnic area by the same name. In an interview with Herald reporters, J. F. Carter, manager of the resort, admitted that there had been drunkenness, and improper dancing at the resort all summer. The Provo sheriff promised to appoint a deputy to watch the resort more closely in the future.¹²

Less than a week later, a story appeared about A. Ghengeralli, a miner who worked at the Dividend Mine located near the south shore of Utah Lake. Mr. Ghengeralli was brought into custody by Provo deputy sheriff J. Coates for having in his possession "a dozen bottles of beer, 10 gallons of wine, and several bottles of white mule."¹³

Soon after, front page headlines reading "EUREKA WIDE OPEN, SAYS DEPUTY" appeared in the Herald. Eureka was a community southeast of Provo where the before mentioned Dividend Mine was located. A large population of foreign born miners labored in the mine. In an interview granted the Herald, Deputy Sheriff J. Coates said:

Nearly every one of the so-called "soft-drink" establishments sell liquor over the bar.

A person can buy moonshine and other intoxicants in many of the soft drink places in Eureka.¹⁴

¹²"Drinking At Vivian Park Charged," Herald, July 6, 1922, p. 1.

¹³"Dry Law Now Extends To Dividend," Herald, July 11, 1922, p. 1.

¹⁴"Eureka Wide Open, Says Deputy," Herald, July 18, 1922, p. 1.

The following spring another story dealing with liquor was run in the Provo newspaper. A local youth was hired by Frank Stubbs of 300 South University Avenue to dig a trench. While engaged in the task, the youth uncovered a box of thirty-five pints of "honest-to-goodness bottled in bond whiskey of pre-Volstead [prohibition] age."¹⁵

At the time of the discovery, Mr. Stubbs was gone so the youth ran home and asked his mother what he should do with his find. He was told to destroy the bottles which he promptly returned and did. In the process:

. . . a passer-by stopped and watched the wrecking process for a moment, then picked up one of the bottles and took a long draught. His eyes gleamed, he smacked his lips, patted his stomach and then walked off.¹⁶

That fall the Provo superintendent of city waterworks, Rod Snow, wrote an article in the Herald in which he asked people not to flush empty liquor bottles down their toilets because the bottles plugged the sewer lines. Commenting on why people used toilets instead of the garbage, Mr. Snow said, "Men who still want their drink nowadays don't want to be seen with the bottle so [they] throw it into the sewer as soon as they are through with it."¹⁷

¹⁵"Digs Into Grave of John Barleycorn," Herald, April 8, 1923, p. 1.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷"Prohibition Clogs Sewers," Herald, September 26, 1923, p. 1.

A month later, front page headlines told the reader: "LARGE STILL CONFISCATED BY OFFICERS. LARGEST AND MOST COMPLETE STILL EVER OPERATED IN UTAH COUNTY." The still which was located in American Fork, a farming community about fifteen miles northwest of Provo, was operated by Andrew Polus, identified as "a Greek" by the Herald. The raid netted twenty gallons of whiskey besides the capture of the sixty gallon still.¹⁸

In December 1923 a significant meeting of leading citizens was held in Provo. Sponsored by the Utah Stake of the LDS Church, the largest church in the Provo area, more than forty officers, teachers, and concerned parents of Provo youth attended the meeting.

A resolution, written by Provo attorney Charles Higgens, was passed by a unanimous vote. A copy was given to the Provo sheriff, William Boyd, and to the Provo Herald for publication. The resolution expressed alarm that

. . .the use of tobacco and intoxicants and profanity are increasing alarmingly among the minors of our local communities among both males and females.¹⁹

This resolution wanted the law enforced against "certain individuals in the city of Provo and the county of Utah" who were selling "tobacco and intoxicants to the young

¹⁸"Large Still Confiscated By Officers," Herald, October 14, 1923, p. 1.

¹⁹"Parents Aid Officers In Tobacco War," Herald, December 12, 1923, p. 1.

people of our community" with impunity.²⁰ It suggested that the use of both liquor and tobacco among Provo area youth, male and female, was serious enough to alarm parents and leaders. The fact that the decision was unanimous also suggested that the matter was serious enough to warrant immediate legal action.

On Christmas Eve, Provo citizens read about another liquor raid in the Provo area. The sheriff and three deputies apprehended a fifty gallon still in American Fork, although no whiskey was found in the raid. No arrests were made because no one was present when the raid party arrived.²¹

The yearly summary of the liquor traffic in the Provo area was given in the Herald in early January 1924. Fifty-four stills had been apprehended and 159 violations of the Volstead Act had been brought before the authorities.²²

Observation of prohibition was no better in 1924 in rural Provo and Utah County. In the August 19, 1924 Herald, large headlines read, "BIGGEST STILL RAID BY SHERIFF." A fifty-two gallon capacity still and five kegs of newly made

²⁰Ibid.

²¹"Sheriff Raids Moonshiners," Herald, December 24, 1923, p. 1.

²²"Sheriff Boyd Handles 840 Cases In 2 Years," Herald, January 4, 1924, p. 1.

moonshine were picked up by the sheriff in Pleasant Grove, a farming town about ten miles north of Provo.²³

The next month, the Provo sheriff and two deputies found a 100 gallon still and 300 gallons of booze near the mouth of Provo Canyon. The sheriff had trailed the bootlegger back to the still after he had made his liquor sales to Provo buyers.²⁴

Soon afterward, Sheriff Boyd discovered a twenty gallon still and a "large quantity of whiskey" in an abandoned house in Orem, a rural community just five miles north of Provo.²⁵

Later in the fall of 1924, Provo newspaper readers saw the following, "SHERIFF RAIDS PROVO HOME; GETS LIQUOR." The Provo home of Dorothy Dennison, 190 East 500 South, was raided by the police. In the raid, two gallon jugs and several pint bottles of moonshine whiskey were found in a well-concealed hiding place in a bookshelf. During the raid, several "prominent young" Provo men arrived and announced that they were looking for some "sauerkraut,"

²³"Biggest Still Raid By Sheriff," Herald, August 19, 1924, p. 1.

²⁴"Large Still Confiscated," Herald, September 15, 1924, p. 1.

²⁵"Large Still Confiscated by Sheriff," Herald, September 30, 1924, p. 1.

which was later found to be a code word for moonshine. The buyers were turned away and Mrs. Dennison was arrested.²⁶

The Provo police raided a wagon with "a barrel of moonshine" hidden in the back in December 1924.²⁷

Liquor traffic continued unabated until 1925. In February 1925 an interesting front page story entitled "COUNTY PEACE OFFICERS INTERFERE WITH PLANS OF 200 COCKFIGHT FANS" appeared. The cockfight was held in the sand dunes in the bench area about three miles northeast of Provo. Fight fans from Idaho and Nevada were in attendance and many of them had liquor bottles in their possession when the sheriff arrived.²⁸

Liquor traffic was so heavy in the Provo area in 1925 that the local sheriff had to call in federal prohibition agents to help enforce the law. A week after the cockfight, Provo police, aided by federal officers, made five separate raids in the Provo area. One raid netted a large still just four blocks from the Provo sheriff's office. Another in the northwest part of Provo netted 55 gallons of Dago red wine and 100 gallons of hard cider. A third in Lehi, a rural town twenty miles northwest of Provo, interrupted a drinking

²⁶"Raids Provo Home; Gets Liquor," Herald, October 27, 1924, p. 1.

²⁷"Confiscate Canyon-Made Moonshine," Herald, December 12, 1924, p. 1.

²⁸"County Peace Officers Interfere With Plans of 200 Cockfight Fans," Herald, February 16, 1925, p. 1.

party in which fifty-five bottles of beer and a bottle of hard liquor were found.²⁹

Three days after this, the Provo sheriff, again aided by federal officers, made seven arrests in the Provo area: six for alleged sale of intoxicants and one for possession.³⁰

As a result of the considerable liquor trade in the Provo area, an "interesting sale" was held in the spring of 1925:

An interesting sale will be held Monday forenoon at 11 o'clock, when stills, burners, sugar and other paraphernalia confiscated by the sheriff's office in different raids will be sold.³¹

Despite the efforts of the Provo police to eliminate all sources of bootleg liquor, the demand for whiskey remained so strong that whenever one still was apprehended, another quickly sprang up. On the 30th of June 1925, a seventy-five gallon still was seized in Alpine, a tiny community twenty miles north of Provo near the mountains. The still was in full operation at the time of the seizure

²⁹"Boyd Gets Em' And Ballif Does The Rest," Herald, February 24, 1925, p. 1.

³⁰"Prohibition Agents Make Many Arrests," Herald, February 27, 1925, p. 1.

³¹"Confiscated Burners, Stills, Kegs, Jugs To Be Sold At Public Auction," Herald, March 24, 1925, p. 1.

and "large quantities of moonshine whiskey" were found by the sheriff.³²

Two weeks later, federal agents, working with the Provo sheriff, found a 100 gallon still in Pleasant Grove.³³

Six days after this, police broke up what was described as a "lively party" and confiscated "a number of bottles of moonshine" in East Tintic, a mining community located about thirty miles west of Provo. Frank LeLux was arrested for distributing moonshine whiskey to the patrons.³⁴

In September, a "keg and Bottle party" was raided by Sheriff Boyd's "anti-wet squad" in South Provo.³⁵

In early December 1925, Provo police arrested George B. Studham of Salt Lake City. In the trunk of Mr. Studham's new 1926 Ford roadster police found:

Thirty-six London quart bottles of Gordon & Company gin and an order book containing a long list of names of people among prominent Provo citizens.³⁶

³²"Big Whiskey Plant Seized At Alpine," Herald, June 30, 1925, p. 1.

³³"Underground Still Raided," Herald, July 9, 1925, p. 1.

³⁴"Moonshine Dispenser Given Jail," Herald, July 15, 1925, p. 1.

³⁵"Lamentations of Captured Bootlegger," Herald, September 27, 1925, p. 1.

³⁶"Provo Police Confiscate 36 Quarts Gin," Herald, December 1, 1925, p. 1.

Provo Chief of Police Wren Wilkins withheld the names of those on the list because releasing such would cause "considerable consternation in the city."

In March of 1926, the Herald participated in a nationwide newspaper poll in which respondents were asked the following three questions: (1) Do you favor keeping the prohibition law as it now stands with no modifications, (2) Do you favor modification of the law to allow the sale of light wine and beer, and (3) Do you favor the outright repeal of the prohibition law?

Four hundred forty-two favored outright repeal of the prohibition law, while another 916 favored modification to allow the sale of light wine and beer for a total of 1,358 Provo area residents who favored some kind of repeal of prohibition. A total of 1,446 Provo citizens voted to keep the law as it stood. Fifty-two percent favored keeping the law as it stood, while 48 percent favored repeal of the law.³⁷

In May 1926, Clifton Hoover, manager of the Provo Business Men's Club, was arrested for having 300 bottles of home brew delivered to the upstairs rooms of the Provo businessman's club in downtown Provo.³⁸ Later that summer,

³⁷"Provo Prohibitions Have Majority of 88 Votes In Herald Poll," Herald, March 12, 1926, p. 1.

³⁸"Charged With Possession," Herald, May 10, 1926, p. 5.

police raided two of the largest stills ever found in operation in Utah County near the Jordan River west of Point of the Mountain, which is half way to Salt Lake City from Provo. One still was a giant 250 gallon rig, while the other had a 150 gallon capacity. Thirty gallons of whiskey and 3 five gallon kegs were also seized in the raid.³⁹

In September, 126 gallons of captured moonshine was destroyed in public view in front of the Provo county courthouse. A public auction of captured bootlegger's equipment was also held on the courthouse lawn at the same time.⁴⁰

In October, a "large still" of undetermined size was found and destroyed by Provo police in American Fork⁴¹ and in the spring of the following year (1927), a seventy-five gallon still was seized near Eureka by Provo authorities.⁴²

The yearly summary for the year 1927 showed seventy-two arrests for possession of intoxicants and sixty-eight

³⁹"Officers Capture Two Large Stills," Herald, August 8, 1926, p. 1.

⁴⁰"Moonshine To Be Destroyed," Herald, September 28, 1926, p. 1.

⁴¹"Confiscate Large Still," Herald, October 18, 1926, p. 1.

⁴²"'Page My Gas Mask' Says Sheriff On Still Hunt," Herald, March 27, 1927, p. 1.

arrests for intoxication in the Provo area, although no mention of the number of stills seized in 1927 was given.⁴³

An assortment of Volstead violations appeared in the Herald in 1928. In April, Provo police arrested three Provo youths for the charge of holding "an extremely boisterous all-night party in their home." At the time of the arrest, "large quantities of moonshine whiskey" were found by the sheriff.⁴⁴

In August, George L. Clark of American Fork filed suit in the Provo Fourth District Court against his wife, Pearl Nicholos Clark. Mr. Clark charged his wife with adultery, illegal manufacture of liquor, and frequent wild parties. Mrs. Clark, in turn, charged her husband with frequent intoxication and neglect of his marriage and his business.⁴⁵

Two days later, the Provo sheriff apprehended a bootlegger a mile west of the Leland Sugar Factory in Springville, a farming town five miles south of Provo. Two bootleggers were caught in the act of filling customer's bottles from a ten gallon keg, which was almost empty at the

⁴³"Reports of Sheriff's And Police Officers Submitted," Herald, December 30, 1927, p. 1.

⁴⁴"Three Youths Are Sentenced," Herald, April 8, 1928, p. 1.

⁴⁵"Alienation Of Wife Charged," Herald, August 12, 1928, p. 1.

time of the arrest. Another ten gallon keg was found nearby.⁴⁶

In September, police found twenty-five gallons of home brew in a washing machine in the home of Mrs. Izeta Kapple of Payson, a community about fifteen miles south of Provo.⁴⁷ Police seized a fifty gallon still in Payson in December. Two 10 gallon kegs full of moonshine whiskey and some pint bottles were also found in the raid.⁴⁸ That same month ran a large headline: "GIANT PROVO STILL IS DESTROYED." The sheriff's raid was probably the most sensational conducted in Provo during the entire decade. The still, which was located at 129 South University Avenue, had the capacity to produce 200 gallons of whiskey every 24 hours.

Two men were taken into custody and twenty-five gallons of moonshine whiskey were also seized in the raid by police. In an interview held during the raid, the Provo sheriff told Herald reporters, "The greatest part of the output of the still has been sold around Provo during the month [of December] in anticipation of the holidays."⁴⁹

⁴⁶"Sheriff Appears As Two-Gun Man," Herald, August 14, 1928, p. 1.

⁴⁷"Washer Used For Home Brew," Herald, September 9, 1928, p. 1.

⁴⁸"Immense Still Is Uncovered," Herald, December 11, 1928, p. 1.

⁴⁹"Giant Provo Still Is Destroyed," Herald, December 20, 1928, p. 1.

