

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Vol. 9 – No. 5 (May, 2009)

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OLD GRAVE MARKERS RAISE INTERESTING QUESTIONS

The late radio commentator, Paul Harvey, was known for ending his broadcast with the phrase “Now, you know the rest of the story”. Many of us who do genealogy and historical research often wish we knew the rest of the story. We get excited when we discover some little tidbit of information that we didn’t know and it usually sends us off on another search, maybe in a totally different direction.

Some of our old cemeteries have hidden stories just waiting to be told if we only had more information or at least some factual piece of evidence to prove or disprove stories that have been passed down over the years.

Below are a couple of these type stories. We can’t prove the stories are true, but neither can we disprove them. Who knows? Maybe someone reading this has some information to share that will help us to learn the “rest of the story”.

SALLIE OLGLESBY WOOD AND THE TEN UNIDENTIFIED GRAVES



Old Union Cemetery is located just south of the city limits of Camden, Arkansas. It is very old with some grave markers dating back to 1841. In this small cemetery there is an unusual plot surrounded by an iron fence that contains the headstone of Sallie Oglesby Wood who was born Sept. 11, 1842 and died August 25, 1926. Next to her grave is a row of ten small identical grave markers with no names, all inside the iron fence. One of the markers is near Sallie's grave, but there is a skip between that marker and the other nine markers.

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The story I've heard about this is that Sallie's husband was killed in the Civil War in Mississippi. Sometime later she went to retrieve his body and found that he had been buried in a mass grave with several other soldiers, so she decided to bring all of those bodies back to Camden for burial which explains the row of identical grave markers in this cemetery plot.

When I visited the cemetery, I questioned why she had the nice iron fence installed around all these graves, but didn't put up a marker for her husband with his name and dates. Perhaps it was because she had no way of knowing exactly which one was her husband.

As I said, it's too bad we don't know the rest of the story. I'm sure at the time this all happened, many people knew the story and it probably would have been reported in the local newspaper. All those people are gone now and newspapers from that time are scarce, so I guess we will just have to continue wondering what really happened.

If the story is true, it causes us to admire a young lady who loved her husband enough that she would go to that much trouble and expense to bring his body back from that far away. There are thousands of Civil War soldiers (and those from other wars) buried far from their homes and family members, many in unmarked graves. I'm sure most families would want their loved one brought back home if at all possible.



I wondered if maybe she was from a wealthy family who had the money to accomplish such a task, but from her obituary, I learned that she was from a family of eighteen children and had one brother, Will Oglesby, who survived her. I doubt if a family that large would have accumulated much wealth, but at some time, the iron fence was installed around this plot and a nice marker was placed at Sallie's grave after her death. I don't know if these fences were expensive in those days, but I expect they were. Maybe the Wood family provided the money for the fence and the expenses of bringing the fallen soldier home. Notice the heart designs in the corner post of the fence pictured here.

Her obituary did not mention her husband or any children who survived. She lived the last 23 years of her life with Mr. and Mrs. Ed Reynolds south of Camden, according to the obituary. Mrs. Reynolds was her niece. It is believed that Sallie lived in Texas in the 1800s before moving back to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds. The Reynolds' had previously lost two small children who are also buried at Old Union.

I assume that she remained a widow until she died in 1926 which would be about sixty years after her husband's death. She was probably in her early 20s when he was killed in the war. We really need to find out her husband's first name. Then maybe we could find his military record and his date of death to prove this story. The Ouachita County marriage records from that time were destroyed in a court house fire. Assuming she was married about age 18, her marriage would have been about 1860. The war lasted from 1861 to 1865. If he was killed in the war, their marriage was very brief. I found other Oglesbys buried in the same cemetery and at Riddick Cemetery in Ouachita Co. I have

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tried to contact Oglesby family researchers, but have had no response so far.

If the story is true, what about the other nine soldiers and their families? Who were these other soldiers? Were they also from Camden? How would a person get permission to move bodies from a battlefield burial ground, especially if they were not family members? How were they transported back to Camden?

