

McCLURE'S

August

25 Cents



Changing
manners &
morals in the
1920s

Reactions to life in
the post-war era – a
decade of
contradictions.

A black and white photograph of five women walking on a city street in the 1920s. They are dressed in fashionable attire of the era, including long-sleeved dresses, various styles of hats, and jewelry. The woman on the far left wears a dark dress and a hat with a wide brim and a decorative band. The woman next to her wears a dark dress with a fur collar and a long necklace. The woman in the center wears a dark, sleeveless dress with a decorative belt. The woman to her right wears a light-colored, long-sleeved dress with a wide brim hat. The woman on the far right wears a dark dress with a floral pattern and a pearl necklace. The background shows a city street with buildings and trees.

How did people spend their time in the 1920s and how did that differ from decades before?

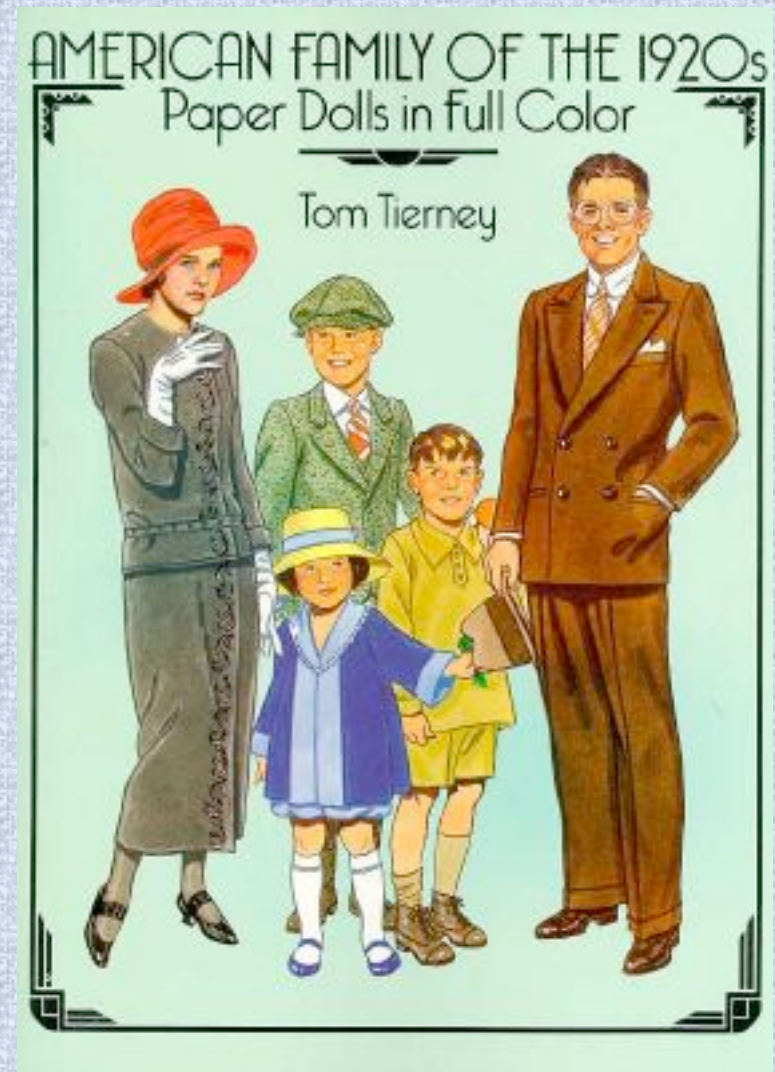
Work

- More women entered the workplace as nurses, librarians, teachers, and secretaries. (Paid less than men.)
- The work week shrunk in the 1920s
 - Factory workers worked a 5 ½ day week (down from 6+)
 - White collar workers worked a 40 hour week and had the weekends off.



Family

- Family size decreased between 1920-1930
 - Birth control more widely used
 - In the 1870s-1880s, more than 50% women who lived to age 50 had 5+ kids.
 - By the 1920s, only 20% had 5+ kids.
- Divorce rate rose
 - In 1920, 1 in 7.5 marriages ended in divorce
 - In 1929, 1 in 6 marriages end in divorce (many cities were 2 in 7)



Family (cont.)

