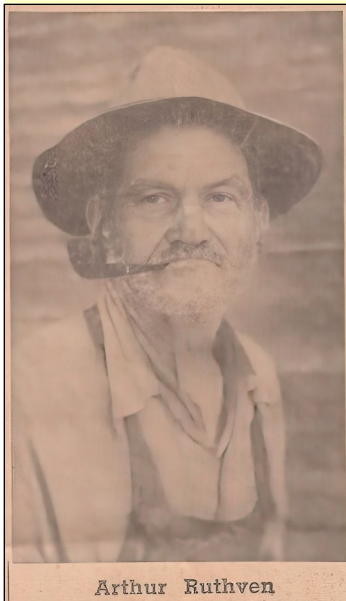


Vår Historia

SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

ART THE TRAPPER



Arthur Ruthven

**PUBLISHED
BI-MONTHLY**

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Many people in the Smoky Valley became folklore legends over the course of time, some for their artistic ability, some for their business sense, and then there are a select few because of their mysterious life-style. Art the Trapper falls into that last category, he did, by the way, spend the last thirty years of his life as a recluse from most of the world.

Art the Trapper went by other names too, "Hermit", "River Man", but his real name was Arthur Theodore Ruthven. Arthur kept his "past life" a secret during his hermit years, and because of that rumors fueled the curiosity of those growing up in the area. This included his family too, no one really knew if he had siblings, or if he did, how many.

Arthur was one of nine children: John Jr., Aurelia (Mary), Alfred, Eva, Albert, Arthur, Grace, Evelyn, and Louise, in that order. They were born to Canadian parents, Aurelia B. (mother) was French-Canadian and John Sr. (father) was English-Canadian. The parents and John Jr. came to the USA in 1877 and the family moved to Missouri, then New York. In the early 1880's the family moved to Vidette, KS, which was farm land about twelve miles west of Topeka (*now much closer as Topeka grew*).

Arthur was born January 20, 1886

to a farming family who liked to build things. Art's father, John, became an inventor and filed his first patent in 1893, he also bought up farms in the area to either sell or trade for Topeka city lots. One fault he had though was alcohol, and one night in 1897 John kicked his family out to the cornfield and proceeded to bust up all the furniture in the house. The family slept in the field all night and pursued the sheriff the next morning. John was arrested and a divorce was later filed.

John Jr. ran the farm, but the other siblings found work in Topeka. Because of this, their mom, Aurelia, and remaining children moved to town and left the farm for John Jr. At sixteen, Arthur had a job as a mechanic, as did his older brother, Alfred. The mother was a dress maker, and some of the girls worked in millinery stores. Arthur stated in an interview that he had worked for the Santa Fe Railroad and had put the flues in the train engine that won a prize at the 1904 St. Louis Worlds Fair.

Arthur filed for his first patent in 1907, it was a means for releasing and leading animals from stables. Professionally he was a clerk for Thompson Bros. Furniture Store in Topeka, but his brother Alfred had changed his profession to "Inventor" by then. Alfred had patented a mechanism to prevent train wrecks a year before and had investors

ART THE TRAPPER {CON'T}

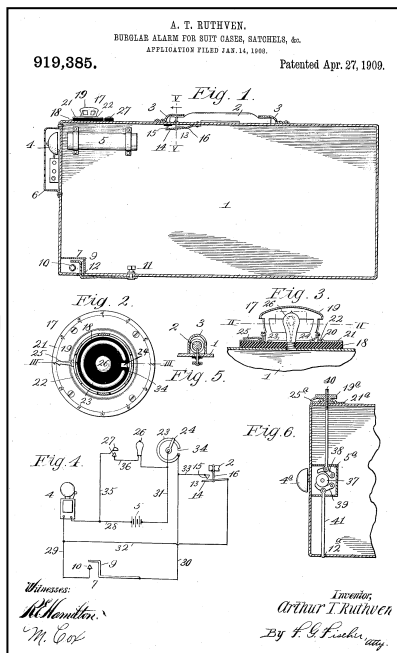
working on production. Art's father would come back in the family picture, but Aurelia listed herself as "widowed" by 1907.

Arthur filed his second patent in 1909, a burglar alarm for suitcases. Both Alfred and Arthur moved to Ohio following this patent, Alfred set up an office (*as an inventor*) and Arthur worked in a furniture factory. During this time, Alfred was promoting his inventions in trade magazines while seeking investors. In 1913 he was found guilty of mail fraud and was sent away for a couple of years. Arthur went back home, but some of the family had moved to Kansas City so he moved there too.

Arthur faced a similar situation in 1916 when he was accused of selling stock from a fake company he and a few others started, called the Ruthven Vaporizing Company. Investors found there was no production or factory, but a jury discharged the case, as there wasn't enough proof that the company wasn't in the works. Regardless, the company folded and a year later

Arthur co-founded Concrete Casing Oil Drilling Company, based in Tulsa, OK. He served as President and Manager of this company. In 1918, Art registered for the service, right at the end of WWI, his mother is listed as nearest relative, still living in Kansas City. He would also register for WWII later in life.

Arthur's last known patent came in 1920, and was a well-plugging apparatus. His oldest brother, John Jr. and family, moved to Ohio, so Arthur and their youngest sister Louise went with them. Arthur listed his profession as "Inventor" and had his own shop. He used the same lawyer for most of his patents, and rumor had it Art was swindled by him, which might lead to the rest of the story.



The next decade left more questions than facts, did Arthur become a recluse while still in Ohio?

In 1933 Arthur drove his 1928 Dodge truck to the Lindsborg area and parked it near the Smoky Hill River, where it set for fifteen years before moving to it's permanent location about a mile away in 1948. Orvin Lundquist owned the land Arthur called home, about nine miles SW of Lindsborg.

