

# In the Centennial Year of Mexican Independence

## Night Ceremony of Ringing Again That Historic Liberty Bell

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temptations of either effete civilization or more ordinary degeneracy. Tehuantepec town spreads over the hills on two sides of the river. The architecture is characteristically Mexican, chiefly adobe houses facing narrow streets centering in a plaza which is also a market place. There are some beautiful groves of cocconut palms and banana trees near by. The railroad cuts through the town and bridges the river. The churches occupy prominent sites and show interior evidences of poverty.

**Town of Tehuantepec.**  
Among the inhabitants, who are of the Zapotecan tribe, tracing themselves back with unmixed blood to before the Aztec days, the women are largely preponderant in numbers. The fact is, the women of Tehuantepec are far-famed for beauty of figure and face. They are of a light brown color, clear complexion, good features and intelligent countenances. They stand erect, carry their bundles or water jars on their heads, are clean and comely, which is the exception and not the rule in Mexican natives. The women of Tehuantepec are the heads of the family; they are the business men; they run the shops and stores and in the market they do the buying and selling. They have for years been pursuing all the occupations our own "new woman" has only lately undertaken to break into. I saw no signs of any suffrage movement and heard no cries that sounded like "We want votes," but if there is any place in the world where women ought to get votes for the asking, if they really want them, this is the spot. Tehuantepec women furthermore have the reputation of being modest, affectionate, devoted and constant, and many are the tales told of lonesome foreigners lured to matrimonial entanglements through their rapturous wiles.

**Dress Makes the Girl.**  
The dress that stamps a person as hailing from Tehuantepec consists of a skirt of dark-colored cloth finished at the bottom with a deep, white-fluted ruffle and a sleeveless jacket of similar figured but different colored cloth cut low at the neck and reaching to the waist. These jackets are beautifully embroidered, sometimes entirely by hand, but more usually merely hand-stitched on a sewing machine (the American sewing machine, by the way, being the furniture piece of resistance in nearly every Mexican household). When they raise their arms or stoop over, the jacket and skirt fail to connect. This costume is usually, but not always, topped off with a peculiar head dress, likewise of fluted white lace or embroidery, which I am at a loss to describe except by saying that it resembles a Marie Antoinette collar in two pieces, one piece pulled up over the head and the other dropped to the middle of the back.

Those who are able deck themselves out with necklace of either coral or gold beads set off with American gold coins, preferably the \$2.50 or \$5 denominations. It is related that originally these chains were linked up with solid gold slugs, for which the thrifty 49ers crossing the isthmus during the California fever, volunteered to substitute the more artistic and beautiful gold coins in each case with a substantial profit to themselves and thus establish the fashion in necklace, which has perdured to this day. I persuaded one of the Tehuantepec belles to part with the corals she was wearing, and some of our party bought gold beads, but not in the same way, off the wearer's neck.

**Enterprise of the Tradesman.**  
Although I can prove an alibi for myself, I will not mention names, but this story is well attested and can be verified. An enterprising Tehuantepec tradeswoman offered for sale a dazzling chain of gold beads, but as the price seemed prohibitive, and brought no bidders, she divided the chain into three pieces and offered one of them for \$10. One of our party had a 10-dollar bill changed into silver and starting at \$5 went for the chain as if it were on the auction block by holding out his coins and adding a half dollar at a time until he got up to \$9.50, where the parleying seemed to reach the point where there was nothing to arbitrate. Finally as a compromise he agreed to put in the other half dollar and buy at the original price on condition that two more beads be added to the chain. His chuckling and crowing over the achievement in making the saleswoman come across even to that extent, however, soon gave way to misgivings, and when later the purchase was exposed to the acid test, the unfeeling jeweler imparted the confidential information that the beads were 18-carat brass, but so skillfully coated with gold wash as to deceive any one not an expert.

**Reverse Rules of Modesty.**  
What I have described thus in detail is the women's dress, the men being clad in the ordinary attire and the children, when clad at all, were miniatures of their elders. There is this peculiar modification in Tehuantepec of our rule of modesty—that public nakedness is accorded to the little boys only, while the infant girls must be covered, no matter how scantily. The same rule applies to the elders when they go bathing in the river. The men swim around quite au naturel while women display abbreviated bathing suits which would cause consternation rather than envy on an Atlantic City bathing beach.  
In our honor, as a party of visiting newspaper men, a grand ball was arranged for our evening's entertainment. Our whole party under escort and headed by a band of native musicians marched from the station through the town, forming a procession which for bizarre effect would leave outshout the centennial parades in Mexico City. We brought up at a large enclosed building of bamboo and thatched roof construction, dimly lighted by lanterns and furnished only with a few chairs along two sides. I could not make out for what the building was used ordinarily, but

saw a couple of chickens roosting in a far corner.

