

# The Changing Times

## Randolph 1911-1935

The United States Postal Service was changing; new regulations in 1913 saw the C.O.D. feature and insurance added to mail services. At that time the Wareham Post Office was discontinued and "patrons, thereafter got mail through Randolph on Route #4.



Merle Gerkins on a 1928 Regulator International Tractor

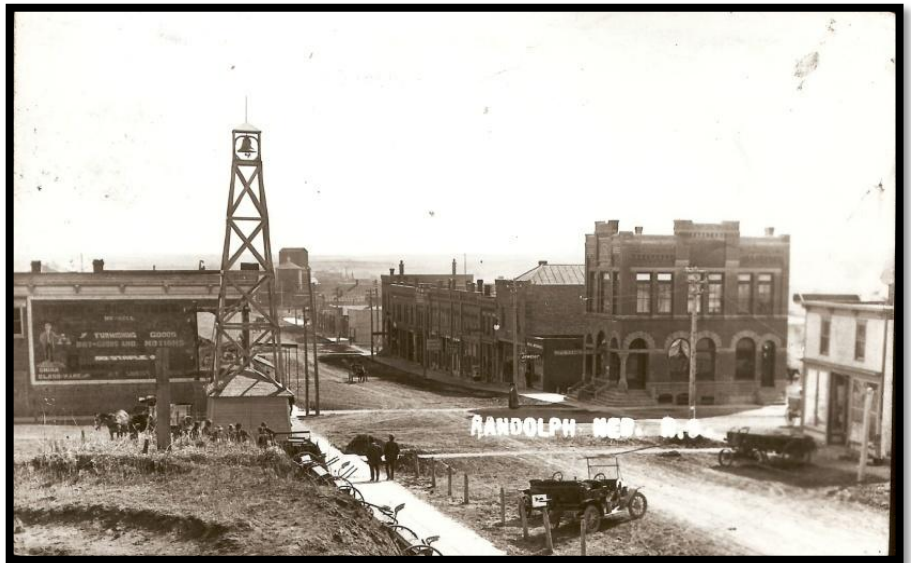
By the summer of 1913 the businessmen met and organized a "Good Roads Association," its object, the better grading, dragging, and working of roads leading to Randolph. After all, cars were becoming more popular and in early 1917 five railcars full of autos had been delivered and sold in the community within a three month period. Ford cars sold for \$315-\$645, whereas the Chandler Six Car sold for \$1295-\$2595.

Basket socials, barn dances, and church bazaars were frequent events in the community. Each fall an annual Halloween Hunt was held and various groups held Christmas plays and programs. Many times gifts were distributed. On record for the Thanksgiving of 1915 it was noted: "We in Randolph have large reason to be thankful for the blessings of life and health, of peace and plenty, and that a gracious Providence has ordered wisely and well for our happiness and well-being. Our city has made growth, our people have had plenty to eat and to wear; no violent outbreak of contagious disease has swept over our village; our people, businessmen, and citizens have enjoyed a satisfactory degree of prosperity." These phrases aptly show the peacefulness, enjoyment of life and prosperity in this community.

Although Randolph had two schools, there were times that it was difficult for local children to get to school. In 1915, "the Randolph Board of Education even received many complaints of school age children not attending school and indicated that there was compulsory education for children 7-16 years of age". It was during these early years that the schools and community were alerted to small-pox outbreaks. Special precautions were taken, particularly in 1914.

In 1917, the school board saw need for enlargement of the school. More land was bought for this purpose and the Randolph school had the largest enrollment in Cedar County. "Randolph's School stands high among state schools. Its courses fit all walks of life and the expense is met by public taxations." Repeatedly, the Randolph Schools were first in other areas - for example, sports, winning every game in basketball and winning the annual Northeast Nebraska field and track team meets thus taking home gold and silver awards.

