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## **Forman H. Craton - 1902 - 1924 - Memoir**

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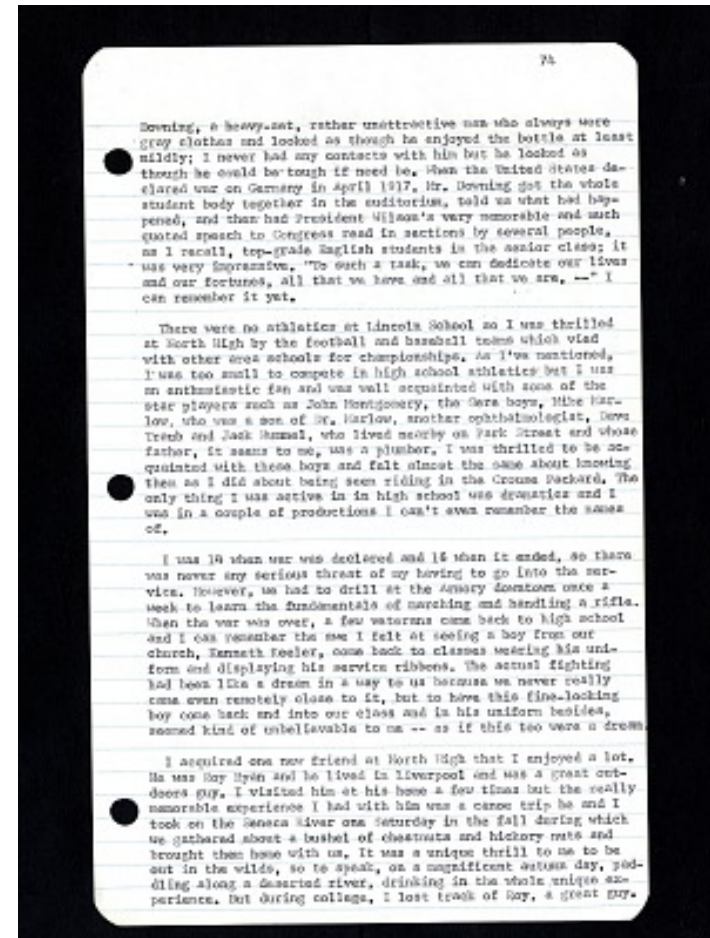
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Downing, a heavy-set, rather unattractive man who always wore gray clothes and looked as though he enjoyed the bottle at least mildly; I never had any contacts with him but he looked as though he could be tough if need be. When the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, Mr. Downing got the whole student body together in the auditorium, told us what had happened, and then had President Wilson's very memorable and much quoted speech to Congress read in sections by several people, as I recall, top-grade English students in the senior class; it was very impressive. "To such a task, we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, all that we have and all that we are, --" I can remember it yet.

There were no athletics at Lincoln school so I was thrilled at North High by football and baseball teams which vied with other area schools for championships. As I've mentioned, I was too small to compete in high school athletics but I was an enthusiastic fan and was well acquainted with some of the star players such as John Montgomery, the Gere boys, Mike Marlow, who was a son of Dr. Marlow, another ophthalmologist, Dave Traub and Jack Hummel, who lived nearby on Park Street and whose father, it seems to me, was a plumber. I was thrilled to be acquainted with these boys and felt almost the same about knowing them as I did about being seen riding in the Grouse Packard. The only thing I was active in in high school was dramatics and I was in a couple of productions I can't even remember the names of.

I was 14 when war was declared and 16 when it ended, so there was never any serious threat of my having to go into the service. However, we had to drill at the Armory downtown once a week to learn the fundamentals of marching and handling a rifle. When the war was over, a few veterans came back to high school and I can remember the awe I felt at seeing a boy from our church, Kenneth Keeler, come back to classes wearing his uniform and displaying his service ribbons. The actual fighting had been like a dream in a way to us because we never really came even remotely close to it, but to have this fine-looking boy come back and into our class and in his uniform besides, seemed kind of unbelievable to me -- as if this too were a dream.

I acquired one new friend at North High that I enjoyed a lot. He was Roy Ryan and he lived in Liverpool and was a great outdoors guy. I visited him at his home a few times but the really memorable experience I had with him was a canoe trip he and I took on the Seneca River one Saturday in the fall during which we gathered up about a bushel of chestnuts and hickory nuts and brought them home with us. It was a unique thrill to me to be out in the wilds, so to speak, on a magnificent autumn day, paddling along a deserted river, drinking in the whole unique experience. But during college, I lost track of Roy, a great guy.



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