

# The Plattsmouth Journal

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## Alvo News

Joseph Ramelas was assisting with the work of rebuilding the house of P. J. Linch during the past week.

Frank Stander, of Omaha, who has a farm not far from Alvo, was having his portion of last year's wheat delivered to the Simon Rehmeier elevator, side in it.

Mrs. Roy Stewart and daughter, Miss Josephine, were in Elmwood last Wednesday afternoon, where they were visiting with friends for a short time.

Superintendent L. M. Hauptman was looking after some business matters in Lincoln Wednesday afternoon, following the closing of school, and was accompanied by Mrs. Hauptman.

John Weichel, who has been at the hospital in Lincoln for the past two weeks, where he underwent an operation on one of his knees, has been progressing very nicely and was able to return home during the past week.

Donald Davis has accepted work on the O street paving job that is requiring a large number of men just now. He is employed as night watchman, looking after the trucks and other machinery which is used on the work there.

Robert Coster has been kept pretty busy of late with his work at the elevator, as Simon Rehmeier has been very busy with the receiving and distributing of hay and grain which he has shipped in for the farmers of this community.

Charles M. Jordan, who resides northeast of town, was shelling and delivering corn to the elevator last week, which in turn is being sold to the farmers of this vicinity who are in need of grain to get them through the heavy spring work.

The Ladies Aid of the Methodist church were having a session at the church basement last Wednesday afternoon, with a splendid program and refreshments. Mesdames L. D. Mullen, Frank Taylor and S. C. Hardcock comprised the committee in charge.

Grandfather G. Rehmeier, who resides at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Frank Taylor, south of town, has not been feeling well for some time and has been confined to the home, but with the warm days of the past week has been able to get out and came to town for a visit with his many friends, spending a portion of the time at the elevator.

Uncle P. J. Linch who recently acquired a piece of property directly across the street from where he resides, is putting it in good shape for an investment property. Included in the work which he is doing is the placing of a concrete foundation under the building and the addition of another room, which will make it a very convenient home for whoever may reside in it.

**Engages in Business**  
Soren Petersen, who has been working whenever he has an opportunity, has just recently taken over the filling station of James Hermance and is looking after the needs of the car owners.

**County W. C. T. U. Convention**  
With representatives from all over the county present, the ladies of the Women's Christian Temperance Union of Alvo entertained the county convention of the order on Tuesday of last week. The members of the Union feel there is need at this time of active

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## Story of Fifty Years as District Court Reporter

State Journal Has Splendid Account of Life Work of Myron Wheeler, a Former Resident Here.

The following very interesting account of the fifty years service as district court reporter by Myron Wheeler appeared in the Sunday Lincoln Journal-Star and which is reprinted, as the Wheeler family have many old friends here:

Myron E. Wheeler, dean of American court reporters, is not the gay blade he once was. But he is the raconteur supreme. As he sits in an easy chair at his comfortable home at 3352 Woodshire Parkway and talks, the saga of Nebraska moves slowly past. On May 10 he will resign as court reporter for Judge Frederick Shepherd of the Lancaster county District court and thus write finis to a career which he began fifty-two years ago.

He has seen all of Nebraska, has Myron Wheeler, and a good portion of the world too. But it is the courts which have been his life and when he leaves them—let's let him say it, "Well, there just isn't much more."

**Native Nebraskan.**  
Born about 70 years ago on the site of the present Cass county courthouse at Plattsmouth, Myron Wheeler can tell you a little bit about nearly anything which has happened since. Droll, whimsical and charmingly entertaining, his eyes sparkle gaily as he recounts happenings of the past.

There were his early days in Plattsmouth when his father, Major D. H. Wheeler, one of the first Indian agents in Nebraska, used to be gone on long trips with the wagon trains and his mother carried a revolver in her apron pocket, "just in case." At first there wasn't a foot of railroad in Nebraska but in those days they went down to the river to meet the boats. There would be gay parties and Myron and the other children would be parked in some corner or other while their folks and others made merry. The next day the townsfolk would go down to bid their traveling friends on the steamer adieu. The boat would back away from shore with more than a few toots, there would be much waving of hats and handkerchiefs, and then—Myron chuckles—the old stern wheeler would like as not get stuck on a sandbar and be there for a week.

The Platte Valley House just across the street from the Wheeler home was one of the finer hostleries between Chicago and Denver in the early days. And from the "drummers," the Victorian edition of the traveling salesman, Wheeler learned some of his first stories. The veteran court reporter smiles as he recalls the "drummers" with their checkered hats and diamond stickpins and a flow of words which moved eternally, it seemed.

