

*Jerry McKelvy's*  
**SANDYLAND CHRONICLE**

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**A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF HOWARD CORNISH FOSTER  
(PART TWO)**



**Howard Cornish Foster as a young man.  
(Pictured at left)**

**SCHOOL DAYS**

My school days were few. The total would not exceed eighteen (18) months. Started in 1902 when nine years old. Learned the alphabet the first day. My textbook was "Webster's Blueback Spelling Book". The school was for a period of either 2 ½ or three months. The teacher was Ealy Carter, and he appeared to be about twenty five years old. This was the last time he taught at that school, but he had taught there before. At the start I did not want to go, but got over my dislike for school after a few weeks, after which I enjoyed it and wanted to continue. About the third day I tried to avoid going by purposely falling down and spilling my lunch just outside the yard gate, but the folks fixed

another for me, and I had to go anyway. It was a bitter defeat for me, and I felt they were giving me a raw deal. At the end of two weeks, Friday afternoon was turned over to having a spelling match. Some of the neighborhood people had come to hear it. I remember Captain Thompson saying it would not be fair to give hard words to the small ones who had not attended school before. He said they should be given simple words, such as "hat". I had learned to spell a few words, but not "hat" and I thought he had a very poor conception of what was easy. By and bye it got under way, and the teacher turned it over to a large girl, Fanny Thompson to give the words. By the time a word came to me it was the word "squash". We had two trials at a word before it was passed on. I said S U C H then called the word squash, feeling it couldn't be wrong, for the sound seemed just right to me. She looked grave, shook her head, and said "No that's not right: try again". My confidence was gone, I felt a burning sensation all over, and with misgivings as to whether it was wrong in the book or not, I said S \_ \_ \_ but cannot here record the finish, for everyone started laughing, I started blushing, and thought they all had it in for me—they had not laughed at any of the others who missed their words. Within half a minute it occurred to me what had happened, and then I was mortified if anyone ever was.

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The teacher for my second school was Molly Robbins, an elderly lady. I was going places now, for in addition to my "Blue Back Speller", had started in "McGuffey's First Reader", and was learning to read by pausing between words. Even at that time we had to memorize poems, and sometimes say one on "Speech Day" at school. I sometimes now think that if we could hear some boy or girl say a poem, with the wits scared out of them, as they were us back then, that it would to some extent compensate for the bore of listening to someone read a poem in the dry manner in which 100% plus of all those who try it now, do it.

During this school I went through the first reader twice, and about half way thru (sic) the second reader. Could read in the third reader some, but not passed to it until the next school. In this district one half of the school funds went to the Negroes for their schools, so there was only enough to pay for three months of school each year. At the end of my second year we moved eight miles to the N. W. , into Union Township where there was not one Negro, and here there was five to six months of school each year. But three months in summer and three in winter was the way it was conducted, so as to give the least interference to farm work.

At the time I started attending school in Union Township, I had learned to like school real well. We did have a fine group here, and had some excellent teachers too. One was Lottie Gladden, another, Warren Starnes who was an excellent teacher in mathematics. Then another was Joe Meador, an unsurpassed teacher for grammar. I have heard him in a number of public debates, and he surpassed any other orator that I ever heard. He lost the decision in but one debate in his life, altho (sic) he had many with university professors and others. Another excellent teacher we had was Claude Hirst, a graduate of the University at Fayetteville, Ark. Several others taught here during my school days but to some of the schools I did not go and cannot remember them all.

It was during this period that I contracted malaria fever and had plenty of grief, chills, ague, enlarged spleen, torpid liver, and what not. I had two and one half miles to go to get to school. It was called Gum Grove Schoolhouse.

Some of the students with whom I attended at Gum Grove in Union Township, Nevada County, Arkansas, who were about my age or older were: Will Griffith—Hildre Griffith—Lummy Johnson—Jenkins Hall—Gilly Hall—Carey Johnson—Ev Parker—Linus Parker—John Will Parker—Sid Parker—Gee McKelvy—Lee McKelvy—Ada McKelvy—Hattie McKelvy--Will Hardwick—Stella Hardwick—Johnnie Hardwick—Raymond Green—Henry Green—Frank Moody—Terry Moody—Jesse Bradley—Julious Bradley—John Bradley—Seeley Bradley—Annie Bradley—Rosie Bradley—Willie Ledbetter—Clinton Pierce—Nettie Pierce—Thurman McDonald—Hugh Henry—Denver Henry—Jabe Crowell—Jack Crowell—Carl Beaver-- Brackett Beaver—William Sarrett—Jim Otwell—John Otwell—Luther Otwell—Stella Otwell—Susie Otwell—Emma Otwell—Emma Nelson—Summerfield Nelson—Warren Fairchild—and there were several I cannot recall including two Ledbetter girls, and there was Annie Parker and another Parker girl, etc.

