

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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*****<http://sandyland.nevada.ar.us/>*****

THE STORY OF THE MAN WHO TRIED TO STEAL THE RIVER

The census of Marion Township in Ouachita County lists Thomas Woodward as male—age 60—farmer—owner of 13,000 acres of land, most of it lying across the Ouachita River from the town of Camden. This was in 1850. Records of the time also name him among the trustees of the first school, as one of the first aldermen of the town, and as the wealthiest man in the county. There are many things for which General Woodward might be remembered, but through the years, he has become... that man who almost stole the river.

Thomas Woodward and W. L. Bradley had been friends back East in their youth. William Bradley came to Ouachita County in 1833 from New Orleans and a year later married the widow of John Nunn, the first permanent settler of the trading post known as Ecore Fabre. Woodward had come to the settlement from Alabama a few years later.

In 1844, Bradley laid a part of his land off into lots and T. S. Woodward was appointed Commissioner to locate and name the streets of the new town. It was then that the name of the settlement was changed to Camden, probably at the suggestion of Woodward, who had lived in Camden, Alabama for a number of years.

Sometime, while the formation of the new town was taking place, there was a trivial disagreement over some land. It caused a misunderstanding between the two citizens that grew into a feud of proportions that almost destroyed the town.

Camden stands on a bluff on a horseshoe curve in the river. The distance around this curve is five miles, but it is less than one fourth of a mile across the neck of the curve. It was here that Woodward set more than one hundred slaves to digging a bayou, which if it had been completed, would have become the main channel of the river, leaving the town sitting high and dry on the loop.

When it became evident that Woodward's plan would work, Major Bradley and the townspeople formed an armed posse to stop him. In turn, General Woodward backed his workmen with a shotgun and a threat to shoot the first man who interfered. Before there was bloodshed, cooler heads prevailed and an injunction was filed against Thomas Woodward's diverting a navigable stream from its natural course. Few people believed that the injunction would stop him. For months armed followers of Major Bradley watched the site day and night, sure that the General would try again to steal their river, but respect for law and order was stronger than his hatred and the digging stopped. Not long after this, General Woodward left Camden after losing several members of his family in death.

Through the years, the General's bayou has been known as Treadway's Slough since it was adjacent to a plantation owned by a Mr. Treadway. During the Civil War, the channel was deep enough to permit a small Confederate steamboat to gain five precious miles on its Federal pursuer by taking the cut-off and so to elude them. For many years, the young men

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of the area found it great sport to take their small boats through the ditch at high water. Because of the accumulation of snags and driftwood (some logs being more than a century old), it took considerable skill and daring to maneuver a boat through the narrow passage and some lives have been lost in the attempt.

