

# Phelps Helps



Volume 19, Issue 1

Spring 2011

**Meetings held at the  
Nebraska Prairie  
Museum  
on the first Monday  
of the month at  
2:00 PM.**

**The public is  
welcome!**

Visit us on the Web!  
Phelps Helps Web Page via  
<http://users.atcjet.net/psdesigns>



**New 2011 Holdrege Area  
Genealogy Club  
Officers:**

President:  
Carol Davis

Vice President:  
Sandra Slater

Secretary:  
Margaret Stutheit

Treasurer:  
Ada Hinson

Phelps Helps Editor:  
Patti Simpson

## Nebraska State Genealogy Board

President Floyd Smith asked if the Nebraska State Genealogy Board could meet at Nebraska Prairie Museum on February 19, 2011. The N.S.G.S. Board came at 10:00 a.m. and we arranged a lunch to be served at noon. We gave the board members a tour of the museum and they continued their meeting until 3:00 p.m.

The board meets four times a year and are now making arrangements for the State Genealogy Meeting to be held at Nebraska City on Friday and Saturday, May 6 and 7, 2011. It was a good opportunity for us to show off our fine museum and genealogy library. They had great praise for the museum.

## New Books At The Library

### On loan from Dorothy Richmond

- ⇒ Virginia Research Notebook, Vol. 5 & Vol. 6
- ⇒ A Handy Guide To The Genealogical Library and Church History Department
- ⇒ The Heimerick Steiner and Ver-na Ehrisman Family book, 1774 -1979
- ⇒ Gateway to the West Ohio Vol. No. 3
- ⇒ The South Carolina Magazine of Ancestral Research 1977
- ⇒ Immigration, Digest 2, 1987
- ⇒ Ohio Genealogical Guide

- ⇒ National Society Daughters of the American Revolution in Nebraska
- ⇒ Sommerholder Family History
- ⇒ Philadelphia to North Carolina – The Early History of Jury Friederich Hiltzbeck

### Donated from the Holdrege Public Library

- ⇒ The United States Census Compendium
- ⇒ Holdrege City Directory

## Orphan Children Find Homes

**July 23, 1908**

**Orphans Brought to City to be cared for  
Were all placed  
Agent J. L. Swan, of Children Aid's Society,  
Spends Week Here  
Much Interest**

Nine orphan children have been given homes in this City during the past week. Mr. J. W. Swan, state agent for the Children's Aid Society of New York arrived here the latter part of the week with twelve parentless children. Since that time nine of the children have found comfortable homes.

Mr. Swan was in Holdrege a couple of weeks ago and made arrangements for bringing the children here. He selected a committee of investigation composed of members of the local clergy and businessmen. This committee received applications for the children and advised the agent as to the suitability of the houses offered.

Every person applying for one of the children was obliged to sign a contract with the Society in which the former agreed to give the child so much schooling and provide him comfortably with clothing and necessities. Another requirement placed on the guardians of the children was that they should attend church and Sunday school. No child can be adopted until after six months residence with the family and if found unsatisfactory the child must be cared for until the Society can make other disposition of the orphan.

The following children have found homes in the city and community; Nellie Patten, 10 years old, with C. N. Morris; Edward Patten, 5 with

William Douglas; Oliver Patten, 2 ½ with Paul Peterson; Florence Pavolovic, 6 years old with George M. Lee; Gertrude McNish, age 10 years old with A. A. Johnson; Homer Hayden, 12 years old with Alfred F. Anderson, 3 miles southeast of Holdrege; Fred Benneisen, 10 years old with S. Schrock, 3 miles north of Holdrege; Frank Pavolovic, 10 years old with Frank Alder. The following Children are still unplaced: Joe Pavolovic, 12 years old; Stephen Pavolovic, 8 years old; Andrew McNish, 6 years old; Henry Patten, 9 years old.

The children who have not been given homes were left in care of the local committee and with Miss Hill at the Central hotel. Mr. Swan left Tuesday night where he will take another company of children.

