

Richard Eugene Hickock Biography

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Biography

Richard Hickock was hanged for the infamous 1959 slaying of a Kansas farm family that inspired the 1965 Truman Capote book *In Cold Blood*. Born in the early 1930s, Hickock grew up on a Kansas farm and came from a stable home, unlike his partner in the murders, Perry Smith. As a young man, Hickock worked as an auto mechanic but was involved in a 1950 car accident that left him with a severely disfigured face. He married and divorced twice, and while in business for himself experienced some financial difficulties. He was convicted of burglary in 1958 and was sentenced to a term in the Kansas State Penitentiary.

In jail Hickock met Smith, who came from an abusive, alcoholic rodeo family. From another inmate, Hickock learned of a Kansas farmer who reportedly kept a large sum of money at his isolated house in Holcomb. When Hickock was released in August of 1959, he returned to the Olathe, Kansas home of his parents and contacted Smith when he was freed as well. Taking a shotgun and a hunting knife, and purchasing cord and gloves on the way, the pair arrived at the farmstead of Herbert Clutter after midnight on November 15, 1959, and entered through an unlocked door. They woke Clutter, demanding to know where his safe was located. They never found any large sum, and so tied up Clutter, his wife, and their two teenaged children, and shot them. Hickock and Smith were arrested in Nevada a few weeks later and hanged in April of 1965.