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# DOWN ON THE MARKET

*Memories of  
the Market Area  
in Roanoke*

*Robert Allen Garland*

BY  
ROBERT ALLEN GARLAND

ROANOKE • 1992

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## FOREWORD

Back in the summer Daddy wrote this essay on the Market area and gave it to me to edit and type for submission to the Roanoke newspaper for a story they were doing on that special part of downtown Roanoke. Soon after, I decided that Daddy's remembrances would be my Christmas present to the family in this book form.

Although the Market area has had less impact on my generation than it had on the previous one, its recent renewal has provided many special times to me and our family in the last decade. One of my favorite places on the market has been "Gallery Three"—begun, built, but recently sold by a cousin, Andy Williams. I have spent many hours browsing among the art work there—always looking to enhance my personal collection, a passion of mine. Or of visiting the Science Museum, the History Museum, of seeing "South Pacific" at the "Mill Mountain Theatre" with Mama and Daddy, and sitting in those seats with not near-enough room for long legs. Of shopping in the dozens of stores—clothes, antiques, novelty; of visiting some of the older stores—Agnew Feed and Milan Brothers. Of eating in the restaurants! What fun we've had at Cornbeef & Company, or the quickly-out-of-business "Blue Muse," and now over coffee or espresso at "Mill Mountain Coffee." Too, it is always fun to take our guests to the market area. I believe they get a real sense of what makes the city so special.

I now feel that any of my visits to Roanoke are incomplete if I don't get to go on the Market. I love being there; I love walking around with Mama and Daddy whom everyone seems to know and wants to greet. Maybe it is because a part of me really is there—a part of all the Garlands is there. That is where we began, where we grew up; it was our home—because of the man who eighty years ago had a dream. It was a Drug Store. Down on the Market.

And so, dear Family, I hope you enjoy this. Merry Christmas!  
—A.H.G.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Forever Richard! Once again my dear friend Richard C. McClintock has helped me in the physical preparation of my Christmas gift. He laid out the design on his computer and gave me pointers on the cover production among other things.

Thanks, too, to Mama who helped me look for the photograph of Big Walter in the drug store; we knew it existed but it had been temporarily misplaced, only to appear in the album where we thought it was all along. Mama also took the photograph to the Art-Fac folks to have it reproduced for me.



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## DEDICATION

For my family,  
and in appreciation of  
Daddy's memories.

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## DOWN ON THE MARKET

*Robert Allen Garland*

From 1915 until the middle 1950s, my father, Walter B. Garland, owned and operated a small drug store at the corner of what was then Campbell Avenue Southeast and Randolph Street (now Williamson Road). He had first worked for Mr. Philip Clore, a "druggist" (not referred to then as "pharmacist"), who was the original owner of the store. His first job was behind the soda fountain as a "soda jerk," a term derived from the hand motion used to dispense carbonated water into a soda.

My father was a hard worker and anxious to get ahead to support his new bride, Minnie Everette Allen, whom he had married on October 25, 1915. He bought half interest in the little store, and it became Clore and Garland. Somewhere around 1920, he bought out Mr. Clore, and the store became Garland's Drug Store located at 132 East Campbell Avenue. I can still remember the telephone number, which in those days was a three-digit number—527. To place a call, you would lift the receiver and a female operator would answer and say, "Number please." That store on Campbell Avenue was the first of ten stores that my father and uncles (J. L. Pitts and M.C. Allen) would establish. With the exception of the Campbell Avenue store and one other at the corner of Salem and Jefferson, all were located in neighborhoods scattered throughout the city. Each store had a soda fountain which were the social hubs of those neighborhoods.