(Please note that through previous research we know that the Patten children names were Potter which was their mother's name. Because of the circumstances of the parent's history, the home had changed their name which was originally Schirman.)

### **The McNish Children Come To Holdrege**

We have information on a number of children that came on the orphan train to Holdrege. Their stories are sometimes lost or forgotten. We received a request from Kathryn Solz for additional information on the McNish children that came to Holdrege in August of 1908. Her grandmother was Gertrude McNish who was raised by Abe and Marie (Boehl) Johnson. There

*(Orphans Continued on page 3)*

*(Orphans Continued from page 2)*

were two other brothers Harold and Andrew McNish who were also raised or adopted by two other Phelps County families. Kathryn especially wants more information on Andrew McNish after the Stoltz family moved to Canada. Her address is 292-96 Lane N.E., Blaine, Minnesota 44334. Thank you Kathryn for letting us share this letter with our members.

Below is a copy of a letter Kathryn sent us from the Children Aid Society which may help other researchers locating information about their orphan train relatives. Children's Aid Society's email address is [www.childrenaidsociety.org](http://www.childrenaidsociety.org)

\* \* \*

*Dear Ms. Stolz,*

*You asked us to tell you why Gertrude, Harold and Andrew McNish were moved out of New York and what happened to the family during this period. Here is what we know.*

*William and Elizabeth McNish lived in New York with their three children, Gertrude born on September 22nd 1897, Harold born on August 4th, 1889, and Andrew born on April 23, 1902. Sadly, Elizabeth died in August of 1904 and six months later on February 26, 1906 all three children were placed in the Home of Destitute Children and stayed there until July 28, 1908 when they arrived by train in Holdrege, Nebraska. Gertrude was eleven, Harold nine, and Andrew six. William, their father died four years later in 1912 of tuberculosis.*

*I don't think we will ever know why the children were put in the Home for Destitute Children, but we can speculate. William might have known that he was very sick and had a short*

*time to live. (This was years before Dr. Trudo started his treatments of Tuberculosis patients in upper New York State. Had Trudo's work been earlier, William might have been saved.) William might have been unable to work or conversely his job may have prevented him from caring for the children. Whatever the reason, even if he felt the placement was just for a short time until he would take the children back, it must have been a difficult decision.*

*Once the children were orphaned the Home for Destitute Children surely started looking for opportunities to put the children in homes. This agency was one of the few that had the legal right to place the children in homes which is the reason that the children were sent to us. Few families in the city wanted to take in children. There were many children who lived on the streets. There were still horses and buggies, the streets were filthy, disease was rampant...survival was indeed a rough sport. Children's Aid felt strongly that children belonged in homes and not orphanages. Clean air, wholesome food, welcoming homes seemed the best path to take, even if it meant traveling to another part of this country. Farming families and communities in the south, west and mid-west needed help and they welcomed the children because of the extra hands they provided.*

*The records show that Howard was placed by J. W. Swan and A. L. Hill, members of our staff, with Mr. and Mrs. Harold Dravo (Harold is incorrect and should be Sam A. Dravo) who had two grown daughters. Harold was a trial lawyer and Mrs. Dravo a cultivated woman. They lived in an especially nice and finely furnished home in Holdrege, Nebraska. The home life seemed splendid and our staff felt that Harold would be*

*(Orphans Continued on page 4)*

*(Orphans Continued from page 3)*

*well taken cared for. They were correct in this assumption.*

*Over the years starting with 1908, Children's Aid Staff visited all the children we had placed in the homes where they were located, and in between visits, letters were exchanged between the staff, family and children quite often. The daughters of Harold Dravo said that Harold fit so well into the family that they could not remember a time when he had not been a part of the family. And Harold for his part said that this was such a perfect home that he was sure the stork had simply taken him to the wrong house first. It seemed that Harold was the leader in the house if not the light. He was bright and quick and answered questions with original thoughts.*

