

MARKING TIME DOWN THROUGH THE AGES TO THE PRESENT

From the Clay Almanac of Our Early Ancestors to the Elaborate and Ornate Calendars of Today, Which Have Become Real Works of Art, Is a Long Step



One month on a clog almanac.

BY CORRIE ROCKWELL SWAIN.

"I'M GOING to send home-made calendars to all my friends this year; they're so easy to make and my time is so limited."

The pre-holiday remark sounds perfectly reasonable nowadays, when ready-to-stick calendars abound at stationery counters and drug stores, and when any amateur who is skillful with camera brush or paste tube can achieve wonders with the aid of an idea or two, plus a little finger-play, to use a kindergarten technicality. But if you had said a thing like that about the middle of December back in the middle ages, people would have eyed you with surprise, perhaps touching their foreheads significantly and exchanging the current "cracks" about squirrel food.

For the fashioning of an approved device for marking time in that period when everything was conscientiously hand-made, was no trifling task. The primitive form then in use was called in England a "clog almanac" and was usually cut on the four sides of a block of oak, elm, box or fir wood, about eight inches long. It was called also a "rim stick" and "prime staff," and in Scandinavia a "Runic staff," from the Runic characters used for numbers.

Sometimes the almanac was made of brass, bone or horn, but according to Dr. Plot, a 17th century historian who found it still in use among the common people of England, it was usually "a square piece of wood, containing three months on each of the four edges. The number of days in them is expressed by notches, the first day by a notch with a patulous stroke turned up from it, and every seventh by a large sized notch. Some are perfect, containing the dominical letters as well as the prime and marks for the feasts engraved upon them, and such are our prime staves in the museum at Oxford; others imperfect, having only the prime and immovable feasts on them, and such are all those I met with in Staffordshire."

There were also special symbols to represent the new moons throughout the year. In the days of old, people were not urged to speed up their Christmas shopping, as they are in our bustling times, but surely it behooved the maker of gift clog almanacs to sharpen the family axe and get his New Year chopping done early!

The words "almanac" and "calendar" alike claim an ancient and honorable lineage, and they have much in common as to their functions; but (to employ a classical and scientific figure of speech) the almanac sees the calendar and goes it one better. Where the calendar is defined as a mode of adjusting the natural divisions of time with respect to each other for the purpose of civil life, the almanac is "a year-book or calendar giving the order of the days of the week and month, astronomical data, tide tables, ecclesiastical festivals and fairs and other varied information."

Explorations in Egypt, Babylonia and other ancient lands prove that the habit of noting the passage of time and recording observations of the heavenly bodies dates back to antiquity. Even savage peoples develop a rude form of calendar, for it requires little observation and scholarship to note and fix upon certain natural standards—the day defined by alternate light and darkness and the lunar month from new moon to new moon. "Many moons ago, in the days of our forefathers," says big chief to the paleface, in



The earliest manuscript almanacs preserved belong to the twelfth century. In the fifteenth century they were printed for a definite period.

justment of the calendar isn't left to the lawmakers, as it was in the time of the Romans, when the pontiffs had sole charge of the matter and corrupt officials used the power "unscrupulously for the gratification of their friends or the annoyance of their enemies." They lengthened or curtailed the year, often that a magistrate or farmer of taxes might enjoy a longer or shorter lease of office than was permitted by law and without regard to the "unsettling of the seasons."

When Julius Caesar became dictator he straightened out these abuses and with the aid of Sosigenes, an Alexandrian astronomer, standardized the "Julian" calendar, afterward used for many centuries. There were occasional hitches and tangles over the old leap-year fragment, which had been incorrectly figured out. The error accumulated, with increasing bethorization to church and state, and in 1582 Pope Gregory XIII issued a mandate to correct the error. The improved form was adopted promptly by the Catholic countries, more slowly by the Protestants, but in 1751 it became universal. After the French revolution the first republic, enthusiastically abolishing old institutions, tried out a new system in France, with a ten-day week and new names for the months, but it didn't work out satisfactorily and was abandoned in 1805, when Napoleon, in favor of the Gregorian calendar previously used.

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statistics, etc. In London the Stationers' company, which originally enjoyed a monopoly of the printing of books, claimed for many years the exclusive right to issue and sell "almanacs and prognostications," and their publications retained their standing and popularity even after other publishers shared the field. The company formerly observed "Almanac day" on November 22, when the almanacs for the ensuing year were issued. It was a notable occasion at Stationers' hall, and one writer in 1941 describes vividly the scene—the great tables piled with almanacs and the throng of porters gathering them into bags and rushing them off for shipment to various points. The company's custom of sending an early copy of each of their almanacs to the archbishop of Canterbury on publication day commemorates a long-ago occasion, when a master of the Stationers' company rowed over to Lambeth palace to call upon Collier Edward Tenison, then archbishop, receiving a cordial welcome and suitable refreshment.

