

LEOLA (HOWARD) BLANCHARD

Rachel Leola (Howard) Blanchard
Finney County & Gray County

Although Leola was not a PROJECT CONSULTANT, her book, "Conquest of Southwest Kansas," written in 1931, was used as a reference in a number of the project stories in Finney County & Gray County.

A lot of gratitude goes to MARY JO BERTHELSON for providing photographs and many details about her grandparents, Miles and Leola Blanchard, and their family. She also provided notes that Leola had written in preparation for her autobiography but did not complete. The notes help explain in more detail about her life.



MILES AND LEOLA (HOWARD) BLANCHARD
Photographs provided by Mary Jo Berthelson

LEOLA (HOWARD) BLANCHARD, a native of Kansas, was the daughter of John William Howard (1851-1921) and Mary Olive David (1859-1907).

She was born **RACHEL LEOLA HOWARD** on 27 Jun 1886, in honor of her aunt, Rachel David McCune. Her Aunt Rachel was named in honor of her David Ancestors. In her autobiography, Leola wrote, "*Being of Quaker parentage, the descendant of the early Delaware Colonists, and the Howards who held the original CITY OF BALTIMORE, MARYLAND LAND GRANT, that makes me more than three hundred years American. But, I do not claim to be accurate with the figures. My only inheritance came from Aunt Rachel Howard's Estate... \$600.*"

She used her middle name, Leola, when writing her book, "Conquest of Southwest Kansas," which was printed in 1931 and reprinted in 1989 by the Finney County

Historical Society. Throughout Southwest Kansas, her name continues to be well known for her historical writings.

In her notes, Leola explained, *“I began writing stories at the age of seven. Some of the titles were “School House in a Tree” (a tragedy), “The Ant on My Toe” (adventure), “The Worm Looked Up” (a horror story), and “Under the Tub in a Hail Storm” (a thriller).”*

She moved to Oklahoma in 1894 and attended a district country school. She was an “A student” through the grades, except for arithmetic, but still passed the eighth-grade country exam.

Leola wrote the following about her years before her marriage; *“I don’t drink or smoke, and I’m poor at playing cards. I’m now active in politics (Republican), several clubs, and a member of the Congregational Community Church in Garden City, Kansas.”*

“I attended Alva Oklahoma State Teacher’s College. The last year there, I worked two hours a day, and all day Saturday in the “Courier newspaper” where Jack Ross was the editor. I also lived in their home, burning the midnight oil, reading novels, and memorizing poems. I also lived with Uncle Walter and his wife, Aunt Emma David. He was the county clerk. The college library contained only classics and time-honored authors. My great ambition was to become a librarian and wear a black satin dress like the college librarian, Miss White, whom I adored.”

“Even though I was still bad at arithmetic, I managed to get a teacher’s certificate. My mother had been a successful teacher and had hopes of me being one. She went with me in a horse cart to interview a couple of school boards. We must have made a good impression as both of them sent contracts for me to sign. I became panic-stricken when I realized that my supervision would include several grades of arithmetic. So, I immediately accepted a job in the Cherokee Newspaper office and soon won local fame as a speedy typesetter. And even though I was very shy-natured, I seemed to have a nose for news, writing it up for publication, and eyes that never missed the excitement.”

Leola took an interest in politics and went as a house clerk to the State Legislature at Guthrie, Oklahoma. She wrote, *“Six dollars a day looked like a fortune to me. I came home with a new gold ring and a new trunk full of old classics bought at a second-hand book store, plus a wool throw rug for my darling mother. She, the poor dear, was terribly disappointed, and I’ve grieved about it ever since. She was wanting black silk taffeta for a new dress or a gold watch. She had never owned either in her life and never did. Shame on me! I then went back to work in a newspaper office owned by my brother, Julius Howard, in Byron, Oklahoma.*

Leola was married to **MILES ADDISON BLANCHARD**, son of James Leander Blanchard (1858-1920) and Malinda Jane Daniel (1857-1892), on 21 Oct 1906 in Cherokee, Alfalfa County, Oklahoma. Miles was born on 6 Dec 1883 on a farm in Smith County, Kansas, near Portis, Osborne County. In 1918, he worked for a bank in Amorita, Oklahoma, a small town in Alfalfa County. In 1942, Miles was working as the proprietor of the Windsor Hotel in Garden City, Kansas. Miles and Leola were living in the hotel at that time. Leola remembered spending many hours writing while sitting at her desk overlooking Finnup Park, located across the street.

Leola wrote in her bio the following about her husband, Miles, *“Just as it looked like I might amount to something as a writer, and despite my love for printers’ ink (I still like the smell of it), and despite an interesting following of beaux, I met Miles, who thought I was the “the gal” for him! In a couple of years, I annexed the name “Blanchard.” I settled down to business as an assistant cashier in his bank.”* They prospered well for a while and then made a bad investment during the Nation’s bad financial depression period. They had to start all over with two children added to their family. Leola wrote, *“A paradox! Both of our children majored in mathematics!”*

Miles and Leola enjoyed the hotel business, first in Wichita, Kansas, and then at the Windsor Hotel in Garden City, Kansas. Leola also worked in the ticket office of the bus station, which was a part of their business. She wrote that it was almost like getting to travel as she figured out routes for other people.