The yearly prohibition violation report for 1928 listed seventy-four arrests for intoxication and fifty-four for possession and sale in the Provo area. No mention of the number of stills raided was given in the report.⁵⁰

Violations of the Volstead Act were unremitting in the last year of the decade. In May, police found a twenty gallon still in the trees along the Provo river bottom.⁵¹ In August, Provo police, assisted by federal prohibition officers, captured a giant 200 gallon still in an isolated spot 60 miles west of Provo in the desert. Authorities also found forty-five gallons of moonshine whiskey in the "heist."⁵²

From the foregoing data, which constituted only a part of the material on prohibition in the Herald, bootleg whiskey was readily produced and consumed in rural Provo and Utah County. It is obvious that the quantity of alcohol consumed by Provo citizens was tremendous, considering the size and location of the town. The very fact that a still, capable of producing 200 gallons of moonshine every 24 hours, was found within a stone's throw of the Provo

⁵⁰"Activity Shown By Reports of Police, Sheriff," Herald, January 4, 1929, p. 1.

⁵¹"Well-Hidden Still Is Discovered," Herald, May 15, 1929, p. 1.

⁵²"Officers Find Still In Raid," Herald, August 27, 1929, p. 1.

courthouse is evidence enough that the appetite for bootleg was enormous in Provo.

Liquor traffic was so heavy in the Provo area that federal prohibition agents had to be called in to assist the local authorities in rounding up bootleggers, drunks and "flaming" youth. Provo had automobile wrecks involving drunken citizens on the way home from dances as well as wild all night parties with liquor during the decade. There is nothing to suggest that drunkenness, liquor traffic and consumption and other activities related to alcohol consumption was any less prominent in Provo than in large, urban centers. Even the fact that Provo was largely an LDS community opposed to liquor consumption does not reduce the reality that enormous quantities of liquor were produced and consumed in town during the Jazz Age.

CHAPTER THREE

PROGRESSIVISM

American progressivism was an effort by many reformers to solve some of the social, political, and economic problems that accompanied the industrial revolution. Its zenith was probably reached during the second decade of the twentieth century. Perhaps the best definition of the goals of progressivism was given by Benjamin DeWitt in The Progressive Movement (1915):

The first of these tendencies is found in the insistence by the best men in all political parties that special, minority, and corrupt influence in government--national, state, and city--be removed; the second tendency is found in the demand that the structure or machinery of government, which has hitherto been admirably adapted to control by the few, be so changed and modified that it will be more difficult for the few, and easier for the many, to control; and, finally, the third tendency is found in the rapidly growing conviction that the functions of government are too restricted and that they must be increased and extended to relieve social and economic stress.¹

A restriction on corrupt and minority influence in government, a broadening of the franchise and control of government by the majority, and the enlargement of

¹Bernard Bailyn, et al., The Great Republic, (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath & Company, 1977), p. 903.

government services into the realm of social welfare would be a good summary of progressivism.

Provo was largely an LDS community. In the eyes of one LDS historian, the LDS Church and some of its leaders held strong progressive sympathies during the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During Utah's territory period, the LDS Church, through its influence over many legislators, had dominated the territorial legislature. During the 1890s, the legislature passed a number of progressive measures, including a public welfare system, building public schools, setting up hospitals for the handicapped, and adopting laws designed to improve working conditions for men, women and children.²

After statehood in 1896, the people of Utah passed workman's compensation laws, old age and widow's pension laws, and gave the state power to regulate some industries.³

Senator Reed Smoot, who was also an Apostle in the LDS Church, voted for a number of progressive measures during the early part of the twentieth century--the Hepburn Act of 1906, the Postal Savings Act of 1910, the Federal Farm Act of 1916, the Child Labor Act of the same year, the Lever

²Thomas G. Alexander, "Reed Smoot, the L. D. S. Church And Progressive Legislation," Dialogue, April 1972, p. 49.

³Ibid.

Food and Fuel Control Act of 1917, the Income Tax Amendment to the Constitution, and National Prohibition in 1918.⁴

Although some writers have seen a decline in the progressive spirit during the twenties,⁵ the evidence in the following pages shows that the progressive spirit remained strong and alive in Provo during the decade.

In the spring of 1921, the Herald carried a front page story entitled "PERSONAL LIBERTY," which was probably written in response to those national anti-progressive critics who were calling for an end to legislation restraints on personal and business behavior even though such behavior was harmful to many people. With tongue-in-cheek, the author wrote:

Why should the liquor dealers be denied their revenue? They want to get rich. Let them saturate us with booze if we are fools enough to reach the saturation point.

Let us do away with the considerable intolerant legislation we have in the past so foolishly permitted to be forced upon the people. For example: Let the merchant once more adulterate his foods and advertise them as pure.

Why force the manufacturer to do away with child labor, for it increases his profits. Yea,⁶ brethren, ye must win back the right to be free!

⁴Ibid., p. 50.

⁵See Arthur S. Link's "What Happened To The Progressive Movement in the 1920s," in Otis L. Graham, Jr. ed., Twentieth Century America (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1973), p. 104, for a good summary of the decline of progressivism during the twenties.

⁶"Personal Liberty," Herald, March 21, 1921, p. 1.

During the 1922 congressional election, William Jennings Bryan, three time Democratic candidate for the Presidency, campaigned extensively for Democratic congressional candidates. Bryan came to Utah in October and campaigned for Utah Democratic senatorial candidate William J. King.

In late October, Bryan visited Provo and spoke to a capacity crowd in the Provo Tabernacle. Approximately 750 people came to honor Mr. Bryan at a reception held in the afternoon prior to his speech. In attendance at the reception held in the Provo home of Mrs. Jesse Knight were a number of noted guests, including Heber J. Grant, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and his wife; Elder John A. Widstoe and Elder Stephen L. Richards, members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the LDS Church, and their wives; and George H. Brimhall, President of the local church-owned Brigham Young University.⁷

That evening, Mr. Bryan spoke to an overflow crowd of 2,500 in the Provo Tabernacle. Mr. Bryan was introduced by President Heber J. Grant who spoke favorably of Bryan's support of women's suffrage and prohibition. President Grant pointed out that the people of Utah favored such legislation years before they became national laws.⁸

⁷"Rule of Rich Grips Nation Says Commoner in His Tabernacle Speech," Herald, October 25, 1922, p. 1.

⁸Ibid.

The size of the crowd and the introduction by the leader of the dominant church in Utah prompted Bryan to begin with the following:

To witness such an audience in a city the size of this is a compliment to any man, and to be introduced by such a man as the president of the dominant church in Utah is an extraordinary compliment.⁹

Mr. Bryan's speech was very similar to his "Cross of Gold Speech" delivered at the Democratic National Convention in July 1886. The tone of Bryan's speech showed little, if any, of the mental degeneration his detractors say occurred in the twenty-six years between 1896 and 1922.

In 1896, Bryan spoke of the "conflict" between the rich and the poor. In 1922, he spoke of the "struggle" between the same two classes and condemned those wealthy men of the 1920s who would have the "poor shrink their stomachs and stop being hungry."¹⁰ That same year Bryan spoke on the "encroachments of organized wealth." In 1922, he spoke on how President Warren G. Harding had surrounded himself with rich advisors. In 1896, Bryan spoke in favor of the income tax and against the high tariff. In 1922, he strongly favored the federal income tax law.

Interestingly enough, in both speeches William Jennings Bryan spoke on two theories of political economics. On the

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

one hand was the idea that by lowering the taxes on the rich and on business profits, the money would somehow "trickle down" to the working masses below. On the other hand was the idea of keeping taxes on the wealthy high and paying workers high wages, thereby increasing their buying power which would stimulate the economy.

While in Chicago in 1896, Bryan illustrated this by saying:

There are two ideas of government. There are those who believe that if you will only legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, their prosperity will leak through on those below.

The democratic idea, however, has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class which rests upon them.¹¹

In Provo in 1922, Bryan spoke on the same topic:

What is the important difference between a democrat and an aristocrat? A democrat says that society is built from the bottom up and that therefore legislation should be for the masses of the people and then reach the higher levels. An aristocrat believes that society is built from the top and that therefore legislation should be for the upper classes and then permitted to leak through to the masses of the people.¹²

¹¹William Jennings Bryan, "Cross of Gold Speech," in Great Issues in American History: From Reconstruction to the Present Day, 1864-1969, ed. Richard Hofstadter (New York: Vintage Book Company, 1969), p. 172.

¹²"Rule of Rich Grips Nation, Says Commoner in His Tabernacle Speech," Herald, October 25, 1922, p. 1.

Another great progressive was Robert M. LaFollette. In 1900, he was elected governor of Wisconsin. With the aid of advisors from the University of Wisconsin, LaFollette was able to introduce a number of progressive reforms, such as direct election of state senators, strict regulation of railroads, a revamped tax law raising income taxes on the rich, and improved working conditions. In 1906, LaFollette was elected to the U.S. Senate from Wisconsin and he continued to work for progressive causes on the national level.

With the "deflection" of his Republican party from progressive causes early in the 1920s, LaFollette formed the Progressive Party in 1922 and was nominated by the party to be the presidential candidate in the 1924 election. Although he only carried his home state of Wisconsin, Robert LaFollette received more than five million votes.¹³

The response to LaFollette's Progressive Party was strong in Provo. A LaFollette For President Club was formed in the summer of 1924 and the club promoted both progressive ideals and LaFollette's candidacy in the area.¹⁴

In the fall of 1924, William Jennings Bryan returned to Provo for the second time in less than two years to speak. For the second time the Provo Tabernacle was filled to capacity with aisles, doors and windows filled with people.

¹³Bailyn, et al., pp. 914-915.

¹⁴"LaFollette Followers To Meet Tonight," Herald, August 25, 1924, p. 1.

Among others in attendance were Utah County LDS Church Stake President T. N. Taylor and Democratic candidate for Utah governor, George Dern. Although the Herald did not carry the speech, the crowd continually interrupted Mr. Bryan with "tremendous applause" which suggests that the speech was very favorably received by the large Provo audience.¹⁵

Support for the progressive cause continued strong in Provo. On the eve of the 1924 presidential election, Mr. J. M. Hill of Ogden gave a strong endorsement for the Progressive Party to a large crowd in the Provo High School, which was carried on page one of the Herald. Mr. Hill told the Provo audience that:

The Progressive Movement had its beginning in the last address before congress of President Abraham Lincoln when he warned congress to guard against the approach of capitalistic combines coercing the people and denying them their just rights and liberties.¹⁶

Mr. Hill also had words of praise for progressive measures such as direct election of senators, inheritance taxes, telephone regulation, income tax, and the eight hour work law.¹⁷

¹⁵"Hope For Utah's Progress Rests in Election of Davis, Says Bryan To Provo People," Herald, September 23, 1924, p. 1.

¹⁶"Hill Upholds Progressives In Final Talk," Herald, November 4, 1924, p. 1.

¹⁷Ibid.

When Robert LaFollette died in June 1925, the Provo Herald ran a banner headline announcing his death along with a large drawing of Senator LaFollette. Calling LaFollette a "staunch defender of what he believed was the popular will," the Herald article mourned his passing.¹⁸

Beginning in the spring of 1926, the editor of the only newspaper in Provo began a series of editorials calling for reforms in business and in politics.

In May, the editor called for regulation of those businessmen who would not set their houses in order:

Reforms in politics or religion, in municipal and social service are necessary only because of the activities of some businessmen who cannot mind their own business as they should. Minding one's business, therefore, must include better conditions for one's fellow man.¹⁹

Three days later, the editor recalled the days of real progressive leaders in the White House and longed for a return of such:

Not since the days of Roosevelt and Wilson has there been a real big man in the White House who has had the courage, ability and initiative to assume the leadership in Congress and drive through legislation that common sense, prudence and necessity demands.²⁰

¹⁸"Senator Robert Marion La Follette Is Dead," Herald, June 18, 1925, p. 1.

¹⁹"Minding Your Own Business," Herald, May 18, 1926, p. 2.

²⁰"Slandering the Athenians," Herald, June 1, 1926, p. 2.

Later, the editor had praise for those brave enough to speak out against wrongs in society when he said, "Fortunately, there are in every century brave souls who dare to come out in opposition to the accepted order of things."²¹

In the summer of 1926 an editorial appeared about Miss Mary Simkhovitch, a New York City social worker who labored among the most wretched poor of the city. The irony of their poverty in a nation that prided itself in its tremendous material wealth was not missed by Miss Simkhovitch or the Herald editor:

She (Mary) sees her people burned to death in rickety old tenements, their minds blasted by the heat of the streets, their children killed by rich men's motor cars. She sees amid the indescribable poverty of her people, the lavish luxury of the night clubs. She watches her people turn to crime in protest against such things.²²

In the fall of 1926, soon after the death of Eugene Debs, the titular head of the American Socialist Party, the editor wrote a moving tribute to Deb's determination to right any and all wrongs he saw:

We speak of Debs, the flaming spirit in revolt against wrong; of a kindly man so sensitively attuned to the lives of his fellows that their suffering became his own personal pain, driving him into impassioned speech and action on their behalf of a great soul who never counted the cost of unflinching devotion to ideals.²³

²¹"Radicalism," Herald, June 8, 1926, p. 2.

²²"Too Prosperous," Herald, July 15, 1926, p. 2.

²³"Gene Debs Is Gone," Herald, October 26, 1926, p. 2.

In December of 1921, Emma Goldman, a radical anarchist who advocated the overthrow of the United States government, was deported to Russia along with a number of other communist sympathizers. However she became disillusioned with Russia and returned to live in Canada. While in Canada, she requested admittance back into the United States and consented to be interviewed by reporters. Her story was carried in newspapers across the nation, as well as by the Herald, in November, 1926.

Miss Goldman saw that America had come a long way in promoting social reform since her arrival in 1896. But much still needed to be done. She spoke of her love for America despite being born in Russia and her still strong ties to that country, and she hoped that America would correct its abuses someday.

In conclusion, Miss Goldman saw 1926 America as having come a long way since the America she found in 1896:

People lived by bread alone, caring nothing for the things of the spirit. Social wrongs, economic injustices and political abuses went unchallenged; or if they were questioned it was by the very few whose voices sounded like a cry in the wilderness.²⁴

In December of 1927, the Provo Rotary, a businessman's club, hosted Mr. A. H. Dixon who was a local banker. He spoke to them about business abuses against employees in

²⁴"Emma Goldman," Herald, November 15, 1926, p. 1.

Provo. For example, Mr. Dixon gave examples of the local practice of making employees work overtime and then refusing to pay time-and-a-half wages for overtime. Mr. Dixon also criticized local businessmen for overworking women and for refusing to give employees the customary Saturday afternoon off work. Sounding very much like a progressive labor leader, Mr. Dixon concluded his talk with the admonition that if employers treated their workers well, they (the employer) would be rewarded with better work and a better public image. "Good feeling, efficiency and happiness alike could be increased."²⁵

In early 1928, the editor again took up the progressive banner when he asked whether democratic presidential candidate, Al Smith of New York, would pick up the progressive banner that had been dropped by Robert LaFollette in 1925. The editor asked if Al Smith would, like Robert LaFollette, push for public ownership of water resources, a strong Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to regulate railroads, and the abolition of injunctions in labor disputes. "Is Smith to pick up the fallen flag and carry on with their progressive principals? If he does, will millions of progressives rally to him?"²⁶

²⁵"Elimination of Emnity Among Provo Business Competitors Would Result in Benefits," Herald, December 9, 1927, p. 1.

