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THE RED-EYED RAVEN GAZETTE

The Official Newsletter of the Author Tim Ritter



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WELCOME!



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Welcome to the April issue of the Red-Eyed Raven Gazette! Hope you enjoy it!

Have you ever spent several hours working on something, only to discover that it just plain ole doesn't work? Yep, I did that. Just now.

I was starting to get concerned that I should convert this email list to the Mailchimp service, since it creates a much more formal-looking email. However, I did not bother to check to see if they allowed attachments. They don't. They only offer file hosting. So if I converted to that, you would have to click a link to get this newsletter, instead of just opening the attachment. I wasn't too crazy about that idea, at least not at this point.

Sooooooooo after spending several hours working up a template, then discovering they don't allow attachments (why didn't I just google it before all that work?), we're back to where we were last month. Oh well. It works! Ha!

As always, thanks for your encouraging messages sent when these newsletters are released. Your support is very much appreciated.

Sarah and Orville Story

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

One of the many challenges in creating a prequel/sequel/whatever-quel for *Sarah Burning* is the question of what to include and what to leave out. There are so many directions to go with the narrative, but ultimately some things are left out for one reason or another. The info below most likely will not appear in the book but is nonetheless interesting.

I have a multitude of photographs going back five generations in the family, the earliest being Civil War era tintypes. However, most of the pics are of Sarah and Orville's generation, and their offspring. The ones I consider to be the most tantalizing are those which appear to be from some sort of family gathering. One such family gathering is offered here, with some interesting details to be noted.

This family gathering appears to have taken place in the spring/summer of 1936. So far I have confirmed only three photos from this event, but I remain certain that more exist. I may just not have them yet in my collection or simply don't recognize that they were taken that same day.

The first photo below is of all the girls in the family at that time. All three of the brothers, Bernie, Orville, and Dick, had girls in their brood, and they far outnumbered the boys. I have the girls named under the photo, which was no small feat and required a little study, as I regret that I grew up not knowing any of Bernie's family. However, I dug out my Ancestry App on my phone and was able to verify everyone in the shot.

One question that always comes up with a pic like this is "What kind of car was that?" and "Whose car was it?" I can answer both: I have no idea. It certainly did not belong to Orville and Sarah. They never owned a car. My best guess is that it belonged to Bernie and Louise. Bernie worked for the Frisco railroad and made a good living, and most likely would have been the only family member with the means to own a car.

Notice the guys working in the back, to the right in the photo. They appear to be doing some work on the foundation of the house. Which brings us to a question: Whose house is this? Simon and Eliza lived in a log cabin, so it wasn't theirs. It doesn't look like Dick and Cora's house either. So that narrows it down to Orville's or Bernie's house. If the car was Bernie's, I don't believe it would have been parked in the spot where we see it. I believe he would have had it tucked away in a barn. However, this most definitely is not Orville's farmhouse on Hunter Road that burned in 1959, because they didn't move there until 1940. Orville and Sarah lived in Hammond, Missouri, in 1936, so there might be a remote chance that we are seeing a corner of the house where they lived in that little mill town. Otherwise, this is Bernie's house and the car happens to be parked there.

It's tough to judge, since this is a black and white photo, but the ground near the house looks quite muddy, which is either a sign of recent rains (which might have been the reason for the repair) or whatever the men are doing requires water.

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Several Ritter girls in front of an old car. At the very front is Dick and Cora's daughter, Norma Rea, age 3. To the left in the dress with dark sleeves is Orville and Sarah's daughter Wanda, age 7. The little girl being held is Margaret, another of Orville and Sarah's daughters, age two. The girl to the far right is Orville and Sarah's other daughter, Elda June, age 5. The other three girls should be Bernie's daughters, Lorene, age 16, Gladys, age 14, and Geneva, age 11. Notice behind the girls to the right, we see Dick and Bernie busily at work. Orville must be hidden by the house.

Let's move on now to the second photograph, the big family pic. This photo warms my heart, and I believe it captures what a hardworking, loving family this bunch was.

