Editor's Pages

A TRANSITION PERIOD, 1907-1911*

WILLIAM O. LYNCH

Industrial developments of the last quarter of the nineteenth century presented new problems that were alarming to many of the leaders and thinkers of the time. Large corporations, with the United States Steel Corporation at the head of the list, were characteristic of the opening period of the twentieth century. The new prosperity was accompanied by rising prices for the necessaries and common comforts of life. The high cost of living became a matter of general concern and a regular topic of conversation and newspaper comment. The World War years and after were ahead, and, not knowing about what was to come, the people felt that conditions had become complex indeed.

By the year 1907, when a short, severe panic came, the age of the automobile and the moving picture was being ushered in. In the summer of that year, one could drive over the roads of an agricultural county of Indiana throughout the season with a possibility of not meeting either of the two cars owned and operated within the limits of the county. It was possible to find a moving picture entertainment, the admission fee being five or ten cents, occasionally more, but the program was made up of several short features. The age of the motor-car and cinema was just beyond, but it was impossible to conjecture how rapid would be the expansion of these industries in the five-year period beginning with 1907. The increase in the number of automobiles and in the number of moving-picture theaters was phenomenal in this half-decade, though but a slow beginning had marked the preceding years.

I gave little thought to the moving picture shows provided for the entertainment of the public in the experimental years, but I was greatly interested in motor cars. I was doubtful whether I should ever own or drive one, but the problem created by horseless vehicles for the transportation

---

*This autobiography was begun in the March issue of 1986, and further installments have appeared in each quarterly issue since.

1 My cash account indicates that I attended a "moving picture show" at Madison, Wisconsin, on July 12, 1907 (15 cents), and again July 19 (10 cents). I remember nothing about either one.

2 The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, 1905-1909, lists a large number of articles on the automobile. Fewer articles dealing with moving pictures appeared in those years, though they were common.
of passengers were fascinating. I remember how seriously
the question, whether the motive power of the automobile
should be furnished by a steam engine, a gasoline engine,
or an electric motor, was discussed. One day in 1908, as I
was riding from Madison, Wisconsin, to Chicago on a North-
western train, I saw a tiller of the soil seated high on the
spring-seat of a farm-wagon, driving a good team, and tow-
ing a "white steamer" along a road towards a small city.
This was not an uncommon sight in those days. Indeed it
was something to joke about and may were the remarks in-
dulged in at the expense of the unfortunate motorist who
found himself stranded on a country road at the mercy of
a farmer and his team. An intelligent gentleman who was
sharing a seat with me at the time launched into a discus-
sion of cars, and expressed his strong conviction that only
motor-cars propelled by steam would stand the test. The
steam-car was easily the car of the future, he declared, and
it would not be long until we would see no others. I was
not convinced, but conceded that my temporary acquaintance
might be correct. It was but a short time after this, how-
ever, until the gasoline motor proved its superiority, if it had
not already done so.

There were many mechanical and other problems that
arose in connection with the automobile, but the one that
most concerned the general public was—"Who can afford
to own cars for personal and family use?" Articles appeared
in leading magazines from time to time dealing with this
very natural query. The general view was that the masses
of the people would have to depend on horses or walk when
short distances were involved, and ride passenger trains
when making longer trips for many years to come. As cars
became cheaper and more dependable, farmers and laborers
began to buy freely, and the first tremendous increase in the
purchase of cars by common people took place from 1907
to 1912. As time went on and dealers took in more and
more old cars in part payment for new ones, the growth of

8 Articles dealing with the expense of buying and keeping up an automobile
included the following: A. Sangree, "The Poor Man and the Motor Car," Harper's
Weekly, Jan. 13, 1906; E. Wood, "Do I Want an Automobile?" Everybody's Maga-
1906; H. B. Haines, "The Automobile and the Average Man," Review of Reviews,
Jan., 1907; D. A. Willey, "Who Can Afford an Automobile?" Good Housekeeping,
May, 1907.

4 An advertisement in Harper's Weekly for Aug. 27, 1907, gives an illustration
of a Ford Roadster at $600, with the slogan, "Watch the Ford Go By," printed
in italics above the picture.
the used-car business made it almost unanimous in regard
to the ownership of automobiles.

