

# THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Jerry McKelvy, Editor

Vol. 6 – No. 2

February, 2006

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

## BUSINESS FIRMS IN CHIDESTER, ARKANSAS IN 1948

These advertisements appeared in the May 16, 1948 issue of *The Camden News* in a special section of the paper entitled “Local firms that have helped build Ouachita County”.

### W. I. Wilke Lumber Co. Chidester

This firm, managed by Jack Mosley, manufactures rough finished hardwood lumber, having a daily output of 20,000 board feet, making an annual output of two and a half million board feet of lumber. They employ about 60 men, all having families who live in this community.

### Smith's Cash Store Chidester

This home owned store was begun under its present ownership January 3, 1948, succeeding Bradford and Stott. Mrs. C. J. Smith operates the store, handling groceries, dry goods, meats, shoes, notions, and feeds and buying local farm produce at top market prices.

### Chidester Mercantile Co.

It was on Feb. 4, 1911 that this concern with G. R. Riffe as President, H. E. Kirby as Vice President, W. C. Stinnett as Secretary, and Thomas H. Benton as Manager came into existence. *(Sorry, I didn't copy complete ad.)*

### Walker Bros. Lumber Co. Chidester

J. T. and F. G. Walker, brothers, started this lumber milling business in 1929. They manufacture yellow pine lumber and sell it wholesale and some at retail, securing their timber locally. They have seven million feet of standing timber in 460 acres of timberlands. They maintain a modern sawmill and employ about 65 local men, all of whom have families. We wish to state that the firm has never lost sight of the fact that it owed a debt of gratitude to the community at large and will in the future, as it has in the past, always take a real interest in all movements that may promote the public welfare; always ready and anxious to aid in the expansion and growth of Ouachita County and vicinity.

# THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

## Bank of Chidester

This bank, founded in 1909, confines most of its activities to the further advancement of the community in which it is located, its resources being primarily devoted to that end. With W. G. Rushing as President, C. B. Clingan and T. H. Benton as Vice Presidents, and W. C. Stinnett as Cashier, it couldn't be different than it is—safe, sound, and conservative. (*not complete ad*)

## Holleman Service Station Chidester

You'll find Roy Holleman's Texaco station and garage the kind you can come back to—not just a filling station. By selling dependable Texaco gas and oil, Goodyear tires and National tires and batteries and giving exceptional repair service, Mr. Holleman built up this enterprise from a humble beginning over three years ago.

---

## THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GORDON H. IRVIN (PART 10) The Story of the Irvin Family Near Bluff City in the Early 1920's

### COUNTRY MUSIC

There is little doubt that music has a profound effect upon the lives of many people. Wherever and whenever the door of a home is opened, one hears the sound of music, the radio, television or hi-fi. One cannot escape these sounds. In hotel lobbies, in travel terminals, and in nearly all business houses, tunes are piped in over long distance wires for a fee. Now the question arises as to exactly what the results are when one is forced to hear questionable tunes he never heard before, or to talk down a blaring TV set when visiting his neighbors and friends, or to try to transact a business deal between duel speakers. And when the noisy day is done, he will drive home face to face with the car radio, go to sleep in spite of the kid's hi-fi, and wake up to a radio alarm clock. The effect of all this confusion could be disastrous but for the ability of a person to inure himself against it.

Right here, let us draw a line between the above conglomerate mixture of electrically amplified sounds, and those tunes we knew and called music in our old home. You could number on one hand the musical instruments known to us. I remember seeing the harmonica, banjo, guitar, fiddle, and a few foot pumped organs. But there was no lack of singing. Social gatherings, called musicals, were frequently held in private homes that had an organ. To this would be added a fiddle or two, a guitar and a banjo. Often they played far into the night. There were solos, duets, trios, quartets, and group singing as well as instrumentals. We did not need a book of instructions to know what tunes they were playing or to tell us what words they were saying and that was good. Some of these people—the Barlows, Irvins, Otwells,

## THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

and others are still singing to this day and it is still good to hear their voices. For many years there were no musical instruments in our home. But one day, I learned to play a harmonica that Hollie had traded for, though I was never good enough for others to listen to. Then when I thought no one was in the house, I took Old Jack's fiddle off the bed and gingerly pulled the bow across the open strings. By a coincidence, I was able to play a few notes of a tune called *The Blind Girl*. Now Mama was about the house after all and overheard me. Soon she ordered a violin from Sears Roebuck and I learned to play, but again was not good enough for others to listen to. I should have kept borrowing Old Jack's fiddle, for it was a thing alive. It could talk, laugh, or cry and could create a mood and had a soul. Still, it needed Old Jack, but then we all needed Old Jack.

He was the minstrel man, tall and bony with piercing blue eyes. His old battered hat could hardly contain the great shock of sandy hair that tried to stand on end. His nose was large and full of bumps. His chin and Adam's apple jutted out like the jaws of a monkey wrench and it was in this vise that he held the violin while he whipped it to make it cry or stroked it gently to hear it croon. And there never was a man so kind or so adept or so much wanted as Old Jack.

You never knew when he was coming to visit, how long he might stay, or where he would go, but it always seemed that when you wanted him the most, you could look up the road and see him swinging along towards you. He never rode a horse nor in a wagon even when invited--they were a bother to him. His feet were long and lean like his body and they appeared to reach way out ahead and gather in great stretches of road with each stride. You could not keep up with him and so he traveled alone with his fiddle swinging like a pendulum by his side.

Mama claimed she could figure out how old Jack was but no one really knew or cared about his age. He was strong and could cut timber or dig a water well, but that was about the limit of his intelligence because his mind never advanced beyond six or seven years and that was good. Papa used him in these capacities when he was staying at our house, in addition to enjoying the music, since he always had plenty of timber to cut and old wells to be cleaned out and new ones to be dug.

### SUPERSTITION

We had too many wells in winter when the water table was high and not enough in summer when it was low. It never occurred to Papa or Old Jack to dig the wells any deeper. Mr. Shamley was our water witch and Papa would not deliberately go against his divining rod as to either the location or the prophesied depth, though he did sometimes suspect that the witching branch may not have been cut from a shumate tree in the dark of the moon.

We were not a superstitious family, as the saying goes. By that I mean, we did not go about looking for signs and such. On the other hand, we did not flout our heresy in the face of a recognized ill omen, adhering to the principle that it can do no harm to be on the right side. Papa was a moon man. He knew all about the quarters and halves, etc. If the crops above the ground such as cotton and corn did not yield, it was because they were planted on

## THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

the dark of the moon and if those below the ground like potatoes and peanuts were poor and full of insects, it was due to light nights at planting time. Cultivation, rains, and insecticides had nothing to do with the harvest. Still, as I have said, we were not a family that believed in magic.

### INSECTS AND THINGS

While traveling about this country—and I have traveled about considerable—I have noticed that no matter where one goes, he is apt to see either a great variety of insects or a great number of insects of one variety. Our old home was certainly no exception to this condition. It is said, but I have never been convinced, that many of these creatures do a beneficial job especially for farmers. Well, we were farmers, but it seemed to me then and still does that we could have gotten along very well without the help of most of these so-called benefactors. Suffice it to say, their effect upon our lives was considerable.

The woodlands, in this part of Arkansas, abound with various wild blooming plants such as may-haws, dogwood, honeysuckle, and many others. Thus, it was well suited to the propagation of honey bees. The months of May and June were the best for locating wild bee trees—it was the bees and not the trees that were wild. This could be done by either of two ways. Having nothing better to do, you might just stroll along through the woods, listening for their humming and looking up into all trees that appeared to be hollow near the top. Or, you might try the more technical method. Some honey was placed on two or three pieces of brightly colored paper to resemble flowers, but having no paper, I went a step further and used fruit jar lids and found that the bees didn't know the difference. These baits were arranged two or three hundred feet apart in small clearings in the woods. For best results, they should not be placed in line. On a clear warm day, it would take about ten minutes or so, depending on the proximity of their home, for the bees to find the honey. These are communistic people—hard workers and very greedy—so much so that they are prone to overload themselves when pure honey is available, thereby making it easy to take a bearing on their laborious homeward journey. At the intersection of the bearings of two or more flyways, their tree may be easily located. The tree was felled and all the good honey salvaged. Many, but no means all, of the bees were captured, placed in a jute sack or other container, and brought home to be introduced to a captive hive. There was actually no profit for anybody in this business, but it was a good excuse to get out of cutting sprouts or building fences when it was too wet to plow. Also, one did not come away unscathed from this looting. You see, the bees were skeptical of becoming slaves and indignant a being robbed. That is probably why they are referred to as wild bees—wild with rage, no doubt. Still, wild or not, they and a few others were considered to be good insects. There were so many insects that nothing good could be said about them. You might just as well lump them all together with snakes and Indians, as far as I was concerned.

