

Newsletter

Randolph County Historical Society

RCHS Fall Program

Prohibition Stories from Randolph County

RCHS president Don Teter will present a general overview of Prohibition in West Virginia. The program will feature stories from Randolph County, including how the county went dry ahead of the rest of the state, which went dry ahead of the nation. Don will also cover the arrests and near-arrest of some of his ancestors, and inside stories by the Randolph Enterprise's local correspondent who reported from the prohibition prisoner packed "Our Hotel De Jail," where he was one of the involuntary tenants.

This program will be presented on Thursday, November 17 at 6:30 pm. The RCHS Annual Members Meeting will also be held at this time, which includes a brief meeting and election of Board members, in addition to the program.

The in-person meeting will be in the second floor meeting room of the Darden Mill, 101 Railroad Ave, Elkins. The program can also be viewed online – for link send us your email address, or watch for information on our Facebook page Randolph County Historical Society or at www.randolphhistoricalwv.org.

FALL 2022

RCHS Program	1
President's Letter	1
President's Letter	2
Exhibit Exploration	3
AmeriCorps Update	4

Upcoming

Board Meeting

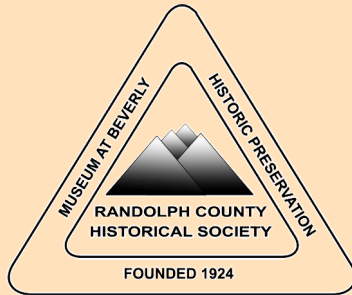
November 3, 2022 1:00PM
Darden Mill and Zoom

RCHS Fall Program –

Prohibition Stories from
Randolph County
November 17, 2022 6:30PM
Darden Mill and Zoom

Annual Meeting

November 17, 2022 6:30PM
Darden Mill and Zoom



President's Letter

Everyday Life – Swatting Flies

by Don Teter

Many subscribe to the notion that history is all about great battles, great events and great – or not so great – leaders, but just as important to a real understanding of history are the “mundane” stories of everyday life.

I sometimes stumble across tidbits I've forgotten in my research files, like my recent discovery of some information I gathered way back in 1979. On May 17, 1917, *The Randolph Enterprise* reported about a fly swatting campaign in the Elkins schools. I had noticed that public service ads in many newspapers of that era frequently reminded readers that diseases borne by flies had killed more people than wars, and exhorted them to “Swat them” or “Screen them out.” Finding my old notes led to a little internet sleuthing and discovery of an article in the magazine *Technology and Culture*, (Vol. 60, No. 3, July 2019), published by Johns Hopkins Press.

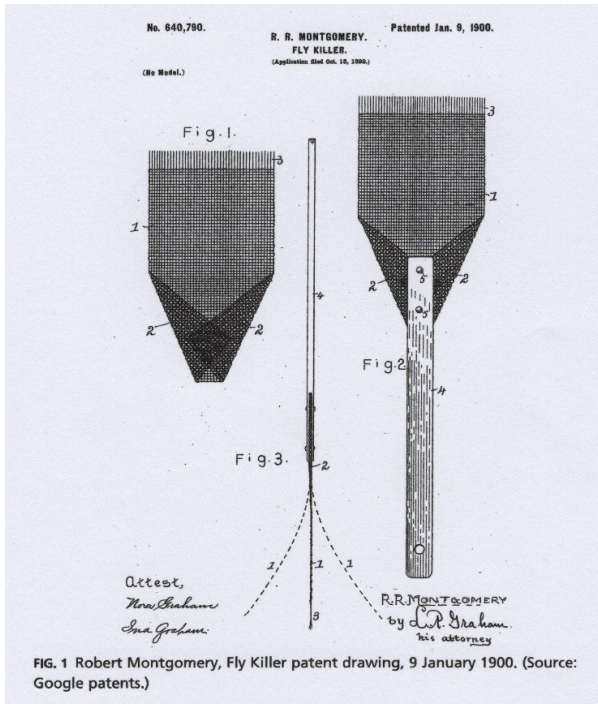
That recent article by Peter Soppelsa and Amy S. Rodgers is titled “Origins of the Flyswatter” and details its background as a twentieth-century “socially stable” artifact “familiar, mundane, and routine” with its use being “intuitive.” The authors note the extensive fly swatting campaigns of the era, describe the device and include a copy of the patent drawings submitted in January 1900 by inventor Robert Montgomery. He and his sons had produced more than half a million of the “King Fly Killer” by 1902, and the next year they sold the patent to John L. Bennett of the United States Wire Mat Company. Bennett himself is perhaps best known as the inventor of the beer can in 1937.