The drug store of that era was the meeting place where people could gather at little expense, exchange gossip, carry on a courtship, or simply watch the world go by. It is probably the closest this country ever came to



the European Café or Coffee House. For 5¢ one could buy a “coke” made from scratch with one ounce of syrup, a scoop of ice, and carbonated water directly from a soda arm. You could get a freshly-made limeade for 10¢, and a milk-shake for the same, unless you wanted Horlick’s Malted Milk added, which was 5¢ more. Other popular drinks in those days were the Cherry Smash and Hire’s Root Beer. There was another that I thought was good, “Green River,” but it never caught on. All these drinks were prepared on request while the customer waited—there were no machines or premixed drinks as you have today—and on hot summer days, with no air conditioning in any of the offices and stores, business was often very brisk. Like my father before me, my first job in the drug store was behind the soda fountain. In my opinion, “the fountain” is an institution which the present day culture has sadly missed and by which it would be improved if it were available today. I have many fond and nostalgic memories of those days.

My most vivid recollections of the Market area start in the early 1930s and extend into the wartime years. I do have some hazy and vague memories of the late 1920s. One such incident which stands out in my mind would have occurred, I believe, somewhere in the 1928-1929 period, although I am not really sure of that date. It was not until years later that I was to learn of the significance of this event. I remember being at my father’s drug store one evening and standing on the curbside in front. There were other spectators lined up on the sidewalks.

I remember that I was terrified by what was occurring. There was a march of what I would estimate to be several hundred people, clothed in white uniforms with cone-shaped hats, and face coverings with slits for the eyes, nose, and mouth. They were carrying a torch or a light of some sort. I believe they were chanting. They marched down Campbell Avenue and turned left onto Randolph Street and went up over the bridge. During that



period, there was a business area along that strip where the Civic Center is now located, for what we then called "colored people." The Kimball area on the other side was where many of Roanoke's black families lived. It was like a small settlement. Rarely would those residents wander outside those areas except to work, to shop, or to go to Henry Street for their entertainment. Ironically, fifty years later, that same organization, the Ku Klux Klan, would march down Jefferson Street and, to Roanoke's credit, attract very few spectators or participants.

The market area in the 1930s was a bustling mecca of activity. Practically all grocery shopping, particularly for meat and produce, was done there. The market building itself housed, I would estimate, 10 or 15 independent butchers who had stalls on each side of the building. (A. R. Minton, a future Roanoke mayor, had his butcher shop at the northeast corner of the first block of Campbell Avenue Southeast and Wall Street.) On the outside, there were numerous stalls where vendors would sell mostly fresh vegetables and fruits, homemade honey, and other delicacies. Also, many farmers lined up their trucks, with the backside facing the curb, and sold their goods from there. Since most of the shopping was done on Fridays and Saturdays, a number of these farmers would sleep in the back or the cab of their trucks to be ready for the early morning business. My parents bought most of their produce from Mr. Ellis, a very aristocratic-looking gentleman, whose family still resides here. His stall was on the east side of the market building.

On the third floor of the market building, there was a basketball court with spectator seats. This court was used for the various city leagues as well as for the Gold Medal Tournament. I witnessed many exciting games there.

The 100 block of East Campbell was a very interesting block of busi-



nesses. The owners of these establishments were, for the most part, very fine and ethical gentlemen, and many were regular customers of my father's store. We reciprocated their business any time we could. With the help of others, I have been able to remember most of these. On the north side of that block, on the corner, was another drug store, Humphries and Webber. They, too, had a soda fountain, but the store specialized in all kinds of garden and flower seeds. They stored these in a beautiful wooden fixture, each drawer labeled with its contents. They also stocked a complete line of patent medicines and trusses (a support used in the case of a hernia, for example). If one were to ask for a "truss" in a modern pharmacy, I doubt if the clerk, or even the pharmacist, would know what one wanted. Next door was the Army and Navy store operated first by Mr. Halpern and later by his son "Poachie" and his sister. They sold clothing, overalls, boots, shoes, etc. Next door to them was Oscar Graves General Store. Today, that store would be an antique lover's dream. I remember the fixtures were all of wood. There were barrels of merchandise on the floor. "Penny Candy" (it really sold for 1¢) was displayed in a glass case, and you were waited on from behind it. Mr. Graves stocked all kinds of groceries, gloves, barrels of pickle, fat back, and anything a farmer might need. He had an especially large selection of chewing tobacco, which came in slabs packed in wooden boxes. He had a tobacco cutter to slice the tobacco as he sold it. (We had the same instrument at my father's drug store.) Farther down the block was Sam's Army Store, run by the Shapiro family, who left that location in 1932 to move to Nelson Street.

