

Jerry McKeiv's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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sandman43@att.net

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**A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY IN ARKANSAS
SAVAGE MURDER OF A YOUNG LADY BY HER LOVER
CONFESSION AND EXECUTION OF THE MURDERER**

Reported in The Ouachita Telegraph, Monroe, Louisiana—January 20, 1872

We find in the Washington, Ark. *Telegraph* a communication giving the details of a most barbarous tragedy near that place, it being no less than the murder of a young lady by the man to whom she was engaged.

The correspondent thus explains the means by which the murderer was discovered, the young lady's remains having been found in the woods terribly mutilated, without any proof to identify the criminal.

The jury of inquest continued to sit until the matter was thoroughly investigated. A main spring of a pistol was found where the murder was committed, and this was the clue that led to the detection of the fiend. The pistol that spring belonged to had to be found. It was proposed that every man that had that kind of pistol in the neighborhood should produce it. Norwood, having broken his pistol, conceived it to be necessary to produce another one--as it was known that he had one on the day of the murder. He therefore went to Murfreesboro and borrowed one from a friend, and, when called upon produced it instead of the one with which he committed the murder. But unfortunately for him, that same pistol had been in the neighborhood before, and at once was identified as belonging to a Mr. Davis at Murfreesboro, although he alleged he had traded for it from a traveler. Mr. Davis was at once sent for and he disclosed the whole secret. After this was discovered to Norwood, he made a full confession which I give in his own words. He says:

Myself and Miss Holt were in the room together at Mrs. Nelsons (13th). She promised to send me a note. She had wrote me a note before that stated she would send me another one in a few days and tell me what she would do. I asked her to tell me then what her reasons were for putting it off. She told me she would send me an answer the next morning. She told me there had been a great deal said about it--more than I knew. I asked her to tell me what it was, but she would not tell me. I asked her if she intended to marry me. She told me she would do it if she could do it in peace. I came home and put up my mule and staid [sic] at home a little while and then went down to the corner of Mrs. Nelson's field. Stayed there until she came. I walked to the road and spoke to her--I told her I wanted her to tell me that evening what she had promised. She told me she could not tell me then. I, at that time, was walking along side of her horse holding the bridle rein. I saw she was frightened. I told her not to be scared as I did not intend to hurt her (several times). She told me that she would tell on me. I told her I did not want her to do that, as I did not intend to hurt her at all. She hallowed [sic] a time or two. I saw that I had gone so far that I would have to kill her, or do something else, *i.e.* get out of the way. I drew my pistol out and she screamed. I told her I did not want to hurt her. She screamed and I walked around on the left hand side of the horse. She screamed at that time. I then shot her on the horse four times. She then fell off the horse. I think I caught her as she went to fall. She was not dead then. She said the Lord save me. Not being dead and lying on the ground, I cut her

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throat with my knife (I think 3 cuts). I struck her several blows over the head with the barrel of the pistol. In striking her over the head, I broke my pistol. I did not bite her hand. I then left and went through the woods close to the 16th section and crossed the road half way between our house and Mr. Nelson's field, and went to the creek and washed my hands, then came on home up the creek. I threw [sic] the pistol in the woods near the 16th section field. Early on Dec. 14th, I went and got the pistol and brought it home and put it in the corn-crib in the yard on the left hand side.

The victim of this foul deed is thus described:

Mary Teresa Holt was fifteen years old on the last anniversary of her natal day. She was beautiful in form, in figure, and in grace; possessed of inestimable virtues and devoted piety. Kind and gentle as a dove. She was idolized by her relations, beloved by her friends, and admired by all with whom she became acquainted. Captivating in manners and disposition, loving and magnanimous, she was indeed the star of the social circle, and the flower of the family. She was the daughter of Mrs. Harriet C. Holt and the youngest of them all.

The lover and murderer of Miss Holt had a common-place history which is thus noticed:

Robert W. Norwood was a young man of some 21 or 22 years of age, light complexion, heavy built, some 5 feet, three or four inches high and would weigh about 140 or 145 pounds. He was rather prepossessing in appearance and had a high reputation in the community. He was of good parentage and the host of friends he had were loth [sic] to believe him guilty of so foul a crime.

