

EVIL OBSESSION

Cemetery Tour 2013

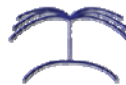
<i>Twilight Tour</i>	<i>Outdoor Performance</i>	<i>Indoor Performance</i>
September 20th	September 21st	September 24th
4 - 7:30 PM	1 - 5 PM	7 PM
North Platte Cemetery Rodeo Rd - North Platte NE	North Platte Cemetery Rodeo Rd - North Platte NE	Quality Inn & Suites 21025 Jeffers - North Platte NE

This year's tour explores one of North Platte's more infamous residents, Annie Cook, as well as several people whose lives she destroyed in her conquest for money, fame, and wealth.



This event will
take place
rain or shine

North Platte Public Library
FOUNDATION



1. Annie Cook
2. Clara Cook
3. Lizzie Knox
4. Mary Knox-Cauffman
5. Sarah Martin and Joe Cook

6. Leonard Coley
7. Violet Gosney
8. Sheriff Berthe
9. William Maloney
10. Ada Kelly



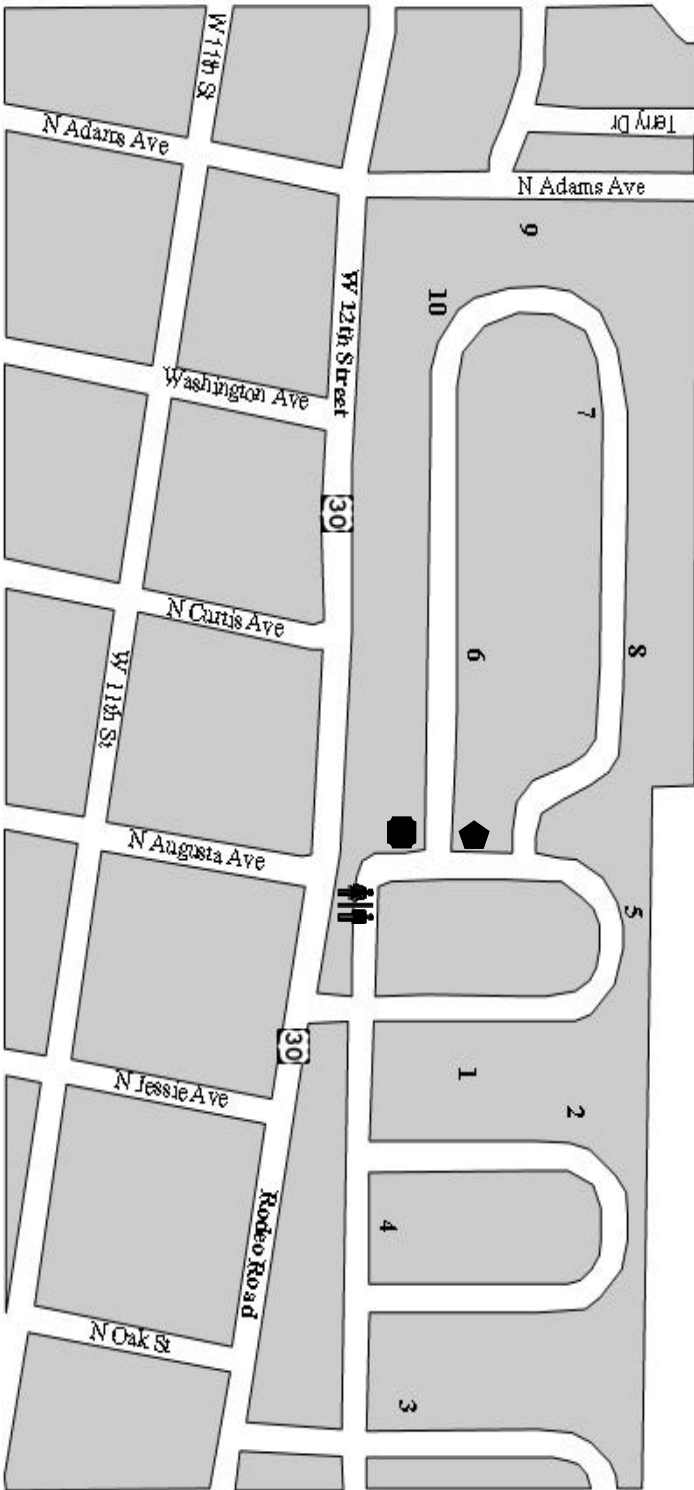
Restrooms



Symbols in the Cemetery Workshop



Lincoln County History Museum
(Local History Books for Sale)



