

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Vol. 17 – No. 12

sandman43@att.net

December, 2017

This article first appeared in the September, 2004 issue of the Sandyland Chronicle

THE BOOM TOWN OF WATERLOO

I'm sure we all remember watching "The Beverly Hillbillies" on television and the changes brought about in their lives by the discovery of "black gold" or Texas tea".

Poor farm families of Nevada County, Arkansas probably had dreams of something like that happening to them in 1922. Oil had recently been discovered in Union County and El Dorado and Smackover had become boom towns almost overnight. Oil had also been discovered in Ouachita County near Stephens. Once oil is discovered, geologists work quickly to determine other places with similar geologic formations and drill test wells in their search for oil. This search led them to Nevada County in 1922. A test well was drilled near Mt. Olive in the central part of the county. The drilling caused much excitement and I'm sure some folks had dreams of becoming rich and being able to retire from the drudgery of hard farm work. Some probably wondered what effect an oil discovery might have on their quiet peaceful communities.

LYKE WATKINS

The most famous oil driller in Arkansas at that time was Lyke Watkins and he was the man who was drilling the oil well at Mt. Olive in Nevada County. Mr. Watkins already had a reputation as an expert and one who didn't believe in dry holes. That added to the excitement as the drilling commenced at Mt. Olive. Hundreds of automobiles and vehicles of every description carried thousands of spectators to this place. Many came on horseback.

Lyke Watkins, oil driller, came to Arkansas from Mexico in 1919 on the hunt for oil. He first struck oil in Ouachita Co. with the Hunter well, then in Columbia Co. with the Poverty Well, and on September 13, 1922 he made a huge discovery of oil near Mt. Olive in Nevada County.

An unusual thing about Lyke Watkins is his view of the number 13, which many people are superstitious about. His birthday was on the 13th, his wedding day was on the 13th, and he begins all his great undertakings on the 13th day of the month. It was also on the 13th that he has reached his greatest rewards as was the case at Mt. Olive when the oil well came in on September 13, 1922. He has never drilled a dry hole in Arkansas (*from the Prescott Daily News - 1-26-1924*)

The news of the big discovery at Mt. Olive spread fast and oil companies rushed to the area to get in on the action. Many other wells were drilled in the same area and most were good producers. Here are some news items from the local papers regarding activities in the Nevada County oil fields.

A well known oil man, George J. Ames visited the well site and sent off samples for testing. (*The Nevada News – 9-21-1922*)

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

From The Prescott Daily News - 2-15-1924:

George Ames and R. M. Zingg receive \$185,000 for 80 acres in oil field, purchased by Keystone Co. of New York. This tract has four wells producing 1100 barrels/day.

A NAME IS CHOSEN

From the Prescott Daily News 4-14-1924:

Sect. 2-14-21 on T. Ellis Tract (1/4 mile from Discovery well)

The Keystone Co. is building houses, both business and residential, and one will be the home of Guthrie Drug Store. Messrs. Adam and Martin Guthrie of Prescott will open a store on the Keystone holdings a short distance from the Discovery well. At this point Keystone people have installed a treating plant and steam all the oil just as it comes from the pump. It is then stored in reservoirs. A mammoth steel tank and a number of smaller tanks are in place on the public road where the Mansfield Lumber Co. road (railroad) will enter the field. It is at this point where the town site has been laid out and at this time a number of streets are being built. A name is wanted for the place and it may be selected today. Many are strong for calling the first city in the oil field "Nevada" and it may be the name selected. Others suggest "Keystone", but there is strong support in the vicinity for the name "Nevada". After much deliberation, the name "Waterloo" was chosen for the new town in honor of the Waters family who owned the property where the first well was discovered.

The road from Rosston to Mt. Olive is rough, but passable. Large numbers of people are visiting the Nevada Co. oil fields and many are making plans to locate there.

From the Prescott Daily News - 4-15-1924:

Keystone Co. has three large boilers running which are never allowed to cool. The railroad is now within two miles of the oil field.

From the Prescott Daily News - 4-21-1924:

The Prescott Chamber of Commerce is planning to visit the oil field. "Hitch up your Lizzies, Packards, and Bevoes. Carry your own grub or you may get hungry".

