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|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Lizzie Knox | 7. Dr. Marie Ames |
| 2. Annie Cook | 8. Lyman Berthe |
| 3. Clara Cook | 9. Violet Gosney |
| 4. Al Hastings | 10. John Hunter |
| 5. Mary Cauffman | 11. Art Salisbury |
| 6. Sarah Martin & Joe Cook | 12. William Maloney |

 Restroom (Porta-potty)

 Lincoln County Historical Museum
The Museum will have historic North Platte, Lincoln County, and Nebraska books for sale

***Thank you for attending
 The Life & Times of Annie Cook Cemetery Tour.
 The Theme for the 2019 Cemetery Tour
 will be Civil War Veterans!***



Proceeds from this event benefit the *North Platte Public Library Foundation*, a non-profit fund of the Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation designed to enhance the facility and services of the North Platte Public Library.

THE CEMETERY TOUR

Volume XII Presented by The North Platte Public Library Foundation Sept. 2018

The Life and Times of Annie Cook



**Local Performers
 to Portray
 Infamous Roles**

Outdoor Walking Tours

September 7th.....4:30pm to 7:30pm
 September 8th.....1:00pm to 5:00pm

North Platte Cemetery
 Rodeo Road, North Platte, NE

Indoor Performances

September 11th.....7:00pm

Quality Inn and Suites
 2102 S. Jeffers Street
 North Platte, NE



Advanced Ticket Prices

Adults (Ages 16 & over).....\$10.00
 Students (Ages 5 to 15).....\$5.00
 Children (under 5).....\$FREE\$

Gate/Door Ticket Prices

Adults (Ages 16 & over).....\$15.00
 Students (Ages 5 to 15).....\$5.00
 Children (under 5).....\$FREE\$



Tickets Available At:

North Platte Public Library
 120 W 4th Street
 North Platte, NE
 308-535-8036

For more information visit
www.npplffoundation.org

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 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.

THANK YOU

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

- ◆ City of North Platte Cemetery Maintenance Staff
- ◆ North Platte Community Playhouse
- ◆ Lincoln County Historical Museum
- ◆ Scotty's Potties
- ◆ North Platte Public Library Staff
- ◆ NPPL Foundation Board: Nicki Henry, Sky Seery, Shelly Penner, Carolyn Clark, Bob Barnhouse, Colin Taylor, and Robin Merritt
- ◆ Event day staff: Bill Kackmeister, Sara Aden, Kaycee Anderson, Amber Martinson
- ◆ Actors: David Breaker, Andrew D. Lee, Shelly Deardoff, Suzanne Knolles, Lois Lynes-Miles, Carolyn Clark, Bill Kackmeister, Teresa Smith, Case Axthelm, Morris Turner, Jess Lemon, Shawn Lemon, and Pam Gloy
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- ◆ Quality Inn and Suites



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Art Salisbury

Portrayed by Morris Turner.

Arthur John Salisbury was born on March 19, 1872 in Livingston County, Ohio. He moved with his family to North Platte in 1889. Around 1900, Art opened a successful livery stable, which he ran until he was elected sheriff of Lincoln County in the fall of 1912. Art was known as a man of excellent business ability and judgement. Art married his second wife,

Katherine “Kate” Clark on February 7, 1921. Art and Kate had two children, Ruth and Arthur Jr. The family lived at 103 W 3rd Street.

Art was the Lincoln County Sheriff from 1912 through his death in 1939, with the exception of one term from 1923-1927. He participated in the solving of many noted criminal cases throughout western Nebraska. Interestingly, the Art seldom carried a gun and at no time during his career was it necessary for him to use a gun in apprehending a criminal. He was never too busy to listen to the troubles and difficulties of others.

One of his proudest accomplishments was the construction of a new Lincoln County Jail, located at 302 N Jeffers Street. The building opened on June 12, 1934.

Tragically, Art and his family were on vacation near Lovelock Nevada in 1939 and were involved in a serious car accident. Salisbury lingered for two days before passing away from his injuries.



The North Platte Public Library (NPPL) Foundation is a non-profit charitable organization founded in 2002. The NPPL Foundation exists to educate and encourage citizens to support library initiatives, raise funds, received financial contributions and provide gifting opportunities that will enhance the facility and services of the North Platte Public Library.

The current goal of the NPPL Foundation is to raise \$3 million to help offset a future capital building

campaign for the North Platte Public Library.

The current three fundraisers of the NPPL Foundation are: Cemetery Tour, Jigsaw Puzzle Tournament, and the Book Gift Basket Sales. The Foundation is managed by a board of directors. If you are interested in serving on the board of the NPPL Foundation, please contact Cecelia Lawrence, NPPL Foundation Chairperson at 308-535-8036 X3321 or info@npplfoundation.org

Partnering with:

Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation
121 N Dewey Street, Suite 112
PO Box 1321
North Platte NE 69103

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 emigrated 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. The fact that the boys were paid for their work and the girls were not fueled Annie’s

anger.

Annie married Frank Cook in 1893. On 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 had acquired in her many business dealings.

Annie’s life was driven by the almighty dollar. She didn’t waste any time settling into a life of self-serving actions, greed, bullying, dominating and abusing 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.

Mary Cauffman

Portrayed by Suzanne Knolles.

