



THE SUNFLOWER

Reno County Genealogical Society

P. O. Box 5

Hutchinson, Kansas 67504-0005



THE HUTCHINSON PUBLIC LIBRARY

January 19, 1904—May 1950

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The Reno County Genealogical Society of Hutchinson, Kansas was founded in 1978 for the purpose of fostering genealogical research, promoting the exchange of information and encouraging the deposit of genealogical and historical materials in established libraries and archives. Membership in the Reno County Genealogical Society is open to anyone interested in genealogy or local history. Dues are \$15.00 per year, per couple from January 1 to December 31 each year. Meetings are held the third Monday of each month in the Auditorium of the Hutchinson Public Library, 9th and Main, 7:00 – 8:45 P. M.

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The Reno County Genealogical Society is a member of the Federation
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Editor's Note:

Yes, I am back as your newsletter editor. Gale Wale so graciously agreed to take over as Editor when I was feeling overwhelmed and close to a "burn out" several years ago. Now Gale needs some relief because family must come first.

I consented to being the editor of *The Sunflower*, but requested help securing articles for the issues. Robert and Barbara Bowman consented to help me and so have several others. I want to thank each and everyone of you for your offers.

I have the been doing some "Organizing" for the last few months. Many research papers were piling up and when my son suggested that I was becoming a "Hoarder". I knew something had to be done. Are you in the same place? If the information I have is cited as a source, I throw the paper away UNLESS it is a vital record then I copy it and put the original in a safe place.

Until next time "Happy Hunting".

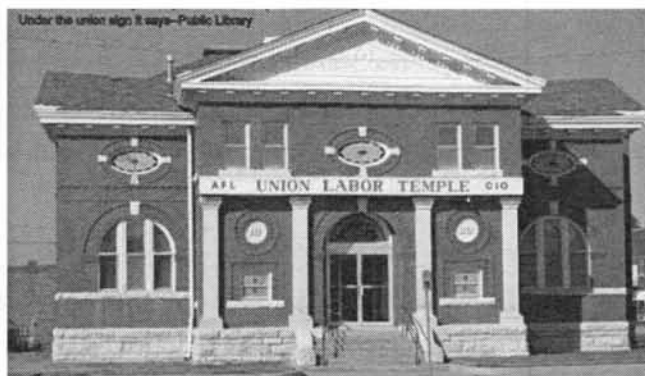
Ruth Filbert

New Members

- Max Kottwitz, Hutchinson Dale & Christina Hansen, Turon
- Mary Ann Clark, Hutchinson Shirley Basgall, Hutchinson
-

A large, stylized, 3D-effect graphic of the word "WELCOME!" in all caps. The letters are bold and have a shadow effect, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The exclamation point is also stylized and integrated into the overall design.

On The Cover is a picture of the original public library. The story follows.



The Free Hutchinson Public Library—Not Always Public or Free

The Hutchinson Public Library didn't just suddenly happen. It slowly grew and evolved over time. This is the story of how it came to be.

Even in the early days of the United States there were privately held book collections by ministers, doctors, churches and colleges. At the time, books were symbols of wealth and education. In fact, Benjamin Franklin is said to have had 4,000 books in his private library at the time of his death.

Hutchinson had struggled through its infancy stage and was moving towards making improvements in quality of life and culture. In January 1896 the Hutchinson Women's Club, a group of ladies devoted to community and self improvement, voted to establish a literary committee and to put aside one hundred dollars as a beginning for a public library.

After a year of hard work, on Saturday, January 16, 1897, the new Hutchinson Public Library officially opened in a small bare room located above the Hutchinson News office on East Sherman Street in the first block east of Main. The space had been donated by Mr. W. Y. Morgan who just happened to be the editor of the Hutchinson News and married to a library board member.

The Women's Club hired Miss Ethel Colville and paid her two dollars a week to keep the library open on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons only. The club women brought soft cushions and donated chairs, both rocking and straight back. The librarian's desk was a little sewing table, and the stack room was created by placing a wooden railing along one end of the room in front of the wooden shelves with just a long enough passage for the librarian to get the books.

There were 227 books on the shelves that Saturday afternoon. Some had been given, and the others purchased with gift money and from the proceeds of the numerous lectures, fairs, parties, and suppers the women's group has sponsored at the Opera House at First and Main. As one of the literary committee members said, "We had to beg, pray, and cook for every bit of money we got to put into books."

The library was a subscription library. Adults who paid the yearly fee of \$1.00 (children paid 35 cents per year for membership) were allowed to use the facility and to check out books. For the next three years, the Hutchinson Women's Club continued their community fundraising efforts in order to improve the library facility and to buy books. They also purchased the Mangold circulating library later in 1897, adding 240 volumes to the library collection.

