

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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If you have ever wondered what a Curly Wolf looked like, here is picture of one taken from the Prescott Daily News in 1926. The picture was drawn by Mildred Avery (you can see her signature on the bottom left).

The Prescott Curly Wolves coached by Tate McGill was a team to be feared if you were the opposing team in those days. The name "Curly Wolves" is attributed to a Little Rock sports writer who reported on some of the games. Over the years, the spelling has changed to "Curley Wolves". If you check the dictionary, you will find that "Curly" is correct. The school yearbook is called "The Wolf Trail".

Do you remember some of the names of Nevada County or Ouachita County ball teams from the old days? If so, let me know and I'll publish them in a future issue. I'm especially interested in names of teams, names of yearbooks, and school colors of schools that no longer exist.

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ROBERT RIDLEY HODNETT OUACHITA COUNTY'S LAST CONFEDERATE VETERAN

I included in the August, 2007 issue an article about Old Seminary Cemetery in Ouachita County near Stephens. This old cemetery has not been maintained in many years. About fifty marked graves were found there and many more unmarked graves are believed to be in this old cemetery as evidenced by rocks and ground depressions. The most recent marked grave is that of R. R. Hodnett who died March 20, 1939.

After I posted my survey of this cemetery on the Internet, I was contacted by a Hodnett family researcher in Florida who was delighted to finally find where Robert Hodnett was buried. She knew he was buried in Ouachita County, but didn't know exactly where.

Robert Ridley Hodnett was born in Georgia, the 11th of 14 children. According to the researcher, he watched six of his older brothers go off to fight in the Civil War and in April, 1864, at the age of 17, he also enlisted in the 1st Georgia Reserves for the duration of the war and later served as a guard at the infamous Andersonville Prison in Georgia where about 30,000 Union prisoners were kept in a prison which was only 26 acres in size. His military record shows that he was 5 feet 9 inches tall with dark hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion.

Robert came to Arkansas in 1867. He married Amanda Elizabeth Stockman Griggs and they had two children—Carrie and Mary Susan. After his wife passed away, he married Elizabeth McDonald in Columbia County in 1879, but they lived in Ouachita County near other members of the Hodnett family. There were two children from the second marriage—Eliza and Thomas Everett. Eliza died at age 19 and is also buried at Old Seminary Cemetery. Mary Susan Hodnett from his first marriage died at age 10 and is also buried there.

Robert lived in several places in Ouachita Co., but after the death of his second wife, he made his home with his daughter Carrie who had married J. W. Jones who lived in the Buena Vista-Stephens area of Ouachita Co.

Robert Hodnett's obituary states that he died at age 92 and was the last Confederate veteran in Ouachita County. His obituary states that he was "a well known Ouachita County man". He was active in church work and the affairs of the county. He was survived by one son, Everett Hodnett. The researchers have not found any trace of Thomas Everett Hodnett after the death of his father in 1939.

These researchers still have some unanswered questions such as where is Robert's first wife, Amanda Griggs Hodnett buried? Where is his second wife, Elizabeth McDonald Hodnett buried? What happened to Robert's son, Thomas Edward Hodnett after Robert's death? These are just some of the pieces of the puzzle these researchers are trying to put together.

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By finding Robert Hodnett's grave in Old Seminary Cemetery and then looking up his obituary in the Camden newspaper, we were able to discover from that obituary that he was Ouachita County's last Confederate veteran—a piece of historical information that more than likely had been lost due to the passage of time. His story is probably similar to many others who served in the Civil War. He will not be remembered for any great military accomplishment, but he, like thousands of others, did their part in the great conflict we call the Civil War. The fact that he outlived all the other veterans of that war who lived in Ouachita County is a bit of historical information that should be remembered. And now we know that his final resting place is in an almost forgotten cemetery called Old Seminary Cemetery near Stephens.



Robert Ridley Hodnett at age 86. This picture contributed by his great-great grandson, Jack McHone.

FIRST WHITE BOY

This story appeared in the 1-17-1918 issue of the *Nevada News*

Many phases of the life of Christopher Columbus offer mysteries that the historians have never been able to clear away, and one student of the life of the great explorer has come across an incidental mystery that has an appealing interest. It relates to a boy who accompanied the expedition of 1492—the only boy among its members, and consequently the first white boy to set foot in America.

The contemporary accounts of the first expedition of Columbus mention the boy in question only once and that briefly. They indicate that he was the only boy in the expedition and they place on his young shoulders the blame for the great

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catastrophe that befell when the *Santa Maria* was wrecked on the coast of Hayti. The story of the wreck shows the boy was less to blame than his elders, but it was easy enough to make him the scapegoat.

It was the night before Christmas in 1492, ten weeks after the discovery of the land, and Columbus was pushing his search for gold among the West Indies. The flagship, the *Santa Maria*, was skirting the coast of Hayti late at night and the wind was light and the ship was barely moving. Columbus went to his cabin for rest. He passed the helm over to the captain. He, too, soon felt the need for sleep and went below. His successor at the tiller was a sailor and he shortly followed the example of the admiral and the master. Before he went, he awakened the lad in question and told him to mind the helm.

