

Randolph County Historical Society

Preserving and sharing the heritage of Randolph County, WV since 1924

THE RANDOLPH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM CELEBRATE NINE DECADES OF PROTECTING THE HISTORY OF RANDOLPH COUNTY, WV.

The RCHS would like to congratulate Randolph County members on successfully contributing to the preservation of Randolph County’s history in 2014. Thanks to all who attended and participated in last year’s events such as the “Last Wolf” and “Randolph County during WWII” presentations. This year we are planning more events ranging from reenactments to historical tours, as well as museum improvements, publications, and a new website. Our next event is on Friday, February 27th. We hope to see you there!

This newsletter from the RCHS contains information about upcoming events sponsored by the RCHS, a letter from the President, and membership information. It also contains a short story entitled “*The Fiddler of Polebridge*” from the book, **Jonathan Fish And His Neighbors**, written by Hu Maxwell and published by Acme Publishing in Morgantown in 1902.

MUSEUM UPDATES

The Randolph County Museum continues working on collections care, and will be introducing a rotating exhibit room in the summer of 2015. The museum is located on the corner of Main and Court St. in Beverly, WV and is open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday 10 to 4 during the summer months and for special events at other times. Admission is free.



Randolph County Museum

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2015 EVENTS

1

A screening of Averell's Raiders and the 35th Star

When: February 27th, 7pm

Where: Beverly Heritage Center



2

The Elkins Economy from WWII to the turn of the 21st Century

When: April 21st, 7 pm

Where: The Darden House, Elkins



Event Preview:

***Development from the Ground Up:
The Elkins Economy from WWII to the
Turn of the 21st Century***

On Tuesday, April 21, 2015, Joseph Wallace will present a program at the Darden House in Elkins giving an overview of economic development efforts led by local business and civic leaders in Elkins and Randolph County. Wallace, who is an Elkins attorney and member of the Board of Directors of the Randolph County Historical Society, was personally involved in many of those efforts and has insight into the processes which helped encourage economic development during the last half of the 20th Century. The free program will be held at the Darden House, 421 Davis Avenue, Elkins, starting at **7 pm**.

3

Historic Site Tour of Randolph County

When: June 20th (Tentative)

Where: Meet in Beverly

4

Beverly Heritage Days

(sponsored by the Beverly Heritage Center)

When: July 18th

Where: Beverly

5

“Through Thick and Dark Laurels: The SPT in Randolph and Pocahontas Counties”

When: TBA

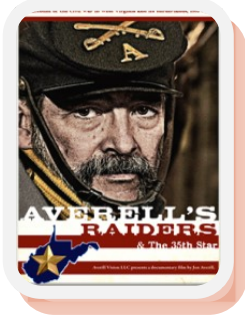
Where: Beverly Heritage Center

“After moving to Randolph County from Oregon for my AmeriCorps position, I was surprised to discover that this location is chock-full of history. The number of people and organizations that are involved with understanding this county’s history is unlike anywhere I’ve ever lived. I can’t wait to get involved with all the historical events in 2015! I’m particularly looking forward to the historic sites tour.”

- Bree Wallace, AmeriCorps Member at the Beverly Heritage Center

AVERELL'S RAIDERS

The Randolph County Historical Society is pleased to be hosting a showing of the documentary film *Averell's Raiders and the 35th Star*, on Friday, February 27, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. at the Beverly Heritage Center, on Court Street in Beverly. There will be no charge for admission.



Don Teter, president of the Historical Society, portrays David Hunter Strother for the West Virginia Humanities Council's *History Alive!* program, and will appear in character to introduce and comment on the film which recounts the campaigns of his commander and friend, General William Woods Averell.

The impact of the war on civilians is one focus of the film, more than specific battle strategy. Several primary source voices along with well-known contemporary historians tell the story.

The story begins in June, 1863, when a young brigadier general is assigned command of scattered units of Yankee infantry in the new state of West Virginia. General William Woods Averell converts these men into a highly effective mobile brigade that protects West Virginia's boundaries and conducts raids against Confederate infrastructure.

"Don Teter's contribution to Averell's Raiders is a reproduction of Strother's voice and character that is as accurate as we could have hoped for ... Don has extensively researched his character. It was our greatest fortune, when preparing Averell's Raiders, to run into folks like Don who were engaged in parallel studies." - Jon Averell

The film recounts the Federal army's role in securing the state of West Virginia during the first two fragile years of statehood, focusing on the campaigns of General Averell, who was sometimes headquartered at Beverly, and fought the Battles of White Sulphur Springs, Droop Mountain, and Moorefield.