Of those about my age or younger were: Braddy Parker—Ezra Sarrett—Homer Hardwick—Garland Hardwick—Viola Bradley—Bessie Beaver and her sister—Gladys Henry--Acsy Johnson—

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Emmett Johnson—Eldre Johnson—Mabel Johnson—Vivian Johnson—Bessie Griffith—Lucy Griffith—Talmadge Griffith—Clarence Dunn—Obie Johnson—Cleveland Johnson—three Fairchild girls—Esther McKelvy—Jim Nelson—Medie Nelson—Sexton Moore—Willie Moore—Mattie Moore, older than I-- several others I cannot recall.

Here I studied during the twelve months in all that I attended this school: McGuffey's Third Reader, Lee's Primary U. S. History, Lee's Advanced History, Ray's Primary Arithmetic, Ray's Elementary Arithmetic, Ray's New Higher Arithmetic, Ray's Advanced Arithmetic, Reed and Kellogg's Primary Grammar, Reed and Kellogg's Advanced Grammar, Steele's Physiology, Longfellow's "Evangeline", McGuffey's Eclectic Spelling Book, Primary Geography, Advanced Geography, Milne's Elements of Algebra, Penmanship.

Jesse Bradley and I would have a fight nearly every school. Our favorite baseball games were "Scrub" and "Townball". We sometimes played "Bullpen", "Blackman", "Anthony Over", "Pop the Whip", "King Base", etc. and boxing, jumping, foot races, "Hot Ball" and what have you.

On Friday afternoons there would generally be a spelling match, a ciphering match, a geography match, or speeches or debating; but more spelling matches than anything else. During one school we had a Mr. Wilson for a teacher, Friday afternoons were devoted to literary society work.

Eldre Johnson was a dirty cuss, often in trouble. Some of the boys would punch holes in the top of their lard buckets, such as we all used to carry our dinner in. These holes were for ventilation, but Eldre Johnson one day was caught spitting on the lids and then use his heel to rub it thru (sic) the holes.

We were always on alert to discover any boys that hated one another, and always lent a willing hand to help arrange a fight. It was fairly easy to stir up a fight between Kenneth Otwell and Eldre Johnson, or Eldre Johnson and Homer Hardwick. Braddy Parker and Kenneth Otwell could also be agged (sic) to fight. One day two of the grown boys almost mixed. Linus Parker almost broke Lum Johnson's leg with a large solid rubber ball, and it created more excitement for us than a threatened war.

Cleveland Johnson and Ezra Sarrett were the two Liziest (sic) boys; Garland Hardwick was the worst to always be running to tell the teacher what happened. Acsy Johnson and Will Hardwick were the worst pests to try to make wise cracks. Emmett Johnson, while one of the smallest, was perhaps the biggest cusser; and Kenneth Otwell, I believe was the worst bragger. Eldre Johnson was thought by some to be the biggest liar. Will Hardwick and Warren Fairchild, from children's points of view, the most cowardly. Perhaps they were not.

As for the numbskulls of Gum Grove, there was Obie Johnson who could not learn the letter B until he had spent three weeks studying it. Braddy Parker was almost as bad. Vivian Johnson was the ugliest girl in school; and she perhaps was also the meanest. Denver Henry seemed to be the most brilliant of the older girls, and was as well behaved as any could be. Hugh Henry, I

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think, was the most brilliant boy. He was a M. D. within four years after leaving this ungraded district school; an attainment which evidently took both brains and effort.

For the most part, we carried our drinking water from a spring, which to reach, we had to go down a steep hill to the north of where the schoolhouse stood. Once a well was drilled near the school, but it was always filling in with sand, so that it was never satisfactory. The nearest residence to the school was that of Robert Henry, it being within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile.

We all went barefooted in summer until we would reach the age of about sixteen to seventeen. Since I was forced to leave school at fourteen, I never knew what it meant to wear shoes except when the weather was cold.