**Saw a Pow-Wow.**  
An episode which remains vivid in his memory is a trip to Columbus to the home of his cousin, the late Major Frank North, in 1876. Major North was chief of the Pawnee nation and in his front yard was a great cleared space where members of the Pawnee tribe gathered periodically for pow-wows. A great pow-wow was held on the occasion of Mr. Wheeler's visit at that time.

Major North and his brother, Captain Lute North, who died but a few days ago, recounted many a yarn for Wheeler. One of the best of Captain North's stories, Wheeler relates, was the one about the Indian magicians. They could take a hawk's feather from their bonnet, toss it into the air, and immediately a hawk would alight upon their finger-tips. Then they would shake the hawk into the air and forthwith a feather would float down into their outstretched palms.

**Sigma Chi Organizer.**  
Mr. Wheeler was a student at the University of Nebraska in its early days and with his brothers, Frank L. and Don H. Wheeler and five other young men was one of the organizers of Sigma Chi, first permanent fraternity to be established on the campus.

They met at the cottage of Ellen Smith at 1204 U street and formed their chapter. Mr. Wheeler recalls that the event caused a general uproar as soon as it became known and that they were all nearly expelled because of it. He is today the only living charter member of the Nebraska chapter.

**First N. U. Band.**  
He was also a member of the first university band. It contained but eight pieces. Myron played the solo alto, Frank L. played the tuba, Dan H. played the B flat cornet and the late Will Owen Jones played the A flat cornet. The late Clement C. Chase, son of Champion S. Chase, one time mayor of Omaha and the man for whom Chase county was named, was one of the Sigma Chi charter members and Mayor Chase and Major D. H. Wheeler were instrumental in preventing the expulsion of the young men from the university.

When Wheeler left the university in 1873 he went to Iowa City where he studied shorthand at a school run by Eldon Moran. A facile student, he was almost immediately made an instructor and during the summer he did his first court reporting in some trials arising out of Fred Wilson's contested nomination for congress in Iowa.

**Man Was Lynched.**  
In August, Wheeler went to Omaha where he became secretary to J. A. Monroe who was at that time assistant freight auditor of the Union Pacific. But in September of 1883

Judge A. M. Post asked him to come to Columbus as reporter for the District court there and Wheeler took the position. His brief stay there was comparatively uneventful, except "for seeing a man lynched in front of the courthouse at Schuyler, Neb." In those days Columbus had a population of about 2,500 and there was a bitter rivalry on between business men on the north and south sides of the Union Pacific tracks.

Wheeler left Columbus to go to Omaha and become associated with the first Remington-Rand typewriter agency in the state. The Union Pacific railroad owned the first typewriter and Wheeler owned the second one. When Judge Eleazer Wakeley requested his services as a court reporter, however, Wheeler sold out his interest in the typewriter agency and returned to the courts.

In 1886 Mr. Wheeler was married at Lincoln to Cora Humphrey, previously of Nebraska City. They were married at 1420 M street at the very spot where Miss Humphrey first alighted when she came from Nebraska City to Lincoln via stage coach. Miss Humphrey was the daughter of Captain Austin Humphrey, commissioned by the government as head of immigrant trains between Nebraska City, Fort Kearney and Denver. Mr. Wheeler still has his father-in-law's original commission.

**Reported Bohannan Trial.**  
In 1886 Wheeler became associated with Judge Samuel S. Chapman whose district included Lancaster, Cass and Otoe counties. The county offices and the District court in Lincoln was located on the top floor of the Tiernan block at Eleventh and M streets. One of the sensational cases which Wheeler reported there was the Quinn Bohannan murder trial. Lincoln was a city of 9,000 persons then. Bohannan killed a Waverly merchant because he couldn't spell the word "peddler" correctly. He was sentenced for life on the first trial, obtained a new trial, and when found guilty again was sentenced to be hung. Bohannan was removed to the Otoe county jail at Nebraska City, the same ancient jail, incidentally, which Ed Beeson of Nebraska City News-Press has written so enchantingly if, albeit, in a slightly uncomplimentary fashion.

About the same time that Bohannan was removed to Nebraska City, Wheeler recalls that he and Judge Chapman went there for the trial of two other sensational cases. One involved a man named Hoffman, who wrecked a train at Dunbar. An engineer died from injuries incurred when the throttle was driven through his chest. Hoffman was found guilty and was sentenced to be hung. He was placed in jail with Bohannan. Then, at almost the same time, Lee Shellenberger killed his two children in the same ancient jail, incidentally, which Ed Beeson of Nebraska City News-Press has written so enchantingly if, albeit, in a slightly uncomplimentary fashion.

