

DECEMBER 2022 | ISSUE 2

THE RED-EYED RAVEN GAZETTE

The Official Newsletter of the Author Tim Ritter



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WELCOME!

Wow! I think I remember December...

Have you ever had a month go "WHOOSH" as it flew by you?

Yep, you're right. I'm talking to the choir here.

It's late in the month, but Issue #2 is here! I hope you enjoy it. And I hope all of you had a wonderful Christmas. Here's to wishes for a happy and safe New Year, and hopes for a bright and prosperous 2023!

By the way, thank you all so much for your positive comments about the first issue. That was so gratifying, and certainly reassured me that this newsletter will be a welcome thing.

As I mentioned before, if there's a topic you'd like for me to cover, or if you have a question about anything, please feel free to email me at tritterman@gmail.com.

Again, thank you for your support and encouragement. I hope you enjoy this little journey with me.



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Sarah Burning News

For you *Sarah Burning* fans, here's something extra-special that is exclusive for newsletter subscribers...

Exciting news continues to come from the site of the old farmhouse that burned in 1959. The owners of the property, who were previously unaware of the story of The Fire, have read *Sarah Burning* and are now fascinated to know more about the ground they own. They have begun metal detecting around the area where the farmhouse stood, and have discovered something significant.

Take a look at the photos on the next page.

It took a little studying to figure out what they unearthed in the first two photos. After much discussion with my knowledgeable cousin Kimberland Ritter, it appears that this is most likely the bottom plate for the wood stove that was positioned in the living room for heat. Initially I was a bit surprised to discover that this big chunk of metal survived the last 63 years and appeared to be in such relatively good condition. But considering the fact that it's been submerged in thick mud with no oxygen, it stands to reason that it would survive in such an environment.

As you may be aware from some of my previous posts on social media, the site where the house stood is now a cattle pen for loading/unloading. That means the area has seen many hooves which have stomped around to keep the dirt and mud well compacted. Even though for many years the family was frustrated that the site was turned into such an area, it appears now that this usage may have served a great benefit, the results of which we are only now discovering. Respectful, gentle digging will resume whenever weather permits.

Take a look at the third color photo. This was taken in the gully within several yards of where Virginia landed the night of The Fire. It appears to be the remains of a well or cistern.

It is known that the spring used by the family for fresh water was some distance away, near where the driveway is located. There has never been any talk of a well or cistern in this area during my research for the book, and I know that the well dug just before The Fire was said to have been very close to the house. Therefore, this may have been used by whoever owned the house before Orville and Sarah bought the place in 1940.

I will provide updates on these and other discoveries as work continues at the site.

SITE PHOTOS



Notice the feet near the items, to provide an idea of scale. The metal plate from the stove appears to be about two feet long by a little over a foot wide. The black and white pic below is the only known photo to show part of the wood stove, at the far lower right.



This well or cistern is certainly a mystery. Note the landowner's feet nearby. It is clear that this is a large structure. To me it looks more like a well, but I cannot be sure. I find it fascinating that this has never been talked about before, which makes me wonder if the family knew it was there. It may have been buried and the erosion from this year's spring and fall rains may have uncovered it. I'm anxious to do more research on this.



ORVILLE AND SARAH PREQUEL UPDATE (SORT OF...)

We just passed the anniversary of Sarah's death (December 28, 1971), and when I talked about it on social media, a conversation sprung up with one of my cousins. Donna, who is the daughter of Wanda and George "Speedy" Bollinger, remembered many things about that timeframe that I did not recall due to the fact that I was so young when it happened and thus have only shadows of memory of it.

One thing she recalled was the fact that everyone gathered at the Bollinger home in Seymour, Missouri before the funeral in Ava on December 30, and a photograph was taken of all eight remaining children of Orville and Sarah. This is thought to be the last photo of all of them together. Large gatherings took place when other family members died in later years, but regrettably not all of the siblings were able to attend those funerals, so this is indeed the last photo of all the siblings together. Within less than 11 years, Norman would become the next sibling to cross over the river.

This subject doesn't really fit into the idea of a prequel, but I would love to include this photograph in the book. Many folks have suggested a third book, a sequel, telling the stories of the other children. I'm hesitant to do this for many reasons, including respecting the privacy of my many cousins. Whatever I end up doing with it, I wanted to give you first look.

Left to right: Ray, Delbert, Elda June, Delmas, Wanda, Neil, Margaret, and Norman.



PRESENTATION UPDATE

If you or anyone you know belong to a group needing speakers, please give them my contact info!



Every month in this section I will highlight one of my current presentations. Here's another one:

Wild Bill Hickok & Davis Tutt: A Big Bucket of Ugly

If you pay close attention to history, you discover that for nearly every significant event, there is always more than one version of the story. Such is the case with the first officially recorded gunfight of the Old West, and it just so happened to take place in Springfield, Missouri. This presentation is a fascinating look into the backgrounds of James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok and Davis Tutt, and how their lives twisted and turned until they found themselves facing each other with pistols drawn on the public square in Springfield in 1865. Within seconds, both men would become the stuff of legends. And yes, we will take a look at the many stories and theories of what started the trouble, the multiple versions of what led to the shooting, and the events that played out on the square that dusty summer day.

Wild Bill Hickok & Davis Tutt



A Big Bucket of Ugly

SCHEDULE OF APPEARANCES

March 18, 2023 - 10:30 a.m.
**Republic Branch of the Greene County
Library, Republic, MO**

The Northfield Bank Robbery

Also, my ongoing speaking gig at all three Elfindale Senior Facilities will continue into the new year. I'm there on the second and fourth Thursday of every month.