Preface from
Evil Obsession, the Annie Cook story
by Nellie Snyder Yost

This is a grim story, the tale of an insane woman's evil obsession that scarred and/or ruined the lives of many people, written in the hope that the facts set forth will awaken readers to their duty and obligation to report knowledge of any known abuse to the proper authorities and see that something is done to put an end to it. Do not "look the other way," and permit it to go on, as the people in this tale did.

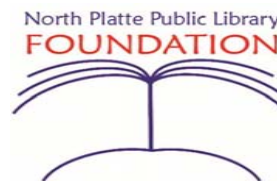
At the time of Annie Cook's death in the early '50s, and the probate of her estate, the local papers carried lurid stories of the goings on at the Cook Poor Farm. Soon afterward an acquaintance told me I should write a book about Annie, and introduced me to Joe Cook, the boy who grew up on the Poor Farm after Annie supposedly poisoned his mother, and who could tell me all about it.

Interested, I talked to Joe, and then went to call on Mary, Annie's niece. I shall never forget that afternoon. Mary, a sixtyish woman with a lined, care-worn face, came to the door of her modest north-side home. I introduced myself and told her I wanted to talk about Annie Cook. A stricken expression came to her kindly face as she cried out, "Oh no, I can't talk about it. I don't even want to *think* about it." Her too evident pain made me regret that I had come. Apologizing, I turned away and started back to my car. Then she called me back. "Come in," she said, "I'll tell you what you want to know."

All that afternoon she poured out her memories of the years she had spent under her aunt's abusive hand and tongue, recalling the torture and starvation she had endured for sixteen years, telling me of the night she had run from Annie and her murderous butcher knife, to walk, barefoot through the rain and darkness to town and help. The telling of it seemed to bring immense relief to the good woman, who had lived with it for so long.

But it took me days to recover from the horror of what I heard that afternoon. It was as if I had listened to a ghastly tale about medieval England or France. *I could not believe that such things had actually happened in western Nebraska, in my own Lincoln County, in the twentieth century in which I live.*

Over the years that followed, Joe told me more and more of what he



Information about the North Platte Public Library Foundation

The North Platte Public Library (NPPL) Foundation began in 2002. The NPPL Foundation exists to promote and enhance the North Platte Public Library as a community resource through fundraising and providing gifting opportunities.

The NPPL Foundation accepts tax deductible gifts through Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation, providing IRS 501 (c) (3) non-profit services to the NPPL Foundation.

The initial goal of the NPPL Foundation is to raise \$1 Million dollars to offset a future capital building campaign for the North Platte Public Library.

How do I make a financial contribution?

It is easy to gift! Simply send your check made out to NPPL Foundation to either:

NPPL Foundation
120 W 4th Street
North Platte NE 69101

Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation
PO Box 1321
North Platte NE 69103-1321

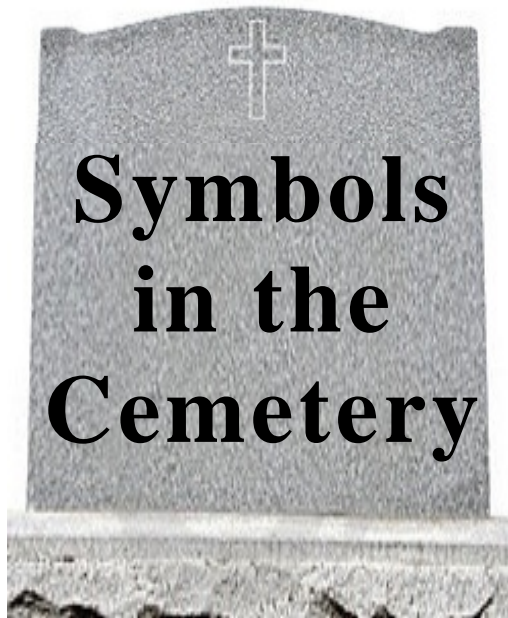
There is also an NPPL Foundation brochure available at the North Platte Public Library's Circulation desk. Or you can visit our website for more options and information: www.npplfoundation.org

I am on a budget, how else can I help?

