

# Mob Hangs Kid Wade on Whistle Post

'I Have Been Feeding You Fellows and Now You Are Going to Hang Me!'

By ROMAINE SAUNDERS  
Editor-in-Chief, Diamond Jubilee Edition

"Goodbye, Lena, I am taking my last trip on such a mission. When I have disposed of the three horses and two left at LeMars, I turn my back on the old life and when I return you and I will find a home together in this valley we love and start a small ranch."

Hands were clasped for a long moment, dark eyes looked into blue eyes and two young lives thrilled as they have thrilled since the dawn of time. Then he turned, mounted a sorrel gelding and rode away leading three bay mares.

The young woman did not speak. Dark eyes were lighted with a momentary luster, then dimmed by tears. Did something within stir a gift accorded to womanhood alone which held a premonition that this not only was to be the last ride of the young man with a string of horses but their last meeting?

Wednesday night, February 6, 1884, Kid Wade was hung to a F. E. & M. V. whistling post one-half mile East of Bassett. A coroner's jury empaneled in Brown county (of which Rock was then a part) said he came to his death by hanging at the hands of unknown individuals. Those who knew considered it a time when silence was golden.

At the time of his apprehension young Wade—he was 22—was under indictment in Iowa, Nebraska, Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana. Some distinction for a Holt county citizen!

He had been schooled in the craft of a horse thief by the elder Wade, whose ranch on the Big Sandy nearly due North from Atkinson was a rendezvous for the outlaws. There were always provisions in abundance in the Wade cabins. Hams, sides of bacon, antelope meat and beef hung from rafters.

The operations of the Middleton band caused the settlers of the Niobrara valley to organize what was known as regulators or vigilantes. They were officers with captains and lieutenants. It was often suspected but seldom proved that some of these "regulators" were using the organization as a blind to cover up their misdeeds.

On the strength of the various indictments, as well as general principles four Holt county citizens, "Capt." C. C. Dodge, "Lt." Peter Hansen, Charles Messenger and Michael Coleman, undertook the task of apprehending the Kid.

On January 12, 1884, they swung into their saddles, reining their horses Eastward. Information had been received that the Kid was near LeMars, Ia. On the evening of the 16th they arrived in LeMars. Here they learned that the object of their quest was at Mansfield, 16 miles out. The morning of the 17th Messenger, not known to the outlaw, rode out to Mansfield and located Wade, with whom he negotiated the purchase of a horse.

A forfeit was posted and Messenger informed Wade if he would accompany him into LeMars they would get the money from the bank for full payment. The Kid consented to this, not without some misgivings. On the way into LeMars he cast frequent searching glances at Messenger who rode stoically on.

As they were leaving their horses to the care of the livery barn attendant in LeMars, the companions of Messenger quietly closed in from three sides and drew their guns—and the Kid, the terror of the Niobrara, was a prisoner.

After 24 hours in the saddle, the Kid in irons, they arrived in Yankton, S. D., the evening of January 18. He had agreed to accompany them without a requisition on the promise of the four that he should have a fair trial in Holt county. They remained two days in Yankton. Here they saw commercial possibilities with their prisoner. A hall was engaged and it was advertised that Kid Wade would give an exhibition of his skill with the six-shooter at 50 cents admission. He had the reputation of being the best that ever flashed an ivory-handled .45 in this territory. That he went through this performance in good faith without making a kill and his get-away clearly indicates his confidence in a square deal being given him with no thought of the tragic end that awaited.

And looking back over the intervening years the retrospective force of the conclusion that the Kid, outlaw that he was, had high regard for his word of honor and a faith that was betrayed in those qualities in others.

At Yankton, a second prisoner was taken, Joe Jordan, a brother-in-law of Young Wade. It appears that Jordan was released upon the arrival in Holt county with the two prisoners. Thus far the activities of the regulators were clothed in the honored vestments of law and order.

On February 1 a kangaroo court was held at Back Perry's at Paddock. Delegations of Holt and Brown county vigilantes were present to "examine" the Kid. A tragedy was averted at this meeting by Mike Coleman relieving Henry Richardson, of Brown county, of his gun when he was in for shooting the Kid on the spot for telling

him "you are as big a horse thief as I am."

