

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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THE HISTORIC WATTS HOME

This historic old home was located at Delta, an old community a few miles southeast of Willisville in Nevada County. The information in this article is from old newspapers on microfilm printed about 1900. Many of you will remember Watt's Dept. Store in Camden. This is the same Watts family whose ancestors owned this beautiful home. The cemetery mentioned has some of the oldest marked graves in Nevada County.

The Watts home, at Delta, in Nevada County was one of the most beautiful places in South Arkansas. The house was built in 1858, and represented an outlay of thousands of dollars, and for many years it stood as a testimonial of the civic pride of the owner, Mr. Thomas J. Watts. He was a native of Georgia, a man of stern integrity, energy, decision of purpose, and strong domestic affection. Such men as he were those who won the respect and esteem of all who felt an interest in the up-building of this section of the country.

His wife, formerly Miss Elizabeth Godbold, was a woman of the finest character, loyal and true in every relation of life.

They came from Lowndes County, Alabama, and lived first in a log house near the spot where the new house was afterwards built. The family consisted of three sons, John C., Monroe, and Thos. J. Watts, Jr. and three little daughters, Rachel, Mary, and May. The three daughters all died quite young. The new house was built by the most skilled workers to be found. The window frames, doors, etc. were made by hand. Some of these same men had just finished building the Graham house in Camden. Among them was Mr. Sifford. The plastering was done by B. Titcomb, who was an expert in that line. Among the painters was a man named Crowan, who was undoubtedly a genius, for he afterwards went to Italy and studied art, returning in later years with many fine specimens of his work, which unfortunately were lost.

Mrs. Lizzie Watts is the owner of a very beautiful fire screen painted by him. The grounds surrounding this beautiful house formed an appropriate setting for the picture. Hedges of box, carefully clipped, long rows of pink crepe myrtles, and white altheas, with their wreath of bloom during the summer and fall, hydrangeas and oleanders in huge tubs, and an immense white climbing rose which outgrew its frame, and stretched out long fragrant sprays as if in welcome to the fortunate guests who made up the house parties of the old days. All these combined to form an ideal picture of Southern home-life before the war.

A grove of fine old trees furnished shade when the children romped and played.

Another little daughter was added to the family, Miss Lizzie Watts, the only one of the children born in the home. When she was quite an infant, her father died. Mrs. Watts was devoted heart and soul to the Southern Confederacy. She frequently entertained soldiers for days at a time. Generals Magruder and Price were among her guests, also Gen. Churchill and family and Dr. C. M. Taylor of Little Rock. After the Battle of Poison Springs, wounded Confederate soldiers were brought to her house in wagons, and the entire lower floor, including the parlors and even Mrs. Watt's bedroom was converted into a temporary hospital.

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

All the Negro women on the plantation were put to work washing the clothing of the men and preparing broth and other food for them. After the war, the family continued to reside here, extending a charming hospitality to all their neighbors and friends. Large parties were frequently entertained for a week. The Watts Bros. had a large store near the house, to which the farmers for miles around brought their produce for barter.

Mr. John C. Watts married Mrs. Nannie Morris and Mr. Monroe P. Watts married Miss Minnie Lee of Camden, and on each occasion the young couples were entertained at the Watts home. Mrs. Watts died on April 18, 1886 and was laid to rest in the family cemetery, wherein are buried the remains of all their loved ones. They still use this cemetery and when the neighbors see the steady tread of a slowly moving procession coming up the road, they know another member of this fine old family has crossed the Delta of the River of Death toward the Gulf of Eternity.

After the death of Mrs. Watts, the family removed to Camden, and shortly afterwards, Mr. Thomas J. Watts was married to Miss Mary Helen Watts of Mt. Holly. The old home was sold to Mr. Geo. W. Hambrice. About two years ago the house was burned and no trace is now left of it, save the memories of those who once dwelt under its hospitable roof. Camden is proud to claim as citizens Messrs. M. P. and T. J. Watts and their interesting families, and Miss Lizzie is one of the most efficient and beloved members of the H. L. Grinstead chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.



