

The Alliance Herald

Twice a Week—Tuesday and Friday

VOLUME XXVII.

ALLIANCE, BOX BUTTE COUNTY, NEBRASKA, JANUARY 2, 1920.

NUMBER 10.

REISENWEAVER TELLS WILD TALE OF INNOCENCE

AND SOB SISTER ON OMAHA NEWS PRINTS IT ALL

Youthful Murderer Talks of Hypnotist Poker Player and Confession Forced by Third Degree

After serving a trifle over three months of his life sentence for the murder of William Johnson, commissary agent, at Alliance on the evening of April 7 in the local railroad yards, William Reisenweaver, the seventeen-year-old murderer, has given out an interview in which he asserts his innocence. The Omaha Daily News of Sunday, December 28, carries as a feature story this wild, wild tale, written in the most approved sob-sister style by one of those fantastic chumps who rather like to make a fuss over criminals. This class of people, by the way, are helping to empty the penitentiaries as fast as the officers can fill them.

Reisenweaver, in his saidy, declares that the confession was wrung from him after a third degree session in the office of Sheriff Miller, during the course of which, after being beaten up, he was promised a light sentence if he would plead guilty. Talk of the electric chair scared him, he said, and he gave in. The real murderer was a hypnotist poker player, a Frenchman, who won all Reisenweaver's money through hypnotic means at a game in Laramie, Wyo., at Christmas time, 1917. Johnson, the man who was murdered, played poker with the Frenchman and others the night of the murder, but he kept his eyes glued on his cards all night, and was not under the influence of the hypnotist. He left the game winner by \$400, and the Frenchman followed and killed him.

The county officers mentioned in the fairy-tale have had a good laugh over the article, and have asked that it be passed on to Herald readers, so that they may share in the fun.

Here's the way the sob-sister describes Reisenweaver: "The prisoner told the story with all the candor of an unspooled boy. Reisenweaver does not look like a murderer. His dark blue eyes, set far apart, start straight into those of the person to whom he is speaking. His well-formed head tops well-developed neck, shoulders and chest. He was a boilermaker's helper, and he has the physique of one. Around his mouth, perhaps, there is a trace of coarseness. But it is not a cruel mouth." There is the usual guff about tears coming to his eyes, and the following quotation is one of those in which the writer sought to arouse sympathy: "I'm only a kid, if I am big. It's hell to think of living here until I die."

Those who remember the details of the brutal murder of William Johnson, as brought out by evidence of the trial and substantiated by the testimony of Reisenweaver himself, will be able to best appreciate the act of those who are seeking to arouse sympathy for him. Reisenweaver was not an adventurous youth, with a love for the excitement of draw poker, temporarily led astray. As a matter of fact, he was arrested, not on a charge of murder, but theft. With the aid of a brake shoe and a hatchet, he had forced his way into no less than three way-cars, and had in his possession when arrested enough sweaters, jack-knives, tobacco and other merchandise to send him up for grand larceny.

It was the similarity of the breaking into the commissary house that first threw suspicion on him, and this was confirmed by the finding of a bloodstained axe bearing Reisenweaver's fingerprints on the handle, marked in the blood of the murdered man. His story explaining how his fingerprints came to be on the axe handle is almost as great an imaginative triumph as his tale of the hypnotic Frenchman.

Testimony at the trial and his confession showed that Reisenweaver had purchased tobacco at the commissary the night of the murder when he had in his possession some thirty-two packages which he had stolen. He told of visiting Johnson at the commissary several times, and admitted that he believed Johnson carried large sums of money with him. He forced his way into the building, robbed it, and then, taking the axe with him, proceeded to wait for his victim to come, hiding behind a gate on the platform. When Johnson did come, he struck him in

the back of the head with the axe, went through his pockets, secured \$400, then threw the axe over the fence, where it stuck in the snow and was found by the officers. The \$400 was secreted under one of the standards to the viaduct. He afterward led the officers to the spot, but the money had disappeared.

The story is filled with inaccuracies. It also contains an acknowledgment that Reisenweaver actually carried \$400 with him the night of April 9 must be a fabrication, for the sheriff's records show that he was in jail on that day—indeed, before that time.

At any rate, here is the story as the News printed it, and it is interesting as an example of journalism of a sort. Our readers will know how much of it is worthy of credence.

William Reisenweaver, seventeen years old, the youngest life-terminer in the history of the Nebraska penitentiary, told an Omaha Daily News representative that he did not murder Charles Johnson, commissary agent, whose axe-battered body was found near the railroad tracks at Alliance, Neb., the night of October 9.

Reisenweaver pleaded guilty to first degree murder when arraigned in Box Butte county's district court. His exclusive interview with The Omaha Daily news is the first time he has ever made any attempt to absolve himself from the responsibility for the crime.