The original library board members were Mrs. A. L. Forsha, president, Mrs. W. Y. Morgan, Mrs. J. A. Fontron, Mrs. Frank Barton, Mrs. W. L. Woodnut, Mrs. G. H. Minor, Mrs. Fred Carpenter, Mrs. George W. Winans, Mrs. George Hodges, Miss Bessie Penney, and Miss Damie Bigger.

In June 1897 the men of the town proposed to do something for the library. Their idea was to gift to the library a shelf of Kansas books—books pertaining to Kansas and books by Kansas authors. The men asked for and received the privilege of being left alone while they proceeded to show what they could do. The Women's Club and the literary committee had nothing to do with this project except to give pleasant and approving smiles.

The city of Hutchinson had recently purchased a building on West Sherman Street two blocks from Main and had remodeled it into a City Hall building. On January 29, 1899, the Hutchinson Public Library moved from the Hutchinson News building to this location. Here, at the request of the club women, two rooms over the fire station and police headquarters had been readied for the library. The equipment for the new location was hardly better, but still it showed the growth of the undertaking. The library hours became 9 am to 6 pm and 7 to 9 in the evening every day of the week with the exception of Sunday.

Although the library board regretted the attending noises of the fire station location, it was the best and cheapest available. Prior to moving, the board granted the room committee permission to re-paper the new room, providing the cost not exceed \$10.

Through the early years there were complaints from patrons and the public that the library was not open enough hours each week, that there were not enough books or the right kinds of books, and that people who could not afford the annual membership fee were excluded from participation. The Hutchinson News attempted to quell these complaints by requesting that people spend less time fault finding and more time helping to make things better. The Hutchinson Women's Club could not have been happier. They knew it was time to lobby for a public library which was subscription free and open to every resident of the city. They were helped in their efforts by a February 1900 letter from Edward Wilder, a very influential man, President and Treasurer of the Topeka Public Library for 28 years, and also Secretary and Treasurer of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company. He had recently visited Hutchinson and was surprised that the city did not have a free public library. He strongly encouraged the residents to work together to achieve the goal of having free library access for every Hutchinson resident.

Mr. Wilder's letter stimulated a lot of interest in the city, and Albert Thomson, a Hutchinson resident, wrote to the newspaper expressing his support for a free public library. At the time the Women's Club was conducting a public library at a cost of approximately \$300 per year paid by approximately 200 people. The Young People's Christian Local Union was supporting a free reading room at a cost of about \$400 per year from 200 regular subscribers. Mr. Thomson suggested that the two libraries were

combine their assets to avoid duplication of effort and reduce total expenses. The Women's Club and the Union agreed to this suggestion with a caveat attached by the Women's Club. The Women's Club insisted that a majority of the board's trustees would be members of the club. This extra legal qualification held for 15 years. The board of trustees also named the library the Hutchinson Free Public Library, a name that stuck for 40 years.

In February 1900 a petition signed by a large number of taxpayers was presented to the city council requesting that the matter of the city establishing and maintaining a free public library and reading room be submitted to a vote of the people at the April city election. The petition was granted, no one opposing the measure. The matter was placed on the April 1900 ballot, and it seemed a sure bet that the proposition would be overwhelmingly approved. However there was a problem. Three-fourths of the votes cast in the election were in favor of the library, but the law provided that such a proposition must receive a majority of all the votes cast at the election, and half of the people who voted were so excited over marshal or street commissioner that they failed to vote at all on the library matter. As there was apparently no opposition to the library and very few understood that a ballot not marked either way would have the same effect as a vote against, the result was very unsatisfactory to the voters and taxpayers of Hutchinson. The Hutchinson News suggested that petitions should be circulated at once asking the mayor and council to call a special election for another vote on the library proposition, and this was immediately done.

On May 8, 1900, the city electorate, by a whopping majority of 551 to 174, voted a half mil levy for the library, and with that election the Hutchinson Free Public Library was born. The first meeting of the library board was January 9, 1901. Ethel Colville was hired as librarian at a salary of \$20 per month. A janitor, W. H. Downin, was hired at \$3 a month. After three months the board approved so heartily of Miss Colville's work that it voted to increase her salary an additional \$2 a month. A board member was instructed to discuss the raise with her. Nothing was ever heard of the matter, and the salary remained at \$20.

Effective January 1901 the Hutchinson Women's Club officially turned over their book collection to the board of the Hutchinson Free Public Library. The club also voted to give 25 dollars to purchase periodicals for the library for one year as a parting gift. The Hutchinson Free Public Library opened to the public on January 12, 1901.

In 1901 when the Free Public Library board of trustees was created, the members appointed by Mayor A. L. Harsha were: Mrs. W. Y. Morgan, president, Mrs. George W. Winans, Mrs. Charles Hall, Mrs. William Kelly, Mrs. A. C. Hoagland, Mrs. Fred Cooter, Mrs. Howard S. Lewis, Mrs. Elizabeth E. Leighty, Mrs. C. H. Scott, Mrs. Louis A. Bunker, Mrs. R. P. Shunk and Mrs. Esther Richardson.

