

# THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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Did you know that Santa Claus did not always look like he does today? These are the front covers of Christmas cards that are probably at least 100 years old. They are part of a collection belonging to Mr. Claudie White of Rosston. They were found in an old trunk along with other items. I think it is interesting to see how Santa was depicted so many years ago.

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## NEVADA COUNTY MORTALITY BEFORE 1940

### ABOUT THE CHARTS THAT FOLLOW

I have been searching old Nevada County newspapers for several years and making an index of the obituaries found in those papers to help those who might be searching for an obituary of one of their family members. Many of the obituaries list a cause of death, but most do not. Some say the person died "after a lingering illness" or "died after a brief illness". We are left to guess the actual cause of death. Sometimes this information is useful to a family doing research especially if some inherited trait is present that could be passed down from

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one generation to the next.

This chart serves no useful purpose, but I thought it might give you an idea of what our ancestors had to deal with before 1940. I have divided the chart into two parts. Part 1 lists accidents, etc. and Part 2 lists medical causes. By looking at the medical chart, you can see what diseases were prevalent at a particular time even though they had different names for many diseases in the early days.

One thing I found interesting is the high number of deaths from people being struck by a train while walking along the railroad track. It seems to me that Prescott had an unusually high number of incidents involving trains. A person can see a long way in each direction, so you would think there would be few accidents. Most could probably be attributed to not paying attention.

Another common cause of death was ladies and children catching their clothes on fire while burning something or just warming by the fireplace. The long dresses women wore in those days could easily catch fire. The person probably took off running which only made matters worse.

Suicide was a problem also. As you can see by the chart, various methods were used from drinking poisons and acid to saturating oneself with kerosene and lighting a match--horrible ways to die.

Of course there were all kinds of accidents that caused death. Many involved farm animals kicking someone. I'm sure most of these could have been prevented. Some could be called "freak accidents" because they were so unusual like the farmer who became entangled in the harness while plowing and was dragged across the field.

You will see a large number of deaths from murder in the chart. This category includes all types of killing ranging from self defense to premeditated murder. Various weapons were used--guns, knives, and an axe. There were many accidental deaths involving firearms also.

There were some occasional deaths caused by drowning. The same goes for house fires and other types of burns like the lady who died from burns while making soap or the small children who fell into boiling water. You can imagine trying to keep an eye on several small children while doing all the work these women had to do in those days.

There were several storm related deaths such as from tornadoes, lightning, or someone trying to cross a flooded stream. Several farmers were hit by lightning while plowing. One was struck while picking beans and another while milking a cow. One young man was struck while playing baseball.

In the medical chart, you will notice that pneumonia was one of the big killers. Many of the deaths resulted from a disease like measles or typhoid fever turning into pneumonia which finally caused death. There were no antibiotics to help at this time. Deaths were also caused by such things as la grippe, an old name for the flu, or sometimes the cause was given as

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congestion or croup. Many small children were said to have died from congestion.

There were all types of fevers--slow fever, swamp fever, scarlet fever, typhoid fever, catarrhal fever, and several others.

You might notice the small number of deaths from cancer in those days. The number may have been much larger, but just wasn't mentioned in the obituaries. I wonder if there is something about our modern times or what we eat that causes so much cancer today. Maybe it's just because people live longer these days.

Several people died from complications following an operation. You would be amazed at some of the major surgeries performed in Prescott in those days. The doctors didn't seem to cull anything, but did what they could to save a life.

There is only one death in the chart from childbirth, but we know that many women died giving birth--it just wasn't mentioned in the obituaries. I didn't find any reference to a death from polio before 1940, but I suspect that some deaths reported as "paralysis" could have been polio. I have read that polio reached its peak in 1952.

There were some epidemics that caused many deaths including the flu epidemic about 1918. There was a meningitis outbreak in the early 1900s that caused several deaths and some small smallpox outbreaks in the late 1800s.

Heart disease was a common cause of death. There were many cases of a person being found dead in a field which was probably a heart attack. Sometimes they gave the cause as indigestion, but it was probably a heart attack. Strokes (or apoplexy) were also a major cause of death.

Deaths from appendicitis were also common, probably because they waited too long to get to a doctor. A few listed tonsillitis as a cause of death which is considered a minor operation today.

Then there were deaths caused by eating the wrong thing or too much of something. Some of the causes given were ptomaine poisoning from eating wild greens and eating canned blackberries. Two small children were said to have died from eating too many mulberries.

You can analyze the charts and draw your own conclusions. As I said, this is nothing to be taken as scientific research, but just something to give you an idea of some of the things our ancestors had to deal with before 1940.