Norwood's execution was summary as may be seen from the following:

After this confession was made, an infuriated populace were fully determined to lynch the fiend, but some influential citizens dissuaded them. He was placed under a strong guard of some twelve men, who were compelled to keep themselves secreted during the whole of Saturday night in order to save the prisoner from the hands of the citizens. On Sunday morning, about 11 o'clock, he was taken from the guard by some 100 armed men, and hung to a tree, about a mile and a half from where he committed the deed. He was drawn up about fifteen feet and choked to death.



Mary Teresa Holt Grave Marker
Ozan Cemetery –Hempstead County

Sentiment on bottom of stone:

Daughter, thou wert mild and lovely
Gentle as the summer breeze
Pleasant as the air of evening
When it floats among the trees

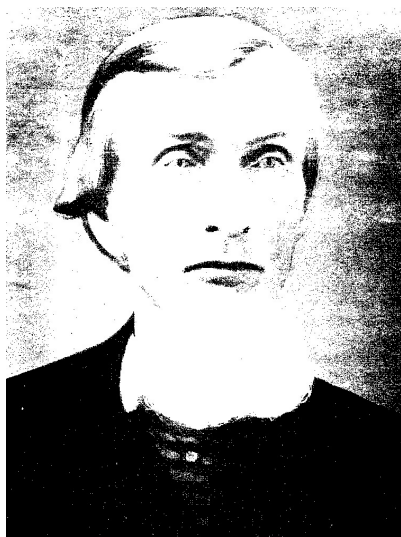
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DR. SIMEON JABEZ HESTERLY

First a little background information (from the book *Hesterly & McKelvy Genealogy* by Frederick P. Looney)

The Summers, Hesterly, and McKelvy families once lived as neighbors in Coweta Co., Georgia. About 1859, the three families, along with other families, migrated to Arkansas. Francis Berry Hesterly had married Elizabeth Ann Summers in 1847 in Georgia and the couple had several small children. She became ill on the trip to Arkansas, died, and was buried near Monticello, Arkansas. Francis Berry Hesterly was left a widower with six small children on his way to a new home in Arkansas.

Jabez McKelvy was along on the trip with his wife and 11 children. His oldest daughter, Mary Ann, was unmarried and took care of the small Hesterly children after the death of Mrs. Hesterly. The Hesterly and McKelvy families settled in Ouachita County about 20 miles west of Camden. The Hesterlys settled on the left side of the road between White Oak Creek and Bluff City and the McKelvys settled a few miles southwest of Bluff City.



Francis Berry Hesterly (*pictured at left*) married Mary Ann McKelvy, the oldest daughter of Jabez McKelvy, in 1862. Three sons were born to this marriage--Simeon Jabez (Jabe) Hesterly, William Starling (Dutch) Hesterly, and James Ezra, called "Little G" who only lived four days. Mary Ann died in 1870, four days after James Ezra's death. Mary Ann and James Ezra were buried at Ebenezer Cemetery near the center of the cemetery. Francis Berry Hesterly was again left with several small children. His oldest daughter, Delila Mildred, had married Isaac Pinkney McKelvy, a son of Jabez McKelvy. All the other Hesterly children were still at home, the oldest girl being 16 years old.

In 1871, Francis Berry Hesterly married Rebecca Frances McKelvy, another daughter of Jabez McKelvy and sister of Mary Ann, his second wife. One son, Albert Pinkney Whitfield Hesterly, was born from this marriage. He was the last child of Francis Berry Hesterly.

Francis Berry Hesterly moved to the Rocky Hill community near Bluff City. He died in 1898 and was buried at Ebenezer near the center of the cemetery where his second wife and son were buried along with other early members of the Hesterly and McKelvy families. His son, Dr. Simeon Jabez Hesterly later placed a large monument at his grave.

For some reason, the graves of his two wives also buried at Ebenezer and the child, James Ezra, were only marked with rocks. Family records show the location of their graves, so I thought it would be nice if their graves could be marked with monuments showing their names and dates. I contacted Thomas F. "Mack" McLarty III, great-great grandson of Francis Berry Hesterly and Mary Ann McKelvy. You may remember that name. He served as President Bill

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Clinton's Chief of Staff during the Clinton presidency. Mr. McLarty agreed to purchase monuments for the three graves mentioned and they were installed this month. There are other unmarked graves from both the Hesterly and McKelvy families at Ebenezer Cem., but these are the only ones we are able to identify from family records. A fence once surrounded the Hesterly and McKelvy graves in the center of the cemetery under the tall cedar trees, but it had fallen down and was removed.

