

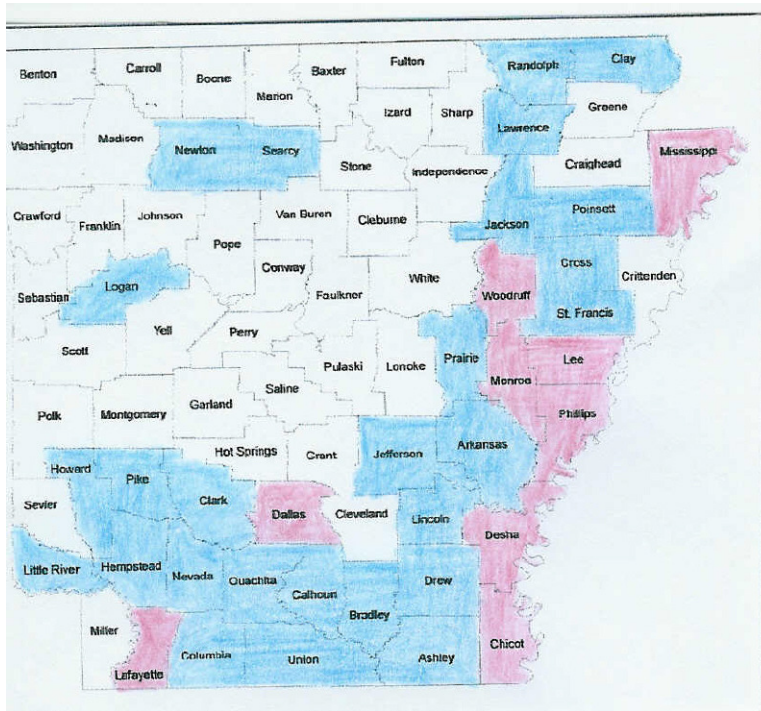
Jerry McKeiv's  
**SANDYLAND CHRONICLE**

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**2010 CENSUS**

**ARKANSAS COUNTIES THAT  
LOST POPULATION**

**Counties in Red lost from 10.1 to  
20.5 % population**

**Counties in Blue lost from 0.1 to  
10.1 % population**

**THOUGHTS ON THE 2010 CENSUS REPORT**

The U. S. Census Bureau released the results from the 2010 census in February. Just in case you didn't see the report, here is a brief summary of what it shows.

The states with the most growth were Texas and Nevada. Texas has over four million more people today than it had ten years ago. Most growth was in the South and West while most of the northeastern states showed a decline. The population increase for the country was 9.7% which is the lowest for any decade since the Great Depression.

The Census Bureau also reported that one out of every four counties in the United States is "dying". That means more deaths are recorded than births. These counties are in all parts of the country mostly counties with an aging white population, counties with a poor economy, and those with few Hispanics.

The population of Arkansas increased 9.1% in the last ten years and is now 2,919,918 people. Benton County in the extreme northwestern part of the state showed a 44% increase in population. Thirty-nine counties had an increase while thirty-six showed a decrease. The southern and eastern parts of the state lost population.

Closer to home, the results are not so good. All the counties in our part of the state lost population. The city of Camden now has 12,162 people compared to 13,154 ten years ago.

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Prescott now has 3,296 compared to 3,686 ten years ago. Bluff City now has 124 compared to 158 ten years ago. El Dorado population is down 12 percent. The story is pretty much the same over the whole southern half of Arkansas (see map on page 1).

The question is why are we losing population in south Arkansas when other areas are gaining? Here are some of my thoughts.

1. People of working age are going to move to where the jobs are located. Many places have lost major employers in the last ten years (e.g. International Paper in Camden and Potlatch in Prescott). It takes a city a long time to recover from the loss of hundreds of jobs when a plant shuts down and the loss of all the associated jobs connected with that industry.

2. The effects of the recession on the timber industry have been severe. Many sawmills have shut down and many loggers went out of business. The housing market has been hit hard by the recession. Less lumber is needed which means less sawmills and less jobs. We need a recovery in the housing market to stimulate the timber industry in our area.

3. Practically all the larger cities in Arkansas increased in population except for Pine Bluff. It seems most young people today want to live in a city where they have more things to do and that's also where most of the jobs are found. There are advantages to living in large towns, but one has to weigh the pros and cons and consider what is best for the family. Many people like to live just outside a good size town and try to have the best of both worlds.

4. Is there something wrong with south Arkansas that causes people to leave the area? I don't think so.

---On the plus side, we have nice rolling hills covered with forests, nice lakes for fishing and recreation, a good climate (most of the time), and small towns with lower crime rates than the big cities. We still have some good small-town hospitals, no major pollution problems, and there are Walmart stores within driving distance of just about everybody. We have good areas for hunting and fishing.