²⁶"Smith, Progressive," Herald, January 10, 1928, p. 2.

Soon after this, the editor wondered about the federal government's willingness to use army troops to protect Standard Oil Company property threatened by revolutionaries in Nicaragua and elsewhere, but "when it comes to asking aid in protection of the nation against oil robbers, Standard Oil puts its nose to its thumb and twiddles its fingers."²⁷

Soon after, the editor took up an old progressive theme: John D. Rockefeller's rise to power.

History will say that his greatest service was destroying the foolish belief in the value of competition. While he was accumulating wealth enough to engage in his immense and laudable philanthropies, his Standard Oil Company's policies were filling some graves in pipe line wars, ruining many small purveyors of oil, clubbing workmen who were only after adequate wages, and the company finally had to be destroyed by law as a great menace to the nation.²⁸

In the fall of 1928, the editor wrote one of the most thoughtful editorials of the entire decade. The editorial was entitled "Our Life Sentences," and was about Jesse Pomeroy who had been committed to life imprisonment for a "hidious" but unmentioned crime he had committed in 1876. The editor reminded his readers that Grant was the President when Mr. Pomeroy entered prison and that he had just completed his fifty-second year behind bars. Mr.

²⁷"Oil Patriotism," Herald, February 10, 1928, p. 2.

²⁸"His Greatest," Herald, February 26, 1928, p. 2.

Pomeroy had indeed lost his freedom, but how many other people in America today not living in prison were as unfree as Mr. Pomeroy?

Just how free are we after all? How many of us are being overlooked by life just as truly as if we were held in prison? The drudge in the New Bedford cotton mill, striving to raise a family on eighteen dollars a week, just how rich a life do you suppose he manages to live? Does he ever get a chance to demonstrate that he is heir to all the ages? Does his fellow worker, the half-starved Pennsylvania coal miner? Does the offspring of the city slums, the north woods lumberjack, the back-country farmer whose sterile acres plunge him yearly deeper into debt?

Freedom to live isn't just a matter of a prison wall. There are other fetters just as effective. The convict isn't²⁹ the only one that deserves your sympathy.

On the eve of the 1928 presidential election, the Herald ran a front page story entitled "ELEPHANTS, DONKEYS, RUBBER STAMPS." The theme of the story was that party labels were really only masks for the real issues. The real issue was not between democrats and republicans, but between conservatives, those who would "keep the brakes on," and progressives, those who would "move ahead." The latter were strongly endorsed by the Herald.³⁰

That same day, a full page political advertisement for Dr. J. H. Paul of Logan, Utah was run in the Herald. Mr.

²⁹"Our Life Sentences," Herald, September 16, 1928, p. 2.

³⁰"Elephants, Donkeys, Rubber Stamps," Herald, November 4, 1928, p. 1.

Paul was for the federal income tax, government ownership of water resources, and national parks for all the people to enjoy. Mr. Paul opposed Senator Reed Smoot of Utah in his advocacy of high tariffs and of private ownership of water resources. The progressive candidate for Utah office was the only candidate who received full page coverage in the Herald--suggesting Herald support and sympathy for progressive causes.³¹

After the election, which the Republicans won, the editor commented in a progressive spirit on the state of the American economy in 1929:

We may have our problems. Some industries may be stagnant. Textile workers may be underpaid, coal miners may be starving, the power trust may be propagandizing our schools, and the farmers may be in despair--but, we have 40,000 millionaires, anyway. Doesn't that encourage you?³²

In the spring of 1929, a delegation of mill workers from a southern cotton mill visited a group of senators in Washington, D.C. At the time of their visit to Washington, there were many Americans who lived in the grasp of poverty and who worked for sustenance wages in wretched conditions despite the fact that the American economy was, to all surface appearances, booming. The observations that the senators made about the mill workers was run in the Herald:

³¹"Voters Urged To Elect Dr. J. H. Paul To Congress," Herald, November 4, 1928, p. 3.

³²"40,000 Millionaires," Herald, January 14, 1929, p. 2.

Jennie is a wage earner, spinner in the textile mills. She works 60 hours a week, and is paid precisely \$4.95 every Saturday. Then there was Myrtle Spoud who is twenty and works 60 hours a week for pay that ranges between \$8 and \$11; and there was Mrs. Bertha Crawford, who supports three children by working 61 hours a week for \$16.62.

These, if you please are the industrial statistics of 1929. They are important for this reason: They prove that there is something very terribly wrong somewhere.³³

In July 1929, almost on the eve of the stock market crash, the Herald editor called for the gathering of unemployment statistics, public works projects funded by the federal government and unemployment insurance for those out of work.³⁴

In summary, the purpose of this chapter has been to show that in a decade when it was generally assumed the progressive spirit declined, a strong progressive spirit remained in one small town in America.

It may be true that William Jennings Bryan attracted large crowds because of his reputation as a great orator. The fact that he came to Provo twice during the decade, filled the tabernacle to overflowing both times, was cheered and applauded by Provo citizens and given a lavish reception by the leading citizen of the town suggests his progressive standards were supported by many Provo citizens.

³³"Dark Pockets of Industry," Herald, May 24, 1929, p. 2.

³⁴"Laid Off at Forty," Herald, July 26, 1929, p. 2.

The evidence given here also suggests that Provo was not insensitive to business abuses, as the speech by a leading Provo banker to a businessmen's club shows, nor was Provo ignorant of noted reformers such as Eugene Debs and Robert LaFollette.

CHAPTER FOUR

BOOSTERISM

Measured by almost any standard, the twenties was a decade of remarkable economic prosperity. For example, the nation's manufacturing output rose more than 60 points during the decade. The Gross National Product (GNP) rose an average of five percent every year. Output per worker rose more than 33 percent over the decade and unemployment, although varied, was usually less than five percent. Inflation was limited to less than 2 percent a year and individual income rose from \$522 a year in 1921 to \$716 a year in 1929.¹ Businessmen were given credit for most of this growth and became the center of public admiration, as the following historian writes:

America in the 1920s belonged to the businessman. It was a business civilization. The business community had always been extremely influential, and it had at times so thoroughly controlled national politics that it had regarded Washington as a branch

¹Freidel claims unemployment never rose above 2% throughout the decade except in "sick" industries (p. 159). However, Geoffrey Perrett claims unemployment was never lower than 5% and was usually considerably above that figure. Geoffrey Perrett, America In The Twenties (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), pp. 321-322.

office. But never before in American history had business influence been so unhampered and so pervasive. Politics, economic affairs, foreign policy, social relationship, and popular thought all reflected the triumph of the businessman.²

H. L. Mencken, one of the leading social critics of the twenties, wrote this about the general public adoration of businessmen:

The successful businessman among us. . . enjoys the public respect and adulation that elsewhere bathe only the bishops and generals of artillery. . . .He enjoys an aristocratic immunity from most forms of judicial process. He wears the legion d' honneur, is an LL.D from Yale, and is received cordially at the White House.³

A person who was a strong advocate of businessmen and business methods was known as a booster. A booster had a number of characteristics that made him unique. For one, he was opposed to most forms of federal government "interference" and regulation of business. Secondly, he was an optimist, having witnessed and participated in the extraordinary business success who believed that if business methods were applied to any other form of endeavor, anything could be done. Thirdly, a booster was a social animal and a believer who joined any number of businessmen's clubs, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, and the Chamber of Commerce that sprouted during the age of business.

²Shannon, p. 49.

²Shannon, p. 50.

As the following will show, Provo participated in this booster spirit that characterized the twenties.

In 1919, fourteen years after its organization in Chicago, a Provo branch of Rotary was organized. Rotary was a strong booster organization devoted to positive business methods. Two years after its organization, the Provo Rotary Club hosted a banquet commemorating the sixteenth anniversary of Rotary's founding. As the Herald story on the event pointed out, many of the "leading businessmen" of the city attended. A number of goals for Provo were outlined, two of which--"better things for Provo and a better city"--were significant.⁴

Two months later, the Provo Commercial Club, another businessmen's organization, hosted its annual "Booster Ball." Billed as the biggest social event of the season, the theme was "Progress and Prosperity For Provo." The entire community was invited.⁵

In addition to Rotary and the Provo Commercial Club, Provo had a branch of the Chamber of Commerce. In the fall of 1924, the secretary of the Provo chapter wrote a very glowing and optimistic booster article for the Herald. Entitled "MEN OF VISION HAVE FAITH IN PROGRESS OF PROVO AND

⁴"Provo Rotary to Celebrate Anniversary With Banquet," Herald, February 21, 1921, p. 1.

⁵"What Next," Herald, May 27, 1923, p. 1.

UTAH COUNTY," the article was a strong booster endorsement of Provo.

Mr. Hinckley saw a bright future ahead for Provo. He was very upbeat, full of booster optimism:

However, the mighty hand upon the dial of human destiny now points to the striking hour of progress. The enormous quantities of materials which we have been surrounded by eons have been undisturbed. Now the development of the western world is calling for them and men alert of mind quick of action have heard that call and with the colossal strength and intellect and capital are preparing to build this mighty empire of the setting sun with home-manufactured products. Out of the hills of Utah will come the structural iron and steel which will be fabricated into the magic cities of the east and by which the marvelous powers of nature will be harnessed and made the servants of mankind. We are now facing the rising sun of prosperity and opportunity.⁶

In the spring of 1925, F. T. Mackay, manager of the Salt Lake City Ford dealership, spoke to the Springville Kiwanis Club. Mr. Mackay said every good booster

. . .should have vigor, energy, strength, ambition, determination, will power, initiative, tact and pluck.

Pep is the thing that is essential in any business. You can tell how much pep a man has by the way he talks, the way he carries his shoulders and head when he walks; you can tell it by his dress and his personal appearance, and you can tell it by the way he undertakes to do his jobs.

A man who moves like he has lead in his shoes may just as well get out of the parade.

If a man has lead in his shoes, he ought to go somewhere and get electrified.⁷

⁶"Men of Vision Have Faith in Industrial Progress of Provo and Utah County," Herald, November 18, 1924, p. 1.

⁷"Springville Kiwanis Hear Talk on 'Pep'," Herald, May 12, 1925, p. 2.

The following year, Provo realtor J. A. Owens spoke to the annual meeting of the Utah Realty Association in Salt Lake City. In his talk, Mr. Owens praised the three Utah cities of Salt Lake City, Ogden and Logan for their substantial growth in the last year. However, in his concluding remarks Mr. Owens told the realtors that his hometown surpassed every other Utah city in every way:

Provo is a city where love of God and love of country go hand-in-hand. There was not a major crime committed in Provo in 1925. Of all the cities of the intermountain west, Provo is the center of opportunity, progress and prosperity.⁸

On the first day of May 1924, the Columbia Steel Corporation of San Francisco, California, began construction just south of Provo of a large steel mill complete with blast furnaces and coke ovens. In the fall of 1926, the completed mill was dedicated. L. F. Rains, Vice-President and General Manager of Columbia Steel, invited W. H. Simmons, President of the New York Stock Exchange, to Provo to speak. Mr. Simmons accepted. Utah Governor George H. Dern and a number of other leaders also attended the dedication in Provo.

In his speech, Mr. Simmons saw a strong economic future ahead for America with no depressions despite some rumblings that money panics were becoming more common:

⁸"Provo is the City For Opportunity, Progress and Prosperity," Herald, January 12, 1926, p. 1.

I look for no special depression ahead, but rather for a growing steadiness of securities prices. There seems to be very little danger of any future money panics in Wall Street. There has been none since the erection of the Federal Reserve Bank, and it seems unlikely that there will be any under the present banking system.⁹

These were words of optimism from the President of the New York Stock Exchange to a Provo audience in the age of the booster at the dedication of a local steel mill.

The following month, the Columbia Steel Company hosted an open house at the new plant where more than 350 people attended. Among the guests were Utah Governor George H. Dern, Provo Mayor T. H. Hansen, Salt Lake City Mayor C. Clarence Nelson, and President Heber J. Grant, President of the LDS Church.

In the spring of the following year, A. W. Christensen, Safety Director of the Columbia Steel Company, spoke to the Brigham Young University student body.

Utah county will be the richest and largest county in the state. As soon as eastern capital shall learn of these conditions of material wealth, it will be impossible to keep capital out. The county will grow to be the biggest and richest in the state.¹⁰

In the summer of 1927, Provo launched a "WHY I'M FOR PROVO" campaign amid tremendous enthusiasm. A movie of many

⁹"Stock Exchange President Visits Provo," Herald, November 15, 1926, p. 1.

¹⁰"Says Utah County Will Lead State Industrially," Herald, April 21, 1927, p. 1.

Provo attractions, such as the farms, the surrounding scenery, local industries, community leaders, the lake and especially beautiful local women, was made and shown in each of the local movie houses. A bathing beauty contest was held--which was open to the public--as well as a "Clean Up" campaign. The purpose of all this was to attract attention to Provo and to advertise the beauties and advantages of Provo, especially to visitors. As the Herald said of the campaign, its purpose was to "Boost Provo" in both local and visitors' eyes.¹¹

In the fall of the same year, the Union Pacific Railroad chose Provo as the host city for its annual employee athletic meet. Employees from all over the western United States were invited to Provo to participate in events from broadjumping to tennis. Because of the honor of having been chosen host city over a number of other cities, Provo went to extraordinary lengths to assure the event would be a success and to boost Provo as the host city. For example, in late August a 300 car caravan made up of Provo boosters headed north towards Ogden to advertise the event and to promote Provo. The auto caravan contained two bands, scores of local beauties and leaders. In addition, every car was decorated with banners and full of Provo boosters anxious to

¹¹"Activities of City Will Be Portrayed On Screen; Beauty Contest To Be Novel Feature," Herald, June 24, 1927, p. 1.

boost their home town. The day of the caravan was declared a local holiday in conjunction with the upcoming sports meet so that every Provo citizen who wanted to participate could do so.¹²

Soon after this, the entire front page of the Herald was filled with booster articles promoting both the coming event and the host city. E. S. Hinckley, Provo Chamber of Commerce secretary and one of Provo's strongest boosters, wrote a very upbeat article entitled "PROVO'S ADVANTAGES FOR SPORTS CLASSIC SUMMARIZED." His reasons:

FIRST--Provo is the "Garden City of Utah."

SECOND--Provo is the home of Brigham Young University, a standard American institution of learning.

THIRD--Provo is the county seat of Utah county. . .and throughout the district there is a strong, wholesome, athletic atmosphere.

FOURTH--Provo is blessed with a fine spirit of cooperation, and everyone knows that whatever the Provo Chamber of Commerce undertakes, it carries over with success.

FIFTH--Provo is one of the largest units of athletes in the league. . .and all of them are consistent good sports and enthusiastic boosters.