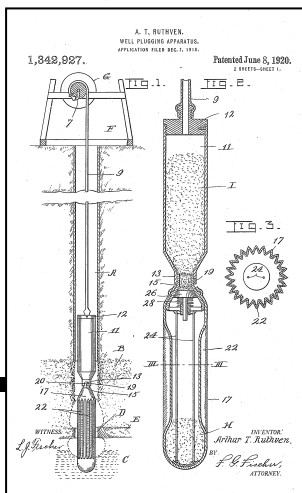
Arthur was resourceful, he dug a 23 foot well with a post-hole digger, came up with new inventions using scrap items found, dug caves to store canned goods, and planted a garden for food. His nickname, Art the Trapper came from his resource of trapping animals for meat and fur. Art enclosed the bed of the truck to make his home, similar to a rustic pickup camper.

Arthur smoked dried walnut leaves in place of tobacco in his worn pipe, managed to keep overalls and rubber galoshes for clothing, adopted a couple of dogs for company (*plus built a shelter for them*) and kept chickens to provide eggs for breakfast. He had everything he needed, and wanted. Arthur frequently said "I like it fine", and meant it.

In early 1962, a group of guys from the Co-op refinery near McPherson found out about Arthur, and built a one-room shack near the truck. Once Art reluctantly tried it out, it lasted only two weeks before burning down. The same group then purchased an old bus and hauled it to his small patch of land. The seats were removed and a cot was placed on one side, and two lounge chairs faced each other near the front. A wood burning stove was in the back, and a stove pipe carried heat throughout the bus. Art grew more vegetables and fruit than he could use, so he set up a box near the road and offered to sell them on the honor system. Occasionally, people brought him food and supplies too. People took care of him as best as he would allow.

During a cold spell in February 1963, Arthur was found by neighbors with gangrene of the legs and feet following frostbite, complicated by pneumonia. An ambulance was called but Art didn't pull through. He is buried in the Freemount Cemetery, nearest to his home for the past 30 years.

REGISTRATION CARD	
SERIAL NUMBER 2709	INDEX NUMBER 2671
NAME Arthur Theodore Ruthven	
BIRTH DATE Jan 20 1886	
BIRTH PLACE Kansas City, Mo.	
RACE White	
U. S. CITIZEN Naturalized	
ALIEN None	
PRESENT OCCUPATION Concrete Casing Oil Drilling	
EMPLOYER'S NAME Concrete Casing Oil Drilling	
NEAREST RELATIVE Mrs. A. T. Ruthven	
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE FACTS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE	

1920
Patent

1928 Dodge Truck



1942 Registration Card

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1897 and on or before February 16, 1897)	
SERIAL NUMBER U 153	1. NAME (Print) ARTHUR T. RUTHVEN
2. PLACE OF BIRTH (Print) K.R.#2	3. COUNTY (Print) LINDSBORG, McPHERSON, KANS.
(THIS PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL)	
4. RESIDENCE ADDRESS Paul Delury, Lindsborg, Kans.	5. AGE IN YEARS 56
6. DATE OF BIRTH Jan 29 1886	7. SIGNATURE Arthur T. Ruthven
8. NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER Hawkeye Lindsborg, Kans.	9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Hawkeye Lindsborg, Kans.
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE	
D. S. S. FORM 1 (Revised 4-1-42)	10-31629-2

Upcoming SVHA Programs

Jan. 10th, 2023

Swedish Heritage

Gotland Sheep Inspiring Swedish Textiles in the Smoky Valley

Dr. Anna Erickson and Laura Hultquist

March 14th, 2023

Henry Lungstrom: Machinist, Inventor, Genius

Steve Borell

May 9th, 2023

"Little Poova" Remembers Doc Bill (Dr. William Holwerda)

Betty Holwerda Nelson

All programs
start at:
7:30 pm

Location:

Messiah Lutheran Church—Fellowship Hall
402 N. 1st Street—Lindsborg, KS.

Please cut along the dotted line

Smoky Valley Historical Association
P.O. Box 255
Lindsborg, KS. 67456



☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$ _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Smoky Valley Historical Association is a non-profit organization and is registered under 501(c)3

All Membership Donations, Bequests, Trusts, and Legacy Donations are tax deductible.

Please mail to P.O. Box listed above.

Thank You!

Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year



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Meetings/Programs

Smoky Valley Historical Association hosts bi-monthly meetings on the odd months, held on the second Tuesday. Programs start at 7:30 pm with topics of local historical interest. Location is listed on page three along with schedule.

Come join us!



Funding

Membership contributions are the SVHA's major source of on-going funding. A free-will donation in any amount will secure your membership in the Association for the year. Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year.

Grants, such as those awarded by the Kansas Humanities Council, are also available from time-to-time to further the mission of the SVHA.

Smoky Valley Historical Mission

The purpose of this association shall be to collect, arrange and preserve historical data, books, pamphlets and manuscripts pertaining to the early history and settlement of our community in general and the City of Lindsborg in particular; to preserve and beautify places of historical interest in our city, its vicinity, and properties entrusted to the association; and to promote the study of history of our settlement and its cultural growth by lectures and other available means.

Contact info:

email us at:

info@lindsborghistory.org

or mail to:

SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
 PO BOX 255
 LINDSBORG, KS 67456

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Bumper Stickers
Available at Old Mill!

Check our Facebook page for the most up to date information concerning the Smoky Valley Historical Association.



Thank you for your contributions, and supporting the historical preservation of Lindsborg and the Smoky Valley of Central Kansas.

Our pioneers left their legacy long after they were gone, so can you. Managing estates, bequests, and gifts through retirement plans can help keep our preservation ongoing and long-lasting.

All donations are tax exempt, we are a 501-(c)3 organization