Our spelling book contained 248 lessons. Some of them were rather difficult. Following are a few from various lessons; From Lesson 43:—sphinx-- fatigue-- police-- valise-- tinder-- verdigris-- quarantine-- pivot-- intrigue-- pinafore—fascia, etc. From Lesson 106: --emigrant--papacy-- heraldry--microcosm--sedulous--pedantry--querulous--microscope--flagrancy--heretic. From Lesson 136:--hoofs--scarfs--volcanoes--halos--mosquitoes--juntas--mottoes--bravadoes--echoes--mementoes--siroccos. From Lesson 166:--circumjacent--disembarrass--epilepsy--eclogue--effuse--epiglottis--circumference--obliquely--dissever. From Lesson 178:--hymeneal--elegiac--empyrean--vendue--tenable--allegro--aperient--terrapin--stereotype--egotism--treble. From Lesson 198:--mellifluous--panegyric--spermacetti--chirurgery--repertory--ceramic--centuple--retrocede--decretory. Taken from other lesson at random:--jocose--lackadaisical--eying--fleche--frere--finale--isochronous--xiphophyllous--coruscation--syzygy--malfeasance--terpsichorean--metempsychosis--buhstone--proboscis--debonair--chevaux-de-frise.

Some of our problems in the examples we had in arithmetic were quite difficult for us, as we had not had geometry or algebra. Here is one from page 408, Ray's Higher Arithmetic: "A tin vessel, having a circular mouth 9 inches in diameter, a bottom  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter, and a depth of 10 inches, is  $\frac{1}{4}$  part full of water: What is the diameter of a ball which can be put in and just covered by water? The answer is 6.1967 inches.

Redway and Hinman's Advanced Geography was plenty difficult to master. Reed and Kellogg's Grammar, to me, was worst of all, because there was so much diagramming to do. Lee's School History was as zealous in giving the Confederate view of matters, as are most other history books to show the spirit of patriotism instead of presenting the essential facts. In Physiology, the treatises on how albuminous foods act after they have been chewed and had spittle mixed with them, when they find lodgement in our inner regions, did not help my digestion or improve my appetite in the least. This with grammar and history was my bugbear.

School always commenced at 8 A. M., and dismissed at 4 P. M. One hour off at noon, and one 15 minute recess period from 10:30 to 10:45 and 2:45 to 3:00 P. M. We spent  $6\frac{1}{2}$  hours in the schoolroom each day.

On Saturday morning I would generally take corn to the mill to have it ground into meal for

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making cornbread. When I did not have to work, I would generally go fishing on Caney Creek on Saturday afternoon if it was summer, or go hunting if it was winter.

### **A FEW OF THE COMMON EXPRESSIONS USED IN THE LOCALITY WHERE I LIVED IN MY BOYHOOD DAYS**

“Goober” for peanuts. -- “Hanted” for haunted. – “Comin in” for getting ripe or ready to use, as coming into use. – “Minners” for minnows. – “Out yonder” for out there. - “Meader” for meadow. – “Youngun” for young one or baby. – “Corn pone” sometimes used for cornbread. – “Go a piece with me” for go a way with me. – “Bee gum” for beehive. – “Nome” for no ma'm. – “Tote” for carry. – “Yesum” for yes ma'm. – “Miz” for Mrs. – “Towsack” for burlap bag. – “Passel” for a quantity, or some. Exepressions meaning a great quantity or very much, are: “Oodles”, “Whole passel”, “Right smart”, “A sight”, “A whole lot”, “A heap”, etc. “Johnny Constant” for corn bread. – “William Seldom” for biscuits. – “Chitlins” for hog guts that are cleaned and cooked.-- “Grease gravy” is plain grease which has been fried from swineflesh. – “Polk” is a poisonous weed used for greens, but which on account of the poison must be par-boiled before it is suitable for eating. – “Patridge” is sometimes used for Bob White. It was common for the more illiterate to sound words ending in ing, as tho (sic) they ended in in, as “comin” for coming. The expression: “You all”, I have never heard used in the singular, even by an illiterate negro. Those who ignorantly allege that Southerners use it in the singular, are usually the ones who say oil for all, crick for creek, bot for bought, cot for caught, foll for fall, and have to make a special effort to sound broad A or broad E.