*Harold McNish loved school and rarely missed a day except to play hooky occasionally so that he could go on fishing expeditions with his new father, Harold Dravo. Visits from and with the staff, Miss Bogardus, Miss Hill, and B. W. Tice, continued through 1927 and the reports were glowing. Harold was strong, well liked, fond of athletics, a great football and baseball player, musical and a member of the band and an excellent student.*

*The Dravos' would have adopted him except for the fact that they had raised two nieces and did not adopt them so adopting Harold would certainly cause trouble they did not want to have. (A note from Kathryn Stolz states that Harold McNish was not adopted by the Dravo family until Harold went to fight in World War I. As an orphan, Harold was not considered a legal relative and the Dravo family would have no rights to Harold*

*McNish if anything happened to him during the war. This is the reason the family adopted him.)*

*Harold enlisted in World War I in 1918 when he would have been 29. After the war he came home and married and settled in Holdrege. Our records on Harold end here.*

*Andrew McNish, Harold's younger brother, was taken from the Home of Destitute Children, in Brooklyn, New York, at the same time as Harold. In August of 1908, our staff member A. W. Harbaugh took Andrew to Holdrege, Nebraska where he was joined by A. L. Hill and J. W. Swan. For some reason Andrew did not stay in Holdrege, Nebraska, but was taken to Bartley, Nebraska and placed temporarily with William H. Ebbeka for a year or until the staff from the Children's Aid came back for their yearly visit. Ebbeka's was not the perfect home or farm for Andrew. Ebbeka it seemed was only concerned about the money he would receive for boarding Andrew. In July of 1909 the committee (our staff) was back in Nebraska and Andrew was placed with the Samuel F. and Pearl Stoltz family just 2 miles north and 5 miles west of Holdrege. The Stoltz's had an excellent home, no children, had an organ, a telephone and a small library. They expected to move near Humboldt, Nebraska and indeed they found a home in Dawson, Nebraska shortly after Andrew arrived. Pearl Stoltz writes that little Andrew is a fine boy and beloved by all his friends. He does his school work and there are no problems. He has improved greatly since leaving William Ebbeka's farm. The Stoltz's are considering adoption. By December 26, 1911 all the papers are in order and on February 21, 1912 in the court records, the county judge of Richardson County, Nebraska, there is a certified*

*(Orphans Continued on page 5)*

*(Orphans Continued from page 4)*

*copy of the decree adoption of Andrew McNeish by Samuel F. Stoltz and Pearl Stoltz, his wife. Andrew's name became Andrew Stoltz.*

*On June 19, the Stoltz's are visited by Children's Aid, Andrew is now adopted, and the family is going to leave for Nokomis, Saskatchewan, Canada. Miss Bogardus has recently seen Gertrude and read a letter that she, Gertrude, has received from Andrew. Gertrude says Andrew is very happy as is shown on his photo in the file.*

*Gertrude McNish was placed on August 4, 1908 by J. W. Swan and A. L. Hill in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Johnson on Sherman Avenue in Holdrege, Nebraska. Mr. Johnson was a miller and considered to be quite well off. They are about to move to a nice new home just completed; a cottage with modern conveniences and beautifully finished inside. Mrs. Johnson is quite an artist, working both in oil and water colors. Mr. Swan, Ms. Hill, and Tice all took turns visiting the family and all was well until January 11, 1910 when Mr. Swan came for visit and learned that Mrs. Johnson was having quite a lot of trouble with Gertrude who was willful and sometimes sassy. Swan talked to her and explained that she might lose her home if she did not behave better. And a year later when Ms. Hill visited she found something different; a beautiful and nice-appearing girl who was well-behaved and in a most excellent home. School work was mostly satisfactory and in addition she was taking music and painting lessons. On her vacation she expected to spend most of her time on Mrs. Johnson's sister's farm.*

*From 1910 until 1915 Gertrude is in her last year of high school. She expects to marry in June and to a highly respected young man, in fact a partner in the flour mill of her foster father. His father died leaving him his share of the mill. Gertrude's foster parents approve of the marriage.*