She wrote, *“I have done a considerable amount of ‘glory writing,’ by which the family means ‘writing that brings in no bacon.’ I had one book published, and there were also some poems in the anthologies. There were some featured stories and poems, all of which have been broadcast over various Kansas radio stations. There was also a pageant that received a statewide production.”*

“I’m still not good with figures. An idealist who sees a story in everything and the state of Kansas through colored glasses, still thrilled at its romantic past, still gathering authentic material, and hoping for a chance to create a “Kansas Classic.” I am always lonely away from the route of the “Old Santa Fe Trail.”

Miles died 30 Dec 1965 in Broomfield, Boulder County, Colorado, due to a heart attack. Leola died on 21 Aug 1975 in Westminster, Adams County, Colorado. Burial for both was at the Valley View Cemetery in Garden City, Kansas.

CHILDREN BORN IN THEIR MARRIAGE WERE:

HOWARD TAFT BLANCHARD was born on 20 Jun 1909. He married Maxine Gertrude Morris, the daughter of Clarence Morris and Gertrude E. Holcomb, on 13 May 1934. Maxine was born on 30 Mar 1910.

Howard was an architect in Garden City, Kansas, from the mid-1930s until sometime in the 1980s. The book *“In Cold Blood”* mentions Maxine as the organist for the Herb Clutter family funeral. It read as follows... *“On 15 Nov 1959, four members of the Clutter family – Herb Clutter, his wife Bonnie, and two of their children, were murdered in their home in the small town of Holcomb, Kansas. A trial, held in Garden City, 7 miles from Holcomb, found Perry Smith and Richard Hickock guilty of the murders and executed on 14 Apr 1965. Truman Capote wrote about the murders in a non-fiction novel titled “In Cold Blood,” and he also made it into a movie.”*

Howard died on 14 Dec 1993, and Maxine died in Feb of 1994. Burial for both was at the Valley View Cemetery in Garden City, Kansas. One child was born in their marriage, Nancy Lee (Blanchard) Mauzey.

JAMES CLAIR BLANCHARD was born on 30 Sep 1910 in Amorita, Alfalfa County, Oklahoma. He died the same day, and his burial was at the Byron-Amorita Cemetery.

MILES ADRIAN BLANCHARD was born on 12 Apr 1912 in Amorita, Alfalfa County, Oklahoma. He died on 5 May 1912, also in Amorita and buried at the Byron-Amorita Cemetery on 6 May 1912.

JOY LINDYNE BLANCHARD BERTHELSON was born on 20 Jul 1916 in Amorita, Alfalfa County, Oklahoma. She married Palmer “Dale” Berthelson, son of Frank Berthelson and Ida C. Hannebaum, on 24 Jun 1934 in Cimarron, Gray County, Kansas. After they were married, Joy and Dale worked for the Reynolds Jewelry Company, owned by Dr. Reynolds, an optometrist, in Dodge City, Kansas. Dale was the jeweler and watch repairman, while Joy worked as the store clerk.

During World War II, while Dale was in the United States Navy, they lived in Chicago, Cape Cod, and eventually, Joy went to California while Dale was on the USS Belleau Wood in the Pacific. She lived with a couple of her friends whose husbands were also out to sea.

When the war ended, they opened the Berthelson Jewelry store in downtown Dodge City. About 1953, they moved to Denver, where Dale worked again for a Jeweler, and Joy went to work for a Woolworth store in downtown Denver. In 1955, they moved back to Dodge City, staying until 1959, moving to Broomfield, Colorado, where they operated a children’s wear store and jewelry store. They remained there until 1976, moving to McPherson County, Kansas, and then Ottawa County, Kansas.

Dale was born on 10 May 1910 in Tescott, Ottawa County, Kansas, and died on 3 Apr 2007 in Minneapolis, Ottawa County, Kansas. Joy passed away in Minneapolis on 6 Jan 2002. Dale and Joy had one daughter, Mary Jo Berthelson.

NEWSPAPER OBITUARY

Garden City (Kansas) Telegram, 22 Aug 1975, Friday, Page 3

LEOLA H. BLANCHARD

After suffering several strokes, Mrs. Leola Howard Blanchard, 89, of Denver and formerly of Garden City, died Thursday at Westminster, Colorado Elegant Care Center.

Born 27 Jun 1886, in Argonia (*Sumner County, Kansas*), she was of Quaker parentage, a descendant of early Delaware colonists and the Baltimore Howards. She married Miles A. Blanchard at Cherokee, Oklahoma, on 21 Oct 1906, and he died on 30 Dec 1965.

Although Kansas was her native state, Mrs. Blanchard spent much of her life in Colorado and Oklahoma. She lived in Garden City from 1930 to 1950. She was a writer and historian. Her most famous book was “The Conquest of Southwest Kansas.”

Mrs. Blanchard was an active member of the Denver, Colorado, East Side Christian Church and was a charter member of the Robert Coe Chapter of the Daughters of the American Colonists and past State Regent. She was active in D.A.R., the Territorial Daughters of Colorado, and a charter member of the Oklahoma branch of the Huguenot Society of Virginia.

Survivors include a son, Howard, Garden City, Kansas; a daughter, Mrs. Joy Berthelson, Broomfield, Colorado; and two grandchildren.

The Funeral will be 10 a.m. Monday at the Howard Park Avenue Chapel, Denver, Colorado. Graveside services will be 10 a.m. Wednesday at the Valley View Cemetery, the Rev. Leonard Clark officiating. Friends may call at the Garnand Funeral Home in Garden City Tuesday evening.

Cemetery Headstone

MILES AND LEOLA (HOWARD) BLANCHARD



VALLEY VIEW CEMETERY

Garden City, Finney County, Kansas

Photograph provided by Rebecca Powers