



THE
SUNFLOWER
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Musings From 1902

A random sampling of newspaper stories from 1902 provide an interesting view of life in Reno County at that time.

TEDDY JR. HERE YESTERDAY

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., passed through Hutchinson yesterday, although few people in town knew it. His special car was attached to Santa Fe train No. 6, which connected with the regular Chicago train at Kansas City that takes young Teddy back to Groton to school.

Teddy has been in Wyoming hunting and his return has been made as unostentatiously as possible. For this reason no one here knew that the special car attached to No. 6 yesterday was occupied by the son of the President of the United States, and no one recognized the spectacled youth who peered out through the window. *The Hutchinson News, Sept. 12, 1902.*

SHERIFF ON A LONG TRIP

Sheriff Long left Saturday night for Olympia, Washington, to bring back **William Shaughnessy** wanted here on a charge of forgery. Shaughnessy is the man who sold a forged note for \$100 to **William Crouse** for \$90. He was arrested in Olympia on a similar charge, but got out of trouble on the plea that he was drunk when he did it and there was no criminal intent. The sheriff there read a notice sent out by **Sheriff Long** describing Shaughnessy and so is holding him until Sheriff Long arrives there with requisition papers. The forgery was committed last April.

TEACHER LOSES JOB

Clarence Black, teacher in district No. 117, near Turon, was tried before the examining committee of the county today on the charge of conduct unbecoming a teacher. He was found guilty by the board and will lose his position. *The Hutchinson News, Sept. 13, 1902.*

HE DIDN'T ESCAPE

One of the Reformatory guards was taken captive yesterday, but he did not make much effort to get away. His name is **Gillby Cheatum** and he was taken captive by Miss **Lulu Rogers**. The wedding took place at the home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. C.H. Rogers, 765 Avenue F east, and Rev Bartholomew of Hadley Chapel performed the ceremony at 5:30 p.m. **Will Blake** was groomsman and Miss **Grace Cornwall** bridesmaid. Mr. Cheatum and his charming bride will reside with her parents for a time. Many friends offer congratulations. *9/13/1902.*

THIS ISSUE: THE ROBERT BORCHERT FAMILY

HER EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY

A jolly company of people spent a very pleasant afternoon at the home of Mrs. E.S. Webster, one of the substantial farmers and fruit growers of Lincoln township. The gathering was to observe the eightieth anniversary of the birth of **Mrs. Ella Webster**, more familiarly known as "Grandma" Webster, who is even at this advanced age quite strong and healthy. Besides being most royally entertained during their stay, each guest was the recipient of a handsome bouquet, gathered by Mrs. Webster from a beautiful flower garden which is cared for by herself. "Grandma" was tendered several beautiful tokens of esteem in which she is held by her many friends. Those present were: Miss **Maude Sparks**, Miss **Maude Heidel**, Miss **Lizzie Brown** and mother, **Mr. and Mrs. F.H. Cost** and daughter, and **Mr. and Mrs. W.F. Hill** and family. *The Hutchinson News, Sept. 13, 1902.*

WALTERS GIVEN HIS FREEDOM

County Attorney Taylor today dismissed the case against **Charley Walters**, charged with horse stealing, and discharged him from custody. Walters is the boy who ran off with a horse belonging to the man he was working for because the farmer owed him. He was under sixteen years of age and the county attorney was convinced that the lad did not intend a criminal act. *The Hutchinson News, Sept. 13, 1902.*

SAID TO BE QUARANTINED

The small pox scare down the Hutchinson & Southern branch of the Santa Fe is still on, although the citizens of Blackwell and the other towns where the cases are do not look upon the disease with much terror. The cases are light and are claimed by many to be a kind of Cuban chicken pox. Blackwell was placed under quarantine this morning. The people of Deer Creek, it is said, refuse to allow any one from Blackwell to get off of trains at that town. It appears that this kind of chicken pox has spread largely in some of the towns. *The Hutchinson News, Sept. 30, 1902.*

MAN KILLED AT HEAVEN

W. H. Morton, a farmer, was run over by a buggy in Haven last Friday evening, and died of his injuries Saturday. The names of the people who ran him are not certainly known as they did not stop upon hearing the old man's cries, but drove right on. The accident is the talk of the village. Mr. Morton was 69 years old. He owned a farm near Sylvania and had bought a place in the town a few months ago and moved there with his wife to spend their last days. Friday evening he returned from the G.A.R. reunion and went to his home. His wife was away at a neighbor's and the door was locked. Mr. Morton started back to town. It was dark and as he was crossing a street a team hitched to a buggy ran him down. He cried out but the rapidly moving vehicle did not stop. The old was able to get to a neighbor's house and told what had happened to him. He was taken home, where he died the next day. *9/30/1902.*

LEG CUT OFF

Brakeman **W. H. Sturman** of the Hutchinson & Southern had his leg cut off at Pretty Prairie this morning by falling from a car while he was doing some work with the air of the train. It is hard to say just how he fell and he really did not know as the train was frosty at the time. He was taken to Kingman and the leg was amputated at the ankle joint. He will be brought to his home in Hutchinson in a short time or just as soon as he is able to be moved. Mr. Sturman has a wife and several children in this city.

