

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

THE SEARCH

After many weary and toilsome hours of fruitless search through the dazzling burning rays of a merciless southern sun, through swamp and high-ways and by-ways, and with a full and determined resolve "to do or die", the officers learned in Louisiana that at the house of one Lewis, living in the confines of Arkansas, a man of bad character, a man who was known to harbor thieves, a man who had been known to operate in thieving and other disreputable transactions in the Pelican State, and a man whom the officers of Louisiana had tried in vain to bring to justice, living seven miles south of Lewisville, the missing Thomson might be found.

THE SCENE OF THE TRAGEDY

Arriving at the house of Lewis, it was agreed by the trio that Milam and Sanders should demand admittance, and that White should keep watch outside. When hailed, Lewis refused to make a light or give admittance to the officers of the law, but after considerable parley and excuses that he had nothing with which to make a light, during such time the murderer of Parson Sanders was doubtless making preparations for the damnable deed, the old man Lewis finally consented to make use of a candle and matches furnished by the officers. After some hesitation upon his part, he then consented to conduct the officers to an inner room of the house. The house was a double frame one, with hall for entry-way extending through the center and containing a large room on either side.

THE BLOODY DEED

Taking the candle in his hand, old man Lewis, a man whose head had been frosted by some seventy winters, hesitatingly and tremblingly conducted Milam and Sanders to the right hand room where the supposed criminal Thomson was concealed. It would be well enough to state here that although the officers were not certain of securing their prey, the suspicious actions of Lewis confirmed them in the belief that Thomson was concealed there, after having heard what they did concerning the character of Lewis. This fact, probably taken into connection with their zeal and hopes of securing Thomson after more than three days' fruitless search, and emboldened to such an extent that they not only lost their discretion but became so unwary as to be almost entirely thrown off their guard. In the dim flickering light of the candle, they followed their conductor to the fatal chamber of death. Unsuspecting, true, but be-brave to rashness, the lamented Sanders entered the room. Almost hidden in a dark corner near the entry with shot-gun in hand, cocked and ready, and with murder in his heart, stood

THE MURDERER

Upon discovering him, poor Sanders, not being familiar with the face of Thomson, demanded a surrender without even attempting to raise his gun, whereupon, the supposed fugitive Thomson, without a word or note of warning, standing less than

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

six feet from his victim, fired, the whole load passing entirely through Sanders' bowels. The murderer was not Thomson, but a son of the hoary-headed old villain, "Shrog" Lewis, aged about twenty-four years, and there can be no question but that he mistook our Sheriff's posse for officers from Texas or Louisiana come to call him to account for some of his many dark and damnable crimes, and it is thought that his father, upon entering the room, gave his son a sign to commit the fatal deed. This family of Lewis's are said to have been outlawed in Texas and in Louisiana, and for several years past have found a comparatively safe haven within the counties of our border.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

To begin with, the Sheriff's posse had been warned of the general bad reputation of the Lewis's. A stranger who claimed to be from Texas had been seen skulking on the premises for several days previous, but had not ventured to make himself known to others than the family. A horse suiting the description of the one belonging to Thomson was seen on the premises. When old man Lewis was called up by our sheriff's posse on first making his appearance, he asked, "Is that you, Thomson?" These and other surroundings confirmed the suspicions of the officers that they were on the right trail.

A LIFE FOR A LIFE, A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH

Upon seeing what had befallen his comrade, true as steel, the brave and intrepid Milam rushed to the rescue, blinded by the smoke from the gun of the murderer, and fired. Simultaneously, Mr. W. B. White, who it will be remembered had placed himself upon guard at a window of the room, as soon as he could comprehend what had been done, also fired, and the lifeless body of young Lewis fell torn and bleeding to the floor.

THAT AWFUL NIGHT

Having every reason to believe they were surrounded by a gang of desperados and thieves, and in their very nest as it were, where the shot of a gun is the only necessary signal for their swarming like so many bees, most men would have fled in dread of overpowering numbers. Regardless of their own personal safety and with thoughts only of their wounded and dying friend, their first care was to administer to the wants of his death-bed. With such remedies as were to be had, with tearful eyes and pitying hearts, all through that dreadful night, Messrs. White and Milam did all in human power to sooth his dying pillow. After leaving him in good hands and with a consciousness of having done all they could, they set out for home about daylight that morning to impart the dreadful news to the widow, orphans, and friends of the unfortunate man, and reached here about sundown on the night of July 4th, after 72 hours without rest or sleep.