At the first meeting the new library board adopted two rules. One provided that no more than two library cards would be issued to any one family. The other was that books on the shelves could not be handled by borrowers. A metal railing would be placed around the shelves to enforce this rule.

The librarians also had a few rules and regulations. Each person would need to apply for a card. The card needed to be presented to the librarian in drawing or returning a book. If this card were lost or destroyed, it would be replaced at a cost of 10 cents to the borrower. Any injury or loss of books must be made good by the borrower. Books could not be loaned or exchanged by the borrower. The patrons

Also in April 1902 word was received that Andrew Carnegie had made a commitment to donate \$15,000 to be used to build a new library. He attached no strings other than to require that plans be put into place that would continue the support and maintenance of the library and building once it was constructed. If the city did not maintain the building in a suitable manner, the property would revert to the Carnegie Corporation. To enable the city to have enough money to keep the library running, a proposition was placed on the ballot to increase the half mil levy for the library to one mil. The vote was 515 to 58 to increase the levy.

In May of 1902 the site at Fifth and Main was officially selected for the new library location. Prior to that time there were disputes which arose among various businessmen in the town who wanted the library to be built near their businesses for their personal gain.

On June 5, 1902, the library board met and received and reviewed plans for the Carnegie library from various architects. C. W. Squires of Emporia was ultimately selected to be the architect. In September 1902 the library board accepted a bid of \$13,650 by Reikowsky and Bartel of Newton to construct the building. The remainder of the Carnegie grant was slated to be used to purchase steel book cases, electric lights, and other equipment.

Sanitation of the books at the library was always a matter of considerable concern. One rule later adopted by the board was that all books loaned to families with infectious diseases should be refused by the librarian and the same collected for. This came after a minor outbreak of smallpox in late 1902. A former board member informed the board there were two books in the library of questionable sanitary condition and these were ordered fumigated. Two months later the same books were ordered burned. December 1902 the library board had all books called in and fumigated with formaldehyde. Will. H. Johnson and Sons, funeral directors, received \$2 for the work. Every book was placed on end upon the floor with the covers open so as to permit the formaldehyde to permeate between the pages.

Miss Ethel Colville remaining librarian until the end of December 1902 when she resigned to marry John F. Corrigan. Miss Pearl Leighty was made librarian at a salary of \$25 per month. She had Miss Lucy Leidigh as assistant librarian and Miss Helen Miner as substitute librarian. Miss Leighty recalled later that the other applicants never had a chance as she was related to half of the board members.

For much of 1903 the library board made considerable effort to obtain more gifts and donations of books to fill the soon-to-be-opened new library building.

Since the mil levy was expected to generate \$1600 in revenue each year, and Carnegie had pledged his donation to be ten times that of the mil levy, in August 1903 Andrew Carnegie increased his donation from \$15,000 to \$16,000 to fund additional improvements to the building. The following month new metal furniture was ordered for the library.

Originally there were hopes to have the library open in July of 1903. This was pushed back to September 1903, but due to problems in obtaining materials, the opening date was again delayed. The library was to be closed during for the move from the old building to the new one.

The new library was formally opened to the public on January 19, 1904, at a grand opening ceremony.

Miss Helen Miner was selected librarian in April 1904, following the resignation of Pearl Leighty. She had as her assistants Miss Jessie McCord, assistant, and Miss May Chapman, substitute. The hours

were from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. On Sundays the library was kept open from 9 to 5 when only the reading room privileges were enjoyed by the public.

In December 1915, through efforts of Hutchinson Mayor L. E. Fontron, Andrew Carnegie donated an additional \$16,000 to add a reading room and a balcony to the existing building.

Arthur L. Bunker died in 1921, and his will left \$10,000 in stocks to the library for children's work. In less than 10 years after the addition was completed, patrons began pressing board members for more space. For 20 years a new building was considered, but it was not until 1945 that any action was taken. By May 1950 a new building at Ninth and Main was nearing completion. A total of \$327,000 was allotted for the structure and furnishings. The Carnegie building at Fifth and Main was sold to the Hutchinson Labor Temple Building Association for \$35,000. When the library moved to its final location, 3000 cardholders went along, checking out as many books

Hutchinson Weekly News

December 3, 1925

Harking Back to Days of Treeless Prairies

Pioneer Women, Still Residing Here, Tell of Days of Hardships, Hot Winds, and Hoppers in Reno County

"Yes, the old days were hard, but we had plenty to eat, though there wasn't much of a variety, and I am thankful that I have lived through what I have," remarked Mrs. Mary Brainard, of 306 Sixth Avenue, east.

Mrs. Sarah Curnutt, who lives across the street from the Brainard home, sat in the front room with her tatting, and between them, they told tales of the early days in Kansas.

