

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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VOL. 4 – NO. 9

September, 2004

THE BOOM TOWN OF WATERLOO

I'm sure we all remember watching "The Beverly Hillbillies" on television and the changes brought about in their lives by the discovery of "black gold" or Texas tea".

Poor farm families of Nevada County, Arkansas probably had dreams of something like that happening to them in 1922. Oil had recently been discovered in Union County and El Dorado and Smackover had become boom towns almost overnight. Oil had also been discovered in Ouachita County near Stephens. Once oil is discovered, geologists work quickly to determine other places with similar geologic formations and drill test wells in their search for oil. This search led them to Nevada County in 1922. A test well was drilled near Mt. Olive in the central part of the county. The drilling caused much excitement and I'm sure some folks had dreams of becoming rich and being able to retire from the drudgery of hard farm work. Others probably wondered what would happen to their community if oil was discovered.

LYKE WATKINS

The most famous oil driller in Arkansas at that time was Lyke Watkins and he was the man who was drilling the oil well at Mt. Olive in Nevada County. Mr. Watkins already had a reputation as an expert and one who didn't believe in dry holes. That added to the excitement as the drilling commenced at Mt. Olive. Hundreds of automobiles and vehicles of every description carried thousands of spectators to this place. Many came on horseback.

Lyke Watkins, oil driller, came to Arkansas from Mexico in 1919 on the hunt for oil. He first struck oil in Ouachita Co. with the Hunter well, then in Columbia Co. with the Poverty Well, and on September 13, 1922 he made a huge discovery of oil near Mt. Olive in Nevada County.

An unusual thing about Lyke Watkins is his view of the number 13, which many people are superstitious about. His birthday was on the 13th, his wedding day was on the 13th, and he begins all his great undertakings on the 13th day of the month. It was also on the 13th that he has reached his greatest rewards as was the case at Mt. Olive when the oil well came in on September 13, 1922. He has never drilled a dry hole in Arkansas (*from the Prescott Daily News - 1-26-1924*)

The news of the big discovery at Mt. Olive spread fast and oil companies rushed to the area to get in on the action. Many other wells were drilled in the same area and most were good producers. Here are some news items from the local papers regarding activities in the Nevada County oil fields.

A well known oil man, George J. Ames visited the well site and sent off samples for testing. (*The Nevada News – 9-21-1922*)

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From The Prescott Daily News - 2-15-1924:

George Ames and R. M. Zingg receive \$185,000 for 80 acres in oil field, purchased by Keystone Co. of New York. This tract has four wells producing 1100 barrels/day.

A NAME IS CHOSEN

From the Prescott Daily News 4-14-1924:

Sect. 2-14-21 on T. Ellis Tract (1/4 mile from Discovery well)

The Keystone Co. is building houses, both business and residential, and one will be the home of Guthrie Drug Store. Messrs. Adam and Martin Guthrie of Prescott will open a store on the Keystone holdings a short distance from the Discovery well. At this point Keystone people have installed a treating plant and steam all the oil just as it comes from the pump. It is then stored in reservoirs. A mammoth steel tank and a number of smaller tanks are in place on the public road where the Mansfield Lumber Co. road (railroad) will enter the field. It is at this point where the town site has been laid out and at this time a number of streets are being built. A name is wanted for the place and it may be selected today. Many are strong for calling the first city in the oil field "Nevada" and it may be the name selected. Others suggest "Keystone", but there is strong support in the vicinity for the name "Nevada". After much deliberation, the name "Waterloo" was chosen for the new town in honor of the Waters family who owned the property where the first well was discovered.

The road from Rosston to Mt. Olive is rough, but passable. Large numbers of people are visiting the Nevada Co. oil fields and many are making plans to locate there.

From the Prescott Daily News - 4-15-1924:

Keystone Co. has three large boilers running which are never allowed to cool. The railroad is now within two miles of the oil field.

From the Prescott Daily News - 4-21-1924:

The Prescott Chamber of Commerce is planning to visit the oil field. "Hitch up your Lizzies, Packards, and Bevoes. Carry your own grub or you may get hungry".

Report from their visit: "Instead of a quiet farming community with a few derricks scattered around, there are now numerous houses, business houses, and on every hand there are derricks, drilling wells, producing wells, enormous pits filled with crude oil, steel storage tanks, and the hum of machinery is heard everywhere."

