

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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BURNING AT THE STAKE

The following article contains some material that will be unpleasant to read, but it is a part of our history.

We are familiar with the term lynching. The dictionary defines it as “to kill an accused person by mob action and without lawful trial, as by hanging”. There have been several public hangings recorded in our past in this area, most of them taking place on the court house square before large crowds of men, women, and children. These sentences were handed down by judges after a jury had reached a verdict. There have also been cases in Nevada and Ouachita counties of accused persons being taken by a mob of citizens and being hanged without a trial. In practically every case, those who perpetrated these acts were never arrested. Many people felt the criminal got what he deserved. I’m sure in some cases, innocent people were put to death by an unruly mob before all the facts of the case were determined.

I didn’t know until I did a bit of research that the practice of burning at the stake was used in many places especially from about 1890 until 1930. I had always heard of women accused of being witches being burned at the stake. The practice was fairly common in Europe in the old days as a punishment for witches, heretics, and “suspicious women”. We have all heard of the Salem witchcraft trials and Joan of Arc being burned at the stake.

Below are some cases I found of people being burned at the stake in this country. Practically all of these were young black men who had been accused of assaulting or murdering white women or children. Some of them had already been found guilty and sentenced to hang, but a mob took them from the law enforcement officers and carried out this brutal form of execution instead. I only found one case of a white person being burned at the stake. That was a Canadian who was burned by some Mexicans for refusing to tell them where some money was hidden.

I did not find any cases of burning at the stake being used in Nevada or Ouachita counties, but I found several in our neighboring states and a few here in Arkansas..

Texarkana, Arkansas, 1892—A Negro named Ed Coy was accused of assaulting Mrs. Henry Jewell who lived a few miles from town while her husband was in town getting supplies. The man was located and arrested. He was identified by the victim and was sentenced to be hanged. A crowd of some 6,000 people gathered for the hanging. He was taken up Broad St. and then on to State Line Ave. near the post office. The crowd began to shout, “Burn him! Burn him!” A leading business man persuaded the crowd to take him out of the city, so they moved to the suburbs of town near the Iron Mountain railroad. He was

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tied to a large tree stump about 10 feet high and kerosene was poured over him. Someone suggested that the victim be allowed to light the fire. Mrs. Jewell, supported by family members, came through the crowd and after further encouragement by the crowd, lit the match and set the fire. A newspaper reporter who witnessed the event wrote, "In a few minutes, the doomed Negro was a sheet of flame, writhing and groaning in terrible agony".

Paris, Texas, 1893—Henry Smith accused of murdering a four year old girl whose body was mangled beyond recognition, was finally captured about twenty miles south of Hope, Arkansas. He was taken by train to Paris, Texas. People came by train, wagons, horseback, and on foot to witness the execution of the criminal. The crowd was estimated to be 10,000 people. There were people from Dallas, Ft. Worth, Texarkana, Fort Smith, and even a 15 person delegation from Hempstead County where he had been captured. Every train was filled to capacity with people who came to witness the event. Smith was put on a float and escorted through the city so everyone could see "the most inhuman monster in current human history". He was put on a scaffold and tortured by red-hot branding irons starting at his feet and up his body toward his head. Kerosene was then poured on him, cottonseed hulls placed beneath his feet and he was set on fire. The crowd even took away mementoes of the occasion, even down to pieces of the charcoal from the fire.

Corinth, Mississippi, 1902—Tom Clark was accused of murdering Mrs. Whitfield. He was allowed to make a speech before he was burned at the stake. The family of the victim lit the fire. The flames were fanned by the crowd until his body was burned to a crisp.

Forrest City, Arkansas, 1902—Charles Young accused of murdering Mrs. Edward Lewis. The mob took him from his jail cell and burned him at the stake.

Sulphur Springs, Texas, 1905—Tom Williams, accused of assaulting a young girl was burned at the stake on the court house square.

Rusk, Texas—Leonardo Johnson was accused of killing Mrs. Maud Redding by cutting her throat "from ear to ear". About 100 men and boys took him from the sheriff and burned him at the stake.

Cochran, Georgia, 1909—John Harvard, a Negro preacher, had killed W. B. Booth after an argument. Harvard had accused Booth of scaring his mules with his automobile. He was burned at the stake.

Rockwell, Texas, 1903—Anderson Ellis was burned at the stake before a crowd of 1000. He was accused of attacking a white lady.

Temple, Texas, 1915—Will Stanley, accused of killing three children, was burned at the stake on the public square before thousands of spectators. Young boys and girls had climbed trees around the square to get a better look.

Dyersburg, Tennessee, 1917—Ligon Scott was burned at the stake on the public square after confessing to attacking a white woman.