Local folks suffered from the elements of nature. In 1913, the great "March Blizzard" caused loss of human lives and loss of animals. This was later, followed by the awful Omaha tornado that put fear into families in that area. It was at that time, that the true spirit of Randolph was shown when that community shipped 1,000 pounds of supplies to the victims of the disaster. Again on February 4, 1915, Randolph was submerged in a huge snow bank. The snowfall was the heaviest in years, even



Early Broadway Street Looking East

train service was out of commission for several long days and the roofs of the Smith-Havelson Lumber Company sheds collapsed due to the heavy load of snow. Heavy rains were frequently seen in those early years, causing much trouble to farmers, railways, and anyone who needed to travel. In the late spring of 1916, high winds and a twister left a path of destruction northeast of Randolph. The twister completely wrecked several barns,

killed horses, cattle, and hogs. It did considerable damage to several farmhouses and sheds.

As early as 1913, farm bureaus in each county of Nebraska with a county agent were established. They worked with the United States Department of Agriculture the Agriculture College in Lincoln to assist the farmer.



**Boughns Elevator**

Also a \$50,000,000.00 fund was established to help farmers move crops giving a boost to the local economy. Our community was and still is a farming community. In 1915, President Wilson urged farmers, asserting that "America must feed the war-torn world- no plows are to be idle. It is necessary that we should plant a great deal more; our land should yield more per acre than it does now."

Silos were coming more and more into general use. All over the community there were reports of bigger and better yields. However, the drawback was the low prices for the farmers; in 1915: choice beef, \$7.60 to \$8.10, hogs, \$6.55 to \$6.60, and sheep, \$8.50 to \$8.90. Farm implement prices were: a 140 tooth, 24 foot harrow, \$25.00, and a John Deere VA cultivator, \$22.00. The local



**Teller Windows in First State Bank Lobby**

meat market charged about 25 cents per pound for beef, 7 cents for a 14 ounce loaf of bread, and 10 cents for a 20 ounce loaf.

The rural credit bill to benefit farmers was signed by the president in 1916, and twelve new loan banks were created for the use of the farmers.

According to the Randolph paper, wolves and coyotes were hunted frequently during these years. It reported that "six wolves, two coyotes, and a wagon load of jack rabbits were taken" during one day's hunt. In the winter of 1915, this sport was a weekly event for the local hunters. Other sports for this community were the town baseball and softball games, and in 1914 Randolph built a tennis court east of the Omaha depot. Each winter the court was flooded and used by the local youngsters as a skating rink.

In 1912 the local merchants and clubs decided to host the "Chautauqua" which stood for the best in public speaking, entertainment, and music". The programs would be hosted each succeeding year for one week. It was felt that "entertainment of this sort is just as essential to the proper growth and development of the human mind as food and clothing.

Chautauqua enthusiasm promotes the good of every town, raises the moral tone in the community, increases the interest in the public welfare, magnifies the need for good, wholesome, clean entertainment, creates an appetite for independent thinking, for knowledge, for research, for advancement and for better living." Some of the Randolph attractions included The Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (1913), Ross Crane, the cartoonist (1913), and Helen Keller, the famed teacher (1916).

Throughout these early years, the whole world was concerned about the war situation that was raging in the Balkan States and here, closer to home, there was war in Mexico. Since Randolph was made up of many immigrants, many people were concerned for loved ones left behind. In 1915 the "first parcel post package of foodstuff sent from northeast Nebraska to Germany for the purpose of consumption by the civilian population was made at the Randolph Post Office".

In 1916, war came to our shores. "Six ships were torpedoed within sight of American shores. No lives were lost." These events brought grave apprehension, which only worsened when in early 1917, a Japanese warship was sunk and two Austrian submarines were captured. Then the draft began. Two hundred ninety-one men registered in precincts 17-18-19. The United States had



**Fred Thies, WWI**





Main Street looking north with viaduct in background

entered the war. Many of Randolph's men served their country both here and abroad.

A dinner was held to honor Randolph's service men that were leaving to serve their country. It was followed by a great patriotic meeting of over 3,000 people where loyalty and food conservation were the topics. As a patriotic gesture a flag was placed in the city's intersection at a cost of \$100.00.

Leslie Hall was the first Randolph man to enlist, and Dee Wilson was the first from our community to die of wounds in the war on August 12, 1917.

