

### **A Court Case:**

Nov. 16, 1876 *Semi-Weekly Hub* – Criminal case tried in Kearney  
State vs. Hutchinson for manslaughter  
Shot & killed Tingley in self defense  
on Elm Island (Audubon visitor center now?)  
Verdict: Not guilty Jury took 30 minutes  
Crowd came from Elm Island to attend the trial

### **Child Murdered:**

Jan. 19, 1911 *Miller Forum*

Mrs. Nellie Mohatt killed her 4-week-old baby on Jan. 12.  
She said she had enough children. She is aged 23 and has  
six children. She was judged insane.

[She fed the baby carbolic acid.]

### **Found Murdered**

*Miller Forum*

Elmer Mercer was killed in Kearney Wednesday by Patrick Edward Cooney.  
Elmer homesteaded with brother at Gibbon., Three brothers, Chalk, William and Frank of  
Gibbon; four sisters – Mrs. A Ferguson, Mrs. Kelley Sprague, Mrs. W.(?N) A. Smith all of  
Gibbon and Mrs. Lee Comstock of Kearney.

*Kearney Daily Hub*, Thursday, Dec. 22, 1918

Elmer Mercer found murdered

Edward Cooney in jail accused of the crime

Albert Gredler testifies to having seen Cooney strike the dead man, he fell to his knees and then  
Cooney struck him in the face twice.

Merch. About 40

### **Psychiatrists, Sanity Board Study [Husband]**

*Kearney Hub*, Jan. 4, 1943

The county insanity commission and two psychiatrists studied the case of a husband in an  
insanity hearing at the courthouse. Insanity complaint had been filed by the county attorney,  
Oscar Drake. The man's wife had died and the coronor's jury found him criminally insane.

The county insanity commission was made up of an attorney, a physician and the clerk of  
the district court. The psychiatrists were a doctor from Omaha and the superintendent of the  
state hospital at Norfolk.

Police had found the wife's body buried four feet deep in a grave beside the river road  
south of Kearney. When they questioned the husband he admitted shooting her with a .22 caliber  
rifle three days previously "because 'she was stepping out' on him."

The man had been admitted to the state hospital at Hastings two years earlier for abusing  
his wife and he was paroled to his wife's custody against the advice of the hospital.

Aug. 30, 1889

**A Cowardly Deed  
Died from Effects of a Brutal Blow  
Donovan Cruelly Murdered**

George Vancil, 38, struck John Donovan on the back of the head with the edge of a shovel inflicting a 2" wound and fracturing his skull about 10 a.m.. Vancil was tending plasterers working on W. Smythe's house in West Kearney. Donovan was hauling sand. The two men argued and Vancil hit Donovan on the back of the head. Donovan fell into a lime trough. The man shoveling lime out of the trough at the time said, "My God, you've killed him." Vancil replied, "I don't give a d-d if I have." He then went into the house and told the workmen what he had done. Then he went into Kearney to police headquarters and turned himself in.

Donovan, about 50, was from Columbus, Nebr. He, his wife and child were living in a tent near the Smythe house. He was taken there and tended by a doctor who dressed his wound. He died about 4:30 in the afternoon.

Aug. 31, 1889

Donovan's body was taken to Switz's undertaking establishment embalming room where he was laid out. It was a gristly sight as saw dust had been placed under his head and blood from the wound dripped out. The body was to be taken to Columbus.

Coroner's jury found Vancil guilty of the murder of Donovan in morning. Description of Vancil was given – gaunt wrinkled face, round shoulders, slouching gait, stiff black hat pulled down low over his eyes, jeans pants, old dark vest, clean blue checked shirt, no coat, light brown mustache, short stubby beard. Taken before Judge Learn for preliminary hearing that afternoon. Held over for opening of District Court