Achievements that brought recognition to the Eleven "All-America Cities" of 1953

THE AMERICAN "All-America Cities" competition, as previously mentioned in The American City, was an important feature of the 1953 National Conference on Government, held by the National Municipal League in Richmond, Va., November 9-11. Co-sponsor of the competition was Look Magazine, which is devoting five pages to the subject in its current (February 9) issue.

Twenty-two cities were invited by the National Municipal League to submit at the Richmond meeting their claims for a place on this "All-America" team. From these the award jury has just announced its choice of selecting 11 as the more outstanding examples of progress achieved in community betterment as a result of energetic, purposeful, intelligent citizen effort.

All 22 of the statements presented impressed the jury as meriting special recognition. In addition, therefore, to selecting 11 for the major awards, honorable mention was accorded to the 11 others, here listed:

Corpus Christi, Texas
Dallas, Tex.
Glendale, Calif.
Grand Rapids, Mich.
Greensboro, N.C.
Hamilton, Ohio
Lawrence, Mass.
Norwich, Conn.
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Rome, N. Y.

Toledo, Ohio

The stories, in brief, of the cities that made the "All-America" team are presented in alphabetical order on this and the following pages. De Soto, the smallest city to qualify, is intentionally accorded the greatest amount of space. The "honorable mention" group will tell their stories in The American City next month.

Canton, Ohio

CANTON, OHIO, an industrial town having a population of approximately 18,000 people, has had a national reputation for 50 years as a "red light" area. Auto parks were renowned, and 300,000 people are said to have visited the district on a Friday night. Canton's citizens, aided by press, radio, and the Citizens Committee for Good Government, gave Canton a new image in 1952, the good administration it needs and deserves.

This concerted effort placed in office officials who have made an outstanding job of cleaning up the unsavory conditions which had prevailed for more than a century. The notorious red light district was eliminated. A dozen or more gambling bars were turned in. There has been a drug traffic crackdown. The American Social Hygiene Association lauded the cleanup by announcing in November 1952 and in May 1953 that Canton had lost its "vice center" tag.

The Safety Director, Stanley Ohmis, who was appointed mayor by some years ago, is the leader in this cleanup. In February 1953, as a result, he was awarded the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce award for good government. Only four similar awards have ever before been given. He was named Citizen Outstanding Young Man in 1952 and the outstanding young man in The State of the Ohio same year.

The Citizens Committee for Good Government has tried to encourage the best in men in both political parties to run for office and to encourage more people to vote. The press did a terrific job of alerting the community to the conditions which have prevailed over the years. The radio helped by good news coverage which keep the people informed.

This story is not the action by any individual or one group. The citizens of Canton have, through their action, given their children and their children's children a cleaner, better place in which to live. Starting in 1952, Norma R. Peterson Citizens Committee for Good Government

Daytona Beach, Florida

DATING FROM 1948, when private citizens formed a Civic A.P. Committee to combat corruption, crime, arm government and open gambling, Daytona Beach has progressed toward better government through intelligent and energetic citizen action.

First, citizens had themselves named elisons by the State Court and personally conducted raids on gambling establishments which had gone unmolested by elected law officers.

The reform group, defeated at the polls by election frauds, drafted a fraud-proof election law which was passed by the State Legislature. This cleared the way for purging of election rolls.

A last-minute write-in campaign in 1950 gave the reform group a 32 majority on the City Commission. Progress was temporarily halted, however, when the reform mayor switched sides and moved to replace an

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Petersburg, Virginia

LINE A GREAT MANY of our cities during the depression years and the war years following. Petersburg does not carry on a comprehensive program of municipal improvements, and had accumulated a great reserve of community needs. The city government, recognizing the problem, from 1930 to 1945, created a Hospital Authority, composed of nine prominent businessmen and professional men. After consultation, and in discussions with the community, a plan was organized and carried on with so much enthusiasm that the financial goal of $800,000, by public subscription, was exceeded by more than 80%. Thirteen thousand people, a number greater than one-third of all the men, women, and children living in the city, subscribed a total of $1,489,761, and, as of November 1, 1953, $1,287,685 of these pledges has been paid.

The tremendous enthusiasm generated by this highly successful community effort proved to be a reawaken- ing of community spirit and interest, and, from the closing date of this campaign, the city has marched forward, not only to the completion and occupancy, on January 15, 1953, of a $1,176,000, 180-bed hospital, but the city government, backed by citizen cooperation, the support of the press, radio, churches and civic groups, has completed:

1. $410,000 Negro high school
2. $300,000 white elementary school
3. $410,000 fire station in the central business district
4. $110,000 waterfront park
5. $97,000 street improvements costing more than $200,000

A Planning Commission, with the aid of a consulting engineering firm, has completed a long-range comprehensive plan for orderly city development.

A seven-member Traffic Commission has been created and engaged in a traffic study. It has painted off-street parking lots to accommodate approximately 100 cars, adopted a street cleanliness code, and taken many other steps to alleviate the traffic problem.

A Recreational Advisory Board has been created, and its members have surveyed the community's need for a permanent recreational program, and have engaged the services of a full-time recreational director and staff who carry on a year-round program of outdoor and indoor activities.

A group of citizens, with the cooperation of the city, has converted an old frame building into a fish and wildlife museum.

In addition to a $500,000 building fund, a volunteer company of 20 men has been organized and fully equipped to staff a fire department.

A group of citizens, with the cooperation of the city, has converted into a museum in which is housed one of the finest collections of Civil War relics in the country.

A group of citizens, with the cooperation of the city, has established an organization of 2,000 citizens, to promote and support city beautification.

A group of citizens, with the cooperation of the city, has organized a Service Club, to promote and support city beautification.

We believe that Petersburg's 1950 population 35,000 stands second to no other city of comparable size in this significant period. This is in no small way the result of the fact that the city has operated within its budget and with a surplus of 200,000. During this period the city completed approximately $5,500,000 in capital improvements with a net debt increase of only $1,000,000 and with its legal debt margin unimpaired.

Second to the hospital project, in the way of public works, was the civil defense organization.

Since January 1, 1951, more than 1,100 citizens have volunteered for training and service in the civil defense program.

Trained in this program have been 125 auxiliary police, 140 air-raid wardens, 456 hospital workers, 146 householders, 70 church attendants, 27 nurses aide, 33 other workers.

Ten volunteer fire fighters have had 180 hours of training; 18 volunteer doctors have had 180 hours of training; 2000 volunteer hospital technicians have been established throughout the city, as well as deficiency kitchen staff, and also an emergency garbage.

An emergency public work is in progress in the city. Three radio transmitters are maintained. Since January 1, 1951, 180 fire calls have been received, and a post is manned 30 hours per week.

Emergency communications are maintained between Fort