The NPPL Foundation realizes that many people wish to contribute to a good cause, but may not have the financial resources to gift. The North Platte Public Library Foundation carries out numerous fundraising events, please think about volunteering your time to support or help with those events. If you would like to help with any of our events OR serve on the NPPL Foundation Board, please contact Cecelia Lawrence, NPPL Foundation Chairperson at 308-535-8036 X 3321.

What will my gift be used for?

The North Platte Public Library receives its primary operating funds from the City of North Platte. The NPPL Foundation is designed to provide support for major capital improvement projects such as a building expansion or new library construction project. The Foundation funds are not intended to provide ongoing support for basic collection maintenance or staffing.



Symbols in the Cemetery

**Don't forget
to stop by
Ruby Coleman's
station and listen to
her talk about the
various symbols that
appear on headstones
in our Cemetery!**

The fundraising efforts for a North Platte Cemetery Kiosk are complete. The Kiosk should be installed and available for public use during Memorial Day in 2014 (May 25, 2013).

THANK YOU

Thank you to the many individuals and business that make this tour possible:

- ♥ Tammy Hoatson, JJ's Bridal of North Platte
- ♥ North Platte Community Playhouse
- ♥ Lincoln County Historical Museum
- ♥ Richard Foran, antique car collector
- ♥ Scotty's Potties
- ♥ First National Bank
- ♥ North Platte Public Library Staff
- ♥ NPPL Foundation Board (Rob Martinson II, Colin Taylor, Traci McKeon, Sky Seery, Denise Skiles, and Bob Barnhouse)
- ♥ Event day staff (Bill Kackmeister, Sandy Erickson, Janice Martin, Rob Martinson II, Cecelia Lawrence, Sara Aden, Kaycee Anderson, John Seery)
- ♥ Actors (Carolyn Clark, Traci McKeon, Drew Phillips, Ila Smith, Jason Gale, Gene Gilsdorf, Shelly & Suzanne Deardoff, Andrew Lee, Teresa Smith, and Lois Lynn-Miles)
- ♥ North Platte Bulletin
- ♥ North Platte Telegraph
- ♥ KNOP-TV and KODY-Radio
- ♥ Railfest

remembered and throughout the hours I spent with him I marveled that his experiences had not turned him bitter, or emotionally twisted. Instead he seemed remarkably calm and composed, almost as if the unbelievable abuse he had undergone had happened to someone else.

In those early years of my initiation into Annie Cook's history, I realized that I could not write the story until the principle characters had all passed off the scene; all the county officials who had, actively or passively, aided and abetted Annie in her nefarious activities. However, I continued to question the people who had known her and to collect information. Always, it seemed they were eager to talk, to tell me what they knew.

As time went on and I finally prepared to write the book, I went to folks who had had a part in the story itself, such as the attorneys who had participated in the old woman's many court activities. Each time I approached such a person I feared being told he or she did not want to talk about it, that it was best kept quiet and forgotten. But this did not once happen. All the informants seemed willing, even eager, to tell me what they knew.

The result was a vast accumulation of notes and tapes, each helping to fill in the gaps, to complete the incredible tale of an evil woman and the hold she had on a county and its principle city for so many years. Of a woman who was not only greedy but who enjoyed hurting helpless people, whose insatiable ambition made her capable of allegedly killing her own daughter, then using her insurance money to buy the farm she had long coveted.