The boy did not go to sleep. He was doubtless a live lad, and he felt the importance of being trusted to steer the ship. But he was in strange waters and the currents were treacherous near that coast. The ship struck a reef. The admiral and crew rushed on deck in terror. Of course, they blamed the boy. That was the way of the world before 1492 and the fashion has not changed.

That was the end of the *Santa Maria*. The crew reached the shore in safety and made a fort from the timbers of the wreck. In that fort, which they called La Navidad in honor of the day, about 40 of the crew remained while their companions went home to Spain on the *Nina* and the *Pinta*. One historian mentions a tradition that the boy remained with this number, but it is only a tradition. The fate of the forty is a mystery. When the second expedition of Columbus reached that island a year later, there were only a few charred timbers and bones to be found. Perhaps the boy perished there. His name has not even come down to us, but the brief glimpse we have of him is one of fascination. There is something to stimulate the imagination in that fleeting picture of the boy who stuck to his post while his superiors slept.

October 12, 1492

Editor's Note: Since Columbus Day is coming up, I thought I would include this 1929 article from the Nevada County Picayune. It had originally appeared in the Commercial Appeal.

"On the thirty-third day after I departed from Cadiz, I came to the Indian Sea, where I found many islands inhabited by men without number, of all which I took possession for our most fortunate king, with proclaiming heralds and flying standards, no one objecting. To the first of these I gave the name of our blessed Savior, on whose aid relying I had reached this as well as the other islands."

The writer is Christopher Columbus. The event described is the landing of the heroic little crew that set out on a September day in search for a western route to India.

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Columbus leaves untold the story of the murmurings and distrust among his men, the plots against his life, the anxious nights, the portents of birds, the mysterious flashes of light, and the many cries of "Land".

His son, Ferdinand, has preserved these narratives around which the world has built its conception of the great navigator.

Columbus lived and wrought and died without knowing that he had discovered a new world. In ignorance he called the strange natives Indians, and the name has endured. In ignorance and injustice his contemporaries called the new land America after the glib Amerigo Vespucci, a merchant without one-thousandth part of the courage and imagination of Columbus.

But neither the ignorance of Columbus nor the injustice of that early society can detract from the grandeur of the voyage of the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*.

Columbus was the first man to prove to Europe that land lay beyond the Atlantic. The Greeks had said so 1000 years before and Renaissance geographers had speculated on the possibilities. But Columbus alone established the fact. Nor does it matter whether Norse adventurers wandered from Greenland and Iceland to the shores of North America in the tenth century. The Norsemen did not make history.

Before the voyage of Columbus, less than one-fourth of the earth's surface was on the map and the theory of the earth being a sphere was regarded as inimical to faith and morals.

Eighteen years after his death, the general figure of the western hemisphere was known, the southern-most point rounded, the Pacific crossed, and the globe circum-navigated.

Enough for one man to inspire and enough for a holiday to keep his memory green.

CHIDESTER, ARKANSAS IN 1939 **(this article appeared in the 1-3-1939 issue of The Camden News)**

Seeing letters from different parts of the county and nothing from this "the oldest town in the county" except Camden, we thought it time somebody should advise that Chidester is still on the map.

The town was located on the railroad where the Iron Mountain was first built from Gurdon to Camden. Only one building is now standing where the town was first built—the Abela house on the corner of West Main and Adams St.

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Chidester has five general stores, one first class hardware, one bank, one barber shop, one beauty parlor where the fair sex can get any kink waved and finger nail tint from a pale pink to a blood red, two first class garages, five filling stations, one telephone exchange, three new churches—Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian with preaching every Sunday at one of these churches, and an up-to-date school building with Smith-Hughes Bldg. with Frank Pfeifer as Vocational Instructor. A new gymnasium is under construction 70 x 72 and will be a credit to any school when completed. Three large buses transport pupils to and from school. A fine sawmill and planer owned by Walker and hardwood mill operated by Taylor and Mosley furnish employment to a large number of men. Both mills have large stocks of air dried lumber on their yards. Hwy. 24 is blacktopped through the town which has eliminated the dust. Chidester has a 4-stand cotton gin under the management of Howard Bradford to take care of all cotton raised in the adjacent territory and an inexhaustible supply of pure soft water. The health of the town generally speaking is far above the average with only one doctor, Dr. J. C. Rushing—true, Chidester had several deaths in the last two years mostly among the older citizens. When we get the 8 mile gap between Chidester and Camden black-topped and the proposed new road to Gurdon finished, Chidester will be ready to annex Camden or be annexed.

Well, time does go by fast. The *Sandyland Chronicle* has been published now for almost six years. I hope you have enjoyed reading some of the stories from the past. I know I have learned a lot just by doing the research looking for things that might be of interest to you.

I think we probably need some new ideas so we don't get into a rut. If you have any suggestions on how to improve the paper or things you would like to see included, just let me know and I'll see what I can do.