Continued page 2

President's Letter

Everyday Life – Swatting Flies

by Don Teter



The elementary schools of Elkins had joined the eradication effort with a fly swatting campaign from March 20 through May 8, 1917. Third Ward School – my alma mater for what that’s worth – won the contest with 9093 flies killed, First Ward followed with 5493, Central School had 2825, and the Riverside Colored School had 335. The grand total of 17,746 was an average of about 507 flies per school day, though it is not clear whether only flies killed at school counted. Prizes were awarded by the Elkins Civic League, with Third Ward School receiving the grand prize of an American flag.

Jason Crickard of Third Ward was the champion swatter with a tally of 2852, or about 81 each day. His prize was a new suit of clothes from merchant John Wilt. The boys champion at First Ward was Grant Nine with 991 and at Central was Junior Gilmore with 153. Each of them received a knife from Mrs. H.G. Johnson. The girls champion was Grace Ferguson of First Ward with 768 and she was rewarded with a pair of Red Ridinghood shoes from John Wilt. Mary Collier of Third Ward tallied 557 kills, and Central’s girls champion was Edythe Simmons with 211. The *Enterprise* did not report whether they received prizes. Central School’s prize-winning room was Miss Gaunt’s with 991, and they were awarded a picture donated by Mrs. Howard Sutherland. Miss Frashure’s room led the way at Third Ward, winning a picture donated by Mrs. W.E. Baker, while Miss Kiser’s room at First Ward received a picture donated by Mrs. A.M. Fredlock. The article made no mention of any winners being recognized at the Riverside School.

I am unaware if our collection includes an example of the King Fly Killer, but I am confident that one was likely used at some point in the building. The story is a fine example of how local history can illuminate and personalize our understanding of national trends, though it also reminds me of my own fly-swatting saga. I was working as a brush-cutter and chainman back in the 70’s on a survey on Cheat Mountain and we were plagued by swarms of flies. Instead of a high-tech swatter I was slapping them with my hands as they settled on my arms. The first day I killed 5 flies, the next about 50, the third about 100, and on the fourth day around 150. The fifth day I didn’t bother to kill any, since there seemed to still be just as many buzzing around as there had been when I started.



Museum Updates

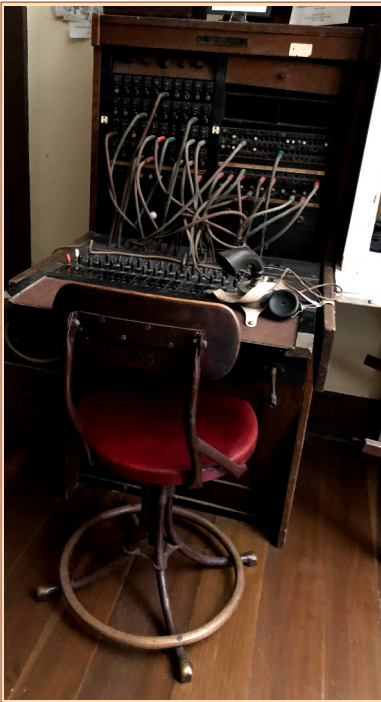
Randolph County Museum has updated equipment, thanks to a generous grant from the West Virginia Humanities Council. This equipment, which includes a new multipurpose printer and Czur book scanner, will help improve our collections management, and let us digitize critical collection items going forward.

AFNHA AmeriCorps member Maddy Fleming has been continuing the accession of the Goddin-Hinkle Letter Collection. This collection includes personal letters and envelopes from 1943 to 1948. Fleming will continue to contribute to the Randolph County Museum’s collections and archives throughout the 2022-23 service year.

Exhibit Exploration

The Tygart's Valley Telephone Company

by Carolyn Corley Channell and Maddy Fleming



Visit the Exhibit

The Randolph County Museum opens Memorial Day weekend and closes Labor Day weekend.

No admission, donations appreciated.

For more information, please contact the Randolph County Museum at randolphcountymuseum@gmail.com.

As one walks into the communications room of the Randolph County Museum, they are transported back to a technological time before that of portable, always-in-your-pocket phones, so easily accessible to the world today. Though it may be hard for some to imagine, there was a time when telephones were their own household or community unit, and one that was shared between households and connected entire communities. The Tygart's Valley Telephone Company served Dailey, Valley Bend, Mill Creek, Huttonsville, Adolph, Valley Head, and Mingo since 1932.