- Women managed the household and finances
- Men worked
- Children were no longer considered laborers/ wage earners but rather children who needed nurturing and education.



Family (cont.)

- The job of taking care of the home became easier in the 1920s.
 - Ready-to-wear clothes, canned foods, and mass-produced furniture made homemaking easier.
 - Wives still worked long hours cleaning, cooking, caring for kids but machines like vacuums & dishwashers made the job easier.

UNIVERSAL

"The Trade Mark known in every Home"

Home Needs



"I don't mind Housekeeping a bit!"

The Universal Housewife Says—

NO wonder—with UNIVERSAL Home Needs to do the hard work. Really—they make housework a pleasure. And how they do cut down the bills!

With the **UNIVERSAL Coffee Percolator** it's the matter of a few minutes to make coffee of delicious flavor. The **UNIVERSAL Food Chopper** makes delicious dishes from left-overs that would ordinarily go to waste. Saves its cost many times over in the food it saves.

Perfect Bread in the **UNIVERSAL Bread Maker** in three minutes. The **Cake Maker**, **Mignonaise Mixer**, **Tea Ball Tea Pot**, and scores of other UNIVERSAL Home Needs all doing their part to lessen the housewives' work.

And with **UNIVERSAL Aluminum Ware** gleaming from shelf and cabinet—the Universalized Kitchen is truly a wonderful "workroom" of the home.

UNIVERSAL Electric Grill and Toaster prepare a complete meal right at the table. Handy and economical. All the conveniences of a kitchen at your hand.

The **UNIVERSAL Electric Waffle Iron** makes delicious waffles at the turn of switch. Served piping hot in less than two minutes. No smoke, no odor.

UNIVERSAL Vacuum Cleaner has conveniently located toggle switch and pistol grip which fits the hand. Full width nozzle, and for picking up thread, lint, etc., which cannot be removed by air alone, there is a gear-driven brush. Is beautifully finished in Verd Antique.

UNIVERSAL Electric Washer—beautifully enameled cabinet with all moving parts enclosed. Gear-driven mechanism, automatic safety clutch, Light, durable, sanitary cylinder; non-sagging, swinging wringer, with safety release. Locks in four positions; will not operate except when in position. Self-draining tub.

UNIVERSAL Electric Iron takes the drudgery out of ironing—saving many tiresome steps to and from the hot stove carrying a heavy iron. No roasting in a stuffy kitchen. Iron in comfort anywhere.

"UNIVERSAL Devices Help Solve the Servant Problem"



UNIVERSAL Electric Vacuum Cleaner No. E761 \$47.50

UNIVERSAL Electric Waffle Iron No. E930 \$20.00

UNIVERSAL Electric Grill No. E584 \$15.00

UNIVERSAL Electric Toaster No. E930 \$20.00

UNIVERSAL Electric Iron No. E930 \$20.00

On sale at Hardware, House-furnishing and Department Stores.
Electric Appliances of Electric Washers and Lighting Companies.

Write for FREE booklet No. 85, "Universalize Your Home"

LANDERS, FRARY & CLARK, New Britain, Connecticut
Metalmiths for over Half a Century

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Leisure

- Thanks to shorter work weeks, fewer work hours, and increased wages –Americans had more time to relax and enjoy themselves in the 1920s.
- A central part of 1920s culture was centered around leisure pursuits:
 - Movies
 - Sports arenas
 - Mini-golf
 - Jazz music
 - Speakeasies
 - Dance halls
 - Radio and popular songs



Media spread the new leisure culture

New methods of communication.

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Radio
- Movies

Newspapers:

27 million to 39 million

Increase of 42%

Motion Pictures:

40 million to 80 million

Increase of 100%

Radios:

