

# SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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## OLD CISTERN AT GUM GROVE

A source for water was one of the most important things our ancestors considered when they settled the sandy land in Nevada County. Most of the people who didn't have a water well at their home used nearby springs for drinking water. Natural springs are easy to find in this part of Nevada County. Almost every hollow has a small branch fed by springs. A good spring can be developed to provide a ready supply of sparkling, clear water. The only problem for our ancestors was that it had to be carried in buckets to the home which could be quite a chore depending on the distance from the house. This was a good job for the children to do. Most rural areas of Nevada County now have rural water systems which make things much easier these days compared to what our ancestors had.

I think the vast majority of rural homes in the old days had dug wells for a water supply. In most cases, water could be found by digging from 25 to 50 feet deep, but there are some areas where it is almost impossible to find a good water supply. Some people believed water could be found by using a divining rod and usually there was someone in the community who claimed to have the ability to find water using a forked stick to locate the spot where the well should be dug.

Some homes had two or three wells in case one went dry. Any time you are checking out an old home place, be sure to watch for open wells. I have found many covered with old boards or pieces of tin. Leaves accumulate over time and make these old wells very hard to see. I always

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carry a stick to poke around in front of me just in case. It also comes in handy for snakes, etc.

Water wells sometimes needed to be cleaned out or dug deeper. Bennie Clanahan, a black man, was the local expert on water wells back when I grew up. Going down into a well is one job I never wanted to do.

Some people placed barrels or other containers under the edge of their houses to collect rainwater. This was a simple system that required little effort. Nobody considered that these containers of standing water made good places for mosquitoes to hatch. Other people constructed cisterns so they would have plenty of water for washing clothes and other domestic chores. These were mainly used to store rainwater since most were not deep enough to reach an underground water supply. Usually some type of gutter system channeled rainwater from the roof of the house and collected it in the cistern.

The old cistern pictured on the previous page is located across the road from where the Gum Grove church once stood (*about four miles southwest of Bluff City*). Before 1929, the Gum Grove School was located at the same location as the church. It was a typical small country school with about 70-80 students. This location was an important landmark even back in the days of the Civil War. It was in Ouachita County at that time and was called Lone Grove on an 1865 map of Ouachita County. It was one of the earliest settlements in this area and was mentioned in the official military reports as troops moved through the area during the Civil War. A post office existed at Lone Grove from 1858 to 1866.

I would like to know who constructed this cistern and the date, but I doubt if anyone is still living who might know. Adrian Hunter says he lived at this location when he was a small child, but said they didn't use water from the cistern. They used water collected in barrels to wash clothes and got their drinking water from a nearby spring--the same spring that provided drinking water for the students at Gum Grove School in earlier times. The Bob Johnson family also lived at this location at one time.

Mrs. Oleta Nelson says the land once belonged to Bryce Barham. I checked an old ownership map and it shows A. B. Barham (Andrew Brycen Barham) owning 80 acres at that location. A. B. Barham was a preacher who was married to Ethel Hardwick. She also assisted him in preaching at various communities in the area. I have been in contact with their granddaughter who says she remembers hearing the name Gum Grove mentioned. She says they kept their farm while they were away preaching in other communities, the house probably being rented out at various times. Ethel died in 1933 and is buried at Ebenezer Cemetery. Brycen remarried a woman from near Heber Springs. He died in 1963 in Chicago and is buried in a cemetery near Heber Springs. It is possible that the Barhams had this cistern constructed since they owned the land.

The reason the land around the cistern looks so desolate in the picture is that the timber was recently cut. Herbicides were applied to control the brush and the area was replanted this last winter. A new pine forest will soon be seen here.

This old home place is situated in an area of very deep sand. The land is productive if

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plenty of water is available, but I can see where a farmer might have had some tough times trying to farm this land during a dry season. I noticed several prickly pear cactus plants scattered around that survived the chemical treatment. The old foundation rocks from the home can still be found near the cistern along with small pieces of glass and a couple of old medicine bottles.

This cistern is about nine or ten feet in diameter and contained about six feet of water when I measured it. It appears the water level might have been near the top at one time, but it has been extremely dry in this area until recently. If you look closely at the picture, you will notice some objects in the water. These were bull-frogs about four inches long.