In our day the almanac is a thing of real importance and dignity, full of valuable information and issued by publishers of high standing. Every leading country has seen the rise of almanacs of this character, a few of which may be named here: the Almanach National of France; the Almanach de Gotha, at first German, then (under Napoleon I) French, and since the Franco-Prussian war of 1871 published in both languages; Oliver & Boyd's Edinburgh almanac; Thom's Irish almanac and the British Nautical almanac. One cannot help feeling that the present distaste for royalty in various quarters must curtail somewhat the resources of such books as the Almanach de Gotha, whose leading feature has long been information about the royal families. The world at present is more interested in cabbage than in kings, especially in the hunger districts.

The earliest American almanac is credited to William Bradford of Philadelphia, and was published in 1687. Of course, the bright particular star among American almanacs is the little later, when Benjamin Franklin began his famous "Poor Richard's Almanac," 1732, in Philadelphia, and won renown for its wise and witty sayings. The American Almanac and Treasury of Fact, a meritorious publication, began in 1878. The patent medicine almanac has been with us for many decades and is still among those present, though slightly modified in form and matter.

Space and time are lacking for even a small part of the interesting lore which clusters about these commonplace and literally everyday affairs, the calendar and the almanac—lore that richly repays the reader who cares to look beyond the numerals and the signs of the zodiac.

Coal Swept From the River Heats and Lights City.

Anthracite Carried by the Flood Waters of Susquehanna Foundation for Not Inconsiderable Business.

We sweep the river to keep you warm; we move its boats to light your well. As we cruise about on our wet farm, 'Work' where only the flakes can tell. We're the fleet, then coal suckin' rats. You sees from the widens of trains, Ah, 'bout perils, so dofs our smoke cap As you rubs by, knowin' none of our aims.

THE very first miner who alighted along the north branch of the Susquehanna river in Pennsylvania began laying the foundation for a not inconsiderable business that was to flourish in the years to come. The storms which rushed down the narrow valleys of the river and its tributaries as far up as Scranton carried mine refuse away, dropping the heavier slate soon, but carrying the lighter coal in some cases for 150 miles or more until the freshest spent itself in the wide reaches south of Northumberland. Year after year, every spring and frequently in the fall, the floods freighted themselves with coal to make sandbars as black as a crow's wing far down the river.

As the river shrank, usually reaching its lowest ebb late in August, the thrifty farmers along its banks saw these black bars. They looked like piles of coal; the farmers experimented and found that black sand was coal. The fuel problem in those days, especially in the country, was not a pressing one, and it remained for a city man to profit by the fuel so thoughtfully transported by the river. Almost immediately the idea of using an arrangement like a sand dredge suggested itself and the coal sucker resulted. Any old thing answered for a boat; even a big raft with slides high enough to breast the wash. Business that do duty in the autumn of the year, the dredges furnish the motive power when belted to a sort of water wheel rigid at the stern. They also run the pumps that bring up a steady stream of inkky water to spill it over a fine screen, where the bits of coal are caught and held and the sand slips through.

Soon a considerable fleet swept the river's bottom, which belongs to anyone who can equip himself for the work, especially in the vicinity of Harrisburg. In those early days a ton of river coal sold for \$9 or \$9 cents. It was chiefly used in manufacturing plants, and as the product direct from the mines mounted higher and higher in price, that from the river bed became increasingly popular.

Fourteen years ago Albert Emerick came down from the State college to become chief engineer of the Pennsylvania State buildings, and one day while walking along the river front he noticed the great piles of river coal. He made a few inquiries and determined to use it. Within a short time the grates and blowers needed to burn the fine coal were installed, and since that time the State buildings have been heated and lighted by fuel furnished, rather transported, by the Susquehanna. The first year the fuel cost \$1 a ton, but it, too, has increased in price until it now brings from \$2.50 to \$2.75 a ton. The Harrisburg Light, Heat & Power company is probably the largest individual consumer of the river coal, using 100,000 to 150,000 tons yearly. The householder is also using it in the kitchen range, and, as a matter of fact, the sweepings from the bed of the noble river that flows through the city literally heats and lights the state's capital.

READING SIGN—By Kenneth B. Clarke

(Continued From Page 5.)

Barclay watched Helen in silence for a few moments, then rising restlessly he sauntered over to the fireplace and stood facing her.

"The same old habits, I see, of orderly method of recording," he remarked. An indifferent gesture indicated the cards as Helen looked around toward him.

"An illustrative point, by the way," he added, a little too pointedly to make the opening appear incidental.

"Habits endure—habits of thinking, habits of doing, and particularly a certain attunement to lifelong environment."

Whatever impressiveness Barclay intended to convey seemed to have glanced off unnoticed.

"Helen, I want to talk to you seriously for a while. Ten days of evasion are about enough. Will you drop that dried trash for a moment and give me your attention?" he asked with some asperity.