### **EMBARRASSING MOMENTS**

When about six years old, and standing by the water's edge at Barham, Arkansas, I jumped into the mill pond almost to my knees when a locomotive passed when the steam shot by my feet, and the hilarity of the onlookers got out of it was no fun for me; and while this was not very embarrassing, it sowed the seeds for an incident in life to take place a few years later. At the sawmill town of White, Arkansas, my brother Bunyan made arrangements with Bill Harris to give me a scare. In the pit of the boiler room were six steam boilers of about nine feet diameter each. It was almost time for them to “pop” off simultaneously, as the head of steam was high. Harris engaged me in conversation, telling me how often boilers exploded, killing everyone near, and how uneasy it kept him all the time he was near them. My feeling began to reach a high pitch as I noticed him watching the steam gauge almost constantly, and appearing to take on a nervous complex. If a man of his age and experience was scared there was plenty of imminent danger, I thought. Just as the safety valve was ready to release for the most terrifying noise I had ever heard, he started for the exit on the run, and as he jumped the noise started; he had the lead on me but not for long; it was some tall running for an instant, but to encounter about fifty on the outside who had gathered to witness the fun.

The first time I went into a restaurant I was nonplussed. The waiter asked me what I would have. I was as ignorant of how to give an order, as a farmer is of the way he should vote, so I said, “I want some beef and bread”.

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When taking lessons to learn to dance, I rammed a girl against a square column in the center of the room. We were doing a one step as it was done in 1917. Her head struck the sharp corner of the column and it almost knocked her out.

The one time I fell on the dance floor, I landed on my partner in such a way that I had to just roll to get cleared of the wreck in the shortest possible time. When we were clear, but before getting up, someone yelled: "Take a look at that, will you".

The first few strictly "cold" canvasses when starting out to sell life insurance was anything but pleasant.

*Howard Cornish Foster left Nevada County about 1913, moved to Utah, served in World War I, and moved to California in 1929. He contracted polio in 1937 losing the use of his right hand so that he could no longer write. He wrote this sketch of his early life by using a typewriter. He died Dec. 10, 1972 at age 79 and is buried at Pajaro Valley Memorial Park in Watsonville, California.*

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## **SENIOR TRIPS AT PHS**

I'm not sure exactly when senior trips began at Prescott High School. Some of the earlier classes had what they called Senior Day with a trip to some place within driving distance of Prescott to enjoy a day of activities. Later on the seniors enjoyed a real Senior Trips which lasted several days. Here are three examples from 1936, 1954, and 1961.

### **Senior Day at Gilliam's Landing in 1936**

***From The Dynamo (the Prescott High School newspaper)***

Forty Prescott High School seniors left for Gilliam's Landing, a popular resort five miles from Hot Springs on Lake Hamilton. They traveled in a large truck which must have been open to the elements, because the reporter mentioned having to stop for lost hats several times. Activities included row boats, a racing machine for those who wanted to try their luck with horses, and a nickelodeon which provided popular music

The noon meal was spread on a long table covered with picnic food of every description. The group had brought their own picnic food along for the trip. The usual plate consisted of five to ten sandwiches, two or three pieces of chicken, half a dozen pickles, probably five stuffed eggs, and two huge slabs of chocolate, angel food, plain, or devil's food cake. The students had free time until 3:30 when a tour of Hot Springs was scheduled. Some spent this time fishing from the bank with poles; some went boating, some danced, and some sat quietly talking and recuperating from a hearty meal.

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It was then time for the tour. The truck was loaded to its fullest capacity and left on a sight-seeing tour of the city. Some students had brought their Kodak's and took pictures of the group at different places. One picture of interest to all was one taken of the sponsor, Mrs. Dale Denman, on the top of Hot Springs Mountain. A long ride about town, a stop at the double dip parlor, and another lost hat which had to be retrieved completed the afternoon's amusement. They returned to the camping ground ready for the call to supper.

After a supper which even surpassed the lunch, all were ushered into the pavilion where dancing was enjoyed until 10:00. The nickelodeon was kept busy. At 10:00 p.m. everyone was once again loaded into the truck headed for home with memories of a perfect day.

Another year the seniors went to the country club at DeQueen for Senior Day.

### **Senior Trip —1954**

#### ***As reported in The Nevada County Picayune***

The class of 1954 chose New Orleans as the destination for their senior trip. They made a stop at the Louisiana state capital in Baton Rouge and rode the elevators to the top for a spectacular view of the city. Then they took a driving tour through the Louisiana State University campus. They arrived on Saturday at the Hotel Senator just off Canal Street in New Orleans. After unpacking, they toured the French Quarter on Saturday night. The reporter mentioned seeing performances by "Cupcake", "Stormy", and Lilly Christine, "The Cat Woman". Some of the boys went to places with jazz bands.

Almost everyone went to church on Sunday. They were free the entire day with no scheduled activities. Some went to see the artists at Jackson Square and to a show after lunch. That night they took a boat trip on the USS President and after docking at 10:30 p.m., some went back to the French Quarter.