"A man who hypnotized me once at Laramie, Wyo., is the man who killed Johnson," said Reisenweaver. "I met him at a poker game in Laramie and later in Alliance. This is the first time I have ever asserted my innocence. Now I am going to tell my story."

The boy's face was contorted as he uttered the statements. He seemed to be having a stiff struggle with himself to force the words to his lips. His jaws were clamped and the muscles of his face twitched.

"Can you tell the man's name?" The boy bowed his head at the question. The contortion of his facial muscles continued. He was silent for more than two minutes. If he was acting the part of a hypnotic subject obeying a post-hypnotic suggestion, then he was playing his part well. Slowly he raised his head. He said:

"I want to tell you, mister, but I can't. I just can't make the words come out of me. He's got five or six names. I know them all, but I can't say them out loud."

Reisenweaver's head sagged to his chest again. His eyes were closed. Again his face gave signs of a mental struggle. More minutes passed.

"His name is Jim Small. Another one of his names is Jim Reid. He's got a French name that I can't think of. I couldn't mention those names in court. I just couldn't speak them, that's all. That fellow had some mysterious power over me at the time. No, he was not in the court room, but I always felt that he was there."

The prisoner told his life-story with all the candor of an unspooled boy. It is the tale of a young adventurer, a boy with a passion for poker, a chance meeting with bad companions, a losing game of cards, a midnight walk through a dark alley, a blood-stained axe, a murder, arrest, admission of guilt and now—the prospect of spending the rest of his life behind iron bars.

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Tears came to the boy's eyes when he spoke of his mother.

"When a fellow gets into a mess like I am in now," he said, "the only real friend he's got is his ma."

Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Reisenweaver, parents of the prisoner, live at Sheridan, Wyo. The father is a boilermaker in the railroad shops there. They have one other son, Johnny Jr. William says that he was thirteen years old when he first ran away from home.

"I don't know why I left home, either," he said. "I just wanted to see the world. I ran away three times. Each time that I came back, I was taken into the home just as though nothing had happened. I was sent back to school. Gee, I wish I was back there now. That last time I left home finished me."

"I'll skip over lots of the things that happened to me. I went to Laramie, Wyo., about 600 miles from my home town. I got into a poker game the night before Christmas, 1917, with this Frenchman, who

(Continued on Page 4)

ANOTHER CENSUS TAKER APPOINTED

District Supervisor J. J. Tooley Meets With Directors of Alliance Community Club

J. J. Tooley of Broken Bow, supervisor of the census for this congressional district, met with the directors of the Alliance Community Club at an informal luncheon at the Alliance hotel Friday noon. The matter of an additional enumerator for the city was suggested, and Mr. Tooley indicated that he would act as the club directors recommended.

Whereupon, the directors strongly urged that an additional enumerator be allowed the city. M. P. Gastineau has already received the appointment and the selection has been approved. Beginning today, the enumerators are at work. In the interest of Alliance and Box Butte county, see that your name gets on the list.

CHURCH TO HOLD A WEEK OF PRAYER

In connection with the inter-church world movement, the Alliance churches have united to hold a "week of prayer." Services will be held each night during the week, at which the various pastors will take turns in discussing some different aspect of the movement. All of the pastors will devote their Sunday morning service to the big problems and opportunities offered by the inter-church program.

Some time soon, a survey will be made to determine, humanly and statistically, how efficient or inefficient the rural church in America is today, and what readjustments can be made, especially in Nebraska. Karl W. G. Hiller, with headquarters in Lincoln, is state supervisor. The work in Box Butte county will be in charge of Rev. J. Orrin Gould, and co-operating with him will be representatives of the denominations affiliated with the movement.

The "week of prayer" is practically the first step in the actual work of the movement. The program follows:

Monday evening at the Methodist church. Subject, "The Church Awakened by Self-examination," the pastors speaking.

Tuesday evening at the Presbyterian church. Subject, "The Church Awakened by a Vision of the World's Need." Speaker, Rev. J. Orrin Gould.

Wednesday evening at the Methodist church. Subject, "The Church Awakened by the New Call for Co-operation." Speaker, Rev. A. J. Kearns.

Thursday evening at the Baptist church. Subject, "The Church Awakened by a Revival of Family Religion." Speaker, Rev. Stephen J. Epler.

Friday evening at the Christian church. Subject, "The Church Awakened by the Call for Workers." Speaker, Rev. Mearl C. Smith.

The public is invited to be present at every one of these services and get an inspiration for the year's work.

VAUDEVILLE AT THE IMPERIAL SATURDAY

The Saturday program at the Imperial will be one of the best that has ever struck the city. In addition to the photoplay featuring William Desmond, "The Mints of Hell," there is a Tom Mix film and a Mutt and Jeff cartoon. Last, but far from least, there are five good acts of Fantages vaudeville.

