

Joseph Hughes – Disturbing the Peace
By Robert Lee Rhodes

In regard to the incident where Joseph Hughes and his step son had a brush with the law, my mother, Jennie (Hughes) Rhodes gave me this account several years ago:

When Joseph Hughes first came to live in the Decatur area, he was a divorced man with his three young daughters to care for. Their two older sisters, Mary (Mamie) and Myrtle were already on their own and not in his household. He found a job as fireman in the boiler room of Norman's laundry, and was able to set up a household for his young daughters.

Also, there was a divorcee, employed at Norman's Laundry named Mary Ellen Dixon. Mary Ellen had two young sons in her household named Herschel and Homer. So Joe Hughes and Mary Ellen decided to get married and form a single household with their combined families consisting of Jennie, Laura and Gladys Hughes and Herschel and Homer Dixon. After their marriage they rented an apartment in the Syndicate building in down-town Decatur, where they established their home.

Herschel Dixon was a mischievous boy who took great pleasure in aggravating the janitor of the syndicate building, a Mr. Snyder, so he responded by locking Herschel in the boiler room of the building. When Herschel came up missing Joe Hughes searched for him and found that Mr. Snyder had locked him in the boiler room, so Joe broke the door down, cutting his arm very badly and rescued Herschel.

So Mr. Snyder swore out a warrant for the arrest of Joe Hughes and his step son, and this was carried out on March 15 1904. Joe then counter- sued Mr. Snyder for locking Herschel in the boiler room and the case was settled.

Soon after that Joe and Mary Ellen quit their jobs at Norman's laundry and accepted a job as a tenant farmer for John Dipper, a prominent farmer west of Decatur in the Sunnyside area, and the family moved into the tenant house on the farm.

It was while they lived in the Sunnyside area that Jennie finally found a homelike environment after four years of moving to different places and going to many different schools. She made many friends at Sunnyside School and she finally was a happy young lady. Jennie enjoyed reminiscing about her experiences while she lived in the Sunnyside area.