Most of the people she so cruelly abused escaped her only by dying or running away; all but her gentle sister Lizzie. Though many knew of Annie's inhumane treatment of Liz, no one had the courage to oppose the powerful old woman and try to rescue the helpless sister. Only Annie's own death released the suffering Lizzie.

Much of the dialog in this story is taken directly from court transcripts, or quoted from informants I interviewed or the old newspapers I read. I have used the real names of the Cook family and of a few individuals who opposed Annie and her schemes. All other names have been changed to preserve the privacy, or avoid embarrassment, of the people involved.

Nellie Snyder Yost
North Platte, NE
June, 1991



Annie Cook

Portrayed by Carolyn Clark.

Anna Mary Petske “Annie” was born in July of 1873. Her parents immigrated from Russia and moved to Denver, Colorado. Upon arriving in Denver, they opened a livery stable. The Cook’s had a large family and everyone worked hard. What angered Annie most was that the boys were paid for their work and the girls were not.

Annie married Frank Cook in 1893. One February 21, 1894, Clara Cook was born. She was the only child produced by this marriage. As far as Annie was concerned, Clara was just another employee. As soon as Clara was old enough, Annie put her to work in a brothel that Annie acquired in her many business dealings.

Annie’s life was driven by the almighty dollar and she didn’t waste any time settling into a life which became many years of her selfish, greedy, domination and abuse of anyone who crossed her path. Many North Platte residents knew and feared Annie. If they had to walk by her house, they walked on the opposite side of the road, afraid of the mean witch who lived in the Cook house.

Annie Cook died May 27, 1952 at the age of 79.

Sheriff Lyman Berthe

Portrayed by Gene Gilsdorf.



Lyman L Berthe was born on November 18, 1877 in Louisiana Pike, Missouri. He married his wife Loscennia Belle Ryan in North Platte on March 12, 1902. They had two children—Elizabeth and Auldwin. Lyman started working with the Union Pacific as a brakeman and ended his career with them as a conductor.

However, from 1923-1927, Lyman ran successfully against incumbent Sheriff Art Salisbury. Art Salisbury was sheriff from 1909 until his death in 1939, except for this one term. Sheriff Lyman was a good sheriff and did what he could to turn around the corrupt town of North Platte.

Lyman certainly had dealings with Annie Cook as he was Sheriff while she and Clara ran the Poor Farm. He was the one person who refused to bring Mary (Annie’s niece) back to Annie when she ran away at age 22.

Lyman was active in the community. He belonged to many civic organizations and religious groups. In addition, he was a member of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen and the order of Railway Conductors. He died on June 2, 1942 at age 64.

Ada Kelly

Portrayed by Ila Smith.

Aldorada “Ada” Otto was born on May 13, 1870 in Winslow, Wisconsin. She married Albert P. Kelly in March 1895 in Lincoln, Nebraska.

They moved to North Platte after they were married and had three children together: Louis, Esther, and Sarah. A. P. Kelly was the publisher of the Daily Telegraph and Ada was well known in the community for her philanthropic work.

She belonged to the American War Mothers, the American Legion auxiliary, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and was very involved with the Methodist Church.

Ada became involved with Annie Cook when Mary Knox ran away. Ada’s home was always welcome to young girls trying to get out of a life of prostitution. Sheriff Berthe brought Mary to Ada after she ran away. Ada worked hard to try to rehabilitate and encourage Mary. Ada also taught Mary about makeup, so she could cover up the burned scar on her face. Mary would not have survived without the help of Ada Kelly.

Upcoming NPPL Foundation Events

January 25, 2014



Jigsaw Puzzle Tournament

July 19, 2014—NEW EVENT!

*Keys for Life: Running & Reading
Family 5K Fun Walk Run Event*



September 19-20, 2014

Cemetery Tour

www.npplfoundation.org

Clara Cook

Portrayed by Teresa Smith.

Clara Cook was born on February 21, 1894 to Annie and Frank Cook in Hershey, Nebraska.

Clara learned early that she needed to work hard to please her mother. She also learned how to manipulate people, especially men.