Once Averell took command of the 4th Separate Brigade in the spring of 1863, Confederates never again had success in threatening the new state, fearing the next advance of Averell's forces toward southern railroads.

Averell's Raiders tells a story previously unknown to most West Virginians. Tales are told of the exploits of Stonewall Jackson, John Mosby, and Jeb Stuart; yet few know of the heroics and success of the Union Cavalry in the new state of West Virginia. Averell's Brigade was extremely well known in January of 1864 and Averell was the toast of Washington, D.C. after the heroic Salem Raid. His reputation was maligned, however, as he ran afoul of Generals Hooker, Hunter, and Sheridan.

The film closes with a brief look at William Averell's business success after the War, including involvement in the growing use of asphalt pavement.

The Historical Society invites the community to enjoy this informative look at a little-known aspect of West Virginia history.

The Randolph County Historical Society welcomes the public to its periodic historical programs, as well as to the Randolph County Museum in Beverly. For more information call 304-637-7424.

FEATURED STORY

The Fiddler of Polebridge

**A short story from *Jonathan Fish And His Neighbors*, by Hu Maxwell
Morgantown, W.Va., Acme Publishing, 1902**

While this story is not actually history, we thought some readers would be interested in a tale told by the historian and writer who published early histories of Tucker County (1884), Randolph County (1898), and Barbour County (1899). A native of Tucker County, Hu Maxwell was a forester and topographer for many years for the United States Forest Service, and sometimes accompanied Teddy Roosevelt on camping expeditions.

The old man was a unique and a peculiar genius; a combination of laziness and pride; a blending of religious fervor and worldly sin; a conglomeration of all the elements that go to make up men who fulfill no mission of any sort in this world, but who come, exist, depart, and the tale is told. He was like the lilies of the valley, he toiled not, nor spun. Too lazy to work, to cowardly to steal, he begged and deadheaded his way. I would give his whole biography if I could, but I cannot. Nobody can. He came from, nobody knew where; he lived, nobody knew how; he went, nobody knew whither. His name was unknown, but the people re-baptized him, by general consent, and called him Dan Tucker. He accepted the name. It was bestowed because he incessantly, uninterruptedly and all but eternally see-sawed a tune of that name from the wailing strings of a fiddle which he possessed. He could not strike a note of anything else. He never tried.

Perhaps it is best to begin at the beginning. In 1866, October 13 (the date is certain) a stranger with a wife, one horse and a violin, came down a narrow road into a settlement on the western slope of the Alleghenies, and commenced boarding around among the people, like an old time district teacher. He said he was a veteran from the lately disbanded Confederate army, and that all he possessed in the world was what he brought with him. The Confederate veterans in that community extended the glad hand, but they catechised him and found that he had never been a soldier. When they upbraided him, he admitted the deception, lost his temper, and said it was nobody's confounded business where he came from.

By the time the spring of 1867 came on, the people grew tired of boarding him, his wife and his horse. He not only never offered to help with the work, but indignantly refused to do so when invited, and replied in language not exactly classic, but expressive, "I'm a cat above that." At length the neighbors took a day off and built him a hut in a quiet and rustic retreat called Polebridge Hollow. The next day himself, his wife and the horse's head moved in – that is, the horse stood all summer with his head in the window, and all winter backed up against the west wind, humped like a Sahara dromedary, and as sorry a specimen of animated nature as ever starved to death on oak sprouts. That cabin was Dan Tucker's home for a quarter of a century. Perhaps ere now the house has been crushed beneath the weight of years, for it was not a structure to defy the centuries and mock the ages like the pyramids of Egypt or the Colosseum of Rome. But it was yet standing, a tenant-less shanty, when last I traveled that road. Its glassless and sashless windows, its yawning doorway, and its sagging roof-tree, suggested haunted places and peculiar chills. So lonesome had Polebridge become that even the snipes and whip-poor-wills had deserted it; and the owls which had made that their rendezvous from time immemorial had not been heard or seen there since the old fiddler took his departure.


But it is proper to state why the old fellow went, even though his going was long delayed. His fiddle was his ruin. Music, like jokes, may be carried too far. The residents were patient and long-suffering. During the first five years they heard the unfaltering voice of the violin pitching up and down through the woods surrounding the hut, and they never uttered a murmur. During the next five years they became restless. During the next five years they expressed the hope that something would reveal to the old man the undesirability of so much music of one kind. By the end of the twentieth year the murmur had grown to a general complaint.