By early 1918, many local residents had to refute false reports that they were pro-German and some businesses were daubed with yellow paint. All types of accusations were being made, for example, that a rural Belden man was under suspicion of being a German spy. Foreign language of any sort, especially German, was banned; they were not to be used on the phone, streets, or any other place. Food hoarding was also banned and carried up to a \$5,000.00 fine for violating the rules. Nonpartisan league organizers in Randolph were mobbed and prevented from giving their speeches. "Home Guards" were organized to provide security to the community and were made up of all businessmen and anyone over the age of twenty. Later they helped shock small grain due to the lack of farm labor, and boys 15-18 were urged to register for farm work. Without this help crops were unplanted or rotted in the fields. Labor prices were set by law with fines for violations.

The Randolph Chapter of the Red Cross sent nearly 500 articles to service men, and Dr. Cook "nailed" the lie about the Red Cross making a profit. The drives for War Savings Stamps more than doubled its quota each time.

Early Monday morning, November 11, 1918, "Glow in Old Glory – Kaiserism Overthrown" was proclaimed and 2,500 to 3,000 people rejoiced. Rapid planning resulted in one of the finest parades and celebrations ever; church

bells, fire bells, and whistles were all set in motion. The draft call was cancelled. "The War is over."

Almost one hundred local men returned and in 1919 the American Legion was formed in Randolph. On June 6th the community held a "Home Coming Jubilee" for the "returned and returning" service men.

The War was not the only news during these years. In 1914 discussion was held on a proposed highway between Sioux City and O'Neill, and it was called the "great highway". By 1919 the planning had reached the point of estimating the cost of the 135 mile road at \$130,000.00, but work did not begin on the project until 1926. It came through town and was

graded and graveled by 1927 at a cost of \$250,000.00. It was designated as U.S. Highway #20. Electrolier lights were secured to light the business section of Randolph at a total cost of \$900.00. A third bank was added to the community in 1917, when a charter was granted to the Farmers State Bank. It fell to the wayside at the beginning of the Great Depression. In 1918, C.H. Randall, a local banker, ran for the State Senate and won a seat he held there for several years. In the early 1920's he ran for the office of Governor of Nebraska on the Republican ticket but was defeated.



Old Randolph "Corny" Postcard

The Spanish Flu Epidemic broke out in 1918. Numerous cases were reported with high fevers and the "attack coming quick and with more pep than the ordinary grip". The draft was halted, local schools were closed, and church services were cancelled. "Business, by order of the mayor could open only in the forenoons. All public places closed to stop the spread of flu." Eight deaths occurred in seven days and forty known cases made the situation alarming. The flu subsided after six weeks and many deaths. Randolph purchased a new fire truck in 1918 for the sum of \$645 and 500 feet of hose for \$100. A new 100 horsepower kerosene engine was installed in the light

plant as more power was needed. The city began discussing the project of paving the streets in 1919 and engaged an engineer for the plans. By 1920 the town began laying the bricks on the business streets of the city and the project was completed that year. Before completion cement was scarce and bricks were slow in delivery and funds ran low. But with the issuance of city paving bonds the State Treasury supplied the necessary money to complete the job.



**First St. Frances Catholic Church**

Beginning in 1916 St. Frances Parish began plans for a new brick church since the parish had grown too large for their old building. The first mass in the new structure was held on June 6, 1918. The cornerstone was laid by the Bishop on Labor Day. The building measured 137 feet by 55 feet with a 120 foot bell tower and could seat 675 people.



**First Presbyterian Church**

Due to the increased demands of the Congregation the Presbyterian Church of Randolph decided to build a new structure in 1906. By December the new church was complete enough to be used, and remained the church until it was closed many years later.



**First United Methodist Church**

The Randolph Methodist Church began a building campaign in 1912, and dedicated their new church in March 1913. On September 13, 1916, this church was struck by lightning, and the building was completely destroyed except for the outer walls. The church was then rebuilt around



**Randolph Carnegie Library**

the standing walls, and was rededicated on July 19, 1917. It was announced in 1916 that the Carnegie Corporation had appropriated \$6,000.00 to Randolph for the construction of a library. The town had to supply the site, furnishings and maintenance. The library opened on November 21, 1918, with over 1,000 volumes with help from the public and Randolph Woman's Club.

The city continued with improvements and work on the sewer system and new disposal plant began in 1918. New engines were added to the light plant on a regular basis during these years.