Rapid changes in the old order were accompanied by
what were then regarded as deep stirrings of the political
waters. Before the “menace” of Bryanism was fully over-
come, a leader of the party of safety and sanity was playing
a “dangerous” role. Placed in the vice-presidency in order
that he might not again be heard from, Col. Theodore Roose-
velt was suddenly thrust into the White House by the hand
of fate. By 1904, he was looked upon as a vigorous reform-
er. Conservative Democrats took their turn in that year,
and, with Judge Alton B. Parker as their candidate, staged
a rather feeble contest with the supporters of the champion
of the “square deal”. Regular Republicans gave their votes
to the man with the “big stick”, though many of them cast
their ballots with grave misgivings. In the Middle West and
more especially in the trans-Mississippi West, former Popu-
lists and Bryan Democrats rallied to the support of Colonel
Roosevelt. I saw nothing to fear and much to admire in
the President and marked my ballot for him on election day
of 1904 with considerable enthusiasm. I was pleased with
his activities and leadership throughout his second term, and
even voted for William Howard Taft on his recommendation
in 1908. The changes wrought while the first Roosevelt was
in the White House do not seem startling or fundamental in
retrospect, but it must be remembered that he was the pio-
neer President in the attempt to eliminate some of the in-
justices that had come with great industrial changes. It
required courage and a willingness to fight strenuously to
accomplish a little. I now believe that the redoubtable Colo-
nel was more fully absorbed in the fighting than he was in
the getting of results.

For several years I heard things about the University
of Wisconsin that aroused my interest. When at last some
of the obstacles that blocked my way were eliminated, I went
to Madison and enrolled for the summer session of 1907.
Founded less than sixty years earlier, the University
now boasted an enrollment of about 4,000 students during
the regular year. The summer school, already widely known,
drew graduate students from many states. The departments
of history, political economy, and political science stood out
prominently, as did the College of Agriculture. The Library of
the Wisconsin State Historical Society and the University Library were both housed in the same splendid building. It was almost impossible to believe that such a remarkable library as that of the Historical Society could have been built up in a state so young in such an incredibly brief period. Indeed, no American University, with comparable resources, has ever equaled the achievements of the University of Wisconsin in the twenty years extending from 1887 to 1907, and probably none ever will.

The history department was not extensive. The work of the summer session of 1907 was carried by five teachers of professorial rank and one instructor, and it required but nine teachers to carry all the history courses that were offered during either semester of the year 1907-1908. Nevertheless, the department was a great department and the University as a whole was a great institution in the finest sense of the term under the presidency of Charles R. Van-Hise.

The summer of 1907 was a pleasant one in Madison, and every day was one to be appreciated. I enrolled in a seminar with Dr. Turner and also in his course in the “History of the West”.

He was at his best in this period of his enviable career, and, though one says nothing new when giving him praise, I very soon became a champion of this unusual student of American history. It was at once apparent that he was first of all a student—a modest man who was anxious to learn whatever he could from any source at any time. I think he guided his students mainly by working along as one of them. In the course in western history, I prepared a short paper on Kansas in the period from 1888 to 1898. While working on this report and on the topic assigned to me as a member of the seminar group, “The Early Period of the Whig Party in the Southern Seaboard States,” I learned something of resources of the splendid State Historical Society Library.

While gathering material on the Whig Party in the older southern states I became interested in the party activities of Calhoun, and decided to prepare a master’s thesis on his party relationships. This study, I completed in the summer of 1908 under the title, “The Party Relations of John C.

---

6 Fulmer Mood, “Turner’s Formative Period,” in an able essay recently published as the “Introduction” to a volume, The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner, brought out by the University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

8 One of the members of Dr. Turner’s seminar group of the summer of 1907 was Prof. P. Orman Ray, now of the University of California.
Calhoun." It was not an exhaustive piece of work, but the labor performed was worth much to me. I have since supervised the preparation of a good many master's theses, and I think the great value of the performance, in almost every instance, was what accrued to the student. I was never willing to publish my thesis, but because of my effort to understand Calhoun thirty years ago and since, I have not been satisfied with any biography of the South Carolina leader that has so far been published.

Besides my work with Frederick Jackson Turner in the short summer session of 1907, I carried a course with Richard T. Ely on "Socialism" and followed it up in the summer of 1908, with a course on the "Distribution of Wealth." Dr. Ely was then a liberal student of economics and one of the able and noted men of the University. I had lived long enough to be somewhat disturbed about the division of the social product, and I went into the classes of Dr. Ely with an open mind hoping to be enlightened. He was entirely fair in his approach, and he dealt frankly with his subject and his students. No very definite conclusions were reached, but, since the same is still true, one can not find fault with what was said by a professor of economics a generation ago. A student under Dr. Ely when he was nearing the climax of his career could not easily forget him. His face was round and pink and very boyish in appearance. His voice was soft and one attending his lectures had to listen closely to catch his words. When deeply interested, he did not become more vigorous, but turned his head sidewise, lowered his voice, and communed with himself almost as if no class were present.

