

A New Amsterdam New Year

By F. A. MITCHEL

New Year's day has changed in a generation from what it was for 300 or more years. Till some thirty years ago it was devoted to making calls. The Dutchmen who settled New York, then called New Amsterdam, early in the seventeenth century, brought the custom with them from Holland. On the first New Year's day in the little town nestled about the fort on the point of Manhattan Island probably not a hundred, possibly not fifty, men made calls.

From where the New York custom house now stands east, west and north, for a distance perhaps of 500 yards, which embraced the town, on Jan. 1, the good housewives having spent the previous week in scrubbing, sweeping, dusting and polishing their homes, put on all the petticoats they possessed and in cap and collar sat themselves down in their parlors to receive callers.

Now, the day before one of the earliest of these New Year's days a bargain was struck between Katrina Van Gansbeck and her mother. Frau Van Gansbeck wished her daughter to marry Diederich Van Dusen, a rich shipowner, while Katrina preferred Anthony Van Horn, a young fur trader. I have called the former of these men a rich shipowner, and he certainly was, for he was the possessor of a sloop fully thirty feet long, on which he carried supplies to the settlers along the East river as far as Hell Gate and along the North river as far as Synthon Day-vil.

The bickerings between mother and daughter had for months past been embittering the life of the husband and father, Peter Van Gansbeck. No sooner did he come home from his work in the evening, pour out a cup of schnapps and light his pipe than the clatter commenced, and he was driven distracted. On this day before New Year's that has been mentioned when the turmoil commenced he cried out:

"Settle this matter between you, or by St. Nicholas, I will go back to Holland on the next ship that sails, leaving you two here to fight it out!"

"How settle, it?" asked mother and daughter at once.

"Tomorrow will be New Year's day. Some time between morning and evening Diederich Van Dusen and Anthony Van Horn will each make a call here. Let it be agreed between you that the one who calls nearest to the stroke of the town clock at noon shall be the favored suitor."

Frau Van Gansbeck was loath to accept this arrangement, for she did not trust her daughter, and Katrina was loath to accept it because she did not trust her mother, but each consented, thinking herself sufficiently sharp to outwit the other.

Then Peter settled himself to his bottle of schnapps and his pipe with great contentment.

Before 9 o'clock that night, when all New Amsterdam were in bed, the suitors had each been informed by the one who favored him of the arrangement and instructed to make his call at the moment the clock struck 12. Diederich Van Dusen arose at cocker and spent the time between then and noon watching the hands of the town clock. At 8 he put on a second pair of breeches, and every half hour after that he put on another pair, so that by 11 o'clock he was so loaded that he resembled a hoghead of gin set upon end on a couple of trunks.

At five minutes of 12 he cast a last glance at the clock and proceeded to the house of Frau Van Dusen. He was received with smiles by both mother and daughter, which made him feel very comfortable, for his rival was not there, it being a minute or two of 12 o'clock, and he had certainly won. He did not hear the clock strike, for Katrina talked so loudly that he could not have heard a gun fired on the Battery, but a hundred yards distant. When he had been in the house half an hour he withdrew, giving place to other callers. Diederich Van Dusen went home and was taking off some of his breeches, laughing gleefully at having got ahead of his rival, when he heard the town clock strike 1.

"It is 1 of the clock," he said.

He had scarcely spoken when there came another stroke. He stopped, with a pair of breeches half off, and listened. There was another and another stroke. When he had counted eleven he paled, and when the twelfth came he was beside himself with anxiety. Pulling on the breeches that he had half removed, he went outside and looked at the clock. The hands stood at 12. Running to Frau Van Dusen's, he looked in through a window and saw his rival with a sausage in one hand and a cup of schnapps in the other. As he looked Anthony swallowed the schnapps.

Diederich declared that something had gone wrong with the clock, but everybody said:

"How many calls had you made, Diederich, and how much schnapps had you drunk?"

So the poor man got no satisfaction. After the wedding between Anthony and Katrina the bride confessed that her lover, stationed in the belfry, had seen Diederich call and had then set the clock back. When Diederich went away Anthony put the clock at five minutes of 12, then went down, to arrive at the Van Dusen's exactly at the stroke of 12.

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William Tripp's Old Mother

By M. QUAD

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William was wicked.

When I pick out one man from a mining camp made up of 300 run-aways, debt jumpers, cutthroats, gamblers, horse thieves and murderers and call him wicked I mean for the reader to infer that he was right up and down bad.

Which was exactly the case with William Tripp.

Wicked! Well, he was that! Such a swearer as William was! He would begin as soon as his eyes were open in the morning and keep up a steady fire until 10 o'clock at night. And he was a cheat and a liar.

You wonder that we didn't run him out or hang him.

Well, somehow we always intended to, but always put it off to a more convenient date. The success of hanging a man depends a good deal on who the man is. On our first gun the hint to William Tripp that unless he was packed up and out of camp inside of thirty minutes his anatomy would be riddled with bullets he produced a couple of revolvers, backed up against the Red Eye saloon and calmly observed that he was aching for a little excitement. I think his actions at that particular time had something to do with our giving him the rope and seeking to get along with his eccentric traits of character.

"I mean," said Elder Deacon one night when we were talking about William's bad ways, "that the committee got the drop on him and then ran him into the hills."

Just so, but who were the committee? That was another point we could never satisfactorily determine, and that was another reason why William continued to abide with us.

Shoot? Well, you never saw such an eye and such nerve. Just as far as he could see the bowl of a pipe in a man's mouth he could smash it with a bullet. Almost every hat in camp had an air hole made by one of his bullets, and though I was prejudiced against William, I had to admit that he respected men's heads in shooting at their hats.