I know many people all over the country read this paper. Some hear about it from relatives and many just stumble across it by accident on the Internet while searching for something else. I thought it would be nice to hear from some of you. How about writing a paragraph or two (or more) and let us know about your part of the country or maybe some connection you have to Nevada or Ouachita counties. Here's your chance to boost your part of the country—tourist attractions, festivals, crops grown, the weather, etc. Maybe you could tell us about some memory you have of a past time spent in this part of Arkansas or some unusual event or funny story you remember. Maybe you have an unusual old picture of a landmark or a photo of your ancestors you would like to share. I will return your pictures, but would suggest you make an extra copy in case it gets lost in the mail or you can send it by e-mail. If you don't want your name published, just let me know, but please tell us your city and state. Thanks to those who have already contributed.

The mailing address is 2680 Warren Ave, Camden, AR 71701 or send by email to jmckelvy@cei.net --- I look forward to hearing from you. ---- Jerry

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THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF CLARENCE PURTLE (from the 3-3-1911 issue of *The Nevada County Picayune*)

Friends in the county and in Prescott were very much shocked early Monday morning to learn of the death Saturday night of Clarence Purtle, son of Pad Purtle, well known farmer of the county. The Purbles lived about five miles from the city.

The report of the sad and sudden death of Mr. Purtle is given out as being murder of the most repulsive methods. It seems that Clarence had been in town Sunday afternoon and returned home late that evening. After dark he decided he wanted some sardines, and saddling his mule, he went to one or two of the neighborhood stores but failed to get them. Returning home he met with a man about three or four hundred yards from his father's home. This man was an apparent stranger, Clarence stating that he had only met him once or twice in Prescott. The man engaged Clarence in conversation and finally prevailed on him to take a drink of what he claimed was whiskey. After swallowing the liquor, Clarence asked the stranger, name given by Clarence as Jamison, why he did not take a drink. The man replied that he did not care for any.

Clarence then stated to the stranger that he had poisoned him. The man replied that he had not. Clarence told the story as above related to his family after reaching home. The mule he had ridden showed that he had been ridden hard and Clarence stated that he rode hard to reach home before he died as he knew he would die unless medical assistance reached him speedily.

The sensation he suffered was that of pins sticking him and intense drawing pains. A physician was hastily summoned but just as he reached the threshold of the Purtle home, Clarence expired. Every outward symptom showed strychnine poisoning.

It was thought advisable to hold an autopsy and four physicians left here Monday afternoon for the Purtle home where they examined the corpse and all seem to be of about the same opinion as to the cause of death. To have been certain as to the cause, it would have been necessary to send the stomach away to have it analyzed. This was not done.

It is understood that the man whom Clarence named as Jamison is being looked for by members of the family. Unless he is found and some information obtained from that source, the death may remain shrouded in mystery.

Funeral services were conducted by Rev. W. C. Felts, Tuesday at noon at New Home Cemetery. (*Note: New Home Cem. is a small cemetery on a county road southwest of the Pleasant Hill community north of Prescott.*)

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INTERESTING NEWS ITEMS FROM DAYS GONE BY

Prescott Daily News (March, 1894)

A town quarantine is in effect due to smallpox. Four whites and two Negroes will act as special police to guard the town.

Nevada County Picayune—1912

According to the Bluff City local news column, Bluff City had four doctors in 1912.

Nevada County Picayune—Oct., 1915

There was a great excitement to some of the Bluff City people last week when a balloon passed over this place. It looked to be about the size of the moon. The balloon turned toward the west and afterwards fell near the home of Walker Benton. There were two men in the balloon. They had started from Kansas and were on their way to Louisiana when the machine broke and they lost control of it.

Prescott Daily News—April 16, 1921

Tornado kills 19 people at Blevins; more at Hope and Miller Co. One of the freaks of this storm was the removal of every tombstone from old Macedonia Cemetery. This is one of the oldest cemeteries in this section of Arkansas. There are a great number of graves there and some of them had very heavy granite tombstones and the wind blew every one of them from the lot. The two churches in this neighborhood—Protestant Methodist and Nazarene -- were completely demolished. The cemetery is located about two miles from Wallaceburg.

Prescott Daily News—April, 1926

A man had the idea to write the entire Bible by hand with each person writing one verse. It will take 31,173 people to accomplish this task. He figures it will take three to four years to complete the project. President Calvin Coolidge wrote the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis.

SWEET POTATOES ON THE HALF SHELL (this recipe appeared in a newspaper in 1926)

6 baked sweet potatoes
¼ cup evaporated milk diluted with ¼ cup water
3 tablespoons butter
¼ cup almonds (blanched and chopped)
1 dozen marshmallows
½ teaspoon salt

Select even sized potatoes and bake at 400 degrees until soft. Cut in half lengthwise and scoop out the inside. Mash and add diluted milk, butter, salt, and almonds. Return to the shells. Top with two marshmallows on each and brown delicately in moderate oven.