

Notable Origin of the Noble and Aristocratic Order of Twenty-niners

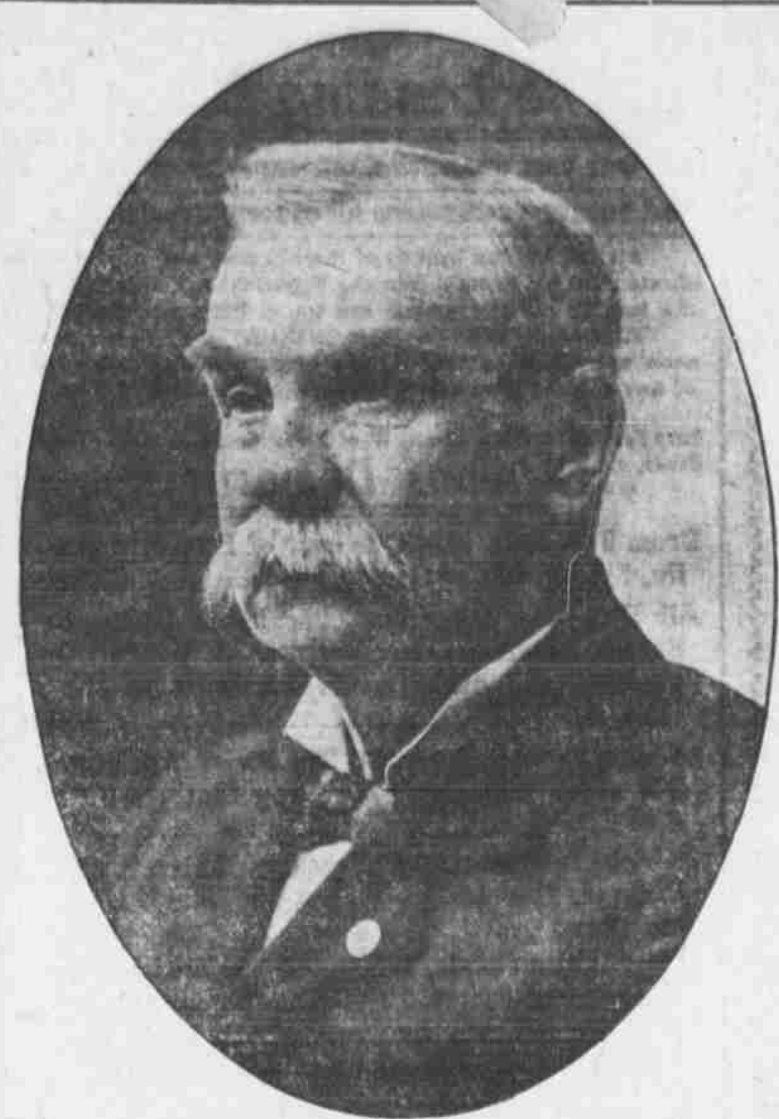
Seven Well Known Omaha People Whose Birthdays Are Celebrated Only Once in Four Years



W. W. SLABAUGH



FRANK W. FOSTER



J. H. STURGART



A. F. HERBER

WHEN Julius Caesar came to the rescue of Father Time in 46 B. C. and decreed a new way of counting days and years in order to give the aforesaid Time a chance to catch up with the Vernal Equinox, he probably did not suspect he was laying the foundation for an Aristocracy of Birth in free, democratic America. It is safe to say he did not even suspect he was doing this, inasmuch as he had never heard of the new world, but this was just what he did do. It was Julius Caesar who placed February 29 in the calendar every four years, by that act establishing a day to be born upon which it is considered in this day and age a special honor conferred by Providence.

Aristocrats who hold their positions by reason of their family connections are looked down upon by these aristocratic "Twenty-niners," for they argue that to be born in a proud family is an accident entirely, while to be born on Julius Caesar's extra day is evidence that Providence has conferred a favor—deemed to most mortals.

The enthusiastic "Twenty-niner" points out the records do not show of a single case where one of their number has been found guilty of a crime against the laws of his country, while the records do disclose that some of them have had high honor conferred on them, and all of them are valuable adjuncts to society. It is small wonder that with the opportunity to celebrate but one birthday in four years, and with the knowledge that they have been set out for special honors by Providence, that the Twenty-niners should feel inclined to form themselves into a body apart, for one day in four years at least, from their fellow men.

Just how the old Roman warrior happened to lance the decree that had such an important bearing on the lives of so many people is a matter of history. It is well known that in the early Roman republic the year consisted of 355 days, with an extra month thrown in occasionally to keep the calendar from slipping up too far on the Vernal Equinox. But the old Roman priests into whose care the keeping of dates for the whole republic was entrusted grew careless. They forgot to add the extra month at the proper time and when they did add them they failed to make the right month, so that in 46 B. C. Julius the Great was startled when he took his almanac off the hook behind the kitchen door to notice that Father Time was several days behind the vernal equinox and was so badly winded he had poor prospects of ever catching up. In fact, the calendar was six weeks ahead of time.