Maybe desiring to shift further responsibility, the majority of the Holt county bunch favored turning Wade over to the mercies of the men from Brown and the Kid saw the promise of a fair trial and his hope vanished.

Coleman and Hugh O'Neill protested the turning of the Kid over to the Brown county vigilantes. He had been promised a fair trial at home and should have it. They did more than protest. Hastening into O'Neill they swore out a warrant for the arrest of the Kid and sent Sheriff Ed Hershiser out to bring him in. Ed, like the Northwest Mounted, generally got his man. He trailed the group to the vicinity of Long Pine.

The Brown county delegation, under command of "Capt." A. J. Burnham, probably by this time also inclined to shift responsibility, turned the Kid over to Hershiser. "Capt." Burnham and another of the party by the name of Matson, offered to accompany the sheriff in with his prisoner.

These three with the Kid pulled into Bassett to spend the night. Hotel rooms were all occupied but they were told they could stay in the bar room. The Kid rolled into a blanket and went to sleep on the floor. The sheriff with his two companions settled at ease in their chairs. The cold February night wore on. Suddenly a crash of glass as gun barrels were thrust through the windows startled the watchers. At the same time, the door was flung open and a body of grim and disguised men appeared. The regulators had come.

The Kid was awakened and led to his doom.

One story was that he trembled with fear and asked to be spared that he might have a chance to mend his way. Another was that he implored his guards to give him a pair of six-shooters and he would get away from the mob and come into O'Neill and surrender.

In telling of the affair when he got back to O'Neill Sheriff Hershiser said the last words he heard the Kid say were: "I have been feeding you fellows and now you are going to hang me."

The fears of that dark-eyed girl left standing alone out there by the frozen waters of the Eagle as Kid Wade rode away that morning were realized in all their paralyzing horror.

## A Challenge and Bluff Called —

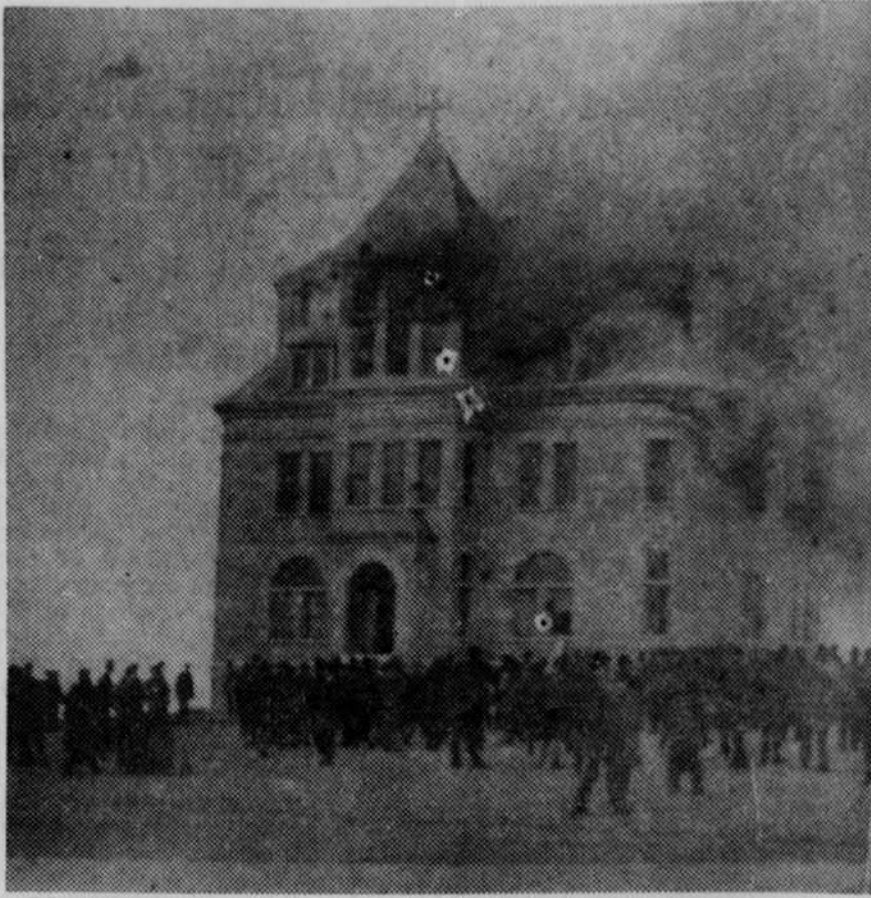
The Greenbackers of Holt county issued a challenge on August 18, 1881, to any or all of "both old parties" to a debate. There were gents among 'em who could roll the eloquence from gifted tongues and make a debate on the burning issues of



