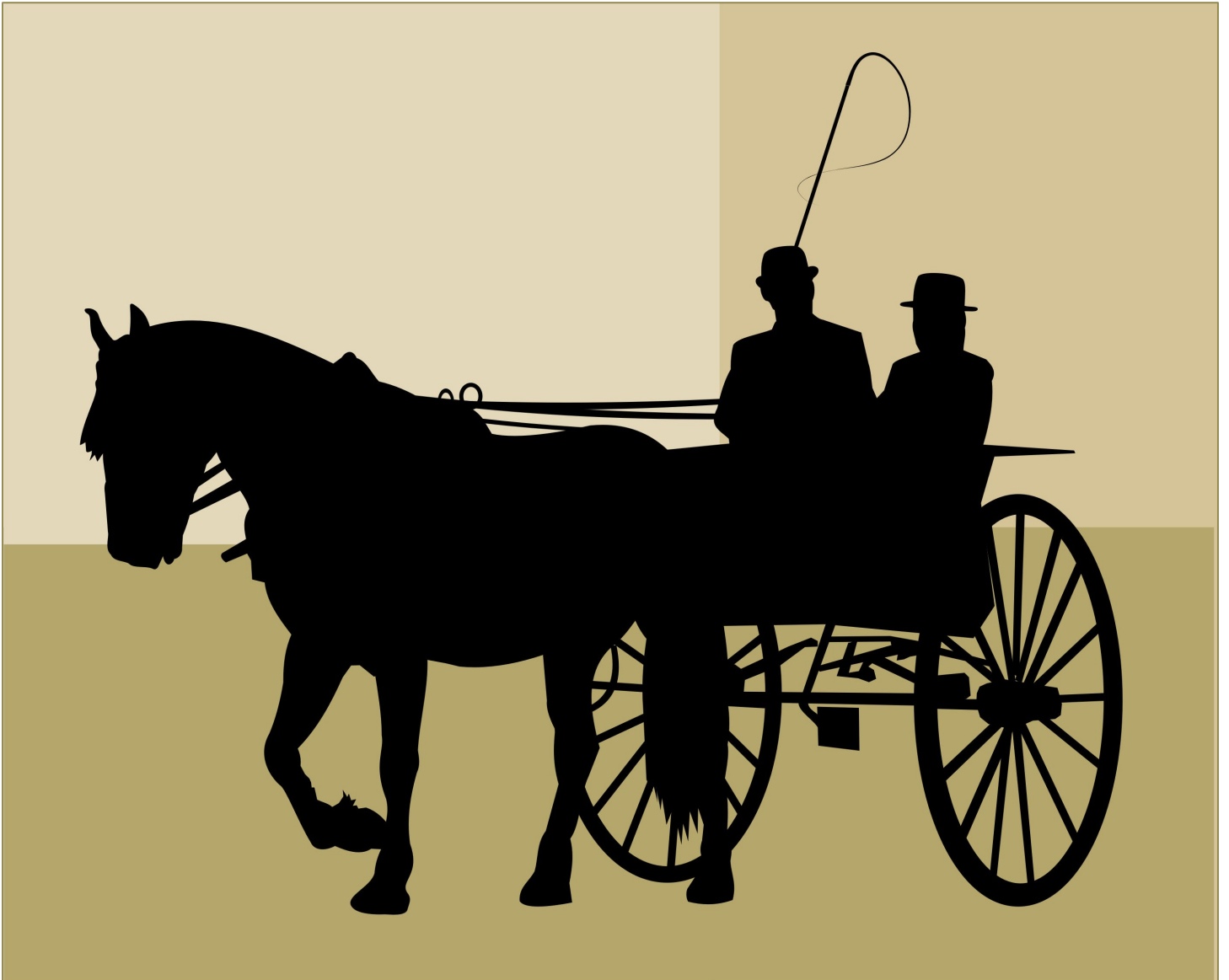


GAY NINETIES



THE GAY NINETIES

The Gay Nineties, sometimes known as the Gilded Age or the Horse and Buggy Days, represent a distinct phase of recreational life in America. The gospel of work was still good, but the need for recreation was recognized.

The Gay Nineties was a time of husking bees, taffy pulls, and box social gay dances.

Invitations for social affairs were elaborately decorated. Favorite motifs were roses, doves, bows of ribbons. Verses were sentimental.

Mottoes such as "Home Sweet Home" were hung from the wall, or woven into a rug and placed before the door. Large family albums covered with red plush usually had a prominent place on the parlor stand. Shells, paper weights, etc. were placed on a "whatnot" as a reminder of places visited.

When you plan your Gay Nineties party, play the games and sing the songs of that period, such as "Pig in the Parlor", "Wait Till the Sun Shines", "Daisy", "Sidewalks of New York", "Bird in a Gilded Cage", "Rings on My Fingers", "Old Gray Mare", "Old Mill Stream", "The Band Played On", or "Curse of an Aching Heart".

Tunes for square dancing: "Turkey in the Straw", "Irish Washerwomen", "Cut the Pigeon Wing".

Gay Nineties costumes included father and son turtle neck sweaters, checkered trousers, striped blazers, automobile dusters and handlebar mustaches. The gals wore gaily trimmed straw hats, veils, full-skirted dresses, button shoes, frilled parasols.

Your party may be made amusing by asking all the men to cut out black mustaches and add a still white collar made of paper plus a bow tie. The girls might cut out bangs and attach a string to each side so that they may be tied to the head.

Melodrama was the thing in the Gay Nineties, stages with elaboration. Talents can be nil yet the hilariousness is high if the actors put their hearts into their parts, to say nothing of an applauding or hissing audience.