SIXTH--Provo is the real center of scenic America.¹³

The rest of the front page was filled with equally enthusiastic articles and a brief reading of just the titles will give a suggestion of their tone: "RECEPTION SHOULD BE

¹²"Provo Plans Auto Caravan For U. P. Meet," Herald, August 7, 1927, p. 1.

¹³"City Prepares To Welcome Thousands Who Will Attend U. P. Athletic Meet," Herald, August 22, 1927, p. 1.

GREAT ONE," "CHAMBER GREETES COMING VISITORS," "OFFICIAL OF O. S. L. UNIT ENTHUSIASTIC," "BEAUTIFUL TROPHIES SHOWN," "ATHLETIC CLUB WILL BE HOST."¹⁴

On the day of the athletic meet, a strong booster story entitled "PROVO PLANS GREAT FUTURE" appeared on page one of the Herald. In the same upbeat, optimistic tone of earlier articles dealing with Provo, this story outlined many of Provo's advantages to both locals and visitors:

No other section of the western part of the United States has greater possibilities or a brighter future than Provo and Utah county. The territory within a radius of 30 miles of Provo is resting snugly in the lap of fortune. In the not far-away future this section will be the industrial center of the Rocky Mountain territory, with hundreds of industrial plants of every conceivable kind producing the necessities for the rapidly growing Pacific coast area.¹⁵

In December, Paul Clagstone, the western division manager of the Chamber of Commerce, visited Provo and spoke to the Provo chapter. His topic was prosperity in the United States, and he told his Provo audience that contrary to the "rumors" that the nation was passing into a depression, business conditions were "greater than ever" and there was nothing to worry about.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵"Provo Plans Great Future," Herald, September 4, 1927, p. 1.

Mr. Clagstone concluded by telling his audience that the stock market was "higher than any corresponding period last year," suggesting that increases in the market meant further prosperity.¹⁶

A week after this, E. S. Hinckley wrote another of his optimistic articles extolling the virtues of Provo for residents and visitors. Entitled "PROSPERITY AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES FOR PROVO," the article concluded with this happy forecast:

We believe that the future of this vicinity is laden with opportunity and that men of wisdom and foresight will grasp them and garner to themselves the great harvest of the future years.¹⁷

Boosterism was evident in another way. In the spring of 1928, the National American Intercollegiate swim meet was held in Philadelphia. Bud Shields, a student at BYU and a Provo resident, won both the 220 and 440 freestyle races. His winning aroused not only enthusiasm among Provo boosters at home but national recognition as well. As the front page article said, "Shields of Brigham Young" is now a national hero and Provo should act accordingly:

¹⁶"Prosperity of U.S. Is Rated High," Herald, December 15, 1927, p. 1.

¹⁷"Prosperity and Future Possibilities of Provo Emphasized by C. of C.," Herald, December 29, 1927, p. 4.

Not since the days of Alma Richardson and Clinton Larson has a Provo athlete captured national championship honors.

AND WHEN BUD [Shields] COMES HOME--ITS UP TO PROVO TO GIVE HIM A GREAT RECEPTION!¹⁸

Soon after this, banner headlines appeared in the Herald that read: "MEETING TUESDAY TO AROUSE ENTHUSIASM OF C. OF C. WORKERS. TREMENDOUS GROWTH OF CITY EXPECTED." As the first paragraph stated, Provo was a community that had reason to look with hope to the future:

Looking forward to an era of great industrial and commercial development in Provo and Utah county, the Provo Chamber of Commerce is laying plans to meet a situation that will call for the heartiest cooperation of every man, woman and child in this community. Provo is destined to become the industrial center of Utah's industrial development.¹⁹

In conjunction with this, the Provo Chamber of Commerce kicked off its annual membership drive a few days later. Again the theme was Provo's bright and prosperous future. F. C. Richmond, past president of the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce, was invited to speak at the kickoff of the fund raising. The first few lines of his speech give a clear picture of just how optimistic Provo felt about its economic potential. "Provo is bound to be another Pittsburgh! The

¹⁸"Provo Must Have Big Day for Shields," Herald, April 2, 1928, p. 1.

¹⁹"Meeting Tuesday To Arouse Enthusiasm of C. of C. Workers," Herald, May 10, 1928, p. 1.

tremendous industrial development coming to Provo cannot be stopped!"²⁰

In May of 1928, another fund-raising campaign was launched to raise funds to build a large addition to the BYU football stadium. The goal was to raise \$25,000 to build an additional 5,000 seats in the Cougar stadium. To raise the money, 110 men would "canvas" the city beginning May 31, 1928, requesting donations from citizens, and the Chamber of Commerce would sponsor a big meeting to arouse contributions and enthusiasm. At the meeting, the following conversation by a number of Provo notables was recorded by Herald reporters:

President Franklin S. Harris [of BYU]: We need twenty-five or thirty thousand dollars to put five thousand seats in the stadium.

I. E. Brockbank [local banker]: Make it fifty thousand and put in more seats.

President Clayton Jenkins of the Provo Chamber of Commerce: I am sure Jesse Ellertson and his committee can get the money.

Secretary E. S. Hinckley [of the Chamber of Commerce]: In the Chamber of Commerce lexicon, there is no such word as fail; we can raise the money!

All: We can do it!²¹

This forceful booster spirit continued strong in Provo without a break. In the autumn of 1928 a full page advertisement boosting local industries and American

²⁰"Great Growth Of Provo Predicted," Herald, May 16, 1928, p. 1.

²¹"Campaign Committees Listed; Sentiment Is Strong For Project," Herald, May 25, 1928, p. 1.

industry appeared in the Herald. Entitled "UTAH COUNTY SHARES IN AMERICA'S TRIUMPHS," its theme was that American industry had lifted America to a level of prosperity never before enjoyed by so many. The theme that Provo would soon be one of the centers of industry and prosperity was again suggested in the article in the usual booster tone:

If we are to judge by the evidence all around us, it is apparent that America has entered into the golden age of industrial supremacy. Never before in world history has there been a parallel to the tremendous concentration of industrial and commercial enterprise flourishing in this country.

Utah county shares in America's triumphs. We point confidently toward a future which shall see Utah county as one of the greatest industrial centers in the west.²²

In December 1928, banner headlines appeared in the Herald which read "1929 EXPECTED TO BE GREAT BUSINESS YEAR." The introductory lines sum up the booster spirit of the age:

Optimism is predominant in industry. The year drawing to a close declared remarkably successful, with further advances predicted for near future. Business leaders look for further advances in 1929.²³

In January 1929, BYU hosted its annual leadership week, the purpose of which was to offer teaching and managerial skills to LDS Church leaders. Church leaders from all over

²²"Utah County Shares In America's Triumphs," Herald, September 13, 1928, p. 3.

²³"1929 Expected To Be Great Business Year," Herald, December 27, 1928, p. 1.

the west came to Provo for the week to attend the sessions. On the day of the first sessions, the Herald ran a front page story welcoming the visitors and inviting them to enjoy more than just the sessions while in Provo:

Utah county is one of the finest counties in the west. It "Rivals The Best--Surpasses The Rest." Here you will find almost everything destined to make man happy and contented.²⁴

In April of 1929, Mr. Paul Clagstone returned to Provo for the second time in less than two years to speak to Provo businessmen about the economy. He spoke in the Hotel Roberts and more than 125 local businessmen attended. His theme echoed the sentiment that prevailed nationwide: prosperity would continue without a break.

Reports of the National Chamber [of Commerce] show that prosperity, as a whole, has increased consistently since 1926, a year that was unprecedented prior to that time in this widespread business activity. From the reports reaching me this year, indications are that prosperity is continuing to increase--and it should so continue.²⁵

In a concluding sentence, Mr. Clagstone sounded a theme very familiar to the twenties. "The national Chamber advocates government's retirement from the business field and a policy of lower taxes."²⁶

²⁴"Welcome, Visitors," Herald, January 21, 1929, p. 1.

²⁵"Official of U. S. Chamber Speaks to Businessmen," Herald, April 3, 1929, p. 1.

²⁶Ibid.

Despite all the optimistic talk, the bottom fell out of the stock market in the fall of 1929 and the Great Depression followed. On Thursday, October 24, 1929, known in history as Black Thursday, stock prices hit a frightening low. On Tuesday, October 29, 1929, some sixteen million shares of stock were offered in a panic for sale at all-time low prices, most of which were not sold. Despite the crash on the stock market, leaders expressed confidence that there was really nothing to worry about.

For example, President Herbert Hoover announced the day after Black Thursday, "The fundamental business of the country, that is production and distribution of commodities, is on a sound and prosperous basis."²⁷

The President of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), William Green, expressed the view that "within a few months we will be back to a normal state in the industrial and economic life of the nation."²⁸

The same optimism in the face of the stock market crash and the oncoming depression prevailed in Provo. On the last day of December 1929, two months after the market crash, the editor of the Herald closed out 1929 and opened 1930 with an optimistic booster editorial which probably echoed the sentiments of many other boosters nationwide:

²⁷Graebner, p. 1042.

²⁸Ibid.

Prosperity for Provo next year? You bet! The recent Wall Street stock crash, bad as it was, has not had a widespread effect on American business. Instead of the old-time panic situation, business seems to be going along virtually as well as ever.

President Hoover has moved to speed up recovery and meet the emergency. Everything is looking better for 1930 than the most optimistic booster had hoped.

Provo is not a city of stock gamblers. It is a city of progress--and that progress will be seen in 1930 more than ever before!²⁹

The purpose of this chapter has been to show that one small town in America quickly adapted the booster businessmen's clubs that were founded in large cities a decade prior to the twenties. While it is true that boosterism always has and always will be a small-town characteristic, it is also true that businessmen's booster clubs, such as Rotary which was founded in Chicago in 1905, spread quickly to Provo and probably to other small towns as well. There was a strong spirit of participation in businessmen's clubs and a spirit of optimism and praise for business in Provo during the New Era.

²⁹"Prosperity For Provo," Herald, December 19, 1929, p. 2.

CHAPTER FIVE

ADVERTISING & INSTALLMENT BUYING

As pointed out in an earlier chapter, manufacturing output rose remarkably during the decade of the twenties. Increased efficiency with such devices as the assembly line led to lower costs for goods and greater output. The introduction of professional schools of management led to better business methods. A generally benevolent federal government and a minimum of government restrictions on business practices also helped industrial output. Equally important was the rise of mass advertising to stimulate increased public demand for this increased quantity of goods produced. This ability of advertising to make the public less happy with what they had and more anxious to purchase newer and better goods was summarized by one historian who said:

A new arm of American commerce came into being: advertising. By persuasion and ploy, allure, sexual suggestion, advertisers sought to make Americans chronically discontented with their paltry possessions, and to want more, more, more.¹

¹Thomas A. Bailey and David M. Kennedy, The American Pageant, 7th ed., vol. 2 (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1983), p. 709.

Throughout the twenties, the Provo Herald was replete with full page advertisements trying to lure customers to buy all manner of goods from washing machines to furniture to automobiles. Only a sampling of some will be given here. Suffice it to say that Provo merchants were as aggressive as any others in creating a demand for goods that may not have existed before.

On December 20, 1920, a full page advertisement appeared on page six of the Herald. Taken out by Robinson Brothers Music on North University Avenue in Provo, the advertisement was headed with very large letters reading: "NO MONEY DOWN." Below the caption were slightly smaller letters that read: "Terms From 6 To 24 Months To Complete The Purchase Of A New Edison Phonograph or Piano" in stock. Much of the remainder of the advertisement was lavishly illustrated with pictures and rendering of the latest phonographs and pianos, all "Just In Time For Christmas." In addition to this appeal to the buyer was such extras as "One Year's Free Service," "Free Home Delivery," and a "Free Selection of Player Piano Rolls Or Records With Any Purchase."²

The full page advertisement was as sophisticated as many seen in later years. The buyer is enticed with the prospect of a lovely new phonograph. He is reminded that he

²"No Money Down," Herald, December 20, 1920, p. 6.

need pay nothing down and that he will receive many extras if he buys now. The advertisement also makes a subtle appeal to the Christmas shopper--what better gift than a brand new Victrola for a loved one. In 1920, Provo had advertising that would make many Provoans "chronically discontented with their paltry possessions."

In the spring of 1921, Guy Hubbard, editor of the New York magazine Dry Goods Economist visited Provo. In an interview with Herald reporters, Mr. Hubbard had these observations about Provo advertising:

The best thing about your advertising is its spirit.

The illustrations of advertisements placed in the Herald are better than you think because they are human and show the goods in sensible style.³

Full page advertisements with lavish illustrations offering many extras to the buyer were a common feature in the Provo newspaper. Local merchants did their best to attract the eye of potential buyers of their merchandise.

In October 1923, Provo furniture company Dixon-Taylor-Russell placed an advertisement in the Herald. The advertisement covered half a page and was promoting the new Monarch gas range. Above a large illustration of the range were the letters: "EASY TERMS." Beneath the illustration were the words: "9 PIECE PURE ALUMINUM COOKING SET FREE

³"New York Advertising Man Praises Provo Progress," Herald, April 22, 1921, p. 1.

WITH PURCHASE." The advertisement went on to remind the reader that for only ten dollars down and free home delivery, this beautiful range could be in their kitchen.⁴

Soon after this, Herald readers were treated to a lavish full page advertisement placed by Provo based Bates Furniture Company. This full page advertisement was literally covered with illustrations of beautiful new phonographs in a variety of sizes and styles. At the top, in very large letters, were the words that were sure to attract attention: "A BEAUTIFUL PIANO FOR YOU ABSOLUTELY FREE!" Beneath the letters was a drawing of the piano and under it the words "A 600 DOLLAR HOFFMAN." Below that, in smaller letters, was information on how one could win the piano. Simply come in and be one of the first fifty purchasers of one of the many phonographs shown on the page and your name would be placed in the drawing. In addition to all this allure, the bottom of the page had large words with "TWELVE MONTHS TO PAY," "SPECIAL TERMS," "12 MONTHS FREE SERVICE," and "OLD PHONOGRAPH TAKEN IN IN TRADE."⁵

A year later one of the most appealing and aggressive advertisements appeared in the Herald. The advertisement

⁴"Easy Terms," Herald, October 5, 1923, p. 5.

⁵"A Beautiful Piano For You Absolutely Free," Herald, October 14, 1923, p. 4.

covered a whole page and was placed by Irvine's Furniture, 45-51 North University Avenue in Provo.

At the top of the page, in two-inch banner headlines, ran the words: "GIGANTIC--TITANIC--COLOSSAL!" Beneath that, in even larger banner headlines ran: "SALE BEGINS JULY 12TH!" At the bottom of the page in half-inch headlines ran: "Free Theater Tickets To First 100 Buyers!" Above that was a large drawing of a huge hand reaching out of the sky with the caption: "GRASP YOUR OPPORTUNITY." If all this was not enough to attract the buyer's eye, the page was covered with such attractions as "10¢ Barrel in front of Store With Up to \$5 worth of goods inside," "\$5 gift certificate with every \$5 you buy," and "Daily Specials."⁶

The advertisement was a furniture sale, although none of the furniture was shown. That probably was not necessary because the buyer was drawn into the store as much by the extra attractions as by the prices of the sale items.