Allen & Jones will appear in songs, dancing and comedy patter; Lee Monie & Co., an Hawaiian troupe, will present American songs and native dancing; Jack Polk, the eccentric comedian, will be there; the Three Jupiters, a feature acrobatic act and the Stroud trio in mirth, dances, pianologue and song oddities.

The Stroud trio is composed of father, mother and twelve-year-old Viola Stroud, who is a sergeant of marines, a first class yeomanette in the navy and a member of the police force of Oshkosh, Wis. This youngster has a record for patriotic service that mighty few adults can equal. She has sold seven million dollars' worth of Liberty bonds, recruited for the marines 1,700 men, for the navy 1,400 men; she made five-thousand four-minute speeches during the war and has turned in \$85,000 for the American Red Cross.

It's gonna be some program, and you won't want to miss it.

W. H. WILSON DIES OF INJURIES

Brakeman, Struck on Head, Suffers Relapse—His Mother Arrives Few Hours Too Late

W. H. Wilson, Burlington brakeman whose head was struck by one of the viaduct beams early Sunday morning, died as a result of his injuries Thursday. He had been taken to the hospital, where for a time indications were that he would recover.

Mrs. L. M. Wilson of Ridgeway, Mo., his mother arrived in the city yesterday. She had been under the impression that he would recover, and it was a sad shock for her when she learned that he had died a short time before her arrival.

The body was taken Friday morning to Ridgeway, where interment will be made.

NEW MANAGER FOR FOWLER LUMBER CO.

Floyd Lucas, the new manager of the Fowler Lumber company of this city, comes from Russell, Kansas, where he had been holding a position with the Mack-Valling Lumber company. He has been in the city for several days, looking for living quarters for his family, and getting acquainted with the duties of his new position.

Mr. Lucas plans to enlarge the stock and make various improvements of the local branch.

AMERICAN LEGION MET TUESDAY EVE

Plans for Minstrel Show to Be Given This Month—First Rehearsal January 6

The holiday vacations cut down the attendance at the meeting of Alliance post of the American Legion at the city hall Tuesday evening, but a number of men turned out.

The proposed state constitution was read section by section, discussed, and the meeting finally voted to approve the document without changes.

The minstrel committee made its report, and Tuesday evening, January 6, at the army, was the time and place set for the first rehearsal. The legion members are not only invited but urged to come out. Every blooming one of them will be needed to put on the right kind of a show—and they are all wanted at the first rehearsal.

President Earl Meyer gave a report of the proceedings at the national convention, and discussed some of the resolutions adopted. He urged that every member spread the news of just what the legion stands for, there being a considerable amount of misinformation concerning the organization afloat.

A committee of three was appointed to draft constitution and by-laws for the local post. Mr. Meyer, F. C. Brown and George L. Burr were appointed as a publicity committee.

TIME TO THINK OF NEW AUTO LICENSES

Another thing that the New Year will bring is a new bunch of auto licenses—and the prices this year have advanced somewhat over other years. Ordinarily, knowing the Christmas expenses are usually heavy, the authorities will not object if the owner of a car postpones getting a new license for a month or so—but it's going to be a little more difficult to get away with it this year.

The county treasurer has the tags right in his office, awaiting prospective purchasers. No longer will it be a valid excuse to say that you've paid your fee, but the tag hasn't shown up.

The last law went into effect on April 11, 1919; and those who were foresighted enough to take out their licenses prior to that date got off easy with a fee of \$3. After that date the new rates went into effect, and there was a lot of howling from those who had neglected it.

Here's the fees you will have to pay:

- Every motorcycle and every two-wheeled truck weighing less than 1,000 pounds, \$5.
- Each motor vehicle, 2,000 pounds or less, \$10.
- For each additional 100 pounds,

THE WEATHER

For Alliance and vicinity: Generally fair tonight and Saturday; warmer Saturday and extreme north portion tonight.

50 cents.

Trucks and cars equipped to carry more than seven passengers will be charged for at the rate of gross weight loaded.

This scale of prices is some higher than Nebraska motorists have had to pay in bygone days, but there is a silver lining to the cloud. Twenty-five cents of this sum goes to the county road dragging fund, and the rest of it to the state highway fund. The dealers especially have to contribute more than usual under the new law. It used to be that they would take out one license for the garage, and the number could be applied to all cars, trucks and motorcycles, but now they take out two, one for automobiles and one for trucks.

CHRISTMAS SAVING CLUBS POPULAR

The First State bank reports that dozens of people are taking advantage of the opportunity to start Christmas savings clubs. Their advertisement, which appears in another column, explains the plan in detail. In this form of saving that the bank will hold the offer open for a week or two longer.

Those who have tried the Christmas club plan are enthusiastically in favor of it. It's an easy thing to save a little bit each week—anywhere from one cent to \$25, and next Christmas, when the bills begin to roll in and the need for money is urgent, you find at your disposal all the money you have put aside, together with liberal interest. Talk it over with anyone in the bank—they will be glad to tell you everything about it.

