

# WATAUGA DEMOCRAT

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FIVE CENTS A COPY

## WATAUGA BOY ON FIRST BOAT SANK BY GERMANS

William F. Rominger, of Hackett, On Board Aztec When Torpedoed Off French Coast

HAD BEEN IN NAVY 13 YEARS

Re-Inducted After War and Was Discharged Because of Bad Health; Died in Texas Two Years Ago

The fact that a Watauga boy was a member of the gunners' crew on the first armed American vessel sunk in the World War is not generally known. His name was, William F. Rominger, nephew of Mr. J. W. Rominger, of Hackett, and was gunner on the Aztec, sank off the coast of France by a U-boat on April 1, 1917.

The crew of the Aztec consisted of twelve gunners, all of which reached France safely save one, John Popolucci, of Washington, D. C., who was the first American to lose his life in that titanic struggle.

Young Rominger had been in the navy for twelve or thirteen years previous to the war, and when the struggle ended he re-enlisted and served in that branch of the service until his discharge because of ill health. He died about eighteen months ago in a sanatorium at Legion Texas, and was buried in the National cemetery at Johnson City, Tenn., with military honors. Rominger had a brother in the army, who went "over the top," was wounded and decorated for bravery under fire.

We reproduce the following story of the sinking of the Aztec from the Washington Herald of April 29, 1927, which paper carried a five-column picture of the gunners' crew:

"Mrs. John A. Popolucci, the first mother of the nation to lose a son in the present (World) war, yesterday gave up her last faint hope that he had been saved.

"Shipmates, members of the gun crew of the Aztec, called upon Mrs. Popolucci in little groups of twos and threes at her modest home, 549 I street southeast, during the day and extended their sympathy.

"We all feel very badly about Johnny being lost," said one of the visitors. "He was such a good shipmate."

"He twirled his hat in his roughened hands and looked hard at the floor. There was sincerity in his voice.

"The Aztec survivors, who reached Washington last Thursday night after a series of thrilling experiences, hastened to call upon the mother of John Popolucci as soon as navy officials would permit and as soon, also, as they were fitted out in presentable clothing. For they arrived from the war zone in suits much the worse for wear.

"Eleven of them came back from their perilous trip across the Atlantic. They told their comrade's mother of the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the Aztec, acted merchantman. They told her of the high seas, the driving sleet and the hours spent in an open boat.

"Up until today I thought that John might have been rescued," said Mrs. Popolucci yesterday afternoon. "Now I know it wasn't possible."

"He did his duty, and I am proud of him—he paused—but it isn't like having him with you."

"The surviving members of the Aztec gun crew continued to maintain their silence yesterday on the incidents of the sinking, their rescue, and later re-crossing the Atlantic amid the dangers of war. Navy officials gave each man strict instructions not to talk.

"Several of the men indicated, however, that there were some mighty exciting times coming back. They would make some indirect mention to these events, halt, and explain that they were not allowed to talk of them.

"Three submarines were sighted on the return trip, it was broadly intimated. Behind the air of mystery and reserve shown by members of the gun crew there were further intimations of skirmishes and narrow escapes. When any of the survivors became too talkative, an officer reminded them not to tell all they knew.

"We played in hard luck all the time," explained one of the survivors. "There seemed to be a hoodoo following us."

"There were thirteen of us in the Dolphin crew," one of the bluejackets remarked seriously. "You see, we started out with an unlucky number."

"Then we left port on the thirteenth and were torpedoed on Friday the thirteenth. The Aztec was sunk on April 1, All Fools' Day. We were aboard a little old boat that made nine knots. And finally, we arrived in England on the thirteenth."

"Nothing could shake this sailor's

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## THE THINGS THAT ARE WORTH WHILE

Interesting Talk by Prof. Downum Before Royal Arch Masons at Recent Meeting

Prof. J. M. Downum, member of the faculty of the Appalachian State Normal, delivered the following address at a meeting of the local chapter of the Royal Arch Masons on September 28:

"What are the things that are really worth while? This is a question that might be answered variously according to who should answer it. It is well for us each to think seriously for a while before attempting to answer it. The deeper problems of life are here.

"Some would claim that as a nation, a state or individuals it is our great wealth and abundant resources, surpassing as they do that of the rest of the world. Others would say our fine highways leading from town and city over our great state and nation. Still others, our 20,000,000 automobiles, whereby we go in a short time for work or pleasure or worship or service, to various desirable places. Others would say our splendid schools where every child may have a chance to prepare for the best in life. Others, our great progress as a state and nation by which the eyes of the world are turned upon us, some in wonder and some in envy. Others might say it is our wonderful scenery spreading out before us on towering mountain, rolling hill, and beautiful dale, all so pleasing and inspiring and uplifting to the souls that look upon it.

"But what do these really mean to us as a nation, state, individuals or a lodge? They are wonderful in their influence and powerful in their appeal for nobler things if rightly used. They are worth while in many ways, but it depends upon how they are used if they are really beneficial. Do they really build up the nobler principles of life so strongly and impressively emphasized by our noble order? Those principles by which God is honored and our fellowmen, from the poorest to the richest, and from the lowest to the highest, are lifted to a truer plane of life? This is a question that well might sink to our deepest heart.