--- On the minus side, we don't have a major hospital for serious illnesses. We must travel to Little Rock, Shreveport, Texarkana, Pine Bluff, or Hot Springs to find the larger hospitals.

I must admit that we have a litter problem in south Arkansas. Some people are just downright messy. They think nothing of throwing their trash out the windows as they travel the highways. That is the first thing a visitor notices when they travel to our part of the state. A trashy roadside turns people off. There is no easy solution to this problem. We can pay folks to clean it up, but it doesn't stay clean. Some folks need an attitude adjustment, and that's not easy to accomplish. I could go on and on about this. I have been to other states and notice how much cleaner their roads are than ours. Maybe they just do a better job of cleaning up the litter. I remember seeing a group of prisoners in Indiana picking up trash. I think that's a good idea and one that could be used more often.

5. Families are not as large now as they were in the past. That may be true, but why are most areas increasing in population and we are decreasing? I notice from the census data that the Hispanic population is increasing. That may account for some of the population growth.

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6. Very few people are going into farming these days. Even the counties in the Arkansas delta along the Mississippi River which has some of the best farmland in the state showed a major decline in population.

7. I think it mostly boils down to jobs (or the lack thereof). We need more industries to locate in our area, but one of the things industries consider when choosing a place to locate is the available labor force. With our declining population, there is a shortage of people to work at a plant that might employ 600 plus workers. Many workers have moved elsewhere to find work and of those who are left, many cannot pass a drug test. Employers are not interested in employing a bunch of drug addicts. Some people had rather sit on the sidelines and draw a check from our government rather than work for a living. That's why I think anyone drawing public assistance checks from our government (paid for out of our tax money) should be required to pass periodic drug tests in order to get that money. In my opinion, those on public assistance that are able to work should be required to do community service such as picking up litter, etc. And we need to crack down hard on the drug problem. That's the source of many of our country's problems and there is no easy solution.

8. Most of the small industries we once had are now gone. Those products are being manufactured in China, Mexico, or some other far away country, and even though the prices are lower, the quality is not what it once was. Camden now has a nice large Walmart store that is standing vacant since they opened a new Supercenter. Why doesn't Walmart lease this empty store building to a small company which could manufacture some product that could be sold at their Walmart Supercenters? Walmart would still get the profit from the sale since the products would be manufactured especially for sale at their stores. It might provide 25 or 30 people a job and the empty building would be back in use instead of becoming an eyesore.

This declining population in our area is nothing new. Nevada County had a population of 19,786 in 1940 compared to a little over 8,800 today. Think about that--over twice as many people lived in Nevada County 70 years ago. Prescott's population was 3,177 in 1940 compared to 3,296 today--not much difference. That means most of the people in 1940 were living in rural areas and were mostly engaged in farming. All those farm fields where they once grew cotton are now pine forests. Small family farms are almost a thing of the past. Even a home garden is hard to find these days.

What does the future hold? Will south Arkansas continue to decline? We will have to wait until early 2021 to get the next official census report. Unless something drastic happens, I expect it will show another decline ten years from now. We could use more people and more industries. Efforts are underway to determine if lignite mining is feasible in this area. We have an abundance of lignite in south Arkansas. Maybe that will bring some needed jobs, but I'm not sure we are ready for the type of open-pit mining used in that industry even though the experts say the land will be restored to the condition it was in before mining and trees will be replanted after the mining is completed.

If you would like to sound off on this subject, send me your comments for the next issue. Tell us what you think. Is there a solution for our population decline or should we join the rest of the folks and leave for greener pastures?

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## MORE ON THE WILEY BRIGHAM STORY (first reported in the October, 2003 issue)

Round Oak Cemetery is a very small cemetery near the Nevada-Ouachita county line in the Troy community. One unusual thing about this cemetery is that one grave is not actually in the maintained portion of the cemetery, but is in the woods about fifty feet from the northeast corner of the cemetery. This is the grave of Wiley Brigham and his marker states that he was "murdered by a bushwhacker".



I took this photo of his grave marker several years ago, but when I last visited this cemetery, I noticed that it had been broken by a falling tree or by logging equipment.

