

Jerry McKeiv's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Vol. 11 – No. 8

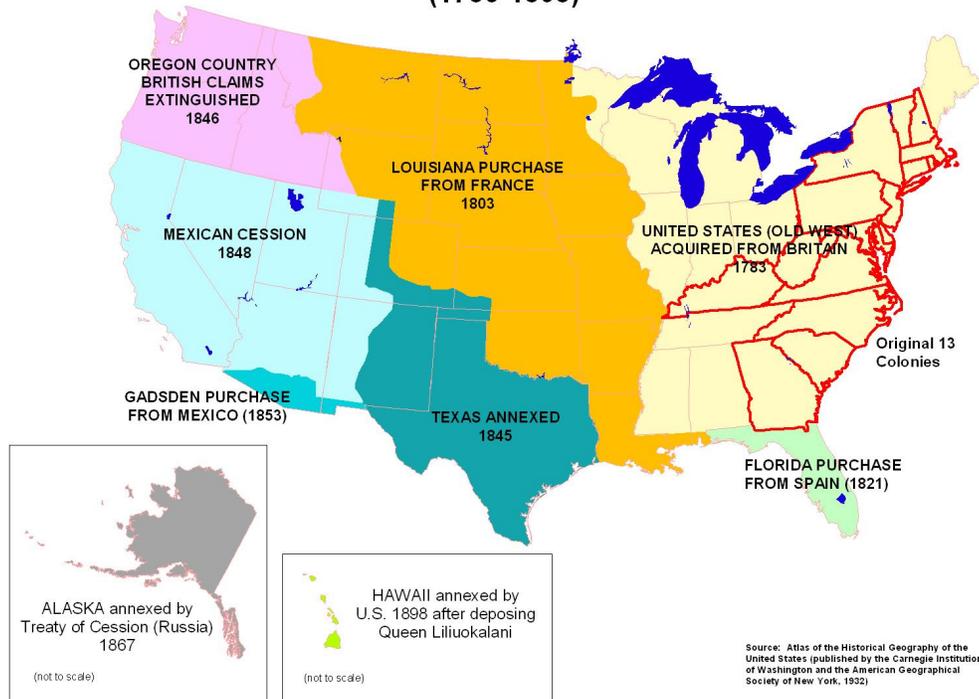
sandman43@att.net

August, 2012

HOW OUR COUNTRY DEVELOPED

I thought in this issue I would discuss how this country was settled or the westward migration of settlers. This is a very condensed version (just a refresher of some of the American history lessons we may have forgotten).

**U.S. TERRITORIAL ACQUISITIONS
(1783-1898)**



As you know, our country started with 13 colonies along the eastern seaboard stretching from Georgia on the south all the way to the present state of Maine. These were colonies belonging to Great Britain. Our Revolutionary War began in 1775 and the colonies declared their independence from Great Britain on July 4, 1776.

A treaty was signed with Great Britain in 1783 formally recognizing the independence of the colonies. A constitution was drawn up for the new country. Delaware became the first state in 1787, soon followed by the other twelve of the original thirteen colonies. George Washington took the oath of office in 1789 as the first president of the United States to serve under the Constitution. The western boundary of these 13 states at that time extended all the way to the Mississippi River. Later other states were carved out of this large territory. The area west of the Mississippi River was claimed by Spain, France, and Great Britain in 1800.

In 1803, an attempt was made to purchase New Orleans from France to give the U. S. control of

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the mouth of the Mississippi River and access to the Gulf of Mexico. Napoleon, the ruler of France at the time, needed money so he offered to sell the whole Louisiana Territory, a large area stretching all the way to Canada (see map). A deal was reached by which the United States purchased the whole territory for \$15 million dollars or about three cents per acre. This was known as the Louisiana Purchase and included what is now the state of Arkansas. This purchase just about doubled the size of the United States. The explorers, Lewis and Clark, were sent out in 1804 to explore this new territory. This exploration took about two years. They went all the way to the Pacific Ocean and returned, keeping good records of what they found.

The next land deal was the Florida Purchase in 1821 from Spain as a cost of \$5 million dollars. Texas was annexed in 1845 following the war for Texas Independence (Battle of the Alamo, etc.). Texas was admitted to the union as a state in 1845.

Soon after this, Britain gave up her claims to the Oregon Territory (shown in pink on the map). The United States territory now extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific. A large area in the southwest was still controlled by Mexico (colored light blue on the map).