WATTS FAMILY HOME - NEVADA COUNTY, ARK. - BUILT 1858

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

A POEM FROM THE CAMDEN EVENING NEWS-JULY 21, 1925

THE GEM OF LIFE

Life is a game that each man plays
At morning, noon, and night;
Throughout the years, months, the days
Lord, help us play it right.

The game starts at the cradle-bed,
The end—a white headstone;
Some play the game where thousands tread
Few play the game alone.

Some play fair—some think they win
By double deal and cheat.
Be not deceived. All's written in
The game's great tally sheet.

Some claim misfortune “stacks the deck”
And leaves no chance to win;
While others rise from ruin and wreck
And beat fate with a grin.

The rules are strict, the game is hard—
There's no soft snap for you;
The King of Faith's your leading card,
Then play that suit straight thru.

Protect hearts with “three of a kind”—
With love! With faith! With hope!
And play the game with even mind—
Don't fret; don't sulk; don't mope.

And when the game at last is done
And you are called to rest,
Lay down your cards—the game is won
If you have done your best!

--Warren H. Clifford

Puzzle: A frog wants to cross a road which is 16 feet wide. On his first jump he jumps half way across—exactly 8 feet. But he is getting tired and so with each jump he manages to jump only half the distance between him and the edge of the road. How many jumps does it take for him to get to the other side?

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

MORE FROM THE 1913-1914 BLUFF CITY HIGH SCHOOL HANDBOOK

Co-education: Our school is co-educational. It is natural for boys and girls to associate, and we believe it inspires both the boys and girls to do better work. Boys and girls enter our school upon the same footing and pursue practically the same studies. Experience has convinced us that this school room association and competition yields beneficial results to both sexes. It establishes confidence in the girls and neatness and politeness in both, and gives each respect for each other. But we would not think of allowing the freedom of association between the sexes that is permitted in many schools.

We feel that fathers and mothers commit to us a sacred trust when they send their daughters to us, and it shall ever be our purpose to guard them as we do our own, and we would want our own guarded were they away from us. There is nothing so delicate as a girl's character; nothing so easily soiled, and nothing so hard to cleanse once it has been tarnished.

Building: Our school building is a neat and commodious new frame structure. It is furnished with up-to-date patent desks and such other furniture as is needed for our work.

It is built upon a beautiful elevated plat where the atmosphere is pure and invigorating.

Tuition: First and second grades--\$1.00; Third and fourth grades--\$1.50; Fifth and sixth grades--\$2.00; Seventh and eighth grades--\$2.50; Ninth and tenth grades--\$3.00; and Eleventh and twelfth grades--\$3.50

Board: Good board with refined Christian families will be furnished for \$8.00 per scholastic month.

Diplomas: A beautiful diploma will be granted to students who, in a satisfactory manner, complete the public school curriculum of Arkansas, provided their conduct has been such as to entitle them to the honors of the school.

Books: Bring such text books as you have upon the several subjects you expect to study. If we do not use them as regular texts, they will be useful to you as reference works.

IT ALWAYS WORKS

Take the number of your living brothers, double the amount, add three, multiply by five, add the number of your living sisters, multiply by ten, add the number of deaths of your brothers and sisters, subtract one hundred and fifty from the result. The right hand figure will be the number of deaths, the middle figure will be the number of living sisters, and the figure at the left will be the number of living brothers.

(information on this page is from Mrs. Clara Harvey)

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

FEED-BACK

From Barbara Ray, Missouri City, Texas (Nov., 2001)

Got my newsletter today. Thanks, I'm enjoying it. If you bump into Mr. and Mrs. McBride, please tell them I said "Happy Anniversary". Don't know if they will remember me, but they taught at Fairview with my mother, Louise Walker. Mr. McBride was my history teacher in the eighth grade. I will never forget his description of the national debt—it made an impression on me that I have never forgotten, when he talked about how the paper money needed to pay it off would fill the classroom we were in, plus many more.