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**SEE CHARTS ON PAGE 4 AND 5**

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CAUSE OF DEATH	1887- 1892	1905- 1909	1910- 1919	1920- 1929	1930- 1940
Vehicle accident				15	20
Pedestrian hit by vehicle					5
Fell from truck					1
Motorcycle Accident					1
Jumped from truck after blow-out					1
Hit and Run					1
Vehicle hit by train			1	4	7
Wagon hit by train			2		
Pedestrian hit by train	2	4	10	8	2
Fell from train			1		3
Railroad trestle gave way					1
Railroad accident			5	2	2
Horse/vehicle accident			1		
Plane crash					1
Murder using gun	3	5	15	23	17
Murder using knife			4		2
Shot by police				5	2
Hanged by mob			1	1	
Killed by mob				1	
Accident involving gun		1	6	5	4
Hunting accident					1
Sawmill or gin accident	1		1	1	1
Farm accidents/farm animals			3	3	
Other accidents			1	5	
Drowning in water		3	6	8	7
Drowning in tank of oil					2
Diving into shallow water					1
Suicide using gun			5	6	7
Suicide using kerosene				2	1
Suicide by jumping off bridge					1
Suicide using strychnine					1
Suicide using carbolic acid			1	1	1
Suicide using Paris Green		1			
Suicide by hanging			1		
Struck by lightning		2	1	3	4
Storm/tornado		1		4	
Fell off oil derrick				1	2
Other falls			2	4	
Explosion	1			1	1
Logging accident	1	1	1	1	
Clothes caught fire		3	3	5	2
House fire				3	1
Other burns			2	3	
Buried alive in tunnel					2
Electrocuted		1	1	1	
Fell in boiling water			1		1
Fell out of tree					1
Hit by falling tree	1		3	1	1
Hit in head with baseball					1
Runaway/wagon accident		2	5		
Froze to death			1		
Killed in military service			2		
Drinking bad whiskey			2		

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CAUSE OF DEATH	1887- 1892	1905- 1909	1910- 1919	1920- 1929	1930- 1940
Medical--heart/circulatory	1	10	18	18	6
Medical--indigestion			2	4	1
Medical--stroke/apoplexy	1	7	19	13	3
Medical--meningitis			6	1	
Medical--brain tumor					1
Medical--brain abscess/congestion		1	4	1	
Medical--epilepsy			2		
Medical--Bright's disease/nephritis			5	4	
Medical--blood poisoning			4	2	2
Medical--pneumonia	6	10	50	18	7
Medical--la grippe	1	4	5		
Medical--congestion		7	15	3	
Medical--influenza			2	3	
Medical--pulmonary/lungs/asthma			2		
Medical--typhoid fever	1	3	8	3	1
Medical--slow fever	2	4	3	1	
Medical--catarrhal fever		1	1		
Medical--typhomalia fever	2				
Medical--swamp fever			5	1	
Medical--malaria	1		1	2	
Medical--scarlet fever			1		
Medical--diphtheria			2		
Medical--whooping cough				1	
Medical--consumption/TB/white plague		5	13	1	
Medical--cancer		3	6	4	
Medical--heat stroke				2	1
Medical--flux		1			
Medical--stomach congestion		1			
Medical--inflammation of bowel			1		
Medical--septic poison			1		
Medical--peritonitis			1	1	
Medical--ptomaine poisoning		2	2		
Medical--eating too many mulberries			2		
Medical--measles		3	7		
Medical--died following operation		1	6	4	
Medical--appendicitis		2	4	6	
Medical--tonsillitis			1		1
Medical--thrombosis		1			
Medical--abscess of liver			1		
Medical--erysipelas		1		1	
Medical--dropsy			1		
Medical--childbirth			1		
Medical--lumbago			1		
Medical--carbuncle	1		1		
Medical--rheumatism	1		1		
Medical--impure vaccine		1			
Medical--stung by bumble bee					1

**A FORMER SOLDIER REMEMBERS CHRISTMAS WEEK OF 1863**  
**(copied from an early Camden newspaper preserved on microfilm-date unknown)**

A few days ago as I was passing up the Iron Mountain Railroad and near Sayre--like a

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flash, an event that occurred during the Civil War came to mind. I had passed along there perhaps a hundred times before since this event, but had never thought of it before. And all at once, while looking out through the car window, I noticed an old log house, the subject of my story.

At the time of which I speak, it was in 1863, just before Christmas. I belonged to Co. A., Morgan's Battalion of Texas Cavalry and we were camped about 30 miles west of Camden on the Washington road. Gen. Price's division of infantry was then camped for winter quarters at Camp Bragg near our camp. There came a report that Gen. Steele, who was then located in Little Rock, had sent out a detachment of cavalry in the direction of Arkadelphia, and that they would probably attempt to move to Camden. We got orders to go to a point on the Little Missouri River, known as Tate's Bluff or Tate's Ferry, or rather our commander Col. Morgan had orders to send a scout to that point to watch out for Steele's blue coats, and 15 of the company I belonged to were ordered there under command of Lieutenant Wheeler.

In going across the country in that direction, there were only a few dim settlement roads, and we did not know the country. We came to a farm house. I remember just how the house looked. It was a double log cabin with a hall and a long gallery in front. We went up to the gate and called and an elderly lady came out. The Lieutenant asked her for directions to our place of destination. She evidently was not used to seeing soldiers, and was somewhat excited and told him the best she could how to go. Then she asked Lieutenant if we came from Captain Price's company. He told her that we had come from Gen. Price's camp. Then she exclaimed, "Oh, you did! Did you see my son, Henry? They made him go to the war three weeks ago and I never have seen him since, and I know he can't stand this cold weather and sleep in a camp where they have no feather beds. Oh, poor boy, I do think they might let him come home." Then she was too full for further utterance and with her face covered with her apron, she turned weeping into the house and we rode on. I think every boy in our crowd thought of our mothers at home, for every one was very silent for a long time. Then Bill Lamon remarked, "Boys, our best friends are our mothers," and we all agreed.