I wonder if these type cisterns were covered in the old days. A small child could easily fall into one of these and drown if they were not covered. How did they draw the water from the cistern?

If any of you have any information about this cistern or who might have constructed it, let me know. I am sure this cistern was constructed before 1940.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

Did anyone in your family have a cistern? How was it used? Did you ever have to carry water from a spring? Did you have plenty of "good" water when you were growing up? Get your answers to me by July 15.

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## DR. E. E. SHELL

Dr. Edward Everett Shell was frequently mentioned by some of the older folks when I was growing up. He was the nearest doctor available in that part of Nevada County back in the 1920s. I was unable to find a picture of him and have not made contact with any of his descendants. If anyone has a picture of him, please let me know.

Dr. Shell was born in 1871 on a farm in the southern part of Nevada County and was the ninth child of John Wylie Shell and Nancy America Battle Shell. His parents had moved to Arkansas from Mississippi in 1855.

Edward Everett Shell was a self-made man; his father died when Edward was five years old. He worked on the farm, helping support his mother. He studied medicine at night in Dr. G. O. Marsh's office and attended Tulane Medical School in New Orleans in 1890. The next year he attended the University of Tennessee and graduated in 1893. He practiced medicine in the vicinity of Cale, Arkansas for 36 years before moving to Prescott in 1929.

He did much for the up-building of each community in which he lived. He was a useful citizen, a faithful friend, and spent a great part of his life's earnings in charity. He married Emily Ella Gulley in 1894 and they had three children: Sarah America, Minos Duncan, and Ruby

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Eleanor. His wife died in 1924 and he remarried to Ellie Adams Dewoody in 1930. There were no children from this marriage. (*this information was written by his daughter, Ruby Eleanor Shell, wife of Roy Duke*)

Dr. Shell also practiced medicine at Theo. I have an old land ownership map dated 1950 that shows a large tract of land as the Dr. E. E. Shell estate. This land was located just north of Theo and is now part of the Fred C. Gragg Supertree nursery.

Dr. Shell died unexpectedly on Nov. 18, 1938 on a trip to Memphis when he was hit by a bus. He and his first wife are buried at DeAnn Cemetery in Prescott. His second wife is buried at Bluff City Cemetery.

The Men's Bible Class of the Methodist church in Prescott had this to say about Dr. Shell after his death: "Dr. Shell was a useful citizen, a faithful friend, a devoted husband and father, a consecrated Christian, and a loyal member of this class and of the Methodist church"

A tribute to Dr. Shell written by Menna Lea Trexler was published in the 11-24-1938 issue of *The Nevada County Picayune*.

## **Tribute to Dr. Shell**

A useful man has passed away into a better life.  
No longer does he have to view this world of human strife.  
A friend in need, a friend indeed, truly, so, was Dr. Shell.  
He did his duty here on earth and he did his duty well.

Those patient hands that now are stilled have quelled many a pain.  
Those hands that had become so skilled will never work again.  
He has gone to his eternal rest; his life here came to an end.  
Now that he has passed away, this county's lost a friend.

He lived his life unselfish, a man of kindly deeds,  
With the people's own welfare at heart and their many needs.  
He will be missed, both near and far, by his many friends.  
We hope he finds a rich reward as his journey ends.

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## **COL. MONCRIEF MAKES GOOD ON A BET He Wheels J. B. Stone Through the Streets of Prescott in a Wheelbarrow (from the 4-6-1908 issue of *The Daily Picayune*)**

Last Saturday afternoon, a large crowd of Nevada County citizens witnessed a spectacle of patriotism seldom to be witnessed. It was the wheeling of J. B. Stone through the streets of Prescott by Col. Otis Moncrief in payment of an election bet.

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At three o'clock, Messrs. Moncrief and Stone met at the McDaniel Hardware store, and before the wheeling began, Col. Moncrief made a speech. He referred to the fact that he was an ex-Confederate veteran, a man who had stood up before bullets and had been in many hard fought battles for four long years because of the conviction that the cause for which he stood was right, and that inasmuch as he had made the bet to wheel Mr. Stone through the streets of Prescott in case Mr. Donaghey was nominated by the Democrats as their choice for governor, he was there to make his bet good. He called attention to the fact that so long as he had been a resident of this county, no one could say that he had ever failed to make his word good. He laid particular stress upon the fact that it made no difference how trivial or how great was the consequence, that it was always the best policy to make good. He said that he had supported Mr. Kirby in his race for governor, but now he was as good a Donaghey man as was the man whom he has to wheel, and with that he proceeded to his task. Mr. Stone, who weights two hundred or more, carried a large banner with "Hurrah for Donaghey" painted on it.