Once Clara was approximately 12-13 years old, Annie took her to meet Jane in Omaha to train her to work in a brothel. Upon their return to North Platte, Annie had her working in the brothels she owned. It is rumored that Annie forced Clara to have a hysterectomy so she wouldn't get pregnant. Clara shared her mother's love of money and seemed to be following in her footsteps.

Clara and Annie did fight on just about any subject on a regular basis, but especially money. According to the book *Evil Obsession*: During one such argument, Annie became enraged with Clara and threw a stove lid iron at her. It hit Clara in the head and she dropped dead immediately. The public story that ran in the *North Platte Bulletin* stated that Clara Cook was dead, a victim of poison. The real cause of Clara Cook's death is unknown.

Clara died on May 29, 1934

Violet Gosney

Portrayed by Lois Lynn-Miles.

Violet Gosney was born on July 4, 1896 in Missouri. Violet was married at age 15 to Floyd L. Graham; they had a son and were soon divorced.

Violet owned a rooming house and operated a house of prostitution. She was the Madame of the house. Violet ran with a rough crowd, including Al Hastings, North Platte's very own mobster. Violet dated and eventually married Al Hastings main thug, Patrick McHugh.

Violet not only knew of Annie Cook, but she also attended many of Annie's parties. She learned quickly that Annie was a formidable Madame; but she knew that as long as she was with Pat McHugh and Al Hastings, Annie would stay on her own turf and not mess with her ladies of the evening.

Violet was accidentally shot in the leg while out hunting with Pat McHugh. She suffered tremendously with the gunshot, but once it became gangrenous, the leg was amputated. She became known as the one-legged prostitute and Madame.

Violet died on May 30, 1986 at age 90 in Los Angeles, California.



Lizzie Knox

Portrayed by Shelly Deardoff.

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Louis Petske Knox was born February 26, 1878 in Denver, Colorado. Lizzie was a happy, friendly child who loved helping her parents with their livery stable.

Unfortunately, her sister Annie had other ideas. Annie convinced their parents that Lizzie's mental status was so low that she would never find a husband. So Annie invited Lizzie to come and live with her, promising that she would take good care of her little sister.

Lizzie moved to Hershey, Nebraska in the summer of 1900 and thus began her lifetime of abuse by Annie. But Lizzie had a secret—she had began a friendship with a man from Hyannis, Nebraska—Joe Knox. They were eventually married and Lizzie moved to Hyannis. They had one child, a little girl named Mary.

But by 1905, Annie convinced Lizzie she had changed. So Lizzie and Mary came for a visit. Lizzie never left Annie's farm until Annie died in 1952. Mary tried several times to rescue her mother from Annie's grip, but never succeeded.

Lizzie lived with Mary until her death on September 9, 1958.

Mary Knox

Portrayed by Suzanne Deardoff.



Mary Knox was born on July 13, 1902 in Hyannis, Nebraska. When Mary and her mother went to visit Annie Cook in 1905, Mary was only 3 years old and not of any use to Annie. So Annie sent her to live with her brother in Colorado. As soon as Mary was of use to Annie as a farm-hand, Annie went and brought her back to the farm.

Annie tortured both Mary and her mother. They both endured physical and mental abuse. Mary tried several times as a teenager to run away, only to be brought back to Annie's farm by Sheriff Salisbury. But when Mary was 22, she got in a horrible fight with Annie and Annie stabbed her. Mary ran away and thankfully, this time found herself with Sheriff Berthe. Berthe stated that Mary was free, white and over 21 years of age, so she did not have to return to Annie Cook's farm if she didn't want to return.

Mary was free at last. She adapted to a world without mental and physical abuse with the help of Ada Kelly. Ada was a kind Christian woman who did everything she could to rehabilitate those who had fallen into "a bad way."

Mary married twice. Her second husband was her great love, Lewis Cauffman. She died July 10, 1987.



William Maloney

Portrayed by Andrew Lee.

William Maloney was born in Green County, Iowa on September 18, 1882. He came to Nebraska with his family and in 1898, eventually moved west to North Platte.