This area to the southwest included California. Following the Mexican War (1846-1848), this area was ceded to the United States under terms of the treaty. In 1853, the U. S. purchased a small strip of land from Mexico which included parts of the present states of Arizona and New Mexico. This was known as the Gadsden Purchase.

The U. S. purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867 at a cost of \$7 million dollars and the Hawaiian Islands were added in 1898.

This is a very simplified timeline of how this country developed from the original thirteen colonies to the country we know today. This westward expansion involved huge land deals with other countries and even fighting wars. Some thought that it was the “manifest destiny” of the United States to acquire all this land from the Atlantic to the Pacific--in other words, they believed God had ordained that the United States should possess this land.

Settlers Moving West

As more and more land was added, the government encouraged settlers to move into this new land and develop it. People went west for many reasons--some in search of better farming land, some hoping to get rich after gold was discovered in California in 1848, and others just for the adventure of it. At the same time some people were moving west, others were arriving from Europe. Some of these immigrants also moved west after arriving in this country. Laws such as the Homestead Act of 1862 allowed settlers to claim up to 160 acres of land at a cheap price if they agreed to live on the land for five years and improve it. Some land was granted to veterans of the War of 1812.

Roads were gradually developed in the new land. They were really just wagon trails at first and usually followed the easiest routes. One of the most famous early roads was the Wilderness Road developed by Daniel Boone in the area of the Appalachian Mountains taking folks into places like Tennessee and Kentucky. Another famous road was the Natchez Trace from

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Nashville, Tennessee southwest to Natchez, Mississippi. Other roads or trails were developed as people began to move west.

The Mississippi River presented quite a problem for these early settlers. Steamboats were in operation on the river as early as 1820 and some of the settlers may have come to the area aboard the steamboats to settlements along the river where they then purchased wagons and supplies for their journey further west. Many traveled west by wagons and had to figure out how to cross the rivers. If a river happened to be very shallow, the wagons might cross by fording. Sometimes they constructed a flat boat called a scow which carried the wagons across. In some places, ferries were in operation to carry the wagons across the rivers. The animals had to swim across the smaller rivers. Whichever method was used, the rivers were major obstacles to these early settlers. The largest river to cross was the Mississippi.

I did a little research about bridges across the Mississippi River. The first bridge was built in 1855 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Eads Bridge in St. Louis was the first railroad bridge opened in 1874. Some thought the bridge would not hold up under the weight of a locomotive, so an elephant was led across at first. It was thought that elephants instinctively would not set foot on an unsafe structure. The elephant crossed with no problem and the locomotives soon followed.

The river gets wider the further south you go, so most of the early bridges were in the northern states. The first bridge on the lower Mississippi was the Great Bridge (a railroad bridge) at Memphis which opened in 1892. Many of the highway bridges across the Mississippi were constructed in the 1920s and 1930s. Today there are 221 bridges across the Mississippi. I assume this includes both highway bridges and railroad bridges.

By the time of the Civil War (1861-1865), several states had been added west of the Mississippi and there were many small settlements in that area with a primitive road system connecting these settlements. Arkansas became a state in 1836. Civil War soldiers had crude maps to help them find their way around the countryside. Some of these maps still exist and many of the early roads are identified by name on these maps.

I've often wondered how my ancestors came to Arkansas from Georgia and the Carolinas. I wish I knew the exact route they took and where they crossed the Mississippi River. Many settlers came to Arkansas sometime around 1850. There were only a few towns in south Arkansas at that time. Camden (first called Ecore Fabre) was a trading center for a large area. Another old settlement was at Washington, Arkansas on the trail leading to Texas. The Camden-Washington road which passed through what is now Nevada County was one of the major travel routes.

Wagon Trains

When I think of wagon trains, I think of the old western TV shows. These were about the wagon trains going west across the uncivilized Great Plains. They usually assembled at places like St. Louis or St. Joseph, Missouri and headed west to California. It was a long, hard trip and much planning was needed. They had to consider the time of the year, the supply of water along the route, and what type weather they might encounter.

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Many of our ancestors who settled in Arkansas also traveled in wagons. The area they traveled across was a little more civilized with better roads than the western wagon trains encountered and the trip was not quite as long. It still took lot of courage for a family to decide to move a long distance across the country to settle a new land. I'm sure many of them questioned their decision when things got rough and maybe wished they had not started the trip.