Mr. Moncrief wheeled Mr. Stone from McDaniel Harware store to the corner of the Bank of Prescott. Many witnessed the wheeling, and taking the day and the deed as a whole, Col. Moncrief was the lion of the occasion.

## **SOME MORE THINGS CONCERNING POLITICS**

Political candidates usually make it a point to show up at any large gathering of people so they can make a good impression which might translate into more votes at election time. One of the most famous political events in Arkansas is the annual Coon Supper at Gillett, an event that started over fifty years ago. Major candidates usually show up in Gillett to meet the people and sample at least a little of the barbequed raccoon. Former United States senator Dale Bumpers once said on the floor of the U. S. Senate that one misses the Gillett coon supper at his own peril. Some say it's a bit greasy, but others seem to like it. Plenty of ketchup is always available.

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All it takes to get votes is to do something to get people's attention. Even an unknown candidate can sometimes do better than expected. Remember Monroe Schwarzlose? He was a 78 year old turkey farmer from near Kingsland, Arkansas who was able to get 31 percent of the vote against Bill Clinton in the race for governor of Arkansas in 1980. Mr. Schwarzlose only spent \$4,000 of his own money in the campaign. He was known for passing out home canning recipes as part of his campaign literature.

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## **CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR PARACHUTES AT GURDON**

Dr. Walter Scott McNutt, an Arkadelphia history professor and minister, was an independent candidate for governor back in 1940. He had been an instructor in parachute jumping for the Army and used this skill in his campaign. He spoke to a crowd of 2,000 people at the Gurdon airport in June, 1940. It had been advertised that he would make a parachute jump while at Gurdon, but it was discovered somebody had forgotten the parachute. Two men were sent to Hope and soon returned with two parachutes. Dr. McNutt strapped on both of them and took off

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from the airport and jumped from a height of 2,000 feet. He had planned to descend to the airport, but instead made a bumpy landing in Fred Wright's cow pasture a mile away. He only used one of the parachutes.

The news story of Dr. McNutt's parachute jump was even reported in the *St. Petersburg Times*.

*Note: Dr. McNutt was the grandfather of Barbara Ray, one of my readers who now lives in Texas. She says he was a bit eccentric. After the election, he and his wife moved to Jefferson, Texas. By the way, the winner of the election for governor in 1940 was the Democratic candidate Homer Adkins who received 91.36% of the vote. The Republican candidate, H. C. Stump, received 8.22%. Dr. McNutt only received 866 votes, less than one percent. Arkansas was a one-party state at that time. Whoever was nominated by the Democratic Party was pretty much assured to win the election.*

