

Man was crushed to death when trains collided in yard

By Evelyn Ward
Sherman County Historical Society
April 9, 1904: J. Butler Instantly Killed — Crushed Between Boiler of Engine and “Apron” of the Coal Chute — Was Coaling Engine 1273 When Train of Cars Was Shunted Upon the Engine — John Butler, head hostler for the Rock Island railroad at Goodland, was instantly killed while coaling Engine 1273, being crushed to death against the boiler head by the “apron” of the coal dump.

The accident was caused by run into by a train of about 18 cars handled by the switch engine, as the train was being made up for the second section of freight No. 97, west-bound.

The hopper, containing three tons of coal, was being discharged on the tender of the engine and was nearly emptied when the heavy shunt drove the engine backward.

The apron of the coal bin shot forward and caught Butler about the head and chest, crushing the life out of him in an instant. Help was immediately summoned.

If the engine was pushed ahead,

today in history

the body might be further mangled by the wreckage of the engine cab. So, about 20 inches square of the heavy oak planking of the dump was sawed out before the body was released from the death trap.

The body was removed to the Bower & Son undertaking establishment. The sad news was conveyed to Mrs. Butler — first that her husband was seriously injured, then that he could live but a very short time, and finally that he was dead — all before she could realize that in the midst of life and health her home had really been touched with the chill of death.

She was fondling a baby in her arms and was caring for her other little child as the messenger of the heavy news knocked at the door of the home.

After the body had been prepared at the undertakers’, it was transferred to the home, accompanied by an escort of the federal union, to which the deceased belonged.

John Butler was born in Milan, DeKalb County, Ill., in April 1866, consequently he was in the 38th year of his age. He came with his parents to Sherman county in February 1886 and settled near Ruleton, taking a claim as soon as he was of age.

He was married Sept. 27, 1892, to Miss Gertrude Bullock, of LaBlanche, Sherman county. Mr. Butler, besides a wife and two children, leaves an aged father and mother, two sisters and two younger brothers, all residing near Ruleton.

John Butler was a good citizen and a kind husband. He was liked by all who knew him, was industrious and competent at whatever he undertook. He was for several years a section foreman, worked in the freight house, fired the boilers of the back shops and was head hostler.

All his associates in these various callings speak highly of him, and no one charges him with fault. This may seem remarkable, but it is true. The unusually large attendance at

the funeral attested the universal esteem in which this humble laboring man was held.

April 10, 1904: Trial of the Seven Cowboys with Dewey Set for December — Herbert Winship, Fred Dye, James Armentrout, Lemuel O’Neil, Charles Wilson, Benjamin Slater and Ed Tucker, the seven cowboys who were put under arrest during the Norton trial for complicity in killing the Berry’s, June 3, 1903, appeared at the April session of the Cheyenne county court to be tried upon the charge of murder.

By agreement of the attorneys for both sides, the case was continued to the December term of court, and bond was fixed in the sum of \$1,000 for each.

These seven men were with Dewey at the time the three members of the Berry family were killed, and three charges are made against each of the men, making a total of 21 cases.

April 11, 1904: Building Era Continues — The Demand for Houses Being Responded to by Local Capital — Building of houses is steadily progressing in Goodland.

The two houses being built by Vogel & Harrison, south of the Mallory residence, are progressing toward completion. Vogel & Harrison have also a contract to build a fine modern cottage, main part 28x28 with a T 14x14 with three porches. The house is for Ira Wolfe, cashier of the new bank, and will be located on lots north of the T.P. Leonard residence.

The Wilson house on East 11th is nearly completed and will be a very conformable house. W.L. White is the architect and builder. The Jasper Gandy house, south of George Kelley’s residence, will be an elegant and modern structure. It will be two stories in height.

J.F. Kuhlman, a retired Lutheran minister, is building a small house in the west part of town. Mr. Kuhlman is a carpenter and is doing his own work. Boilermaker Helper Bartholomew is putting up a small dwelling, 14x22, just north of the shops.

S.A. Marshall is building a house on the corner opposite and north of the Bower residence. The building is 24x26 feet, intended for four

rooms and a pantry. When completed, it will be for rent.

B.E. Coffin will soon build on a lot 50 feet north of the H.H. Auer & Son short order house on South Boulevard, a restaurant building 20x40 feet. Others are contemplating building soon as there is still a large demand for homes and houses to rent.

April 12, 1904: Round House Repairs — The south end of the five-stall extension of the old roundhouse has been cut out and removed and a new wall and doors constructed.

All the stalls and the engine pits for the large class of engines are now completed. Heavy, hydraulic stationary jacks have been installed in the drop pits to lower and hoist the driving wheels when repairs call for their removal. The largest class of engines can now be housed, handled and repaired at Goodland.

From weekly issues of The Goodland News, provided by the Sherman County Historical Society. Since the paper was published weekly, some items were arbitrarily assigned a date.

obituary

Gladys Confer

Gladys Mae Confer, 87, a Cheyenne County farm wife, died Saturday, April 3, 2004, at Hays Medical Center after a short illness.

She was born May 30, 1916, in Bird City, the daughter of Herman and Pearl Kanel. She was the fifth of eight children and grew up on a farm south of St. Francis.

She married Edgar Edmonds in 1931 at the age of 15. They spent their married life working together on a farm southwest of St. Francis. They had no children but spent a lot of time helping with the neighborhood children and a nephew, Dick Edmonds.

She was a member of the Neville Methodist Church, a Sunday school teacher and helped during Bible school each year. She moved her membership into the United Methodist Church in St. Francis after the Neville church closed.

On April 25, 1964, she married Lester Confer, and was a major part of the lives of his daughter Arlene and granddaughter Glenda.

The Confers worked side by side through their nearly 40 years of marriage, doing housework and farming.

Preceding her in death were her parents; three sisters; three brothers; her first husband; a son-in-law, Royce Peter; and a great-grandson, Bobby Krien.

Survivors include her husband; a brother, Bill Kanel of Las Vegas; a sister, Helen Kyle of Cottage Grove, Ore.; a step-daughter, Arlene Peter of St. Francis; two step-granddaughters, a step-grand-

son, seven step-great-grandchildren, and six step-great-great-grandchildren.

Services were Tuesday, April 6,

at the church, with Marvin Zimbelman and Jack Abendschan officiating. Burial was in the St. Francis cemetery.

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