"Why, the thing I can remember most of all is that I came to Hutchinson once just to see a tree," spoke up Mrs. Brainard. "It was a cottonwood, and was one of four that had been planted by a lawyer in front of his office, which stood where the Graber furniture store is now."

"Now—to look at the trees in our front yards, it is hard to believe that once upon a time the whole plain was bare—but it was that way when I came out in March of '74."

Offered Townsite for Team

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Curnutt, resignedly, "and it is hard to think that once upon a time, my brother was offered the quarter section of land just north of the present Santa Fe depot for his team of horses and his wagon. But he thought his horses were of more value than the land—my, my!" she concluded, with a sigh.

The Brainard Family

"We lived in Valley Township, on the road known as the "angling road" from Wichita to Hutchinson. That angling road," explained Mrs. Brainard, "went through every section between here and Wichita from corner to

corner, from the southeast to the northwest, and great lines of wagons would come through with “Kansas or Bust” painted on the covers.”

“After the hoppers came in ’74, about as many went back, saying “Busted!” or “Going to live with my wife’s folks”, or something else as broken spirited as that.”

When the Hoppers Came

“I don’t think I ever will forget the day the grasshoppers came,” added Mrs. Brainard, when asked if she could remember that occasion.

“They had been bad for several days, but this day they were especially bad, and along about ten or eleven o’clock, when I went out in the yard, I had to turn back almost at once, because they would fly so fast and thick that they would hit a person like a rock. They were those huge ones—they call them the Colorado hoppers—and the air was just thick with them. We had a patch of melons which stood about two feet high at the beginning of the day, and that night, the ground was almost bare. I was alone all day, and as I could not go outside, I had to just sit there and listen to those things hit the house as they were blown along.”

Those Kansas Winds

“And that reminds me of the wind, and how scared we were of being blown away, when we first came here,” she laughed as the memory came back more strongly. “We had a huge pole that we kept all the time to prop the house with when the wind storm should come along. Our house at first was no more than a little 8 by 10 cabin, and we would rush out when the wind was from the north, and put our prop under the eaves at the south side of the house—as though that would keep us from blowing away!” she concluded, laughing at her own expense.

A Pioneer Home

“That house was surely one poor imitation,” she sighed, smiling all the while. “I can still see the cracks—heavens—they must have been an inch wide, and that first night I thought sure that they were coming to pull me through them. Of course they couldn’t have done it, but we heard so many stories that I didn’t know hardly which to believe and which to know were fibs.”

“One of our neighbors carried a plug of chewing tobacco with him, and as he was harrowing that day of the great grasshopper raid, he laid the plug and his knife on a board across the harrow. As he came back after the first round of the field, he decided he wanted a chew, and lo and behold! when he got there, he told us that what should he see but the biggest hopper cutting off chews with the knife and giving those which were circled about him a jaw-full!” and she chuckled as she told it.

“Another neighbor, she added, “decided to salt his onions, and had just got half of his patch finished when the raid began. Well, when it was all over, he said he found the creatures had eaten what onions he had salted, and had taken what salt there was left over to the other half for seasoning, and ate that, too!”

Few Girls Here Then

“When I came out here,” Mrs. Brainard resumed, seriously, “I got off the train at Burrton, where my husband met me and as I was on my way to my sister-in-law’s home, I was stopped by a group of young men who

knew my husband, who wanted to know if I wouldn't dance with them, as there were only three girls in town, and any number of men at the hall. But after two days on that train, I defy anyone to feel like dancing," she concluded.

"Hutchinson in 1874 was about the same size as Burrton was then, and there was no real passenger service on the Santa Fe. Newton was the only real passenger station, and only when passengers accumulated was there any "train" consisting of one coach which was a combined passenger and smoking car to Hutchinson."

"We were married in 1866, just after the war and lived in Bloomington, Ohio, until we came out here," Mrs. Brainard said. "I will always remember how proud we were that we were one family of the three in Valley Township who did not have to accept aid after the fall of 1874," she concluded, with a straightening of her back that showed she was still proud of it.



Mary Phyllis Obee—Early Reno County Pioneer

Mary "Phyllis" Obee was born on June 24, 1897, in Hutchinson, Kansas, the eldest of three daughters of Louis Henry "Lou" Obee and Minnie B. Obee. She never married. Her grandfather, Henry Obee, had homesteaded in Reno County, and Obee School and Obee Road were named in his honor. Her father was also a successful farmer in his own right. The family had high expectations, and the Obee girls had big shoes to fill at a time when most women went to school, got married and raised children.

Phyllis graduated from Hutchinson High School in May 1915. She then went to Normal School to obtain certification to become a teacher. In the fall of 1916 she began her teaching career in the Sunflower School in Valley Township on the eastern border of Reno County. It was during this first year of teaching that a boy broke his leg in a fall from the front steps of the school. Phyllis asked several of the bigger boys in the school to hold the victim down, and Phyllis set the broken bone herself ("I heard it click", she says). She splinted the leg so well that when the boy was later carried

across the snowfields to a doctor, the doctor saw no need to change anything. In subsequent school years she gave aid for everything from broken noses to broken legs.