Standing to the far left in the back is Orville, age 38, with a big grin on his face as he appears to have a pipe in his mouth. He's holding a boy in his arms, which would be Ray, at that time age 3.

Standing in front of him is Bernie, age 41, and I believe this is one of the best photos I have of him. He's clearly taller and seems more muscular than Orville. In coveralls and a jacket, the dirt on him indicates he's been working hard. He appears to be the only person wearing a jacket. Next to him is Simon, father of the boys and Dora. He was 63 years old in this photo, with his ever-present hat with the front flipped up, as seen in nearly every photo I have of him.

Next to Simon is Cora, with husband Dick close behind her. They were both 29 years old in this photo, four years away from their son Jack being born.

The girl next to Cora is Lorene, one of Bernie's girls, and next to her is the only daughter of Simon and Eliza, 24-year-old Dora. The day of this gathering would have been just three to six months before she married Glen "Pete" Franklin. Peeking from behind Dora is her mother, the great storyteller Eliza. On the end, holding two-year-old Margaret, is Sarah, age 36.

Note there are two male boys in front. The one on the left with his hands on his hips is Bernie's son Clifford, age 6. The stern-looking one in the middle is Orville's oldest, Norman, age 10.

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A big family photo. The adults, left to right, are Orville, Bernie, Simon, Cora, Dick, Dora, Eliza, and Sarah.

Another question that comes to mind about these photos is "Who took these pictures?" The person notably missing from all these photos is Bernie's lovely wife, Louise. She is therefore assumed to be the photographer.

The third photo, which I find hilarious, is of the three boys in the family, no doubt taken near the location of the other photos. Left to right, we find Clifford, Ray, and Norman. Apparently, the boys were facing into the sun, as Ray seems most distraught over the situation, shielding his eyes. Considering the fact that Orville is holding him in the family pic, I get the impression that this photo of the three boys was taken first, and then Ray needed a nap, which is why Orville is then holding him.



I remain hopeful that someday I will discover more photos from this family gathering and workday.

The three Ritter boys: left to right, Clifford (age 6), Ray (age 3), and Norman (age 10). Norman is the only one who appears to be relatively happy to be there.



"CHASING THE CHADWICK LINE" UPDATE

Last month I noted that I was working to get permission to use multiple old photographs of the train that appear on the internet from a variety of sources, as well as other photos which are owned by private collectors. I'm happy to report that after spending a solid week sending out emails and other messages, I managed to secure permission for most of the images I wish to use.

Also I was a bit excited to get permission to use an excerpt from a recently-published book. *Faces Like Devils* by Matthew Hernando was published in 2015 on the subject of the Baldknobbers, the vigilante group that existed in three Missouri counties in the 1880s. One of those counties was Christian County, through which the train travelled. There's a story about the vigilantes and how they decided to threaten a business associated with the railroad. The author and publisher were happy to offer permission, provided of course that I provide proper credit.

Lastly, I'm going to try to get this finished up in July so that it can be released in September. It is expected to be about the size of *Sarah Burning*, give or take a few pages. It will be heavy with old photographs and maps, as well as modern photographs in the section dealing with the remains of the roadbed visible to this day.

Keep an eye on social media for an announcement when the cover design is completed. That's the next big hurdle as writing continues.



Photo courtesy of Springfield-Greene County Library

Here's a little surprise for you!

I haven't said much about it, but the writing project that will be published after *Chasing the Chadwick Line* and *Sarah and Orville* will be a collection of stories and poems presented as a tribute to Edgar Allan Poe. It will be entitled *The Screamer Down the Hall and Other Tales*. It will be something very different from anything I've published prior. It will have macabre/spooky stories, adventure stories, humorous tales, and poetry. I have sixteen stories and poems in their early drafts and will continue to develop more for the collection. But just as a teaser, I thought you might like to see a little sample of what's cooking...

Mind the Leg, Madeline

Where do the most frightening monsters dwell: under our beds or within our heads?

If you want to live to see tomorrow morning, listen to me.

Two unbreakable laws govern the process of retiring for the evening. Period. Following these rules not only ensures restful sleep; attention to these nocturnal requirements absolutely, positively saves your very soul on a nightly basis. Therefore, you must listen to me.