On Monday morning, the girls went shopping and as the reporter stated, "the boys did too, in a sense". That afternoon they went to Lake Pontchartrain where they swam, ate, played games, and went to the fun house.

Tuesday morning they were free. That afternoon they toured the cemeteries. They checked out of their hotel at 5 p.m. They spent several more hours at the French Quarter and left the city at 10 p.m. headed for home. Sometime in the early morning hours, they stopped at a restaurant for breakfast.

New Orleans was a favorite destination for senior trips in those days. Can you imagine being a chaperone in charge of about forty seniors in a city like New Orleans? One footnote to this story--the Hotel Senator where the Prescott students stayed in New Orleans was destroyed by fire in 1968.

### **Senior Trip—1961**

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I graduated with the class of 1961. By that time, the school administration had begun to limit the senior trips mainly because some in the previous classes had not behaved properly on their trips. I think the class of 1959 had the last out-of-state trip. It took a little persuasion to convince the administration that our class deserved to have a trip. Finally, they said we could have one, but we must stay in the state of Arkansas and it would be limited to three days.

It was decided our destination would be Scott Valley Dude Ranch in the very northern part of Arkansas near the Missouri border. We chartered a tour bus to take us there. It was my first time to ride one of these buses. Some of us had never seen the mountains of northern Arkansas so it was quite a thrill just to travel crooked Hwy. 7 through the Ozarks with all the scenic views. I remember the bus making a rest stop at Harrison.

The dude ranch was back in the boondocks, not too far from Mountain Home. The boys stayed in what I would describe as a bunk house and I assume the girls had similar quarters. Our meals were served in a large rustic room similar to a cafeteria. There was a swimming pool and various games to play. I remember them taking us on a boat ride at Lake Norfolk and I think we may have had a weiner roast. Some went horseback riding.

Even in this remote area, some of the students managed to get into some trouble. Someone had smuggled some liquor on board the bus and a few of the boys (and maybe some girls) were involved in drinking and some other shenanigans. I remember that our chaperones threatened to cut the trip short and take us home because of this, but those involved straightened up and we managed to complete our trip and stay the full three days.

The next two graduating classes, the class of 1962 and 1963, had a three day trip to Hot Springs. That was the end of the senior trip tradition at PHS.

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Re: "Old Hen's Day" mentioned in the last issue as a way to raise money for the Bluff City School. Cathy Straley says she remembers reading in another Nevada County paper that the ladies donated an old hen from their flock of chickens to be sold to raise money for some cause. Thanks, Cathy. I thought maybe they were calling the older women "old hens".

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### **SEEMS LIKE I HEARD THIS SOMEWHERE**

I'm starting a new feature this month. It will feature a word or phrase used by some people in our part of the country. Some of these were used by our parents and grandparents but have sort of faded away. Some of them are still used frequently today. If you have a word or phrase you would like featured in future issues, let me know.

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This month's phrase is "**right smart**". I saw this used in one of the local news columns in the county newspaper from about a hundred years ago. This is the way it was used--"There is a right smart of sickness around Laneburg."

I couldn't find this phrase in any dictionary around our house, but I did find it in the Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary online. The definition given is "a large amount, number, or quantity". Examples given are: "She'll leave him a right smart when she passes on" and "This hill is a right smart steeper than the side we were on."

It's been a long time since I heard anyone use this phrase and when you think about, it doesn't make much sense. Have you ever heard this phrase before?

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**RAINFALL RECORD**—January—5.4 inches; February—3.6 inches plus about 5 inches snow and ice; March—I let my rain gauge freeze, so I had to estimate part of the rainfall. We had rainfall on 18 days during March, so it was plenty wet around here. My estimated total for March is 10.3 inches plus 2 inches of sleet.

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### **PRESCOTT'S TEACHERS**

I surely do like to go to school  
My teachers I never try to fool  
My teachers teach us things we should know  
That is one reason I like to go.

Mr. Roe teaches us arithmetic  
Some people think he is very strict  
He has no pets, we all know  
That is why we love him so

My home room teacher is Mrs. McCargo  
Believe me, with her everything must be just so  
She sure knows how to make us mind  
She does too, and teaches us geography and spelling too.

Mrs. Thompson teaches us to write  
She is pretty and quite bright  
She also teaches us history  
If she did not, some years would be a mystery

Mrs. Parker teaches us to read  
Something we very much need  
Who is as good as she can be  
And we like her very much, you see

Written by Virginia Montgomery (Grade 5A)