

The Best of . . .

"Prairieland Talk"

By ROMAIN SAUNDERS

Reprinted from March 18, 1948
 (Editor's note: Seventy-nine years ago in February the illustrious life of Kid Wade ended tragically at the hands of a band of "regulators". The recent anniversary of this "whistling post" hanging of one of this region's best-known historical characters has prompted the retelling of this epic story.)

Wednesday night, February 6, 1884, Kid Wade was hung to an F. E. and 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.



Romaine Saunders

Those who knew considered it a time when silence was golden. After justice had laid an inexorable hand on Doc Middleton, the Kid was the recognized leader at the eastern end of a band of outlaws operating from the Black Hills to the Missouri.

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 officed 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 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 in to 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 his 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 forces 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 Berry's at Paddock. Delegations of Brown and Holt 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 "oh you are as big a horse thief as I am".

Maybe desiring to shift further responsibility, the majority of Holt county bunched favored turning Wade over to the mercies of the men from Brown and the Kid saw the promise of a fair trial and his hopes vanished. The late S. J. Weekes, of the O'Neill National Bank, was among the boys and men then living in the neighborhood to congregate at Paddock to "see the excitement".

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 the 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 ways. Another was that he implored his guards to give him a pair of 6-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."

Did the Kid recognize his abductors as his own hand of outlaws who resorted to a hanging to protect themselves?

Frontiers Ago

50 YEARS AGO

Christian Spenser and Anna Bellar, both of O'Neill, obtained license to wed last Saturday. On Monday Judge Carlon issued a similar document for Albert Ziech of Boyd county and Annette Smith of Holt county. . . Mr. and Mrs. Anton Toy are the parents of a girl born Monday. . . Justus Spindler filed suit in district court Tuesday against Katherine Spindler praying for divorce. They were married in O'Neill last October. . . Jesse Mills and Miss Maude Sniggs were married at Orchard Wednesday. The wedding took place at the home of the groom's sister, Mrs. Ray Scofield. Assessor Tom Coyne has been on the job the past week getting the books, schedules and other supplies in readiness for the precinct assessors to begin work next month.

25 YEARS AGO

Last Thursday afternoon while descending the back stairs at her apartment home on South Fourth street, Mrs. Emery Petersen slipped and fell to the bottom, a distance of about ten feet, sustaining a fractured collar bone. . . Sheriff Peter Duffy filed last Tuesday for reelection to the office of sheriff, subject to the action of the democratic voters of the county at the primary election. . . Senator Frank Brady will address the Lions club of this city at a 6:30 luncheon at the Golden Hotel. . . Henry Schacht and Bill Egger returned last Sunday evening from a two week automobile trip that took them thru the southern states and over into

Mexico. They traveled nearly 4,100 miles.

10 YEARS AGO

Very Rev. Timothy O'Sullivan, pastor of St. Patrick's Catholic church escaped unhurt about 4:30 p.m. Friday when the car he was driving left the road and twice overturned. . . Mrs. Ruth Morgan received a telephone call from San Diego, Calif., Saturday from her son, PNI Richard Morgan that he was shipping out Monday on the USS Boxer for Pearl Harbor and then on to Japan and China until November 21. . . Duane Weier, 17, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Weier, O'Neill has been selected by the Chamber of Commerce as O'Neill's boy's state delegate. . . Mr. and Mrs. Neil Davis have announced they are assuming management of the O. K. Inn, well known Atkinson cafe which formerly was operated by Mrs. Opal Keating. . . About two hundred persons attended a membership banquet Sunday evening at the American Legion auditorium sponsored by the Saddle club.

5 YEARS AGO

Buy E. Wanser, 67, well-known in northeast and northcentral Nebraska livestock auctioneering and race horse breeding circles died Wednesday, March 26, in St. Anthony's hospital. . . Mrs. Delia Harrison Sunday was honored at open house at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Elmer Devall, north of O'Neill. She was observing her 90th birthday. . . Mike Smith, 51, chief operator of the Spencer hydro-electric plant escaped drowning Tuesday evening in a harrowing experience at the Niobrara river dam. He fell from a concrete ledge into the reservoir water immediately behind the dam, was flushed through the spillway into turbulent deep water and had to swim to safety in the ice-choked water. . . The Wade Davis farm home, located three miles south of the junction of U. S. highway 281 and state highway 95 was completely destroyed by fire Thursday while Mr. and Mrs. Davis were away.