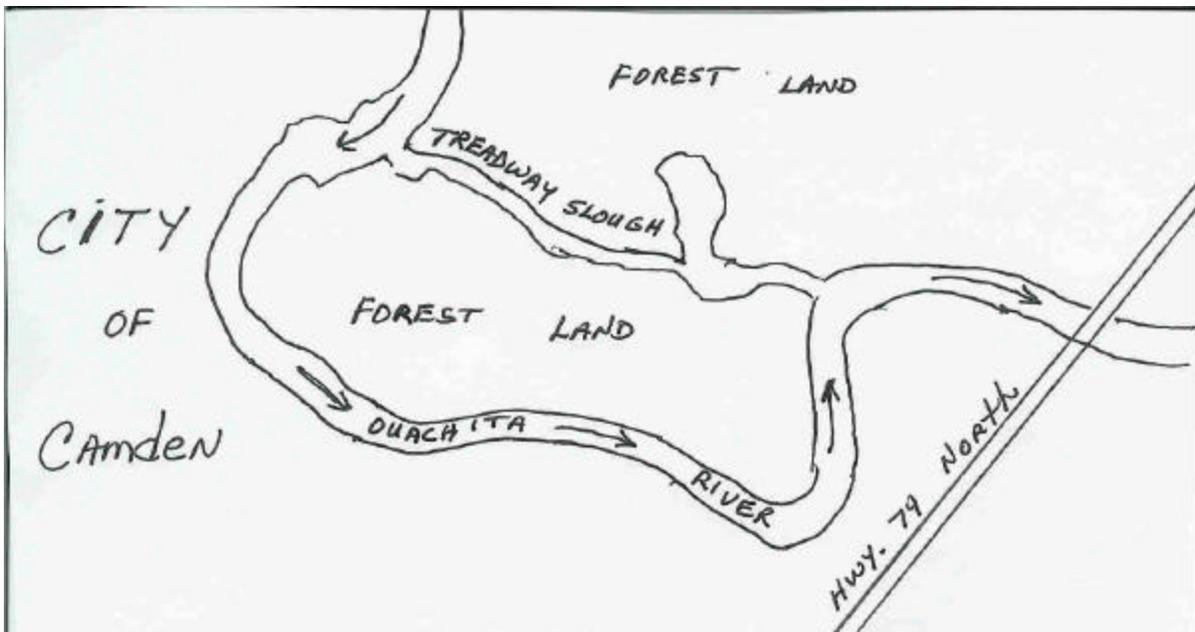
In 1930, nearly a hundred years after the General's attempt, the project he began in hatred was almost completed by floods. The channel was enlarged to the point that it required the building of \$20,000 worth of revetments, concrete levees, and other barriers by the United States Army Corps of Engineers to prevent the town of Camden from losing its river as General Woodward had planned. (taken from a booklet called "Historic Camden").



At left: Copy of Government Survey map of 1841 showing the loop on the Ouachita River on which Camden (Ecore Fabre) was situated. The town was on the left side of the map in the bend of the river.

Gen. Woodward planned to dig through the narrow neck of the bend and thereby change the course of the river.

Below: This is taken from a recent aerial photo showing Treadway Slough. Over the years the river has enlarged the channel dug by Gen. Woodward, but the main river channel still flows in the direction of the arrows. The article mentioned that it was five miles around the loop, but it is actually a little over two miles. The distance of Treadway Slough is a little over one fourth mile.



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A “TOM THUMB” WEDDING AT CHIDESTER IN EARLY 1930’s

Boy with book (the preacher)-Louis Harold Jones; **two young girls in center by basket**-Betty Jo Rushing and Rebecca Dempsey; **boy sitting in front**- Jackie Norwood; **two girls kneeling bottom right**- Colleen Jones and Valerie Bridges; **first row standing left to right** - ?_____, Billy Stinnett, Charles Farr, Mamie Jo Taylor, Harold Sweatman (the groom), Dorothy Hildebrand (the bride), Wanda Lee Emmerett, James Epperson, and Alpha Stinnett; **second row standing, left to right** - ?_____, Henry Harvey, Jr., Charlene Webb, Billy Ray Baker, Johnnie Lee Riffe, and Marion Baker; **back row, left to right** - ?_____, William Rufus Bradley, Cleo Blagraves, Marvin Holleman, Frances Lyon, and James Blagraves

Thanks to Patricia Farr for sharing this picture and to Dorothy Herrington and others who helped identify the young people in the picture.

WHO WAS TOM THUMB?

His real name was Charles Sherwood Stratton. He was born in 1838 in Bridgeport, Connecticut. He was a fairly big child, weighing nine pounds at birth and his parents were both of normal size. He grew normally for the first five months of his life reaching a length of 25 inches and a weight of 15 pounds, but then he simply quit growing. Other than his height, he was a normal, healthy person. He was what was known as a “midget”, which in those times was a short person of normal proportions. Today the “politically correct” term is “little person”, and the term midget is considered derogatory.

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Stratton was four years old when the circus pioneer, P. T. Barnum met him. He was 25 inches tall and weighed just 15 pounds. Barnum taught him how to sing, dance, and perform and gave him the stage name of General Tom Thumb. His height never exceeded 33 inches.