Maybe this story sparks some bit of interest that will cause someone to dig deeper into this story. It might be good to start with some research into the family of Sallie Oglesby Wood. Maybe someone in the Oglesby or the Wood family would have more information or at least tell us the name of her husband.

We may never know the full details, but until we find more information, the story of these ten unidentified graves at Old Union Cemetery will probably be passed on down to others as it was related to us. If anyone has any information about this, please contact me.

THE ROCK GRAVE AT EBENEZER



At Ebenezer Cemetery in Nevada County, located four miles from Bluff City, there is an unidentified grave surrounded by huge rocks. These type rocks are found in abundance a few miles from the cemetery in the area around Rocky Hill. Gathering these rocks and getting them to the cemetery was quite a job. I counted 56 rocks surrounding this grave and I would guess most of the rocks weigh somewhere around 80 pounds and the larger ones probably weigh over 100 pounds. Imagine the work involved in constructing this rock enclosure for this grave.

Many of us have wondered who might be buried in this grave. By the time I got interested in such things, all the older people had passed away and there was nobody left who knew anything about this grave. The earliest marked grave at this cemetery dates back to 1859, so this grave could be very old. I talked to people in their 80s and they said the grave was there as far back as they could remember.

I always figured it might be the grave of some well-to-do farmer or plantation owner who had slaves to do all the heavy work of getting these rocks to the cemetery, but a well-to-do farmer would probably have a store-bought tombstone. These rocks were probably hauled to the

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cemetery by wagon. How they got the rocks to the wagon is another question. I looked closely at the rocks hoping someone might have carved some initials in one of them, but I couldn't find anything like that. In some cemeteries, initials are chiseled into an appropriately shaped rock of this type and it is used as a headstone.

Then one day I received a message from a descendant of the Ammons family concerning this grave. Like the first story in this article, this cannot be proven, but is the story passed down in that family. According to that story, the grave is that of a young girl who was bitten by a rabid dog. The girl developed rabies and was kept locked in the smokehouse by her parents until she died. Maybe this was before the time of rabies shots which were first used in 1885.

The story goes that Guss and Amy Ammons lived near the sharp curve on Hwy. 299 about where James Nelson's farm is today and were acquainted with the family of the young girl. The family was very superstitious, and after the girl was buried, the family built the rock wall around her grave to keep the spirits from coming back to haunt them. The name of this family has been forgotten and there are no other graves very close to the rock grave to give us a clue.

From what I've heard this is a terrible way to die. In the final stages of rabies, the patient has throat spasms, convulsions, and delirium. It is usually fatal in about three to four weeks. The symptoms can appear anytime from a few days to several months after a bite by a rabid animal. The animal that bites someone is tested for rabies. If the test is positive or the animal cannot be found, it will probably be necessary to take rabies shots. Rabies shots have improved from what they used to be. The "twenty injections in the belly" are no longer used. Treatment today requires a series of about six injections in the arm and hip. Even with the modern medicine, rabies is still a serious disease. It's a good idea to get your pets vaccinated and avoid any strange acting animals.

There is no way to prove if this story is true. As far as I know, there were no written cemetery records for Ebenezer Cemetery until a survey was done about 1950 by Howard Foster and Edward Dunn which included some notes about some of the people buried there. They did not mention the rock grave in their survey, so they probably had no information about this grave.

If you have heard a story concerning this unusual grave, let me know. We will probably never know the complete story of the rock grave at Ebenezer, but so far this is the only explanation I have heard.

SAFETY ALERT

While researching these stories, I came across an incident that happened in 1934 at Stephens Cemetery in Stephens, Arkansas. A lady and her small children had gone to the cemetery to place some flowers at a grave. The children were playing among the tombstones when one of the large marble monuments fell on the nine year-old girl. Her back was crushed and she had several broken ribs. She was transported to a Shreveport hospital and it was reported that she was paralyzed from the waist down. Remember this incident if you are in a cemetery with small children. Many of the older grave markers are unstable and are very heavy. I can see where something like this could happen.

