

## Jackson in 1934 on Jamestown in 1910

*To mark the 111th anniversary of the birth of Jamestown's Robert H. Jackson, we are pleased to publish an edited piece of his writing about this city.*

*Jackson, born in Spring Creek, Pa., in 1892, became a Jamestown regular after he graduated from Frewsburg High School in 1909. He spent the next year as a post-graduate student at Jamestown High School and graduated with the class of 1910. Three years later he was a lawyer, and in the next 20 years he became the great lawyer of this city and region and one of its leading Democrats.*

*In early 1934, Jackson went to Washington to join the New Deal under President Franklin D. Roosevelt and begin traveling the path that took him to the Cabinet as U.S. Attorney General, to the Supreme Court of the United States, and to Nuremberg as prosecutor of the principal surviving Nazis following World War II.*

*That spring, apparently on the occasion of the impending demolition of JHS and plans to break ground for its successor, a predecessor of this newspaper asked Jackson to write his recollections of Jamestown and the high school during his year as a student.*

*This essay by Robert H. Jackson, which has been edited by John Q. Barrett, professor of law at St. John's University School of Law in New York City and Elizabeth S. Lenna Fellow at the Jackson Center here in Jamestown, was published in 1934 with an eye-catching title:*

### Days When Girls Wore More Clothes and Less Make-up

By ROBERT H. JACKSON

Nearly a quarter century has passed since I graduated from Jamestown High School. This quarter century represents the high point of civilization. We are assumed to have such educational superiority and democratic control of our institutions that we shape our own destiny. Yet these years have been almost continuously crowded with events no one wished for and which brought individual and collective disaster. We began with a world war no one wanted and no one gained by, lived thru a peace that was unworkable, to a boom that undermined integrity and wound up in a panic and depression that left widespread suffering and loss. Yet as of old, life goes on, and in many ways is pleasant.

Physically, Jamestown was a different town in my school days. To appreciate how different, you must rebuild the city in imagination. You will leave out the Erie overhead crossings and new station and the Third Street bridge. They existed then only in conversation. You must take out the Hotel Jamestown, the Hotel Samuels and put in the Humphrey house and the Shearman house.

You must leave out the Telephone building, the Y.M.C.A., the Professional building, the Y.W.C.A., the Furniture Exposition building, the new bank buildings of the Bank of Jamestown and the National Chautauqua County bank, the Maddox building, the Palace and Winter Garden theaters. The era of building fraternal houses had not begun. There was no Norden Club, Odd Fellows temple, Eagle temple, Masonic temple, or Scottish Rite home. The obsolete structures they replaced must stand again in your imagination.

You must clear the streets of automobiles, do away with nearly every garage, and get out the horse-drawn vehicles. There were few automobiles and they mostly had only a couple of cylinders and were forever in trouble. Street cars were the popular form of transportation. New trolley lines reached surrounding country, but paved roads did not. Only the principal streets were paved and most streets were mud pools in winter and clouds of dust in summer. Roads to nearby towns were in spring almost impassible. Chain stores had only begun to appear.

Our social life was less mechanical and more individual. There were no radios, but the party line telephone took its place. There were two telephone sys-

tems, so the best informed telephone operator knew only half of the gossip.

Movies were just coming in, and road companies or stock companies entertained in the flesh at the Samuels Opera House. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "Ten Nights in a Bar Room" were popular plays. We waltzed and two-stepped and the years have made many changes but no improvements in dancing. Dances and parties then broke up about the time they now begin. The girls wore more clothes and less make-up. Playing cards was a pastime, not a trade. Smoking had not yet become effeminate, but like hard drinking still ranked as a man's vice. There were no golf courses in Jamestown and we had not yet learned that the correct way to exercise is to hire a caddy to carry our clubs.

Of money we had less, and spent less. Our amusements were simple and home made ones. Thrift was not despised and temptations to spend were few. Sunday saw young couples take long walks or bicycle rides. Snooty ones took buggy rides or trolley rides. Few went beyond walking distance of home. A trip to Celoron was an event. We were often late but the excuse of flat tires and running out of gas had not been invented. The most expensive dinner served in Jamestown was 75 cents and dinner was usually at noon and supper at evening.

We were all smug in the belief we were too civilized ever to go to war again.

There was no American Legion. The "old soldiers" were Civil War veterans and Spanish American War veterans were youngsters. Now we know more wars are in the making.

We had no income tax, senators were elected by the legislators and there were no direct primaries. We had party caucuses to nominate and the side that counted the votes usually won. In the conventions the event turned on which side unseated the most of the other side's delegates. Great training school for politics of a kind.

There was no workmen's compensation, and injured workmen took care of themselves, or had a lawsuit.

But there were elements of sameness about the political world. A Roosevelt had been in the White House and then as now, the timid, the propertied and the "stuffed shirts" were crying that civilization

was wrecked. Theodore had the country so scared it had elected Taft. Sam Carlson was mayor of the city and doing a little amateur "new dealing" on his own account. There were only a few Democrats and they divided into "Bryan Democrats" and "Cleveland Democrats." Both were scarce and protected by the game laws and regarded with amused tolerance by the Republicans who held every national state, county, city and town office. How have the mighty fallen!

In none of these changes was the old high school building changed. It's the same architectural monstrosity, the same fire trap it was then. In those days the high school did not look so unfitting as compared with the town, and to those of us who came in from the country it was a vast temple of learning — and fun. The new one will better fit the age and surroundings — it will never be more to the student than our old one was to us.

It is the teachers, not the building that makes the school. And what teachers we had. Milton J. Fletcher was the principal. Mary R. Willard was teaching dramatics to Madeline Osgood and the other girls in the Avon club and was trying to teach me to write speeches that Miss Bell (now Mrs. Ed Smith) was trying to teach me to deliver. The town has certainly been patient as we have kept practicing those lessons every time we could get an audience since.

Quite a group of us country boys and girls carried lunches and ate in the study hall. They were days of fun and hard work. If I wanted to turn states evidence on others of the class, I could tell of raids on the ice cream at parties, round-about trips by debating teams, unorthodox "experiments" in the laboratory, daring rescues from the teachers of "notes" lost in-transit from the girls to the boys side of the study hall, or how the pretense of a sick horse kept a certain party at Fluvanna going until nearly midnight when we had promised to start home at 10 o'clock. But such memories are interesting only to those who lived them and their recital would only prove that youth is now just what it was, and every shall be.

Such were those days — days of blessed memory.

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