*January 8, 1927 Gertrude is living in Holdrege. Our last contact with her was in 1951 when she was in New York for the day and appeared, looking very prosperous at 150 East 45th Street where our archives were located. She wanted to find the house in Brooklyn and information if possible about relatives. I do not know the results of this. (Kathryn Solz "The information in the letter about my grandmother Gertrude looks as to be accurate with what is written there. She had a sometime difficult relationship with Marie Johnson but the Johnson's made sure she had a good education, learned to play the piano, attended church, and learned to cook and bake all before she was married to my grandfather, Howard J. Johnson. Her relationship with Abram Johnson was close. I remember visiting with him when we came to Holdrege, we would pick him up from the home where he was living and take him for a drive through the countryside. He was very quiet, but we all enjoyed the time we spent with Abraham Johnson.")*

*I hope Kathryn, this adds to the knowledge that you already have. The three children, despite their early beginning, had good lives.*

*Truda Jewett, Director of Archives  
Children's Aid Society  
150 East 45th Street  
New York, New York 10017*

## Freewater, Harlan County, Nebraska

**Manuscript Drawn Up by  
C.R. Porter for his 90th  
Birthday, March 3, 1920**

**By Charles R. Potter**

In the spring of 1879 we moved from the old farm at Red Cloud to our homestead and timber claim, where we built a little building 16x24 feet. Into this building I put a few goods I had a hut of 14x32, 18 feet high with six living rooms over the store. We lived there for about four years, until I was able to build the warehouse on the west, the full length of the store and a wing on the house, making the entire building 32x54.

People that lived in sod houses and dug outs were very much pleased to have a store and warehouse with the capacity of mine and it was

**NOTE:** The Phelps Helps Newsletter highlights Harlan County in this section. With many of our subscribers interested in and from Harlan County, and since Harlan County is a connecting county to Phelps County, the Phelps Helps will publish history information on Harlan County.

very pleasant there. We raised an abundance of hogs, killing about 100 a year and sold to my customers and sold to three times as many on an average in market. People used to wonder how we

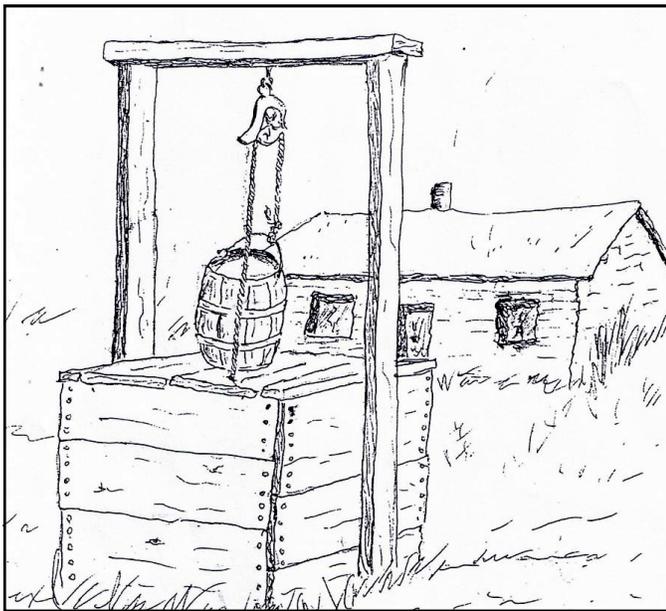
could haul our goods clear from Kearney and sell so cheaply as the cities of Bloomington, Kearney and Hastings. My argument was "We were under our own vine and fig tree and hadn't the taxes to pay that the people had in the cities."

I kept the place at Red Cloud for the timber and used it for posts, rails, and wood and hauled it to Freewater where we lived. I sold the rest of it to Red Cloud where I had a wood yard with brother Sebra looked after for me. Then after building the store on the homestead, I stocked it up with everything the people needed---dry goods, clothing and even had implements, cultivators, wagons, plows, riding plows, everything the farmer required.