The Long Ago At Chambers

50 YEARS AGO

Dr. Oxford reports the birth of a large baby boy at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fleck. . . It is reported that the A. T. ranch lost 34 head of cattle in the recent storm. They drifted into the lake and perished. . . The Carpenters expect to commence work on Will Blakes new house which he will erect as soon as the weather permits. . . The play "The Corner Store" given by the band boys in the hall Wednesday evening had a large attendance in spite of the bad roads. . . Dr. Oxford reports the birth of a baby girl at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Northrup. . . Dr. Hemingway arrived today for a few days dental practice. . . Frank Charles is hauling lumber for the erection of a new barn which he will build on his lots in the north part of town.

25 YEARS AGO

James C. Wilson was born near Springfield, Nebr. February 14, 1838 and passed away at his home about twenty miles south of Ewing on March 18, 1938 at the age of 81 years. Government Contracts have been awarded to Clyde R. Elkins and Arthur C. Walters to carry the mail on the Chambers star routes beginning July 1st. . . A surprise dance was held at the Kenneth Watt's home, Friday night, the occasion being Mrs. Watt's birthday. Word has been received from the west that Ernest Wilkinson and Almond Jenkins arrived at Oscar Greenstreet's in Sedro-Wooley, Wash., on March 26. . . W. P. A. workers arrived Tuesday at the farm occupied by F. D. Anderson and family, with over 17,000 shelter belt trees for planting there. . . Mrs. Gladys Oxford was having

some work done on the interior of her building, that is used as the Post Office, the latter part of last week.

Pages Past

50 YEARS AGO

Veterinary McKim of Norfolk was here Wednesday to inspect some horses that R. A. Sarchet is preparing to ship to Canada. . . The Oliver Hill family moved into the house south of the Hay residence Monday. . . J. B. Anderson of Dorsey shipped a car load of hogs to Sioux City last week from this station. . . Rain turning to snow last Friday turned into a raging blizzard, no trains running and Northwestern still not open a week later. . . Born to Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Leisy of Middle Branch March 13, a daughter. . . Rev. H. Jacobs has resigned as pastor of the Page Presbyterian church to take effect in April. . . The Charles Spear family are preparing to move to Murdo, S. D. . . Miss Emily Auten was a passenger to Iowa Thursday. . . R. P. Every of Kingfisher, Okla., arrived Tuesday and visited in the Bartley Blain home. . . Free cane seed to those planting for my mill is offered by A. D. Canada.

40 YEARS AGO

John R. Weber has shipped each week for two months four cars of hogs. . . W. H. Decker has come to Page to live on his 240 acre farm northwest of Page and

will also deal in real estate. . . Robert Gray Sr. celebrated his seventy sixth birthday March 10. That was also the 27th anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. J. I. Gray's marriage and from Sioux City came a wireless telling of the birth of a daughter born on that date. Parents, grandparents and great grandparents note the Mar. 10th date of 1847, 1896 and 1923. . . Funeral services were held Mar. 7 at the Wood home for Charles Leland Wood, 69, who died at the home of his brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. William Lines in Arizona on his way home from spending the winter in California. . . Survivors include Mrs. Minnie Moffat, Okarchie, Okla., Mrs. Emma Canada of Guernsey, Wyo., Mrs. Mary Flora, Fred Wood, Mrs. Winnie Haynes, Misses Grace, Nellie and Faye Wood and Edgar and Lewis, all of Page. Deceased are his wife, Melissa, daughters, Dora Belle, Mattie L. and sons Clarence and Charles L. . . C. A. Auten sold a team of horses Friday for \$60. . . A. E. Riggs turned lumber into a 6 by 7 playhouse for his children. . . A. C. Townsend Jr. issued an invitation to all to hear Cuba voiced over his big radio. . . Frank Allen built a house and barn on his farm. . . B. K. Kerna, an uncle of Mrs. H. A. Rakow, came to Page from Appleton, Wis., for a visit. . . Farmers team smashed R. J. Bryans Friday. Damages \$3.75 paid.