"The evasion," she answered, "has been because I think I have guessed what you wish to consider seriously—and because I have not wished to condemn it at all. You are difficult, but formerly you did not embarrass me. Now your business relations with my husband present a complication and leave me disconcerted. The avoidance, if possible, of anything personal being revived between us seemed to be due to him and, if you can understand it, my own self-respect. Possibly I have made a mistake in judgment. Ordinary understandings do not seem to apply."

He came back there. I want you to come back to them. Lanham was riding along the edge of a baranca when a hail from a rise on the opposite side brought him facing about. He saw Lin Winton alighting his horse down the far bank, and presently the foreman scrambled up to his side.

The sunny stillness of a lazy afternoon hung about the ranch house as Lanham rode in.

Barclay's team stood by the hitching rail.

As he approached the door of the big room he could hear Barclay's voice slightly raised in some sort of expostulation. Instinctively Lanham stopped to listen.

"So you refuse to go with me!" he heard Barclay say. "You prefer to stand by the mockery of this bondage in isolation."

Seemingly incapable of grasping the situation beyond the door before him, Lanham stood in a momentary daze. Trivial impressions—the contented cluckings of the hens under the umbrella tree and the distant creakings of the windmill veering to a change of the faint breeze—came prominent to his faltering senses. The pause, though brief, seemed minutes long and then he heard Barclay speak again in a low, impassioned tone.

"Here you stand waiting in a great readiness to live and you hesitate to let love touch the kindling spark." There came the sounds of a few swift steps, the clatter of something falling from the table, and a stifled cry from Helen.

With a light bound Lanham crossed the veranda and thrust open the door. The change from the brilliant light outside to the cool dusk of the big room was abrupt, but he could see Barclay standing with his hands clasped Helen's shoulders and her hands pressed against his chest, whether in resistance or responsiveness he could not tell.

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terly simple and so devoid of outward ardor that the intensity of his feeling and the open avowal in his confession were swept in upon Helen slowly.

They came to her with the submerged power of a wave that looms upon a swimmer, first as a barely perceptible motion on the distant surface, then with the lifting thrust of mounting force until, with a heart-stopping dip and a mighty heave, there is a sudden ecstatic overwhelming. She stood swaying slightly toward him. Her eyes were closed with damped lashes; her cheeks were flushed and her lips were parted.

"I heard what he said at the last," Lanham went on, as though steadied to carry the matter through. "And he is right. You are alone, and probably sacrificing yourself to stand by an impossible compact." For the first time since he started speaking he nerved himself to look at the girl steadily, intently. "Do you wish to be free again? For God's sake, he frank with me! Do you care for him? Does his appeal—"

Quickly Helen stepped to him and laid her hand upon his. She disengaged his hat, and, tossing it aside, gave him her other hand.

"I do not care for him—except with loathing. And he is wrong where you think him right; but in another way he is right. I do stand waiting in a great readiness to live."

Her hands tightened ever so slightly upon the broad, firm palms that held them. "Here! Now!" she added, with an exultant little break in her voice.

Lanham seemed not to understand at all, so slow was his comprehension.

"And you—my husband—are the only one that ever could touch the kindling spark. You have already. And I think it was right there on the hearth, that first morning, when you stood looking at me like 'Ariseons.' Even then he could not speak. But there was little need. Dropping her hands, he gently, wonderingly gathered her within his arms. She did not waver under his gaze, and her face remained upturned to his as he lifted her to his lips.

in the open doorway with her arms intertwined, "If it wasn't, after all, the kindling spark that sent me over that trail two thousand miles to find you!"

"And I wonder," Helen replied. "If the western art of reading signs isn't greatly overrated!"

A stealthy movement of the blacksmith shop door caught Lanham's attention. The top, above the canvas prop, swung out in jerks as from impatient pressure from within. Then the lower corner bulged outward and an iron bar protruded and groped uncertainly for a pivoting footing. Lanham smiled grimly.

With one hand still holding Helen's, he reached within the room and lifted a heavy Colt from a belt hanging over a peg. A throw from his shoulder sent a single shot crashing into the scuffling propped against the shed. There was a flurry of splinters and the door swung slowly open.

Lanham returned the gun to its holster and stood waiting.

A long period of inactive uncertainty followed at the little shop. Then an open hand was extended beyond the door frame in a gesture that both declared and pleaded for amity. Barclay followed the hand out into the open with cautious and unalarming deliberation, and cast an anxious glance toward the house.

A moment before he had pictured his departure as a hurried affair, sped with gunfire and spurts of dust about his horse's flying heels, at least dignified in a way by the outraged husband's concern.

He stared in utter bewilderment. The scene presented by the low, comfortable ranch house with its busy drift of smoke from the kitchen chimney, the hens contentedly squawking in the dust under the umbrella tree, and the man and woman serenely standing with clasped hands in the doorway, was staggeringly disconcerting.

He saw Lanham lift a hand and wave negligently toward the back-broom in a gesture of dismissal and farewell—and the girl was looking up at the man beside her—not at him.

"I wonder," he said, as they stood