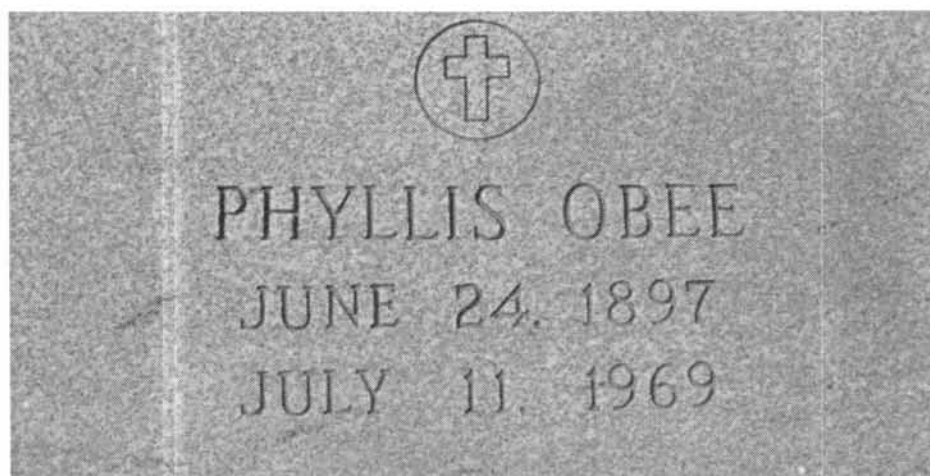
Phyllis Obee originally set out to be a lawyer. After two years of teaching at Sunflower and year each at Arlington and North Reno schools, she entered Washburn University in 1920 with her sister, Isabel, and both sisters earned law degrees in 1924, graduated with honors, and passed their bar examinations. While Isabel went on to practice estate law for over fifty years, Phyllis never entered the law practice. When asked why, she simply said, "I didn't like it". Instead she returned to Reno County to teach, serving as principal of the grades at Partridge and Arlington, teaching at Lerado, North Reno, Daisy, Red Star, Ijams for 13 years and finally the South Hutchinson school district for seven years, but she never taught at Obee School.

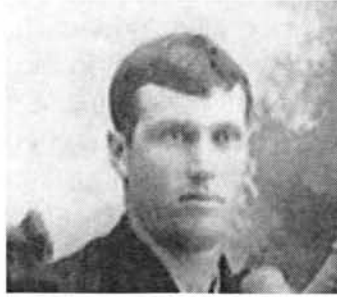
Nearly ten years into her teaching career, in 1928 Phyllis Obee decided to make a run for Republican for Superintendent of Schools for Reno County. In November 1928 she defeated the male incumbent and was re-elected to three more two-year terms. She was voted out in her bid for re-election in 1936, losing to Will Billingsley, the head of the Reno County Teacher's Association.

After serving as Superintendent, Phyllis Obee began to work on her education degrees, eventually earning a master's degree from Fort Hays by attending summer school. She finished out her teaching career in the classroom, retiring in 1962.

Phyllis had always been interested in politics. When she was barely out of high school, she was attending Republican women's functions. In January 1938 she was elected President of the Reno County Republican Women. Later she became vice-chairman of the Reno County Republican Party and served in this capacity for many years.

By 1969 Phyllis' health was failing. After an illness of nearly six months, Phyllis Obee died on July 11, 1969, and was buried at the Eastside Cemetery in Hutchinson, Kansas, next to her parents. Few women of her day could claim as many accomplishments as Phyllis Obee for she truly was an early pioneer in the women's movement.





James "Jim" O'Loughlin—Early Reno County Pioneer

Fireman James O'Loughlin, a member of the Hutchinson Fire Department, died on April 15, 1913. He was the first fireman in Hutchinson to die in the line of duty.

James O'Loughlin was born on July 21, 1864, in Danville, Illinois. He was one of six children of John O'Loughlin, a Scottish immigrant, and Mary Wright who was born in Illinois. John, a farm laborer, and Mary, a homemaker, were married April 25, 1855, in Champaign County, Illinois.

The O'Loughlin family moved from Illinois to Hutchinson, Kansas, in 1879 when James was age 14. On April 24, 1886, James O'Loughlin, age 22, married 15-year-old Ida Ann Stoll. They then went on to have ten children together—six girls and four boys.

In 1910 the entire O'Loughlin family contracted typhoid fever. The Hutchinson firemen from Station 2 helped raise money to support O'Loughlin's family until everyone's health was restored.