Of 21 wells drilled so far, 14 are producing oil, 2 are gas wells, 2 are temporarily abandoned, and only 3 dry holes found. The Johnson Lumber Co. railroad (formerly Mansfield Lumber Co.) is almost completed to the oil field.

From the Nevada News 2-25-1926):

The Humble Oil Co. is building a treating plant, erecting steel storage tanks, and has a derrick up on the Grove Tract in the south side of the NE SE of Sec. 2, Twp. 14 South, Range 21West. Their lease is 220 acres and many holes will be drilled at once.

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From the Nevada News - 3-11-1926:

Major oil companies are being drawn to Nevada Co. oil fields. A large force of men are laying pipe and building tanks. Humble Co. is erecting derricks, building earthen reservoirs, steel tanks, and treating plants, and has completed pipe lines to the loading rack on the Reader Railroad

From the Nevada News - 3-18-1926:

Nevada Co. oil field is booming. In Waterloo, many houses, both business and residential, have been built and the forest is full of tents. Waterloo has businesses of all kinds and hotels and rooming houses, but not enough to accommodate the men employed by the drilling companies.

From the Nevada News - 4-15-1926:

The oil field is expanding rapidly. Waterloo is growing and business is good. Arkansas Power and Light is erecting lines into the oil field. The Reader Railroad goes into the field each day hauling oil in tank cars to the MoPac line at Reader and bringing in supplies to the oil field. They are talking of adding a passenger coach.

Ozan Oil Co., Humble Oil, Keystone, and others are shipping a number of cars daily from their treating plants via the Reader Railroad to the MoPac line at Reader. Keystone, Smitherman and McDonald, and Autry have their treating plants near the loading racks on the railroad and others pipe their oil to the railroad.

Keystone has a 100,000 barrel order with Barber Asphalt Co. of Madison, Ill. Humble has two 55,000 barrel steel tanks partially filled.

The road from Prescott to Waterloo has been graded and many improvements made.

From The Nevada News - 4-1-1927:

Keystone has been taken over by Atlantic Oil Royalty Co. Keystone owns Waters No. 1 in Sec. 11, Twp. 14S, Rng. 21West which was the first oil well in Nevada County brought in September, 1922. Keystone has a productive treating plant and large storage capacity and pipelines to the loading station on the Reader Railroad. The company has produced 240,000 barrels of oil so far from 30 acres of land. The average depth of drilling is 1200 feet.

Testing for oil is being done in the Falcon area. The abstract office in Prescott is so busy with oil leases, etc. that it has had to hire extra help.

From The Nevada News - 8-18-1927:

The Prescott Chamber of Commerce is planning a visit to the Waterloo oil fields. The Prescott Boy's Band will accompany the group and will render concerts at each stop on the route as well as at Waterloo.

From The Nevada News - 9-1-1927:

A caravan of autos and 150 people made a good will tour of the oil fields. The first stop was at Laneburg where the Boy's Band gave a concert. Dr. and Mrs. Nelms served iced melons following the speech. The next stop was Mt. Moriah, at one time the principal town in the

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county. A large crowd enjoyed a concert by the band. A larger crowd was found at Rosston and the band gave another concert.

At noon, the caravan arrived at Waterloo. The town has a number of businesses, a hotel, and an emergency sanitarium. There was more music and speeches. Lunch was at the Humble Oil “chuck house” and was served by “Ella”. One person ate 38 chicken gizzards. Almost everyone had from one to four gizzards. Following lunch, Fred Guthrie and Dan Pittman conducted a tour of the oil field.

*Editor’s note: On early maps of Nevada County, you will find a place called **Ames**. This was the spot where the railroad from the oil field crossed the Rosston-Camden highway and is named after George J. Ames, one of the early oil men. The intersection of the Mt. Olive road (now Hwy. 76) and the main highway (now Hwy. 371) was named **Irma**. I have lost my notes on who Irma was, but I believe she was a member of the Waters family or a daughter of one of the oil men.*

THE OIL CONTINUES TO FLOW

The oil produced at Waterloo was not the highest grade of oil, but it was soon discovered that it was useful for certain purposes such as in the production of asphalt and for certain types of lubricating oils. New highways were being constructed in the 1920s and 1930s, or at least the main graded roads were being paved. A large asphalt plant and oil refinery was constructed at Waterloo and this operated for many years. Products from the oil field continued to be shipped on the Reader Railroad up the “Possum Trot Line” to Reader on the main railroad line, a distance of about 25 miles.