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

THE FATE OF POOR SANDERS

Upon being shot Mr. Sanders exclaimed, "Boys, I am killed". He then sought the hall-way of the house where he lay upon the hard floor to yield up to its Giver the spirit of as brave, true, and Christian a man as ever lived or died. Knowing that the ruthless hand of death was upon him, separated from the wife of his bosom and the loved ones of his peaceful and quiet home far away, no reproachful or vengeful words did he utter against his murderers; no earthly considerations seemed to occupy his mind although rapidly he was approaching his dissolution which he was expecting at any moment, his thoughts seemed to dwell not upon earthly but upon heavenly subjects.

THE REV. FLEMON SANDERS

Was a native of Virginia, but had been a citizen of this part of Arkansas for several years. He served gallantly and faithfully in the Confederate army during the late civil war. At the time of his death he was engaged in farming and school teaching about four miles west of Prescott near Artesian church. He was a regular ordained minister in the Cumberland Presbyterian church. He was a Mason, a Christian, and a gentleman of taste and culture.

It was our pleasure to be personally acquainted with the deceased. He was a man upon whom nature had bestowed many of her richest and choicest gifts, a brave and true man, a man of education and refinement, a man of worth and talents, and a man whom Nevada County recognized as one of her chosen sons, and his loss to us is almost irreparable. His pen and voice can no longer be used in defense of those principles which should govern every Christian man for they are now hushed in death.

Tongue is powerless and pen incapable of describing the many Christian virtues and graces which characterized him as a man. He lived a life loved and respected by his friends and acquaintances, worshipped by his wife and children, and honored by all. – "None knew him but to love him—none heard him but to praise."

THE CORPSE

Esquire Daniel O'Leary, Mr. J. B. White, and Mr. Joe Treadway left Prescott on the night of July 4th for the scene of the tragedy, to bring back the remains of the deceased, and at this writing (Friday, 4 p. m.), are expected in a few hours, when further particulars will be made known.

Editor's note: Flemen Sanders is buried at Artesian Cemetery a few miles west of Prescott. He was born February. 28, 1831 and died July 4, 1877. His grave marker states that he was born in Patrick County, Virginia.

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Correction: Two names were left out of the list of burials in 2007 in the January issue.

L. H. "Poodle" Walthall (9-10-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Pauline Pratt Walsh (11-22-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Dear Editor,

I recently ran across "Arkansas: A Guide to the State," compiled by workers of the Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration, Hastings House Publishers, 1941 - and it is a gem.

The chapter on 'Folklore and Folkways' has a description of the hoop snake which every Arkansan should know - "a reptile remarkable for its method of locomotion (rolls along with tail in mouth) and for the poisonous stinger in its tail." A man once dodged the rolling snake and its tail stuck in a tree. Fifteen years later, the man returned to the tree and chopped it down for saw logs. "Without thinking, he yanked a splinter from the stump and picked his teeth. The hoop snake's poison, which had long since penetrated every fiber of the tree, had never lost its strength. The woodcutter died before sundown."

The Arkansas joint snake is described too. One farmer found one in his barnyard and whacked it with a stick. "True to tradition, the serpent flew into several dozen pieces." The farmer hid one of the joints in his pocket; he must have been amused as the snake searched for the missing link. "At last, apparently deciding that the joint was forever lost, the snake coupled in a corn cob instead, and glided away, darting out its tongue in high dudgeon." You'll have to read the book to learn about the whip snake, "which is accused of wrapping itself around a victim and fatally lashing the unfortunate person with its tail."

Arkansas mosquitoes? One hunter defended himself with a paddle, then with a shotgun. "Later, he went back to the swamp and caught one of the insects in a bear trap, intending to train it to bore wells. He shackled the mosquito in a mule's harness, but it broke away. Seizing a cow in its mouth, the mosquito flapped heavily away through the tree-tops." That, of course, is an exaggeration. "Generally it takes two of the swampland mosquitoes to fly off with a cow."

As I say, this book is "must reading."