Conservation was encouraged in all areas of life and no less so for the United States Postal Service. "Mail clerks are to be a thing of the past after June 21, 1917. Tie pouches and tie sacks will be kicked off the train and will be sorted at the local post office." Mail rates increased, postage for letters was three cents, only to be lowered again in 1919 after the war.

A big issue for years was that of "Woman's Suffrage". Finally in 1919, women were given the right to vote in primary elections for President of the United States and all county and precinct offices.

Wages increased faster than prices, an increase of 74% to 112% between 1914 and 1919 thus improving living standards. Farmland was selling for \$150.00 an acre in 1917. Taxes nearly doubled and motor vehicle owners paid vehicle taxes for the first time.

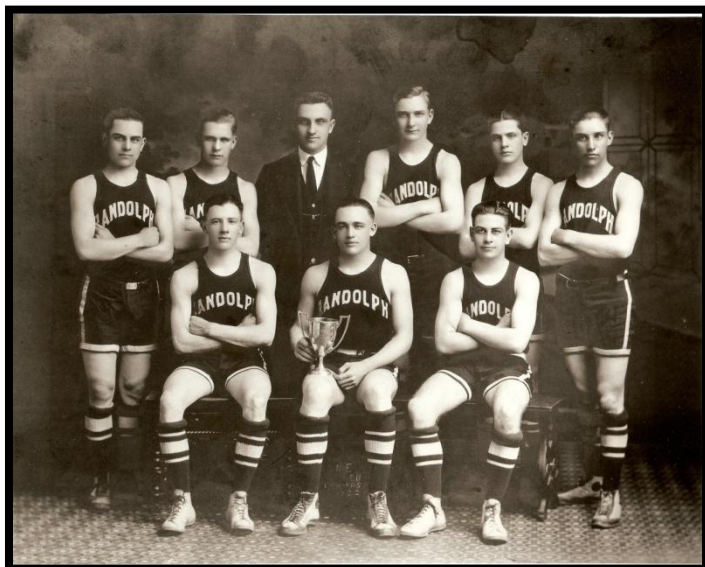
After the war, local farmers were told "cows must be tested or milk pasteurized if the product is to be sold for human consumption as milk or cream". Records show at that time there were numerous farm sales with farmers leaving Randolph for other states. Along with these problems, "money matters were tightening up fast. Community members were urged to stop speculating". Farmers were hit hard by feeder cattle prices. They had to sell at a loss and corn was too costly to use to fatten cattle.



**First St. John's Lutheran Church**



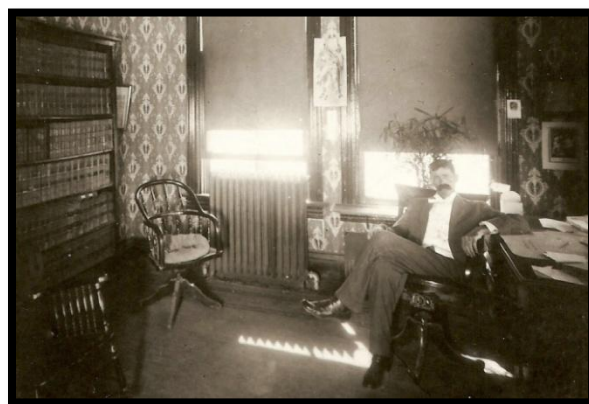
More and more problems began to confront Randolph. Robbery and thievery were on the increase. Between 1912 and 1918 Randolph had an average of three break-ins per year. Then in 1918 the first auto, a 1918 Ford, was stolen off the streets of Randolph. In 1920, troubles of a different sort were arising. A state agent came to town and rounded up several men. "He arrested them for distributing illicit booze, crap shooting, and cards." This appeared to be a sign of the times. In the mid 1920's, reports were frequent of chickens and hogs being stolen, at almost epidemic proportions. By the late 1920's and early 1930's even check forgery was prominent. As times got harder, crime was on the rise and in 1931 it was necessary to appoint a night watchman.