The wagons used by the early settlers were sometimes called Conestoga wagons. That name comes from an area in Pennsylvania where they were first used. The wagons were usually pulled by a team of four horses, mules, or oxen. They moved about two miles per hour and usually covered ten to fifteen miles per day. Each wagon could carry about 2,000 pounds, so families usually only carried the basic necessities with maybe a few very small sentimental objects. The wagons were covered by canvas supported by wooden hoops. This protected the occupants from the elements and provided a little privacy. Pots and pans were sometimes hung from the wooden hoops making noise when the wagon was moving. Every bit of space in the wagon was utilized with water barrels attached to the sides.

Most large wagon trains had a wagon master who was the "boss" during the trip. His main goal was getting the wagons to their destination safely. Some had scouts who rode ahead to check for any type of problems. The wagon masters and scouts knew where there was fresh water and also knew the best places to cross streams. Most of the people who were able walked alongside the wagons as they moved. A cow or two might be tied to the rear of the wagon. At night, the wagons usually formed a circle for protection in case of an Indian attack. Sometimes the men would go hunting for some type of wild game to use for food. After eating the evening meal, the people would visit, play music and dance, tell stories, or try to get some rest, knowing the next day would be another hard day of traveling.

The wagon masters had to deal with any type of problem that might come up during the trip. There might be some sort of dispute between two members of the wagon train. There might be some sort of sickness to deal with. Babies were born during the trip and some people died and had to be buried along the way. The 2,000 mile trip from Missouri to California would take about five or six months.

There were many dangers--fierce animals, Indians, storms, disease, robbers, coyotes killing the stock, grass fires on the prairie, runaway oxen, a broken wheel or axle, and sometimes lightning would hit a wagon as they crossed the open areas.

The first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869. This provided another way for settlers to travel to the western part of the country.

The Indians

Indians, also called Native Americans, were scattered all over the United States. Even some of the early settlers in the East had to deal with them. We've all heard the stories about the Indians teaching the early settlers how to grow crops, etc.

Many of the Indians did not like the white settlers moving into their lands and who could blame

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them? Some tribes were friendlier than others. Some Indians traded with the settlers and even assisted them at times. As more and more white settlers moved west, efforts were made to move the Indians to reservations just to get them "out of the way". In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act which called for the relocation of Indians in the southeastern part of the United States to areas further west. Oklahoma was designated as Indian Territory, and many of the eastern tribes were moved there on what is known as "The Trail of Tears". It is a sad chapter in our nation's history with many deaths along the way. The government provided Indian agents to oversee the reservations. Some were good and some were bad.

The western Indian tribes such as the Apache and the Sioux depended on the buffalo for their existence. The white men began to kill off the buffalo herd and this resulted in Indian attacks on the wagon trains moving west. Forts were built and the U. S. Cavalry tried to bring the Indians under control and protect the settlers as they moved west. We are all familiar with Gen. Custer and the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876 and the Massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. One of the last hold-outs was the Apache chief, Geronimo, who finally surrendered in 1886. He was told that after a period of imprisonment in Florida, he would be allowed to return to his homeland in Arizona, but this never happened.

I think one of the main concerns of the early settlers moving west across the Great Plains was being attacked by Indians. A slow-moving wagon train offered little protection against an Indian attack. Each man was concerned about protecting his family. Many lives were lost on both sides during these Indian attacks. After many years, treaties were made with the Indian tribes by which they agreed to give up their lands and agreed to be moved to reservations where they would be fed and clothed by the U. S. government. I am not acquainted with any Native Americans, so I don't know if they still hold any type of grudge against the white men who invaded the country of their ancestors. Oklahoma, known in earlier times as "the Nation", did not become a state until 1912. The Indian Citizenship Act was passed in 1924 which granted citizenship to any Indians living in the United States.

Here are some interesting facts regarding Indians. According to the 2010 census, there are 5.2 million Native Americans and Alaska Natives in the U. S. making up 1.7% of the population. The states with the most Native Americans are California, Oklahoma, and Arizona. There are 324 Indian reservations and 565 different Indian tribes recognized by the federal government.

What to Take on a Wagon Train

This list was extracted from pages 499-500 of the Wayne Co., Kentucky Marriage and Vital Records, Vol. 2. This is what each person was allowed to take in the early wagon train migrations (c. 1845).