From Perry Westmoreland, Livingston, Texas (March, 2002)

I read with interest your piece in *The Sandyland Chronicle* about the Union army at Lone Grove and Gen. Carr's report of April 13, 1864. As you know, my Great Grandfather Fielding Irvin's place was near Lone Grove. Lonnor B. Moores, my Great Great Grandfather also lived there.

Fielding Irvin did not believe in slavery and would not join the Confederate army even though he was pressured to do so. Great Grandmother Margaret C. Moores Irvin told my mother, Drue Tunnell Westmoreland, that at the beginning of the Civil War, Fielding Irvin would hide from the Confederate sympathizers in the woods of Caney Creek bottom during the day and come home at night. Late one night, the Confederates came to their home, and Fielding went out the back door and crawled under the house, where he could hear the boots of the Confederates as they searched for him...

Margaret Irvin told my mother that she believed it was the Confederates who burned their house.

Keep up the good work. I only wish *The Sandyland Chronicle* was as large as our newspaper, *The Houston Chronicle*.

From Barbara Masterson, Chandler, Arizona (March, 2002)

The *Chronicle* arrived this evening and it is wonderful as always. I thought you would like to have some more information on Eugene Asa Carr. In 1850 he was the 1,468th person to graduate from West Point which had begun as a military school March 16, 1802. It took 48 years to graduate as many as graduate in about one year today....

THANK you for this issue. It is so wonderfully interesting.

Editors Note: Thanks for your letters, be they praises or criticisms. If any readers have some memorable experiences of growing up in the Nevada-Ouachita County area or anything that might be of interest to readers of this paper, please jot it down and mail it to me. I will try to include it in a future issue. Send letters, comments, stories, suggestions, etc. to Sandyland Chronicle, 2680 Warren Ave., Camden, AR 71701 (email: jmckelvy@cei.net)

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

RECIPE FOR THIS MONTH

Editor's Note: The following bread recipe is one of the best and is not all that hard to make. If I can do it, anybody can. We try to keep a supply of these tasty rolls in the freezer and just heat them in the microwave to go with a meal.

NO-KNEAD KNOT ROLLS

Sometimes, we make them shaped like knots, but usually we make them butter-horn style. Choose the style you like.

2 packages (1/4 ounce each) active dry yeast
2 cups warm water (110-115 degrees)
1/2 cup sugar
1 and 1/2 teaspoons salt
6 to 6 1/2 cups all purpose flour
1 egg
1/2 cup shortening
1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened

In a mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in warm water. (*I use a thermometer to make sure water is the right temperature*). Add the sugar, salt, and 2 cups of the flour. Beat on medium speed for 2 minutes. Add egg and shortening and mix well.

Now for the hard part: Stir in enough remaining flour (*a little at a time*) to form a soft dough (*do not knead*). I usually give up after about 3 1/2 more cups of flour is mixed in. You need to have a strong arm for this or get someone to help stir. *I use a wooden spoon with a plastic handle which seems to help*. Dough will be sticky, but it will be OK. Put in a large greased bowl. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Take a break and take care of sore arm.

For Knot Rolls:

Punch down dough and divide into four portions. Cover three pieces with plastic wrap. Roll remaining portion into a 14 inch by 12 inch rectangle on a slightly floured surface. Spread two tablespoons softened butter over dough. Fold in half lengthwise and cut into 12 strips. Tie each strip into a knot. Tuck and pinch ends under. Place 2 inches apart on greased baking sheets. Repeat with remaining dough.

Cover and let rise until doubled, about one hour. Bake at 400 degrees (*I use 375*) for 10 -12 minutes or until golden brown. Brush tops with melted butter. Yield: 4 dozen

For Butter-horn Style Rolls:

Punch down dough and divide in half. Roll one half into a 12 inch circle on a floured surface. Spread 4 tablespoons softened margarine on top of dough. Cut circle into 12 pie shaped pieces. Start from wide end and roll up each piece. Place on greased baking sheet with pointed side down. Repeat with remaining dough. Cover and let rise until doubled, about one hour. Bake at 375 or 400 degrees until golden brown (about 12-15 minutes). Brush tops with melted butter. Yield: 24 rolls