When I saw "murdered by a bushwhacker" on his grave marker, it made me curious to know more about this man. I talked to a man who lives nearby and he told me the story that had been passed down through the years. The story he had heard was that Wiley Brigham was involved with a local girl and that someone laid in wait for him and murdered him. Some folks did not want him buried in the cemetery, which is the reason for his grave being separated from the rest of the cemetery. The man I talked to said he always heard that the grave marker was made by a black man who lived nearby who felt that all men--good or bad --needed to have a marker so folks would know where they are buried. He was the one who added the phrase "murdered by a bushwhacker".

I tried to verify this story that has been passed down through the years, but could not find any information about it. Recently, as I was searching the Internet, I was surprised to find a news story published in the *Waco Evening News* in Waco, Texas that provides a little more information.

*Waco Evening News, Waco, Texas (January 8, 1892)*

*Prospects for a Lynching Bee*

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*Texarkana, Ark., Jan. 8 -- Wiley Brigham, the young man mentioned as having eloped on Sunday night from Stephens, Ark. with Miss Martha Drake, the 15 year old sister of his wife, whom he married three months ago, was located in Anonna, Red River county, Texas by his pursuer, Deputy Sheriff Frank Strange, who caused his arrest by Texas officers. The prisoner, together with the girl, were brought here this afternoon and the girl taken to a hotel, while Brigham was given quarters in the county jail. When arrested the pair were making preparations to quietly settle down at Anonna, having already purchased their necessary furniture, and was passing as husband and wife. The girl is deeply infatuated with Brigham and says that he was made especially for her, and vows she will go with him again as soon as he is a free man. The people living in the vicinity of Brigham's home are reported as being wrought to a high pitch, and the chance for a lynching bee when the prisoner is taken there is regarded as quite promising.*

Evidently, the story passed down through the years that he was involved with a local girl was accurate. This news story provides more details and mentions that Wiley Brigham would not face a friendly crowd when he was returned to Stephens, Arkansas. The newspaper reporter warned that Wiley Brigham might face a lynch mob, but the actual cause of his death is still a mystery.

I would like to know "the rest of the story". Was Wiley Brigham hanged when he was returned to Stephens, Arkansas? Did someone shoot him from ambush as suggested by the phrase "murdered by a bushwhacker"? Was there any official report concerning Wiley Brigham's death? What happened to Martha Drake?

Maybe someday I'll come across more of this story and find the answers to the circumstances regarding Wiley Brigham's death.

It was not uncommon in the old days for a community to forbid unsavory characters from being buried in the local cemetery. A clause in the deed to Artesian Cemetery near Prescott specifies that "in no case shall any person be entitled to be buried here who is a murderer or a thief". Since Wiley Brigham's grave is not in the maintained portion of Round Oak Cemetery, it is likely that his grave will soon be lost. As stated before, the marker is now broken and only a few people know of this grave of a man not considered worthy to be buried with the rest of the folks in Round Oak Cemetery.

*Note: Wiley Brigham's tombstone has a death date of Feb., 1891. Based on this news story, the death date may be incorrect. It probably should have been Feb., 1892.*

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## JUST FOR FUN

Did you have a nickname? If you don't mind sharing it, write and tell us what it is and how you got stuck with it. If you don't have one, tell us the most unusual nickname you remember hearing. Did you have a nickname for one of your teachers? Tell us why. *I hope my former students don't read this.* Don't give the teacher's name—just the nickname. I don't think nicknames are as common today as they were in the old days. Send in your comments by April 15, please. Don't worry; I'll just put your first name unless you tell me otherwise.

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## DR. J. L. RUSHING

The town of Chidester in Ouachita County, Arkansas is only seven miles from Bluff City where I grew up. Although we did most of our business in Prescott back about 1950, we occasionally went to Chidester mainly for hardware supplies, to get our old black white television repaired, or to see the doctor.

Dr. J. L. Rushing had an office in Chidester. I can remember my parents taking me to him as a child and many of the older folks around Bluff City used him for their physician many years ago. I recently made contact with Barbara Rushing Lyerly who is a granddaughter of Dr. Rushing. She provided me with more information about this well known physician.



Dr. Jeter Lafferty Rushing was born near what is now White Oak Lake in 1879. His mother was Nannie Stone Rushing from Bluff City. He went to school at the Memphis Medical College for four years and then went to New Orleans and did a residency at Tulane Hospital. He began his practice at Felsenthal in Union County, and then went to El Dorado. After a short time there, he came home to Chidester. He practiced medicine for 57 years. His office was in the building that housed the Purifoy/Taylor/Rushing drug store on Main St. in Chidester. He delivered over 5,000 babies and was, at one time, the only doctor from Camden to Prescott and from Sparkman to Stephens. He died in April of 1957.