Per Person:

150 lbs. flour or hard bread	25 lbs. sugar
25 lbs. bacon	1/2 bushel dried peas
10 lbs. rice	1/2 bushel dried fruit
15 lbs. coffee	2 lbs. soleratus (baking soda)
2 lbs. tea	10 lbs. salt

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1/2 bushel corn
small keg of vinegar
pepper

Miscellaneous per family

rifle, ball, powder
8 to 10 gallon keg for water
1 axe
1 hatchet
1 spade
2 or 3 augers
1 hand saw
1 whip or crosscut saw
1 plow mold
at least two ropes
mallet for driving picket pins
matches carried in corked bottle

Clothing per person

Men--2 wool shirts, 2 wool undershirts
Women--2 wool dresses
Both--2 pr. drawers, 4 pr. wool socks, 2 pr. cotton socks, 4 colored handkerchiefs, 1 pr. boots and shoes, poncho, brimmed hat

Sewing supplies placed in buckskin or stout coth bag

Stout lines thread, large needles, thimble, bit of bee's wax, a few buttons, buckskin for patching, paper of pins

Personal Items

1 comb and brush, 2 toothbrushes, 1 lb. castile soap, 1 belt knife, 1 flint stone per man

Cooking

baking pan used for baking and roasting coffee, mess pan (wrought iron or tin), 2 churns (one for sweet, one for sour milk), 1 coffee pot, tin cup with handle, 1 tin plate, knives, 1 coffee mill, forks, spoons, 1 camp kettle, fry pan, wooden bucket for water

Bedding per person

1 canvas, 2 blankets, 1 pillow, 1 tent per family

Medical Supplies

iron rust, rum and cognac (both for dysentery), calomel, quinine for ague, Epsom salts for fever, castor oil capsules

I could not find what iron rust was used for medically. Possibly it was thought to build up the blood. I have seen ads for early medicines called iron bitters. Rum and cognac were types of liquor and dysentery is an intestinal disorder sometimes called the flux. Calomel

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was a medical powder used as a laxative and ague was a malarial fever with chills. Castor oil was a laxative, but I didn't know it came in capsule form. The early settlers made use of many medicinal herbs and home remedies. They pretty much had to doctor themselves and hope and pray they stayed healthy for the trip. Many died from diseases due to the primitive medical care and lack of doctors.

This is just a brief history of how our country developed and how the early settlers migrated westward. If you are interested in knowing how your ancestors migrated across the country, you must do a lot of research. You may not find all the answers, but you might be able to at least learn where they were living when the census was taken every ten years or from other documents recorded at the various court houses. It's like a giant puzzle. You just have to find the missing pieces to get a better understanding of your family history.

SNAKES

I suppose there are some people who like snakes, but I'm not one of them. I don't get hysterical when I see one, but I do respect them, especially the poisonous varieties. Here in Arkansas we have six species of poisonous snakes—cottonmouth moccasins, copperheads, timber rattlesnakes, western diamondback rattlesnake, pygmy rattlesnake (ground rattler), and coral snakes.

In my opinion, the cottonmouth water moccasin is the most aggressive snake. I think they would go out of their way to bite someone. They especially like wet areas, so it pays to be very careful anytime you are near water. Copperheads are usually found around trash piles, wood piles, under old lumber, or in old sheds. At one time we called them rattlesnake pilots. Rattlesnakes are usually found in the wooded areas especially in river bottoms and on the edges of creek bottoms. They can be anywhere, but usually don't bother anyone unless you get too close and then they usually sound a warning before striking. I was on a field trip one time in Mississippi with a group of about 30 people. The whole group walked within three feet of a rattlesnake before someone saw it and it never rattled. The western diamondback rattlesnake is usually found in the extreme west or northwest parts of Arkansas. The ones we see in our part of the state are timber rattlers and ground rattlers.

Coral snakes are pretty rare, usually found in sandy land. They are very colorful with red, yellow, and black bands. There is a non-poisonous snake that resembles the coral snake, but the bands are in a different position. An old saying is: "Red on black in good for Jack, but red on yellow will kill a fellow". The trouble is I sometimes forget how the rhyme goes. I don't think I've ever encountered a coral snake, but I would be suspicious of any I saw that had red, black, and yellow bands.