**Natives Dance the Two-Step.**  
Our native orchestra established itself on one side of the room and we made ourselves at home on the other, while gradually the belles of the ball gathered decked out in all their finery. They first gave us an exhibition of their native dance, which is very pleasing to the eye, five couples going through the steps and poses. The dancers kept at a little distance from one another passing back and forth with rhythmical movements of arms and body as well as feet, remotely suggestive of the balancing in our quadrilles. The surprise part of the party came when the music swung into a waltz and then into a two-step, and the Tehuantepec girls accepted the to them unintelligible invitation extended by the visitors to trip the light fantastic, according to the rules of our own ball room games. And it may be said that these barefooted women dancing on a dirt floor proved that they could go through the mazes of a waltz and pace the two-step with a grace and skill not only unexpected in the shadows of a little Indian town nesting under the tropics, but calculated to put to a real test our own best dancers if they entered in competition.

One number not on the program should come in at least for a mention—a real earthquake—that was pulled off in the middle of the performance apparently for our delectation. This was an up-and-down earthquake and very perceptible, the tremor of the ground lasting quite a few seconds.

It attracted momentary attention, but did not extinguish the lights and the natives, accustomed to the seismic demonstrations, went right along with their mirth and music as if nothing had happened.

The next day brought us the final adventure among these interesting people. A little boy about 11 years old accosted as he was coming out of school with Spanish school books under his arm, had been very accommodating in answering questions and showing some of us around, and had pursued the acquaintance by coming down to our train. He disclosed the information that he had never been on a railway car, and although less than 20 miles from the Pacific, had never seen the ocean, much less an ocean steamer. Just as we were pulling out some one asked him if he would like to come along, and receiving an affirmative reply, quickly got permission from an uncle who was standing near, and swung him on to the step. We could see the ominous looks on the faces of the crowd as they saw the boy apparently kidnapped before their very eyes. The bold, bad white men who wanted to take the beads they were wearing from their necks had seized and swallowed up little "Maximo," just as Cortez had done with their forefathers a few centuries before, and as some band of ruthless invaders had done periodically ever since.

**His Return a Miracle.**  
But Maximo was by no means disconsolate; on the contrary, he was all eyes, ears and amazement. The interior of the train was to him like Fairyland. He manifested no distrust nor apprehension. Why should he care where he went? He had a loose blouse shirt of black and white check and a pair of cotton trousers, probably all the wardrobe he ever owned at one time, and he was going to see the world. Open-mouthed and awe-inspired, he gazed at the waves as they

rolled in; he watched the big majestic ships at the wharf and saw one of them sail out beyond the horizon. He went through the warehouses and puzzled over the electric cranes with colossal loads balanced in midair. He sat in our dining car at luncheon and ate strange foods; he answered ques-

tions and asked more of them. He picked up a short acquaintance with some of the youngsters who lived in this harbor town, and he climbed aboard the train homeward bound with the air of a child having been to his first picnic. It was a short run to Tehuantepec, and as we went

through the town Maximo pushed his way out upon the platform where he could see his friends easier than they could catch sight of him as we passed. It was their turn for astonishment again, and we could hear the exclamations, "Why, there he is." "He is really coming back." "Look at Maxi-

mo!" And when the boy was safely redposited at the railway station, it was a certainty from the way they jostled around him that he would be a seven-day wonder in Tehuantepec, where, for all I know, he is still recounting his strange experiences of that day. V. R.



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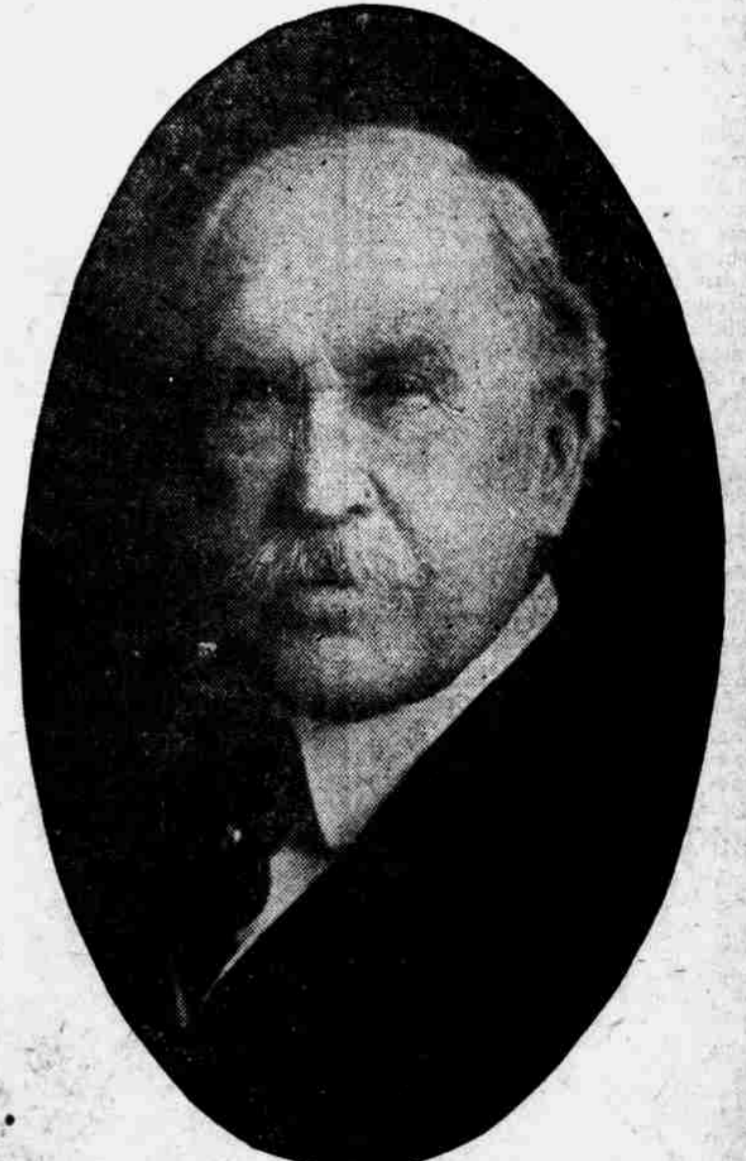
**A. A. McLaughlin**