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## PRESCOTT 100 YEARS AGO

### Items from *The Nevada News* in July, 1911

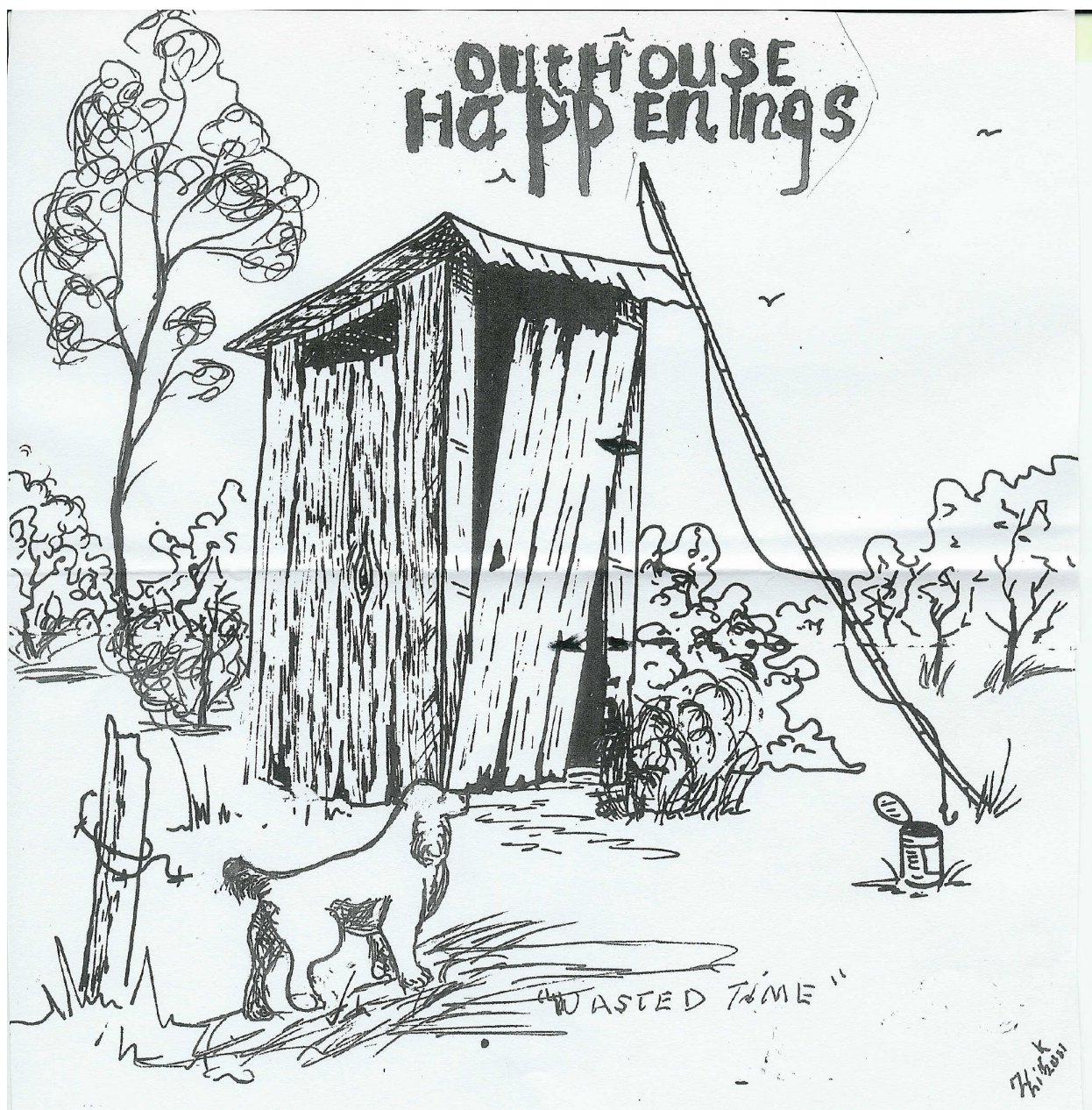
- Hundreds of people died from the extreme heat in the central and western states.
- The Fourth of July was quiet in Prescott. The afternoon temperature was 104 degrees.
- Prescott Hardware advertised a New Process "non-explosive oven".
- Prescott was a growing town with dozens of new dwellings, new business houses, a new gin, a sewer system, and work was about to begin on constructing a new court house.
- The first Elberta peaches from the Highland orchards passed through Prescott on the way to Pittsburg, PA. Over 500 train car-loads of peaches and canteloupes were expected to be shipped this season.
- J. W. McKelvey advertised hot and cold baths at both the east and west side barber shops.
- A rural comedy sketch called "Troubles of a School Teacher" was playing at the Air Dome on West Main Street.
- Ozan Mercantile Co. advertised barefoot sandals for the little folks for 50 cents to \$1.00 per pair.
- Prescott Hardware advertised a plow for every type of soil.



I found this tiny blue bottle a few days ago. As you can see, it is only a little over one inch tall and the diameter is a little larger than a nickel. I figured it must be some kind of medicine bottle and that the product it contained must have been very potent. I found a bottle like this for sale on the Internet, but it had the cap and label. The label said it was quinine sulfate, a medicine for malaria in children under one year of age.

That's my guess. If you know for sure what it is, let me know. I've added it to my bottle collection.

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I knew some of the readers of *The Sandyland Chronicle* had some artistic talent. Mrs. Zettie Griffith Link sent me a few of her sketches. If you don't know what an outhouse is, you are probably too young to be reading *The Sandyland Chronicle*. Mrs. Link grew up in "the Sandy Land" near Bluff City not far from where I was raised. Thank you, Mrs. Link, for a job well done.

