

SESQUICENTENNIAL, CITY OF POETRY

For Logan City Utah

I

Out of the wide open dirt roads
hard-packed for horse-drawn wagons,
out of the Telluride power poles
centered and towering next to the Eccles
trolley tracks laid down flat and gleaming,
out of the brick and wood buildings
rising shoulder to shoulder, archways
and awnings and signs painted-on,
Hotel Eagle, Cardon Jewelry, Temple
Grocery;

Out of the dirt road center of town,
not even a sidewalk to stand on, where
crowds gathered along the parade route
up Center and down Main, crepe paper floats
from the Rotary Club, Holstein Breeders,
Thatcher Clothing, and LK Wood of Mendon
with his miniature steam engine; out of
the Midwest to Logan, Ringling Brothers
Circus Parade, tigers and bears in cages,
camels draped in fine regalia with riders
perched high on their humps, showhorses
lined up single file, stately, a landscape
of mystery;

Down from the canyons, granite and lumber
for temple and theater, stone homes
and tabernacles, quarries where cliffwalls
were broken to blocks and carried to town
for lasting foundations; from brickyards
and lime kilns for plaster and mortar, for carbide
and water applied to make gas for the lighting
of businesses, banks, for the elegant homes
of the Thatchers and Nibleys, of the Eccles
and Youngs;

Down from tower of Old Main Hill,
down from the Victory Garden, Animal Science,
Dairy Science, Dormitory, down from Industrial
Mechanics, glass-roofed Conservatory, down
through Arts and Athletics, the Girls' Rifle Team,
gym class, junior prom, football, basketball,
Military Band, Second Platoon Company B,
down from the Red Cross Life Saving Corps,
five college women in bathing suits, red cross

centered inside a bulls-eye stitched to their
bodice fronts;

Out of the saw mills and grist mills,
shingle mills, water wheels, pick and shovel-
built canals and irrigation ditches, down from
Logan Canyon a drinking water system
named for the great Logan poet Aaron DeWitt,
a spring where water was so fresh and cold
pre-1940's, so they say, a person could
hardly drink it;

Out of the Model T's of the nineteen-teens
to the Bus Lines of the twenties, into the paved
stoplight sheen of gas and electric, plastic
and fiberglass, passenger cars in train formation
gliding the highways down to the valley
and into the City, a flood of endless residents,
of generations born here, leaving, then returning
out of the same nostalgia, out of the longing
for home.

II

What happened to all those places we knew,
those people who knew them before? ZCMI
into Howells then Wickels' then Mac's, then
the Kater Shop. Kater shop's gone to the mall.

Knitting factories, garment companies,
specialty shops for ladies. Mode O' Day,
Keith O'Brien from Shamhart Christiansen.
Piggly-Wiggly, Woolworth's, Low Cost Drug.

Second Ward United Order Manufacturing.
The American Food Store's Saturday Special:
Two loaves of bread ten cents, hamburger
nine cents a pound, nine cents a dozen for eggs.

JR Edwards 1891 Saloon, the Club Saloon,
The Beach and Barracloch, Barracloch and Hansen,
Fjeldsted-Owens, Old Bitters, Boyle Billiards.
The Tap Room. The DelMar. The Cactus Club.

What happened to the drive-in movies,
one on each end of town way out beyond
the Main Street drag where stars encrusted
dark night skies above the lighted screens,
movie stars projected large and luminous,
cars of the decades parked in gravel, windows
rolled down for the speakers and heaters,

short walk to the restrooms, the popcorn stand.

What happened to Dragging Main,
cars full of teenagers cruising the strip
from Logan Lanes down to the Y,
from Blake's Spudnut to Pete's Spudnut
and back again, landmarks barely visible
to the few who knew where they were.

III

All along the corridor from Fourteenth North
to Logan River Golf Course, city of transition,
city of motion, city of welcome set down
in the center of one gorgeous valley
from mountain to mountain to mountain.

What happened here is what happens
everywhere, every year, in houses
built on every street, in apartments
nestled together like dominoes, in cars
that roll along from west fields to low
foothills, to what was once swampland,
frogs to be caught, bulrushes to break
into fluff and let go. What happened
was children, born to those who used to be
children too, here in this city that grew
like the bones of a growing boy.

Held in the bones of the city, people
of every persuasion who gather at churches,
at theaters, restaurants, people connecting
in friendship at school, at work, on the bus,
in libraries, animal shelters, parks, Rec Center,
zoo—those who say *We never want to leave*.
What happens is people, the best kind,
someone for everyone, a century and a half
of human history here in this city.

IV

It comes down to this: When your dogs bark
on a wintery Sunday morning, you look out
your window and there in the driveway,
two neighbors are shoveling your snow.
It's twenty degrees, yet you open the door
to smiles as warm as the full golden sun.

Or it comes down to this: The shuttle
from the car repair shop arrives and the man
who was already in the front seat gets out,

holds the door open, urges with the sweep
of his hand for you to take his place,
and when you arrive at the shop, he opens
every door, as if you were a celebrity.

Or this: The group of citizens who lifted
the crashed car from the motorcyclist's
broken body, pulled him free, made sure
of his recovery.

Or this: The dozens who
stood by our Muslim friends, citizens
whose lives became precarious when fearful
voices threatened to tear loose our solidarity.
Not one word of counter-protest for this
act of kindness.

This, our city, the one we've grown up with,
the one we claim, the one we hope will be here
to sustain us for as long as we are part of it,
part of what changes, part of what we hope
will never change: the spirit of community,
of history, centerpiece of our heritage, heart
of the valley, city of art, city of poetry.

Star Coulbrooke, Logan City Poet Laureate
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