**Standing: Herb Schoof, Walt Brauer, Coach Rube Dawson, Ralph Mailliard, Harold Dennis, Vern Boughn Seated: Merton Farrell, H.H. Sherwood, Biltse Robinson**

Medicine was also in the news. Dr. G.E. Peters installed the first X-ray machine in Randolph in 1920. Dr. Kerley, a "very dedicated doctor", died and his funeral was the largest ever held in Randolph. An outbreak of smallpox occurred in 1926 that was handled by vaccine. The flu hit again in 1929 along with diphtheria.

With the increase in population of Randolph to 1493 in the 1920 census it was felt that Randolph needed some form of recreation. Hence, a swimming pool was built in 1925, measuring 100 feet by 50 feet, and costing about \$4,500.00. Golf became a popular game and several different golf courses were established beginning in 1924 with the first one located on Dr. Cook's land northwest of town. By 1929 a course was permanently set up about one-half west of town which included a club house. By 1935 it was abandoned for lack of funds. The Boughn Opera House closed in 1923, after 28 years of business, and completely burned in 1928. To fill this gap, T.M. Kaiser rented the old Palace Garage in 1921, and made it into a dance hall. It was also used for other community affairs.

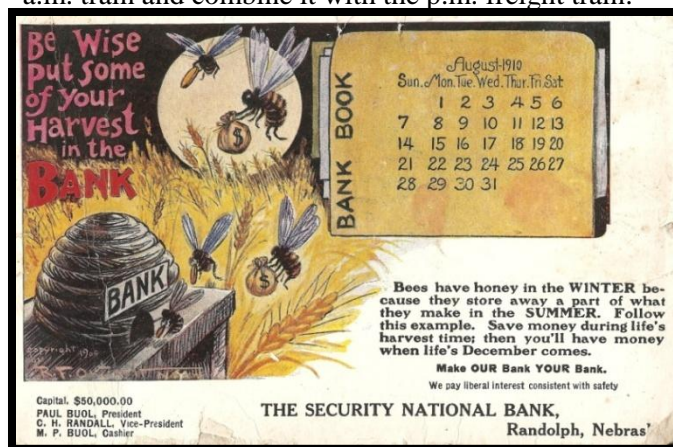


**C B Willey sitting in his Law Office**

The beginning of Randolph's rise to the title, "Honey Capital of the Nation" can be traced to 1926. In that year Kuhl Apiaries, run by brothers Dave, AL and Frank Kuhl east of town, shipped a carload of honey to Council Bluffs. This was a short crop at 30,000 pounds since a normal harvest netted 60,000 pounds. Today, our community still boasts the Honey title with five active apiaries.

The 20's were years of success by Randolph High's athletic teams. Several basketball teams went to the State tournaments. By 1926, the school had played 39 football games losing only 15, and out of 83 basketball games they had won 69, all over a five year period. They also had won nine track meets out of 16.

Due to the increasing number of autos, the railroads were cutting back on service and upping their prices. In 1926, the Burlington reduced the number of passenger cars to two. The M & O filed a petition with the State Commission to take off Train #50, which was the 7:30 a.m. train and combine it with the p.m. freight train.



**1910 Security National Bank Post Card**

However, advances were evident. The year of 1922 seemed to be the year of wireless radio receivers for the community with numerous radios being installed. Randolph radio fans formed a club and by 1926 excitement was high. They were eager to receive a message from overseas. Then it happened. Fans reported that they heard Mussolini speak, expressing his greatest

friendship for America and declaring that the two countries had much in common and were allied by strong bonds.

Nature took her toll on our community. In 1923, heavy rains and flooding came week after week so that water in some places covered the ground three feet deep. Most homes were sitting with one to two inches of water on their main floors. Many cellars filled and foundations caved in. Again, in 1924, heavy rain and flooding was upon this community. Action was taken and petitions were out for a drainage system to put an end to the flooding. Two weeks after this later flood at the end of June, the temperature dipped to 48 degrees. There seemed to be no predicting the weather, for in 1925, the vicinity was very hot and dry with temperatures soaring to 106 degrees in September. Vegetation suffered severely. The next few years saw no relief. By July 12, 1928, whatever crops were in the fields were then destroyed by hail. The hailstones, as large as goose eggs, leveled crops, killed hundreds of chickens, did untold damage to buildings and stripped everything. "All was ruined." By the early 1930's, farmers had to work nights and early morning to avoid the 100 degree heat. Horses were overcome by heat and the grasshoppers were nearing Randolph. Oat fields only nine miles north were badly infested.