Report from their visit: "Instead of a quiet farming community with a few derricks scattered around, there are now numerous houses, business houses, and on every hand there are derricks, drilling wells, producing wells, enormous pits filled with crude oil, steel storage tanks, and the hum of machinery is heard everywhere."

Of 21 wells drilled so far, 14 are producing oil, 2 are gas wells, 2 are temporarily abandoned, and only 3 dry holes found. The Johnson Lumber Co. railroad (formerly Mansfield Lumber Co.) is almost completed to the oil field.

From the Nevada News 2-25-1926):

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

The Humble Oil Co. is building a treating plant, erecting steel storage tanks, and has a derrick up on the Grove Tract in the south side of the NE SE of Sec. 2, Twp. 14 South, Range 21 West. Their lease is 220 acres and many holes will be drilled at once.

From the Nevada News - 3-11-1926:

Major oil companies are being drawn to Nevada Co. oil fields. A large force of men are laying pipe and building tanks. Humble Co. is erecting derricks, building earthen reservoirs, steel tanks, and treating plants, and has completed pipe lines to the loading rack on the Reader Railroad

From the Nevada News - 3-18-1926:

Nevada Co. oil field is booming. In Waterloo, many houses, both business and residential, have been built and the forest is full of tents. Waterloo has businesses of all kinds and hotels and rooming houses, but not enough to accommodate the men employed by the drilling companies.

From the Nevada News - 4-15-1926:

The oil field is expanding rapidly. Waterloo is growing and business is good. Arkansas Power and Light is erecting lines into the oil field. The Reader Railroad goes into the field each day hauling oil in tank cars to the MoPac line at Reader and bringing in supplies to the oil field. They are talking of adding a passenger coach.

Ozan Oil Co., Humble Oil, Keystone, and others are shipping a number of cars daily from their treating plants via the Reader Railroad to the MoPac line at Reader. Keystone, Smitherman and McDonald, and Autry have their treating plants near the loading racks on the railroad and others pipe their oil to the railroad.

Keystone has a 100,000 barrel order with Barber Asphalt Co. of Madison, Ill. Humble has two 55,000 barrel steel tanks partially filled.

The road from Prescott to Waterloo has been graded and many improvements made.

From The Nevada News - 4-1-1927:

Keystone has been taken over by Atlantic Oil Royalty Co. Keystone owns Waters No. 1 in Sec. 11, Twp. 14S, Rng. 21 West which was the first oil well in Nevada County brought in September, 1922. Keystone has a productive treating plant and large storage capacity and pipelines to the loading station on the Reader Railroad. The company has produced 240,000 barrels of oil so far from 30 acres of land. The average depth of drilling is 1200 feet.

Testing for oil is being done in the Falcon area. The abstract office in Prescott is so busy with oil leases, etc. that it has had to hire extra help.

From The Nevada News - 8-18-1927:

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

The Prescott Chamber of Commerce is planning a visit to the Waterloo oil fields. The Prescott Boy's Band will accompany the group and will render concerts at each stop on the route as well as at Waterloo.

From The Nevada News – 9-1-1927:

A caravan of autos and 150 people made a good will tour of the oil fields. The first stop was at Laneburg where the Boy's Band gave a concert. Dr. and Mrs. Nelms served iced melons following the speech. The next stop was Mt. Moriah, at one time the principal town in the county. A large crowd enjoyed a concert by the band. A larger crowd was found at Rosston and the band gave another concert.

At noon, the caravan arrived at Waterloo. The town has a number of businesses, a hotel, and an emergency sanitarium. There was more music and speeches. Lunch was at the Humble Oil "chuck house" and was served by "Ella". One person ate 38 chicken gizzards. Almost everyone had from one to four gizzards. Following lunch, Fred Guthrie and Dan Pittman conducted a tour of the oil field.