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 to run away when she was a teenager, only to be brought back to Annie’s farm by Sheriff Salisbury. But when Mary was 22, she got in a violent argument with Annie, and Annie stabbed her with a knife. Mary ran away and thankfully, this time found herself dealing 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 wed two times. Her second husband, Lewis Cauffman was her great love. She died July 10, 1987.

John Crider Hunter

Portrayed by Case Axthelm.

John C Hunter was barely 30 years old when he disappeared in 1931. Seven years later, his body was presumed found.

John was a rodeo trick rider, convicted cattle rustler and big time bootlegger. He had the reputation of being a “lady killer” who liked fast cars and the fast life. In 1928, Hunter was arrested for having a distillery in McPherson County. He was arrested again, several months later over another still owned by a man named Conruft, who had disappeared. When Conruft was found, a trial was held and Hunter was found guilty of bootlegging.

In August 1931, Hunter came up missing. His truck was found at Fred Sirek’s farm and his car was later located in Omaha. No one heard from him or saw him for many months. In December, his wife filed a legal notice stating he had disappeared and that she needed to use the assets of his estate.

In May of 1938, a skeleton was found on the Fred Sirek farm, under a concrete floor. Hunter’s girlfriend had revealed the location to a lawyer. There was a large jagged hole over his right eye where the “death blow” had been dealt. John was always known to wear a gold ring and said ring was not found with the body.

Harold Lozier who had been Hunter’s right hand man was charged with the murder. After a seven day trial, the couple was found not guilty.



Albert Hastings

Portrayed by Bill Kackmeister

Albert Hastings was considered North Platte’s very own mobster. He was notorious during the Prohibition Era of the 1920’s and 1930’s for his control of the North Platte underworld. Al controlled the flow of illegal liquor, gambling rooms, and houses of prostitution. There were no rival gangster syndicates in the area, so Hastings was the long godfather of the North Platte underworld.

Although many people knew he had criminal ties, he was also well liked, by just as many people. If you were on his good side, there wasn’t anything he wouldn’t do to help you. For example, if you couldn’t get a loan through a bank, Al would probably loan you the money. Of course, his interest rates and other assorted payment requests may lead to illegal activities. He helped many people own homes.

Al owned Platte Valley realty. He was married to Lena and had five children, four boys and one daughter.

Clara Cook

Portrayed by Teresa Smith.

Clara Cook was born on February 21, 1894 to Annie and Frank Cook in Hershey, Nebraska. She learned early that hard work was one way 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 Omaha to meet Jane. Jane trained Clara to work in a brothel. Upon their return to North Platte, Annie put her to work in the brothels that 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 fought on just about every subject on a regular basis, but especially about 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 a victim of poison. The real cause of Clara Cook's death is unknown.

Clara died on May 29, 1934



Lizzie Knox

Portrayed by Shelly Deardoff.

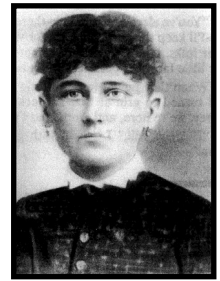
Elizabeth (Lizzie) Louis Petske Knox was born February 26, 1878 in Denver, Colorado. Lizzie was a happy, friendly child who loved helping her parents with their livery stable.

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 a 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.



Dr. Marie Ames

Portrayed by Pam Gloy.

Marie Antoinette Sloan was born in Lanark, Illinois on January 23, 1863. Marie was a well educated woman who began her education at the school for Christian Workers at Springfield,

Massachusetts. She then taught school in Yankton, South Dakota.

After marrying Albro Joseph Ames in 1895, they both attended Creighton Medical College in Omaha, Nebraska. They both graduated in the class of 1901.

The Ames' worked as physicians in Sargent, Bayard, Whitman and Hyannis before coming to North Platte in 1905. Marie and Albro divorced in 1913.

Marie was taken to court for performing an "illegal operation." It seems that Dr. Ames performed a criminal abortion on a woman in Kearney which resulted in her death in June of 1913. By 1914, the charges and case were dropped. Ten or so years went by and to the outside world, Dr. Ames was a kind doctor who helped the sick, infirm, and ill. If she was continuing her illegal operations, she was performing them in the dead of night. I

n 1927, Dr. Marie Ames was charged with performing more illegal operations. Those charges were dropped when it was discovered she had not renewed her medical license.

Dr. Ames passed away on September 6, 1937 at age 74.



Sheriff Lyman Berthe

Portrayed by David Breaker.

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 the railroad as a conductor.

However, from 1923-1927, Lyman ran a successful political campaign 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.





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, 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 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.

Violet Gosney

Portrayed by Lois Lynes-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.

Sarah Martin

Portrayed by Jess Lemon.

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 completed her schooling and went 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. But the night before she was to leave, Sarah mysteriously died, she was forty years old. According to the book *Evil Obsession*, Sarah mistakenly drank carbolic acid instead of her headache medicine. 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 of unnamed and unmarked graves).



Joe Cook

Portrayed by Shawn Lemon.

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 married and had several children (both biological and adopted). He died on October 21, 1991 in Kansas City, Missouri at the age of 72. Joseph Martin Cook is buried at Floral Lawns Cemetery.