In late November 1933, a dust blizzard raged for twelve hours, throughout the entire northeast Nebraska area. If that wasn't enough, an old-fashioned prairie fire raging in western Nebraska sent smoke drifting through Randolph. On May 29, 1934, temperatures soared to 107 degrees. Vegetation shriveled, pastures burned, and many farmers were forced to turn cattle into oats and barley fields, even herding them along highways and railroad tracks so the stock might get a little feed.

All this only added to the frustration of the local people. Low corn prices created more dissatisfaction and hog cholera was bad. In 1926, a serum came out to help farmers combat this dreaded animal disease. Tractors came on the scene, and in 1925, a tractor school was held with an expert from the factory teaching area men about the machines.

Farmers saw disaster coming through, and by 1931, Nebraska's leading crops were valued at 57.7% of 1930 prices, and only 43% of 1929 prices. The lowest values since 1910 occurred. Carloads of grain had to be shipped in for farmers to feed their livestock.

News from New York City was depressing. Unemployment was on the rise and business was in a sorry state. Locally the teachers took salary cuts and the Lions Club formed a committee to give relief to the needy persons of the area. In early 1933, the general relief fund headquarters in Randolph received a good stock of clothing, etc., as well as 100 pound bags of flour.

Randolph was left with one operating bank, and cattle and hog prices in 1933 were half of what they were in 1928. Fifteen unemployed went to work in Randolph under the PWA project.

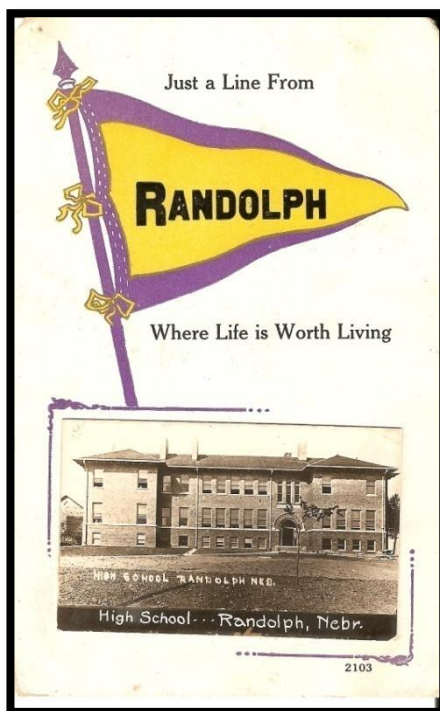
By early 1934, thirteen Nebraska counties were assured carloads of grain from the Federal Government. Nebraska farmers were to receive emergency funds, hoping for a business recovery. Women joined classes to seek ways and means to grow gardens for survival. Farmers

were urged to plant seedling wood lots and wind breaks.

Market prices continued to fall, and 30 pound hogs sold for 25 cents each at Yankton in 1934. By fall, colder weather made the situation more and more serious. A truck load of free freshly killed beef was distributed. Surplus pigs were slaughtered at the Randolph Relief Pork Storage Point. The American Legion put into effect a very worthy program in 1935 that of giving milk to undernourished children and those whose children did not secure enough milk at home.

By 1932, only a few short years after the Great War, news was coming in again that Japan refused to accept the plans for peace and the American Marines had landed in Shanghai to assist in protecting the international area. "The situation remains serious." Peace was not to be. War raged between Italy and Ethiopia in 1935. However, local concern was not great at that time.

Despite the hard times, the Randolph community never lost their faith in their God and their love of life. There were many happy times for these hard working and devout people. They enjoyed dancing, basket socials, and various sports, and the talking screen, when it came into the Orpheum Theatre in 1930. In 1920 "The Randolph Waltz" was published by Hazel Montgomery of Carroll, Nebraska. Bits of humor were not lacking either. It seems that one resident received four young 15-inch alligators from Florida. They were put in a galvanized tub, but got out. The paper announced that "women shouldn't be scared of the little fellows as they were harmless and just lost".



Postmarked 1914