

## **RUSSELL ROY BECHTELHEIMER**

*Project Consultant – Grant County*



**RUSSELL ROY BECHTELHEIMER**

Newspaper Photograph

1977

**RUSSELL ROY BECHTELHEIMER**, son of William Bechtelheimer (1857-1942) and Lucinda Hoyle (1856-1927), was born 27 Jun 1888 in Marshall County, Iowa. Russell moved to Ulysses, Grant County, Kansas in 1902 and made his living as a farmer and a businessman. He served as County Clerk, Postmaster, City Councilman and in 1937, he became Mayor of Ulysses.

He married **BIRDIE ELIZABETH KIISTNER**, daughter of Peter Kiistner (1852-1950) and Wilhelmina Gutz (1856-1951) on 6 May 1912 at the Hotel Stone in Garden City, Finney County, Kansas. Birdie was born on 8 Feb 1893 in Ulysses, Kansas.

Russell died on 1 Aug 1978 at the Bob Wilson Memorial Hospital in Ulysses, Grant County, Kansas. Birdie passed away on 8 Oct 1994. Both were buried at the Ulysses Cemetery in Ulysses, Kansas.

Three children were born in their marriage; **LOIS DOREEN BECHTELHEIMER** (5 Nov 1932 - 11 Nov 1932), **R. RICHARD BECHTELHEIMER** (3 Dec 1934 - 23 Apr 1935), both children were buried at the Ulysses Cemetery. Their third child, a daughter, **ELIZABETH ANN BECHTELHEIMER** was born on 29 Jun 1936. On 7 Mar 1955, she married Dwaine "Wendell" Cheek in Denver, Colorado. Wendell was the son of Alton J. Cheek (1908-1983) and Ruth E. Culbreath (1909-1994). He was born on 13 Apr 1931 in Loveland, Tillman County, Oklahoma. He was a farmer and a rancher when he and Elizabeth made their home in Grant County, Kansas and in Park County, Colorado. In 1973, he retired from ranching and became active in Real Estate. He died on 29 Apr 2000 in Oro Valley, Pima County, Arizona. Elizabeth lived in Tucson, Arizona. Wendell and Elizabeth had two children, Kevin and Dana.

## Newspaper Article

### RUSSELL ROY BECHTELHEIMER

*Garden City (Kansas) Telegram, 6 Oct 1977*

#### “UNCLE RUSSELL” HONORED

Ulysses – Russell Bechtelheimer, known to nearly everyone as “Uncle Russell,” was honored Thursday as the “Kansan who has contributed most to the general betterment of his or her community.”

He was one of four Kansans honored at the awards luncheon in Topeka at the Kansas Health Care Association, a feature of the 27<sup>th</sup> annual convention of the organization formerly known as the Kansas Nursing Home Association. Bechtelheimer received the “Better Life Award.”

“Everybody who has lived here a year knows who Russell Bechtelheimer is,” said Fern Bessire of the Grant County Museum. “He’s had a finger in almost every pie that’s ever been baked in Grant County.”

A former four-term mayor of Ulysses, Bechtelheimer helped bring the first telephone and electrical service to Grant County. He served 10 years as secretary-treasurer of the Pioneer Electric Cooperative in Ulysses.

He and his wife were instrumental in building, furnishing, and staffing the Western Prairie Home at Ulysses and he has served for six years as president of Western Prairie’s executive board.

“Uncle Russell” came to Ulysses with his family in 1903 at the age of 15. His father served several years as a probate judge. Russell purchased a farm and in 1912 married Birdie Kiistner. While farming, he also served two terms as County Clerk and a period as Postmaster.

A farm implement dealership he began nearly 50 years ago is still in business under different ownership.

Several downtown businessmen made their start with his help, including a nephew, Cecil Kopley, owner of Kep’s Toggery, who familiarized the title “Uncle Russell.”

In recent years, according to Mrs. Bessire, Uncle Russell, now 89, has cut back the number of activities he is involved with; she said he had served as a board member of nearly every organization in the community.

After serving as City Councilman, Bechtelheimer was mayor of Ulysses from 1937 to 1945.

## Newspaper Obituary

### RUSSELL ROY BECHTELHEIMER

*Garden City (Kansas) Telegram, Thursday, 3 Aug 1978*

ULYSSES – Russell Roy Bechtelheimer, 90, Ulysses, died Tuesday at Bob Wilson Memorial Hospital.

He was born on June 27, 1888 at Marshalltown, Marshall County, Iowa and he married Birdie E. Kiistner on May 6, 1912 in Garden City, Kansas. He was a retired farmer and businessman and lived here since 1902.

Mr. Bechtelheimer was a member of the United Methodist Church, Pioneer Telephone Association, past chairman of Western Prairie Nursing Home, all of Ulysses.

Survivors include his wife, a daughter, Mrs. Wendell Cheek of Denver, Colorado, and two grandchildren.

The funeral will be at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, at the church, the Rev. Harry Betts officiating. Burial is at the Ulysses Cemetery.