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Nodena, Arkansas, 1921—Henry Lowry was accused of killing O. T. Craig and his daughter, Mrs. C. O. Williamson. He was taken to a levee on the Mississippi River just north of Memphis and burned to a crisp. He had been taken from officers in Sardis, Mississippi. A crowd of 300 people witnessed the event. He was asked if he had anything to say and he said he was hungry. He was allowed to eat a hearty meal. His wife and children were sent for and bade him goodbye. He confessed to the killing and said he was full of whiskey when he did it. He was chained to a log and covered with brush up to his shoulders. He was slowly burned and was being questioned at the same time with his answers being recorded in a notebook. It resembled a courtroom scene. Finally, after about 40 minutes of this slow torture, he was dead.

These are just a few of the many cases of accused persons being burned at the stake or put to death by hanging in this country. Even though our constitution forbids “cruel and unusual punishment”, some people with their emotions fueled by hate and anger, refused to allow the law to take its course and took matters into their own hands. Many people feel today that our courts have become too lenient with lawbreakers and that the criminals are not punished as harshly as they deserve, especially those who have brutally murdered innocent men, women and children. What is the appropriate punishment for taking a human life? As a civilized society, we can only leave that question to the courts and hope that the punishment will fit the crime. I know of families who have had to struggle with their emotional feelings after a family member was murdered. Nothing can bring back a life cut short by the actions of a criminal. To prevent complete lawlessness, we must have a system of laws and punishment for crimes against society. We may not agree completely with every outcome of a criminal trial, but we can take comfort that these criminals (and all of us) will someday face the ultimate Judge who will render a fair and final judgment.

All of the following statements or phrases are found in the Old Testament (King James Version) except for ten. Circle the numbers of the 10 not found in the Bible. Answers on page 8.

1. Buy the truth and sell it not.
2. A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.
3. It is not good to eat much honey.
4. Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out.
5. All that glitters is not gold.
6. Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein.
7. Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.
8. Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set.
9. Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.
10. The chameleon may change its color, but it is the chameleon still.
11. The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.

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12. It is better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and angry woman.
13. The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head.
14. Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadow.
15. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty.
16. Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.
17. Open rebuke is better than secret love.
18. A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.
19. The venom of the female viper is more poisonous than that of a male viper.
20. Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter.
21. There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise.
22. Iron sharpeneth iron.
23. Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing.
24. A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.
25. Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.
26. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full.
27. For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.
28. That which is crooked cannot be made straight.
29. So the eyes of man are never satisfied.
30. Cleanliness is next to godliness.
31. A man's pride shall bring him low.
32. He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread.
33. The sleep of a laboring man is sweet.
34. To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.
35. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it.
36. Two are better than one.
37. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth: therefore let thy words be few.
38. Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown.
39. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.
40. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.
41. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

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42. Spare not the rod and spoil the child.
 43. A wise son maketh a glad father.
 44. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.
 45. Is there any taste in the white of an egg?
 46. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.
 47. None preaches better than the ant, and she says nothing.
 48. A small leak will sink a great ship.
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BALL TEAMS

A few months ago, I asked readers to submit names of ball teams from schools in Nevada and Ouachita counties. Here is a list of what I have received so far from readers and from newspaper items:

NEVADA COUNTY

Bluff City High School —Fiery Dragons
Bluff City—Idlers (baseball team in 1928)
Bluff City—Literary Societies (Hubs and Spartans-1929)
Bluff City—Yearbook called *The Dragon's Den*
Bluff City—each high school class had class colors and class flower

Bodcaw – Badgers

Cale—Red Devils

Glenville—Vikings (1934)

Hickory Grove—Lick-Skillets (1933)

Laneburg—Hornets

Nevada (at Rosston) —Blue Jays

New Hope—Terrapins (1924)--basketball team

Prescott—Curly Wolves

Redland—Rounders (1928); literary societies (Royals and Alpines-1929)

Redland—Winners (1924)—basketball team

Rosston—Shisters (1933)

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Shady Grove—Lions (1934); this was a Negro school near Willisville

Willisville—Lions

OUACHITA COUNTY

Chidester—Braves

Reader – Hornets (1929)

Red Hill – Hot Shots (baseball team in 1906)

DEMOGRAPHICS FROM 2000 CENSUS

Have you ever checked to see just what the government does with all the census information they collect every ten years? The following information is from the 2000 census. I have included a report for Nevada County as well as the city of Bluff City. These reports are available for any town or county in the United States.