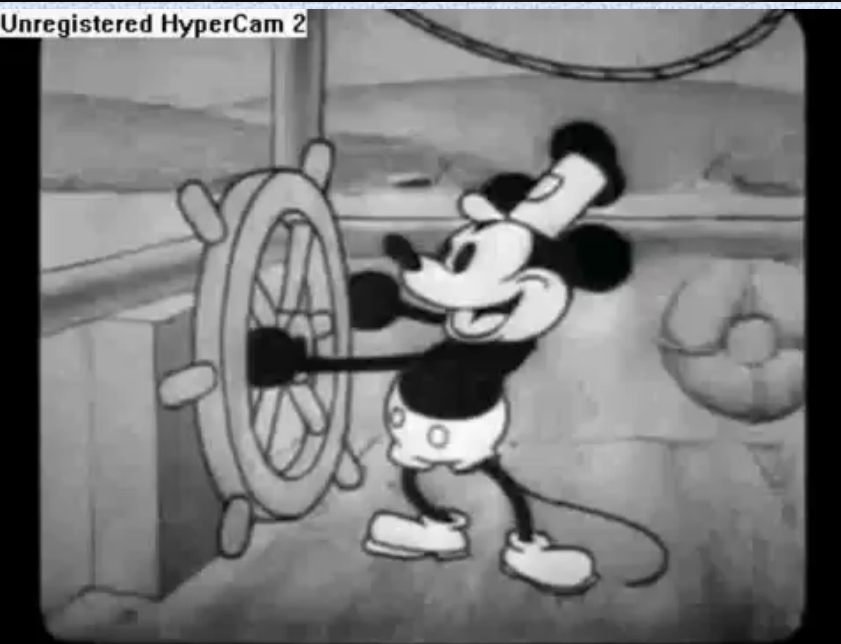
60,000 to 10.2 million

Increase of 16,983%



Entertainment & the Arts

- ❑ Even before sound, movies were a means of escape for audiences
- ❑ By 1930, millions of Americans went to the movies each week
- ❑ First sound movies: *Jazz Singer* (1927)
- ❑ First animated with sound: *Steamboat Willie* (1928)



Walt Disney's animated *Steamboat Willie* marked the debut of Mickey Mouse. It was a seven minute long black and white cartoon.

- ❑ Jazz was born in the early 20th century
- ❑ Armstrong is considered the most important and influential musician in the history of jazz
- ❑ Ellington won renown as one of America's greatest composers
- ❑ Bessie Smith, a blues singer, was perhaps the most outstanding vocalist of the decade
 - ❑ She achieved enormous popularity and by 1927 she became the highest- paid black artist in the world