An independent telephone company organized by Byron Woods in 1932, the Tygart's Valley Telephone Company emerged from what was Beverly and Marlinton Telephone, organized in 1903 by Drs. John and Perry Bosworth. The Tygart's Valley telephone exchange moved from Huttonsville to Mill Creek in 1953. Independent telephone companies became notable nationwide starting in the late nineteenth century, as the expiration of Alexander Graham Bell's telephone patents allowed the market to open and shift to more companies rather than purely Bell's own. For rural communities especially, this brought much change too. Many independent telephone companies worked to bring reliable and quality-made technology to the isolated regions where the Bell Company had no interest due to low profitability. Telephones donated to the Randolph County Museum and on display are excellent tangible representations of this shift.

The telephone switchboard was essential to manual telephone exchanges, operated by switchboard operators. The cords, or switches, established connections between telephone users or other switchboards. This particular switchboard was manufactured by the Stromberg-Carlson Telephone Company. Established circa 1894 in Chicago, Illinois by two employees of the Chicago Bell Telephone Company, Alfred Stromberg and Androv Carlson followed the market shift from American Bell. The company later moved to Rochester, New York, also the origin of this switchboard. Stromberg-Carlson and its telephones became known as the "farmer's friend" for their respected and reputable use in rural areas.

Another prominent telephone company of the times appears in the Randolph County Museum exhibit collection. Western Electric was well-known as a part of the Bell Company that would become widely recognized as AT&T, or the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. Western Electric served as a major manufacturer of telephone and communications equipment throughout the late nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. Three of the phones on exhibit are Western Electric, namely the crank wall telephone (250W model), a 250W candlestick phone, as well as a 302 model telephone with no dial.



Left to right: Western Electric 250W crank wall telephone, 250W candlestick phone, and 302 model telephone with no dial.



Left to right: Yet to be identified phone and Automatic Electric Type 80 Rotary Dial telephone.

There is one outlier telephone on exhibit which is an Automatic Electric Type 80 rotary dial telephone. The remaining phone on exhibit has yet to be properly identified.

The Tygart's Valley Telephone Company history lives on in the interconnected community, not only on exhibit in the Randolph County Museum but also in the memories of community members. One recollection is specially intertwined with the switchboard on display. The first switchboard operators with the Tygart's Valley Telephone Company, located at its Huttonsville office, were Agnes (Granny) Louk, who operated the day shift, and Martha Ross, who operated the night shift. The telephone switchboard shut down at 11:00PM.

AmeriCorps Update

by Maddy Fleming

Hello all! My name is Maddy Fleming and I will be serving as the AFNHA AmeriCorps member for the Randolph County Museum and Camp Pioneer through 2022-23. I grew up and currently live in Green Bank, West Virginia. The drive over the mountain isn't so bad, though I'm sure the winter weather will test me. Either way, sun or snow, I'll enjoy the winding way I travel each day.

I graduated from Shepherd University in August 2022 with a Bachelor of Arts in Global Studies, concentrating in history and culture. I also received a minor in English. I took my studies to Cork, Ireland this past summer where I studied the Irish language, ethnology, and folklore, as well as discovered my interest in working in the museum and cultural heritage fields. The AFNHA AmeriCorps program proved to be the best opportunity to further explore this interest and to learn even more about history here in my own Appalachian home.

In the month I've been serving so far, I've already learned so much. I'm eager to continue the work in the archival collections at the Randolph County Museum and contribute what I can in conserving the rich history here in Beverly and Randolph County. I'm also delighted to be working alongside my supervisor, Carolyn Channell, and the Randolph County Historical Society throughout my time here.

There is so much more to learn and do, and I look forward to all that is to come during this service year.



Support Randolph County History!

Please join or renew your membership in the Randolph County Historical Society. Your tax deductible dues and donations support the Randolph County Museum, and the preservation of our county's history.

**Randolph County
Historical Society**
PO Box 342
Elkins, WV 26241

Randolph County Museum
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Beverly, WV 26253

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randolphcountymuseum@gmail.com

MUSEUM AT BEVERLY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
RANDOLPH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FOUNDED 1924

Membership 2023 Pay your dues now for 2023!

Annual Dues:

___ \$20 Regular ___ \$50 Supporting ___ \$10 Hardship

Donation: \$ _____ Amount

Donation Purpose:

- ___ Don Rice Memorial Fund for Museum Improvements
___ Randy Allan Memorial Fund for Museum Improvements
___ Capital Improvement Fund
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To pay online go to www.randolphhistoricalwv.org