Today is the anniversary of the death of **Mr. Barndollar**, who was accidentally killed in the Santa Fe yards here by being knocked from the top of a freight car by the roof of the freight station. **Conductor Merritt** was in charge of the crew in both cases. *Hutchinson Daily Bee, Nov. 10, 1902.*

SASSED THE JUDGE

Tom Diffendorfer, convicted of burglary was this morning sentenced to the penitentiary for ten years. He turned to the judge and said: "May the curse of God rest upon you, you baldheaded old tyrant." *Sept. 20, 1902.*



the ROBERT BORCHART family

One interesting feature of searching in old newspapers is the joy of traveling along rabbit trails to discover interesting facts that would be otherwise missed. Such was the case of Robert Borchert, and some of the articles about his family follow. - Editor

Robert Borchert was born in Germany and immigrated to America, settling in Hutchinson by 1884. An early newspaper article read, "There is nothing that adds more to one's comfort than a good furring boot or shoe, and there is no one who can make them better than Robert Borchert. He served a full apprenticeship in the old country, and he don't know anything about slighting work" (*The Hutchinson News*, October 25, 1884).

In January of 1885 it was said, "Robert Borchert, our German shoe maker, contemplates taking to himself a frau soon" (*The Weekly Democrat*). 3 weeks later came the announcement: "Wedding. On Sunday, February 1, 1885, by Rev. L.O. Mead, at the residence of the bride's mother, on Eighth avenue, Miss **Martha E. Zimmerman** and Robert Borchert, of this city" (*The News*, February 7, 1885). Their first child, **Robb Borchert**, was born a year later (Feb. 1, 1886) and died 6 days later on Feb. 7. He is buried in the Memorial Park Cemetery of Hutchinson.

When the city of Haven was established. Robert & Martha moved to Haven and were active in all the community affairs after that time. They attended the German Lutheran Church and were active in affairs of the Democrat party - Robert at one time running on the ticket as Constable.

The community followed the news of the family in Haven as it grew to include five living children: **Edith** (1888), **William** (1889), **Herman** (1891), **Walter** (1893), and **Isabel** (1896). When Herman was born, the announcement said, "Robert Borchert wears a broader smile than usual, all on account of the arrival of a boy at his home Sunday night that wants board and lodging for 21 years more or less" (*The Haven Independent*. Nov. 26, 1891). Announcing Walter's birth, the same paper said, "Borned - Sunday morning March 5 to Mr. and Mrs. Robt. Borchert a boy. Dr. Hutton officiating, Mother and child doing well and Robert is getting better" (*March 9, 1893*).

The old country was not forgotten. Several German immigrants in the Haven area would often gather together to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries together. In 1892, "Robert Borchert received word this week that his father died at Berlin, Germany, on April 5th. He was 68 years of age. Robert has been arranging his business to go to see his father this summer but death has taken him beyond the confines of mortality" (*The Haven Independent*. April 28, 1892).

Mrs. Borchert appears to have been particularly attentive to her children. Several newspaper articles similar to these appeared through the years: "The little folks had a very pleasant time at Mr. and Mrs. Borchert Tuesday afternoon. Edith Borchert was six years old on that day and her mother gave her a surprise party. Miss Amy Astle's Junior League class and others to the number of twenty-five or thirty were present. Edith received some nice presents" (*The Haven Independent*. August 17, 1893). "Last Wednesday afternoon as Willie Borchert came home from school, about thirty-six boys were at his home to celebrate his tenth birthday. This was quite a surprise on him,

BOOTS AND SHOES

-A-T-

ROBERT BORCHERTS

NEW STOCK OF GOODS, AND

LOWEST PRICES

Ever offered in this market
REPAIRING A SPECIALTY.

Call and see me. I guarantee all of my work.

ROBERT BORCHERT.

as he thought his birthday was past. But after he became reconciled the remainder of the afternoon passed away very pleasantly, and all went home feeling repaid for their surprise on Willie" (*The Haven Journal*. January 28, 1899).

