

Life right here in the '20s . . . 1920s

By Karen Zach, Around the County

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Haven't you wondered what was happening 100 years ago here in MoCo? Of course you have, so read on! The year began with Emory King, Fire Chief giving his yearly report saying there were 138 runs the previous year with 23,150 feet of hose laid and 1,359 feet of ladders raised. The total loss from fires was \$8,087.14 however that was on property valued at \$222,850 so job well done! However, by the 6th, two runs for 1920 had already been tallied.

Edgar Rice, County Clerk gave his report with just one citizenship; 300 civil cases filed; 15 juvenile court cases; 137 Letters of Administration; 46 guardianships issued; 9 foreclosures; 7 sheriff's sales; 14 declared of unsound issued. 66 divorces were filed with cruel treatment being the largest complaint but failure to provide; abandonment and adultery were also tallied. 27 criminal cases went through court with 17 convicted felonies, 4 misdemeanors and other problems. One man was convicted of arson; four grand larceny and other crimes with only two women through the court.

The first set of jurors for the year were chosen being C.G. Hill; Arthur Nichol; H.C. Elliott; Royal Cox; Charles Driver and Sylvester Morris for the Grand Jury and for Petit: W.W. McClure; George Largent; Wallace Peterson; Rice Kline; Charles Custer; George Spencer; James Hart; Verne Livengood; Arthur Caplinger; Francis W. Baldwin; O.W. Mason; Tomas Allen; George Mahoy; Wm. Buser, Jr; J. Nelson Chesterson and Joe Hite. The Strand Theater hosted a celebration for the prohibition of liquor in mid-January and although the census forms were late in coming, it was of course, tallied nonetheless. The Crawfordsville Review (the Journal-Review had not been born yet) had a contest to guess the total for Crawfordsville.

Organizations: the Moose Lodge moved into the Joel Block, corner of Washington and Pike. A large hall would be subtle for entertainments (dances and other merriments) for extra money for the group. In the meantime, the Elks were hitting it big with their minstrel production called "Hoop La!"

Along that line, the churches had several revivals, including the ME Church highlighting Rev. Appleby's beautiful voice singing several numbers with their choir. A large convention of local churches was held on the college campus in July.

One problem presented was eventually worked out, the redistricting of the county. This due to the large influx of women who would be voting. Also in early March, federal agents were visiting the city, "a hot spot of liquor violations." Railroad accidents continued, many resulting in a death. Example: Donald Byrd.

One of my favorite items as I perused the year was that then Mayor Dumont Kennedy's Elm Tree (on his property just south of the city) was in the American Forestry "Hall of Fame." Papers from all over the country noted that it was about 125 years old, stood 99' in girth and was 78 feet high. He knew it wasn't going to last long so had planted a dozen trees on the property that were just approaching a good maturity.

Close behind for my favorite article would be the free tractor school put on by the Service Auto Company, 210 East Market featuring three models of tractors that would teach the students all the "rudiments of power farming." In other words, they wanted to sell some tractors!

Another choice would have to be in late March when Mandie Goldstein bought the property at the southwest corner of Market and Water from Dr. WT Gott where he made a "first-class wedding establishment."

In the commerce area, sugar was quite limited that year (war times) to the point that the local retailers had to limit purchases. Fruits and vegetables were in full supply in the stores and ads prompted the local folks to add those two foods as main features to their diets. The Golden Rule put on a huge sale while their boss was in Europe "No one to stop us, so we are going to slash prices from right to left." Whether having died or lost property, there were many public auctions throughout the year. Today, 100 years later, we love the 10 for \$10 at Krogers and the Wide Awake store had the same idea without calling it that as there were so many things on sale for 10 cents (silk stockings; cashmere toilet soap...).

Some interesting little tidbits including the Athenian being sold for a quarter more that year (\$1.25) with an increase in paging (168 from 144). Plumbers and electricians of Crawfordsville demanded a big wage increase in May. The council voted to raise their salary \$1. In early July, over 3,000 were at the fairgrounds to witness an exciting horse race. Virginia Dare, Richard Davidson's horse won the big race at 2:19 $\frac{3}{4}$ winning the racing card. Milligan Park was dedicated in July of that year with quite an affair lasting all day, included ball games; bands; contests (pie eating; water melon; dashes; horse shoes); oldest man and woman prizes. The Strand gave a benefit for Hal Sutton, a local blind merchant and the Joy theater wasn't to be outdone and planned one, too. Dr. G.L. Mackintosh, Wabash president of the time was often seen in the papers going here and there to speak, "devoting a great deal of his time to the college's endowment fund campaign." In October Wabash grad and Vice President, Thomas R. Marshall came here to speak at the Strand.

Then there was music everywhere it seemed, even the Wire Mill had a band which entertained at the courthouse weekly after a great success on the 4th of July. A band under the direction of Ed Denny was started and the new invention wowing the world was the phonograph (local dealers pushing to purchase the New Edison or the "Victrola," with several models).

Know you have all heard of the 1918 Flu Epidemic but be assured MoCo was still suffering from it with many being quarantined. In fact the first week of February there were eight deaths in neighboring Tippecanoe County. Physicians were required to report cases and people were encouraged to take the flu serum. Yep, flu shots way back then! Won't get into the national news but Air Mail was a big one as well as the election and women's voting. Plus the sensational and always, always baseball. Also in December, "purchase Christmas seals" showed up in almost every issue.

In conclusion, after reading the front page of the whole year, I either missed the total of Crawfordsville (although Montgomery County tallied 28,490 in the 1920 census) or the total appeared sometime in 1921 (papers aren't online), but suffice to say it was a fun article to write for you, featuring some of the happenings in our little piece of America exactly 100 years ago! Enjoy!

Karen Zach is the editor of Montgomery Memories, our monthly magazine all about Montgomery County. Her column, Around the County, appears each Thursday in The Paper of Montgomery County.