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EDITORIAL

A GLANCE BACKWARD

● ● As is usually said, "We stand on the threshold of a New Year". It is never made clear whether we are coming in or going out of the door, but it is certain that we are about to enter into a new period of time. And the idea of standing there seems to mean we are pondering a moment before taking that final step into the new world; perhaps taking one long, last glance backward from whence we came. Let's see what that last glance would show for Roanoke Rapids and those thousands of us who make up Roanoke Rapids.

There are, sad to say, the gloomy and the terrible things we see as we look backward over a shuddering shoulder. We see disappointments, failures, mistakes, sorrows . . . in our own lives and those of our friends and neighbors. We remember the violations of the laws of God and of man. They are there in the news of our lives from week to week, these grim things showing the weakness of man. They are a part of our lives; a part we dread and hate; a part we ever seek to be free from. And always, we see the grim reaper, Death, taking from us those near and dear to us, some suddenly, some after long periods of illness. We see, in that glance backward over the past year, wrecks on highways, sudden death, manslaughter, murder, suicide, thievery, knavery, falsifying and falseness.

Were that all we could see in that last glance backward this would be a poor world indeed and hope would be buried forever. But there are other things we see in that glance and because the good things of life outweigh those bad is enough to make us face the next year with courage and high hope. There is new life, the babies, to take the place of those who must go on. We can see the kind deeds and kind words of so many. We see the generous acts of those who feel for others and do for others, with no thought or hope of recognition or reward. We see and feel things growing . . . and growing better . . . as the horizon which holds our little gaze is ever raised. We glance backward and see the sunshine.

And then, there are the more material things which have been accomplished during this past year and in that brief glance backward, as we stand on the threshold, we try to recall a few of the things which have been done in Roanoke Rapids to make 1939 a year in which we can all have some pride, knowing that the good things outnumber the bad. We may have forgotten many, but here are a few to remind us that we are still a growing city, a good city and to encourage us to keep going in the right direction.

In 1939 our city concrete paving project was

THE MIDDLE MAN



completed on the Avenue, on Hamilton, on Jackson and on the side streets connecting those central streets. To a city which knew only mud and dust in the past, this is an important step forward in healthfulness and comfort.

A free city library was opened by the Womans Club in 1939, a place that has meant so much to those who love to read and to those who are given an opportunity to improve themselves. This same year also saw plans made to enlarge the library and to make it possible for every citizen in Roanoke Rapids some day to find what he wants to read and to have a quiet place in which to read.

1939 also saw the passage of bonds for the construction of still more streets in Roanoke Rapids, the purchase of a rock-crusher and other equipment by the city government, storm sewers on 10th Street and now concrete curb and gutter preparatory to the asphaltting of the surface of a half dozen more streets.

The latter part of this same year saw the completion and dedication of the Girl Scout cabin, which should open up a new and larger field of endeavor in the proper training of the young girls of the community.

1939 saw the congregation of the Rosemary Baptist Church pay off their church debt and saw the Presbyterian Church complete a fine Sunday School building, while other churches grew in strength and in numbers.

Speaking of records, 1939 probably saw more broken by the citizens of Roanoke Rapids than any previous year in history; for in 1939 the Lions Club's Midsummer Festival drew record crowds and made it possible for hundreds of children to receive eye-clinic service; the 9th annual Kiwanis show played to record crowds two nights and made possible dental clinic service for 1,247 city chil-

dren; the city summer playground program gave more children vacation recreation than ever before; the 1939 Red Cross Roll Call topped all previous years; and even the graduating class of Roanoke Rapids High School was the largest in the history of the school, with 2,929 enrolled in the school system, surpassing all other years.

Just glancing backward for a moment more and not being able to remember half the good things of the year, we can recall that 1939 brought the fireproofing of the Roanoke Rapids Hospital, thus providing safety for our sick; it brought the completion of another High School building to relieve the overcrowded condition in our schools; the passage of a bond issue for a much-needed new city jail; and a new livestock market; and several new mercantile buildings and scores of new homes and developments; and the forming of a city Safety Council to improve traffic and other safety problems.

And a glance at sports shows 1939 brought that great classic: the Wake Forest-Carolina baseball game to Roanoke Rapids; the Legion baseball team to the East semi-finals; the Roanoke Rapids Owls to the State Semi-Pro baseball semi-finals; the State Softball championship to the Romances and the City Championship to Roanoke No. 2 with a trip to the Worlds Fair at New York.

And a glance at more recent events shows that the Community Chest went over the top in fine fashion; that there is more steady employment in the local mills than ever before; that everybody had a very merry Christmas.

So that glance backward should prove the good things outnumber the bad; that 1939 was a right good year for the most of us after all; that we should face this new year with faith and confidence, yet always with the humility of those who, realizing their faults and weaknesses, can thank a good God for being so good to them.