Rattlesnakes can get very large, so they can be intimidating. I worked in the forestry business for thirty one and a half years and I only came across five or six rattlesnakes in that time. I almost stepped on one of them and it was five and a half feet long and had just swallowed a squirrel. It did sound its rattle and was ready to strike. I was very lucky I didn't get bit, and needless to say, I didn't get much work accomplished the rest of the day. From

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then on, that tract of land became known as “the rattlesnake tract”. We soon learned which areas were more likely to be inhabited by rattlesnakes and tried to be more careful when working in those areas. My favorite way to encounter a rattlesnake is to see it on the road while I’m driving.

We were given snake leggings to wear while working in the woods. They gave us a little feeling of security, sort of like a policeman wearing a bulletproof vest. You might get bit by a snake, but supposedly the leggings would keep the snake from injecting the venom. In my 31 plus years of forestry work, I don’t remember any employee being bitten by a snake. When I first started to work, we were given snake bite kits to carry with us. It included a sharp scalpel-like instrument with the instructions that we should cut an X over the bite and suck out the poison with the plastic suction cup included in the kit. A year or two later, we were told to throw those snake bite kits away. The experts said cutting on the bite was likely to result in a severe infection that would be worse than the snake bite. They recommended to immediately go to a hospital for treatment and to stay calm. Yea, right! Try to stay calm after being bitten by a poisonous snake when you are maybe a half mile or more from your truck and maybe an hour away from the nearest hospital. The faster your heart beats, the faster the poison spreads throughout your body. I think it would be impossible to keep your heart from beating fast after being bitten, especially if you had to walk a long distance to your truck, and much of the time we were working alone with no way to call for help especially in the early days of my career. Before I retired, we had portable radios and even cell phones to carry with us but sometimes they didn’t work due to weak signals.

I know of several people who have been bitten by copperheads. My brother was once bitten on his toe while walking in one of our sheds barefoot. He thought he had stepped on a piece of glass. There was one small cut on his toe. He showed us where he was standing which was in front of an old cabinet. We moved the cabinet and there was a big copperhead. We rushed him to the hospital in Prescott. They kept him overnight, but he never got sick. Evidently, the snake didn’t inject any venom.

A cousin once got bit by a copperhead and his leg swelled up almost twice as big as his other leg. A good snake bite (if there is such a thing) can cause a lot of pain and swelling and I had rather not experience it.

The most common snakes we usually encounter are so-called “black snakes” which includes the chicken snake and coach whip. These can also get quite large. Chicken snakes like to get in hen’s nests to swallow the eggs. We learned to check a nest carefully before sticking our hands in to gather the eggs. They also sometimes climb up bushes to get to the bird nests.

One experience I remember involved a large chicken snake in our smoke house. It tried to get away by crawling in a hole next to the floor of the shed. Someone grabbed hold of the snake with a tow sack and tried to pull it out of the hole. We learned that it is almost impossible to do that. That episode ended when someone got the 22 rifle and fired a shot into the snake and we were able to pull it out of the hole. Best I remember, it was five or six feet long.

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We have a species of poisonous snake we call a ground rattler, sometimes called a pygmy rattlesnake. These don't get too large and look pretty cute as far as snakes go. They can be found in grassy areas or maybe in flower beds. Occasionally, one gets into a house if it can find an opening large enough. I remember one time one of these got into our office at work and caused quite a commotion especially among the secretaries.

There are other species of non-poisonous snakes like the garter snake, the spreading adder (hog-nose snake), and the king snake. We always tried to protect the king snakes because they sometimes kill poisonous snakes.

Well, of all God's creatures, I would have to say that snakes are one of my least favorites, mainly because of the fact some are poisonous. I think skunks would be a close second on my list of least favorite creatures.

Statistically speaking, there are very few deaths from snake bites. They say more people die from wasp stings than snake bites, but it pays to be careful and respect them. I did read in the paper last week about a person in Missouri who died from a copperhead bite. One web site says only about one in 500 poisonous bites will cause death and deaths in the United States from snake bite rarely exceeds 10 per year.

Have you ever been bitten by a snake? I would love to hear your story.