With such proximity of the barns and hog lots to the dwelling, one can be sure that houseflies were everywhere in evidence. We used Daisy fly poison, Tangle-foot fly paper, and various other deterring agents, but with no screens on the doors and windows, all we could do amounted to no more than token resistance. During most of the early daylight hours, it is the custom of flies to forage about in the pig pens and stables for whatever it is

## THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

they eat and also to find likely spots to deposit their eggs. But in the afternoon, they like to come inside the house where it is cool to breed, relax, and be sociable like everybody else. Maybe that is why they are called houseflies. It was fortunate for us that they too slept at night.

Mosquitoes were prevalent in all but the winter months and at certain turns of the seasons we were invaded by great dark clouds of gnats. And, while they did not prescribe human blood, their preference was for the plow animal. After feeding upon his body until they became bloated with blood, they would literally fall off to be blown by the wind back into the face of the trailing plowman. They were always bad at sun-up and worse at sun-down. A gnat infestation might last for a few days or it might go on all summer, but while it lasted you had to wear a mask and keep the animals covered with stock dip. In the evening we built fires with cow dung to try to discourage them. The stock caught on quickly to the purpose of this and were willing to nearly suffocate on the acrid smoke rather than be eaten alive by the gnats. I was a barefoot cow chip specialist using my toe to determine if the chips were yet dry enough to burn good, and so was singled out to keep the smudges going. Mama never cottened to the word dung, and called them chips, or it, chips, if you prefer—but they smelled the same. The smoke from dried cow chips will soon rout a gnat or anybody else. Nobody ever built cow dung fires inside the house, at least nobody in our neighborhood ever did. So, shortly before retiring, Papa would shoot off a mixture of sulphur and black powder in each bedroom, and if this did not asphyxiate you, the stench would make you forget the gnats and mosquitoes long enough to go to sleep.

The great prevalence of malaria fever was, to some extent, undoubtedly due to certain species of mosquitoes though, at that time, we were not aware of this fact. There was also a fever among the livestock which they said was caused by ticks, and when this became known, state laws were enacted forcing the farmers to dip all stock at regular intervals. Now, this may strike the uninformed reader at a very good idea, but it is often a lot easier to enact a law than to enforce it. In the first place, there are fewer people involved with the enactment and in the case of the dipping law, you had the obstinacy of both the cows and the farmers to contend with. It developed that some were dipped all the time and all were dipped part of the time, and suffice it to say that there are still ticks in Arkansas.

It was at about this time that the hog law and the smallpox vaccination law came into effect. The hog law required the farmer to keep his hogs behind fences, not because of the highway hazards or any danger to the hog. The Arkansas razorback is a first cousin to the southwest Texas javelina and he is more vicious. Whereas the javelina will attack when cornered, the razorback will corner and attack any living thing. He could not be fenced in and so the hog law, in effect declared open season on the savage beasts which was good. Still, the law required the farmers to build hog proof fences for their domesticated animals and this they refused to do. In other words, they gambled. Some won and some lost, but to this day nobody ventures into the river bottoms without a good high powered gun. The vaccination law was viewed as an insult to the intelligence and in a way, I guess it was. They said it was cruelty to the little children. You see, they neglected to require the immunization of all adults. I don't know in just what light this gateway to possible extermination was

# THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

deliberately left open, but it is so, and one can only surmise. At any rate, there are still both farmers and razorbacks in Arkansas.

