Occupational Tax was Arlington’s First Financing Method

The following is an article published in a February 1972 special issue of The Citizen Journal, written by Gene Randall.

Need of funds for the operation of the city government and methods for paying city officials apparently offered a real challenge to early-day city councilmen, who responded with some imaginative legislation.

Legislators today are considering new forms of taxation, and an occupation tax has been discussed, but Arlington had an occupational tax in 1884—the first method of taxation put on the books.

The tax assessed, on a yearly basis, a fee for every profession, and for almost every vocation imaginable. It is most interesting to note the amount of tax placed on the various jobs.

For example, traveling salesmen and fortune tellers were taxed at $87.50 per year—the highest tax—and whiskey salesmen were charged from $10 to $50. Clairvoyants, land agents, (continued on page 2)
Occupational Tax: Arlington’s First Financing Method (cntd from p. 1)

lawyers, dentists, food peddlers, cotton buyers, and grain dealers each paid $2.50 per year.

Anyone who listed the posting of bills and circulars as his occupation paid only $2, and merchants were assessed on a sliding scale from $1.50 to $62.50, depending on their sales volume.

Photographers paid $3 each and photo salesmen were charged 50 cents extra, or $3.50. Also rated at $3.50 were commission salesmen. Auctioneers were assessed $6, sewing machine salesmen paid $7, just 50 cents less than food peddlers with one horse or a pair of oxen. Of course, a food peddler with two horses or two pair of oxen had to pay $15.

Bankers and stock brokers were assessed $8, along with shooting gallery operators. If you owned a pool hall, the charge was $10. (Two years later, the Council outlawed pool halls, so that tax revenue dried up.)

“All persons keeping or using for profit any hobby horse or flying jenny” were assessed $8 and lightening rod salesmen and cotton brokers paid $9.

When it came to show business, the cost went up in many cases. Every circus performance was taxed $25 and acrobatic exhibitions had to pay $5 for each show. Magicians were charged $5 and regular concerts of a cultural nature were charged only $1.

On the paying side of the ledger, as was common in many towns, the Mayor and town Marshal were paid on commission. The Marshal at one time received “all but $225 a year out of the town’s treasury.” Later this was revised to $25 per month salary plus eight percent of all of the town’s ad valorem taxes.

The two town attorney’s received $5 for every guilty verdict and $10 for every not guilty decision, apparently in an effort to ensure that everyone would receive a fair trial. However, the Marshal received most of all fines collected and the mayor received a share of prosecution costs.

The Mayor received varying compensation until 1886, when his compensation was set at $2 per Council meeting plus various fees for criminal cases.

These fees included:

Complaints, 75 cents
Warrants of arrest, 75 cents
Bonds, 50 cents
Subpoena, 25 cents
Docking cases, 10 cents per person
Swearing each witness, 10 cents
Empanelling a jury, 50 cents
Each judgment, 50 cents
Each execution, $1

In 1907 Arlington Dogs had their last free day
Starting December 1, every dog caught on the street without the required tag was to be impounded. After three days, “the dog will be shot unless the owner calls for it and pays the impounding fee.”

There was a penalty for keeping a dog in the city limits without a license.

It was stated that “It might be well for farmers to leave their dogs at home, or tie them under their wagons, when they come to town.”
The Arlington Historical Society and 3DI Sign + Design are excited to announce the first annual “The Village on Front,” a Haunted Experience in Downtown Arlington at Knapp Heritage Park. “The Village on Front” will run from October 3 through November 3.

“The Village on Front” will include a haunted maze, as well as many scenes that have lighting and sound effects, sure to scare attendees and leaving them with a desire to tell their friends about it, and come back. Tickets are $24.99 per individual, or $199.99 for groups of 10 purchased in advance.

Haunted House dates and time are as follows:

- Mondays: CLOSED
- Tuesdays: October 15, 22, and 29: 6 pm to midnight
- Thursdays: October 3, 10, and 17: 6 pm to 10 pm
- Thursday, October 31, Halloween Day: 6 pm to midnight
- Fridays: October 4, 11, 18, and 25: 6 pm to midnight
- Saturdays: October 5, 12, 19, and 26, and November 2: 6 pm to midnight
- Sundays: October 6, 13, 20, and 27, and November 3: 6 pm to 10 pm

Order tickets at Eventbrite:

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-village-on-front-tickets-67132786973?aff=ebdssbdestsearch

PLEASE NOTE ON YOUR TICKET ORDER WHICH DATE YOU WILL BE ATTENDING. YOUR TICKET WILL BE GOOD ONLY FOR THAT DAY!
Can you identify these Arlington Personalities?
Match the person on the left with the description on the right (answers—p. 7)
From Legendary Locals of Arlington, by Lea Worcester and Evelyn Barker

A. Zack Bobo

1. UTA graduate from India who joined NASA in 1994. In 2003, on her second space flight, she was part of the space shuttle crew of Columbia, which broke up in re-entry over north Texas.