*Editor's note: On early maps of Nevada County, you will find a place called **Ames**. This was the spot where the railroad from the oil field crossed the Rosston-Camden highway and is named after George J. Ames, one of the early oil men. The intersection of the Mt. Olive road (now Hwy. 76) and the main highway (now Hwy. 371) was named **Irma** for the daughter of Louis Waters, the postmaster when the post office was established in 1906. The community at the other end of Hwy. 76 where it intersects Hwy. 278 was called **Nevarck** which comes from combining the first part of the words Nevada and Arkansas.*

THE OIL CONTINUES TO FLOW

The oil produced at Waterloo was not the highest grade of oil, but it was soon discovered that it was useful for certain purposes such as in the production of asphalt and for certain types of lubricating oils. New highways were being constructed in the 1920s and 1930s, or at least the main graded roads were being paved. A large asphalt plant and oil refinery was constructed at Waterloo and this operated for many years. Products from the oil field continued to be shipped on the Reader Railroad up the "Possum Trot Line" to Reader on the main railroad line, a distance of about 25 miles.

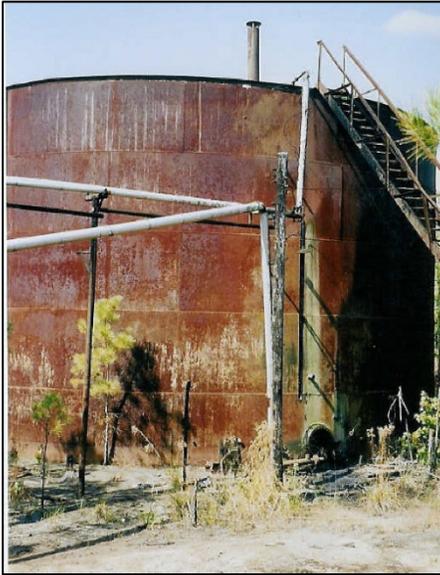
The old refinery stands silent today with rusting tanks, pipes, and rundown buildings. The railroad line to Waterloo was discontinued in the 1970s and the track was taken up. The oil continues to be pumped, but is now hauled by trucks to wherever it goes.

The big oil boom at Waterloo didn't last too long, but the oil industry has played a big part in the economy of Nevada County and still does today. The town of Waterloo today has only a few families, no post office, and no stores. For pictures of the oil refinery at Waterloo, visit the Nevada County Depot Museum website at <http://www.depotmuseum.org/> and type "waterloo" in the search box.

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE



I visited the old Berry Asphalt plant location several years ago and took these pictures.



One of the huge tanks once used to store oil. Below is an area near the plant site which is nothing but a wasteland today caused by oil being allowed to escape from the refinery. Some of the oil found its way into nearby Caney Creek. Environmental regulations evidently were pretty lax during the time this refinery operated.



THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE



The correct answer to the “What Is It?” from last issue is a corn sheller. Some corn shellers are much smaller than this one. This one stands about four feet tall and is probably a deluxe model. It does an excellent job of shelling field corn after the husks are removed. The corn is fed into the chute at the top. When the handle is turned, the shelled corn will come out a chute at the bottom and the cob will be ejected.

I only received two answers. One thought it was a pea sheller. Brenda Barham said it was a corn husker. That’s pretty close to the right answer.

The word for this month is OMNIVORE. Look it up. You may be one.

TWO POETS

Most everyone has heard of the poem “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer. I had always thought Joyce Kilmer was a woman, but I recently learned that Joyce Kilmer was a man. His full name was Albert Joyce Kilmer. The poem “Trees” was his most famous poem and it was always one of my favorites. Critics said Kilmer’s poems were too simple and sentimental. Maybe that’s why I like them.

Kilmer might have been more famous if he had lived long enough. He was killed in World War I at the age of 31. It seems that many of the most talented people die early. Another Kilmer poem I like is called “The House with Nobody in It”. When I see an old empty house, I think of this poem.

THE HOUSE WITH NOBODY IN IT

By Joyce Kilmer

Whenever I walk to Suffern along the Erie track
I go by a poor old farmhouse with its shingles broken and black.
I suppose I've passed it a hundred times, but I always stop for a minute
And look at the house, the tragic house, the house with nobody in it.

I never have seen a haunted house, but I hear there are such things;
That they hold the talk of spirits, their mirth and sorrowings.
I know this house isn't haunted, and I wish it were, I do;
For it wouldn't be so lonely if it had a ghost or two.

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

This house on the road to Suffern needs a dozen panes of glass,
And somebody ought to weed the walk and take a scythe to the grass.
It needs new paint and shingles, and the vines should be trimmed and tied;
But what it needs the most of all is some people living inside.