Event followed fast upon event. Times were moving fast and not nearly all of the people could keep up or swallow such large doses without more time to chew. Mama was more broad-minded and could adapt. She said she might allow them to vaccinate her children, but there she drew the line—and ticks or no ticks—they would not dip them—the children, that is—and she never did either.

The foregoing are a few of the more obvious insects and their effects upon us. Underneath and not so conspicuous, but probably more detrimental, there were others which dealt us great material damage such as the corn weevil and the cotton boll weevil. There were years when our production was cut in half by these insects. At the beginning of the year, we could not foresee what the yield might be, but we trusted in God and the moon and worked and hoped and took whatever the insects left and Providence was of a mind to give.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

---

## READER FEEDBACK—from James Hairston

Hi, Jerry! I read your Chronicles as often as I can find the time. I particularly enjoyed the one describing the trip to Prescott from Bluff City back in the earlier years. Reading that article brought to mind an escapade I pulled shortly after being brought to Prescott, along with my sister, Ruth, as adoptees. As most folks from around Prescott know, my dad was a family physician. In the years from 1948 to some time around 1970, Dad made house calls to his patients' homes. He used to take Ruth and/or me along at times to keep him company. Anyway, one Saturday, my mom and dad were visiting Hot Springs for a day at the horse races, having left my little sister and me under the wonderful care of their housemaid, Pearl (for the life of me, I can't recall her last name!). Pearl was very loving and extremely conscience of our safety; however, on this particular day, she was busy doing her housework, while my little five year-old mind was conjuring up mischief! I talked my sister into our getting on our tricycles and, just like daddy, making a *house call at Blevins!* As I recall, the weather was spring-like, quite warm for that time of year (April?). Nevertheless, I made Ruth put on a heavy coat so she wouldn't get any sicker! You see, she was suffering from a bad case of the flu at the time! We set out for Blevins on our tricycles, traversing the city of Prescott as if we'd drawn up the original street map! We made it to what is now the entrance to DeAnn Cemetery before a kindly black lady gave ME a warning to get my back-side back home before she called our folks! I reluctantly made a u-turn and headed back toward the east side of town, my little *sick* sister in tow! We ran upon a small bridge which spanned the roadside ditch. We played on it for several long minutes. Finally, as we approached Highway 67, just past the police department, we were met by a highly irate and agitated, worried sick, caretaker called Pearl! She was kind enough to assist ME in peddling my trike. She'd obtained a "switch" and was switching me onward with each pedal motion!!! After my folks returned home, I experienced the first (of many) "attitude adjustments" from my dad! After growing up, I've many times thought just how really fortunate we were that day! We were two tiny figures, riding on and off the streets, crossing the Missouri Pacific railroad tracks....not once, but twice, with not a single safety-related mishap (that is, if you don't count the switching I got!). Later on, my parents explained, it was one of the most frightening times they ever experienced with my sister and me.

## THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE



**BLUFF CITY SCHOOL GROUP IN EARLY 1920's  
(identified by Mrs. Elsie Moore Beaver on Oct. 21, 1996)**

Front row (left to right)-Nellie Morgan; Myrtle Martin; Charlie Payne; Dovie Black; Joe Bevell (teacher); Gladys Hildebrand; Sula Nichols; Elsie Mae Moore; Grady Starnes

Middle row (left to right)-Bill Nichols; Doyle Crowell; Hollis Walker; Inita Henry; Mae Crowell; Edna Hildebrand; Penny Black; Clinton Robinson-?; Georgia Carter; Marie Hildebrand; Louis Carter; Lawrence Walker; Ruby Carter; Florence Carter; Dennis Walker; Ray Robinson

Back row (left to right)-Hazel Walker; Hudson Crowell; Elsie Moore; Byris Thompkins; Marie Martin; Clyde Moore; Mildred Moore; Garland Moore; Mattie Carter; Clyde Hildebrand