Throughout the decade, large one and two page advertisements appeared in the Herald at least weekly. Many offered a variety of extras to the buyers, such as "Easy Terms," "Home Delivery," and "Generous Tradein Given." Provo merchants were very aggressive and very creative in advertising and displaying their goods to local audiences.

⁶"Gigantic--Titanic--Colossal!" Herald, July 8, 1924, p. 3.

Just a sampling of headlines will show this: "AT NO TIME WILL WE BE UNDERSOLD," "GREATEST SALE IN THE FURNITURE WORLD'S HISTORY," "ONE DOLLAR DOWN BUYS ANYTHING IN THE STORE," and "THE MOST AMAZING SALE EVER OFFERED."⁷

Advertising was a success, and Provo merchants knew it. On December 27, 1925, a front page editorial appeared in the Herald entitled "WHO PAYS FOR ADVERTISING?" To answer the question, the editorial pointed out that merchants who do not advertise pay because those merchants who do advertise have increased sales and lower expenses as a result. The article showed examples of large stores in New York that had suffered loss of revenues from limited advertising.⁸ The lesson was clear to Provo merchants: Advertise and you will have greater profits. Don't advertise and you will have less profits.

Even cigarettes got full coverage in Provo. In July 1928, a half page advertisement for Lucky Strike cigarettes appeared on page seven of the Herald showing a large illustration of movie director King Vidor. He was quoted as saying that this product was the "Cream of the Crop." Above the illustration in one inch headlines ran the words, "20,679 Doctors Say Luckies Are Less Irritating To The

⁷Herald, February 25, 1925, p. 6; July 17, 1927, p. 8; July 20, 1927, p. 4; July 2, 1928, p. 5.

⁸"Who Pays For Advertising?" Herald, December 27, 1925, p. 1.

Throat."⁹ The advertisement said nothing else. The product was "toasted," it was endorsed as "The Cream of the Crop" by a noted American movie director, and it was recommended by more than 20,000 doctors as the "least irritating" of any brand of cigarettes.

Probably one of the most interesting and suggestive advertisements appeared in the Herald on December 22, 1929. The advertisement ran in conjunction with the color and sound movie Glorifying the American Girl which was playing at the Paramount Theater. Billed as "A Shattering array of Feminine beauty, their rise to fame and fortune, their loves and disappointments," the movie starred the famous Ziegfield Follies Chorus Girls--"The Most Beautiful Women In America."¹⁰

The advertisement was billed as "Glorifying the Provo Girl," and it was placed by nine Provo merchants. The advertisement was purely suggestive. Photographs of movie starlets, probably the Ziegfield Follies Girls, were scattered about the page in bathing suits and nightgowns, with that "come hither" pout that beautiful movie starlets do so well. For example, one of the merchants had an advertisement with a bathing beauty smiling at the reader

⁹"Its Toasted," Herald, July 2, 1928, p. 7.

¹⁰"Glorifying the American Girl," Herald, December 29, 1929, p. 6.

with the caption, "And What American Girl Would Refuse A Box Of Chocolates From Startup Candy Company?" Another showed a tall, sensual star in a transparent nightgown, smiling a coy smile at the reader with the caption, "Brown-Bilt Shoes Do Much To Glorify The American Woman." Get them at Buster Brown Shoe Store, 168 West Center Street, Provo.

Probably the most attractive and suggestive advertisement of all was placed by The Provo Greenhouse. In the advertisement, an attractive movie star was sitting on a rock with nothing on but flowers covering the feminine parts of her body. Beneath, the caption read, "Flowers Speak The Language of Beauty." In the center of the page was a photograph of three starlets in bathing suits doing a dance routine and smiling at the viewer. It was captioned "A Gorgeous Array Of The New Fashions" and it was placed by Butler's Women's Clothing in Provo.¹¹

The 1929 Provo advertisements were designed to attract and stimulate the viewer. In no less a manner than the Pepsi-Cola television commercials today with their bikini-clad beauties sipping a Pepsi on the beach, the advertisements were full of beautiful women with suggestive come-hither looks on their faces. The subtle and persuasive power of erotic and suggestive appeal was used by Provo merchants as effectively as by any other big city merchants during the twenties.

¹¹Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

POPULAR CULTURE

The twenties are probably best remembered for the social activities that many people participated in: "flaming youth," "flappers," all night parties in college fraternities, bootleg gin, bathing beauties, sports spectacles, radio soap operas, crossword puzzles and ma-jong. Activities that people did themselves or entertainment that people watched remains strong in people's minds even today. Such behavior may not have been an accurate portrayal of life for the majority of Americans during the era, but it is nonetheless true that many participated in a style of behavior that gave the decade the name "The Roaring Twenties."

Provo had jazz music at local halls where drunken couples danced close together. In addition Provo had titillating movies in the theaters, all night parties in private homes, bathing beauty contests, sports mania and soap series on the radio and in the newspaper. A brief look at some of the more sensational headlines in the local newspaper will show that Provo participated in the "Jazz Age" with as much vigor as did any large metropolitan center.

Jazz got an early start in Provo. In November 1920, headlines in the Herald announced: "SPRIGHTLY JAZZ DANCE AND MUSICAL ACT" at the Columbia Theater.¹ A photograph of the jazz band complete with a trumpet saxophone and female vocalist appeared with the advertisement.

Another advertisement appeared a month later announcing: "BOWLING'S CHICAGO SYNCOPATED JAZZ REVIEW!" at the Provo Armory in December 1920.²

The popularity of the music continued to rise among Provo dancers until it reached a point where the decent citizens of the community rose to complain about its effect on the youth. In June 1921, front page headlines appeared in the Herald which read: "IMMORAL DANCING IN RESORTS AND HALLS COMPLAIN PROVO WOMEN." The complaint was submitted to the Utah County Commissioner's Office by a distinguished body of local women's clubs, of which the following were only a sample: Sorosis, Mutual Improvement Association, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, The Mormon Battalion, Women's Municipal Council, and The Service Star Legion. Judging from the number of groups submitting the complaint, the situation must have been serious. The report denounced

¹"Sprightly Jazz Dance and Musical Act," Herald, November 15, 1920, p. 2.

²"Bowling's Chicago Syncopators," Herald, December 6, 1920, p. 2.

immoral dancing, jazz music, and intoxication at Provo resorts. The report read, in part:

Dancing of a standard far worse than anything permitted in New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles is witnessed at dance halls near Provo.

I have seen a great deal of intoxication at dancing resorts in the county. . . .

The obnoxious dancing positions are not graceful.

Jazz music must be prohibited. If this is not done, it will affect the morals of every young man and every girl who goes to our dance halls.

Some eastern people with us, Mrs. Potter [women's club member] said, were shocked at the dancing permitted at this resort.³

The complaint may have fallen upon deaf ears because in September headlines read: "GENEVA RIOTS IN VULGAR DANCING, REPORT [CLAIMS]." This accusation of loose behavior was submitted by Provo Deputy Sheriff Otto Birk in an interview with Herald reporters. Liquor, jazz, and loose standards of dance were again in evidence in Provo resorts:

Young girls of 14 and 15 were dancing the cheek-to-cheek, stopping frequently to kiss and embrace with men and boys.

Before the evening was over, they were biting each other on the neck.

There was liquor floating around. . .but liquor wasn't needed to intoxicate the girls and boys. The jazz music did that.⁴

³"Immoral Dancing in Resorts and Halls Complain Provo Women," Herald, June 22, 1921, p. 1.

⁴"Geneva Riots in Vulgar Dancing, Report," Herald, September 21, 1921, p. 1.

The Geneva resort was located on the eastern shore of Utah Lake near the location of the present steel mill.

Jazz continued to be in great demand in Provo and Utah throughout the first half of the twenties. Provo audiences continued to dance to and demand jazz at local dance resorts. In 1925 the Herald reported that a "Well Known Provo Band Breaks Ranks--Jazz Destroys Leading Musical Organization of Intermountain Territory." The group, known as the Provo Band, had been in existence for over twenty years. Throughout its existence, it had "steadfastly refused" to play jazz. However, the demand for jazz by audiences had become so great that the band was forced to choose jazz or unemployment. On November 12, 1925, the band chose the latter. At the time of the breakup, the Provo Chamber of Commerce and Elks Club were "contemplating" two new bands but nothing more was heard about them afterward.⁵

The twenties were noted for promoting sexy and suggestive movies. As Frederick Lewis Allen said, there were movie advertisements heralding such items as:

Beautiful jazz babies, champaign baths,
midnight revels, petting parties in the purple
dawns, neckers, petters, white kisses, red kisses,
pleasure-mad daughters, sensation craving
mothers. . . .⁶

⁵"Well Known Provo Band Breaks Ranks," Herald, November 12, 1925, p. 1.

⁶Paul Sann, The Lawless Decade (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1957), p. 77.

In 1921, Betty Blyth appeared in the movie Queen of Sheba where in "some scenes [she] was wrapped in nothing much more than a few veils and a mess of imitation pearls."⁷

Provo offered plenty of blonde starlets and sexy movies to audiences during the twenties as the following will show. On April 4, 1923, a four page movie advertisement for the show Bella Donna with flaming Pola Negri appeared in the Herald. Among other things, passionate embraces, violent love scenes and substantial action scenes were offered in the advertisement.

That fall (November 30, 1923) a second four page advertisement for the movie Forbidden Fruit, with Negri, appeared in the Herald. Love and Passion in the Desert with Sheiks and Harems was also offered to the public.

In the summer of 1925, a full page advertisement for the movie Sandra appeared in the Herald. It showed a partly-clad woman with the caption beneath reading "Tempestuous Love Affairs' From Long Island to Paris." The following summer, Greta Garbo and Ricardo Cortez starred in Torrent. The illustration showed a couple in a passionate embrace with flames about them. The Red Kimona played at the Columbia that August and children were not admitted because the movie dealt with "A Daring Subject." Rudolf Valentino played in The Son of the Sheik in December 1926.

⁷Ibid., p. 66.

Movie attendance was heavy in Provo during the decade and Provo theaters were quick to offer the latest developments to audiences. In March 1927, the Paramount Theater closed for renovations. The entire interior of the theater was redone and a \$25,000 Wurlitzer theater organ was installed. The Paramount was opened to the public and the Clara Bow movie It was shown.⁸

Sensual movies continued to be offered to Provo audiences throughout the decade. In February 1928, a full page spread for the movie Is Your Daughter Safe? appeared in the Herald. The film was billed as "A Most Daring Subject, Delicately Handled." Greta Garbo and John Gilbert appeared in Love at the Paramount in March 1928. In October 1928, The Scarlet Lady was shown at the Gem. The movie advertisement had the most provocative pictures of the decade. One scene showed a couple in a passionate embrace and another showed a naked woman from the waist up clutching her bare breasts.

Along with plenty of titillation, Provo movie houses continued to offer audiences the latest technological developments. On August 6, 1926, the first sound or "talkie" movie, The Jazz Singer, was shown to movie

⁸"Newly Renovated Theater Re-opens," Herald, March 13, 1927, p. 4.

audiences at the Warner Theater in New York City.⁹ A little more than two years later, the Gem Theater installed sound or Vitaphone equipment and the "talkie" "Hit of the Show" was shown to Provo audiences.¹⁰ The following February, the Gem also showed the first color movie which was entitled Lonesome.¹¹

Soon after, the Paramount Theater installed sound. On February 20, 1929, page one of the Herald read, "PARAMOUNT INSTALLS VITAPHONE." The movie The Jazz Singer with Al Jolson was the first sound movie played in the Paramount and it ran to capacity audiences.¹²

Enticing and sexy movies continued to be offered to Provo audiences after color and sound was advented in Provo theaters. Wild Orchids with Greta Garbo played at the Paramount in April 1929. The Woman From Hell with a very suggestive poster ran at The Strand in May 1929. Provo audiences must have filled the local theaters because there were four movie houses in April of 1929, two of which had

⁹"Paramount Installs Vitaphone," Herald, February 20, 1929, sec. 2.

¹⁰"Gem Now!" Herald, November 14, 1928, p. 3.

¹¹"A Talking Picture In Color," Herald, February 8, 1929, p. 2.

¹²"Paramount Installs Vitaphone," Herald, February 20, 1929, sec. 2.

sound. Four movie houses for a town the size of Provo was a significant number.¹³

Not only were provocative movies played to capacity crowds in living color and sound and wild jazz music played to young couples who danced too close and drank too freely, but Provo had bathing beauty contests.

By the middle of the decade, bathing beauty contests were common fare for Provo viewers. On September 2, 1925, the Provo Columbia Theater hosted a beauty contest. Any local girl who wished to participate could do so simply by being at the theater the evening of the contest. All contestants would be paraded before the audience, and the winner would be chosen by applause. No prize for the winner was mentioned although the entire community was invited.¹⁴

On June 24, 1927, another beauty contest was held in conjunction with a "Boost Provo Week." A movie of Provo highlights was shown to audiences before the main feature during the month of July. In addition, the beauty contest was held in June to promote interest in Provo. Local people were invited to submit names of local beauties to the Herald. The girls with the largest number of entries would be paraded before an audience at the Gem Theater the

¹³Herald, April 10, 1929, p. 4.

¹⁴"Provo Selects Two Beauties," Herald, September 2, 1925, p. 1.

evening of Wednesday, June 29, 1927. The event was heralded throughout the month of June to promote Provo, especially for tourists.¹⁵

The bathing beauty contest must have been a success because less than three weeks later page one of the Herald read: "STRAND THEATER TO STAGE BEAUTY CONTEST." The contest was held to choose the local girl to represent Utah County at the Utah State Fair in Salt Lake City on July 27 where "Miss Utah" would be chosen.

As before, Provo citizens were invited to submit names of local beauties. A "local committee" would narrow the finalists to ten girls who would parade before an audience the evening of July 27, 1927, at The Strand Theater. Bathing suits were to be provided free of charge by the Jenkins Knit Company of Provo. No mention was made as to how the winner would be chosen.¹⁶

In the spring of 1928, the Paramount Theater ran the movie Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. To promote the movie and local beauties, the Paramount hosted another Provo bathing beauty contest.

¹⁵"Provo To Be Featured In Movie Films," Herald, June 24, 1927, p. 1.

¹⁶"Strand Theater To Stage Bathing Beauty Contest," Herald, July 13, 1927, p. 1.

The rules of the contest were simple: Provo citizens could mail a picture of a local girl to the "Preferred Blonde Contest Director" at the Provo Herald office.

All contestants will appear on the stage of the Paramount Theater Thursday evening, March 15th, at which time five semi-finalists will be selected by the judges. These five will appear again on the stage Friday evening, March 16th, when the audience will select the first and second prize winners.¹⁷

If a Provo citizen grew weary of looking at blondes on screen, they could see the real thing on Provo stages on numerous occasions during the second half of the "Age of Wonderful Nonsense."