About in the middle of that block was another grocer, L. I. Booth. He and his wife operated this typical "Mom and Pop" store and did it very well. My parents were regular customers of Mr. Booth's store, buying most of their staples from him. I remember going to that store with my parents, and my



mother having a list of all her needs. She handed it to Mr. Booth, and he went throughout the store getting each item off the shelf, and then completed the transaction by charging it to our account and bagging it. Imagine that kind of service today!

In those days, the 100 block of East Campbell would be considered the Furniture Mart of the city. It included some of Roanoke's most prominent business names. There was Wrights, John Parrish, Wickhams, Killingers, Witten-Martin, Waynicks, Stephenson and Aldridge, and probably more that I can't remember. One of those gentlemen I remember quite well. Mr. O. B. Wickham would come to the drug store several times a day, and he would always order a "coke." He was really a nice man, but there were many others too.

I have only the faintest recollection of the street car waiting room, which was directly across the street from my father's store. This building was last occupied by Grand Piano. I am not sure when the street car company relocated, but I would estimate that it was in the late 1920s. When they were there, my father became great friends with all the street car motormen. I can remember the names of E. H. Hammersley and W.R. Harbour. Daddy would cash their checks and run charge accounts for them. After they left, the Appalachian Electric Power Company moved in and occupied all floors of that building. This helped my father's business, for even in those days, they had a large number of employees, and most of them were customers of the drug store several times a day. Also, people paid their light bill at that location, which brought a lot of foot traffic to that area.

I remember, with fondness, many of the men and women who worked for the Appalachian and who were customers and friends—names like Jimmy White, Davis Elliott, J.G. Harvey, Jimmy Crouch, Joy Nash, Doss Ayers, Frank Wells, Clarence Mills, Alex Pullen, Irene Kendrick, Mr. Whitfield,



Alfred Hendricks, Bob Phillips, Mary Mills, and many others. My brother "Dickie" met his wife Eloise Turnbull when she was working there. In those bygone days, there were no drink machines or coffee makers in office buildings—those came much later. Often, particularly during inclement weather, the employees would telephone their orders to us for various drinks, candy, and Nabs, and we would deliver those things directly to their offices. In the summer, I was the one doing most of the delivering.

In the 1930s my father installed a slot machine in the front part of the drug store. It took nickels and paid off just as the ones do now in Atlantic City or Las Vegas. It was very popular, and customers would gather around, waiting in line to play it. Occasionally, the three bars would appear, and the cheers would go up as the jackpot was hit. Although this would not happen very often, the folks from Appalachian were still frequent players.

Even though these machines were illegal, they were allowed to operate. I have been told that a member of City Council had these slot machines in his business, and consequently the police were reluctant to enforce the law, thus enabling the other merchants to also operate. However, on occasion, I suppose to let everyone know that "the law" still existed, the police would raid those businesses and fine the owners for possession of the machines.

While also illegal like the slot machine, another thing used to bring customers into the drug stores was the sale of baseball tickets. If anything, baseball was more popular in the 1930s than it is today, despite the television broadcasts. During that period, many of the confectioneries, cigar stores, smoke shops, and luncheonettes posted the major league baseball scores, as well as the World Series. The inning by inning scores, names of players pitching and hitting home runs, and delays in the game were transmitted by way of the Western Union ticker. All this was posted either on a huge blackboard or on the window inside the store.



Baseball tickets ("chances" on the games) were sold for 10¢ each, which gave you the opportunity to win (as I remember, \$6.00) if your ticket had the teams with the two highest or the two lowest scores on that particular day. My father installed the Western Union ticker in the store, and during the summer months, my older brother "Dickie" and I had the job of posting the scores as the returns came in on the ticker.