---

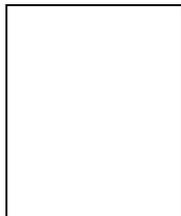
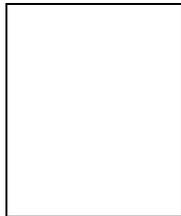
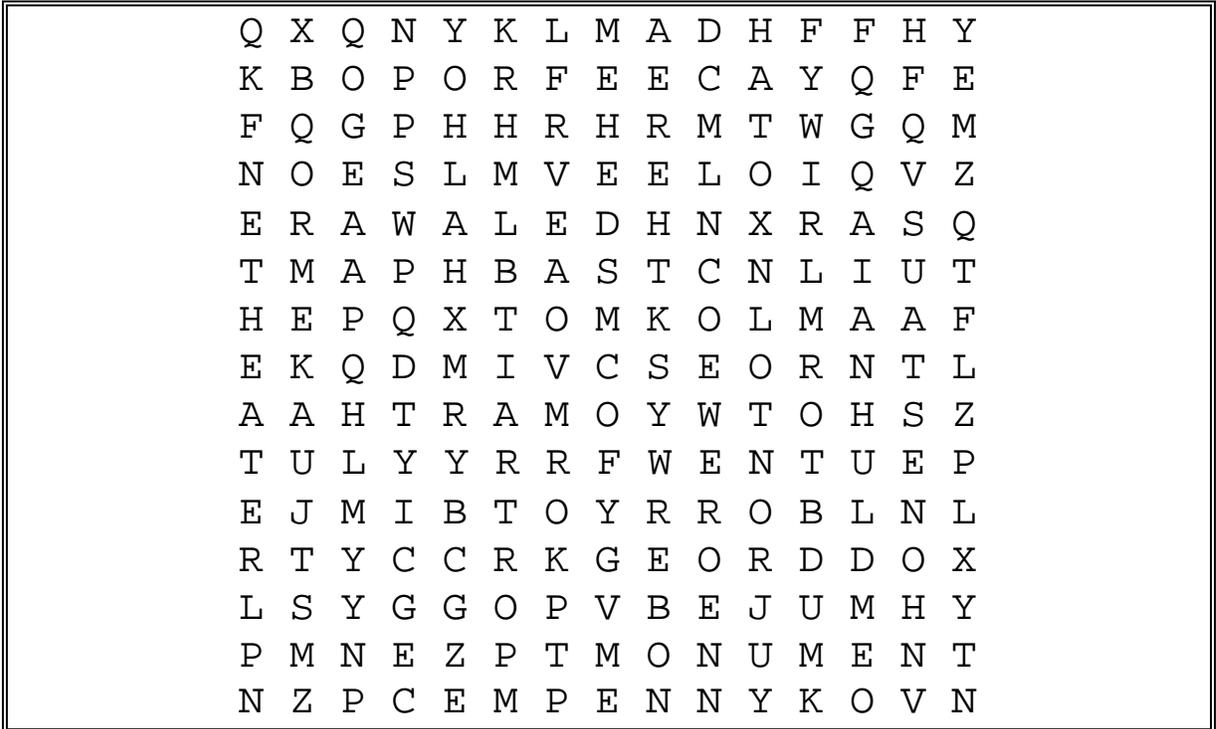
A fellow from Boston named Lance  
Couldn't walk well or run well or dance;  
It troubled his mind  
Till he happened to find  
That his necktie was caught in his pants

A business man living in Gurdon  
Deemed all fire prevention a burden  
But they thought him a fool  
When the ruins got cool  
And they found out it was his third 'un

# THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

## GEORGE WASHINGTON AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Both George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were born in February. Try to find the words below that are associated with these famous presidents. Words can be vertical, horizontal, diagonal, or backwards.



BOOTH  
 CHERRY  
 DELAWARE  
 HAT  
 HONEST  
 MARTHA  
 MARY  
 MEMORIAL

MONUMENT  
 MTVERNON  
 PENNY  
 PORTRAIT  
 QUARTER  
 SMALLPOX  
 THEATER  
 VALLEYFORGE