At twenty-five years the old fellow went. In all that long and agonizing period no tune was ever heard except the same Dan Tucker. He sat in his hut and kept up the lick all the time. His only source of support was a little garden where his wife raised such vegetables as would grow without much cultivation. She was as lazy as he, but she had no fiddle, consequently had more time to kill, and she killed it in the garden without mercy. About harvest time, and in the winter when there was wood to chop, the neighbors in the compassion of their hearts, sometimes offered him work. No! Not a bit of it did he want. Sometimes they gave him things to eat, fearing that he and his wife would starve to death. The people did not want the reproach of letting a human being and his wife die of hunger in a Christian land. He took all they gave, asked for more, and quoted the text which says that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver. It was a maxim with him that he who gave quickly could be prevailed upon to give twice. There was a pious side to his nature. He was a Christian and a classleader. Vividly do I remember when I was but a barefoot boy how he lifted up his stentorian voice in exhortation to sinners to repent and be saved. Well do I remember with what awe I watched his rolling eyes as he dilated upon the horrors of hell and the certainty of damnation. His prayers went up like the whirlwind that caught Elijah. Splendid and terrible were his benedictions on saints and his maledictions on sinners. He was the greatest exhorter and dead-beat that ever roamed the everlasting Alleghanies. But his boiling Sunday fervor cooled down on Monday till there was not a simmer. That was why nobody had confidence in him; why he was regarded as a delusion and a snare; why people quit attending his class-meetings; and why he finally shook the dust of the meeting house from his feet and said that the whole tribe and generation of the children of Belial might go plumb to the devil for all of him. The older residents who had known him since his coming, and who had heard the pitiful and agonizing tones of his fiddle all the years, were patient and forbearing; but the younger generation was coming on, and some of the members decided that it was not necessary to go on eternally listening to the same tune. They laid plans. Soon afterward he walked out one morning to view the haunts of nature in his front yard, and on a stump by the road he espied a paper which ran thus:

One tune, one solitary tune,
He crucifies from noon to noon
From July first to last of June,
It's "Old Dan Tucker, fine old man,
He washed his face in the frying pan,
Combed his head with a wagon wheel
And died with toothache in his heel."
O, Children! How that see-saw bow
Makes Old Dan Tucker's spirit go!
It never stops for sun or snow,
Or rains that fall, or winds that blow,
O, children, children, O, O, O,
O, children, that's what screeches so,
There's music in the thunder's roar;
There's music in a healthy snore;
There's music when hyenas gnaw;
There's music when we file a saw;
There's music in the whip-poor-will;
There's music in the coffee mill.
But where's the music to compare
When Old Dan Tucker fills the air!

"That is an indignity," were the words of the old fiddler as he turned away. His wife tore the paper and threw the pieces in the road. His anger was kindled, but it was near election and that helped him forget the insult.





He took great interest in politics, and he felt full responsibility in state affairs. At the polls he was always first to come and last to go. He always managed to hang on some candidate for dinner, and usually for a pair of pants also. His vote counted and he knew it. He invariably put off voting till late in the afternoon. By so doing he sometimes drove several bargains, particularly if the election promised to be close and the opposing candidates had an eye single to business. It was not unusual for him to waddle home on election night with a shoulder load of garments and shoes. He was sometimes offered carboys and demijohns; but he always declined, because he was a classleader and hated all forms of sin.

On one particular election night he reached his home in Polebridge Hollow late and tired. It had been a day of intense excitement for him. Never before had the exalted and inestimable right of freeborn suffrage been so valuable. Never before had he felt so proud of his American citizenship. Never before had the blessings of liberty seemed so real. Never before, in fact, had there been such a close election at that precinct, and never before had candidates been so numerous and so liberal. He had reaped his reward. Not only did he eat six free dinners that day, but in the shades of evening he departed for his home with a load of shoes and clothing, under the weight of which he reeled and staggard, although he was duly sober. As he drew near his humble domicile the pale and flickering glow of the pineknot candle came through the window to guide him to the doorway. His wife had sat up to await his coming. The load of apparel which he flung upon the floor excited her and she exclaimed.

“Good man!”