At least three of the six sons of Francis Berry Hesterly became doctors. Dr. Francis Pennington Hesterly is buried at Moscow Cemetery, Dr. Simeon Jabez Hesterly is buried at DeAnn Cem., and Dr. Albert Pinkney Whitfield Hesterly is buried in an unmarked grave at Ebenezer.

Francis Berry Hesterly never talked much about his family or things of the past. He would always say, "When I left Georgia, I burned all my bridges behind me and I don't want to talk about the past."

Now, to the subject of this sketch--Dr. Simeon Jabez Hesterly



Simeon Jabez Hesterly was born in 1863, the son of Francis Berry and MaryAnn McKelvy Hesterly. He studied medicine at night in the offices of Dr. Harris in Prescott and attended medical school in Memphis. He began his medical practice at Bluff City in 1895, practicing there about five years before moving to Prescott. He did further studies at Chicago and New York.

He married Sarah Gibson and had five children--Berry Francis Hesterly (a druggist), Bertha Ann Hesterly, Jacob Bradley "Jake" Hesterly (a doctor), Beulah Hesterly, and Ernest Hesterly (a jeweler).

He served as a physician for over fifty years and was very active in church and civic affairs. He was chairman of the board of deacons at the First Baptist church, was on the Prescott city council from 1912 to 1916, was vice-president of the Bank of Prescott when it was founded, vice-president of the State Medical Society and member of the examining board, board member of Ouachita College, city and county health officer, and the local physician and surgeon for the MoPac Railroad and Prescott and Northwestern Railroad.

He died in 1941 at the age of 77. He was survived by three sons, Berry Hesterly, Dr. J. B. Hesterly, and Ernest Hesterly and two daughters, Mrs. Wren Scott and Mrs. Otho Stephenson. He had always said he wanted to be buried at Ebenezer with his "kith and kin", but his wife died first and the family decided that DeAnn Cemetery would be their final resting place.

Dr. Hesterly's name was mentioned frequently in the early newspapers of Nevada County since he was involved in so many civic affairs. In connection with his position as county health officer, Dr. Hesterly submitted this article for the 8-23-1912 issue of *The Nevada County Picayune*.

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DR. S. J. HESTERLY ON THE GENERAL HEALTH OF NEVADA COUNTY

Arkansas, taking all in all, is one of the healthiest states in the union, and Nevada is one of the very healthiest counties of the state. I base this study upon twenty years study and practical experience in the county and a general knowledge of the healthfulness of other states. The health of Arkansas, at one time, it is true, was very poor, because of the lack of hygiene and unsanitary conditions, but that was years ago, and is a thing of the past. The general health of Arkansas has wonderfully improved in the last ten years, on account of better sanitary conditions, better living, and a better understanding of the facts. Add to this a general improvement of the river banks, the draining of low lands, and the adoption of modern methods of preventing disease, together with better dwelling houses, we have eliminated all unhealthy conditions to a great extent, and placed Arkansas on a par with any section of the United States.

For years malaria, chills, fever, and kindred troubles frightened the stranger long before he ever came south. Today, in Prescott, or in Nevada County, we have but very, very little malaria, and rarely in malignant form, owing to the improved sanitation.

Pneumonia is a condition which we have occasionally, but this is not at all prevalent on account of the genial climate and the fact we have no sudden changes from warm to cold weather, etc.

Typhoid fever is not prevalent at all, but we occasionally have a few cases in autumn. In this particular locality, we now seldom have typhoid, since the installation of our artesian wells and water system.

We have a low mortality rate which does not exceed that of any other section of the country, and I do not believe Nevada County has a peer anywhere in this respect. The very finest of water, climate, and rational living make for the best of health among our people.



Charlie and Minnie Starnes Henry

The Charlie Henry House

This was the home of Charlie and Minnie Henry and was located on Hwy. 299 out of Bluff City next door to our place. The house was torn down for the lumber in 1988. Charlie Henry was my grandfather.

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Here are two bottles from my bottle collection. Can you tell me anything about these? The one on the left has no other markings except on the back states that it is a product of the Seven-Up Bottling Co. The Milde's soda bottle has the slogan 'Has No Equal' under the name and was a product of the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Jackson, Missouri. Do you remember drinking these sodas?



THE GOOD OL' DAYS

Sometimes I think of what my life might have been like if I had been born fifty years earlier.