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EVIL EFFECTS OF CHEWING GUM (from the 12-22-1886 issue of The Nevada County Picayune)

A popular craze that is daily growing is that of chewing gum.... The popularity of the gum-chewing habit is due to the fallacy that some health journal promulgated awhile ago that gum chewing preserves the teeth and develops the gums and should be encouraged.

The fact is that gum-chewing stimulates the salivary glands to a degree that is draining and exhaustive, and when the increased secretions of these glands are swallowed, it has an injurious effect on the stomach It excites the glands of the stomach, the liver, the pancreas--in fact the entire glandular system connected with alimentation. It wastes the products of these glands, or diverts them from their proper use, and by so doing injures the system. So you see gum-chewing is not only a ridiculous and a vulgar habit, but it is hurtful to health and should be stopped.

Dr. W. G. Priest in the *Globe-Democrat*



After the article in the last issue regarding Dill's Mill, I received this photo of Wallace Helsel at Dill's Spoke Mill.

Mr. Dill opened the spoke mill in 1918.

Mill Kids Photo in last issue: Adrian Hunter says he is the one on the left and thinks the other boy may be Jerry Tippitt.



Also in the last issue was a request from Sandy who was trying to find more information about her grandfather, Willard Holmes, who lived in Nevada Co. before moving to Arizona. She has found his death record which shows his father to be Oscar Holmes. His mother's name had "Unknown" typed in the death record, but someone had scratched through that and written Nora Ward in as his mother. Sandy also asks if anyone can identify any of the people in this photo dated April, 1944. Possible surnames are Holmes, Gammage, and Waddle. If you have any information, you can contact Sandy at sandyhogan@cox.net

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Old well house at the Irvin place in Nevada County, Arkansas

DRINKING FROM THE DIPPER

By Jerry McKelvy

I can remember stopping by the well on a hot day for a cool drink of water, drawing a bucket of water from the well, and drinking from a metal dipper hanging close to the well. Most every farm had a water well and some had more than one because sometimes a well might go dry in the summer time.

My grandparents had two wells--one close to the house and another across the road. At our house we had a well that was just a few steps from the house with an open shed built over it complete with well pulley, rope, and metal water bucket. The well usually furnished enough water, but in the summertime, we had to ration our water. I can remember taking a bath with only enough water to barely cover the bottom of the bath tub. Sometimes we would have to wait an hour or so to have enough water for someone else to bathe.

Sometime in the late 1960s, a well driller was working in the area and I contracted with him to drill a new well at our house. We chose a spot about thirty feet from the old well and put down a new 30-inch water well lined with concrete well tiles. The old well was only about 25 feet deep and didn't furnish enough water, so he drilled the new well 38 feet deep. He hit a good stream of water and the well usually had about 15 feet of water which was plenty for our use. I think this new well only cost about \$350 dollars at that time. We had electricity at that time, so a pump was used to pump the water from the well. The coming of electricity to the farms soon did away with the well buckets and water dippers.

Our well was on top of a high hill and the water had a very good taste unlike some wells which might have an iron taste or some other odd taste. Some people living nearby had much more trouble finding good water. In some places there is plenty of water at a depth of 25 or 30 feet and in other places, a well 100 feet deep might have only a small amount of water. Sometimes the driller would hit a dry hole. I have heard those old stories about using a forked stick or divining rod to find water, but we just picked out a convenient spot and hoped for the best. Well drillers usually charge a certain amount per foot even if they have a dry hole.

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Having to pay for a deep dry hole and still not have any water would be an expensive proposition, but that was a chance a person had to take when having a well drilled.

Sometimes a water well had to be cleaned out or dug deeper. Bennie Clanahan, an older black gentleman, was the one I remember that did that type work. A heavy wooden spool was set up over the well to lower a person into the well to dig the well deeper. Buckets of dirt or mud were pulled up by another person stationed above ground. Well digging is one job I have never done and I have no desire to learn that trade.

Some of these old water wells from long ago are especially dangerous. Old home places grow up with brush and sometimes the wells are hidden from view. A person could easily fall into one of them, so you must be very careful when walking around an old home place. I have found them covered with a piece of rusty tin covered with leaves. One time I poked a stick around on an old piece of tin and heard a hollow sound. When the tin was pulled back an open well about 60 feet deep was revealed. Working in the woods as I did for many years, I always had a fear of falling into an open well.