It is not so much what we have that makes of us a great people, but it is what we are. The world history has taught us this lesson. How few men of wealth and power have really blessed the world. It is often those without means—the toilers, the self-sacrificing that are the up-lifters.

"The problem before us is not so much making a living in the world or getting the most physical enjoyment out of the worldly interests—any one may do this—but the real problem is to use all our means, our abundant wealth, our fine schools, our splendid roads, our wondrous and beautiful scenery, even our troubles and disappointments, and whatever else may come in our way, to make a life of the truest mold—getting the highest soul life.

"This lesson the principles of our great order would impress upon us, and well will it be for us and for those whom we may serve if we but carry out these noble tenets in our daily lives. These are the things for which the noblest men and women of the world have stood. These are the things for which such men and women of our own day are standing. These are the things that count. These are the things that are really worth while. These are the things that God approves, and we might say, nothing less than these."

**FEMININE BLOC IN HOUSE TO HAVE 4 MEMBERS IN HOUSE**

Three feminine members of the present house of representatives have won the primaries and will in all probability be elected on November 2. There will be an addition to the bloc, Mrs. John W. Langley, who captured the Republican nomination in a district in Kentucky that always goes Republican. She succeeds her husband, who resigned to accept a position in the Atlanta Federal penitentiary for violating the prohibition law. Mrs. Langley is labeled "dry" and is said to have the support of the Anti-Saloon League.

Mary N. North, Progressive Democrat, of New Jersey, was given a vote of approval by her constituents and will return to Washington for another two-year term. She made a splendid record during the last congress.

Edith Nourse Rogers, Republican, of Massachusetts, and Florence Kann, Republican, of California, received renominations in the recent primaries and have excellent prospects in the November election.

**A TRIP TO THE SESQI-CENTENNIAL AND OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST NORTH**

By J. T. C. WRIGHT

On Monday, September 6, a party, comprising Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Hartzog and Mr. and Mrs. J. T. C. Wright and family, left Boone in Mr. Hartzog's automobile for a tour of the north. It was our purpose to visit New York City, the Sesqui-Centennial at Philadelphia, Washington, Richmond and other points of interest along the route. We left Boone about 1 o'clock in the afternoon and spent our first night in Wilkes county at the home of my father, C. C. Wright, who with his wife and son, Calvin, joined us in the tour, traveling in their automobile.

The next morning we left about 7:30 for our first real day's journey. We went by way of Winston-Salem, Leaksville-Spray, Rocky Mount in Virginia, and other points, to Roanoke where we got on the Lee Highway which traverses the beautiful Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Before we had arrived at this point we had to change tires on each of the cars, having picked up nails on the road.

Between Rocky Mount and Roanoke, Va., we crossed the Blue Ridge and descended into the Shenandoah Valley. The Blue Ridge at this point is very low. You scarcely realize that you have crossed until you begin the descent to Roanoke.

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## NEAR FATAL AUTO ACCIDENT

Mr. and Mrs. Cal Greene Seriously Hurt When Car Leaves Road Tumbling Down Mountain

On Thursday of last week, Mr. and Mrs. Cal Greene, a former citizen of Watauga county, now of West Jefferson, with his bride of only a few days, was mingling with friends at the Wilkes county fair, probably one of the happiest men in the large gathering.

Later in the evening he and Mrs. Greene started home in their car. All went well until they had reached or passed the summit of the mountain, when for some cause unknown, the car left the road, plunged over a high embankment, turned over and over down the mountain, carrying both occupants with it for some distance.

When they were discovered, it was thought Mrs. Greene was in a dying condition and Mr. Greene not so badly hurt. They were carried to their home at West Jefferson and an examination, revealed the fact that it was just the opposite. Mrs. Greene was badly hurt, but not nearly so seriously as was Mr. Greene.

The full particulars could not be gathered by The Democrat, but last reports on Sunday morning were that the lady's condition was not so very serious, but Mr. Greene was very low.

His friends in Watauga, and they are numerous, will hear of Mr. Greene's misfortune and that of his wife with genuine regret.

## PROGRESS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN NORTH CAROLINA

On March 26, 1830, 97 years ago, fourteen Baptist met at Greenville and organized the North Carolina Baptist State convention. At that time, according to Charles E. Maddry, corresponding secretary, in the Biblical Recorder, there were not more than 15,000 Baptists in the state who believed in missions, education and progress. Mr. Maddry gives the following achievements of the denomination from 1830 to 1926:

Number of churches, 2,300.  
Number of members, 354,000.  
Number of Sunday schools, 2,203.  
Number of teachers and officers, 18,000.  
Number of pupils enrolled in Sunday schools, 312,000.  
Gain in enrollment in five years, 91,000.  
Number of B. Y. P. U. members, 60,000.  
Number of B. Y. P. U. Unions, 1,850.  
Seven schools and colleges, owned by the convention with a property value, including endowment and deducting all indebtedness, of \$5,223,370.