In 1902 William went to work for C.A. Howe in his furniture and hardware store. After a period of time, he got into the undertaking business (funeral home), making \$28 per month. William stayed with Mr. Howe's business and was such an outstanding employee, that Howe sent him to the Hohenschuh School of Embalming in Omaha to improve his skills. After Mr. Howe's death in 1914, William took total control of the business and made it W.R. Maloney Co. Mr. Maloney was a very well-respected member of the community and very involved in all matters of the city, county and state.

Being very involved in community affairs meant he was also good friends with Annie Cook. He was a regular visitor out at the County Poor Farm. Maloney took care of many of the mysterious deaths that occurred at the farm. Mr. Maloney was also chairman of the North Platte Cemetery Association and was well-known for his style of "cutting corners" when it came to burying the poor residents of our community.

Leonard "Cac" Coley

Portrayed by Jason Gale.

Leonard E. "Cac" Coley was born about 1914 in Nebraska. Leonard was one of eleven children born to Edward and Bertha Coley. Once in North Platte, Cac married Vivian Fremont and they had a little girl, Jodell.

Cac worked as a car salesman for Al Eighmy and first met Annie Cook when she bought a car from him. He had heard all the Cook rumors and stories but he believed that she would be his ticket to prosperity, wealth and land.

After Joe Cook left for the military nobody was around to help out Annie; so Cac became her gardener, her chauffeur, her companion and some suspect, her lover. They had deed papers drawn up making the Cook estate his. Annie signed the documents and a notary made them legal.

After Annie died, her whole estate was supposed to be left to Cac Coley. But people and businesses filed liens against Annie's estate until there was hardly anything left for Cac Coley. The Court case drug on for years. Some people got their money, some settled out of court; and some received nothing.

Cac Coley didn't end up with much, certainly not what he thought he deserved. Coley died on February 2, 1975 and is buried in Cody, Wyoming.

Sarah Martin

Portrayed by Traci McKeon.

Sarah Martin was born on March 1885 in South Dakota. At age 15, she is listed as a student at the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb in Omaha Nebraska.

Sarah was orphaned before she had quite finished her schooling and had gone into housekeeping to support herself. Researchers believe that she was a housekeeper until she became pregnant by the married man of the house. She ended up in a home for unwed mothers in Omaha until Joe was born. She and little Joe ended up in the North Platte Poor House.

The Poor House at that time was being run by Mrs. Emma Pulver. In 1925, Mrs. Pulver lost the County Contract for the poor and the new owners, Clara and Annie Cook took over. Sarah's life became one of misery and torture by Annie's hand.

Ada Kelly arranged to take Sarah and Joe away from Annie. Sarah mysteriously died the night before she was to leave. Somehow she drank carbolic acid instead of her headache medicine. Sarah was 40 years old. It is unknown where she is buried, but researchers believe it may be in the *Potter's Field* part of the North Platte Cemetery (section where poor people were buried in un-named and un-marked graves).

Joe Cook

Portrayed by Drew Phillips.

Joseph Martin Cook was born July 13, 1919 to Sarah Martin. Joe was a young child when Sarah Martin died. Annie Cook told him Sarah was nothing but a poor deaf dumb woman, and definitely not his mother. According to his obituary, he was born to Frank and Annie Cook. Joe worked on the Cook farm until he enlisted in the U.S. Army during WWII. Much of the book *Evil Obsession* is based on his interviews with Nellie Snyder Yost.

Joe was treated like a slave by Annie Cook. She mentally and physically abused him. The book also alludes to sexual abuse as well.

Despite their dysfunctional relationship, Joe did stay in touch with Annie as an adult. Although he didn't like to stop by the farm to see Annie (as Annie immediately put him to work), she could manipulate him into dropping by.

Joe was a member of the Berean Fundamental Church and worked for the Union Pacific Railroad for forty years. He was a member in the Brotherhood of Locomotive and Engineers as well as the American Legion. Joe did marry and had several children (biological and adopted). He died on October 21, 1991 at Kansas City Missouri at the age of 72. Joseph Martin Cook is buried at Floral Lawns Cemetery.