Don Mathis

Stepson of General Gillespie and

Grandson of the Dumas, the Walker, the Hearnberger, and Mathis clans of
Southern Arkansas

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Don also sent in his poem called *Ode to Bois D'Arc*. I'm sure some of you are familiar with this unusual tree, more commonly known in this area as "bo-dark".

Ode to Bois D'Arc

The Osage Orange is a lowly tree.
French explorers called this wood 'bo dark.'
Natives of the 16th century
used many parts of the wood and bark.

This 'wood of the bow' served well in war.
Bows and war clubs were used on the Plains.
Tannin from bark could help cure leather.
Ropes were twisted for use or exchange.

Dye from the roots yielded a yellow.
It's used to make uniforms khaki.
And it was a creative fellow
who used it for fence in the prairie.

'A hedgerow of bois d'arc was bull-strong,
horse-high, and pig-tight,' old experts said.
Horse Apple fence posts also last long.
The wood is even good for the dead.

Grave markers, gates, and parts for machines,
foundations, wheel rims, and rail-road ties,
were made from the hardest wood ere seen.
It's essence repels mildew and flies.

But like the tree of evil and good,
there's a shady side to the Hedge Ball.
If you try to burn it as fire wood,
wild sparks will fly to directions all!

A tougher, thornier, more tangled
specimen of cantankerousness,
odd grains that grow twisted and angled,
does not exist in the wilderness.

Try to prune bois d'arc limbs if you please,
the branches will bend with your chain saw.
Board Ark lumber splits and cracks with ease.
The toughest wood in old Arkansas.

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Thorns adorn this arboreal quirk.
Itchy inch-long spikes will shame barb-wire.
They tried paving streets but it didn't work.
It floats in flood and is fuel for fire.

But like the natives of the Blackland,
the versatile qualities shine through.
Bois d'arc roots grow in clay, loam or sand.
And we're bodacious in all we do!

Don Mathis
Sherman, Texas

I WAS JUST THINKING

By Jerry McKelvy

LIFE IS SHORT

The other day while I was shaving, I got to thinking about how much time I wasted every day on just this one activity. Assume that a man starts shaving at age 16 and that he lives to be 80 years old. That's 64 years or 23,360 days. At 10 minutes per day, that comes to 233,600 minutes--3,893 hours--162 days. That's over five months that a man spends shaving in his lifetime.

Then consider that a person sleeps about 8 hours a day. In other words, we spend one third of our lifetime asleep. If a person lives to be 80 years old, he spent 26.6 years of his life asleep. There is not much way around this. We have to sleep to rejuvenate our bodies. We can cut back on the time we spend sleeping, but by doing this we may shorten our lives.

If it takes an hour per day driving to and from our jobs, that amounts to about 10 days per year. Spread over a working career of 30 years, that amounts to 312 days--almost one year spent doing nothing but driving to and from work.

Well, I could go on about many other routine activities we do and how much time we spend doing them, such as bathing, tying your shoe laces, getting a haircut, sitting in your car waiting for a traffic light to change, etc. When you consider the time spent on all these activities, you might be surprised at the amount of time wasted in a lifetime.

I suppose there is not much to be done about this except to try and make the best possible use of whatever time we have. We must decide for ourselves how we choose to use each day, hour, or minute of our lives.

Just something for you to think about, but don't spend too much time thinking about it. I'm sure there is something more productive for you to be doing.

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE



After the article last month on mad stones, I received a phone call from Mr. Claudie White of Rosston who said he had one of these stones that was in his great grandmother's trunk when she came to Arkansas from Tennessee in the 1800's. Here is a picture of his stone. Even though it appears to be heavy like a rock, it is very light weight. What a conversation piece!

LITTLE SPICE COOKIES (A recipe from 1938)

3 ¼ cups sifted flour
3 ¼ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
¾ teaspoon ginger
¾ teaspoon cloves
½ teaspoon soda
1 egg, well beaten
1/3 cup melted butter or other shortening
1 cup molasses

Sift flour once, measure, add baking powder, salt, sugar, spices, and soda and sift together three times. Combine egg, butter, and molasses in bowl. Add flour mixture and blend. Chill until firm enough to shape. Shape into balls about ¾ inch in diameter. Roll in sugar to tiny colored candies (?—*That's what the recipe said*). Bake on greased baking sheet in moderate oven 10 minutes or until done. Makes 5 dozen little spice cookies.