The picture of the house are in the minds of those who are interested, but the individuals that bought the place had another place and didn't see fit to keep it and sold it to John Terman who made the wing of the house for the wing of his house and it made him a good home. He took the store part and made a barn of it and those buildings are still in existence, just one mile from where they originally stood.

I want to speak of the way Freewater got its name. The freighters themselves named the place. They would stop at Walker's Ranch and consult about where they could stop. At the ranch-

*(Freewater Continued on page 7)*

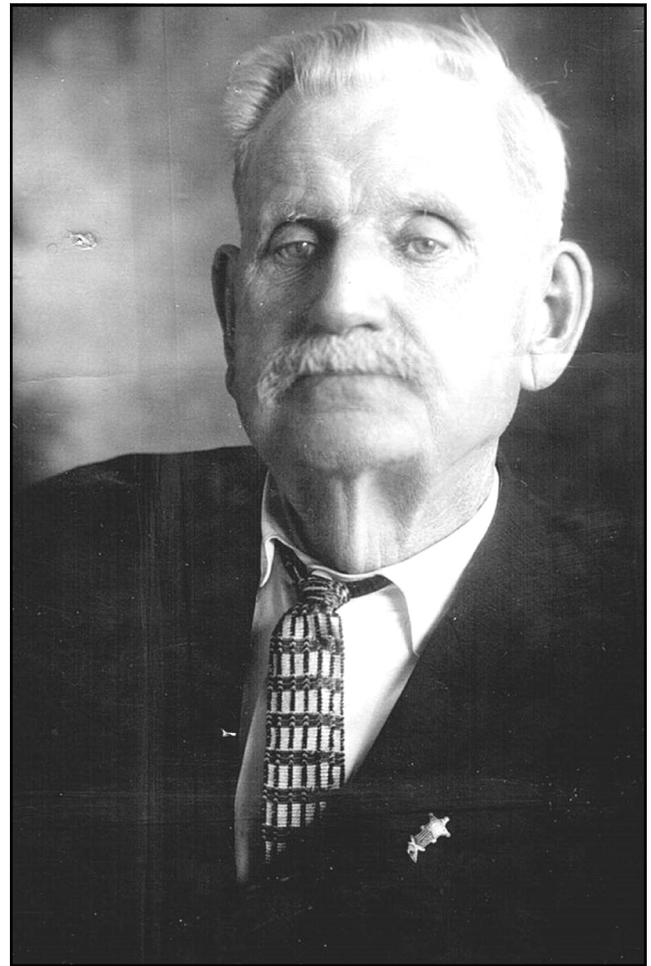


*This is a drawing of the store and well at the community of Freewater. It was drawn by Lester Golter and is in a book written by Lester Golter called, Freewater Where I Grew Up."*

*(Freewater Continued from page 6)*

es they had to pay 10 cents per team and 25 cents per barrow for water and would have to draw it for themselves from the deep wells. If they went on to John Elliott's sod house, they could get it for nothing. John Elliott put down the first well on the prairie. Allan helped put it down and got water from there, but the well was on John's place. Then when I built the store, I called it Freewater store and the mail came to be Freewater post office which was conducted for years by John Elliott and then it fell into hands of his sister Mrs. Holms and finally to John Hawksby, an old uncle of the Elliott's and Holms's. Allan and John Elliott started the first burying ground and it cornered with my homestead. Now that cemetery is a very nice country cemetery.

When the different towns started up, it didn't look reasonable to stay and draw the trade away from the town and the railroad. Wilcox was started in 1886 and I built a store with a hall overhead. The building was 24x54 on the ground and 22 feet high. I also built my house there. Next I built a mill and elevator, but these burned down a few years later. I rebuilt the mill, a new structure 30x70, but at that time Wilcox possessing three elevators, did not deem it expedient to re-build the



*C. R. Potter*

elevator. Later I traded the mill for equity in five quarters or 800 acres of land. Then I moved my hardware store from Wilcox to Ragan and built a general store and lived in the rear of it. In 1886, I sold the Ragan general store to Charles Holmes and then moved into the farm and went improving the different farms, buildings and houses and barns. It pleased me and my people to see the homesteader pleased to see us help improve the country as we did. Now they are practically all gone and it seems sometime to be lonesome to me because now I am 90 years old and nearly all the old homesteaders have passed away.