James O'Loughlin had a variety of jobs before joining the fire department. He was an electrician and an electric lineman in his earlier years. Later he worked for the waterworks department. As late as 1910 he was working as a farm laborer. He became a member of the Hutchinson Fire Department in 1912 and was always considered a good and faithful member.

In April 1913 the Hutchinson Fire Department had two serious accidents. On April 5, 1913, recently married, three-year-veteran fireman, William Rickard, age 28, sustained severe head injuries when the fire truck upon which he was riding skidded and turned completely around, throwing him from the truck. The accident took place at the corner of Main and East Sherman Streets. The driver of the fire truck was trying to avoid the many onlookers who had crowded into the streets and several vehicles that had failed to yield to the emergency vehicles. The driver of the fire truck tried to turn too short to avoid an oncoming vehicle, causing the injuries to William Rickard. (Note: William Rickard was hospitalized for a lengthy period of time, but he did survive, was eventually able to work, and had two daughters. He died December 20, 1942, at age 57.)

Just ten days later, on April 15, 1913, at 10:45 a.m., fireman James O'Loughlin was fatally injured when the first motorized fire truck used by the city skidded and then overturned at the intersection of Avenue A and Main Streets. James O'Loughlin, riding on the back of the truck, was flung from the truck and struck his head, suffering severe head injuries. Some newspaper accounts stated that he may also have been run over by the fire truck. He was immediately taken to the Stewart Hospital where he died at 8 p.m. that same day. The other three men riding in the truck at the time it overturned escaped serious injury, including one man by the name of Nelson who was also standing on the step with James O'Loughlin on the rear of the truck. After O'Loughlin fell from the truck, Nelson landed on top of him.

Dozens of townspeople witnessed the accident. The driver of the fire truck stated that as he attempted to avoid an oncoming vehicle, the truck tires seemed to catch on the metal rails of the streetcar line, thus causing the truck to skid and overturn. Eyewitnesses disagreed as to the rate of speed that the truck was going as it attempted to make the turn.

The newspaper stories stressed the similarities of the two accidents—both firemen having head injuries after falling from moving trucks. Here is what the October 15, 1913, Hutchinson News had to say just prior to the death of James O'Loughlin:

“Two firemen have been nearly killed and one may be dead as a result of the fast driving of the auto fire wagons. This is too great a price to pay for a little speed on Main Street. It is better to have a fire burn a few seconds longer than to endanger the lives of our fire boys. Some day there are likely to be even more fatalities. The auto wagon often goes up crowded Main Street at reckless speed, and it would be no surprise if it should skid into a crowd and maim and kill. The city authorities should put a stop to this fast driving on Main Street and at corners before other fatal accidents take place. There has been plenty of warning. Friendly rivalry and a desire to make a record speed to the fire do not count against the danger to life.”

Sadly, at the time each fireman was injured, the fires amounted to very little. When Will Rickard was hurt, the only fire was some grass burning in a vacant lot on East Sherman Street. When James O'Loughlin was killed, the men were headed to put out a board fence that was afire.

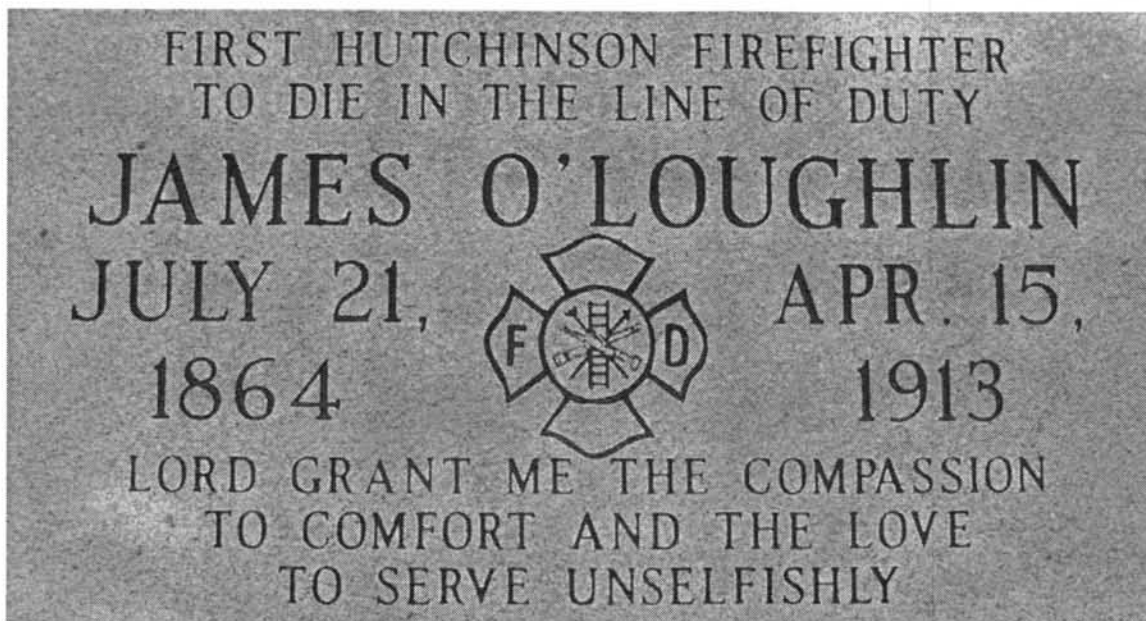
At the funeral of James O'Loughlin, held on April 17, 1913, at the United Brethren Church, speakers told of this well-respected firefighter who never earned a big salary. He always paid his obligations, and where he was known, James O'Loughlin's word was as good as another man's money. Firemen from Wichita attended his funeral and sent flowers to his grieving wife and family. Firemen from the Hutchinson Fire Department acted as the pallbearers. James O'Loughlin was laid to rest in the Eastside Cemetery. His family could not afford to buy him a headstone.