If I had a lot of money and all my debts were paid
I'd put a gang of men to work with brush and saw and spade.
I'd buy that place and fix it up the way it used to be
And I'd find some people who wanted a home and give it to them free.

Now, a new house standing empty, with staring window and door,
Looks idle, perhaps, and foolish, like a hat on its block in the store.
But there's nothing mournful about it; it cannot be sad and lone
For the lack of something within it that it has never known.

But a house that has done what a house should do,
a house that has sheltered life,
That has put its loving wooden arms around a man and his wife,
A house that has echoed a baby's laugh and held up his stumbling feet,
Is the saddest sight, when it's left alone, that ever your eyes could meet.

So whenever I go to Suffern along the Erie track
I never go by the empty house without stopping and looking back,
Yet it hurts me to look at the crumbling roof and the shutters fallen apart,
For I can't help thinking the poor old house is a house with a broken heart.

Back in July, 2015, I had an article in this paper about Nancy Temperance Wilson, a young lady from Prescott, Arkansas who became famous for her poetry. She won many awards, but very few people in Nevada County know about the works of this young lady. Her most famous poem was called "Scattering Stars" which I included in that article. Like Joyce Kilmer, Nancy's poems were simple and sentimental. Another similarity is that she also died at the young age of 29. She was working on her second volume of poems at the time of her death.

I recently stumbled across her grave at DeAnn Cemetery in Prescott and took a moment to stop and read what was engraved on her simple grave marker. Beneath her name and dates is engraved the first part of her most famous poem "Scattering Stars":

“Up in God’s skies, I hope to go
Scattering stars for you below”

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE



RECIPES

I used a random number generator on the Internet to select two recipes from those submitted for this issue. Thanks to all who submitted a recipe. I will be emailing all the recipes to you soon.

6. JEFF DAVIS PIE (from Don Ernst)

Chess Pie is a traditional Deep South delicacy (developed from the original chess pies of England) and so it was only natural that this was to be one of the dessert items when Jefferson Davis visited Fulton (Missouri) in 1875, and stayed at the Hockaday House. Chess Pie is made with white sugar but legend has it that Mrs. Hockaday's colored cook suddenly discovered her supply of white sugar was nearly exhausted so she improvised and used brown sugar, creating a pie with a slightly different flavor. Legend also has it that this pie met with Mr. Davis' highest approval so it was known thereafter as Jeff Davis pie.

4 egg yolks
2 cups brown sugar
1 cup double cream
2 tablespoons flour
½ cup melted butter
egg white for meringue

Beat egg yolks and sugar together until smooth. Add cream, flour, and melted butter. Pour into 9 in. pie shell and bake at 350 degrees or until firm. Beat egg whites and put on top and brown in slow oven.

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

11. (from Joy Neal Brown)

Date Nut Cake Recipe

“Aunt Mag” (Evans) Neal Ellis (b. 1894 – d. 1974)

2 lbs. dates
1 c. water
2 c. walnuts (may use less if desired)

Cut up dates finely and cover with the water. Let stand one hour.
Chop walnuts and set aside.

1-1/2 c. sugar
3/4 c. shortening (or 1/2 c. oil)

With mixer, mix sugar and shortening

2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla

Mix eggs and vanilla with sugar mixture.
Stir in dates.

2 c. flour
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking soda

Combine above dry ingredients. Add to date mixture.
Stir in walnuts.

Pour into deep iron skillet (8 inch or larger) greased (with Pam or other) and well floured.
(Note: skillet must be deep for this amount of batter).

Bake at 250 degrees for about two hours.

Turn out of skillet and let cool.

After it cools, wrap in foil.

Can freeze: put bag around the foil-wrapped cake.

Joy Neal Brown's notes:

- “Aunt Mag’s” recipe was sent to her niece Joy (Neal) Brown by Aunt Mag’s granddaughter, Sharon (Collums) Westbrook of Hope AR.
- Sharon’s mother was the late Magdalene (Neal) Collums, long-time Hope AR poet and teacher.

Sharon said that “Aunt Mag” would make this recipe every Christmas and mail it as gifts

Rainfall Record—I received 1.4 inches in October. Total for the first 10 months of 2017 was 45.2 inches. Despite all the wet weather in the first part of the year, we may not even make our normal rainfall of 52 inches.