The mighty Julius sat down and pondered. He foresaw that it would not be long until the industrious farmer would have to begin planting his corn in the snowdrifts of January in order to have it laid by before the Fourth of July, which is the usual date of every progressive farmer. He realized how seemingly it would be to celebrate the Fourth in the middle of winter and how hard it would be for Kris Kringle to make his rounds with his reindeer and sleigh with the ground bare and the thermometer up to summer heat. The fall elections would be held in the spring and Easter with its display of spring bonnets and gay dresses would come where Christmas ought to.

With the foresight and wisdom for which he has been frequently commended in commencement orations, the great Julius commenced to figure out a plan to avoid all the confusion that was surely coming. Attention has often been called to the directness with which Caesar did things. This time was no exception. He issued a decree providing that more than six weeks should be lopped ruthlessly from the calendar, that the day following October 31 should not be October 14, but December 13 should not be October 14, but December thereafter the year should consist of 365 days and that every four years one day should be added in order to keep the calendar straight. This is what is known as the Julian calendar, or method of reckoning time.

But Caesar's intentions were better than his mathematics. His year averaged 365 days 6 hours in length, while the real year is 365 days 5 hours 48 minutes and 46 seconds long. Consequently his year was 11 minutes 14 seconds too long. This little discrepancy was not noticed at the time and people went back to work blissfully ignorant of the fact that while Caesar had improved the old calendar he had not perfected it. It was not until the year 1582 that Pope Gregory XIII noticed that the Vernal Equinox came on March 21 instead of March 23, showing that the calendar was again outdistancing Father Time and his slythe.

The same thoughts that bothered Julius Caesar more than 1,800 years before surged



MRS. H. M. BUTTS



EMMA FULLAWAY



MRS. G. W. CRAIG

through the brain of the good old pope. He saw it would only be a matter of time until the seasons would be so badly jumbled up as they threatened to be in the time of the Romans. The thought troubled him and he called the eminent astronomer, Clavius, into consultation. Clavius knew more about the stars and the flight of time than Julius Caesar had ever dreamed of, and what mathematic he knew he knew right. After considerable figuring the pope finally amended the Julian decree by providing that every one hundredth year, 1000, 2000 and 3000, should not be leap year, except every fourth one hundredth year beginning with the year 2000. It was figured, that following these amendments the difference between the civil and natural year

would not be more than a day in 5,000 years. It was this amendment that robbed every living Twenty-niner of a birthday until the year 2000, most of them will forgive the pope.

The pope also lopped ten days out of the calendar in order to give Father Time another even start, and decreed that the day following October 5 should be October 15.

In the Catholic countries this decree was accepted as final, and people began counting time the new way, but in England and the other protestant countries, where they hated the pope and everything he did, refused to accept it. In 1700 most of the protestants decided to accept it, but by that time they had to cut eleven days out

of the calendar, which their catholic neighbors declared served them right for their stubbornness. England did not adopt the new order until 1751, and every school boy has envied George Washington because he had two birthdays every year, one February 11, old style, and the other February 22, new style. Russia still adheres to the old style calendar, and that country is literally thirteen days behind the times.

While all these facts may to the casual reader seem superfluous and immaterial, a second thought will convince him that all of them were necessary that the modern Twenty-niner might be. It is no cause for surprise that if the man or woman who happened to enter this world on that extra day ordained by Julius Caesar and con-

firmed by Pope Gregory XIII, should feel somewhat above the ordinary mortal who was introduced to society on a common day.

It was this aristocratic feeling, coupled with the idea that those who are deprived of the pleasure of eating birthday cake every day, have something in common that lead the Twenty-niners to join hands in an organization that for a time promised to be national in its scope.

It would have been flourishing today undoubtedly if an unforeseen element of human nature had not asserted itself. It was the intention to celebrate the return of the mystic day this year with an elaborate feast, but the men who were planning the celebration forgot to consult their wives. When their wives

heard of the promised event they were displeased.

"We have only one opportunity in four years to celebrate our husbands' birthday," they said in unison, "and if these days are to be given over to a public feast, what will become of the little family birthday parties we hold so dear?"

When they heard this complaint from their helpmates the men gave up the public dinner and so this year each Twenty-niner will celebrate in the quietude of his own home.

The announcement that a quadrennial club was about to be formed in Omaha brought out a flood of applications for membership, because, owing to the amendment to Julius Caesar's calendar by Pope Gregory,

with only three birthdays has a decided advantage over the ordinary "kid" when the birthday contribution box comes around and each child is expected to chip in a penny for every birthday he has had.