Attorney H. M. Uttley . . . redoubtable.

the day worth riding a sore-back bronc miles to hear. But the greenbackers did not have a monopoly on the gift of gab. Over his signature there appeared on August 25 an acceptance of the challenge by the redoubtable H. M. Uttley. The speeches at the debate were not printed.

The "ink-sacs" of cuttlefish yield sepia pigment used by artists, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica.



CONVENT BURNS . . . The cornerstone of St. Mary's convent (above) was laid on September 13, 1890 when Rev. John Jeanette, of Omaha, came to O'Neill to officiate at this ceremony. When the contractors were about ready to turn the building over to St. Patrick's parish officials, fire broke out and destroyed the structure. Helpless citizens looked on.

## DEATH STALKS PRAIRIE SETTLERS

We flip a little gadget and get our hot or cold water.

The source of water supply for the early settlers was something of a job to obtain. Wells were dug by the laborious process of spade and shovel, and as depth was attained beyond the reach of the man in the hole to toss out the dirt buckets were filled attached to the end of a rope and lifted out. On the high table lands it was necessary to dig a hundred feet or more to get an adequate supply of water, while in the low lands a post hole filled with water. Accident and some times tragedy befall well diggers.

On an August day in 1881 two brothers by the name of Biglow were caught by a cavein as they were at work digging a well on their claim in the vicinity of Atkinson.

Just who discovered that they were caught in the cavein nearly 70 years, but neighbors and a railroad grading crew worked from Thursday until

Sunday to get at the buried men who were dead when taken out.

Settlers who felt that their families deserved something better left the country when going got a little tough on account of an unfavorable season or two. Open wells were left at these abandoned homesteads that were pitfalls for night travelers who chanced along. The story is told of one such man in Custer county into which a man by the name of Carlin fell on a dark night as he was driving through the country.

He stopped his team, dismounted from the wagon to investigate about the road and fell into an opening which he discovered to be a well when he landed in water and mud nearly 140 feet down. His team ran away and he was up to his neck in mud and water. Men pray at such times if not before. He got out to tell the story after a night and a day in the hole.

A headstone marking the grave of Rachel E. Patterson, an 18-year-old girl from Missouri, at Ash Hollow in Deuel county, stands as mute witness to one sad tragedy of the '40's. A little mound on a rise of ground 20 miles South of

O'Neill that I often rode past in years now gone marked the resting place of an unknown prairie land adventurer. The mound has now disappeared from the rounded hillock where lie the bones of some luckless wayfarer.

## When Editors Were In on the Handouts —

A large, nicely dressed turkey was left at the editor's residence the day before Thanksgiving, with Mrs. J. D. Sparks' compliments. We can assure Mrs. S. that her kindness to the printer is appreciated; and also that the fowl was thoroughly "carved," even to the marrow-bone. Thank you! . . . The editor being absent we are unable to state the weight of the different watermelons which have been brought in. However, we will publish the list next week. (This generation was born too late. Give us back the times of 1831.)

## A Two Bit Meal —

You can get a better meal for 25 cents at the European than any place in the city, and don't you forget it! (But that was in 1887.)

Some persons can speak, see, and hear while sleep-walking according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica.



## Benjamin Franklin

... WAS A THRIFTY MAN!

OUTSTANDING as a diplomat, scientist and philosopher, Ben Franklin valued THRIFT highest among his traits.