At the end of the fall semester of the year 1907-1908, I gave up my place in the Elkhart High School, and, after spending about a month at the University of Wisconsin completing a reading course which I had undertaken to do in absentia, I enrolled for the second semester of the year 1907-1908. Remaining for the summer session of 1908, I was granted the A.M. degree in the fall of that year. During the semester ending in June, 1908, I had the privilege of taking a course in the history of the South with Dr. Ulrich B. Phillips, and a

---

7 Phillips was a charming young southerner from Georgia who had recently completed the requirements for a doctor's degree at Columbia University. Born in 1877, he was in his thirty-first year when I was in his class at Wisconsin.
seminar with Dr. Edward A. Ross. In the catalogue, the subject of this new seminar was listed as a "Seminary in Special Criminology," but my recollection is that Professor Ross at first called it a "Seminary in Modern Sin." As a preliminary to the course, the members of the group read a little book just off the press with the title, Sin and Society, which sold for one dollar per copy. The catalogue described the course very well in five lines: "A study of the nature, extent, varieties, and effects of contemporary wrong doing, especially in politics and business, and an inquiry as to how far the phenomena may be explained by changes in American life and society."

The very atmosphere of the University was stimulating and wholesome. So many of the faculty were right out on the firing line in the various fields—searching for facts, groping for answers to all sorts of new questions, and hopefully believing that man could make over the out-of-joint world that had recently seen so many changes—that it would have been well-nigh impossible for one not to get caught in the current. I was convinced then, as I am still, that there was no place where it was better for me to be than at the University of Wisconsin at that time.

It was in the summer of 1908 while I was finishing my master's thesis that I took my second course with Dr. Ely. I had just enough work with Professor Dana Carleton Munro to observe his passion for the truth and his devotion to the primary sources. Dr. Herman V. Ames of the University of Pennsylvania, who served as a visiting professor at Wisconsin for the summer session of 1908, gave a course on the "Political and Constitutional History of the United States, 1786-1837." As a student in his class, I was privileged to become well acquainted with Dr. Ames, especially since he read my thesis. Dr. Phillips likewise read my thesis, but neither he nor Dr. Ames directed my work in anyway. Dr. Turner kindly conferred with me a few times while the thesis was under way, though he was not on duty during

---

*In addition to these courses with Phillips and Ross, I carried a course with Dr. Alfred L. P. Dennis, England Under the Stuarts, and a seminar with Dr. Carl Russell Fish in the period of political reconstruction in the South. Dr. Dennis was a very competent student who made thorough preparation for each lecture. He was deeply interested in the political factors that determine historical development but cared little for the economic factors. In fact, he declared that the new school of historians would have a hard time to demonstrate that the history of the Stuart period was appreciably influenced by economic forces. Dr. Fish was unusually kind to his students, and was always genial and enthusiastic. His views of political reconstruction were in general harmony with those of Prof. William A. Dunning of Columbia. I had a strong desire to do some work with Prof. Paul S. Reinsch, but he was on leave in the Far East during my short period at Wisconsin.*
the spring semester or the summer session of 1908.

I went to the University of Wisconsin mainly because of what I had heard of Professor Turner. When I sat at his feet in the summer of 1907, and later during the year 1911-1912 at Harvard, no matter what geographic belt was under consideration there was always a search for facts relative to the period of colonization of that area. There was emphasis on the “recurrence of the process of evolution in each Western area reached in the process of expansion,” and there was a close adherence to the notion expressed in the second paragraph of “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” that American development has exhibited not merely an advance along a single line but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character . . . .

The fundamental point in Professor Turner’s teaching was that in each successive frontier area there was a new establishment of democracy which reacted on the older areas, each of which had earlier passed through the pioneer stage. He often made a further statement in his lectures, the purport of which was that, with the disappearance of the frontier, it would be more and more necessary for the American people to preserve democracy through legislation. This would include the regulation of the activities of capitalists who hoped to retain as much freedom of action as it was customary for men to exercise in the period when the frontier advanced across the country. He frequently mentioned James J. Hill and Edward H. Harriman as examples of business leaders who had taken advantage of the lack of government regulation to carry through their plans in an age that came fast on the heels of the pioneer period.