Bathing beauty contests remained popular in the Provo area throughout the decade. During the summer of 1928, the Arrowhead Resort in Payson, a town twenty miles south of Provo, hosted a bathing beauty contest. The winner was chosen by applause and received a \$35 cash prize as well as a free trip to Salt Lake City for a shopping spree. The Herald mentioned that a "Big Crowd" showed up for the contest although no winner was given.¹⁸

Finally, the Edgewater Resort hosted a bathing beauty contest on the beach in the summer of 1929. One of the

¹⁷"'Gentlemen Prefer Blondes' Contest To Be Held," Herald, March 11, 1928, p. 4.

¹⁸"Bathing Girl Review Slated," Herald, June 21, 1928, p. 7.

swim suits offered for the contestants to wear was called "screamin' scanties."¹⁹ Bathing beauty contests were common and popular in Provo during the twenties.

Gorgeous blondes in bathing suits on the stage for all to see, beautiful blondes in transparent nightgowns on the silver screen, wailing saxaphones blasting out jazz while couples embraced and drank bootleg "hootch"--Provo had this plus radio during the "Jazz Age."

On March 11, 1920, a Radio Society was organized at Brigham Young University. Professor Carl F. Eyring of BYU demonstrated to the public free of charge how the wireless worked. Loudspeakers were then set up and the audience listened to west coast broadcasts after the demonstration.²⁰

Radio continued to grow in popularity in Provo and by the middle of the decade large advertisements for radios appeared in the Herald. For example, Bates Furniture of Provo placed a full page advertisement in the newspaper on November 2, 1924. It was lavishly illustrated with scenes of gardens and birds. In the center was a drawing of a beautiful wood grained radio with the words beneath: "RADIO,

¹⁹"Bathing Beauties At Edgewater Soon," Herald, August 11, 1929, p. 2.

²⁰"Radio Society Established At The B.Y. University," Herald, March 11, 1920, p. 11.

A WORLD FORCE." Free delivery and easy payment plans were offered the would-be buyers.²¹

In July 1925, the Zenith Radio portable broadcasting station WJAZ came to Provo to broadcast music and talk shows from their truck. The portable radio station was in town as part of a nationwide tour to promote Zenith radio equipment in particular and public interest in radios in general.²²

That same fall, Zenith Radio took out a quarter page advertisement for their radios in the Herald.²³ From then on radio advertisements were appearing nearly every day in the local newspaper.

In January 1927, Brigham Young University hosted its annual Leadership Week. The opening session of the week was broadcast by Salt Lake City radio station KSL to the local area. A front page article appeared in the Herald just prior to the broadcast inviting Provo radio owners to "tune in" to the broadcast.²⁴

²¹ "Radio, A World Force," Herald, November 2, 1924, p. 4.

²² "Broadcasting Apparatus To Come To Provo," Herald, July 28, 1925, p. 1.

²³ "Radio," Herald, October 25, 1925, sec. 2, p. 1.

²⁴ "Leadership Week Full Of Interest," Herald, January 24, 1926, p. 1.

In April 1926, the Provo Kiwanis Club announced that they were "looking into the possibility" of establishing a radio station in Provo. Apparently the demand for radio broadcasts was great enough to warrant a local station.

By the summer of 1926, daily listings of radio broadcasts from Portland, Oregon and San Francisco, California were carried in the Herald. The offerings were mostly talk shows, farm news and light comedy, with "Amos 'n Andy" a daily favorite.²⁵

In addition to being the age of jazz, movies and radio, the twenties were remembered for the "million dollar" gates in boxing and other spectator sports. Millions of Americans danced to jazz, drank "hootch," watched sexy movies in palatial movie houses, listened to "Amos 'n Andy" on their radios, and watched or listened to Dempsey beat Carpentier or Firpo.

In September 1926, Jack Dempsey, the world heavyweight boxing champion, met Gene Tunney in Philadelphia for the title. More than 100,000 fans witnessed the fight and paid more than \$2 million to see Tunney defeat the champion.²⁶

At the time of the fight, the Utah County Fair was being held in Springville. Loudspeakers were installed at

²⁵"Radio," Herald, June 24, 1926, p. 2.

²⁶"Sann, p. 173.

various locations throughout the fairgrounds and a radio apparatus was set up so fair-goers could listen to the fight. There was a "considerable" amount of interest in the fight, according to the Herald story.²⁷

A year later, in September 1927, Jack Dempsey met the world heavyweight champion, Gene Tunney, for a second chance at the title. The fight drew over 100,000 fans and again more than \$2 million. Like the earlier fight, the match was broadcast nationwide by radio.²⁸

The Provo Herald set up a radio and installed loudspeakers in front of their office on 200 West Center Street and invited everyone interested in hearing the fight to come and listen.

The next day huge headlines read: "MORE THAN 5,000 FIGHT FANS HEAR HERALD RETURNS." As the story pointed out, it was the "biggest crowd" to ever come together in Provo to hear a sporting event. The streets for three blocks in every direction from the office were jammed with cars, many so tightly parked that it was impossible to walk between them.

It was a Dempsey crowd. During the famous "long count" in the seventh round when Dempsey knocked Tunney down for a

²⁷"Dempsey-Tunney Returns At Fair," Herald, September 15, 1926, p. 1.

²⁸Sann, p. 175.

thirteen second count, "pandemonium" broke out in the Provo crowd. By the end of the seventh round, two to one odds were being offered in Dempsey's favor. However, when Tunney came back and devastated Dempsey during the last three rounds, gloom settled over the crowd.²⁹

In New York City the following summer, Gene Tunney met Tom Heeney of Australia for the heavyweight crown. The fight was broadcast via radio to a nationwide audience. For the second time, the Herald set up loudspeakers and a receiving device in front of their office and invited the town to come and hear the fight. Again a big crowd showed up to listen to the fight. The day after the fight, banner headlines greeted Provo: "4,500 HEAR RETURNS."

Any doubt as to Provo's interest in championship fights was dispelled Thursday night by the size of the throng which gathered to get the Heeney-Tunney results. In spite of the absence of Jack Dempsey, famous Utah mauler, who is a popular idol in Provo, the crowd in front of the Herald office was practically equal to the record-breaking throng which assembled for the Tunney-Dempsey encounter last September.³⁰

Once again, the area around the Herald office was jammed with cars and people. It was a Heeney crowd, and "tremendous applause" greeted the announcement that rounds three and seven had been won by the challenger.

²⁹"More Than 5,000 Fight Fans Hear Herald Returns," Herald, September 23, 1927, p. 1.

³⁰"4,500 Hear Returns," Herald, July 27, 1928, p. 1.

Soon after Gene Tunney defeated Tom Heeney, the champion retired from professional boxing. In February 1929, Jack Sharkey of Boston met Young Stribling in Miami, Florida for the world heavyweight championship. For the third time, the Herald set up loudspeakers and invited the entire community to hear the fight. "Approximately 1,000" showed up, despite the fact that it was a cold February and more people had their own radios in Provo.³¹

Jazz, movies, sports, radio, and "flaming youth" were all found in Provo during the "Jazz Age." For example, on Saturday evening, March 10, 1928, three young men who lived in an isolated house near the Eureka Summit invited three "juvenile girls" over for a party. The girls accepted the invitation

. . . remaining there throughout the night, one of the girls leaving Sunday morning and the other two Sunday afternoon. . . there was a large quantity of moonshine whiskey served and the party became boisterous. . . .³²

In April, Herald readers were greeted with the following on page one:

Reckless driving, said to have been caused by too much liquor, was the cause of an automobile accident in which three Provo men and two co-eds

³¹"Hear Big Fight At Herald Office," Herald, February 27, 1929, p. 1.

³²"Three Youths Are Sentenced," Herald, April 8, 1928, p. 1.

of the Young University narrowly escaped serious injury or death Sunday afternoon.³³

Provo had the "soaps," or romantic serials also. For example, on September 28, 1926, a front page advertisement for the serial "Campus Rebels" said the following about the upcoming serial:

"Campus Rebels" is a stirring story of college life. It deals with a professor, a young teacher, a flapper co-ed and a handsome senior who become involved in a strange love affair. Their adventures form one of the most interesting stories in years.

"Campus Rebels" catches the flaming, rebellious spirit of the great American undergraduate and paints a picture of college youth that is real--not merely stuffed shirts in football togs and giddy co-eds with oversized date books.³⁴

Even screen stars got involved in writing serials for the Herald. On Monday, February 4, 1929, a front page photograph of screen sensation Clara Bow showed her at a table, pen in hand, looking up at the reader with a radiant smile. The captions read:

CLARA BOW TO TELL READERS ABOUT "IT"!
Clara Bow Turns Feature Writer on The
Herald Staff!

Empress of "It" Tells Secret of Her
Personality.

Here is Clara Bow, the world's most popular
screen star, writing her series of stories for

³³"Car Crashes; Liquor Cause," Herald, April 19, 1928, p. 1.

³⁴"Here's Another Real Treat To Herald Readers," Herald, September 28, 1926, p. 1.

The Evening Herald. The first article will appear in Thursday's February 7, 1928 Herald.³⁵

In some measure, Provo had every aspect of the social behavior that characterized the twenties. Suggestive serials written by screen sensation Clara Bow, all night drunken parties in isolated cabins, saxaphones blaring out jazz at Geneva Resort, drunken youth dancing too close at Vivian Park, blonde bathing beauties parading across the stage of The Strand, Greta Garbo thrillers in the movies, 5,000 excited Provo fans cheering wildly as Jack Dempsey stands over Gene Tunney for the "long count"--Provo had nearly everything that made the twenties unique in America's social history.

³⁵"Clara Bow To Tell Readers About 'It'," Herald, February 4, 1929, p. 1.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BAD TIMES AHEAD

During the twenties, business boomed for many reasons. "Scientific Management," introduced by Frederick Taylor, was a method of finding ways of making workers and their machines produce more goods at a faster rate.

Professional schools of business management taught businessmen how to run their concerns in a more efficient and profitable manner. The assembly line technique became more common. Favorable tax policies returned vast sums of money back to businesses. High tariffs increased the cost of imported goods. Also, greater use of electricity allowed plants to operate twenty-four hours a day and other labor-saving devices found wider acceptance during the twenties. The creation of a mass market through mass advertising spurred business growth during the twenties.¹

Attitudes of the federal government and the public also contributed to the business boom. The federal government

¹Morison, p. 424; Bailyn, p. 1064; and John M. Blum, et al., The National Exposure, vol. 2, 5th ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1978), p. 633.

was friendly towards business and kept restrictions to a minimum. In turn, a friendly public attitude towards businessmen and business methods also helped promote business growth.

Accompanying this extraordinary prosperity was a frenzy for wealth and power in speculative ventures. The more money people had in their pockets the more people arose with schemes--many of which were totally crooked--to take that money away from them. As the economy continued to grow (on a shaky foundation, as some writers pointed out) and the stock market continued to grow in points, more and more people invested their savings and earnings in hopes that they could make their fortune. This speculative frenzy only served to weaken an already weak economy.²

Although there were a few voices of warning against the overdeveloped zeal for wealth, words of warning were largely ignored by the majority in their mad scramble for wealth.

As one writer said:

So powerful was the intoxicant of quick profits that few heeded the voices raised in certain quarters to warn that this tinsel prosperity could not last forever.³

The majority of Provo citizens strongly supported and participated in the boomer spirit that characterized much of

²See Galbraith, The Great Crash 1929, Chapter 2 for a good summary of the shaky foundations of the economy.

³Bailey, p. 720.

the decade. One influential Provo citizen who was skeptical of the boomer spirit strongly questioned the firmly held belief of the period that "everybody ought to be rich" and cautioned his readers that the speculative frenzy could lead to an economic disaster. In an almost prophetic tone, the editor of the Herald raised his voice throughout the decade against the speculative frenzy that characterized much of the decade.

Early in the decade an editorial appeared about a particular kind of individual--or more correctly, two kinds of individuals--who seemed to be everywhere during the decade of "Boom and Bust."

A "sucker" is a person who, seeking to get rich quickly, is persuaded to the belief that a smooth talking promoter [of stock] is a philanthropist in disguise,⁴ eager and willing to make everybody else rich.

The editor went on to warn his readers against "stock manipulators" who boost the paper price of stock in order to make a fat profit. The editor also reminded his readers that it only takes a few "suckers" to make one "wildcat" rich.

As the economy continued to boom and stock prices and paper profits rose higher and higher during the decade, the editor continued to warn against the speculation frenzy:

⁴"Wildcats and Suckers," Herald, July 1, 1921, p. 2.

For every ten people willing to take a chance there is one who lies awake nights scheming to fool them. Irresponsible and crooked promoters of get-rich real estate projects, gilt-edged with unsupported stocks and a thousand other 'dreams' find there are just as many suckers nowadays as there used to be three shell victims at the county fair.⁵

One of the methods businesses used to increase sales was known as the installment plan which originated during the twenties. A buyer could put a minimum amount down and pay for the goods in "easy monthly payments." This created an enormous consumer debt which added to the unstable foundations of the economy during the twenties. In the spring of 1928, the editor commented on the five billion dollar a year consumer debt and wondered where it would all end:

Buy necessities and luxuries on the installment plan and get-rich-quick stocks with spot cash. Will some professional economist kindly elucidate as to the finale of this vogue?⁶

The Herald editor continued to wonder what the future held for a nation of stock manipulators and suckers and heavy national debt.

In May of 1928, the editor wrote an editorial that seems profound in light of subsequent events. In reading this editorial from a small-town newspaper during the height of the New Era, the reader is tempted to wonder whether the

⁵"We're Great Gamblers," Herald, September 1, 1927, p. 2.

⁶"Whither Away?" Herald, April 22, 1928, p. 2.

editor could almost sense the coming Crash and the Great Depression that followed it.

Speaking of the mood of "contentment" that characterized the day, the editor introduced his message with a word on

. . .the great conservatism of this country in political and economic matters. The people are prosperous. Being prosperous, they are contented.

It's a very nice state of affairs when you stop to think about it.

Yes, it's very comfortable indeed. But there is another side to it.⁷

In a prophetic vein, the editor then wrote:

Suppose, just once, that there should come an era of genuine depression--depression similar to the panics of the old days, only more far reaching and severe than anything the last decade has seen. Suppose the factories should shut down and men everywhere should be thrown out of work. Suppose that the men who remained at work should have to accept greatly reduced wages. What then?⁸

The editor's answer to his own question was that radicalism and radical measures would increase in the country.

In the spring of 1929, the editor took up the matter of unemployment. Again the reader could sense the coming soup and bread lines that would characterize the following decade. Writing on a recent report issued by the New York City Welfare Council, the editor said:

⁷"Prosperity--Two Sides," Herald, May 16, 1928, p. 2.

⁸Ibid.

The number of jobless "down-and-outers" given free shelter by the municipal lodging house has risen steadily during the last few years of our prosperity and is now higher than at any time since the hard winter of 1915-1916.

All of which suggests that this present era of mass production, stock market flurries and high profits may look somewhat different if viewed from the angle of the New York free lodging house.