The next morning he overslept the lark, and arose with an uncomfortable feeling. He sauntered out for a whiff of ozone while his wife looked in the cupboard and tried to remember how long it had been since it contained anything to eat. Down by the road he saw another notice posted on the stump, and he walked slowly down to read it. It ran thus:

Once in four years he goes hellbent
To fire the guns of the government,
He never shirks from doing that –
To vote (He is a Democrat),
At evening through the falling dews
His pathway homeward he pursues
With packs of pants and shirts and shoes.
O, children, listen! Four years more
You’ll hear Dan Tucker’s fiddle roar.

His wife had come down from the house and stood beside him. He looked at her and said: “That’s a slur.”

The next day it became known in the neighborhood that Dan Tucker and his wife were about to turn their backs forever upon Polebridge Hollow. Inquiry at the cabin elicited only the information that they were going back where they came from.

“Where is that?” was asked him, and the short answer was:

“None of your business.”

The neighbors with one consent joined hands to speed the parting guest, and raised eight dollars with which they bought a mule so old that its teeth were nearly as long as the tines of a pitchfork. Dan Tucker’s horse had starved to death twenty-four years before. The next morning the mule bore the goods and chattels of Dan Tucker up the road. The Fiddler of Polebridge Hollow had entered upon the journey from which he never returned. He went the way he came, and disappeared over the summit of the Alleghanies and was heard of no more. “None ever knew what became of Œdipus.”

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's membership renewal time for the Randolph County Historical Society. Our dues are modest, but building membership is important to increase our ability to reach the community. We want to play an active role in the life of the local community, and plan to continue offering events and programs doing so, both on our own and in conjunction with other groups.

I use the word community in a broader sense than the immediate neighborhood. I encourage our members and friends to help us stretch the envelope, extending our reach to a much broader "community". The Community of Randolph County includes not just those who live and work here, but should rightfully embrace all who have family and other ties to the area. Just because they don't live here does not mean they can't be part of what we do. I commend board member Linda McCauley for starting our Facebook page, and such efforts are helping us reach out to a broader audience, but we need to take it a step further and close the deal.

And just what, you may ask, do I want you to do? Help us reach out. Maintain your membership and encourage your neighbors, friends, and family to join us. Pass on this newsletter, not just in the local area, but to those who are no longer residents. We can provide a simple and economical way for those no longer living here, many of whom have strong family ties to the area, to be part of our community, with a wonderful opportunity to contribute to the maintenance of our cultural and historical heritage. *You may leave Randolph County, but it never really leaves you.*

I am reminded of the time my young nephew, born and raised in Orlando, Florida, was in a grade school class celebrating cultural diversity. When the teacher said, "Joey, your last name is Petronio, does that mean you are Italian?" His response was "No, I'm from West Virginia." He knew where home really was, even though he's never lived here. Of course, we know you can be a West Virginian and Randolph Countian at heart no matter where you live. And pride in the place we come from doesn't mean we can't also have personal and community pride in the variety of ethnic backgrounds represented in Randolph County and the roles they have filled in our rich and diverse history. Please join us in finding new ways to explore and preserve that diverse heritage. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Don Teter

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

With a RCHS Membership, you receive:

1. Full Newsletters
2. Access to RCHS publications
3. The satisfaction that you are helping preserve Randolph County's history

Annual Membership Fee:

- ⇒ \$20 for Adults
- ⇒ \$10 for Seniors and Students

If you would like to join or **renew your membership** digitally, please email the museum email address at:

randolphcountymuseum@gmail.com

**When the new museum website is complete, a membership form will be available online*

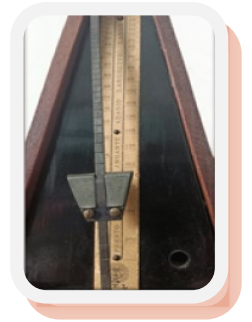
If you would like to sign up for a membership manually, please send your name, address, email address, and membership fee to the RCHS mailbox at:

Box 1164
Elkins WV 26241

FEATURED ARTIFACT

The Randolph County Museum is pleased to announce the introduction of “Featured Artifacts” that will be displayed monthly on the forthcoming website. Our February 2015 artifact is a metronome from the early 20th century that belonged to Ella May Daniels who taught the piano for decades in Beverly, WV. The metronome was a common object utilized in musical households and was used to establish, and often correct, rhythms as the piano was played. This metronome was handcrafted in Paris. It is a mechanical device that uses an adjustable weight on the end of an inverted pendulum rod to control tempo. A second fixed weight on the opposite side of the pendulum pivot is hidden in the metronome case. The pendulum swings back and forth in tempo while an internal mechanism produces a clicking sound with each oscillation.

Please donate to help preserve artifacts like this metronome.



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