Another long-time business in that block of Campbell Avenue was "The Big Four Barber Shop." It was located on the south side of the street up from Appalachian. I can still remember the names of those four very talented barbers—Mr. Wright, Mr. Moore, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Craft. Since all of them were customers of the drug store, my hair was cut by them—usually by Mr. Jones—until I went off to college. During an infantile paralysis (now called polio) epidemic in the mid-thirties, my parents forbade us from mingling in crowds, or going to the drug store, or even playing with other children because of the fear of this disease. On at least one occasion, I can remember one of the barbers traveling to our home in Raleigh Court and cutting my hair in the bathroom.

The barber shop stayed open until 11 p.m. on Saturday nights and would do a brisk business up until that hour. The price was 25¢ for a haircut, and no tip was given or expected. In addition, they had a shoe-shine stand, and you could receive an expert shine for only 10¢. When the bootblack was finished with the shine, he would take a whisk broom and brush your clothes as an extra service.

There were many other unique businesses in that area in the 1930s. On Randolph Street going north was one with which I was quite familiar. On the west side was Belmont Shoe Hospital, which was there until recently, when it was destroyed by fire. Mr. Richard Smith owned and operated this well-run establishment. This expert cobbler did quality work, and even



during the depression did not lack for business. In those years it was common practice to have your shoes redone after wearing out the soles or heels. This is where I first met Mr. Allen Pullen, who was in his late teens then. It is a friendship that I treasure and have retained to this very day. Alex operated the shoe shine stand in that shop. I don't think I have ever met a more likable, friendly, and courteous man in my entire life. He had numerous customers and friends throughout that business community. He was loved by all of us who knew him. Many of his customers were Appalachian employees; as a result, he became an employee of that great company and worked for them from 1944 until 1976 when he retired. Alex's influence in this community will be felt long after he is gone.

On the east side of Randolph Street going up the hill was a building owned by Mr. Jacob Brenner, who operated the Roanoke Scrap Iron and Metal Company. He was a fine gentleman in every respect, and very aristocratic looking. He had a rather wide moustache, as I recall, and in the winter months wore a Homburg hat which gave him a very distinguished look. The Brenner family is well known in Roanoke for its civic and philanthropic activities.

On the northeast of Randolph Street was first the Virginia Electric Company owned and operated by the Johnson Brothers, Dewey and Earl. Dewey, the older brother, was a hard-nosed businessman and more-or-less ran the business. I never saw him without a hat on his head or a cigar in the corner of his mouth.

I believe next to that business—going up Randolph Street—was John Hansbrough's shop where he made horse harnesses, bridles, collars, saddles, and other equipment for farm animals. Farther up was Eaton's Watch Repair and another shoe repair shop owned by a Mr. Doss. At one time, there was a pool room (Lockards). Fleishman Yeast Co. had a wholesale



outlet there.

The last shop on the right just before crossing the Randolph Street Bridge was Dulaney's Bicycle Shop. I was more familiar with this shop than the others because my brother and I both owned bicycles, and we would frequent that shop often for repairs. The room was always in a state of disarray. It appeared that they rarely cleaned the floor or straightened the shop. There were bicycle parts lying and hanging everywhere around that very small room. Nonetheless, they did an excellent job in repairing our bikes.

There were other businesses in that area worthy of mentioning, namely Economy's Barber Shop, Katz Tailoring and Pressing Cleaners, and Tom's Restaurant. Tonik's also had a tailor and pressing shop. Others have escaped my memory.

"Fats" Summers owned and operated a barber shop that faced Campbell Avenue next to Virginia Electric Company. As his nickname indicated, he was quite overweight. Unfortunately, too, he would go on frequent drinking binges where he would really get down and out, until he was picked up by the police and taken to jail to dry out. There were no detoxification centers or halfway houses here during that era.

Diagonally across the street from the drug store was the N & W Salvage Warehouse (Firestone Co. present location). The Third Street railroad tracks were perhaps several hundred feet to the east of that building. During the depression years, the hoboes and derelicts would gather there behind the warehouse. They would come to the drug store, buy rubbing alcohol for 19¢ a pint, and then go back and share it among themselves. Frequently, the police would appear with the "Black Maria" (Paddy Wagon) and haul them away.