I cut the bridges behind me when I left Elkhart, indulging a hope that I might find a job by the time I should complete the requirements for a master’s degree. Early in the spring of 1908, Dr. Ross sought me out and introduced me to an educator by the name of Wilson who was president of the State Normal School at Ellensburg, Washington. President Wilson was seeking a man to teach history in his institution and seemed to look upon me with fa-
After his return to Ellensburg, he wrote me that the finances of the school were in a temporary tangle. Because of other developments that come in rapid succession, I never learned what might have been the outcome at Ellensburg. I soon received a letter from Dr. James A. Woodburn of Indiana University, my staunch supporter, in season and out, from the day that I first entered one of his classes, inquiring whether I would be interested in the new position of critic teacher of history in the Bloomington High School which involved the supervision of practice teaching to be done by history majors of the University who were preparing to teach. The salary suggested was a fair one for that period and it seemed to me that there would be a chance to do a useful work, hence my response was a friendly one. I don't deny that the need of a job influenced me. The Superintendent of the Bloomington schools at the time was the man who has for a number of years served as the head of the School of Education of Indiana University, Dean H. Lester Smith. It was not long until I received notice that I had been appointed to serve in the dual capacity of teacher of history and critic.

Just ahead of this welcome information from Professor Woodburn, there came a letter from President W. W. Parsons stating that another teacher of history was to be added to the Normal School faculty. Would I care to be considered? I wrote to both Dr. Woodburn and President Parsons, stating to each what I had heard from the other. I offered to accept the Bloomington position unless there should be a willingness on the part of the authorities to await the outcome at Terre Haute. I was generously granted a respite and so informed President Parsons. In about a week, I received word that I had been appointed assistant professor of history in the Indiana State Normal School, now Indiana State Teachers College. In September of 1908, thirty years ago, I began my work as a teacher of history in one of the state educational institutions of Indiana. I remained with the Normal School for ten years, served two years at the Ball State Teachers College (then, the Eastern Division of the Indiana State Normal School), and have now...
completed eighteen years at Indiana University.

During the three years from September, 1908, to September, 1911, I taught both American and European History. In short, I had a sort of settee instead of a chair, as I attempted to give from time to time courses in Greek, Roman, Medieval, Modern and English history while devoting the other half of my time to American history. It was impossible not to learn something with such a comprehensive program, though it was difficult to master any field. College instructors cannot all be provided with the opportunity to teach a narrow range of courses, but whenever I hear of a college teacher who is asked to ramble all over the field of history from Adam till now, I not only sympathize with the teacher but with the institution as well. At the end of three years, I obtained a leave of absence in order to do graduate work at Harvard University during the year 1911-1912.

When I returned to Terre Haute in 1908 to teach in the Normal School, from which I had been graduated twelve years earlier, I found that the institution had changed much in several ways, but very little in other respects. The older buildings had deteriorated somewhat, while the only building added to the physical plant since 1896, the Training School, was constructed of cheap looking brick. In the midst of noise and dirt, without a campus, and surrounded by a residence district that was receding in tone, the outward conditions were not inspiring. Between 1908 and 1917, several new buildings were added to the plant, greatly improving the facilities of the school. Prior to the launching of the building program of those years, there was a moment when it would have been comparatively inexpensive to move the institution to a site on the eastern, northern or southern edge of the city. This desirable change was not made, at the opportune time and the expansion of the plant anchored the school to the location originally chosen.

A college course had recently been added to the curriculum which was under the management of a College Course Committee. The chairman of this Committee, who occupied

---

10 In this period, the Manual Arts Building, the Library Building and the Science Building were constructed. Since the World War and especially since 1933, a new and extensive building program has been carried out, and successful attempts have been made to extend and beautify the grounds of the Indiana State Teachers College. I have been anxious for years to see the old, central structure torn down and rebuilt. This much to be desired improvement has not yet been undertaken. However, I hope to live long enough to see a new building replace the old one which constituted the entire plant when I entered the Normal School as a student forty-seven years ago last January.
a strategic position, was Prof. Frank Smith Bogardus. He was a forceful man who had come to the Normal School in 1904 as a teacher of European history. He was strongly backed by a group made up of most of the newer members of the faculty and a few of the older men. The members of this group, who constituted a quiet determined element, worked steadily to lift the work of the institution to a higher plane of scholarship. They exerted a deep influence from 1907 to 1917. I was happy to join this element, and did whatever I could to help it carry on effectively.