The end of 1899 and beginning of 1900 found Martha Borghert ill, in and out of the Stewart Hospital in Hutchinson, with what was determined to be stomach cancer. "Last Wednesday morning at six o'clock the death summons came to Mrs. Martha Borchert, and relieved her from suffering in this life, which she had been patiently awaiting. For the past seven months she has been confined to her bed, with that dreaded cancer of the stomach, which finally took a beloved wife and mother from this earth. Before she was taken down, Mr. Borchert took her to the hospital and the most skillful examination was made, afterwards she was brought home, and the best physicians from Hutchinson and Wichita, made their visits to see her, but nothing could be done to save her. Mrs. Borchert was a very industrious woman, and was liked by all in whom she came in contact with, and has always been a faithful member of the Lutheran Church. She leaves five children, who will miss her motherly care. Three boys and two girls, the oldest is a girl thirteen years old and the youngest a girl only four years old. Mrs. Borchert was born May 11th, 1863, making her 37 years and two months old at her death. In 1885 she was married to Robert Borchert in Hutchinson, and they resided there until Haven was started, then they moved here and have lived here ever since. The ladies of Haven sent to Wichita for a nice selection of flowers to lay on the casket. The funeral services were held in the Lutheran Church Thursday at two o'clock, after which the remains were laid away in the cemetery, by the Church, and the spirit is gone beyond where there is no sorrow or distress" (*The Haven Journal*. July 14, 1900).



Just a year prior to Martha's death, Robert Borchert's brother (Richard) died suddenly in Inman, Kansas, where he was a shoe maker like Robert. On May 8, 1899, "Mr. **Richard Bochert**, the shoemaker, as on his way to the lake to hunt, and was accidentally shot by his gun which he had with him. He punched his horse with the butt of the gun and the gun was discharged, and all the muscles and blood vessels were torn from the upper part of his right arm. An operation was performed but Mr. Borchert was weakened by loss of blood. He died Sunday evening at nine o'clock. He was buried Tuesday afternoon at the German Church conducted by Rev. Henser. Mr. Borchert leaves a wife and three small children" (*The McPherson Republican*, May 12, 1899). He and Anna were married on August 19, 1894 so had not yet celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary. Six months later, the Inman Review printed the article, "Whiskey Did It. Trustee Wiegand took Mrs. Richard Borchert and three children to the county poor farm Friday. This is the sad sequel of a loaded shot gun and a drunken man. Her husband was killed by the accidental discharge of a shotgun last spring while on his way to the lakes to hunt. He left his wife and children destitute" (*Nov. 23, 1899*).

Anna Borchert was traumatized by the situation, and for a short time was taken to the insane asylum in Topeka. She was discharged on November 8, 1901. No mention is made of Anna's 3 children after her time in the asylum, and their names and whereabouts have not been learned. Just a few weeks later, on November 29, 1901, it was announced that Robert Borchert of Haven, and Mrs. Anna Borchert of Inman, were married. This solved the problem of Anna's destitute condition and of Robert's need for a mother to care for his 5 children.

The only articles which appear in early 1902 were notices telling of Robert's fishing trips, which he did often - usually on Sundays instead of attending the German Lutheran Church. There were 2 occasions prior to 1900 in which he was charged with violation of the prohibitory law

with whiskey in his possession, although he was acquitted both times. Just a year after his marriage to Anna, Robert Borchert found himself in trouble he could not escape.

“Robert Borchart, a Haven merchant, was arrested by the Kansas City police yesterday on a description sent from Hutchinson. He is wanted on a charge of improper relations with his fifteen year old daughter. The case grows out of an application for a guardian for the children of his first wife, Borchart having married the second time. The guardianship was demanded on the ground that Borchart had been cruel to his children. The 15-year-old daughter when questioned recited cruelties she had suffered, but appeared to keep something back. She was asked if there was more and said there was but she could not tell it. She was then asked to write it out which she did. It was upon this written statement that the warrant was issued. C. H. Shirk, constable of Justice Morris’ court, went to Kansas City to bring Borchart back. County Attorney Taylor accompanied him. When arrested in Kansas City Borchart claimed he was not running away, but was on his way to Chicago to purchase goods” (*The Hutchinson News. September 12, 1902*).

“Borchart Denies His Guilt. Robert Borchart was arraigned this morning, who fixed his bail at \$500. Borchart had not been able to raise it at noon, and was taken to jail. Borchart claims that the charge against him is the outgrowth of a Church quarrel, he having been expelled from the Church at Haven. His attorneys believe that the girl was coached to write the statement in which she accuses her father. The preliminary hearing in the case will be before Justice Morris on next Tuesday afternoon” (*The Hutchinson News. Sept. 13, 1902*).

“Borchart Acts Queerly. There is a possibility that Robert Borchart, arrested on a charge of improper relations with his 15-year-old daughter, may be insane. Under Sheriff Lewis says that Borchart has acted queerly ever since he has been in jail. He talks incoherently and imagines that his face is black. He says this is because he had a fight with a negro and the black rubbed off his adversary’s face on to his own” (*Hutchinson News. Sept. 15, 1902*).