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case study

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"We can control the heat in each room — just as we like it . . . The even temperatures all over the house are just wonderful . . . My cleaning problems are nothing compared to what I had to do with the old-style heat." This is what open house visitors heard last month when they stopped by the new electrically-heated home of Roland and Frieda Weyers of Beatrice. Mrs. Weyers, like all enthusiastic people, did most of the talking. She's sold on her new home and all-electric living. And so is Mr. Weyers. "I've farmed most all of my life, and now I know what comfort really means," he said. The Weyers have 2,800 square feet on both the main level and the completely-finished basement level. Baseboard heating units supply silent and fast radiant electric warmth to both levels. An all-electric kitchen, full-house stereo sound and planned lighting add to the attraction of the low-lying Bedford stone home. "And whether we just sit and visit — or if we're actively square dancing — electric heat provides just the right temperatures," Mrs. Weyers explains. Why don't you investigate radiant, flameless electric heat. Your local utility can tell you all about it — no obligation, of course.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC POWER SYSTEM

CONSUMERS PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

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Editorial

Why Editors Get Grey

Dear Editor:
 We've taken your paper for 20 years and like it first rate. When it comes on a Thursday we look up the grocery ads and then make our list for Saturday Buying. There is usually bargains and good buys. There is news from all over the territory. We've lived in different places and like that and we always look for the farm sales. I am a big reader and you put out a good paper but it could be better, especially for us women.

We don't care so much for what's went on around here 50 years ago or for them notes about big deals or law doings and such but what we feel is that there is a lot of the best stuff is being held back and what we'd like to hear is like I heard at our little sewing club meeting last week.

There is 8 of us ladies and what all I heard at the last meeting would just make the hair stand on end. Such awful goings on by people right here in town.

It is just awful but we can't judge each other if we don't have the facts.

Of course I'm no newspaper man so I can't put these things out and anyway my man has put the lid on me. He says one word of this slop as he calls it and we could be sued and they'd take every cent we've got and we've worked too hard for our stuff but a newspaper is different and anyway they're supposed to give us the news and I figure if I heard that much at just one ladies club meeting that you editors who go to lots of clubs and meetings could hear enough to really get us up a paper that would do something for you.

Don't thank me, it's just an outsider can sometimes see a different move.

Sincerely,
 A Faithful Subscriber

P.S. My husband says to tell you that our boy wasn't driving 1 mile over the speed limit the other night and if you put his name in the paper in the court news you can cancel our subscription.

B J R

Dismal Prospect

The bill providing for health care for the elderly which has been introduced in this Congress varies from the Medicare bill of last year only in minor details. It would bring everyone drawing social security benefits under the federal tent — whether or not they wanted or needed the aid. Administration estimates place the cost at \$5.6 billion over a four-year period — and that is hardly pin money, particularly when looked at in the light of current budget and tax problems. Other estimates, from informed sources, place the possible figure at twice

that sum.

Peter Edson, a well known Washington columnist, provides an interesting footnote to the proposal. An effort is being made to get rid of the name Medicare, which is an obvious bad odor in and out of Congress, and to substitute a term such as "hospital insurance". But social security is not insurance in any accepted sense of the term — and the Internal Revenue Service itself is authority for that statement. In the case of an Amish farmer who refused to make his social security payments on the grounds it was insurance, the IRS ruled that it was a tax. And it seized and sold the farmer's horses in order to meet the tax.

That aside, the American Medical Association News does a good job of summing up the grave faults in the bill in these words: "It would lower the quality of health care, it would lead to the decline of voluntary health insurance and prepayment plans, it would take another bite out of the take-home pay of America's wage-earners to provide benefits for millions who can well afford to take care of themselves, and it would impose government controls on medical practice."

It would be hard to think of a more dismal prospect than that.

GREENSBURG, IND., TIMES: "Only 16 of the nation's 50 states have laws that guarantee all men the right to work where and when they wish. And these laws are jeopardized by whims of the courts."

THE FRONTIER

BILL RICHARDSON, Publisher
 BRUCE J. REHBERG, Editor

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