LOUIS
ARMSTRONG



DUKE
ELLINGTON

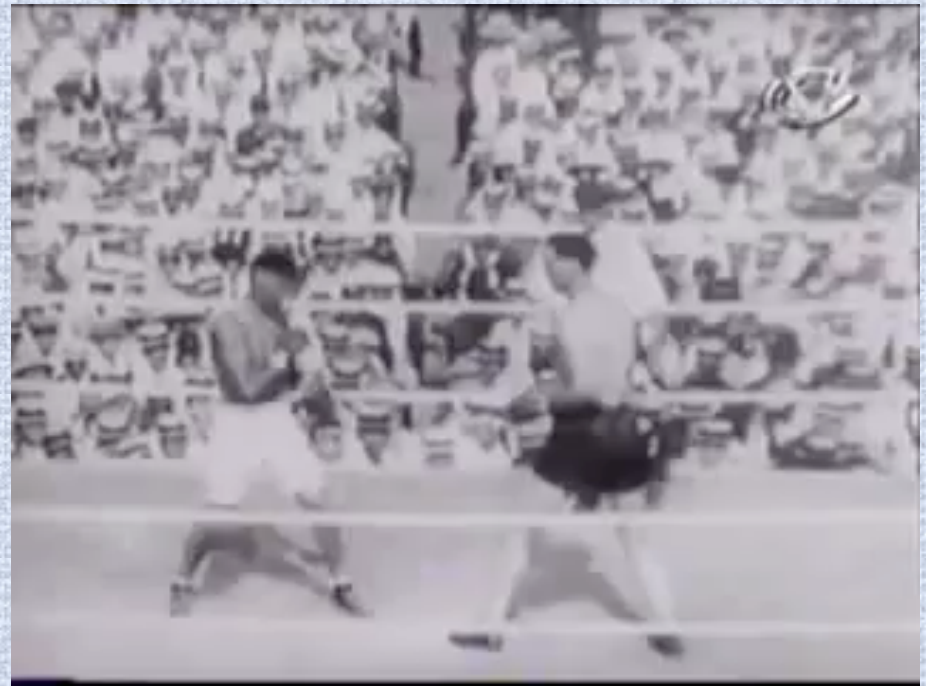


BESSIE SMITH

American Sports Heroes



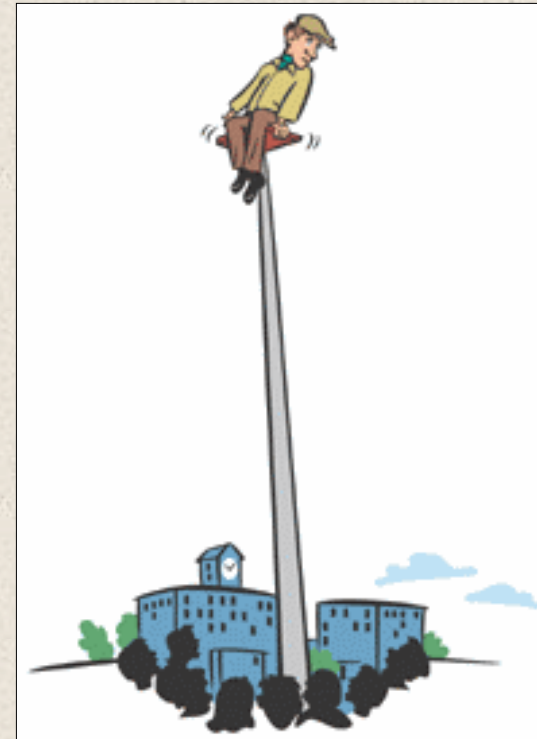
- ◆ In 1929, Americans spent \$4.5 billion on entertainment (incl. sports)
- ◆ People crowded into stadiums, arenas, and games to see their heroes



1920s Fads

- **Flag pole sitting:**

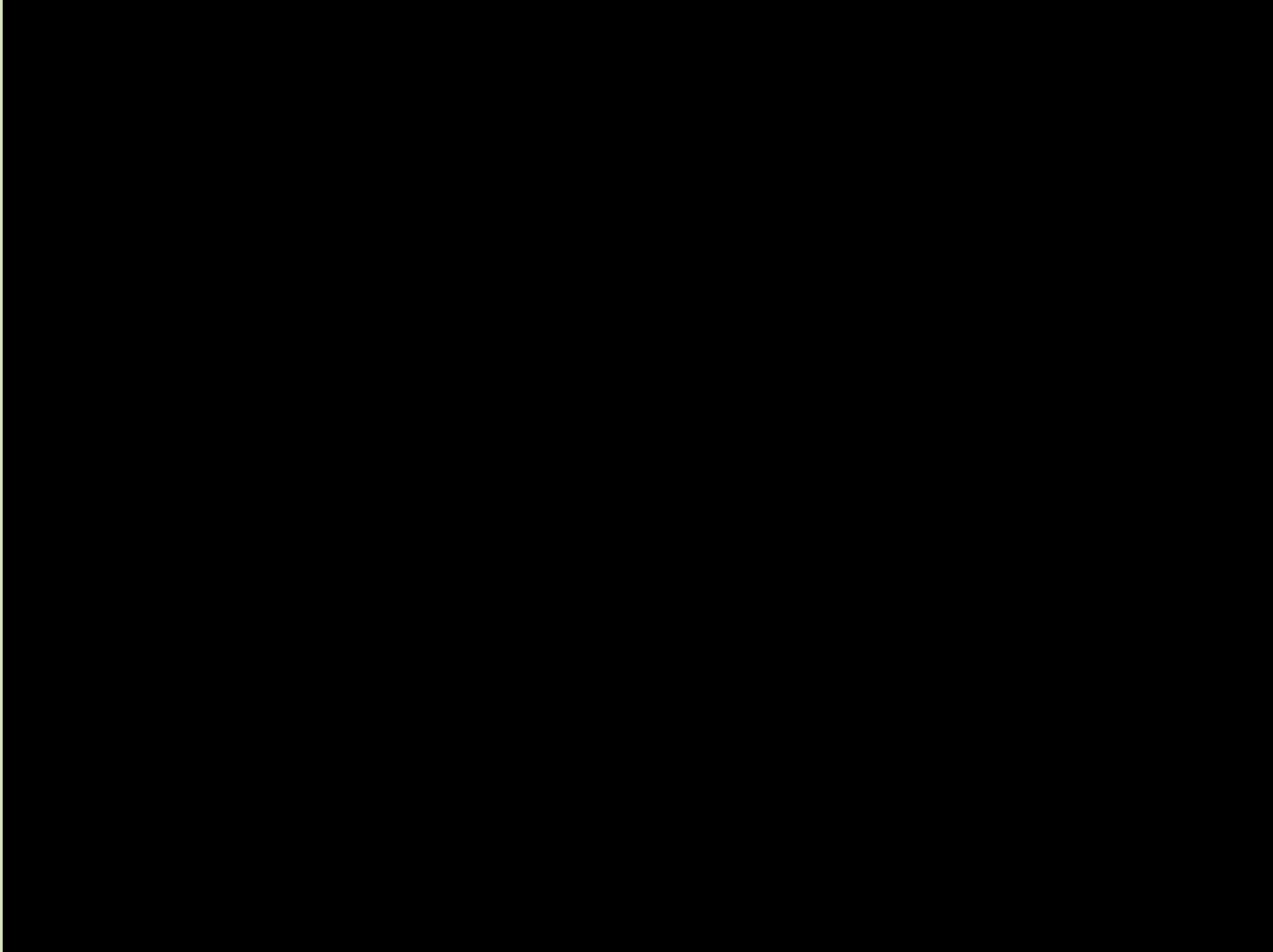
- Alvin “Shipwreck” Kelly, a professional stuntman, was asked if he would sit on a flagpole outside a theater to attract the attention of potential customers. He sat upon the pole for 13 hours and 13 minutes and began a national spectacle.
- Within weeks, hundreds of people were trying to call themselves the "King of the Pole." Public fascination was phenomenal as huge crowds would gather to watch the participant.
- In Atlantic City, NJ, Kelly sat atop a flagpole for a record 49 days in front of an audience of 20,000 admirers. Kelly estimated that during his career, he spent 20,000 hours at the top of flagpoles.
- Flagpole sitting died out around 1929 with the coming of the Depression, but during its time, it certainly caught the nation's fancy.