Oh, I know life was hard in those days. I'm sure I would miss all the modern conveniences we have today and I know life is easier now for most people as far as work is concerned. It's hard to imagine working all day for fifty cents or walking several miles to school each day like our ancestors did.

I can remember when \$1.00 per hour or \$40 dollars a week was the usual pay for general labor. I even worked part time when I was in college for fifty cents an hour writing parking tickets on campus, but I remember the old folks talking about making railroad ties and using a cross-cut saw for fifty cents a day.

Imagine living in the late 1800s when there were no televisions or radios, no electricity, and no computers. Probably 90 percent of your neighbors would be farmers if you lived in a rural area. There were no automobiles, so horses, buggies, or wagons were the main forms of transportation. Those living in the rural areas had to make occasional trips to the nearest town to get needed supplies, and that trip might take all day. I can remember my uncle talking about heating a rock in the fireplace to put on the wagon to keep their feet warm on the trip to town in the winter. If you were a kid, you didn't mind trips to town. In fact, you looked forward to them because you would see new things and a different lifestyle from what you were accustomed to on the farm. You might even be allowed to buy a few treats or maybe a toy if the crops had been

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good that year.

Families were large in those days. Sometimes there were as many as a dozen or more kids. I don't see how families managed, but somehow they did. The older kids helped watch after the younger ones and the whole family pitched in to see that all the chores were done. All this helped to bind the family together.

Most women did not work outside the home. They had plenty to do watching after all the children and keeping everyone fed and clothed. I wonder sometimes how this country would survive these days if we had another "Great Depression" like in the 1930s. The old ways of doing things have all but disappeared. Those folks knew how to skimp and save. They knew how to substitute when they didn't have exactly what they needed and no way to get it. I'm afraid most folks living today in this country are spoiled and think there could never be another time like the Great Depression of the 1930s. There is an old saying that history repeats itself, and very few people these days are happy with our current economic situation. Our country is deeply in debt, gas prices are high, food prices are rising, unemployment is high, and more and more people are expecting the government to take care of them.

Just think how it was in the 1930s. There was no Social Security program for the elderly. When Grandma and Grandpa got old and unable to work, the family had to take care of them. Going to a nursing home was not an option in those days. Many of the modern antibiotics had not yet been discovered, so a serious illness like pneumonia was likely to result in death. Anyone over 70 years old was considered "an aged person". One advantage of having large families back then was that usually some of the children lived nearby on their own farms and could help care for their parents. These days the children are scattered to the four winds and may only see their parents a few times a year.

It seems to me that there was more interaction between families in those days, especially those who lived on the farms. Neighbors visited each other when they could and maybe even helped each other with jobs such as cutting hay or canning vegetables. Church services and school functions were well attended even with all the work that had to be done.

Many farmers would take a break on Saturday afternoons and sort of wind down from a week of hard work. The older boys might be given the afternoon off to enjoy a ball game with other boys in the community or maybe go fishing or swimming. It all depended on how much work there was to do. Work always came before pleasure in those days because so much depended on it. As the saying goes--"if you don't work, you don't eat".

Work came to a halt on Sundays except for taking care of the farm animals. It was a day of rest for the farmer and his horses. The day was devoted to church services and resting from a week of hard work. School and revival meetings were both planned around the farm work. When the kids were needed to help with planting and harvesting the crops, the schools were closed and reopened when the busy season was over. Revival meetings were planned for a time when the crops had been "laid by".

I wonder what those old-timers would say today if they could see the younger generation

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and some of us older ones spending hours playing video games, computer games or watching television. Their idea of a game in those days was a ball game or a good game of checkers. Ball games provided bodily exercise and checkers exercised the mind. Hunting and fishing required skill and provided food for the table.

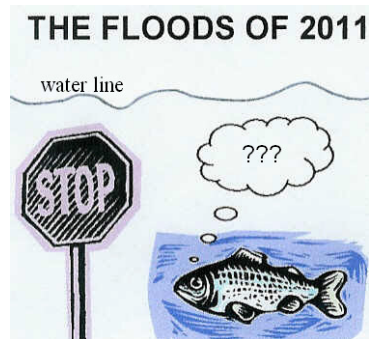
I'm pretty sure that our ancestors would have something to say about the way some of the young folks dress these days. I think every generation tries to push the limits with their fads, etc., but I'm afraid Grandma might have fainted if she had seen kids in public with their pants down to their knees and their underwear showing. If kids had tried that in the old days, there would probably be a trip to the woodshed and some Bible verses to memorize.