**Hang 'Em To a Tree.**  
Wheeler recalls that Bohannan heard he had a typewriter. Bohannan wanted to see it. Before Wheeler got a chance to exhibit his mechanical curiosity to the condemned man, however, a mob formed and ripped open the Otoe county jail. They got Shellenberger and hung him to a tree. Hoffman they couldn't reach and he was hanged nearby. Bohannan escaped and was never retaken.

The whimsical story teller paused to light a cigaret and continue his reminiscences.

"The foundation for the present Lancaster county courthouse was laid in 1888. It was a real show-place and I'll bet you money you can't find a crack in it today," he declares. "One of the early cases there and one of the most sensational was the John Sheedy murder trial."

At the time of that trial the south half of the second floor of the courthouse was all one courtroom. Women used to come at 6 in the morning and bring their babies to be sure of a good seat during the proceedings.

In the Sheedy case, a negro, Monday McFarland and Mrs. Mary Sheedy, were jointly charged with the murder of John Sheedy, her husband.

John Sheedy, who operated a gambling place near Tenth and P streets, was murdered in January of 1891 at his home by an assailant who beat a rash in his skull three inches wide and an inch deep with an iron cane bound with a leather thong. McFarland was charged with committing the murder and Mary Sheedy was named as an accessory before the fact.

Wheeler recalls how he sat in a dark closet at the old police station and took shorthand notes—feeling his way—of McFarland's confession. McFarland's voice came in over the transom and Wheeler was hidden because it was feared the negro would not confess if he knew his admissions were being taken down in writing.

**300 Men Drawn.**  
Proceedings were begun in District court late in April of 1891 and it took what seemed an interminable length of time to draw a jury. Two panels of 150 men each were exhausted before twelve men were found who were eligible to sit on the case.

Wheeler recalls Mrs. Sheedy: "She was a beautiful woman and had been wed, as I recall, twice, before she became the wife of Mr. Sheedy. Her expression as she sat in the courtroom was that of a Madonna and I am convinced it was her beauty which resulted in a verdict of acquittal for both her and the negro."

The trial lasted from May 2 to May 29 and the jury was only a few hours in reaching its verdict. Wheeler recalls that Sheedy's skull was brought into the courtroom and introduced as evidence.

"Mrs. Sheedy didn't bat an eye when that gruesome thing was placed before her," he said.

**Yellow Lies.**  
"This writer was in the District court wait and found the appearance docket which contained a

list of the filings and proceedings in the case. Its yellow pages cracked as they were turned. There it was, State of Nebraska vs. Monday McFarland and Mary Sheedy. There were sixty-three witnesses for the state and forty for the defendants. And in the attic of the courthouse were the files, musty and rent and covered with dust. Pages and pages of laborious longhand—the only method of transcription known then except, (as previously noted), Myron's typewriter—record the filings in that case.

N. Z. Snell represented the state in that case and J. B. Strode was the chief attorney for the defense. Virtually every legal technicality known to man was resorted to—demurrers, pleas in abatement, motions to quash, affidavits showing incompetency of jurors, et al ad infinitum.

The court reporter smiles as the memory of some of his trips to Valentine, Neb., in the nineties comes back to him.

"That was one of the damndest towns you ever saw. It was the northwest end of the Northwestern railroad at the time and one of the most colorful places in all the state. The stove-pipe chimneys in every store in town were full of bullet holes—practice shots. All night long roosters would be shooting in the street. Men were scarcely ever convicted of murder but horse and cattle thieves were usually lynched.

**Elected Sheriff.**  
"I remember one case of a man who was caught stealing horses. They were going to hang him from the railroad bridge. He asked if they wouldn't just as soon shoot him, 'if you please.' They consented but he somehow escaped and later returned and killed two of the men who made up the would-be firing squad. For that accomplishment they elected him sheriff.

"When I arrived there the first time—I was living in for some court reporter who was about to become a father, as I remember it—I walked into the first saloon I saw as soon as I had registered at the hotel. It was with rather startling reactions that I noticed a dead man lying under a blood-stained table. Around the table a couple of men wielded their cues as if they were not greatly concerned. I called the attention of the bartender to the situation—"Oh him, he got shot a couple of hours ago, what'll you have to drink?"—And that, I guess, was that."