—Charles R. Potter



## By Andrew M. Brown—Mayfield, New York on His 90th Birthday—Sept. 1965 ~ Part 2

*This is Part Two of the story of homesteading in Nebraska by the Hollenbeck and Mortimer families, as told in reminiscences to his wife, Edith.*

When Uncle Rob came home from New York and Vermont, Aunt Martha Jane's brother, Halsey J. Whitney, came with them. He was sixteen years old. He became an important part of the family.

Another important thing that happened was the Pleasant Ridge Sunday School, which was organized April 27, 1884. The first officers were Jerome Yearous as superintendent and John O. Watson as secretary treasurer. P. Schrack was librarian, and the teachers were D. C. Durkee, Mrs. Yearous, Mrs. Shipp and Robert Mortimer. They met every Sunday at three in the afternoon.

I should remember when Holdrege started. I suppose it was when the railroad came through. I think certain tracks of land were set aside as townships, the same as school section (9). There was a water tank and a place for coal. I think soon someone settled there, and the town was started. All the buildings at Phelps Center, nine or ten miles away, we moved to Holdrege and it became the county seat. The move must have been quite a project. They used ten teams to draw a building. Dad had teams there.

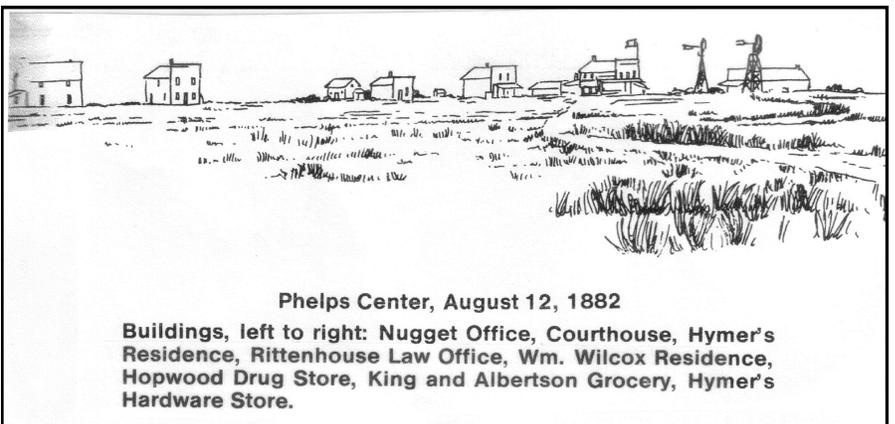
In a way Holdrege was a help to us all, even Aunt Sate. Some sportsmen were staying at the hotel. They came out to hunt wild ducks and had no luck. They saw Aunt Sate's ducks, bought some, and had them cooked at the

hotel. After that she could hardly raise enough to supply the hotel.

All the land was now taken up. A few families sold and went back east, but many moved west. A family by the name of Cobb from Indiana bought land from us. They were a large and lively family, nine children I think. Lige later married Nell Cobb. Peter Schrack had settled farther north of us.

About this time, Aunt Martha Jane's two brothers, Oscar and John Whitney, came and they wanted to homestead. Uncle Rob sold out to Dad and they moved to Colorado and took up land west of Sterling, near Stonham. They moved in three wagons and with several head of cattle. They had some bad luck on the way; one of Uncle Rob's horses died, and they had to put Harlsey's sad horse on the wagon. They all built houses on their land. I don't think the land proved to be too good, it was too dry. They sold it back to the government. Today it is covered with oil wells.

I don't think anyone missed Uncle Rob as much as I did. I spent all the time I could in his



Phelps Center, August 12, 1882

Buildings, left to right: Nugget Office, Courthouse, Hymer's Residence, Rittenhouse Law Office, Wm. Wilcox Residence, Hopwood Drug Store, King and Albertson Grocery, Hymer's Hardware Store.