Mr. McLaughlin was born on May 13, 1868, on a farm in Hamilton County, Iowa, where his parents, natives of Ohio, had settled in 1856. He was educated in the country schools and Iowa state college at Ames, graduating with the class of 1889. He studied law in the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and graduated therefrom in June, 1892. He was admitted to the bar of Iowa on October 5, 1892, and thereafter engaged in the general practice of the law in Des Moines. On March 1, 1903, he became assistant attorney for the Chicago & Northwestern Railway company of Iowa and continued in such capacity until October 1, 1912, during all of said time engaging also in general practice. On October 1, 1912, he came to Omaha to assume the duties of attorney for the Chicago & Northwestern Railway Co. for the state of Nebraska. At present Ass't. Gen. Solicitor with headquarters at Chicago, retaining general supervision for South Dakota, Wyoming, Minnesota and Nebraska.



**John C. Wharton**

If anyone was asked to choose from Omaha's business men an example of what a poor boy can do in this great country of ours he could safely pick out Attorney John C. Wharton, former postmaster of the city. Reared on an Illinois farm, of people who yearn much nearer the poor station in life than the rich, Mr. Wharton found time to attend the public schools and later made the opportunity to attend college. He carried off the class honors as valedictorian and after graduation opened law offices, becoming state's attorney of Mercer county, Illinois, in the first year of his practice. It was in 1888 that he came to Omaha, where he practiced law for many years, the only interruption to his business being when he was appointed postmaster of Omaha. Early in life Mr. Wharton realized that the west was bound to grow and invested his spare earnings in land, some of his investments having returned to him with such good profit that he is well off today. As an example of what perseverance, faithfulness to public and private trust in him, and an intensive study of his profession will do for a man in the west, Mr. Wharton stands forward in the front rank of successful business men.



**John L. Webster**

ATTORNEY AT LAW

Standing forth as a strong, powerful personality, John Lee Webster presents a varied character to his fellow citizens of Omaha. In his profession he represents a masterful mind, with power and determination to dissect and conquer the problem before him and he has been for years a leader among the attorneys of Omaha and Nebraska.

Prominent as he is as a lawyer of the highest caliber, Mr. Webster in the role of a painstaking investigator and student has made himself a leader in all lines of art, philosophy, and in the broadening of the mind to the better uses of life. He is the founder of the Friends of Art Association to cultivate a love for art among Omaha people and is also founder of the Palimpsest Club, a group of professional and business men who meet to hear distinguished literary, scientific and philosophical masters talk on the subjects.

Mr. Webster is not one who does not find time from his studies to be active in his life. Born in Harrison county, Ohio, in 1847, he graduated from Union college as Bachelor of Arts and in 1873 was given an LL.D. degree there. He began the practice of law in 1868 in Ohio and came to Omaha in 1874. He was a member of the legislature here three years later and was chairman of the Nebraska constitutional convention in 1875, a meeting which he had done much to bring about. He has been prominent in republican political circles for years, having been endorsed for vice president by the Nebraska republican convention in 1904.

Some of the most prominent cases which Mr. Webster has fought out in the courts are the famous maximum railroad rate cases, the bank guaranty law cases and the Omaha water works litigation. One of the interesting pieces of legislation won by him was in favor of the Standing Bear and Ponca Indians, and since his winning it there have been numbers of cases decided on the precedent established.

Prominent wherever there are gatherings discussing civic welfare or matters of art and culture, John Lee Webster stands as an artist whose love for the beautiful has been kept alive in spite of the stress of business cases.