**Went to Cuba.**  
In 1898 Wheeler went to Cuba as chief of the war department's correspondence division. Ed R. Sizer, clerk of the district court here, also went. He was chief clerk of the island. Those were stirring and exciting days for both of them. General Tasker H. Bliss was head of the armies of the United States and Wheeler made out his reports and did his correspondence. Bliss, a busy man, had Wheeler write letters to his wife and to his daughters who were at Bryn Mawr. "They were rather intimate and endearing letters and I rather embarrassed me to compose them," Wheeler says, "but the general usually just scribbled his signature on the end without even reading them over. I felt a frightful hypocrite."

He returned from Cuba in 1900 and again took up his post as reporter for the District court of Lancaster county. He was with Judge A. J. Cornish until 1917 and has been with Judge Shepherd since that time. The words Myron Wheeler has written would reach around the world.

## PRESENT PROGRAM

The third grade from Central building under the direction of Miss Selma Diehm entertained their mothers at a miscellaneous program last Wednesday afternoon was as follows:

Songs, "Spring" and "April Showers," by girls of third grade.  
Chalk drawings (taken from Nature Story Book) by Donna Faye Mason, Donald Nollin, Billy Crumley, Shirley Burcham, Edwin Eledge, James Short, Hazel Miner, Josephine Sedlak, Edward Bashus, Melvin Swanda, Merle Shryock, Martha Mel-singer, Bonnie Walters, Jane Hitt, Joann Traudt, Jean Goodchild, Marjory Dean Phillips. Each child gave a short descriptive story of their picture.

Song, "Dolly Don't Weep," by Shirley Burcham and Donna Faye Mason.  
Recitation, "Somebody's Knocking," by Bernard Flynn.  
Drill, "Our Bird Books," by Bernard Dow, Russell Wannacott, Roy Poston, Bernard Flynn, Paul Meyers, Melvin Swanda.

Play, "The Birds' Convention," Mr. Robin, Roy Poston; Mrs. Robin, Dorothy Lynch; Mr. Catbird, Russell Wannacott; Cedar bird, Jack Pettit; Woodpecker, Harry Goenour; Kingbird, Cecil Howard; Goshawk, Howard Mrasek; Barnswallow, Claude Kennedy; Oven bird, Mary Lou Hitt, Jenny Wren, Millie Kozacek; Oriole, Donald Nollin; Crow, Raymond Rhoden.

Transcripts he has prepared, stacked one upon the other, would go a good many feet into the air.

As he thinks back on the men who were with him as the present courtroom opened he shakes his head a bit badly.

"They're all gone. All the officers and all the men who were then practicing at the bar, except H. H. Wilson, they've all gone. And now my work, my life, my doctors tell me that must go too."

**Court Progress.**  
But what of the courts? Mr. Wheeler doesn't know if they've progressed so far or not.

"It seems as though law suits nowadays are nothing but gabfests. Lawyers aren't as dignified as they used to be. They aren't as careful about their exhibits and their objections and the condition of the record. It's 'hurry-up, hurry-up, hurry-up,' eternally. So many of them aren't after justice. All they want is to win their case—by fair means or foul. It doesn't seem to me that there used to be so much of that," he declares.

There is a distinct improvement in one regard though, according to Wheeler. There is little if any "fixing" of jurors any more. And in the early days, he reports, there used to be a lot of it. A lawyer who couldn't bribe a jury in certain instances was hardly thought worth his salt in the old days, he remarks.

But of his own work—of the countless millions of words he has taken down, difficult medical and technical terms in many cases, he has little to say. He waves that aside—"It's all in a day." And Myron Wheeler, the raconteur supreme, the master of the retort elegant and the story apropos, turns to the dictaphone in his home. He wants to get all his work completed by May 10, the date of his retirement from a long and faithful career in the courts.

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## WILL ATTEND CONVENTION

Mrs. J. A. Jimeron, of Auburn, district president of the Nebraska federation of Woman's clubs as well as Mrs. Ray Norris, Weeping Water, county president, have signified their intention of being present here at the local club banquet on next Monday evening.

The banquet committee is arranging one of the most attractive programs for the members and a very large number are expected to be present to enjoy the event which is to be held at the parlors of the First Methodist church.

## UNDERGOES OPERATION

Edward Stewart, eleven year old son of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Stewart, was taken to Omaha early Wednesday morning suffering from a very acute case of appendicitis, being suddenly stricken with this trouble. The young lad was taken to the Methodist hospital where an operation was performed as soon as possible after his arrival. The patient stood the operation in excellent shape and at the present time is reported as doing as well as possible under the circumstances.

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## He Ain't Got It Yet!