The annals of the poor are short and simple, and I need not tell much of the life of my family and self during the three uneventful years that elapsed before we went to Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1911. As a new member of the faculty earning my spurs, I had little to do save teach my classes. Though there were certain handicaps, I worked steadily on each field as I taught it, and made a supreme effort to stimulate my students to accomplish something worth while. I knew that whatever the nature of my opportunity it was the best that had ever come to me, and I struggled to make the most of it.

As an accompaniment of my real work, I learned in my first three years of college teaching some things that I have verified in the twenty-seven years that I have passed through since. One was that the faculty of any college is quite certain to contain persons that have no real education no matter what institutions they may have attended or what degrees they may have obtained. The school that has a faculty with a majority of keen-minded, truth seeking, intellectually honest professors is to be deeply congratulated. There are very apt to be reactionaries, “stuffed-shirts,” and snobs on any faculty, along with men and women who are entitled to rank with the noblest of the earth. In between, there is always the general body of dependable members, not brilliant but competent and sane, who can not be dispensed with by any institution. How a professor trained for his work and supposed to be an earnest seeker after the truth can be a confirmed reactionary in relation to any line of human activity is beyond my comprehension, but such there are. I fully believe that most faculties are kept above the water-line by less than ten per cent of the members, and that this portion does not, as a rule, draw one tenth of the total salary outlay.
Taking it by and large, a faculty is very much like any other group of trained persons—at least the grades of intelligence are about the same. In one thing, a faculty outclasses almost any other professional group—that is, in rugged individualism. I say this in spite of the dullness which characterizes most faculty meetings. I must add that, the wide-spread notion that the persons who make up a faculty are too dumb in regard to other things than teaching to come in out of the rain unless some lawyer, banker, manufacturer or merchant is at hand to suggest the wisdom of such a move, is false. In the matter of taking care of themselves, professors are, I feel, no whit worse off in ability than any other group. In fact, I am convinced by long observation that most professors can go farther on a modest income than can most lawyers, bankers, manufacturers or merchants. Indeed, these other classes have shaped things so that this is true from sheer necessity.

Though my wife taught successfully for a period in Elkhart, she said goodbye to the schoolroom when we left that city. Life moved pleasantly for her in Terre Haute, and she was active along several congenial lines. Our daughter, Mary Bernice, reached the age of six in the summer of 1911. She was a kindergarten pupil during the second semester of the preceding year, and spent her first regular year in a public school of Cambridge, Massachusetts. We were tempted to begin the buying of a home soon after we took up life in Terre Haute, but it seemed best to wait until after I should find the opportunity to do further graduate work. I knew college men who had placed themselves under a fatal handicap by buying a home. I felt that I must commit no such error, and Mrs. Lynch agreed with me.

I taught for twelve weeks during the summer of 1911, after which we stored our household effects and prepared to go East for a year. After recreating for a brief time in Carroll County, where we visited the home folks, we went to Logansport to take a Wabash train for Buffalo in the afternoon of September nineteenth. We spent the twentieth, a very beautiful day, at Niagara Falls, and left on a Boston train that evening. We reached Cambridge at about ten o'clock the following morning. About three days later, we were installed in an apartment at No. 47 Langdon Street. Cambridge Commons was not far away and beyond that was the Harvard Yard. Mary was ready to enter a nearby
grade school (Peabody School) and, incidentally, to learn unconsciously to speak English words as they are spoken by teachers and children in Cambridge; and Mrs. Lynch was ready to enjoy trips to Boston to shop at Filene's, or White's, or in other big stores, to attend Boston plays and concerts, and visit historic places. I was ready to put in more hours of work in an academic year than I had ever done before in my life, as a graduate student in Harvard University.\footnote{This autobiographical sketch will be continued in the issues of September and December of this year.}

Contributors to this issue: Dr. Daniel S. Robinson is professor of philosophy and head of the department at Indiana University. Edgar F. Kiser, M.D., is professor of medicine and lecturer in medical history at the Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis. Middleton Robertson lives at Deputy, Indiana. Julie LeClerc Knox, formerly teacher of Latin in the Crawfordsville High School, now lives in Vevay, Indiana. Milton Rubincam, whose wife is a granddaughter of David M. Parry, resides in Washington, D.C. Florence Goold (Mrs. H. T.) Watts of Vincennes is much interested in the early history of that city. Norma Fuller (Mrs. G. T.) Hawkins of Washington, D.C., is a niece of Sergeant-Major Blanchard who lost his life at Gettysburg. Joseph A. Batchelor is an instructor at Indiana University in the department of economics.