NEVADA COUNTY

Population—9955

Race—66.9% White; 31.8% African-American; .38% Native American; .06% Asian, and .85% Other

Average Household Size—2.48

Average Family Size—3.02

Age—

Under 18—25.2 %

18-24--8.70 %

25-44—26.6 %

45-64—23.8 %

Over 65—16.6 %

Median Age—38

For every 100 females, there are 94.40 males

For every 100 females over age 18, there are 89.90 males

Percentage below Poverty Line—22.8%

BLUFF CITY

Population—158

Race—27.22% White; 71.52% African-American; 1.27% Native American

Average Household Size—2.39

Average Family Size—2.96

Age—

Under 18—19 %

18-24—6.32 %

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25-44—24.7 %

45-64—31 %

Over 65—19%

Median Age—45

For every 100 females, there are 129 males

For every 100 females over 18, there are 103.2 males

Percentage below Poverty Line—23.6 %



JOHN ALEXANDER GREER AND HATTIE MAE MCKELVY GREER

John Greer was born in 1862 near Lackland Springs, AR and died in 1934. He was the son of Alexander P. Greer and Nancy Caroline Lee Greer. Hattie was born in 1883 and died in 1911 from swamp fever. She was the daughter of Alexander Fletcher McKelvy and Elizabeth Ann McLelland McKelvy. Their first child died as an infant in 1908. Carl Lee Greer, their second child, was less than one year old at the time of her death. He was raised by Hattie's sisters, Esther, Mattie, and Beulah McKelvy who lived in the Goose Ankle community. Hattie McKelvy Greer is buried at Ebenezer Cemetery. A rock marks a grave next to her. This may be the grave of her husband. I was told that John Greer was buried at Ebenezer next to Hattie. He remarried after Hattie's death. Carl Lee Greer is buried at Bluff City Cemetery with his wife, Annie Mae Barlow Greer.

HONOR ROLL AT BLUFF CITY HIGH SCHOOL (NOV., 1925)

The following pupils made an average of not less than 85 per cent in the test given at the close of the first month of the Bluff City High School: (none were listed for grades 11 and 12.

Tenth Grade

Veron Dewoody, Lera Barksdale, Marie Martin, Edna Hildebrand, Dale Askew, Troy Byrd

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Ninth Grade

Byar Tompkins, Shelton Lee, Lawrence Walker, Dillard Sarrett, Penny Black, Garland Moore, Minnie Mae Harvey, Elsie Moore, Cloe Lee, Lewis Carter, Homer Greer, Clyde Black

Eighth Grade

Myrtle Henry, Pink Merritt, Hazel Walker, William Dewoody, Ruby Carter, Gussie Byrd, Hudson Henry, Elsie Mae Moore, Hollis Walker, Lloyd Robinson, Bill Nichols, Mary Ellen Dewoody, Gladys Hildebrand, Dovie Black, Lucy Lee Byrd, Doyle Crowell

Seven Lower Grades

Myrtle Martin, Elmer Meador, Cora Starnes, Hassel Starnes, Blanche Henry, Maurine Henry, Helen Harvey, James Harvey, Selma Nichols, Herbert Moore, G. P. Walker, Hugh B. Hackney, Gerald Carter, Larnell Nichols, Marguerette Henry, Arlie Merritt, James Neal Byrd, Elwood Byrd, LaVerne Carter, Herschel Carter, Geneva Henry, Ruby Robinson, Pearl Moore, Gladys Morgan, Woodrow Carter, James Crowell, Dawson Barlow, Mabel Hackney, Imogene Morgan, Clinton Robinson, Howell Byrd, Ellis Harvey, Stell Meador.

Mrs. W. A. Barlow
Mrs. Tula Barlow
Teachers

Answers to Bible quiz: 1. (Proverbs 23:23); 2. (Proverbs 25:11); 3. (Proverbs 25:27); 4. (Proverbs 26:20); 5. (William Shakespeare); 6. (Proverbs 26:27); 7. (Proverbs 27:1); 8. (Proverbs 22:28); 9. (Proverbs 22:6); 10. (William Shakespeare); 11. (Proverbs 22:2); 12. (Proverbs 21:19); 13. (Proverbs 20:29); 14. (Helen Keller); 15. (Proverbs 20:13); 16. (Proverbs 20:1); 17. (Proverbs 27:5); 18. (Proverbs 27:15); 19. (Ben Butler); 20. (Proverbs 30:33); 21. (Proverbs 30:24); 22. (Proverbs 27:17); 23. (Proverbs 18:22); 24. (Proverbs 22:1); 25. Ecclesiastes 12:13); 26. (Ecclesiastes 1:7); 27. (Ecclesiastes 7:20); 28. (Ecclesiastes 1:15); 29. (Proverbs 27:20); 30. Unknown; 31. (Proverbs 29:23); 32. (Proverbs 28:19); 33. (Ecclesiastes 5:12); 34. (Ecclesiastes 3:1); 35. (Ecclesiastes 5:4); 36. (Ecclesiastes 4:9); 37. (Ecclesiastes 5:2); 38. (William Shakespeare); 39. (Proverbs 14:12); 40. (Proverbs 18:8); 41. (Proverbs 15:3); 42. (Unknown-see Proverbs 13:24 and Proverbs 23:13); 43. (Proverbs 10:1); 44. (Benjamin Franklin); 45. (Job 6:6); 46. (Psalms 121:1); 47. (Benjamin Franklin); 48. (Unknown)

DID YOU KNOW THIS?

Ouachita County deer hunters in 1943 were encouraged to save their deer skins and give them to the game warden. These were to be used to make gloves for the troops in World War II.