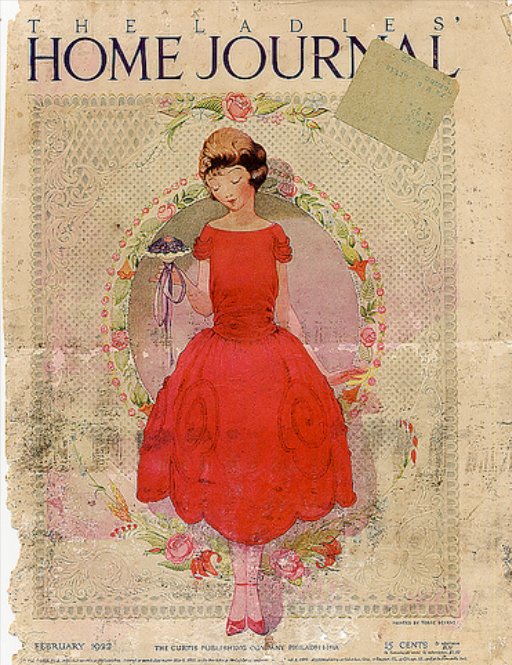




DANCING!

1920s dances were unlike those of the decades before – faster and less restrictive as people danced with bodies touching (Charleston, Turkey-trot, Bunny-hug, Black bottom, Shimmy, Cake-walk)





Ladies Home Journal, August, 1921

- “We have never stopped to consider that...music might invoke savage instincts...America is facing a most serious situation regarding its popular music.
- Welfare workers tell us that never in the history of our land have there been such immoral conditions among our young people, and...the blame is laid on jazz music and its evil influence on the young people of today.
- Never before have such outrageous dances been permitted in private as well as public ballrooms....”



• Dance marathons:

– These endurance contests offered the hopes of temporary fame, small fortune, and the opportunity to dance their cares away.

- Prizes ranged anywhere between \$1000 to \$5000 (or \$11,000 to \$56,000 in today's money.)

- Serious competitors danced for days, even weeks at a time. The record stands at 5,148 hours and 28.5 minutes.

- The contestants were usually allowed a mere 15 minutes of rest for every hour of dancing.

- Success came to those who had the ability to keep their partner moving at all times; style was irrelevant.



