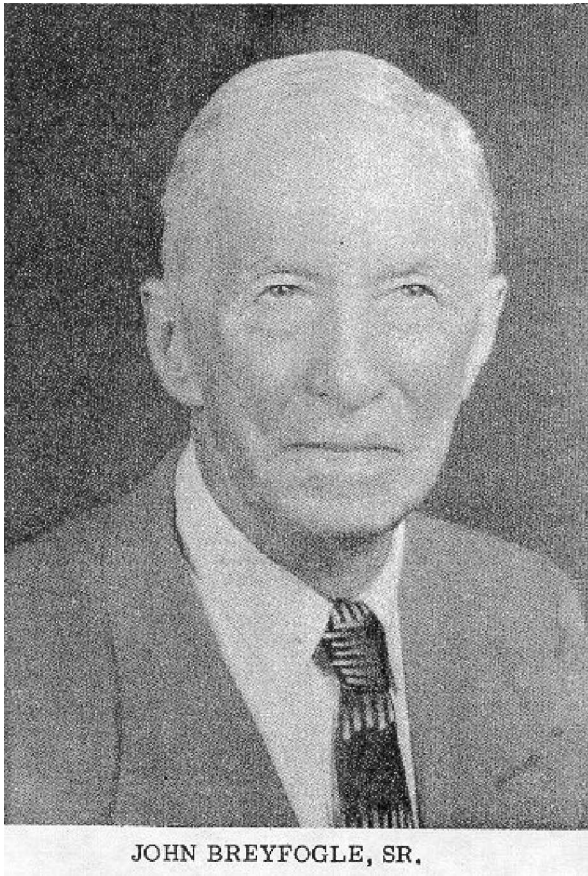


John Breyfogle, Sr., longtime Olathe business leader, is dead



John W. Breyfogle, 94, longtime Olathe banker, developer and newspaperman, died last night at the Good Samaritan home in Olathe. He had been in failing health for several months.

Funeral services were incomplete late last night. The body will lie in state at the Julien-Flaming Amos Family funeral home in Olathe.

Although he never held or sought public office, he had been active in Republican politics in Kansas and Johnson County for the past 50 years. He was looked upon and recognized as “Mr. Senior Citizen of Olathe.”

Breyfogle was born Dec. 21, 1872, son of Israel Breyfogle and Mary Devanney Breyfogle, on a farm owned by his parents near 87th & Robison Streets, Overland Park, which has since been subdivided as Sherwood Heights. His mother was a native of County Galway, Ireland and his father’s people had immigrated from Germany, first settling in Berks Count, PA where they acquired a large tract of land from William Penn at 40 schillings per 100 acres near Kutztown.

His father and grandfather came to Johnson County in 1865 at the close of the Civil War and purchased several hundred acres of land from Chief Blue-jacket of the Shawnee Indians in what was later designated as Mission Township.

Breyfogle attended the county elementary schools through the eight grade and because he was not physically strong and did not want to be a farmer, left home when he was seventeen to enroll in Spalding’s Business College, Kansas City, MO. He completed the course with honors in two years and accepted a contract to teach grades one through eight in the same one room rural schoolhouse known as Little Blue, which he had graduated from a few years before. He received \$225 for the term and when the school board refused to grant an increase to \$250 for the next year, he left and came to Olathe in 1892 where he made his home until his death.

In Olathe he was first employed in the old Grange general store and after a few months took a position with the First National Bank where he worked in various capacities for seven years.

He entered into the social life in the community and was a charter member of the “Cockleburs,” a group organized by fifteen young men including William A. Mitchell, brother-in-law of Jesse Clyde Nichols, George H. Hodges and D. Clark Kelly, which sponsored an annual ball at the

Grange Hall, which was then the civic center of the community. He was the last surviving member of the group.

In 1900, he left the First National Bank to engage in the insurance and real estate business with an office first in Olathe and later in Kansas City in the Victor Building, which he maintained until the late 1920's.