Up in Alaska men were striking it right with the finding of gold and when they celebrated of a Saturday night, they made the rafters ring.

Such was the golden era in which the Eagles were born back in February of 1898.

It was an era of fun and friendliness and that's just what going back to the Gay Nineties to celebrate the anniversary of the Fraternal Order of Eagles can mean to your Aerie.

Your older members can underwrite the success of this party because they can provide that authentic touch. It is far better to play the games and sing the songs of that period than to improvise games and songs by giving them a Gay Nineties theme. So be sure to have some of those old timers on the committee.

Decorations: This was an age full of sentiment. Hang mottoes such as "Home Sweet Home" on the wall, also pictures of Lillian Russell, Diamond Jim Brady, etc, if such are

available. Old fashioned dance programs, paper flowers, shells and old-fashioned family pictures in ornate frames.

Perhaps you can get hold of an old fashioned stereoscope. It will serve as excellent entertainment for the guests who come early, or for some guests to look at while waiting for some game to start.

Costumes:

They would include gaily trimmed straw hats, veils, and full skirted dresses with leg-o-mutton sleeves, button shoes, and parasols. The men could wear checkered trousers, striped blazers, automobile dusters, and stickpins in their ties, handlebar mustaches, derby hats or checked caps.

For those who just can't dig up a costume, provide white paper stiff collars like the old-fashioned celluloid ones and perhaps a black paper handlebar mustache.

A Melodrama:

Staged with elaborations, melodrama was the thing of the Gay Nineties. Make up your own melodrama (one or two scenes, 15 minutes running time all together would not be difficult). Use Aerie names, making the character of the real person and the one in the drama as inconsistent as possible. For example, that quiet member who never says a word at a meeting could lend his name to the villain in the piece. For the theme of your melodrama use the old standbys such as the poor widow about to be evicted for non-payment of rent; the drunken father; Nellie the Needlewoman who meets up with a villain; the beautiful young girl who is tempted to marry an old man for his money in preference to the handsome penniless son of the fruit peddler. There need not be too much dialogue. Pantomime and slow action can take up a lot of the time. Melodrama casts are always small-the hero, heroine, the heavy man, the light comedy boy and one or two others. Slow sad music on the piano or violin will provide plenty of atmospheres.

Music:

Try to get an old-time piano or accordion player who can play all the old tunes. Fill in all gaps in the evening with old-time music. If you use a phonograph, find suitable songs and have some one very reliable in charge.

Start the program with some barber shop harmony by singing waiters or a barber shop quartet. Ask the people to call out request numbers. Get everyone to sing if possible.

Some old favorites are:

Bird in the Gilded Cage
Rings on My Fingers
The Band Played On
Daisy
Wait Till the Sun Shines
Sunday Afternoon
Man in the Moon

Sidewalks of New York
Old Mill Stream
Old Gray Mare
Curse of an Aching Heart
She May Have Seen Better Days
Apple Blossom Time

Cat's Cradle:

This is a game typical of the Gay Nineties. Cradles were made by tying two ends of a piece of cord together and threading it around the fingers in different ways. Usually, two people played and the strings were taken from one person's hands to the others to form different patterns. Someone in the Aerie will know how to play the game. Have him demonstrate. Provide lengths of string for all guests. Have three or four judge's walk among the pairs to select the most novel or complicated pattern completed with the string. Award a prize to this pair. Have all participate in pairs.

Forfeits:

Many of the Gay Nineties parlor games carried a penalty and the player paid a forfeit such as a tie, handkerchief or a piece of jewelry. The owner then had to perform some kind of a stunt to redeem its return. It was usual for the owner to kneel in front of a judge who was blindfolded, with another player holding the article over his head.

The following formula was gone through:

"Heavy, heavy hangs over thy head"

The judge pronounced sentence and the player paid the forfeit in order to regain his property.

Some of the penalties were as follows:

Become a Greek Statue. (Boy's forfeit) He mounts a chair and various members, in turn, place him in a difference attitude, in which he must remain until it is altered by the next person. Bow to the wittiest, kneel to the prettiest and kiss the one you love best. Repeat a piece of poetry or sing a certain song. Count to forty backwards. Hop on one foot three times around the room.

Bicycle Race:

As a surprise stunt, stage a slow bicycle race or a bicycle news boys' race, throwing folded newspapers on a certain table as they ride by.

Dancing:

Square dancing, the Old Cake Walk

Refreshments:

Box social style. Ladies bring a lunch for two in a box that must be decorated with colored paper, bows of ribbon or paper flowers. Have an auctioneer entice the men into paying for the lunches. The ladies have their name carefully concealed inside the package. There's nothing to prevent them from giving their husbands hints as to which is their box.

Other themes for a Gay Nineties Party is as follows:

**An Evening of
Vaudeville:**

The Eagle Pamphlet, Amateur Show, lists acts that would be appropriate.

**Old Fashioned
Spelling Bee:**

Chairman calls meeting to order; appoints two leaders, who take turns in calling to their sides, first one then the other, until all who desire to spell have been called out. Sides are opposite each other. Leader gives out words, alternating between the sides. When a player misses a word he sits down and the player opposite him is given the opportunity to try the same word. The game proceeds until only one player is left standing.

Pronouncing matches are carried out in the same way, except that the leader spells the words, while the players pronounce them.

Taffy Pull:

Good for the young folks

Singing School:

Singing schools used to be held in the country school houses and were conducted by a singing master who demanded strict attention during the first part of the evening. He stood on a platform, with his old reliable tuning fork in hand and woe to the one that missed a note. With a good selection of songs, including a few rounds which add to the novelty, a good program could be prepared. A good song leader is a "must." The rest of the evening could be devoted to cards.

Oyster Supper:

Guests in costume, of course.