ANNUAL MEETING OF HOME BUILDERS

The first annual meeting of the stockholders of the Alliance Home Builders' association will be held at the Community club rooms on next Monday. New officers for the association will be elected at this meeting, and possibly plans will be discussed.

No further steps have been taken the past few days, either toward securing a superintendent of construction for the company, or arranging for a supply of needed building materials. The present board thought it best to leave these matters for the judgment of the elected officers.

Following the meeting, the Home Builders' will start at work with a vengeance. Subscriptions are being taken in the meantime, and considerably over half of the stock has been subscribed for.

FASHION SHOP SALE DRAWS BIG CROWDS

The half-price sale now in progress at the Fashion Shop is drawing a large share of patronage. The sale will be continued for a while longer, in order to make room for the new spring goods which are beginning to arrive and which must soon go on display.

The largest reductions are on suits, coats and dresses, and the genuine reduction means a considerable saving that careful buyers and liberal buyers alike appreciate. In addition, there is a 25 per cent discount on skirts, blouses and undergarments and several other staple lines, and extra discounts on a few special articles. It's a good time to stock up.

JOHNSON-GRAHAM

The marriage of Miss Bessie Graham, daughter of Postmaster Robert Graham, to Chester Johnston of Scottsbluff has been announced. The wedding took place in Denver on December 30. The groom is a son of J. M. Johnson of this city. He has been a resident of Scottsbluff for some time. The couple will make their home in Scottsbluff.

—Mrs. Charles Matthews of Marsland is visiting in the city at the home of Mr. and Mrs. True Miller.

—R. E. Plumb and President Glen Miller of the Community club left for Lincoln this morning, on business connected with the Alliance Packing company.

OFFICERS MAKE NO ARRESTS IN LACKEY CASE

COUNTY OFFICERS WORKING ON DEATH MYSTERY

Examination of Girl's Stomach Shows Evidence of Strychnine Poisoning

An analysis of the stomach of Pauline Lackey, seven years old, who died in convulsions at the Central school on December 17, shows that it contained strychnine in a quantity sufficient to cause death. The analysis was made by physicians at the University of Nebraska school of medicine.

The little girl went to school the morning of December 17, and within half an hour after she entered the school room, was seized with convulsions, death resulting shortly afterward. Dr. Einar Blak, who was called, recognized the symptoms of strychnine poisoning, as did Dr. Hand, city physician, who was called in. An autopsy was held and the stomach of the little girl sent to Omaha for analysis.

The report leaves no doubt that strychnine was the cause of death. To make doubly sure, an analysis of the embalming fluid used is being made.

It is known that the girl at some candy the morning of her death, but candy from the same container has been analyzed and been found to be absolutely pure.

The officers have several other clues, but in a matter of this kind, The Herald refuses to try the case in advance. County Attorney Massey and Sheriff Miller are working on it, and if sufficient evidence is obtained, arrests will undoubtedly follow. There seems to be no question that death came from poisoning, but evidence as to the identity of the poisoner and the motive for the crime is not complete.

MISS NELL O'DONNELL RETURNS FROM FRANCE

Miss Nell O'Donnell, who has been with the American Red Cross service in France for the past fifteen months, arrived in Alliance Wednesday morning. She arrived in New York December 24 on the U. S. S. Patria, sailing from Marseilles, France, and visited at the T. F. Murphy home in Omaha for a few days before coming back to this city.

Miss O'Donnell was stationed for ten months at Brest, where she was with the home communication department of the Red Cross. Her work was the sending of photographs of soldiers' graves and the writing of letters to relatives at home. The remaining five months of service was in the legal department of the Red Cross, with headquarters at Paris.

—William O'Shea and H. Prague, the two men injured in the explosion at Hoffland a few days ago, were discharged from the city hospital yesterday.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The annual business meeting of the congregation was held at the church Wednesday evening, December 31. The reports showed that all departments are in a healthy and growing condition. More than \$4,000 was given for all purposes. The minister's salary has been raised each year and another substantial raise is pledged for the year 1920. Nearly two hundred members have been added to the congregation since the present minister came to Alliance two years and a half ago. A budget of \$4,000.00 is planned for the coming year. A five-year program was adopted which holds before the members a standard to be attained.

The church board is as follows:

- Elders: J. C. Hawkins, R. Lawrence and P. Werkman.
- Deacons: J. W. Long, E. I. Gregg, F. Sweet, H. Johnson, O. Stevens, R. E. Rednal, W. E. Cutts, William McKune and L. S. Adams.
- Trustees: H. C. Redenbaugh, W. E. Cutts and E. I. Gregg.

The past year has been a splendid year and the congregation looks forward into the new year with the highest hopes for spiritual advancement and material growth.