The old refinery stands silent today with rusting tanks, pipes, and rundown buildings. The railroad line to Waterloo was discontinued in the 1970s and the track was taken up. The oil continues to be pumped, but is now hauled by trucks to wherever it goes.

The big oil boom at Waterloo didn’t last too long, but the oil industry has played a big part in the economy of Nevada County and still does today. The town of Waterloo today has only a few families, no post office, and no stores. For pictures of the oil refinery at Waterloo, visit the Nevada County Depot Museum website at <http://www.depotmuseum.org/> and type “waterloo” in the search box.

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THESE SUPERSTITIONS?

1. Wearing ear-rings is good for the eyesight.
2. Wearing a mustache is beneficial for weak eyes.
3. Carrying a buckeye ball in your pocket will help rheumatism.
4. Children should wear a bag of asafetida around their necks to ward off diseases.
5. Keeping a goat around the house is a good health measure.
6. Boys afflicted with hives were warned not to wade in water, lest they strike the heart and cause death.
7. A horse hair placed in water will turn into a snake.
8. Don’t take the third light from a match.

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A FLYING LEAP

Editor's note: This news item concerns John W. McKelvey, who was a well-known Prescott businessman in the early 1900s. Some members of this family had come to Prescott from a place called Buckhorn in Madison Co., Missouri. They had migrated to Missouri from Portage Co., Ohio. There is a Huffman-McKelvey Cemetery in Buckhorn, MO which I visited while doing research on this family. As best I can tell, there is no connection between this McKelvey family and my McKelvy family.

The family is mentioned frequently in early Nevada Co. newspapers. In 1909 there are advertisements for the McKelvey and England Barber Shop. In 1919, I found J. W. McKelvey had purchased the East Side Barber Shop and in 1920 he had accepted a position in the shop of Louis Stroopon in Arkadelphia. I also found a McKelvey Hotel mentioned in Prescott.

This news item concerns a serious illness that J. W. McKelvey had in 1912. He was taken to a St. Louis hospital for treatment where the following unusual event happened.

Prescott Daily News 6-1-1912

J. W. McKelvey, well known in the Prescott area was admitted to St. John's Hospital in St. Louis on May 27. He had relatives in the Madison County, Missouri area. His brother, C. W. McKelvey of Prescott left for St. Louis when he heard of his brother's illness. He has been suffering from a mental condition. The following report was published in the Prescott Daily News.

May 31st- The shock of diving headlong through the glass and screen of the third story window of the hospital is expected to cure Mr. McKelvey of his hallucinations. John (known as Jack) McKelvey, wealthy merchant of Prescott, whose plunge was taken yesterday has given no sign of his mental condition and his physician says he is permanently cured. McKelvey's leap through the window was witnessed by Miss Mary Budde, a special nurse who had been detailed to watch him. Catching her off guard, he sprang from his bed, brushed her aside, and made the dive, clad only in a thin night gown. He landed on the sidewalk of Twenty Third Street, but the only injury he sustained was a broken left leg.

He had been in the hospital since May 27th and had been possessed of the delusion that his wife and three children also were in the hospital and were being kept from him.

A footnote to this story: About a month later, Jack McKelvey returned to Prescott by train accompanied by Dr. Gill Buchanan and was said to have stood the trip well. He continued in his profession at least until 1920. There is a John W. McKelvey buried at the Huffman-McKelvey Cemetery at Buckhorn, MO who died in 1939. I suspect this might be the subject of this story, since many of his relatives are buried in that cemetery.

"The future lies before you, like paths of pure white snow. Be careful how you tread it, for every step will show." *Author unknown*

"Decide what a beautiful day it's going to be for you before checking the weather." *Mary Ellen Edmunds*

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THE DEATH OF RIN TIN TIN From the 9-8-1932 issue of *The Nevada News*

After 13 years as a film actor, Rin Tin Tin, the most famous dog that ever lived, is dead in his 15th year. The passing of this wonderful animal, whose almost incredible intelligence amazed and delighted millions of movie fans, will be regretted wherever the silver screen is known.