"It makes an old man like me feel strange," says an elderly Twenty-niner, complainingly, "when my 12-year-old son insists on trying to run the household because he has had twelve birthdays and I have had only 11. I insist that we must not measure our lives by birthdays, but by deeds, but he can't get far enough away from me to do that."

"It also happens that our birthdays come in the presidential election years, and, therefore, it would seem to be especially appropriate if we should unite on one of our number for president. At least it would seem that we Twenty-niners should be consulted and that our influence should be recognized. We may decide some time to go into politics, and when we do, look out."

Out of the Ordinary Happenings That Read Strange to Most People

T Rush for the Water Wagon.

HERE is a rush for temperance pledges in Millvale, a suburb of Pittsburg. Thousands of snakes have invaded the town and the boys are having a good time where they dangle in the faces of pedestrians. The reptiles come from an old coal mine that is burning, having been driven out by the flames.

The snakes made their appearance one night as men were returning from clubs. These men are the ones who hurried to take pledges. Others, less superstitious, traced the trouble to its real source and fire off the water wagon again.

Queerest of Queer Wills.

"I do hereby direct the executors of this my will to have made out of my bones circular buttons of the dimensions of from one-half inch to one inch in diameter.

"I further direct my said executors to have the skin of my body tanned and made into patches.

"I do hereby further direct my said executors to have made out of such parts of my body as may be suitable strings for the violin, such as are usually designated 'cat-gut' strings.

"And I do hereby further direct my said executors to have said violin strings adjusted to the body of a violin.

"I hereby give, devise and bequeath unto my beloved friend and clubmate, James Hayes, all and singular, the buttons, violin strings and tanned skin made out of my body, as aforesaid, the same to be by him distributed according to his discretion to my intimate friends."

So reads the will of Henry E. Sullivan, a prominent member of the Nameless club, at 223 West One Hundredth street, New York City. Made in all seriousness, this queerest of queer wills reflects the utilitarianism that has been a factor in every act of the man's life.

Tale of a Dastard Deed.

Police Justice Bray listened to the tale

of a dog of high degree in the Orange (N. Y.) police court last week. The story was told by one of two handsomely gowned women who left court without saying who they were. This woman said she was the owner of a valuable collie dog, of which she said, the neighbors had complained. She said the dog was never permitted out of the yard, but neighbors had said that she must not let the dog roam in her own

yard after 9 o'clock at night or they would complain to the police.

"The charge is most unreasonable," said the woman. "He is dog of the most exemplary habits, and I would never allow him out of the house after 9 o'clock at night. He is so delicate, and last summer he was under treatment by a doctor for a long time for nervous troubles and he simply cannot sleep out of doors. He always

sleeps on a feather mattress or on my bed and he eats off a little platter at the table."

Justice Bray assured her that so long as the dog was licensed she had nothing to fear from his court.

Helped Him.

A physician out west was sent for to attend a small boy who was ill. He left

a prescription and went away.

Returning a few days later, he found the boy better.

"Yes, doctor," said the boy's mother, "the prescription did him a world of good. I left it beside him, where he could hold it in his hand most of the time, and he can almost read it now. You didn't mean for him to swallow the paper, did you, doctor?"

—Harper's Weekly.



McCullough, Kenner, Roe, Vana, Dennison, Ross, Druker, Rosenberg, DEBATORS OF THE OMAHA HIGH SCHOOL WHO ARE TO MEET DES MOINES AND KANSAS CITY IN FORENSIC COMPETITION AND PROF. DENNISON, WHO IS COACHING THE BOYS

The story is sometimes told of the bashful young Twenty-niner who applied to the marriage license clerk for a permit to wed the young woman of his choice.

"How old was your last birthday?" inquired the official.

"On my last birthday I was only 15 years old, but I am almost 22 now," the young man is said to have replied.

The tale goes that it required considerable diplomatic explaining to induce the official to issue the license to a man who was only 15 his last birthday without the consent of his parents.

One Omaha man who is not a Twenty-niner has special reasons for blessing old Julius Caesar when he established February 29, for it was on that day that at a birthday dinner given by his present wife that he began the courtship that ended successfully. His wife is a member of the club and he was a casual guest at her birthday party. Though they had known each other for a long time before, it was there, with the traditions of the mystic day around them, that they fell in love.

Julius Caesar little knew the importance of the plan to help out Father Time. He thought he was only doing a little athletic stunt with time to keep the almanac straight, but instead the nearly 2,000 years since have proved he did much more than that. If he had not issued his famous calendar Judge Slabaugh and his followers would have been deprived of the distinction which is now theirs. If the society of Twenty-niners should ever become what early democrats accused the famous society of the Cincinnati of being, an embryo aristocracy, Americans would have another chance to "knock" the old Boston. But inasmuch as membership in the Twenty-niners is ordained only by Providence and cannot descend from father to son, like membership in George Washington's old organization, little apprehension is felt by outsiders and the Twenty-niners declare they are not afraid of the big stick or a special message to congress on the subject.