B. B. J. Thomas

2. In 1999 she became the first African-American woman to become a sergeant in the Arlington Police Department. In 2008, she became a Deputy Chief.

C. George Hawkes

3. Came to Arlington with his parents in 1925, settling in the section of town called The Hill. His son, Dale, was the first African-American to play football at Arlington High, in 1965.

D. Lauretta Hill


E. Daniel Miller

5. In his 1931-1987 medical career, he delivered more than 4,000 Arlington babies. In 1936, he opened Arlington’s first private hospital.

F. Reby Cary

6. Had the winning design, chosen from among 2,800 others, of the Texas quarter for the U.S. Mint—an Arlington graphics designer.

G. Kalpana Chawla

7. Arlington five-time Grammy winner. Pop, country, and gospel were his genres. His 1969 hit was “Raindrops Keep Fallin’ on my Head.”

H. Ruffin Pointer

8. In 1969, became the first African-American faculty member at UTA
Arlington on Tap takes a look at Front Street, followed by MUMentous talk

Though calling October’s Arlington on Tap session “The Miracle on Front Street” may be a tiny bit of a stretch, it’s nevertheless a fascinating topic with this premise:

Front Street – a long-neglected six-block roadway fronting the north side of the Union Pacific Railway line – is about to become downtown’s hottest real estate property. Unique restaurants, off-center bistros, eclectic apartments, primo offices and even an urban park. All highly walkable and complimentary to what’s already a mix of live music theater, along with a booming craft beer brewery, co-working facilities and unique restaurants.

Developer Ryan Dodson will be the primary speaker, though he’s expected to bring along a few friends who will talk about everything from the nuances of ax throwing (one new institution on Front Street specializes in exactly that) to the principles of exactly what the term “Tiki Bar” is supposed to mean a whole new learning dimension to the phrase “public knowledge.”

Learn more about the quickly unfolding Front Street Miracle: Plan to be there: Tipsy Oak (on the patio), 301 E. Front St., 6 p.m. Tuesday, October 8.

“We’ve tried to put together an eclectic series of speakers who combine unique knowledge and who can talk about different but unusual topics,” said “Tap” speaker scheduler O.K. Carter. “One of the things we discovered is that the world’s leading expert on the very Texas institution of the homecoming mum has Arlington connections – is in fact Amy Schultz, the current artist in residence at the Arlington Museum of Art.”

Indeed, Schultz’s multi-media exhibit “A MUMentous Occasion” runs through Oct. 27 at the museum, and she’ll be the Nov. Arlington on Tap speaker not only about this history of the mum but how the increasingly oversize silk-flower-and-ribbons and heavens knows what else corsage has become a state ritual that also provides income for what is estimated to be more than 6,000 for-profit craft mum makers across the state.”

“After her talk, Schultz will also be collecting oral histories from attendees who have their own mum stories,” Carter adds. Check it out: MUMentous Stories, Hooligan’s Pub, 310 E. Abram St., 6 p.m. Tuesday, November 12.

The Arlington Historical Society is among the sponsors of Arlington on Tap, along with Downtown Arlington Management and media sponsor Arlington Today Magazine. “Tap” events are informal, RSVP not required.
Talking with the Stars (continued from page 1)

-owned WBAP-Radio, despite the fact that his degree was identical to hers and also “brand new.” When Carter’s WBAP-TV began broadcasting the next year, Phil transferred there and wrangled a job for his wife (at one-third his salary).