But there came a halt in William Tripp's mad career, and it happened in a queer way. A fire in his tent one night burned up a lot of his traps, and he had to make a pile of thirty rifles on Colonel Cooper's old mare to replace them with new. The morning he rode out of camp was the last time we saw him, but we heard from a dozen different ones just what happened. About twelve miles from our camp was the Overland trail, and just where our own trail struck in was a pretty little valley with plenty of water and wood. It was a favorite camping spot with immigrants, and the day William Tripp reached it he found half a dozen wagons and as many families halted for a breathing spell.

The devilry in William's nature bubbled over when he struck that valley and beheld such a scene of peace. Children were playing around, women were washing and mending, and the brawny men were repairing wagons and harness and whistling over their work. William drew rein and gazed upon the scene for a few minutes. Then he got out with his revolver. Seated before one of the fires was an old woman with her knitting in hand and a pipe in her mouth. It was a long shot, but the evil one urged William to try it, and try he did.

What happened?

Something even worse than murder. The bullet went straight for the old woman's head and crashed into her brain. Then something awful followed. She rose to her feet, whirled around to face the shooter, and true as you live she seemed to look at him for thirty seconds before she tottered forward and shrieked out:

"William! Oh, my son William!"

Then she pitched forward on the grass and was dead in a second, and the red blood oozed out and made a terrible stain on the green grass.

And William—what did he do? He was like one turned to stone. The old woman's words plainly reached his ears, and he must have recognized her face. In the awful moment in which he sat gazing at the corpse on the grass it must have flashed across him that his poor mother had made that long journey with neighbors for no other purpose than to hunt him up—he the boy who had left her years ago and had been the subject of her nightly prayers ever since. Wicked as he was he must have felt her devotion and sacrifices.

And then?

He sat there in his saddle, his eyes fastened on his mother's corpse, and the revolver still in his hand. The situation had petrified him. While he sat thus one of the immigrants, who, believing that the camp was to be attacked by a force, leveled his rifle over the wheel of the wagon and sent a bullet plowing through William's heart.

Ab, well! It's years and years ago, and the twin graves in the valley have long since been trampled out of sight, and White Fog Diggings can be found no more, but the day the news of that awful tragedy came back to us we dropped spade and pick and could work no more for the day. And after a long period of silence among the men who had instinctively gathered around Judge Desire to hear his opinion, the judge arose and said:

"Fellow citizens, the wicked don't live out half his days, and don't you forget it!"

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RESOLUTION

It is resolved by the city of St. Johns:

That it deems it expedient and necessary to improve Fairman street from the easterly line of Central avenue to the westerly line of Oswego street in the city of St. Johns, in the following manner to wit:

By grading said portion of the street to grade or subgrade to be established and by laying a six foot cement walk and a fifteen foot curb on both sides of the street with necessary cement cross-walk and gutters from the easterly line of Central avenue, to the westerly line of Meyers street and also from the easterly line of Meyers street to the westerly line of Oswego street by grading said portion of street to grade or subgrade to be established and by laying a four foot cement side walk and an eight foot curb on both sides of said street with necessary cement cross-walks and gutters, according to the plans and specifications of the city engineer on file in the office of the city recorder relative thereto, which said plans and specifications and estimates are satisfactory and are hereby approved. Said improvement to be made according with the charter and ordinances of the city of St. Johns and under the supervision and direction of the city engineer.

That said costs and improvements to be assessed as follows: From Central avenue to Seneca street on a pro rata basis, and from Seneca street to Meyers street on a pro rata basis, and from Meyers street to Oswego street on a pro rata basis as provided by the city charter upon the property especially and particularly benefited thereby, and which is hereby declared to be all of lots, parts of lots, blocks and parcels of land between the termini of such improvement abutting upon adjacent or approximate to said street, from the marginal lines of said street back to the center of the block or blocks or tracts of land abutting thereon or approximate thereto.

That all the property included in said improvement district aforesaid is hereby declared to be Local Improvement District No. 106.

That the city engineer's assessment of the probable total cost of said improvement of said street is \$7478.04. That the costs of said street to be assessed as above mentioned against the property in said local assessment district as provided by the charter of the city of St. Johns.

Adopted by the council this 23rd day of December, A. D. 1913.

F. A. RICE,
Recorder.

Published in the St. Johns Review, Dec. 26, 1913, and Jan. 2, 1914.

RESOLUTION

It is resolved by the City of St. Johns, Oregon:

That it deems it expedient and necessary to improve Willamette boulevard from the westerly line of Burlington street to the easterly line of St. Johns avenue in the city of St. Johns in the following manner, to wit:

By grading said portion of street to grade or subgrade to be established, and by laying a six foot cement sidewalk and an eighteen foot curb on both sides of said street, and by laying a Standard Concrete pavement.

Work to be done according to the plans and specifications of the city engineer on file in the office of the city recorder relative thereto, which said plans and specifications and estimates are satisfactory and are hereby approved. Said improvements to be made in accordance with the charter and ordinances of the city of St. Johns, and under the supervision and direction of the city engineer.

That the cost of said improvement to be assessed as provided by the city charter upon the property especially and particularly benefited thereby, and which is hereby declared to be all of lots, parts of lots, blocks and parcels of land between the termini of such improvements abutting upon, adjacent or proximate to said street from the marginal lines of said street back to the center of the block or blocks or tracts of land abutting thereon or proximate thereto.

That all the property included in said improvement district aforesaid is hereby declared to be Local Improvement District No. 107.

That the city engineer's assessment of the probable total cost of said improvement of said street is \$19,918.72.

That the cost of said street be assessed against the property in said local assessment district as provided by the charter of the city of St. Johns.

Adopted by the council this 23rd day of December, 1913.

F. A. RICE,
Recorder.

Published in the St. Johns Review Dec. 26, 1913, and Jan. 2, 1914.

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