“The Trial. It was 20 minutes to 12 when the first witness, Miss Edith Borchert, the daughter, was called to the stand. The girl told her story in a simple and direct manner that was convincing. Her 12-year-old brother Willie also made a good witness for the State. Robert’s wife claims that he is the victim of the malice of the minister of the German Church at Haven, who opposed his marriage with his present wife on the ground that she is a sister of his former wife. Mrs. Borchert stated on the stand in the preliminary hearing that their marriage was produced aside from the fact that the minister befriended the daughter, to show that he was an enemy of Borchert or had conspired against him. Mr. Borchert used to be a heavy drinker and suffered nervousness bordering on delirium tremens after being incarcerated. The trial is attracting much attention and the court room was filled with spectators” (*THN Jan 8, 1903*). “A feature of the case was the reading of a letter written in German by the father to his daughter. It asked the daughter to return home, under penalty of having the sheriff sent for her. Its purpose is to show that the father was in the habit of threatening the daughter” (*THN 1/9/03*). “Mr. Borchert says there is nothing in it. He says it is just a part of the oppression of the Church for breaking one of its laws by marrying the widow of his deceased brother. He says that the Church has been very bitter against him since the trouble commenced and he admits he had said some pretty strong things about the Pastor and congregation on account of the oppression. He hints that the statement of the girl was prepared by someone that had more worldly knowledge than it was possible for the girl to have, It is said that the minister of the Church preached several sermons condemning Borchert for his second marriage, for which he was dropped from the Church rolls and which exclusion made considerable trouble in the neighborhood” (*The Hutchinson Daily. Sept. 13, 1902*).

“Borchert Is Guilty. Robert Borchert was found guilty of rape of his 15-year-old daughter Edith at 11 o’clock last night. The jury was out over 24 hours. When it did report it recommended

to the court that mercy be shown the defendant. The minimum sentence is five years and the maximum is twenty-one years" (*THN 1/13/1903*). "Sheriff Hooper will leave for Lansing tonight with Robert Borchert who was sentenced to 10 years in the pen" (*THN 3/4/1903*).

The only thing heard of Robert after this was an article from 1905. "**Carr Taylor**, former Reno County attorney, received from Robert Borchert a very handsome cane, made of pieces of horn joined together on a steel rod. Mr. Borchert says he made the cane himself. Incidentally he mentioned that he is thinking of applying for a pardon. Mr. Taylor said: "I can't do anything for Borchert in the pardon business. He was proven guilty and his family is in terror of him. He ought to serve out his sentence" (*Hutchinson Gazette. October 21, 1905*).

The remaining newspaper articles deal with Anna Borchert. "Dr. W.J. Duvall went to Haven to assist Dr. Blaisdell of that city in an inquiry into the mental condition of Mrs. Anna Borchert, the wife of Robert Borchert who was sent to the penitentiary for improper relations with his own daughter. Since the beginning of her husband's troubles she has been acting quieerly and of late her actions have been such as to lead to the belief that her mind is unbalanced. Mrs. Borchert's case is an unusually pathetic one. She had no idea of her husband's wrong-doing until after she married him, and she did all that she could to protect him in his trial before realizing his guilt" (*The Hutchinson News. April 3, 1903*). "Mrs. Borchert will be taken to the state asylums. Most of the time she appears rational, but at other times, according to her neighbors she is dangerous. Mrs. Borchert has had more than her share of trouble in this life. She is a slight, light-complexioned German woman of prepossing appearance and her case is a very pathetic one" (*April 10, 1903*).

"Anna Borchert has applied for a divorce from her husband who is serving a sentence at Lansing for rape on the person of his daughter. Mrs. Borchert says that they were married in Reno County in November 1902, and lived together until January 1903 when he was sent to the penitentiary. There are some lots at Haven which are the property of Mr. Borchert and she asks that they be turned over to her" (*The Hutchinson News, Jan. 28, 1904*).

"A message was received here the first of the week from the State Hospital at Osawatomie that Mrs. Anna Borchert had passed away there on Tuesday night. On account of it being impossible to locate her children, and as she has no relatives here, it was decided to have the burial at Osawatomie" (*The Inman Review, Oct. 29, 1921*).

The 1905 Kansas census shows the family members being raised in other families: William with **F.E. & Laura Tonn**, Herman with **A.E. & Emma Meier**, Walter with **Anthony & Alvina Johnson**, and Isabel with **Robert & Josie Patterson**. "Edith Borchert has been living at Groverland, McPherson county, for some time with relatives and has worked away from home for a portion of several years" (*Hutchinson Daily. Sept. 13, 1902*). It is not known when Richard was released, where he lived or died afterwards, or if ever was reconciled to his children. -dmc

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