- Due to potential health risks, police and health officials attempted time and time again to shut down these contests.
- Two contestants literally danced to their deaths right on the dance floor. The dangers, however, did not stop couples from participating, nor spectators from coming to witness others dance themselves to utter exhaustion. The competitions continued on until the early 1940s.



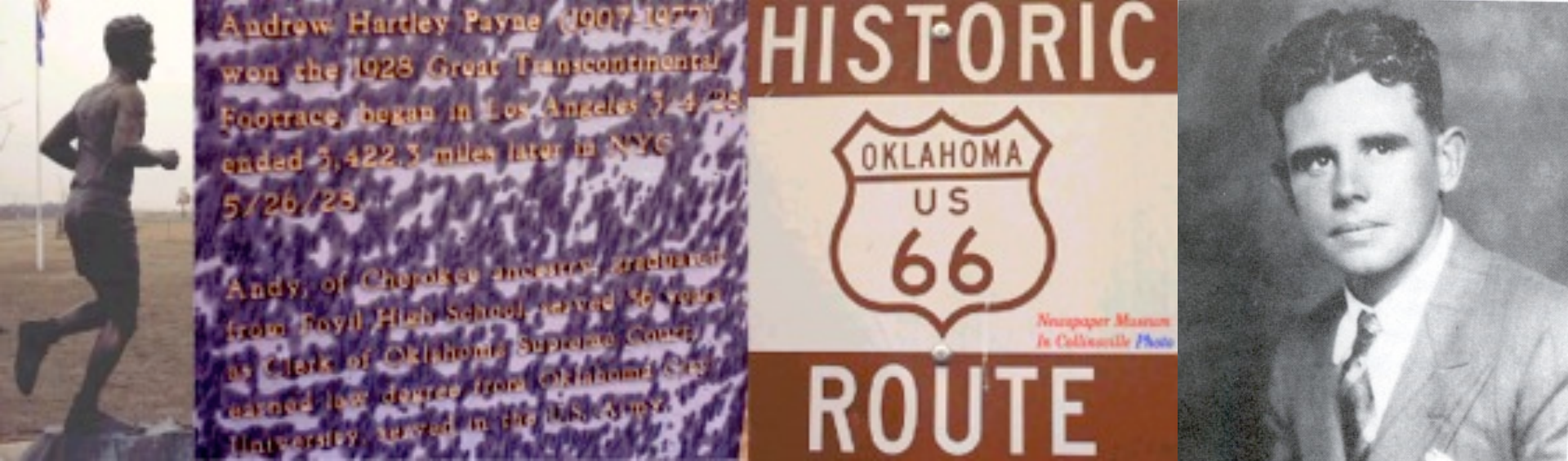


- **Bunion Derbies** (Footraces in which contestants would partly walk, partly run in a competition for cash prizes.)
 - The biggest bunion derby ran from L.A. to NY in 1928. The footrace was expected to draw top racers from around the world, but anyone who paid the \$125 entrance fee could participate. The winner was awarded a \$25,000 cash prize, with \$23,000 to be split among the next 9 men.
 - The route from LA to Chicago along the famed Route 66, which had just been built (America's first federal highway.) This was when car travel was just coming into its own. The idea was to promote the highway along with the race; if it was safe enough to travel on foot, then it certainly was safe enough to travel by car. However, Route 66 was mostly a primitive dirt road at this point.
 - The runners ran an average of 40 miles a day (the shortest daily run was 17 miles and the longest, 74.6 miles, in *one* day.)



- The derby faced problems from the start.
 - Weather: the racers struggled through desert heat, rain and hail storms, unpaved and pot-holed roads, freezing mountain conditions, high altitudes.
 - Hazards: in the Jim Crow states of the South non-white racers' lives were threatened.
 - Injury: several runners had to pull out of the race due to injuries. A few men were even hit by cars causing at least one runner to drop out with broken ribs.
 - Conditions: There wasn't always enough proper food and water. Sleeping conditions were no better. Forced to sleep on cots, under tents using the same unwashed pillows and blankets every night, and on some nights, the supply truck didn't make it to the camp. Occasionally they got "lucky" and were able to sleep on the floor of some building basement, or school gymnasium.