Photo: Dr. Rushing as a young man

Barbara has provided the Chidester Museum with some "Dr. Rushing" material for display. The museum is open each fifth Sunday afternoon from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

One item there is a tablet that people who have visited the museum have signed if Dr. Rushing delivered them when they were born. There is a home-made walking stick Dr. Rushing made from a limb. He was going out to deliver a baby one very bad night with ice and snow everywhere when he skidded off the road into a ditch. He couldn't seem to stand well, so he cut this limb and walked on to the home to tend to the delivery. The next day he carved his initials and the date on the stick and varnished it. Barbara says it is one of her prized possessions. She has loaned it to the museum but plans to pass it down to her children some day.

Barbara says anyone you talk to would probably have a funny story about her grandfather. One is about him being called out to a black lady's home to deliver a baby several times and each was a false labor. He finally just moved in and took the second bed in the lady's room and stayed until she had the child.

One of the older residents of Chidester told Barbara about the time a Chidester resident who had a little too much to drink lost his balance while walking down the sidewalk and fell on his

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face into the gravel street. Some of the locals picked him up, took him to Dr. Rushing's office, cleaned him up and put iodine on the cuts. The doctor's office was not open for business since it was about midnight, but the doors were unlocked. Can you imagine a doctor's office being open at midnight in this day and time--not open for business, just unlocked?

One of Barbara's special memories was how her grandfather taught her so many life lessons. When she was about eight years old, Dr. Rushing had a patient who had what was then called "dropsy". Today we would call it congestive heart failure. Over a few weeks he took Barbara with him on house calls to see this patient. He told her in detail what was wrong and that she would die. When she did pass away, he took Barbara to the home where people used to "sit up with the dead" and showed her the body. They then rode around for a long time and he explained to Barbara that dying is a part of living and not to be feared. God knows when you will die and He will be there for you; you should remember that all through your life, you should live so that you will know that you will go to live with Him when your time comes. That was a heavy lesson for an eight year old, but Barbara says she has never forgotten that day or what her grandfather told her.

The town of Chidester had a big reception in 1953 to honor Dr. Rushing for fifty years of service to the community. He continued to practice another seven years after that, but didn't charge anyone. During the fifty years, he never charged ministers, old people, or those he felt couldn't pay. He never sent out a bill and if someone didn't pay, he just "forgot" about it.



Dr. J. L. Rushing on left; William Garland Rushing on right who established and ran the Bank of Chidester; standing is their brother, Warner Eugene Rushing who taught school at several schools in the area including Steele's Chapel and established a retail store that evolved into the Chidester Mercantile.

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## FEATURED WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

<http://timeticker.com/> Tells you the correct time anywhere in the world by clicking on a country on the map. Good for those who have someone in military service or those who have friends living in or visiting foreign countries.

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## WILD CAT SKINS

County Court Record, *April* Term, 1889  
Duy's Proceedings.  
Geo. D. Bernard & Co., Blank Book Manufacturers

*A. F. McKelvey* }  
*v.s.* } *\$4.50* allowed  
*Nevada County* }

Now on this day ~~comes~~ the claim herein & heretofore filed is presented & submitted to the Court & upon examination the Court finds that said claim is for three wild cat skins and is of opinion that said claim should be allowed.

It is therefore considered, ordered & adjudged by the Court that said *A. F. McKelvey* do recover of & from the County the sum of *\$4.50* & that he have a warrant therefor issued, & that the County pay all costs herein.

*It is*

I came across this old record concerning my great grandfather, Alexander Fletcher McKelvy, at the Nevada County court house. Evidently, he had filed a claim for \$4.50 for three wild cat skins and the court said the claim should be allowed. This is the type of interesting stuff you can find searching these old records. Now I wonder what type of wild cat was roaming the woods of Nevada County in 1889. There must have been a bounty offered for their skins. As you know, we do have a "Wildcat Rd." near Prescott.

### Re: Old Time Remedies, Mary Ann Sanford writes:

I thought I would tell you about an old time remedy that my mother used on me probably around 1966. I sprained my ankle one morning. That night mother spread red clay that had been mixed with cider vinegar and wrapped my ankle up with some cloth. Next morning the swelling and pain was gone, so I was able to go to work. Probably just being off my foot all night is what helped, but you would not have been able to convince my mother of that.

There was another remedy that was used on me when I was a child. I would have a lot of pain in the calves of my legs. Daddy would rub my legs with turpentine and the pain would go away. I know this worked because he tried rubbing alcohol one night when we were out of turpentine. Still had the pain and kept crying.

Sometimes I wonder if we wouldn't be better off if we used some of these "Old Time Remedies" instead of running to a doctor with everything.