Students enrolled in the seven schools, 2,900.  
Number preparing for the ministry and mission field, 270.  
Missionary societies number 2,281 with a membership of 50,000.

## CONGRESSMAN DOUGHTON TO SPEAK IN COUNTY

Ben. Robert L. Doughton, congressman from the eighth North Carolina district, will address the voters of the county next week at the following time and places:

At Don Hagaman's store in Beaver Dam township, on Tuesday, October 12th at 2 p. m.  
At Stevens' store in Meat Camp township, on Wednesday, October 13th at 2 p. m.

Everybody invited, with special invitation extended to the ladies.  
J. L. WILSON,  
Chm. Dem. Ex. Committee.

## REYNOLDS TO TAKE STUMP FOR SENATOR OVERMAN

Asheville, Oct. 5.—Robert R. (Bob) Reynolds, defeated opponent of Senator Lee S. Overman for the Democratic nomination for the United States senate, has announced that he has set aside the week of October 25-30 for service to the party and will take up the cudgel in behalf of the senator in a number of speeches to be delivered throughout the state.

## COOLIDGE TO BE HOST TO MARIE, QUEEN OF RUMANIA

Washington, Oct. 5.—President and Mrs. Coolidge will be hosts to Queen Marie of Rumania, at a dinner at the White House on October 19. The Queen is now on her way to America, and will visit North Carolina sometime in December.

## GOVERNOR McLEAN SPEAKS AT WILKES COUNTY FAIR

Governor A. W. McLean was the guest of honor at the Wilkes county fair last Thursday and spoke to approximately 5,000 people in the afternoon.

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## DR. B. B. DOUGHERTY AT NORTH WILKESBORO

Brilliant Address of Noted Educator Before Recent Good Roads Conference

BOONE TRAIL MEANS MUCH

To Northwest North Carolina; Money Must Be Provided For Its Completion

The Democrat is pleased to present in full this week the brilliant address of Dr. B. B. Dougherty before the good roads meeting in Wilkesboro on September 23. It was not known until this week that a stenographer took down the address, and while it is a little late, we feel that it is well worth reproducing. Dr. Dougherty spoke as follows:

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

"I have no speech to make. If I did have, I hope I would be too thoughtful to speak at length at this hour on this crowded program. He who would talk long just now, must commit suicide.

"But if you will give me two minutes of your time—only two minutes—I will say this much:

"First of all, I am a North Carolinian. I love the whole state; I love North Carolina from the Tennessee line down through Piedmont Carolina—where the electric lights overlap each other from many progressive cities; I love North Carolina down in the land of the artesian wells; I love North Carolina down to the sands of the sea. I love her institutions; I have a common interest in every home; and I have an intensive interest in the welfare, prosperity and happiness of every living human being in this commonwealth.

"But I hope it will not be indelicate for me on this occasion to say that I have a passionate pride in the future growth and development of northwest North Carolina. I was born here; I have always lived here; I expect to die here; I want to go to heaven from here. (As anxious as I am about going to a better world, I must confess, however, that I am not in a big hurry about my departure.)

"My friends, I can think of nothing that would add so much to the physical growth and development of this section of our state as the building of a good road—not a fairly good road—but an up-to-date, first-class, concrete road, such as we have in other parts of North Carolina—from Winston-Salem to the Tennessee line. I want it to come out of Winston-Salem, across the Yadkin river, through the fine county of Yadkin, on to the Wilkesboro, then up the slopes of the Blue Ridge, through Deep Gap, and on to Boone; from there to the Tennessee line, connecting with the fine road built by that state, leading through Mountain City to Bristol, there intersecting with the Lee Highway, giving splendid connections on hard surfaced roads, into every state of America.

"But I hear a doubting Thomas say: 'Can it be done? I think it can—I know it can.' Let us join ourselves all along the line into a single road. Let us create a public sentiment that will grow like the rolling snowball, and it becomes all powerful—even irresistible. Let us believe in our cause. Let us press our just claim, and we shall succeed."

"But I hear mutterings as to where we shall get the money. I can tell you where we shall get it. We will pledge the credit of the state for it. We will get it out of the same box that we got the money when we built the Central Highway from Raleigh to Durham, to Greensboro, Salisbury, Statesville, Hickory, Morganton, Marion and on to Asheville. We will get the money out of the same box that we are now getting it to build fine concrete roads from Asheville through Haywood, Jackson and other sparsely settled counties west of Asheville.

"Let us have proper legislation this winter, and next summer we shall see a dozen contractors working at a dozen different places; and by the winter of 1927, we shall be driving our automobiles, touring cars, and freight cars alike, from Winston-Salem across the Blue Ridge mountains into Tennessee, on railroad grades and at railroad speed. A great momentum, never before known or even dreamed of, will come our way. Winston-Salem, the largest, the richest, and one of the most progressive cities in the state will become 'The Greater Winston-Salem.' Yadkinville—I know you will be glad to get this message—will then begin to grow. The Wilkesboro will spread out until they will make but one corporation. Boone will grow, flourish and prosper as

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