- 84 days and 3,422 miles after they left L.A., the 55 survivors (out of a field of 199) limped into NYC. Only a few spectators were there to greet them and only 4,000 paid to watch the closing ceremonies in the 18,000 seat Madison Sq. Garden.
- When asked to make a few laps around the Garden for the paying customers, the runners were all too pooped.
- After receiving his \$25,000 cash prize, the winner of the prize, 20 year old Andy Payne, staggered into a stone pillar and fell unconscious. It was a fitting end to one of the most disastrous ventures in sports spectacles.

Why was there a change in manners & morals in the 1920s?

- Returning soldiers wanted to seize the day and enjoy life after the trauma of war.
- More women were out of the home working (less time to raise kids and manage house.)
- Child labor laws, mandatory school attendance laws and higher college attendance rates kept kids in school longer than before so their peers played a bigger role in socializing kids than ever before.
 - Enrollment in high schools quadrupled between 1914-1926.
- Advances in communications (radio, movies, advertisements, etc.) helped to rapidly spread the new culture.

- Americans were exposed to new influences in the 1920s.
 - Flappers
 - Bootleggers



- These new influences led to a culture of defying societal conventions.

Slang of the 1920s speaks to some of the changing values of the decade.

EXTRACTS
from the
ALPHABET
of the
YOUNGER
or more
RISING
GENERATION



by
JOHN HELD, JR.

(To be continued next week
and gets better as we go)

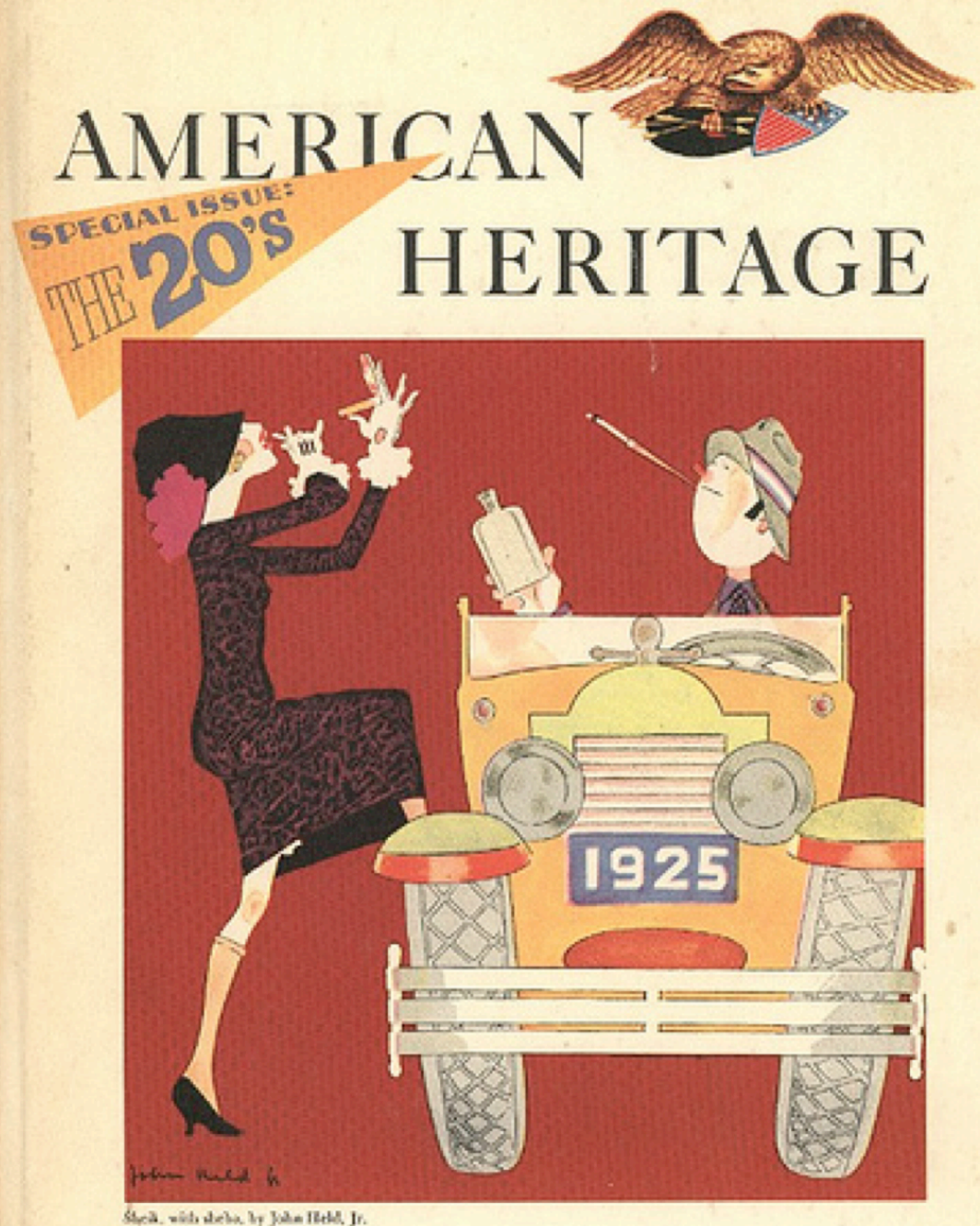
Flapper Slang	Definition
Hiphound	One who drinks hootch
Alarm clock	A chaperone
Father time	Any man over 30 years old
Petting party	Social event devoted to hugging
Dingledangler	One who persists in telephoning
Fire alarm	A divorced woman
Forty-niner	Man who is prospecting for a rich wife
Strike breaker	Young woman who goes with her friend's "steady" while there is a coolness
Dud	A wall flower
Cake-eater	Harmless lounge lizard
Tomato	Good looking girl with no brains
Snake-charmer	A female bootlegger
Corn-shredder	Young man who dances on a lady's feet
Police-dog	Young woman's fiancé
Fig leaf	One piece bathing suit
Snuggle-pup	Young man who frequents petting parties
Handcuff	Engagement ring
Sugar	Money
Mad money	Carfare home if she has a fight with her escort
Hush money	Allowance from father
Biscuit	A pettable flapper
Barney-muggin	Love-making
Cat's pajamas	Anything that's good
Butt me	Give me a cigarette
Dropping the pilot	Getting a divorce
Goof	Flapper's sweetheart
Half cut	Happily intoxicated
Neckers	Those who park while dancing
Plastered	A synonym for pie-eyed, oiled, intoxicated
Whangdoodle	Jazz band
Sharpshooter	A good dancer who spends his money freely
Appleknocker	A hick
Oilcan	An imposter