Stratton traveled the world with Barnum meeting and performing for various leaders and royalty. His parents accompanied him in his travels. His starting wage at age 5 was 4 dollars a week with all expenses paid, and by 1844 he was making fifty dollars a week, with expenses paid for both him and his parents.

In 1863, Tom Thumb married Lavinia Warren (also a midget) in New York in front of over 2,000 wedding guests. It was the most celebrated wedding of its time, and besides many well known people attending the ceremony, President and Mrs. Lincoln sent gifts. To receive their guests, the bride and groom stood atop a grand piano. Following the wedding ceremony, the couple was received at the White House by President Abraham Lincoln.

Tom Thumb died of a stroke on July 15, 1883 at the age of 45. His funeral was attended by more than 10,000 people. He is buried in Mountain Grove Cemetery in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The statue of him on top of his headstone is life size. Mrs. Tom Thumb died at the age of 77.

During the 1920's came many fads. The "Tom Thumb" wedding was one of the more interesting fads to come into style. At these events you would see a mock wedding with children dressed in formal attire. The fad was fashioned after the famous midget pair in the P. T. Barnum circus. They were sometimes used to raise money for some community project.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GORDON H. IRVIN (PART 5) The story of the Irvin family near Bluff City, Arkansas about 1920

RELIGION AND THUNDER

Our home and religion were synonymous. You could not very well picture one without the other, for any account of one must, in truth, include the other.

If the following narrative of certain phases of our religious life leads the reader to suspect that we were fanatics or even that I have now reached or attained a condescending attitude, I wish to rectify that illusion and assure him that such is not the truth. Christianity has many faces all looking in the same direction. Here I shall try to present that particular phase of religion as taught, practiced, and lived in our old home. And so, if the facts here recorded seem unorthodox, it should be remembered that the Christian faith has that particular characteristic of adapting itself to all walks of life or vice versa. It may lend solitude to those who need it and time for meditation to those whose lives are filled with noise and distraction. It may give joy to them who weep and relief to those lonely, checkered, and work-weary souls.

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I don't know from whence my forefathers came, but looking back now, it occurs to me that not a few of them might have been Calvinists or next of kin. Stern as they were, however, it must be acknowledged that we then, as today, had two more or less widely separated religions just like we have now. There was a sort of hot summer time salvation, protracted meeting type and a winter time sort of passive, waiting for summer time type of religion. As a boy, I anticipated both kinds with certain well founded apprehensions.

I do not wish to imply that we ever forgot about God in winter or any other time. On the contrary, we never ate a meal until grace had been said. I will admit here that I never followed this practice, but do recommend it for at least two good reasons—first, it tends to keep one's skirts clear with the Lord, which is good, and also it allows a few seconds for the kids to jockey into position and get set at the table. At best though, winter was a cooling-off time for religion too. There was Sunday school every week and church with preaching once a month. The circuit rider was just an ordinary farmer who had heard the call and without checking to see who it was or what He wanted, unhooked his horse from the plow and took to the buggy. He would fumble and bumble through his sermon in a half-hearted manner thinking more of his dinner than his duties. No particular attention was ever paid to his random gibberish. We went to church because it was our duty, but mostly because it was some place to go. Be that as it may, in back of our minds, lurked the constant knowledge that any day Papa and Mama might reflect upon their negligence, become contrite, and take things into their own hands by imposing stiff penalties on all of us.

You could not escape summertime religion any more than you could escape the heat, and only a fool such as I would spend his time trying to avoid it. A general build-up would begin in about May or June with prayer meetings say once a week at first and then twice a week as the time of the revival neared. This was usually July or August. These so-called protracted meetings might last three days or they might be protracted to three weeks depending on the evangelist's schedule and on his success, or lack of it, as the case might be. Somebody had to pay the piper or he didn't pipe very long. The close of the meeting was the anti-climax and following this, a simmering-down period for a few short weeks.