Check back next month for more "Outhouse Happenings".

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## READER'S COMMENTS

*I asked in the last issue if anyone had learned how their ancestors migrated to the United States, where they lived in this country, your connections to Nevada County and why you ended up living where you do. Only a few readers tried to tackle this.*

David Cummins of Sarasota, FL writes:

Charles Cummins, Scotch-Irish, married Rebecca McNickle in County Down, Ireland; had some kids and came to America. Settled in Shippenburg, PA and had some more kids. Charles got a bit ticked with the Quakers and trekked to Mecklenburg, NC. There the tribe split and my side went to Surry Co., NC, then to Nashville, TN and then to Hickman Co., TN. One brother, John Overton Cummins saw it better in AL and trekked to Tuscaloosa, Northport and Reform, AL, buying land. It was better and other brothers followed to Reform. One brother, TN David married up with Sarah Lowdermilk, whose family had trekked to Reform from NC. Had David. Sarah's father was Elliott Lowdermilk and was familiar with a Johnson report about the land around Washington, Hempstead, CO, AR. Elliott thought his land at Reform was lousy (I visited it, and agree). In 1858 Elliott gathered up the several families, slaves and material and trekked to Washington. Sarah kept it together during but soon after the Civil War the Tennessee David died and Sarah held it more together. The Reform David met and married Martha Anna Laughlin from Columbia Co. Elliott gave Sarah a large piece of land in Prescott so the Reform David and others (including Sarah) lived there. The Prescott David was born on that land in Prescott. If Prescott David had not gone to the USN, I too would be a Prescott David.

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Wanda Carter of Garland, TX writes:

I have been able to go back three generations on the McKelvey, Steele, Weaver, McLemore, and Larkin. I was able to accomplish this on the McKelvey's with the the help of Dave McKelvey sending me information on the McKelvey. Robert Steele was married to Jane McKelvey Steele. They came from Tennessee and settled in Batesville, Arkansas. That is where Robert Steele and his wife Jane are buried. William Henry Weaver married Agnes Eleanor Steele and moved to Lamar County, Texas in the early nineteen hundreds. I was born 1932 in Grayland, Texas to Noble Henry Weaver and Gertrude (Larkin) Weaver. I married Albert M. Carter, Jr., September 3, 1955 and have lived in Garland every since.

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Fred Hawkins of Garland, TX writes:

### Ancestors of Rachel Alayna Hawkins

Rachel Alayna Hawkins born 09/19/1979 at Presbyterian Hospital of Dallas. She is a teacher at Cooper Ele. School in Garland Tx. Rachel's mom and dad are Lana S. Irvin Hawkins and Frederick Arthur Hawkins. They are living in Garland Tx. Fred's mom and dad were Margaret Tyson Stott Hawkins and Glen E. Hawkins. They lived in Camden, Arkansas. Glen's mom and dad were Vadis Wage Hawkins and Arthur S. Hawkins. They lived in Camden, Arkansas. Arthur's mom and dad were Sallie Turner Hawkins and John Gaston Hawkins. They lived in Sayre Arkansas. John's mom and dad were Marth Ann Gill Hawkins and Dr. Isaac Hawkins. Isaac got his Doctor's degree from Medical University of South Carolina. Both Isaac and Martha Ann lived in York Co. South Carolina and moved to Ouachita Co. in 1850 and got married. Isaac's mom and dad were Letty Hawkins and Johathon Hawkins. They lived in Union County South Carolina. Johathon's mom and dad were Margaret Hawkins and Isaac Hawkins. They lived in Union Co., South Carolina. Isaac's mom and dad were Martha Hollowell Hawkins and James Hawkins II. They lived in Union Co., South Carolina. James II's mom and dad were Mary Elliot



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Hawkins and James Hawkins. They lived in Philadelphia Co. Pa. James's mom and dad were Dorothy Mattock Hawkins and Jeffrey Hawkins. They lived in Wiltshire, England and emigrated to Pa. in 1682.