I identify more with rural people since I grew up on a farm. We were not rich by any means, but we always had plenty to eat. I think if I had to go through a great depression that lasted for several years, I would rather be living on a farm than in the city. As long as a family had a few cows, some chickens, and a place to grow a garden, they could probably survive if the house and vehicle were paid for.

New inventions have greatly changed our way of life. They just come too fast these days. That brings up another huge problem for some people today. Many people are too eager to use their credit cards, buying things they don't really need, and paying just the minimum payment each month. They don't realize they will never get out of debt and many don't seem to care. Credit cards are nice to have, especially when traveling, but it's best to always try to pay the balance due and not let a debt accumulate.

Well, we don't get to choose the time period in which we live, so we just have to make the best of it. I wonder if fifty years from now, folks will be calling these the "good ol' days". If the prices keep rising, those still around may call these "the good ol' days" and tell the young folks about the days when gasoline only cost \$4.00 per gallon.

AND THE WINNER IS



Thanks to everyone who sent in an entry in the contest to come up with a caption for this little cartoon. I'm not an artist, so I had to use clip art instead of drawing a real cartoon. A few years ago, we were traveling through some flooded farm land in northeastern Arkansas and spotted a stop sign almost submerged by the flood waters. I joked at the time about what the fish might think if they came across a stop sign underwater.

It was a tough decision to pick just one winner, so I decided to choose five captions that I liked best and there were others almost as good. Here are the ones I chose:

“Now the government even wants to tell us fishes where and when to swim.”—Cathy Sraley

“No way—fishes gotta swim; birds gotta fly!”—Irma Evans

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“I thought Noah was just kidding.”—Yvonne Munn

“Well, it’s about time they did something to slow down those upstart young minnows.”—James Hairston

“Man, I must have had a bad dream!”—Shannon Edmunson

There were some duplicate captions submitted also, and it would be hard to choose between two entries which were almost alike. So, I decided to give everyone another chance to win based purely on luck. I counted the total number of people who submitted entries and used a random number generator I found on the Internet to pick the winner. I just put in the range of numbers and it gave me a random number. I then counted down my list to that number and the winner is Ginger Patterson. These six winners will receive a copy of my booklet called “*Hard Times*”. I will be contacting you for your mailing address.

Send me an email if you can draw cartoons and would like to contribute some for the Sandyland Chronicle. I’m sorry I can’t pay you for your work. All I can do is give you credit for your work and some free exposure. Who knows? Maybe somebody will see your work and decide to employ you full time as a cartoonist.



THEY LOOK SO LONELY

By Jerry McKelvy

They look so lonely, those graves marked by rocks
No names, no dates, no flowers to be found,
Nobody ever visits these forgotten graves
Scattered over the cemetery ground.

Perhaps the family was too poor to afford a stone
Or planned to mark the grave at a later time
Grave markers cost a lot of money
And maybe they couldn’t spare a dime.

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One thing on which we all agree
Whatever the reason, it's a shame,
To see so many unmarked graves
With just a rock--not even a name.

Somebody's father, mother, daughter, or son
Early settlers of this land we call home,
What stories they could have told
But alas, they now are gone.

We will never know whose body lies there,
They no more this earth will roam.
We can only take care of their graves
As if they were marked with expensive marble stones.

Of all these rocks, one might catch your eye
You might see a letter or part of a date
A little clue as to who this might be
If only you had not waited so late.

Why not adopt one of these graves
And pretend it was someone you knew,
Cut the grass or pull a weed,
Maybe even leave a flower or two?

We only pass this way but once
But little things like this we can do.
Just think--the person buried there
Might have done the same for you.

Next time you visit an old cemetery
With beautiful grave markers so old,
Think about the lonely rocks,
Those early settlers, and stories never told.

QUESTION FOR NEXT ISSUE

Here's a question for the next issue. How far back have you traced your ancestors? How, why, and when did they migrate to Arkansas? Where did they first settle? What connection do you have to Nevada County or surrounding counties? How did you end up living where you do? If you don't know much about your ancestors, just go back as far as you can. Try to condense it all into one or two short paragraphs and get it to me by June 15 for the July issue.