Prayer meetings were, as a rule, dull affairs, no singing or fooling around—just praying. Picture if you can, a little sinner listening for two hours to the prayers of fifteen or twenty men and women praying together and separately. It was at best a monotonous rote coupled with hard benches. Still, it was some place to go. Moreover, I was not in any fear of being molested at this time. You do not gather a green harvest, but give it time. One can understand why these meetings were boring if he considers the fact that they had all been born, raised, married, and lived within a short distance of the church. They were all farmers, they grew the same crops, and their interests were identical. It was, for all practical purposes, one big farm family. So, generally, they prayed for the sick and afflicted, the needy, and poor in heart (and that took in about everybody). Particularly, though, they prayed for sinners, but not always, as I recall and as we shall see.

Arkansas has a bad habit of being dry during July and August. Just when the corn needs it most, it will not rain a drop for weeks. One summer, right at prayer meeting time, the weather was being uncommonly stubborn so that the corn leaves were twisting up like

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firecracker fuses and turning about as yellow, and never a sign of rain in the sky. Someone, I think it was my father who was prone to lean to the practical side, suggested they pray for rain. Now this idea of his of praying for rain didn't catch on right away. It lacked emotional quality. Also, it does not sit well in the eyes of God to tamper with Arkansas weather. No, it would be better to stay on familiar ground and stick to tangible, familiar emotional and personal subjects like John Stone and Tom Plyler, where you could call a spade a spade. Still, as I have said, my father was a persistent man and he had a point to his argument that if all the pleas and supplications could be funneled into one main stream and all the prayers focused on one single objective, their combined weight might bear fruit in the form of a good summer shower. There was much wagging of heads and rolling of eyes at this, but reluctantly and grudgingly, they finally set aside one evening to pray for rain.

Well, it started off like a bad dry evening. Papa was just a humble man, not much given to flowery words or demagoguery, and here he found the whole burden of this project on his shoulders alone. It was his baby, so to speak, and he was not a man who could fan a spark in indeed there ever was a spark. Of course, when it comes to praying, especially on the eve of a protracted meeting, one should not be refractory like a mule, nor have to be kicked in the side when it comes his turn to pray. But this is about what Papa had to do to keep things going and the people awake that evening. There was more muttering and maundering than praying as everyone fidgeted and waited for a decent time when they could pick up and go home. And it was just about that time, I guess, say 9:30 or 10:00, when someone noticed a faint lightning low in the east. Now everyone knows that this is another bad habit Arkansas has of lightning at night in the east during a drought. It just doesn't mean a thing except that you are in the middle of a long dry spell. Rain always comes from the west and northwest – never from the east in the summertime. Here it is hard to describe or understand what went through the minds of most of the farmers and their wives there that night. True, the lightning was not bright at first, still one associates lightning with thunder and later with rain. Well, that is what they had been praying for. This then was their dilemma—should they rely on all past experience, pretend not to see the lightning, quietly slip out of the church and go home? But no, God is the author of all inexplicable phenomena. Here the unbroken chain—prayer, God, lightning, thunder, rain—five links and already the first three in hand. Still, lightning in the east during a drought—to believe or not to believe—that was their crux. They hung momentarily on the horns of their dilemma, but not for long. It has been said that Mag Johnson was the world's most ignorant woman, but I believe, on this night, she was it's most vociferous one. East or west didn't matter to her--she knew it was going to rain.

Now the tide turned and everyone followed her example, got down on their knees, and started to pray—and I mean to pray good and proper. And lo, the flashes became brighter and the praying became louder, and soon across the heavens rolled the distant sound of thunder. Ever nearer the thunder drummed as louder and louder old Mag shouted. It seemed for a spell they were jawing at each other back and forth. But as the night wore on, they became more belligerent. The bellicose thunder rumbled, roared, and came tumbling down out of the black sky hard in the wake of each vivid flash. And many there that night knew they had tampered with the lock of God's workhouse and were wrought with fear and sought to hide themselves from His vengeance. Yet, all alone in the midst of the storm, stood old Mag and gave no ground. Not an inch did she give. Small in stature, but stout and staunch,

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she stood with her hair streaming and arms outstretched in the blinding white lights. Aye, she hobnobbed with God that night and the strength of heaven was in her breast. She looked the storm full in the eye and gave as good as she took.