Rin Tin Tin was a pure-blooded police dog, one of a litter of puppies found by American soldiers in a captured German sector during the last stage of the World War. He was adopted by Lee Duncan of the Aviation Corps, who brought him to the United States and trained him for the movies. The dog's earnings have been close to \$300,000. His great popularity is said to have once saved Warner Brothers from bankruptcy.

Among Rin Tin Tin's most impressive stunts was to thwart the villain of the play by springing at his throat with apparent ferocity. Yet he never bit anyone, his viciousness being entirely assumed as a feature of his technique as an accomplished actor.

It is related that he paid very little attention to villains in real life, once having slept peacefully while a burgler robbed his master's home, including the room where the dog lay.

Rin Tin Tin Jr. has been in training for some time and will take the veteran's place in a new picture which was to have starred the dead actor-dog. Movie fans will hope the offspring may prove worthy of his distinguished sire.

CATS AND KITTENS

One day last spring, a funny thing
Our mama Maltese cat
Found seven little kittens
In my Granddad's high silk hat.

And then when it was summer
Right behind the cellar door
She gave us a big surprise
And found us seven more.

And when the plumber came one day
The kitchen pipes to fix
Here was the cat behind the sink
And there she'd found us six

And so if mama cats find kittens
Everywhere like that
What are we to do
When every kitten ----is a cat?

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Amanda E. Kirk Wadley
Born- November 11, 1846
Died- November 10, 1933
Married- ???Wadley
(separated)
Buried at Ebenezer Cemetery
Nevada County, Arkansas

Siblings: Jasper Newton Kirk
(married Nancy Ann Honea),
Caroline F. Jane Kirk (married
Robinson McAteer), Matilda
Adlissa Georgia Kirk (married
Samuel Luther Gulley)

WHEN SMALLPOX WAS COMMON (from the July 8, 1915 issue of The Prescott Daily News)

About 200 years ago, everyone was expected to have smallpox sometime in their lives. “All our ancestors,” said a physician, were pock-marked and smallpox was a recommendation if you were looking for work.

“What I mean is that you couldn’t get a job if you had not had smallpox. No one wanted a servant who was liable at any moment to be stricken down with the loathsome disease.”

“Hence, ‘help wanted’ ads read something like this from a 1774 newspaper:

“Wanted—a man between 20 and 30 years of age to be footman and under-butler in a great family. He must have had smallpox in the natural way. Also a woman, middle-aged, to wait upon a young lady of great fortune and fashion. This woman must have had the smallpox in the natural way.”

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RECENT NEWS ITEMS FROM THIS AREA

July, 2004—A large alligator was spotted in Bluff City near the Herman McKelvy residence. Ronnie McKelvy was able to take a picture of it.

July 15, 2004—James H. “Booger” Cummings, 80, of the Terrapin Neck community was found murdered in his bed and his house had been ransacked. He operated a produce stand at his home for many years. Burial was at Bluff City Cemetery. Three teenagers and a 22 year old woman were arrested in August.

July 21, 2004—Freeman Quinn McKelvy, 58, of Houston, TX died from lung cancer. He was the youngest child of Lee Roy and Marie Martin McKelvy. Burial was at Ebenezer.

August 14, 2004 – Richard Perry McKelvy, 53, of Conway died after a nine month battle with melanoma. He was the son of Herman and Nell Wanda McKelvy of Bluff City. Burial was at North Little Rock Veterans Cemetery.

August 17, 2004 – Mary Ann Starnes, 68, of Bluff City died Aug. 17. She was the daughter of Carl and Mary Purifoy and the widow of Jimmy Starnes. Burial was at Bluff City Cemetery.

BROCCOLI SUPREME

This recipe was given to us by Mrs. Cora Starnes many years ago and is one of our favorite casserole dishes.

1 (10 oz.) package of frozen broccoli (chopped)
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 tablespoon all purpose flour
½ cup sour cream
¼ cup grated carrots
1 tablespoon grated onion
¼ teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
¾ cup herb seasoned stuffing mix
2 tablespoons butter or margarine

Prepare frozen broccoli according to package directions. Drain. Blend together soup and flour. Add sour cream, carrots, onion, salt, and pepper. Stir in broccoli. Turn into a two quart casserole dish. Combine stuffing mix and the melted butter or margarine. Sprinkle around edge of baking dish. Bake in 350 degree oven for 30 to 35 minutes or until hot through.

* May add chopped cooked chicken breast for a complete main dish.