Breyfogle was always interested in politics and was an ardent Republican. In 1910 he purchased the Olathe Mirror, one of the oldest Kansas weekly newspapers, which was the principal organ for the party in Johnson County until its sale to the J.P. Harris interest in January of 1960 and when it was consolidated with the Johnson County Democrat and is now published as the Daily News. In 1957, at the age of 85, he built and personally supervised construction of the building now occupied by the Daily News at 127 S. Cherry Street.

Breyfogle was influential in both county and state politics for many years and numbered among his friends prominent members and officials of both the Republican and Democratic parties. He belonged to the conservative wing of his party and in 1928 successfully managed the campaign of the late Senator Charles Curtis of Kansas to obtain the Vice Presidential nomination at the Kansas City convention as running mate to Herbert Hoover.

In 1930 he was selected as state campaign manager for Frank Haucke of Council Grove in the hotly contested gubernatorial primary contest between Haucke and Clyde M. Reed who was seeking nomination for a second term. Governor Reed was defeated, it being the first time in history of the state that a Republican Governor had failed to secure his party's nomination for a second term. After the primary John D. M. Hamilton of Topeka took charge of the Republican campaign in the general election. It was a three cornered race between Haucke, Harry Woodring, the Democratic nominee, and Dr. John R. Brinkley who was running as an independent. The primary fight had been bitter and as a result Woodring was elected Governor by a narrow margin.

Breyfogle helped finance the first Young Republican organization in Kansas, contributed liberally to the party and its candidates and was serving as a member of the Johnson County Finance Committee at the time of his death.

In 1930, Breyfogle became editor of the Security Benefit News, a national magazine of a fraternal life association which was the forerunner of the Security Benefit Life Insurance Company of Topeka. He served in that capacity and as a director of the insurance company, dividing his time between Topeka and Olathe, until January of 1946 when at the age of 74 he took a leave of absence to engage in the real estate development business with his nephews, George I. Breyfogle and Louis D. Breyfogle, in Overland Park.

Although lumber and other materials were then very difficult to obtain he persevered and proceeded with the first business and residential developments of that area after World War II. In the fall of 1946, he resigned his positions with the Security Benefit Association and devoted his full time to his interest in Overland Park. He maintained an office at 7300 West 80th Street, Overland Park and commuted daily from his Olathe apartment until last September when he was

stricken with a severe illness. Except in bad weather he operated his own car until December of 1965 when he voluntarily gave up driving and made the trip by bus.

He became associated with the Patrons Co-Operative Bank of Olathe in the 1920's as a stockholder and director, serving in the latter capacity for approximately 40 years. He was well known in banking as well as in political newspaper circles and his advice and council were frequently sought.

He took a keen interest in community and civic affairs and was one of the original sponsors of the Olathe Community Hospital to which he contributed generously. He was instrumental in obtaining the first printing press for the School for the Deaf so that the students there would have an opportunity to learn the trade. It was primarily through his efforts that a fulltime Farm Bureau office including a home demonstration agent were established in Johnson County. This was long before the days of federally financed projects and when farming was the principal industry of the county.

He was a member of the Old Ashbury Methodist Church which was located at about 105th & Metcalf, Overland Park; the Kansas City Club; Overland Park Chamber of Commerce, was a 32nd Degree Mason and a life member of Abdallah Temple. He was a sustaining member of the Kansas State Historical Society and a member of the Topeka Civic Theater. He became the first life member of the theater in 1946 when he provided a cash award for a national playwriting contest. His interests were varied and in his leisure time he enjoyed good books and fine paintings.

Breyfogle was married to Kate. O. Taylor of Olathe June 7, 1905. She died in 1928 and in 1933 he married Lorraine Johnston of Cleveland, Ohio who predeceased him in 1944. He is survived by his son, John W. Breyfogle, Jr., lawyer of Olathe, and three grandchildren, John W. Breyfogle, III, Robert T. Breyfogle and Ann Elizabeth Breyfogle, all of Olathe.

SOURCE: The Daily News of Johnson County, Kansas, Thursday May 4, 1967

EDITORS NOTE: This article was prominently place on the front page above the fold of this edition of the paper. The photocopy of this article came from Dartmouth College as part of the William Arthur Breyfogle files.