Now, it has taken God several hours to gather up the storm and bring it to Rocky Hill, so it was quite late or early morning before He was able to break it on top of old Mag's head. No matter, she had lost all track of time and was in no state of mind to go home. Everybody else had had enough of it. Many were leaving and some had already gone. Frank, her husband, had threatened to leave her there alone, but she either couldn't hear him above her shouting and the raging tumult, or else she didn't care. He could home if he wanted to. She held her ground and beat her bosom and arrogated unto herself the power of God while the tempest howled outside. My father was a cautious man, especially where the Lord dwelled, and he was also head deacon in the church. He realized something had to be done and was reluctant to stand by and hold his hands and accept the impasse. He was responsible for and accountable to the Lord in all church activities. So, he called Frank to one side and told him what had to be done. Frank agreed--he had to--and so, with the assistance of two or three more good men, they put a headlock on Mag, hauled her bodily out of the church, and threw her into the back of a wagon. The horses were unhitched, the lightning unchained, and the rain descended. In sweeping gray sheets, the rain came and beat upon Mag while the lightning flashed and the thunder clapped. And the last I saw of old Mag, she was writhing and screaming and wailing and flouncing there in the back of the wagon as it rolled down that rocky hill into the night.

But as I have said, you could not expect the above type of show very often. In fact, it was the most spectacular prayer meeting production that I can remember seeing.

(to be continued)

Lot's Wife

The Sunday School teacher was describing how Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, when little Johnny interrupted, "My mommy looked back once, while she was driving", he announced triumphantly, "and she turned into a telephone pole!"

The Lord Is My Shepherd

A Sunday school teacher decided to have her young class memorize one of the most quoted passages in the Bible- Psalm 23. She gave the youngsters a month to learn the verses.

Little Bobby was excited about the task, but he just couldn't remember the Psalm. After much practice, he could barely get past the first line.

On the day that the kids were scheduled to recite Psalm 23 in front of the congregation, Bobby was so nervous. When it was his turn, he stepped up to the microphone and said proudly, "The Lord is my shepherd and that's all I need to know!"

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THINGS TO PONDER

The most destructive habit.....Worry
The greatest Joy.....Giving
The greatest loss.....Loss of self-respect
The most satisfying work.....Helping others
The ugliest personality trait.....Selfishness
The most endangered species.....Dedicated leaders
Our greatest natural resource.....Our youth
The greatest "shot in the arm".....Encouragement
The greatest problem to overcome.....Fear
The most effective sleeping pill.....Peace of mind
The most crippling failure disease.....Excuses
The most powerful force in life.....Love
The most dangerous pariah.....A gossip
The world's most incredible computer.....The brain
The worst thing to be without.... .Hope
The deadliest weapon.....The tongue
The two most power-filled words....."I Can"
The greatest asset.....Faith
The most worthless emotion.....Self-pity
The most beautiful attire.....SMILE!
The most prized possession..... Integrity
The most powerful channel of communication.....Prayer
The most contagious spiritEnthusiasm

NEW ENGLAND BLUEBERRY COFFEE CAKE

1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
½ cup sugar
1 Tbsp. baking powder
1 tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. salt
1 ½ cups fresh blueberries
1 egg
½ cup milk
¼ cup butter, melted

Topping

¾ cup packed brown sugar
1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
½ cup chopped walnuts

In a large mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt. Gently fold in blueberries. In a small bowl, whisk together the egg, milk, and butter. Add to the flour mixture and stir carefully. Spread into a greased 8 inch x 8 inch baking pan. Combine all topping ingredients and sprinkle over batter. Bake at 425 degrees for 20-25 minutes or until top is light golden brown. Serve warm or at room temperature. Yield: 12 servings.

The aroma of this cake is heavenly, and the taste is scrumptious. It's wonderful with mid-morning coffee. You can serve it at brunch, or with ice cream as a dessert. The blueberries help make this a special treat. (this recipe found on the Internet)