Most of the old wells had some sort of structure above ground about waist high to protect the well and most had some type of lid that could be raised to lower the water bucket. The lid kept unwanted things out of the well like blowing leaves or the family pet.

People in the old days didn't give too much thought to drinking from the water dipper. It was usually found hanging somewhere close to the well and everyone in the family and any strangers who happened by could drink from the dipper. I guess it was too much trouble to have a separate drinking glass for each member of the family. There might be a dozen or more family members. Most people today would not want to drink from the same glass or bottle that someone else used. We know diseases can be spread that way, but I guess our ancestors didn't know that or chose to ignore that possibility.

Drinking from a water well might not be as sanitary as our modern water systems, but a dipper of cool well water tasted mighty good on a hot summer day. I wonder what our grandparents would say if they could see us these days buying bottles of drinking water from the store.

Several years ago, the area around Bluff City got "city water" which was pumped from the Camden water system. Residents now have a good supply of treated drinking water even though it's not free like the old water wells. The old water wells are no longer needed, but it's nice to have a second water source just in case there is some problem with the city water system.

Just remember if you go exploring around an old home place to be on the lookout for the old water well and remember that many homes had more than one well. Many of them are just open holes in the ground and can be up to sixty feet deep. They can be dry or contain several feet of water. Exploring around old home places can be fun. You might find an antique bottle, an old plow, or maybe some sort of flowering plant, but you could also find an open water well. Better to be safe than sorry.

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NEWSPAPER TIDBITS FROM NEVADA COUNTY PICAYUNE

December, 1884

---A little five year old, who attends the Prescott Graded School, asked his mother the question, "What is nature?" After stammering over a reply, she finally told him that nature meant the woods, the trees, and the flowers. "I can give you a better answer than that" said the little one. "Nature is what God makes that man cannot make".

January, 1885

---Ice has been quite plentiful of late, and if harvesters have been industrious, there is no reason why this cooling article may not be very cheap next summer.

---A society for the eradication of profanity is the latest moral reform in New York. Such a society in these parts could find plenty material to work on.

---A sad accident occurred in the Artesian neighborhood late Monday evening. Dr. Milam's little son, Charley, was having the chills and Mrs. Milam went to give him a dose of quinine, but through a mistake gave him a heavy dose of morphine. The little fellow went to sleep, and after he had slept some time, his mother went to wake him up. She discovered the mistake she had made. A doctor was sent for, but Charley never awaked anymore.

May, 1886

---The Davis Quilting Frame was patented Jan. 19, 1886, and is now only four months old. The best citizens of Nevada County are buying it. A large comforter or quilt can be made on the sewing machine in from one to three hours by the use of the Davis Quilter, now being demonstrated at the post office in Prescott.

Ham Strada from John Turpin of Louisiana (age 81)

Loaf of sandwich bread - day old bread - with crust removed. Lay the slices out on a cookie sheet, put them in the oven and dry them out on warm. (Save the crust to put in your food processor for bread crumbs ... waste not, want not.)

Now butter the slices, both sides (most likely why the bread needs to be firmer). Lay bread slices in the buttered bottom of a large 9"x13" pan. Cover bread with slices of ham, trimmed of fat and cut to fit the bread. Cover that with sliced Swiss cheese - or shredded.

Cover with a layer of cooked, well drained spinach (Optional). [Or why not broccoli, asparagus, maybe low fat cottage cheese instead of spinach]? Top with a final layer of buttered bread. Beat six eggs together. Add three cups of milk. Pour this mixture over the bread, ham, spinach. Refrigerate overnight.

Bake at 350 - for one hour - or until neatly/nicely browned. Test for doneness the standard way. Sometimes I find that the end of the pan needs a few portions of sliced bread to fill it out. Good place for small pieces of ham and a snack for the cook.

This dish can be cut into serving sections and frozen. John says: "I use a spiral cut ham because they are almost 100% lean. Expensive, but you get a lot and ham freezes well for up to six months."