

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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LOOKING BACK AT 2015

We have almost completed another year. They sure seem to go by faster when we get older. This is a good time to record some of the events of 2015 in our area, file the old year in the record books, and look forward to a new year.

I guess the weather is a good place to start. We had above average rainfall in 2015. In fact, we had very heavy rains in the spring with some major damage done to some of the roads. The county road department worked for weeks trying to get the gravel roads back in good shape. The sandy land around Bluff City absorbs rainfall like a sponge unless it comes down too fast. Then we have some erosion, but at least that area doesn't have to worry about homes being flooded.



We had some snow and ice in February which created problems for travel. We never know what to expect in south Arkansas. We may go two or three years with very little snow and ice or we may get hit hard. We all remember the ice storms in December, 2000 and we hope we never have to experience that again. Power being off a few hours is just an inconvenience, but when it is off everywhere for days, we can better understand how our ancestors lived before the days of electricity. The picture at left shows what Hwy. 24 near Bluff City was like in February after an ice storm. Ice storms like this always cause some damage to the timber, especially the very young trees.

Summer temperatures in our area in 2015 were near or below normal. The frequent rains helped. We did have a dry spell in July and August which lasted for several weeks. We remember the hot, dry summer of 1980 with temperatures well over 100 degrees for many days. Newspaper reports say Bluff City had a temperature of 112 degrees in 1934 during the Great Depression (and that was in the days before air conditioning).

We were fortunate to not have any tornadoes in our immediate area in 2015. We can't really complain too much about our weather. It was a pretty good year weather-wise.

Gas prices fell in 2015 which helped consumers. Gas was \$2.09 per gallon in Camden at the beginning of the year and it is \$1.80 now (Dec. 18th). Egg prices

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rose dramatically to around \$3.00 per dozen due to the nation's worst outbreak of bird flu affecting chickens. Egg prices are coming back down (very slowly).

Gardens produced well in 2015 although few people raise gardens anymore. The heavy rains in the spring made some gardens in our area too wet to work.

There were no major changes in Bluff City. The city council sponsored a "Fun Day" in April, a "Trade Day" in October, and a community Christmas party. All events were well attended. Wilma Pettit opened a flea market in Tina Bean's building (formerly a pulpwood office and a restaurant). No stores are operating in Bluff City now. R & R Bar-B-Que located at the county line sells sandwiches and meals. White Oak Lake State Park, located two miles from Bluff City, provides all kinds of activities and camping facilities for visitors.

The Nevada County Picayune office in Prescott closed in April and moved to Hope, but at least the county paper is still being published. The Picayune office was located in the old Dale Ledbetter department store building next to the vacant Prescott Hardware Co. A few days after the paper had moved most of their equipment to Hope, the Prescott Hardware building burned and also damaged the Picayune building. The hardware had been vacant for a long time. That business dated back to 1893 and was once the largest hardware store in southwest Arkansas. The loss of these two old buildings leaves a gaping hole in the business district of Prescott. Clean-up work is in progress.

A new library opened in Camden in 2015 after the old library was destroyed by fire in July of 2011.

NECROLOGY (as of Dec. 17)

The following deaths occurred in 2015 with burial at Bluff City Cemetery:

Shirley Ann Harvey Brooks
Alice Ann Starnes Grissom
Bill Walker
Margaret Benton
Ruby Lee Blake DeWoody
Arlis Billingsley Jr.
Carl McMichael

Former residents of the area who died in 2015 with burial elsewhere were:

Donald Barlow
Clifford Jones
Hubert "Buddy" Carter
Roger Dale Norman

Ebenezer Cemetery—Dennis Kirk

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A FAMILY HEIRLOOM



Mr. Perry Westmoreland sent me these pictures of a gun he has that belonged to his father, Forrest Westmoreland. The story is that in 1907, Mr. Forrest Westmoreland went turkey hunting with his mussels-loader but missed a turkey when the gun “fast-fired”. He was so disgusted he went to Prescott the next day and purchased this L. C. Smith shotgun from the Nevada County Hardware which was owned by his brothers, Dwight and Arthur Westmoreland.