Never think that our new industrial era hasn't brought some unpleasant problems along with it. Whenever you begin to feel too optimistic about it, remember that it would look considerably different if viewed with the eyes of the man whose job it has destroyed.⁹

In September 1929, the editor wondered whether stocks were not selling for too high a price and what the consequences of this inflated price might be.

Listen to a Portland (Ore.) banker who knows what he's talking about:

"Many stocks in American industries are selling at prices from 30 to 50 times their earnings and five to ten times their book value. This indicates an unusually high degree of confidence in the continued earning power and stability of our industries."

It also indicates an unusually high degree of willingness on the part of small stock investors to part with their money for Wall Street's benefit.

Any man who pays "from five to ten times its book value" for a stock must be an unusual sort of an optimist.

Or, perhaps, a better name for him would be "a sucker."¹⁰

Despite the fact that Charles E. Mitchell, Chairman of The National City Bank of New York, had said in early October 1929 that the "industrial situation of the United

⁹"Another Angle of Prosperity," Herald, May 28, 1929, p. 2.

¹⁰"Unusually Willing," Herald, September 22, 1929, p. 2.

States is absolutely sound," the situation in reality was not sound at all. Industrial and factory production reached a peak in June 1929 and then turned downward. The Federal Reserve Index of industrial production stood at 117 in October 1929 compared with 126 in July 1929. Steel production started a decline in June 1929 and freight car loadings began a decline in early October 1929. Home building, an important economic indicator, had been in decline since 1927.¹¹

In October 1929, the economic conditions listed above, combined with the inflated stock prices, finally broke the market. On Thursday, October 24, 1929, known in history as Black Thursday, owners began a massive unloading of stocks which they feared would quickly decline in price and ruin them. Excessive selling of stocks on that day drove prices to disastrously low levels. The following Tuesday more than 16 million shares of stock were offered at any price they could gather--most going without buyers. The market crash had begun and the Great Depression was to follow.¹²

As already mentioned, the majority of writers and political and economic commentators wrote in praise of the business boom and predicted it would go on forever. Those

¹¹John Kenneth Galbraith, The Great Crash 1929 (New York: Time, Inc., 1961), p. 91.

¹²Graebner, p. 1042.

who raised their voices in warning against the speculative frenzy were a minority who were not listened to. In light of what happened, those who did raise their voices in warning seem profound today. In Provo, Utah, the editor of the local newspaper was as sensitive to what was going on in the economy as many editors in larger cities. The editor of the Herald was one voice among the few who sensed that the speculative mania could only lead to doom.

CHAPTER EIGHT

POLITICS

How were the League of Nations, the "Red Scare," "Normalcy," Coolidge, Hoover, Al Smith, the tariff, prohibition, and other items treated in the Herald? First of all, Provo, like the majority of the rest of the nation, followed the conservative, Republican and pro-business tide of the times and yet had a strong undercurrent of progressivism. Second, Provo supported the national prohibition act in theory, although not always in practice, as did most of the rest of urban America.

In 1919, a pathological overreaction against communist activity in the United States, known as the Red Scare, took place. Communist sympathizers were hunted down and subjected to imprisonment and sometimes violent persecution. Aliens and other foreign-born characters received unusual persecution, too. In November 1919, 249 aliens, Emma Goldman among them, were deported by Attorney General A. Mitchel Palmer to Russia.

Although no actual acts of violence against aliens were recorded in Provo, a strong denouncement appeared in the April 1, 1920 editorial of the Herald calling communism a

"peril to Civilization," threatening to engulf Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, India, Persia, Japan, and China. The editorial closed by calling upon the average citizen to "combat radicalism in whatever form it manifests itself."¹

In 1913, the sixteenth amendment, which provided for a federal income tax, was ratified by the necessary two-thirds of the states. In the summer of 1920, a front page story in the Herald supported the federal income tax law. The Farm Bureau of Utah County advocated a state income tax like the one used by the federal government. The bureau called for a corporation tax, a personal income tax and an inheritance tax claiming that such taxation would move the burden of taxation to those who "could afford to pay."²

Soon after, a front page editorial by W. J. Reede appeared entitled "WHAT HAS SENATOR SMOOT DONE FOR UTAH?" Calling Senator Smoot a "moral man" but one who had not represented the ordinary people of the nation, Reede accused him of siding with the monied interests of the country:

Talk to the banker or monied man of Wall Street, the financial districts of Chicago, San Francisco, or any other large city and your name [Smoot] be mentioned and at once words of praise

¹"Real Danger," Herald, April 1, 1920, p. 2.

²"Farm Bureau Favors The Income Tax Law," Herald, July 10, 1929, p. 1.

spring forth. The bigger the monied interest the speaker has the louder the praise. Personally, the writer has not been overburdened with listening to praise for you from the common people, especially in Utah county, your home county. To be perfectly frank with you, I doubt very much that you could be elected to the office of constable in any precinct in Utah county.³

A major issue in the presidential election of 1920 was American entry into the League of Nations. The Democrats generally supported League membership and the Republicans generally opposed American entry. A group of powerful Republican senators, lead by Henry C. Lodge of Massachusetts and Senator Reed Smoot of Utah, favored entry with some "reservations" that President Wilson could not accept. The campaign was fought over entry into the League of Nations with "reservations," as the Republicans wanted, or entry without "reservations," as the Democrats wished.

On October 24, 1920, a few days prior to the election, two front page Herald articles appeared strongly supporting American entrance into the League of Nations. One of the articles, entitled "Progressive Republican Favors League of Nations," was written by a "local businessman" whose name was not given. The story had strong words of praise for Wilson's peace efforts in Paris and strong words of

³"What Has Senator Smoot Done For Utah?" Herald, July 22, 1920, p. 1.

condemnation for both Senator Smoot's and J. Reuben Clark's opposition to entry into the League.⁴

The other article, entitled "Latter Day Saints Favor League of Nations," included quotations from both Heber J. Grant and Charles W. Penrose of the First Presidency of the LDS Church, and Elders George F. Richards and Orson F. Whitney of the LDS Council of the Twelve Apostles, all favoring American entry into the League of Nations.⁵

In the fall of 1920, Warren G. Harding was elected President. After his victory, President-elect Harding put together his cabinet of which two, Herbert Hoover and Charles E. Hughes, are remembered for their contributions to the administration.

An editorial in the Herald in February 1921 could probably be best summed up as "two first rate minds out of ten." Calling the cabinet "conservative" with "scant encouragement afforded the progressive cause," the editor warned that difficult times were ahead and wondered whether the cabinet was of the character to rise to the times. Commenting on the quality of the majority of the cabinet, the editor said:

⁴"Progressive Republican Favors League of Nations," Herald, October 25, 1920, p. 1.

⁵"Latter Day Saints Favor League Of Nations," Ibid.

And here we have the cabinet. Two first rate minds, two first rate reputations [Hoover and Hughes] out of ten. . . .The other eight mediocrities and unknowns.

With the two exceptions already noted, there is very little proved statesmanship in Mr. Harding's cabinet, no scholarship, no indication of outstanding ability, much less of genius.⁶

In addition to national events, the Herald carried a number of stories dealing with the unsettled situation in Europe and the possibility of another war there.

In August 1925, the Herald editor quoted the Danish statesman, George Brandes, who saw a "dark future" for Europe and the very real possibility of another war in Europe ahead.⁷

The following fall the subject of another war in Europe was again brought up when Professor Gerritt DeJong, dean of the College of Fine Arts at BYU, told the Provo Rotary that many in Germany felt the only way to right the wrong suffered in the last war was to have another war.

The university population in Germany has a very pronounced feeling that someday there will be another great war between Germany and France. They feel that Germany must be vindicated and that she must have her rights which they feel were abrogated in the war [1914-1918] and in the peace treaties that followed.⁸

⁶"The Harding Cabinet," Herald, February 28, 1921, p. 2.

⁷"Brandes Pessimistic," Herald, August 15, 1926, p. 2.

⁸"Another War Certain Says Dean G. De Jong," Herald, November 4, 1927, p. 4.

During the twenties the rise of the power and responsibility of the federal government with all its ramifications for the individual citizen continued at a steady pace. This reality did not go unnoticed or without comment in the Provo press. In the fall of 1926, Provo Judge Elias Hansen spoke to the Provo Kiwanis Club. In his talk he warned of the continued growth of the central government since the American Civil War and that a continuation of government concentration of power would lead to a "restriction of popular rule in America."⁹

Soon after, Utah Congressman E. O. Leatherwood spoke to the Provo Rotary Club on the dangers of centralization of government in Washington declaring that government control of education could result in the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution in the schools. He warned his audience to fight against such government encroachments.¹⁰

During the twenties many farmers approached desperate circumstances. Falling prices for produce, growing prices for farm equipment, and limited available help from the state and local governments caused many to seek aid from the federal government. The McNary-Haugen bill, sponsored by Senator Charles L. McNary of Oregon and Representative

⁹"Charter Of County Is Club Topic," Herald, September 16, 1926, p. 1.

¹⁰"Rotary Speakers Urge Constant Watchfulness," Herald, September 17, 1926, p. 1.

Gilbert N. Haugen of Iowa, was an attempt to help distressed farmers. The federal government would purchase farm surpluses at a specific price and store them. In turn, the government would sell the surplus crops bought from farmers abroad at whatever price they could get. The difference in the price paid and the price sold would be made up for in a tax levied on farmers, processors and transporters. Although the bill would be costly to both farmers and eventually taxpayers, a majority of farmers supported the bill.

In the spring of 1928 Frank Evans, general counsel of the American Farm Bureau, spoke to the Provo Kiwanis. Mr. Evans told the Provo audience that the McNary-Haugen bill was "practical" and the best hope for American farmers.¹¹

A few months prior to this the Utah Farm Bureau had hosted a large meeting to air tax problems among Utah farmers. The topic discussed was "Equalization of the Tax Burden" which meant lower taxes for farmers and higher taxes for industry.¹²

In 1921, Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall persuaded President Harding to transfer control of the naval oil reserves at Elk Hill, California and Teapot Dome,

¹¹"Evans Says Measure Is Practicable," Herald, May 17, 1928, p. 1.

¹²"Tax Problem To Be Aired At Mammoth Farm Bureau Meet," Herald, February 15, 1928, p. 1.

Wyoming to the Interior Department. The next year Fall secretly leased Elk Hill to Edward L. Doheny and Teapot Dome to the oil company of Harry F. Sinclair. In 1923, Thomas J. Walsh began an investigation which revealed that Doheny had "lent" Fall \$100,000 and Fall had received \$85,000 in cash and \$223,000 in bonds from Sinclair. Fall, Doheny, and Sinclair were acquitted of conspiracy to defraud the government in a series of trials that received strong condemnation nationwide. Fall was convicted of bribery in 1929, fined \$100,000, and sentenced to a year in jail where he spent one month.¹³

The Fall-Doheny-Sinclair trials received mostly negative attention in the Provo press. The assumption was that all three men were guilty of fraud and had used their money and power to win acquittal. Commenting on the whole series of hung juries and trials that characterized the whole affair, the editor of the Herald had this to say in 1927:

In fact, the whole proceedings in the oil scandal cases have been a travesty on justice and a demonstration of what money can do to ravish justice.

Verily, it is a good time for Chief Justice Taft to again declare that the administration of American justice is a disgrace to civilization.¹⁴

¹³Blum, p. 625.

¹⁴"'Horse-Play,' By Justice," Herald, November 7, 1927, p. 2.

A few days later the editor again took up the Harding scandals in a strong attack on Fall and Sinclair's attempts to bribe the jury in their fraud case:

"Fixing the jury," declares Atty. Pomerene, who is prosecuting Fall and Sinclair, "strikes at the very heart of the judicial system and the Constitutional processes of the government."

The maximum penalty for such crime is \$5000 fine and six years imprisonment.

A chicken-stealing penalty for assassination¹⁵ of the government! Verily, Justice is cross-eyed.

During the First World War, the Allies--Britain, France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Finland, Hungary, and others--borrowed millions of dollars from the United States to continue their war effort. After the war it was assumed by the United States that the allies would repay their war debts in full and on time. Severe financial conditions in most of the allied nations, especially Germany's refusal to repay the reparations owed to the allies, made it increasingly difficult for others to repay the United States. This controversy over debt repayment reached a crisis point during the twenties.

In Provo the matter of allied repayment was taken up in the press with strong support for repayment. During the summer of 1926, the Herald editor saw "a lot of paydays" for the United States as a result of the money owed by the allies.¹⁶

¹⁵"Justice Cross-Eyed," Herald, November 8, 1927, p. 2.

¹⁶"Uncle Sam's Debtors," Herald, July 27, 1926, p. 2.

A few days later the editor wrote on France's unwillingness to repay her war debt to the United States. European resentment at the United States' insistence that the debt be paid had prompted cries of "Uncle Shylock" in European capitals. Taking affront at this verbal abuse, the editor of the Provo newspaper wondered how those "ungrateful" European nations would have fared in the war if "Uncle Shylock" had refused to loan them the money in the first place.¹⁷

Soon after this the Herald had praise for tiny Belgium because she was trying to repay her war debt and not "crying" about it. Belgium had chosen to sell the state-owned railroad system to private capital and use the receipts from the sale to help finance the repayment of the war debt.¹⁸

Leading political figures of the twenties received coverage in the Provo press. During the 1920 presidential election, the Herald strongly supported the Democratic candidate James G. Cox because of his support of American entry into the League of Nations.¹⁹ The Herald also denounced the Republican candidate Warren G. Harding for his

¹⁷"Pocketbook War," Herald, August 3, 1926, p. 2.

¹⁸"Belgium Does Not Beg," Herald, August 4, 1926, p. 2.

¹⁹"Straw Vote Favors Cox In Provo," Herald, October 25, 1920, p. 1.

ambiguous position on American entry into the League of Nations. Harding, however, won the November 1920 election.

On June 22, 1921, a front page story appeared about Samuel Gompers' reelection as head of the American Federation of Labor "amid scenes of wild enthusiasm" in Denver a few days prior to the date above. In his victory speech, carried in part in the Herald, Mr. Gompers announced that the union movement would not submit to the wishes of management that they accept lower wages without opposition, nor would the union submit to editorial cries that they were too aggressive:

The American trade union movement will not submit to dictation from the forces of corruption or greed--neither the Hearsts nor the Garys can chart our course or select our leaders.