O'Loughlin's widow, Ida, was left with 10 children, Lydia Reno, Joseph "Abe" Abraham, Mary, Roy, Darlo, James Frank, Helen, Leota, Ammonette, and a 3-week-old daughter who still didn't have a name. The baby was later named Ida Josephine. She died less than a year later.

Ida O'Loughlin used the \$2,000 insurance money the city gave her to open a small grocery store. The grocery store sold on credit, but not enough people paid her back. She did odd jobs to support her family. There was originally a \$25 per month pension paid to Ida by the City of Hutchinson on her husband's behalf. This pension was discontinued during the Great Depression when the city became unable to fund it.

On May 24, 1921, Ida O'Loughlin married Carl Wittorff. She lived in the Medora area for nearly 40 years and died on June 7, 1960. She too is buried at the Eastside Cemetery in a location not too far from that of her first husband.

However, that is not the end of the story of James O'Loughlin. In the year 2000 the Hutchinson Firefighters Local #179 was researching firefighters buried in Reno County. Using old cemetery records, they discovered that James O'Loughlin did not have a grave marker. Efforts were undertaken to raise money for a proper headstone, and in September 2000, a dedication ceremony took place. Two of his daughters, both in their nineties, attended the ceremony to honor their father, a fallen hero who died in the line of duty.





Alexander Forsha—Early Reno County Pioneer

On August 20, 1883, fifty-year-old Alexander Forsha rode the train into Hutchinson, Kansas, pockets full of money. This was certainly not his first trip to Kansas. He and his investment partners had often made business trips to Kansas and points west looking to buy vast quantities of cheap land before other investors could do the same. He was a capitalist; he was opportunistic; and, most of all, he knew how to make money. By early September 1883, Alexander Forsha had decided to make Hutchinson his family's new home.

Alexander L. Forsha was born December 27, 1832, in Oxford, Ohio, the son of William and Elizabeth Forsha. Like many others of his time, William Forsha was not content to stay in Ohio. He saw opportunity to the west. In 1836 William moved his family to Scotland County, Missouri, becoming one of the early Missouri settlers. He set his sights high, becoming wealthy from his extensive land and stock raising interests. Little Alexander Forsha was only three years old when his family moved to Missouri, but he grew up learning all about business from his father and graduating from St. Charles College in St. Charles, Missouri.

By 1854 Alexander was but 22 years old and already owned his own mercantile business in Eddyville, Iowa. He was successful in this endeavor, but after a few years, he ultimately decided to return to Missouri, ending up in Schuyler County where he had accumulated a considerable amount of land. Alexander and his brother, Stiles Forsha, in 1868, laid out the town of Glenwood, Missouri, in Schuyler County and build a number of the early buildings there.

Alexander Forsha was a farmer and miller in Schuyler County until 1883. Due to his wealth and standing in the community, he acquired the title of "Colonel".

While in Iowa, Alexander Forsha married the first time to a woman named Adda. Born in 1830, she died May 15, 1861, probably in childbirth. She was buried in Eddyville, Iowa, with her infant son.

On February 13, 1862, Alexander married Jean R. "Jennie" Irvin in Eddyville, Iowa. They had two children, Frederick Alexander Forsha, born December 2, 1862, in Eddyville, Iowa, and Samuel W. Forsha, born December 4, 1868, in Schuyler County, Missouri.

Colonel Alexander Forsha had purchased quite a number of sections of railroad land in various parts of Kansas and elsewhere. He disposed of his Missouri property and promptly moved to Reno County, where some of the railroad land was located, hoping to expand his fortunes. He was a man of many aptitudes, and one of these abilities was recognizing how he could both meet the needs of the fledgling city of Hutchinson while making

money for himself. He was a master at finding new projects and in organizing people to invest in these projects. Many of the organizational meetings were held in Alexander Forsha's office in downtown Hutchinson. Colonel Forsha traveled extensively throughout the United States, observing the assets of other cities, talking with their officials, and looking for new business ideas he could bring back to Hutchinson.