CONFEDERATE VETERANS OF NEVADA COUNTY IN 1925 (from the 7-16-1925 issue of *The Nevada County Picayune*)

The Bank of Prescott has agreed to present as a token of its appreciation of the sacrifices, suffering, and service of each of the survivors of the Confederate Soldiers who now reside in Nevada County, one of the Stone Mountain Half Dollar Coins minted by the United States Government under a special act of Congress as a memorial to the valour of the soldiers of the South. As far as we are able to determine, the names of the veterans of this county are as follows:

C. M. Andrews	D. P. Hazzard	H. C. Sampson
P. E. Bryson	W. A. Hatley	B. F. Steele
W. P. Buchanan	J. M. Holland	O. R. Sayles
C. M. Buchanan	H. S. McMillian	W. A. Thomasson
Sam Cantley	J. K. Munn	J. K. Waddle
W. M. Carruthers	A. Norman	J. G. Westmoreland
T. P. Callicott	J. F. Odom	J. W. Ward
M. H. Caudle	J. H. Pinkerton	George Ware
James M. Gage	James K. Prescott	Jas. M. Wells
John W. Gann	L. S. Snead	H. W. White
J. A. Gleghorn	G. A. Sudsbury	W. T. Williamson
G. M. Franks	Hon. W. N. Sutton	J. T. Young

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Sandy says some places still need more rain

RAINFALL RECORD FOR 2012

Jan. ---- 3.3	Apr. --- 3.8
Feb.---- 4.1	May --- none
Mar.--- 10.0	June--- 2.0

Total first half of 2012 ---- 23.2 inches
Normal yearly rainfall in AR --- 49.19 inches
Driest year on record in AR – 1963 (32.45 inches)

RESULTS OF ELECTION POLL

I was hoping for more participation in my little election poll. I hope this doesn't mean that some of you are thinking about not voting. Maybe you are just waiting until closer to the election to start thinking about it. Maybe we'll have another poll in late October after we know the vice presidential candidates, have heard some of the debates, and been subjected to the endless campaign ads.

I received a total of 53 votes and here are the results.

Barak Obama-- 4 votes
Mitt Romney-- 49 votes
Undecided -- none

These votes came from several states (Arkansas, Texas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, and maybe others). I sense a great feeling of dissatisfaction and frustration among the readers of *The Sandyland Chronicle* about the way the country is heading. Some of you expressed strong feelings about the current president and his policies. Some were not too pleased with Mitt Romney, but felt he was the better choice of the two.

For your information, Arkansas held a Democratic primary in May. There were two candidates on the ballot for president—Barak Obama and John Wolfe, an unknown attorney from Tennessee. In Nevada County, John Wolfe received 64% of the vote and Obama got 36%.

This election is predicted to be another close one. Please stay informed and cast your vote in November.

From *The Nevada News* – April 22, 1909

A little girl from Hope whose grandfather was a Methodist minister recently attended church and at the close of service, the grandfather was called on to pray. During the prayer, a devout member of the congregation would occasionally offer a fervent “Amen”. The little girl looked worried and finally said in a voice loud enough to be heard over the congregation said, “Mama, why don't that man quit butting in when Grandpa's praying?”

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“THE WEDDIN’ DRESS” and Maureen Henry

Some Reflections by Warren U. Ober

I was fascinated to read, in Jerry McKelvy’s note accompanying Demma Rae Oldham’s “The Weddin’ Dress,” that Maureen Henry of Bluff City had copied the story into her school composition book in 1932. It seems that Maureen, for whatever reason, did not finish transcribing the story, which as it stands appears to be without a conclusion. I doubt that the author, Demma Rae Oldham, would have cut off her readers so abruptly. Her story as published, I think, must have concluded with a wedding—with all problems solved for newlyweds, parents, relatives, and everybody else—and a classic happy ending. Jerry speculates that Maureen might have copied down the story because the character “Jim Henry” would have reminded Maureen of her uncle Jim, and I think Jerry is on the right track. I suspect a further reason why it seemed worth copying to her was that the author makes it clear on the next to the last page of Maureen’s transcript that the story takes place in Arkansas, even though I’m not aware of a “Mount Lebanon” or a “Rock Hill” in Arkansas. Unfortunately, Demma Rae Oldham couldn’t resist turning Arkansas speech into something like the Dogpatch dialect of Al Capp’s soon-to-be-popular “funny paper” strip “Li’l Abner.” I’m guessing that the story would not have appeared in a mainstream magazine like *Saturday Evening Post* or *Ladies’ Home Journal* but in a publication like *Grit: America’s Family Newspaper*, a weekly with a separate fiction section, which was a popular read in Bluff City at the time. I know because a few years later I delivered *Grit* every week to my faithful Bluff City subscribers.