The whole work of the convention. . . mean[s] for the future a united, progressive, militant movement, following upon a progressive, fruitful and militant past.²⁰

In the summer of 1926, the Herald editor commented on President Coolidge's lack of leadership in political matters:

Not since the days of Roosevelt and Wilson has there been a real big man in the White House who has had the courage, ability, and initiative to assume the leadership in Congress and drive through the legislation which common sense,

²⁰"Gompers Re-Elected Head Of American Labor," Herald, June 22, 1921, p. 1.

prudence and necessity demands. Both parties are almost devoid of constructive leadership. Statesmanship has gone out of fashion and political expediency has taken its place.²¹

In October 1926, socialist leader Eugene Debs died. Throughout his life Debs had worked tirelessly for the American worker. At the time of his passing the Herald editor wrote a moving tribute to Debs:

While grave and silent men lower a wasted form to the midwest clay, we again see the benign face of the great leader as he passed in happy companionship among the world's toilers. We feel again the quick, warm handclasp; are again utterly disarmed by the engaging smile. If we had raised any defenses against the man, they were vanquished at the first sound of his gentle voice.²²

In January of 1928--a Presidential election year--the editor asked whether the democratic governor of New York and potential presidential candidate Al Smith would carry on the progressive programs of the then departed Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Robert LaFollette. The editor hoped that Al Smith would carry on the progressive tradition of the three progressive leaders.²³

By August 1928, the presidential candidates had been chosen and the campaign was on. Herbert Hoover had been chosen as the republican candidate and Al Smith the

²¹"Slandering the Athenians," Herald, June 1, 1926, p. 2.

²²"Gene Debs Is Gone," Herald, October 28, 1926, p. 2.

²³"Smith, Progressive," Herald, January 10, 1928, p. 2.

democratic. That month the editor spoke on the basic differences between the political philosophies of the two candidates, Smith's progressivism and Hoover's conservatism.

Smith may be said at this election to represent the wave of feeling against repression: he is the symbol of the city man's growing distaste for harassing regulation. Hoover, on the other hand, represents the status quo; he will be the champion of the people who wish to "let well enough alone."²⁴

Later that month the editor of the Provo newspaper came out in favor of Al Smith's plan to change the National Prohibition Law because it was not effective at that time.²⁵ Soon after that the editor strongly endorsed Al Smith's advocacy of public ownership of water power.²⁶

In the fall of 1928, less than a month prior to the election, the editor wrote a very friendly editorial about President Calvin Coolidge who had chosen not to run for re-election in 1928.

Writing on the fact that many people saw President Coolidge as an "unemotional, cold-blooded" man without any feeling, the editor asked if that accusation could really be

²⁴"Which Way the Wind Blows," Herald, August 1, 1928, p. 2.

²⁵"Out In the Open at Last!" Herald, August 23, 1928, p. 2.

²⁶"Smith's Platform," Herald, August 27, 1928, p. 2.

true in light of the following speech that President Coolidge had given while campaigning for Herbert Hoover in Bennington, Vermont.

While his train passed through Bennington, the President yielded to the request of the crowd for a speech. As the editor said, these "are not the words of an unemotional man."

Vermont is a state I love. I could not look upon the peaks of Ascutney, Whittier or Mansfield without being moved in a way that no other state could move me. It was here that I first saw the light of day; here I received my bride; here my dead lie pillowed upon the everlasting hills.

I love Vermont because of her hills and valleys her scenery and invigorating climate. But, most of all, because of her indomitable people. They are a race of pioneers who almost beggared themselves for others. If the spirit of liberty should vanish in the Union and our institutions should languish, it could all be restored by the generous store held by the people of this brave little state.²⁷

Prior to the election, Herbert Hoover returned to his home state of California to cast his vote. His train passed through Provo enroute to Palo Alto, California. "A vast crowd, extend[ing] from one end of the station platform to the other, cheered voriferously" as the candidate and his wife appeared on the rear platform of their train. A bouquet of flowers was given Mr. and Mrs. Hoover. Mr.

²⁷"A Different Coolidge," Herald, October 2, 1928, p. 2.

Hoover gave no speech although he expressed his appreciation for the turnout and the flowers.²⁸

Many of the significant political events of the decade such as the Red Scare, the tariff, Teapot Dome, rural troubles, war debts owed the United States, and arms limitation were all carried in the local newspaper in some depth. In addition, thought-provoking words were written about many of the leading political figures of the day, including Al Smith, Calvin Coolidge, Robert LaFollette, Warren G. Harding and Eugene Debs. Provo was aware of what was going on nationally and eager to comment on it during the decade.

²⁸"Hoover Gets Big Welcome," Herald, November 5, 1928, p. 1.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

The twenties are probably best remembered for bootleggers and their product, most of which was consumed by people who lived in the big cities. As David Shannon said, National Prohibition "was observed best in rural areas and small towns," whereas in cities, "speakeasies operated fairly openly."¹ Although the observations may not be entirely accurate, the cities are remembered for their wetness and the country for its dryness during the Jazz Age.

Not only was the violation of the National Prohibition Law remembered as an urban occurrence, but almost every other social activity that made the decade unique is remembered by many writers as an urban occurrence.

As mentioned earlier, Carl Degler said:

The twenties have been called the "Jazz Age," characterized by wild parties, aggressive females, and heavy drinking. But while the decade had these aspects, they were largely limited to the upper class of the largest metropolitan areas.²

¹Shannon, p. 134.

²Degler, p. 196.

Norman Graebner, agreed with Degler when he said, "Music, literature, clothing styles entertainment exemplified by the radio and movies, and mass communication all found their source in urban America."³

Provo was a very small community during the Jazz Age and remains small even today. Provo was surrounded by high mountains with only a few paved roads and railroads passing through. The largest city in Utah, Salt Lake City, was 60 miles to the north and it was really no more than a large town of 47,000 during the decade. Provo was mainly a rural area where farming remained the largest industry throughout the decade. This small community had few immigrants, few blacks, and few Jews during the decade and was a largely fundamentalist community with a predominant church that opposed the consumption of alcohol, whether legal or not.

As such, it would be expected that Provo would have few drinkers, few wild parties, few wild youth, little jazz in the dance halls, and probably little interest in what was going on in the big cities. If the popular concept is accurate, Provo would be dry, moral, and even a little dull.

The reality is that Provo was none of these, as this paper has shown. Stills abounded as did drinking and gambling among Provo citizens throughout the decade. Provo citizens, aroused by the drinking and smoking among their youth, signed petitions opposing such behavior in their

³Graebner, p. 976.

community. Federal prohibition agents had to be called into Provo to help the local police and sheriff enforce the numerous violations of the prohibition law. Nearly half of the citizens of Provo desired repeal of the National Prohibition Law during a citywide referendum taken in 1926. A 160 gallon still in full operation was raided just two blocks from the Provo county courthouse in 1928.

Provo citizens not only drank tremendous quantities of moonshine liquor but they danced to jazz music in local resorts. Provo claimed three dance halls during the decade and the newspaper headlines were full of reports written by the sheriff of too much liquor and drunkenness, and too much "wild dancing" and loud jazz music in the dance halls. The demand for jazz was so great that The Provo Band, a well-known traditional group, was forced to retire from service in 1925. The local newspaper was filled with warnings by the sheriff that "spooning," drinking and wild behavior would not be permitted at Provo resorts, suggesting that there was plenty of it going on.

Provo had movies as suggestive as any big city. By 1929, Provo had four movie houses, two of which had sound. The same suggestive and provocative movies that were being shown to big city audiences were being shown to Provo audiences who filled the theaters to see them.

There were bathing beauty contests on Provo stages watched by Provo citizens, and Provo merchants used the same

kind of sexy advertisements to attract buyers as did merchants in larger cities.

Provo had the American Legion, the Elks, Rotary, Kiwanis, and the Chamber of Commerce, all of which exhibited the same strong boomer spirit that was common in larger cities.

At the same time, there was a strong undercurrent of progressivism and skepticism about the New Era in Provo. William Jennings Bryan, a leading progressive, came to Provo and spoke to capacity crowds twice during the decade. His speeches, filled with strong words of condemnation for the wealthy, were wildly cheered by Provo audiences even when he denounced the rich.

In 1926, a Provo audience listened to a local speaker predict another war in Europe and in 1927 the editor of the Provo newspaper predicted a depression. Sophisticated analysis of Warren G. Harding's cabinet choices, the European refusal to pay their war debts to the United States, and Al Smith's progressivism all appeared in the Provo press which suggests that not only was Provo very wet and very wild, but it was also very sophisticated and urbane.

The purpose of this paper has been to show that one widely held assumption about the Jazz Age may not be entirely accurate: the idea that the social behavior that characterized the twenties only happened in the cities while the small towns were very dry and very backward. This paper

has shown that Provo was not only as wet as any larger city but was as sophisticated and as aware of what was happening in the world as any larger community.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Secondary Sources

- Allen, Frederick Lewis. Only Yesterday, An Informal History of the Twenties. New York: Bantam Books, 1946.
- Allen, James B. and Leonard, Glen M. The Story of the Latter-Day Saints. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976.
- Athearn, Robert G. World War I And The Twenties. Vol. 13. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1963.
- Bailey, Thomas A. and Kennedy, David M. The American Pageant. Vol. 2. 7th ed. Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath & Co., 1982.
- Bailyn, Bernard, et al. The Great Republic. Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath & Co., 1977.
- Barnouw, Erik. Tube of Plenty, The Evolution of Modern Television. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Bird, Caroline. The Invisible Scar. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966.
- Blum, John M., et al. The National Experience. Vol. 2. 5th ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, Inc., 1978.
- Carter, Paul. The Twenties In America. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968.
- Degler, Carl M., et al. The Democratic Experience. Vol. 2. 4th ed. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman & Company, 1979.
- Forrest, McDonald. The United States in the Twentieth Century. 3rd ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Company, 1982.
- Freidel, Frank and Brinkley, Alan. America in the Twentieth Century. 3rd ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Company, 1982.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth. The Great Crash, 1929. 3rd ed. New York: Time Book Division, 1961.
- Graebner, Norman A. and Fite, Gilbert C. A History of the American People. Vol. 2. 5th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970.
- Greene, Lawrence. The Era of Wonderful Nonsense. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1939.
- Gruver, Rebecca Brooks. An American History. Vol. 2. 3rd ed. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1981.
- Handlin, Oscar. Al Smith and His America. Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1958.
- Hicks, John D. Republican Ascendancy, 1921-1933. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960.
- Hofstadter, Richard. The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. Vol. 2. 2nd ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Company, 1955.
- Huthmacher, Joseph. Trial By War and Depression: 1917-1941. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1973.
- Link, Arthur S. and Catton, William B. American Epoch. Vol. 2. 3rd ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts Company, 1960.
- Leuchtenburg, William E. The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.
- Malone, Dumas and Rauch, Basil. War and Troubled Peace, 1917-1941. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1973.
- Merz, Charles. The Dry Decade. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1931.
- McCoy, Donald R. Calvin Coolidge: The Quiet President. New York: Macmillan Company, 1967.
- Miller, Marilyn and Moffitt, John. Provo, A Story of People In Motion. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1974.
- Morison, Samuel Eliot, Commager, Henry Steele, and Leuchtenburg, William E. The Growth of the American Republic. Vol. 2. 6th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.

- Morris, Lloyd. Postscript To Yesterday. America: The Last Fifty Years. New York: Random House Publishing Company, 1947.
- Mayer, George H. The Republican Party, 1854-1966. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Murray, Robert K. The Harding Era. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969.
- _____. The Politics of Normalcy. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973.
- _____. The Red Scare. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955.
- Perrett, Geoffrey. America in the Twenties. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.
- Phillips, Cabell. From the Crash To the Blitz, 1929-1939. Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1969.
- Robinson, Eugene and Bornet, Vaughn. Herbert Hoover. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1975.
- Romasco, Albert U. The Poverty of Abundance. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Sann, Paul. The Lawless Decade. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1957.
- Schlesinger, Arthur M. Jr. The Crises of the Old Order. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Company, 1957.
- Schwartz, Jordan A. The Interrgum of Despair. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1970.
- Shannon, David A. Between The Wars, America 1919-1941. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965.
- _____. Twentieth Century America. Vol. 2. 4th ed. Chicago: Rand-McNally Publishing Company, 1977.
- Sklar, Robert. Movie-Made America, A Cultural History of American Movies. 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan Company, 1976.
- Sinclair, Andrew. The Available Man. New York: Macmillan Company, 1965.
- _____. Prohibition. The Era of Excess. Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1962.

- Slosson, Preston, W. The Great Crusade and After, 1914-1928. New York: Macmillian Company, 1930.
- Sullivan, Mark. Our Times. The United States, 1900-1925. VI The Twenties. New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1935.
- Weisberger, Bernard A., et al. The Story of America. Pleasantville, New York: The Reader's Digest Association, 1975.
- White, William Allen. A Puritan in Babylon, The Story of Calvin Coolidge. New York: Capicorn Publishing Company, 1965.
- White, Edmund, et al. This Fabulous Century. Vol. 3. New York: Time-Life Books, Inc., 1969.

Primary Sources

- Commager, Henry Steele, ed. Documents Of American History. 8th ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968.
- Davis, Ronald L., ed. The Social and Cultural Life of the 1920s. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972.
- Delorme, Roland L. and McInnis, Raymond G., ed. Antodemocratic Trends in Twentieth Century America. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969.
- Hofstadter, Richard, ed. Great Issues in American History: From the Revolution to the Civil War, 1765-1865. New York: Vintage Books, 1958.
- _____. Great Issues in American History: From Reconstruction to the Present Day, 1864-1969. New York: Vintage Books, 1969.
- Hoover, Herbert. The State Papers of Herbert Hoover, ed. William S. Myers. Vol. 2. New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1970.
- Leighton, Isabel, ed. The Aspirin Age, 1919-1941. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949.
- Mowry, George E., ed. The Twenties, Fords, Flappers and Fanatics. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963.

- Nash, Roderick, ed. The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930. Chicago: Rand-McNalley and Company, 1970.
- Provo Daily Herald. January 1, 1920-December 31, 1929.
- Plesur, Milton, ed. Intellectual Alienation in the 1920s. Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1970.
- _____, ed. The 1920s, Problems and Paradoxes. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1969.
- Shannon, David A., ed. Progressivism and Postwar Disillusionment. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966.
- Shover, John, ed. Politics of the 1920s. Waltham, Massachusetts: Ginn-Blaisdell, Inc., 1970.
- Tipple, John, ed. The Crises of the American Dream. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968.
- Wilson, Joan Hoff, ed. The Twenties: The Critical Issues. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972.

PROVO IN THE JAZZ AGE: A CASE STUDY

Gary C. Kunz

Department of History

M.A. Degree, August 1983

ABSTRACT

Many historians have suggested in their writings that much of the social behavior that made the decade of the twenties unique had their origins in the urban centers, leaving the small towns taking no active participation in the Jazz Age.

The purpose of this paper is to show that Provo, Utah, a small, isolated community, took a very active part in the Jazz Age, contrary to what has been suggested. There was a considerable quantity of drunkenness, bootlegging, wild dancing and partying in Provo during the decade, much more than historians suggest there should have been in a community the size and location of Provo.

In addition, there was a strong progressive spirit in Provo during an age that is best remembered for its political conservatism.

The prevalent historical thesis that small towns were bone dry and very moral and conservative and backward does not appear to hold true for one small town during the decade, suggesting that other small towns across the nation may not fit the traditional historical stereotype.

COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

H. Carleton Marlow

H. Carleton Marlow, Committee Chairman

Frank W. Fox

Frank W. Fox, Committee Member

James B. Allen

James B. Allen, Department Chairman