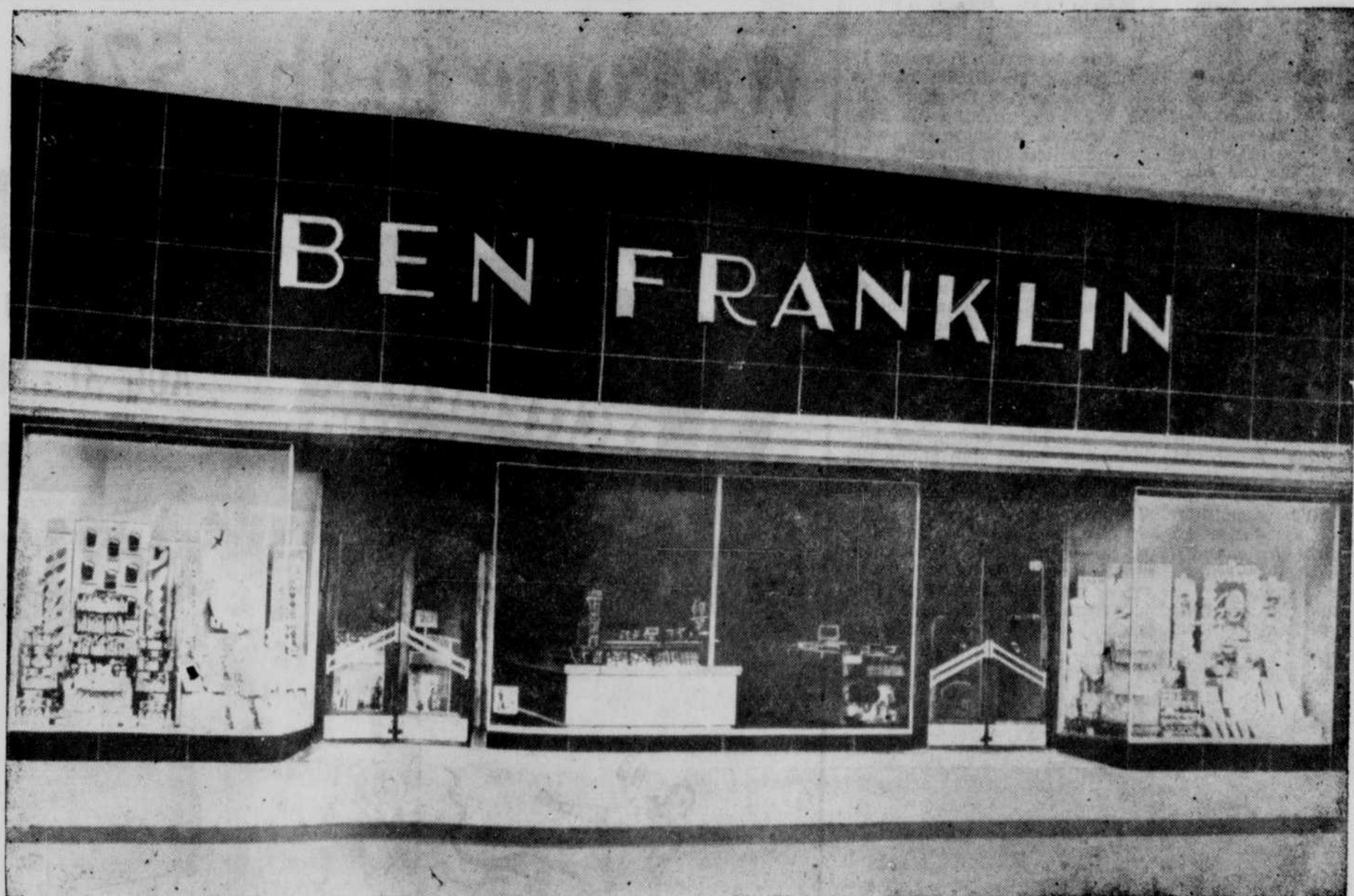
BEN FRANKLIN STORES, which are home-owned, home-operated and home-managed, are named after this great statesman of young America. Our patrons, who know the value of THRIFT, would number among them Ben Franklin himself were he lucky enough to live in O'Neill.

IN 1903 this store was founded by the late Frank Bowen, one of the pioneer merchants in O'Neill. In 1919 his son, Archie, took over. Then came a series of expansions. Last year saw the opening of a handsome new store—one of the finest variety stores in the state. In February, 1949, the present owners—R. V. Lucas & Son—took over and today they're operating the large modern store pictured below.

*Congratulations*

TO O'NEILL IN ITS

## Diamond Jubilee Year



The Store of True Values

R. V. LUCAS, Owner

Homeowned

## BEN FRANKLIN

LOCALLY OWNED - NATIONALLY KNOWN