“The Weddin’ Dress,” largely because of Maureen herself, has brought back nostalgic memories associated with my boyhood in Bluff City. I came to know Maureen a few years after she copied the story into her notebook, when my parents, A. C. (Andy) Ober and Delilah Upton Ober, my two siblings, Mesilla Jean (Miller) and Kenneth, and I became neighbors of the Henrys: Mr. Anthem, Mrs. (“Miz”) Mollie, and their daughters Blanche and Maureen. Maureen’s name appears in the Bluff City cemetery records, where, as the wife of my cousin “Bill” Nichols, she is listed as “Margarett Maurine H. Nichols.” According to those records she was born July 10, 1913, and died September 8, 1951. Maureen Henry’s life, it always seemed to me, was far too short.

I really did appreciate the fact that Maureen Henry was one of the few “big girls” who always seemed to have time for the “little kids,” and she and Bill Nichols would once in a while, before they were married, take me along when they went in search of blackberries, somewhere (as I vaguely recall) along the road from the Bluff out toward Gum Grove. They always seemed to know where the blackberries hadn’t already been picked over. To this day blackberry jelly, when I’m fortunate enough to find it, is my favorite breakfast treat. I always looked forward to the times when my mother would go for a visit to Mrs. Mollie’s and take along Mesilla, Kenneth, and me. I could count on Mrs. Mollie to say to Maureen or Blanche, “Get Warren Upton a biscuit and butter and some blackberry jelly.”

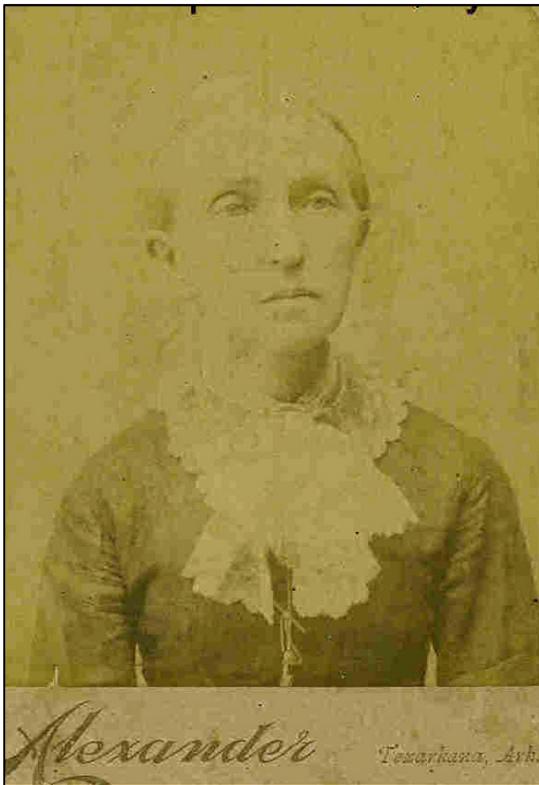
My father and Mr. Anthem Henry were close friends and hunting companions. They both had fine coon-and-possum dogs and often enjoyed (of all things!) hunting at night, sometimes accompanied by Bill Nichols. Mesilla loved to visit at Mrs. Mollie’s for hours and

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observe her at work as the telephone operator facilitating contact with the outside world for the 25 or so (?) local party-line subscribers in the Bluff City vicinity. I can remember Mesilla coming home afterward to “play like” being a phone operator and repeating over and over again Mrs. Mollie’s directions and comments to the local party-line subscribers and telephone operators and customers elsewhere.

Mesilla reminds me that Mrs. Mollie had the cleanest yard in all of Bluff City--nothing but white sand, with not one weed or sprig of grass. (I’ve heard it said that the custom of keeping the yard clear of grass and weeds resulted from the necessity in pioneer days to be on the lookout for poisonous snakes.) Mesilla further recalls that Blanche and Maureen regularly swept the yard with 4- or 5-foot-long brush brooms consisting of small dried tree limbs tied together with rag strips. I’m sorry to say I have no idea what sort of trees or bushes supplied these yard brooms. Mrs. Mollie’s spotless front yard was graced with two magnificent cape jessamine shrubs with large, fragrant blossoms.

Thanks to Jerry’s sharing it with us, Maureen Henry’s curious partial transcription of this little short story has conjured up for me and Mesilla treasured memories of old Bluff City.



We had a pretty good tomato crop this year. This one weighed almost two pounds.

Unidentified lady--photo taken at a studio in Texarkana. Remember to label your pictures. This person may be connected in some way to Nevada County since the picture was found with other family pictures belonging to Mrs. Mollie Henry of Bluff City.