Cigarette smoking was a national craze in the 1930s, promoted by the



tobacco companies as glamorous, fashionable, and even healthy. The brands used catchy advertising slogans to attract smokers: Camels—"I'd walk a mile for a Camel," Lucky Strike—"It's toasted," Chesterfields—"They satisfy," and Old Gold—"Not a cough in a car load," were the leading brands that used mostly radio and magazines to sell their product. At my father's drug store, we sold two packs for 25¢. Believe it!

In the 1930s the market area had its share of alcoholics and drug addicts. If there were homosexuals or transvestites on the market then, either I was not aware of it or I did not understand their role. I have no recollection of either.

In those days, these poor, unfortunate addicts were referred to in less sophisticated terms. They were called drunks and dope fiends. Because of what we sold, these street people were frequent customers at my father's drug store. Paregoric could be purchased without a prescription, because it did have some legitimate uses. Legally, one could purchase two ounces for 25¢ by signing a register with one's name and address, although this regulation was not always followed by the drug stores. Neither would it prohibit someone from going store to store; and at that time there must have been 12 to 15 drug stores in the downtown area. There were a number of these addicts who were well known throughout the market area, and they would make their rounds to all the drug stores until their money ran out. Several of these lost souls stand out in my memory. One of the most pitiful and pathetic human specimens that I have ever encountered was a woman then whom I knew only as "Aunt Maria" (pronounced Ma-rye-ah). That was not her real name, but it derived from the fact that she chewed tobacco, the brand name being "Black Maria." In addition to the chewing tobacco, she also used "Tube Rose" snuff. Aunt Maria must have been in her late 70s or early 80s. She was very stooped, one of her eyes was completely gone and



shut, and she was toothless. She was nothing but skin and bones, weighing not more than 75 pounds. She was addicted to Paregoric, and would go up on the market and beg or sell pencils until she got enough to buy her Paregoric. Often someone on the market would give her cornbread, and when she came to get her Paregoric, my father would give her a cup of buttermilk to go with it. In the winter, he would allow her to sit in the back of the store to keep warm. I never knew where she lived.

There was also Bessie Lambert and John Parrish, both of whom were dope fiends and also addicted to Paregoric. They were always seen together. Bessie, too, was a small pitiable figure, and John was a humpback always in need of a bath. They pushed an old two-wheeled cart around town, collecting various junk, then taking it to Jake Brenner's junk yard to get enough money for food and Paregoric.

Another was John Young, whom I understand was a World War I veteran. He had a wooden leg and was addicted to Terpin Hydrate and Codeine Elixir. He would consume four ounces of that alcoholic (45%) and codeine mixture without taking the bottle from his lips. There were many others like those hapless, woebegone, and forlorn people, and even as a child my heart went out to them.

The story of the market would not be complete without some mention of the hotels in that area, although to some people, hotel might be a misnomer. The two that immediately come to my mind are the Shenandoah (later the Earle) and the Randolph Hotel. The Shenandoah faced Salem Avenue, just as the Earle now does, and extended through to Campbell Avenue over my father's drug store. Originally, the Shenandoah was a businessman's hotel and was considered respectable. However, as time went on, it attracted many prostitutes and their clients, and became known more-or-less as a whorehouse. The Randolph was a much smaller hotel with several floors,



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located on the left after you pass Salem Avenue and before you cross the bridge. Although I can recall many legitimate guests, it was known essentially as a house of ill repute. Many of the women were good customers of the drug store, and they would buy many of their needs from us, especially the products known today as feminine hygiene, which consisted of douche bags, disinfectants, and douche powders. I remember one of these ladies of the night in particular. She was very pretty but was deaf and dumb. I have often wondered whatever happened to that girl.