Dating norms prior to the 1920s: Courting

- Men asked the parents' permission to court their daughter.
- Courting happened under the watchful eyes of the family, generally in the home.
- Purpose was to find the perfect mate.
- If they were allowed out of the house while courting, young people were accompanied by a chaperone.



How did
dating norms
change in the
1920s?



- In the 1920s, young people began to date without chaperones.
- Cars provided a convenient escape (hence the reference to them as “houses of prostitution on wheels.”)



Petting and necking were common.

In the words of one college coed: "I don't particularly care to be kissed by some of the fellows I know, but I'd let them do it any time rather than thing I wouldn't dare."

"It's terribly exciting. We get such a thrill. I think it's natural for want nice men to kiss you, so why not do what is natural?"



TO BREAK UP PETTING PARTIES IN MT. PLEASANT CEMETERY

MOUNT PLEASANT, July 9.—Perhaps the newest place for petting parties, is the cemetery, and many complaints have come to the members of the board by persons interested concerning the petting parties that are being staged each evening there. These may be found any place, but the favorite spot is the porch around the rest cottage. This practice, it is stated, is to be broken up. The sexton has been given the privilege of placing under arrest any person caught petting in the cemetery.

Also to be banned in the cemetery are speeding automobile drivers. It is claimed motorists run up along the drive, whirl madly through the cemetery and back out. These also are to be dealt with on a par with the petters.

"When I have had a few nights without dates I nearly go crazy. I tell my mother she must expect me to go out on a fearful necking party."

Breaking Social Conventions (cont.)



- Some teachers / social workers encouraged more open discussions about sex, diseases, etc. (fear pregnancy)
 - Newspapers, movies, magazines, popular songs (“Hot Lips” and “Burning Kisses”) made sure that Americans did not suffer from sex starvation
- Line between acceptable and inappropriate behavior is blurred
 - Smoking
 - Swearing
 - Frankness about sex became fashionable
 - Margaret Sanger gained a large following for advocating greater access to birth control.