As a child, I obeyed these rules to the letter. I guess that statement is quite obvious, because if I had not followed them, surely I would not be here today, sharing this tale with you. And now, I find it most important, most crucial, to share these guidelines, these rules, these laws with you. I share them out of caring for your safety and well-being.

The first rule: Always be certain that the door to your closet is closed (and latched) before crawling into bed. This prevents any specters that dwell within your closet at night from getting out, lest they eat you.

The second rule: Never, under any circumstances, allow your arm, leg or foot to be exposed while you sleep, and for the love of all things holy, DO NOT let such appendages dangle loosely and carelessly over the side of the bed as you rest in quiet slumber. Otherwise, the beast under your bed could reach up and grab you, then pull you down under the bed and eat you.

I sense some scoffing, some of the doubting of Thomas, as you listen to my story. But dear friend I must tell you that I have proof of the necessity of these commandments. I am sad to say that some individuals familiar to me did not heed these rules, and as a result they no longer walk among us. Their tales are tragic, and it pains me to think that these souls would still be alive had they heeded these simple edicts.

Pertaining to the first rule, I speak of poor old Jules Cauchemer, who lived on Dumaine Street in the heart of the Bayou St. John region of New Orleans. Jules was a bit of a loner, having been widowed many years before his demise. Superstitious to a fault, Jules lived a lifetime of trepidation, always careful to never conjure up evil spirits, nor anger the benevolent ghosts which he was convinced surrounded him within the historic district in which he lived.

His rickety old house, bleak and in constant need of maintenance, gave every appearance of spirits residing within. Most of the shutters, dingy and worn, barely clung to the clapboard siding. The frayed curtains, hanging crooked in the windows, announced to all who gazed upon the façade that the home suffered of loneliness and neglect that mirrored its occupant. Upon entering the house, guests experienced an instant bombardment of scents and aromas (not all of them pleasant) which appeared to attack the nasal passages and taste buds from all directions. Cloves of garlic hung at each outer doorframe to ward off vampires. Each room sported a different herb, placed in a variety of containers. Scents of dill, lavender, oregano, and parsley mixed with the smell of mold, curtains in need of washing, and a floor covered with dust that swirled up in little whirlwinds as one walked from room to room to dismal, depressing room.

“The herbs keep the evil spirits at bay, monsieur,” he often mumbled.

Stay tuned....

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:

The Baldknobbers: Terror in the Hills

After the Civil War, violence and political corruption reigned supreme throughout the Ozarks hills. A group of citizens, banding together to create a vigilante force, soon blurred the lines between good and evil. Their murderous version of justice spread to neighboring counties where their crusade evolved to an odd combination of enforcing their version of moral rectitude and downright bullying. The terror and killing continued until arrests and three nooses convinced the groups to reconsider their cause.

My regular speaking engagements, twice each month, continue at the three Elfindale senior living facilities in Springfield. Also, I have now begun presenting at The Preston Senior Living Facility, as well as Elfindale Manor.

SCHEDULE OF APPEARANCES

April 18, 2023 - 7:00a.m.
Rotary North Monthly Meeting
Glendalough Convention Center, Springfield, MO
Presentation: *Route 66*

April 27, 2023 - 7:00p.m.
Monroe Coffee Co.
Fair Grove, MO
Presentation: *The Baldknobbers: Terror in the Hills*

April 28, 2023 - 11:30a.m.
University Heights Baptist Church Senior Education
Program
Springfield, MO
Presentation: *Sifting Through the Ashes (30-minute version)*

July 11, 2023 - Time TBD
Glenstone Avenue Baptist Church Senior Education
Program
Springfield, MO
Presentation: *Battle of Springfield*

July 22, 2023 - 10:30a.m.
Scottish Rite Cathedral
Joplin, Missouri
Presentation: *Keynote Address*

August 3, 2023 - 6:00p.m.
Polk County Genealogical Society
Bolivar, MO
Presentation: *Wild Bill Hickok and Davis Tutt - A Big Bucket of Ugly*