In the evening, bell-hops (mostly black) from the hotels would make a purchase from the drug store, which a clerk would get from one certain drawer in the back of the store. Until I became of age, this one drawer was "forbidden" and off limits to me, though I did not really know the reason until much later. I remember male customers (never female) coming into the store and, in whispered tones, saying something to the clerk or to my father. The clerk would then go to that drawer, take something out, place it in the palm of the hand of the customer, then ring up the sale on the cash register. I am sure at some point when no one was looking and my curiosity had gotten the best of me, I peeked in that drawer. In today's drug store, the items in that drawer, prophylactics, are openly displayed on self-service shelves. This would have been unthinkable, as well as considered unethical, even up into the 1970s. Although universally known as condoms now, the term was never used in the 1930s to my recollection. Customers usually referred to them as "rubbers." Other names that were frequently used were cunions, safetys, raincoats, or pro's. I remember one particular brand that my father stocked was "The Three Little Pigs," a rather appropriate name as 3 sold for 25¢.

Although sexually transmitted diseases were prevalent then, there was little said or written about them. Syphilis and gonorrhea were the most



feared. Of course there was no AIDS, and I don't ever remember the term herpes being used until much later. There was one product that we sold called "Dough Boy," a mercurial (mercurous chloride) type of ointment also sold from the forbidden drawer. This was applied by the male before and after an encounter, supposedly to protect him from those diseases.

Floods in the market area were quite common, particularly in the summer months. Like now, perhaps even worse, during heavy rains, the downtown streets would become flooded. The waters would back up into all the businesses along Campbell Avenue, and Daddy's store was no exception. Much damage was done then, just as now. I can remember one such summer flood, mainly because a picture was taken by a newspaper photographer, showing me along with other members of my family with mops and brooms in front of the drug store. I am almost sure that that was the first time my picture ever appeared in the newspaper. I found that clipping in a photograph album after my parents had passed away.

During the summer months, "Dickie," my older brother, some of our friends, and I would play softball in the middle of Campbell Avenue (street-car tracks and all) under the lights which lit the streets reasonably well. Our play would be frequently interrupted by a street car, a passing motorist, or a policeman. However, the traffic at night during those depression years was very sparse. It is a miracle that we did not break any store windows during those games.

I guess some of my fondest memories of the market area are of the Rialto Theatre (Shooting Gallery). In those days, you didn't go to a movie, but you went to a "picture show." Practically every week we would go to see our favorite cowboy stars—Buck Jones, Ken Maynard, "Hoot" Gibson, Tim McCoy, Bob Steele, and other notables. Usually there would be a serial going. I remember one, in particular, starring "Red" Grange, a football star,



in "The Galloping Ghost." I saw all fifteen segments, one each week. Afterwards, we would walk down past "Diamonds," which was a confectionery with a soda fountain, a pool room and a duck pin bowling alley in the back, past Nelson Hardware and Bob's Shoe Store to get to the Roanoke Weiner Stand. There we would order a hot dog with everything on it and a bottle of "Coke" for 10¢. We thought that was really living.

As I think of that little corner drug store of ours, Christmas time was the most memorable. The gifts my father offered were simple and inexpensive, most below five dollars. People seemed to appreciate those small gifts then, more so than the elaborate items they have today. I remember the store and the window decorations to entice the passersby to come in. I remember, too, with nostalgia the farmers as they displayed their Christmas wares from the back of their trucks or from the sidewalk stalls: the beautiful wreaths, the mistletoe, holly, and the red poinsettias, all at unbelievably low prices. Many came to sell Christmas trees. One of these farmers I remember distinctly—he was a real character. His name was Mr. Lane. He would bring a truck load of Christmas trees from Buchanan and set them up behind the Appalachian building. In between customers, he would warm his hands over an open fire, usually a huge oil drum. At night, he would bring his daily receipts to the drug store, and Daddy would put them in the safe. I never saw him without a large wad of chewing tobacco with the juice running down each side of his mouth.

One can re-live much of Roanoke's history, indeed, America's history, in knowing and understanding the activities of the Market Area. As I reminisce about those times and recall my treasured memories of that unique area, I am reminded of a passage attributed to Ivanna Chamberlain:

*Oh memory, turn back the leaves of your book;*



*On the pages of childhood permit us to look.*

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#### COLOPHON

*The text was written during June of 1992,  
for a Market Retrospective section  
in the Roanoke newspaper.*

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