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*(Hollenbeck Continued from page 8)*

blacksmith shop. He let me have his tools and taught me how to use them, provided I put them back where they belonged.

One thing I so remember was important to me. Somehow I got an old shotgun without any stock. I got a piece of two-by-four and whittled for days making a stock. I expect Uncle Rob helped me. Anyhow, after it was all finished, I went hunting jack rabbits. I must have been a pretty small boy, for others told me afterwards that I came in with two hanging on my shoulders and the tips of their ears touched the ground. The wonder of it all is how Aunt Sade ever let me have a gun.

Aunt Martha Jane was good to all of us too. She must have been baking or cooking most

of her time for she always had some for us. I surely got in wrong with her once. It must have been the first years we lived there. We children had to keep the cattle out of the gardens and the crops. I had a long whip with a lash on it, and for what of something to do, would snap it around weeds. I snapped it at one of Aunt Martha's hens, and the lash wound around its neck. She saw me and I ran, dragging the hen. She came after me, and how she could run! When I saw she was going to catch me, I stopped. While she was getting the hen loose, I got away. She told me what she would do to me if she ever caught me, so I was careful not to go near her house, but one day she came out and gave me cookies, so I knew everything was alright.

*To Be Continued In The Next Issue...*

## New Members & Queries

**1. Paul Heinzman**  
13180 NE Stoller Rd.  
Ongton, OR 97114

Paul is researching Civil War Veteran James Heinzman born in 1827 in VA and died in Holdrege, Nebraska on March 22, 1910. He married Mary Kerns Heinzman August 9, 1857 in Nebraska and died 3 August 1883. They had two children that didn't survive. He then married Mary Caswell July 18, 1886 at Holdrege, NE. and had two children Horace and Mamie. Mary Caswell Heinzman died 9 March 1928.

**2. Kathryn Solz**  
292-96 LN. N.E.  
Blaine, MN 44334

**3. Janice N. Zlatez**  
59 Jericho Path  
Falmouth, MA  
02540-3615

Janice is searching Albert S. Hanson, born 29 Mar 1872 and died 30 Mar 1970 and his wife Selma, born 13 Feb 1877 and died 2 Sep 1933. They are buried in Adullam Cemetery in Phelps County Nebraska. She would also like information on John Pearson, born 1890 and died 1931 and

his wife Anna born in 1876 and died in 1936. They are buried in Sandstrom Cemetery.

**4. Banna McQueen**  
2130 U. S. Highway 24  
Stockton, KS 67669

**5. James E. Almquist**  
424 Switzer Ln  
Thornton, CO 80260

James is interested in Ragan and the history surrounding the area and in Immanuel Lutheran Church and Cemetery.

# Hobos Hold Up Fellow Passengers

## Sheriff Hanson and Posse Have Busy Afternoon When Freight Breaks Down

### Holdrege Progress ~ 14 August 1930

Sheriff and a hastily gathered posse went to Funk last week to quell a bunch of hobos who were determined to relieve their fellow travelers on Freight No. 77 of their available cash.

It appears that as the train left Funk, one of the engines of a double header went dead and the cars were left on the siding at Funk while the live engine hauled the dead one into Holdrege for repairs.

The crew of tramps began to make things rather uncomfortable for the unsophisticated members of the party and was having pretty much their own way in demanding tribute, until the sheriff and his party arrived on the scene.

When the officers put in their appearance the "Bo's" took to the tall corn and the officers, augmented by a number of Funk citizens began rounding them up.

Twenty-one were loaded into a truck and brought to Holdrege where they were held for safe-keeping, a few at a time being liberated to catch an outgoing freight, at various intervals.

A few of those having money in their possessions were escorted to a depot and required to buy tickets to other destinations.

The local police and the sheriff are endeavoring to keep the town clear of undesirable characters and as each bunch arrives they are warned to be on the move. One colored man included in the bunch said that he saw more law on this trip than he had seen in his life.