Lyman Cornelius Smith, the namesake for this gun, was first involved in the livestock and lumber business, but didn't do too well. He then ventured into the firearms business. In 1886, the company made its first hammerless shotgun which was the most successful design for the company. The company was sold in 1889 to Hunter Arms Co. which continued the L. C. Smith brand. Hunter Arms was later sold to Marlin Firearms Co. This Lyman Smith was not the same Smith as in the name Smith and Wesson Firearms Company. After

quitting the firearms business, Lyman Smith became involved in the manufacture of typewriters. The brand name Smith-Corona was a well known brand of typewriters for many years.

Thanks to Mr. Westmoreland for sharing this story and the pictures. I'm sure he is proud to own his father's old L. C. Smith double-barreled shotgun.

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The sugar maple is one of my favorite trees. I transplanted several of these from my wife's uncle's property in Missouri. This one was especially beautiful in 2013 when I took this picture. It inspired me to write this poem.

THE CHANGE

By Jerry McKelvy

I look forward each fall to the changing of the leaves
And think--wouldn't it be great if we could be like a tree?
Cast off our wrinkles and gray hair
And start over again with a fresh new look for all to see.

Even a snake loses its outer skin every few months
According to the reptile book.
Too bad we can't shed our old skin and scars
And have a fresh new look.

It's all part of the Plan and we must accept our fate.
We can't turn back the clock and be young again.
Our skin may have wrinkles and our hair may turn gray.
Our body will get old and we might even have some pain.

But there are some things we can do as we travel along life's way
When the problems of life get us down.
We can have a positive attitude
And add a smile to replace that frown.

We can laugh when things make us happy
Or maybe even sing a little song.
Put aside our gripes and grumbles
And make folks like to be around us as we go along.

We can be like this sugar maple tree
With its beautiful leaves of gold.
Make the world a better place
And enjoy life even when we are old.

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BLUFF CITY TEACHER'S NORMAL SCHOOL

For those who don't know, a normal school is a school which trains teachers. It was once included in the name of some of the colleges in Arkansas. The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff was once known as Arkansas A. M. & N. which stood for agricultural, mechanical, and normal. Southern Arkansas University (formerly Southern State College) was once known as Arkansas A & M (agricultural and mechanical) since they didn't train teachers at the time.

Did you know that the Bluff City School was once known as Bluff City Teacher's Normal School? Advertisements for the school appeared in the county newspapers from 1910 to 1914. In 1914, the normal school began on May 4 and lasted five weeks. A student completing the course was qualified for a 3rd, 2nd, or 1st grade teacher's certificate. I could not find anything about the differences in the three types of certificates. I'm not sure if the 1st grade certificate or the 3rd grade certificate was the highest type certificate a student could earn. Oscar Dawson was the principal at Bluff City at that time.

Even though the course was only five weeks long, it was an intense training program. A certain grade had to be achieved in order for the certificate to be granted. The teacher training sessions were conducted after the regular school year had ended. Many of Nevada County's early teachers received their training at the Bluff City Teacher's Normal School.

THE ROYAL BLUE FLYER

The September 29, 1910 issue of *The Nevada News* had an interesting article about a pigeon. According to the article, a pigeon would fly directly in front of trains from Malvern to Arkadelphia and sometimes as far south as Gurdon. It usually flew with the freight trains going south and with the passenger trains going north. When the trains got up to full speed, the pigeon would take its place directly in front of the headlight and hold its place during the twenty to thirty mile trip. The railroad workers gave the pigeon the name Royal Blue Flyer.

ADVANTAGES OF WEARING A CORSET

From March 17, 1910 issue of *The Nevada News*

Ripley, TN—A quarrel developed between two young men over which one should have the last dance with Miss Myrtle Goodenough. Over 60 couples were on the dance floor dancing to the tune "Home Sweet Home" when Bud Hayes fired sixteen shots with a small .22 caliber pistol. Six of the shots hit Miss Goodenough, but the stays on her corset stopped the bullets. She did not even suffer a flesh wound.

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A search on the Internet of other old newspapers resulted in about 25 other cases of corset stays stopping bullets from the years 1893 to 1913 in several different states. They must have been heavy duty corsets made in the U. S. A.

TOO TALL

The *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* published in November a reprint of the obituary of Edgar A. Pruitt of Bluff City. According to the obituary, Mr. Pruitt who died November 22, 1915, was thought to have been the tallest man in Nevada County at over seven feet tall. The undertaker had to order a special casket because he did not have one of sufficient length. Mr. Pruitt was a former school teacher who died from tuberculosis.

