

# **Hobart and Bertha Putnam**

Cemetery Walk Information 2009

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Hobart and Bertha were represented by Cheri Sterk and Hugh Johnson

The year was 1897, and a doctor near Royal was summoned to deliver a baby. However, the rains had washed out several bridges and the doctor was forced to ride horseback, leaving his buggy at home---thus, Hobart S. Putnam was born! Hobart's parents, Lew and Cora Putnam, moved to Hartley where he attended and graduated from Hartley High School, then helped his father on the farm and kept books for several Hartley merchants. Hobart tried to join the army but they told him he didn't weigh enough.

However, in 1918, he was drafted into the army and sent to Camp Dodge near Des Moines. His unit was ordered to Europe, but Hobart became ill with diphtheria and flu and was sent to the hospital and honorably discharged. Two weeks later, he passed the tests necessary to work for the U.S. Postal Service and was assigned to Hartley's Rural Route 2, north of Hartley, using a horse and mail wagon to deliver the mail.

Bertha was born on a farm north of Hartley to Henry and Caroline Linder in 1896. She attended rural schools near her childhood home. When her Mother died, she and her older sister, Minnie, helped raise her five brothers. As the story goes, word started "that a young single man was now delivering the mail north of Hartley and a pretty young single lady, Bertha Linder (whose home was located on his route), began meeting him at the mailbox!" Hobart bought a Model T touring car in 1925, and after a five-year courtship, Hobart and Bertha were married and became parents of three girls—Carol, Thyra and Dorathy. They lived in their beloved home in the same house in Hartley for sixty-three years!

Hobart continued to deliver the Hartley mail and took his job very seriously. Most rural mail carriers were very conscientious and tried their hardest to sort the mail, decipher the handwriting and send it off to the right party. Hobart was no exception. He had some rough times in the winter as he battled the snowy roads, and if necessary, used a bobsled and even snow shoes. His motto was, "The mail must go through!" On Christmas Eve he would occasionally work late, delivering a package or letter to someone on his route from a son in the service. People could depend on him arriving at the mailbox at a certain time and they set their watches according to his arrival. His route was twenty miles long when he started delivering mail, but by the time he retired in 1960, the route had lengthened to cover sixty-nine miles.

Hobart was a charter member of the American Legion serving for sixty-two continuous years of membership, and as an officer (mostly chaplain) of Arthur Kirchoff Post No.288 for fifty years. He was usually the oldest member in Hartley to march from the Legion Hall to the cemetery on Memorial Day. He also was a member of the Masonic Lodge, the Order of the Eastern Star, Shriners and Rural Letter Carriers Association. He was a man of God and a faithful member of the United Methodist Church of Hartley where he served as Sunday school superintendent for twenty years. During World War II Hobart joined the Civil Air Patrol and helped with air raid drills.

Hobart was dedicated to his wife, daughters, and aging parents, but he also enjoyed his hobbies----flying, gardening, beekeeping, and working in his shop. He had fun attending auctions and Bertha was amazed at the "stuff" he brought home!

Bert (as she was often called) loved her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and they adored her. She was devoted to her husband and family, yet took time to be involved in community affairs. She was a charter member of the American Legion Auxiliary and The Eastern Star. She was also a member of the United Methodist Church where she served in Sarah Circle, and taught Sunday school for many years. She was given an award for helping Goodwill Industries for 38 years.

If someone in the community passed away, she quickly baked a pie or cake for the family. Bertha loved to entertain and was always hosting dinners for friends and relatives. She enjoyed quilting and tatting. She never complained when Hobart was late for dinner because she knew he was taking groceries to someone or giving a friend a ride home.

Most hobos knew Bertha would always serve them a good meal on her back step and often stopped at the Putnam home. She was a good matchmaker, and she and her daughter, Thyra, arranged a date between her nephew, Paul Linder and Bonnie, a young school teacher boarding at their home and yes, they got married!! During world War II she baked angel food cakes, packed them in popcorn and sent them to Hartley's servicemen on their birthdays, whether she knew them or not!! She and Hobart often opened their lake cottage to youth groups of twelve to fifteen kids from their church for a week of summer camp.

How do you describe Hobart and Bertha Putnam, Centennial King and Queen of Hartley? Faithful, dependable, fun-loving, industrious, loyal, hard-working, patriotic and caring. As one fellow stated concerning them "They are one reason Hartley is the great town it is today!"