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Jerry McKelvy writes:

My McKelvy family came to America from Northern Ireland in 1767, landing at Charleston, SC. John McKelvy married Mary Stuart and lived in Laurens Co, SC. They had 16 children. From there, they spread out in all directions—some going to TN, some to GA and AL, and some stayed put. Some added an extra “e” in the name (McKelvey). My gg grandfather, Jabez McKelvy went to Coweta Co., GA for a few years and then to AR about 1859, settling near Bluff City. I still live within 25 miles of where they first settled in Arkansas. I continue to find distant cousins scattered all over the United States who are descendants of the original couple that landed at Charleston in 1767. I also have good information on the Henrys, Kirks, Moores, and others to whom I am related in some way. It’s amazing how many people you can be related to and not even know it until you do some research.

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Jeanie McKelvy (my wife) writes:

I have had good luck tracing my mother’s side of the family (the Hardestys). Many of them migrated from Maryland to Ohio, Indiana, and later to southeast Missouri where I was born. My father’s family (the Gribblers) is a different story. I can trace them back to 1860 in Missouri, but how they got there and how they got to this country from Austria is a mystery. I ended up in Arkansas due to marriage. Through research, I have found that one branch of my husband’s family once lived only 15 miles from where I was born. They had migrated from SC to TN and then to MO. You never know who you might be related to until you start researching. While researching my Hardesty line, I discovered that I am a third cousin to actor Richard Chamberlain (*Dr. Kildare, the Thornbirds, and others*). I wrote to him and was surprised to receive an autographed picture of him.

Betty Kirk Thomas of Arlington, TX writes:

Climbing the family tree can be addictive! I always claimed that I really wasn't interested and when my Grandpa Morgan died, my cousin Charlotte Woody said she would like to do some research but really didn't have any idea where to begin beyond the Bluff City Cemetery. I remembered my dad Horace Kirk mentioning that when he and my mother Nellie Mae Morgan got engaged he told his great aunt Amanda about it. Aunt Amanda Wadley said, "Oh, that's Dol Morgan's granddaughter--he was a baby on the wagon train when we came from the East. (EAST WHERE??) My dad got out some old family records that had been handed to him when he bought his Grandpa Kirk's property in 1942 (the Kirks do NOT throw out anything--I have tax receipts going back to the Civil War.) That was when we discovered land patents. One of them was granted to Wiley Kirk for serving in the War of 1812. I wrote to the General Services Administration and was sent all the military records of Wiley Kirk, including his application for a pension. On that application was information about his marriage to Precious Sharps in 1814 at Montecello, Georgia, so we finally had a "jumping off" point. Charlotte has been a lot more diligent than I. She put together the Morgan side of the family and traced it back to James Morgan born in Glamorgan, Wales, U.K. in 1643. We have not found when the Kirks came from Scotland and have traced them back to Jessie Kirk, born in 1762 in North Carolina.

My ancestors evidently were farmers. Not much was known about crop rotation and preservation of the soil in olden times and land was farmed until it was "wore out" and folks moved on to new land. One book that I saw showed a lottery for Georgia Indian Lands and Jessie was one of those who won a tract.

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One hundred sixty acres were granted to Wiley Kirk for his service in the War of 1812 and his son James Marion acquired the land patent and purchased more land to go with it in Arkansas (our property in Nevada County).

Aunt Amanda Wadley told my dad about the wagon train coming from "back east" and stopping over in Mississippi to "make a crop" before coming on to Arkansas so the trip took two years. That was the first time I had ever heard of stopping over to raise food for themselves and their livestock before continuing on the journey.

Earlene Mendenhall Lyle writes--

The Mendenhall family has been traced back to the 13th century, with the name in earlier times being Mildenhall -- the name of a village in England. The family is both Prussian and Norman in origin, having arrived in England at the time of the Norman conquest. One of the most notable accounts of this family occurred with Queen Elizabeth I appointed Sir John Mildenhall as her ambassador for trade to the empire at New Delhi. In 1771, when Guilford Co, NC was created, the village of Jamestown was named for James Mendenhall, a Quaker who had located there after first migrating to Pennsylvania. George, his son, laid out the town of Jamestown. James' sister, Lydia, was the gr-gr-gr-gr-grandmother of Richard Milhous Nixon. While she remained in Pennsylvania, several of her siblings moved south to North Carolina near Jamestown. During the American Revolution, British troops camped nearby and confiscated, among other things, the one remaining milk cow. With a houseful of children to be fed, the mother marched after the troops and, after an argument, walked back down with her milk cow.