COMMENTS FROM READERS

In the matter of labeling photos...I was once a guest on one of the Indian reservations. Not part of our "tour", but something I caught wind of... Three OLD ladies... much respected in that society... were gathered around some old photo albums, filled (mostly) with commercial postcards of "the Wild West", and "the Savages", for consumption in the East. For most of their lives, their heritage had been suppressed... surprisingly vigorously, including by the BIA, surprisingly "recently". The old ladies were going through the photos, trying to put names to the faces, and put that knowledge down as ink-on-paper... before their memories were no longer available to their people. I hope you will understand why seeing that was a special moment, and as a little "thank you" for the great job with the Chronicle.—T. K. Boyd

Hi. This was a great Sandyland Chronicle. It is so interesting to read of your research into your family. It is addictive, but I love to find a new cousin every once in a while.

Old cemeteries are so important. I am glad so many people will go out and take censuses of them and take pictures. Those you and your wife wrote about are helpful. Find-a-Grave has unearthed (no pun intended) many relatives, and I always print the pictures of the stones and leave comments and virtual flowers.

Thanks again for your unfailingly interesting posts.—Irma Hamby Evans

We have had a dog like Slim, and I sure do miss him!—Teresa Harris

Thanks so much for all the work you put into this publication. My mother reads it as soon as I can print it out.—Paulette Weaver

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Enjoyed your tribute to Slim. And the article about the Wild Man. And your genealogy research. It's all good! ---Don Mathis

Thank you for the Dec. issue of Sandyland Chronicle. You make the quest for family history sound so easy, but it hasn't been quite so for me. I do hope clues will gather all together if the Lord lets me live, so my grandchildren will have an identity. I am sorry that you lost your hound dog friend. We have entertained many strays through the years, cats and dogs. They always are so affectionate and grateful for their food.---Annette Lemons

I just wanted to express my appreciation to you for keeping the history of Nevada County, and especially Bluff City alive and well for the ancestors of those who have passed on. I just saw the photo of Jimmy Starnes posted and immediately recognized him from photos my grandmother had possessed. My grandparents were Herbert and Clara (Rowe) Harvey and my mother is Shirley Brooks. Jimmy was my grandfather's great grandfather making him my great-great-great grandfather. I didn't realize he was one of the original settlers of Bluff city. I am so happy that my grandmother and her sister, my Aunt Blanche Whaley, instilled in me a respect and appreciation for our heritage before they passed on. I am trying to do the same for my daughters. Thanks for penning the booklet on Gooseankle (I just about wore my copy out) and your online series, Sandyland Chronicles. We have it so easy today compared to what our ancestors endured. Thanks again for your hard work. ---Rich Brooks Custer, WA

I am wondering if you know of anyone in or from Nevada County who might have pictures of Ella/Ellie Ledora Carter Black and her husband, Robert Wilkerson Black. Her great-grandson, Woodrow Wilson "Woody" Black would love to see pictures of them. Is this a notice that could be put in an upcoming Sandyland Chronicle? P. S. I am a Carter descendant and Woody is my cousin.---Loretta Talley Stehle

I LOVED Grand Daddy's Knife by Mr. Mathis. This was a great issue. I love to hear about the old timers and their lives.—Annette Lemons

Thanks for keeping Nevada County history alive. My sis, Judy Daniels, is married to a Rosston O'Keefe. His daddy was R.D. O'Keefe. I always enjoy your reports.---J. Daniels, Proud Bodcaw grad. 1963

Loved, loved Ms. Zettie Link's artwork of your homeplace, especially the well spot and the mailbox. Was that a sycamore tree in front?
And the entry of "I live in a small town" brought back LOTS of memories to me. Cudos to Mr. Mathis for his artful writing. Just don't know what I'd do WITHOUT the Chronicle to brighten up each month. What a contribution you are making to the historicity of your area. I KNOW your community is more than grateful for your time and efforts.—Annette Lemons

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RAINFALL RECORD

November rainfall -- 11.2 inches

Total January through November—72.4 inches and another month to go

Average annual rainfall – 53.21 inches



The staff of The Sandyland Chronicle (me) wishes each of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.