Wygant’s personal story is, therefore, inseparable from the history of local television, with the challenges faced by “career women” of her generation as a deeply buried subtext (she rarely complains about anything). Serving as a production assistant on a wide variety of live shows, she did just about everything that needed doing in the station’s first decade, building invaluable experience. After his father’s death in 1955, Amon Carter Jr., was eager to innovate, including more “general interest” daytime programming, with women as hosts. As a result, in 1960 Wygant became the producer and host of “Dateline,” a pioneering live talk show where she interviewed scores of local, national, and even international celebrities in politics, the arts, and entertainment. Her show became a required stop on the celebrity interview circuit, and everybody who was anybody in the 1960s and 1970s appeared on “Dateline.” Her stories about these years are fascinating, but most poignant is her account of being live on the air, conducting an interview, as she learns through her earpiece that President Kennedy had just been shot.

In 1973, the FCC ruled that Carter Publications had to sell either the Star-Telegram or WBAP-TV to breakup its “monopoly” on the media market in Fort Worth, so Carter Jr. reluctantly sold Channel 5 to LIN Broadcasting in 1974, which renamed it KXAS. Wygant’s popular show was immediately cancelled, and she was demoted to co-anchor of a local news magazine, “Inside Area 5.” (But she was luckier than her husband, who was fired, despite Carter Jr.’s direct attempts to intervene.) In 1977, the station cancelled her new show, and Wygant was demoted again, to producing and hosting a 5-minute entertainment spot on the 5 o’clock news. The next year, when yet another new boss tried to terminate her altogether, she surprised herself by announcing “I ain’t leaving” and walking out on him.

(continued on page 7)
Talking with the Stars (continued from page 6)

By the 1980s, the ever-resourceful Wygant had reinvented herself as a nationally known TV film critic, winner of many honors, including a special Emmy in 2004 when she was inducted into the Gold Circle of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. After NBC bought the station from LIN in 1998, she actually tried to retire, but that didn’t last long, and for the past 20 years, she has continued as an occasional entertainment reporter for Channel 5, even though she is well into her 90s.

Wygant clearly made a conscious decision to write a fact-based memoir that avoids engaging in controversial issues like pay equity, the glass ceiling, office climate, etc. For example, she doesn’t directly comment on the wage disparity between herself and her husband at the start of their careers and likewise addresses workplace sexual harassment obliquely by saying that it never happened to her (although she does mention that Charlie Rose, who served briefly as a program director at KXAS, was hard to work with). In the days of “tell-all” memoirs, some readers might find her discretion refreshing, yet as a historian, I wish that a pioneering female broadcaster like Bobbie Wygant had been franker about what she witnessed and experienced. Nevertheless, Talking to the Stars offers a pleasurable “walk down memory lane” for everyone familiar with television’s early days.

NBC5-DFW website has a nice story about Wygant: “Bobbie Wygant Reports Her Biggest Story: Her Own,” at this site: https://www.nbcdfw.com/entertainment/the-scene/Bobbie-Wygant-Reports-Her-Biggest-Story-Her-Own-508825441.html (just copy this URL and paste it your search engine, e.g. Google)

To Be Reviewed in the Next Issue:
Timothy McNulty and Brendan McNulty, The Meanest Man in Congress: Jack Brooks and the Making of an American Century, a biography of Jack Bascom Brooks (1922-2012), the powerful Beaumont congressman who represented Texas’s 2nd (later 9th) District for 42 years. Suggestions for recent books on Texas history to be reviewed in this section are always welcome and should be sent to us at denise.youngblood@uvm.edu.

Answers—Arlington Personalities (on p. 4)
A. Zack Bobo 5. 1931-1987 medical career in Arlington
B. B.J. Thomas 7. Arlington 5-time Grammy winner
C. George Hawkes 4. Owner, Arlington Citizen-Journal
D. Lauretta Hill 2. First black woman sergeant in Police Dept.-1999
E. Daniel Miller 6. Winning design-Texas quarter (U.S. Mint)
F. Reby Cary 8. First black faculty member at UTA-1969
G. Kalpana Chawla 1. UTA graduate-crew of ill-fated Columbia space ship
H. Ruffin Pointer 3. Father of first black football player at Arlington High School, Dale Pointer, 1965
Have you seen this?

Have you ever stopped to read it?

It’s at the entrance to City Hall. I suppose you could call it the official State of Texas Historical marker for the City of Arlington.

It was installed in 2004.

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Arlington Garden Club

Find them on Facebook - “Garden club– Arlington TX”

Thanks, Arlington Garden Club, for your volunteers’ contributions to the upkeep and beautification of the grounds of the historic Fielder House!!