Thomas Marmaduke Mendenhall, my ancestor, moved on down from NC to Alabama where he married Mary Ann Caldwell. Their first few children were born in mid-Alabama before the family migrated westward around 1835, settling in a place called Caney in Nevada Co., AR. Thomas' 10th child, Andrew Jackson Mendenhall, was my great-grandfather who married 1) Celestia Marsh and, after her death, 2) Elvira Ledora Shultz, my great-grandmother. Andrew was discharged from the Confederate Army in May 1865 when Elvira was just 5 years old! Their son, Harrison, was my grandfather who gave me my precious 'daddy', Homer. All of us, including me, were born in Prescott, AR; however, after marriage (and my birth), my parents moved to Minden, LA, which is where I was raised.

Marriage into a heavy-construction family took me all over the country until we moved to Alabama in 1970 where moved into careers and, now, retirement! Life has been, and still is, good -- not anticipating the next phase!

Charlotte Woody writes:

I always enjoy the *Chronicle*, however, I found the last issue particularly enjoyable. I remember Mr. Charlie and Mrs. Minnie well. I have tried several times while driving that way to determine where their old home stood.

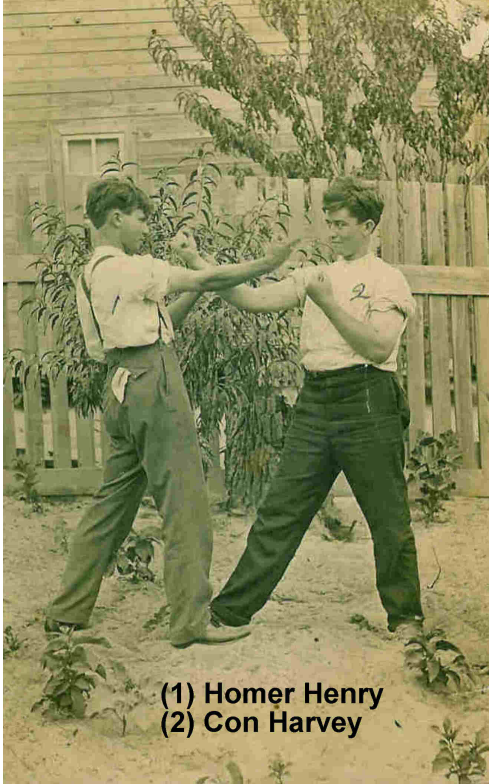
Recently I have done some work on my *Cottingham Family* files. I knew that "Dutch" Hesterly married the sister (Willie Cottingham Pruitt) of my grandmother (Barbara Cottingham DeWoody) so it was quite interesting to read his family history. Somewhere during my research, I believe I saw that he was a school teacher at Bluff City. I am assuming he was related to you because of the McKelvy connection.

I also remember Dr. Jake Hesterly, who was our family doctor in Prescott for a lot of years. I remember Hesterly's drug store. Thinking back to the times when I grew up in this area, it is amazing and sad how the town has declined.

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What is also amazing is to realize how very much I am now a part of the "older" generation. Many of my memories of growing up in rural southern Arkansas seem comical (and unimaginable) to my younger nieces and nephews. As you said in your article, times were hard because everyone had to work hard to earn a living and provide for their families; but we were mostly happy, living what many would consider a simple life. Many times during my working years I have been proud that I was taught the work ethic of the people in the area where I lived. The ability and determination to pull my weight and do my best has served me well. One of my father's favorite sayings to us was "A job worth doing at all is worth doing right." I also learned that not doing it right the first time meant you had to "hoe your row over."

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(1) Homer Henry  
(2) Con Harvey

## AN INTERESTING OLD PICTURE

These young men were from Bluff City. Con Harvey operated a general merchandise store for many years in Bluff City. Photo date is about 1907.

I wonder what the plants are. It looks like they might be standing in the flower bed or garden. That could spell trouble!

## DEATH

I am sorry to report that Mrs. Pearl Henson passed away in Zambia, Africa May 31, 2011 at the age of 93. She and her husband, Lloyd have been missionaries in Africa for 42 years. Mrs. Henson contributed several articles for *The Sandyland Chronicle* in 2009 regarding her experiences in Zambia. Our sympathy is extended to the Henson family. Their dedication to the spread of the gospel is to be admired.

Don't forget to send in your answers to the questions on page 3 for the next issue.