We went on to the river and got there just at night. It was freezing cold and we had no tents nor anything for protection from the bitter cold, but we found an old empty log house with a wide fireplace, and appropriated it for our use. We soon had a roaring fire and our horses cared for. Then we huddled around the old fireplace and while we had nothing to eat, we enjoyed the shelter and the warm fire. We were used to missing our meals, so thought but little of it, but while we were discussing the prospects for provisions for the morrow, an old gentleman came in to see who his new neighbors were, and after some conversation with him about the roads and the crossing of the river, he gave us what information we asked him for. Then he told us he had several small hogs butchered that he had not cut up, and if we wanted one of them, we were welcome to it if some of us would go with him. When they came back, the old man had given them, in addition to the dressed hog which would have weighed about 100 pounds, about two bushels of sweet potatoes. Well, we surely had a feast that night. We roasted the potatoes in the fireplace and broiled the pork in the coals.

The next morning, the pork we had not eaten was frozen as hard as the North Pole. But we managed to thaw it up so we could use it. We stayed there several days and guarded the

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ford on the river and watched for Yankees, but I guess they heard we were there--anyway, they never came.

On Christmas Eve, we were ordered to rejoin our command at Camden. We came to Camden on Christmas Eve and found the battalion camped just on the south side of the river where the Cotton Belt Railroad bridge is now. There, in the rain, sleet, and snow, we spent Christmas week of December, 1863.

On the first day of January, 1864, we crossed the Ouachita River and camped in the bottom on the other side in the cane. The river was very high and everything frozen over except the middle of the river where the current was very swift. I remember this as the coldest day I have ever experienced in all my life. I came very near freezing on that day. We undertook to cross the river in a ferry boat, but when the rope would go down in the water and was lifted up again, there would be a shield of ice formed on it, and it continued getting thicker on the rope until it got so large and heavy that men could not handle it.

There was a large steamboat at the wharf in Camden and it was steamed up and sent up to the ferry and we crossed on it. It was the old May Flower. Many of the citizens of Camden now will remember this old boat, for it ran on the river for a long time.

What I expected to tell in this story was that I believe I have located the very old home where the poor old mother gave us directions, who was very distressed about her poor boy who had been away three long weeks, and she had not seen him and he had no feather bed to sleep on. But we did not criticize her for her little knowledge of the sufferings that soldiers had to go through. We felt sorry for her and for her dear boy too, for we had tasted the bitter cup. We had mothers at home who we knew felt for us like this good mother did for her Henry. But this is a memory of the past and we will let the curtain fall.

Respectfully,  
J. W. Hollis



### IS HE MAD OR SAD?

I thought this was an interesting picture. If we could only read his mind!

The name on the back of the picture is Hurshel Carter. At least someone took the trouble to label their pictures.

Thanks to Linda Carman for sharing this old picture.

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## MESSAGE TO READERS

It's hard to believe, but it has been seven years since I started *The Sandyland Chronicle*. I hope you have enjoyed some of the articles, but the time has come for me to make some changes. It is getting harder to come up with new ideas for stories each month. It has also become increasingly expensive to print papers. The cost of ink, paper, envelopes, and postage keep going up.

So, I have come to a difficult decision. I will no longer be able to produce printed copies. This change will only affect those of you who receive the paper by mail and those who receive copies hand delivered by me. If you have some time remaining on your subscription, I will refund the unused portion of your subscription price.

This will be the last monthly issue of *The Sandyland Chronicle* in the present format. I still plan to do research because I enjoy it. I will still send out articles and other interesting things similar to what you have been reading to all of you who wish to receive it by e-mail, but I will no longer be able to produce printed copies. This will eliminate a lot of my headaches such as addressing envelopes, buying stamps, purchasing paper and ink not to mention the time it takes to print up copies and the bookkeeping required keeping up with subscription accounts. Maybe those of you who receive it by mail or in person will be able to get someone to print out the e-mail articles for you from their computer.

The only change for Internet readers is that I will send the paper directly to your email whenever I accumulate enough to make it worthwhile. The number of pages may vary. That way I don't have to carefully plan how to make the articles fit a certain number of pages. Hopefully, I will be able to send you something at least once per month.

Every so often I will pick out the best articles, especially those with historical or genealogical value, and send them in to be posted on the web site for those who just happen to be surfing the Internet. In the meantime, continue to send in any family stories, old pictures, etc. so I can pass them along for others to enjoy.

This decision requires me to bid farewell to some of you which I deeply regret. I hope you understand my reasons for doing this. If you want a name added or removed from my mailing list, just contact me. Also let me know if there is a change in your email address.

I might mention that the drawing on this page was not my work. Actually, it was drawn by a student in the American Government class at Lewisville High School and was given to me as I was ending my student teaching there in 1965. I have kept it all these years.