In December 1883, Colonel Forsha established a money-lending/real estate/insurance business with his older son, Fred. It was called A. L. Forsha & Son. This business was highly successful, and the newspapers related stories that the Forshas had the lowest loss rate among all moneylenders in Hutchinson and described the lengths to which the Forshas would go in order to avoid a loss.

In March 1884 Alexander Forsha and his wife purchased a beautiful home on East Sherman Street in the new and elegant section of Hutchinson.

Here are some of Alexander Forsha's titles and accomplishments:

--October 1884--A. L. Forsha became a founder of the Reno Loan and Savings Association.

--March 3, 1885-- A. L. Forsha helped to found the Arkansas Valley Fair Association.

--July 1885--A. L. Forsha and son purchased 3031 acres of railroad land in Edwards County for \$5,532.

--December 11, 1885--Alexander Forsha was Vice-President of the Nebraska, Kansas and South-eastern Railroad.

--1886--The Hutchinson newspaper listed him as the richest man in Reno County, estimating his wealth at \$800,000. No one else was even close.

--1886--Alexander Forsha became President and one of the founders of the Hutchinson Street Railway Company and stayed an active member of this group for a number of years.

--September 1886--A. L. Forsha became a candidate for the Republican nomination for state representative. This same month he was appointed a director of the Nebraska, Salina, Hutchinson, and Southern Railway.

--December 1886-- Colonel Forsha was elected Vice-President of the Hutchinson Board of Trade.

--March 2, 1887--The Hutchinson Brick Company filed a charter with the Secretary of State. Alexander Forsha helped to incorporate this business.

--April 1887--One of the investors and builders of the Rock Island Hotel was Alexander Forsha.

--May 4, 1887--The Hutchinson Natural Gas Co. was organized. One of the directors was A. L. Forsha. It was the intention to find out if gas could be found here. Gas was not found by this group, but salt was, and Alexander Forsha helped to promote the Hutchinson salt industry in his travels.

--1887--A. L. Forsha announced plans for an opera house.

--May 14, 1887--At a meeting of the Fair Association it was decided to make the capital stock \$50,000 and to purchase 40 acres of ground adjoining Glendale park. Among the men who subscribed for the stock was A. L. Forsha who was an incorporater.

--August 31, 1887--At a meeting at the A. L. Forsha home, it was decided to organize an Episcopalian church, and among the vestrymen was A. L. Forsha.

--October 21, 1887--A. L. Forsha and a number of other men filed a charter in the Secretary of

State's office for the Hutchinson Packing Company. The capital stock offering was \$100,000.

--November 15, 1887--The Hutchinson Stockyards was organized. Among the directors was A. L. Forsha.

--January 24, 1888--Alexander Forsha was a stockholder in the Hutchinson Baseball League Club.

In March 1889 Alexander Forsha abruptly dissolved the partnership with his son, Fred. There were rumors about town that Alexander disapproved of his son's drinking, gambling and womanizing, and future events seemed to support that supposition. Fred moved his family to Kansas City where he became a cattle buyer.

After dissolving his partnership, Alexander Forsha switched his focus to developing his sections of Reno County railroad land. This land, located in Castleton Township, southeast of Hutchinson, grew over the years to nearly 5,000 acres, and became known as the Forsha Ranch. When a post office was established there, it officially became the now defunct town of Forsha, Kansas.

Alexander Forsha built a beautiful home for his family on the ranch property as well as numerous out buildings and quarters for the hired help. The ranch became Alexander's pride and joy.

Alexander Forsha was one of the first farmers to successfully raise alfalfa in Kansas. He pioneered using tractors instead of horses to break and farm the land. The Forshas built a mill on their property, producing several of their own brands of flour for sale, and they did milling for other farmers. They were featured in the Saturday Evening Post magazine in 1902 for their outstanding contributions to farming.

Throughout the late 1890s, due to continuing health problems involving his heart, Alexander Forsha gradually turned his ranching operation over to his Georgetown Law School graduate son, Samuel. Samuel was a most able manager who, it was said, was well liked and could outwork any employee at the ranch. Samuel continued to expand the ranch and pioneer new techniques in farming and ranching.

In early November 1903, Alexander Forsha went to Kansas City to seek medical treatment for his heart condition. It was there that he died on November 17, 1903.

When Alexander Forsha's will was probated, his son, Fred, was left \$500 in cash. Much to Fred's dismay, the remainder of Alexander's vast estate was divided equally between his wife, Jennie, and his son, Samuel.

Alexander Forsha was buried at the Eastside Cemetery, a simple unadorned and undated granite stone as his grave marker. The color of the granite chosen for the marker was said to resemble the color of the earth at Alexander's beloved Forsha Ranch.

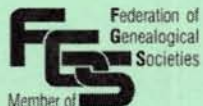
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