

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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**OUR CEMETERIES—
SOME ABANDONED AND NEGLECTED**

Most folks in this area know about the active cemeteries, but many don't realize there are many old abandoned cemeteries or family burial places. Some are in very remote areas and no longer accessible by ordinary vehicles. Some are behind locked gates on private land.

The map on the next page shows the location of all the cemeteries I know about along and close to the Nevada-Ouachita county line north of Hwy. 278. The cemeteries are marked on the map with a red circle and are numbered. Below are some comments about each of these cemeteries.

1. **Abandoned Cemeteries at Terrapin Neck**—One is just off the right-of-way of Hwy. 24. I found one headstone leaning up against a tree for Mary F. Barnes Woodell (1852-1876) – wife of A. M. Woodell. Pieces of other markers were found. This cemetery was possibly destroyed by the construction of Hwy. 24. Another abandoned cemetery is directly behind the church building at the intersection of Hwy. 24 and 57. I found newspaper accounts of four people buried there with surnames Barringer, Cottingham, Franklin, and McLelland.

2. **Heldebrand Graves** – a small family plot surrounded by a chain link fence near the old Heldebrand home place. Contains the graves of Daniel Jefferson Heldebrand (1813 – 1900) and Mary Jane Heldebrand (1835-1907). They have grave markers.

3. **DeWoody Graves** – I have not located these graves. The family says George William C. DeWoody (1798-1854) and Isabella Gates DeWoody (1800-1871) are buried here.

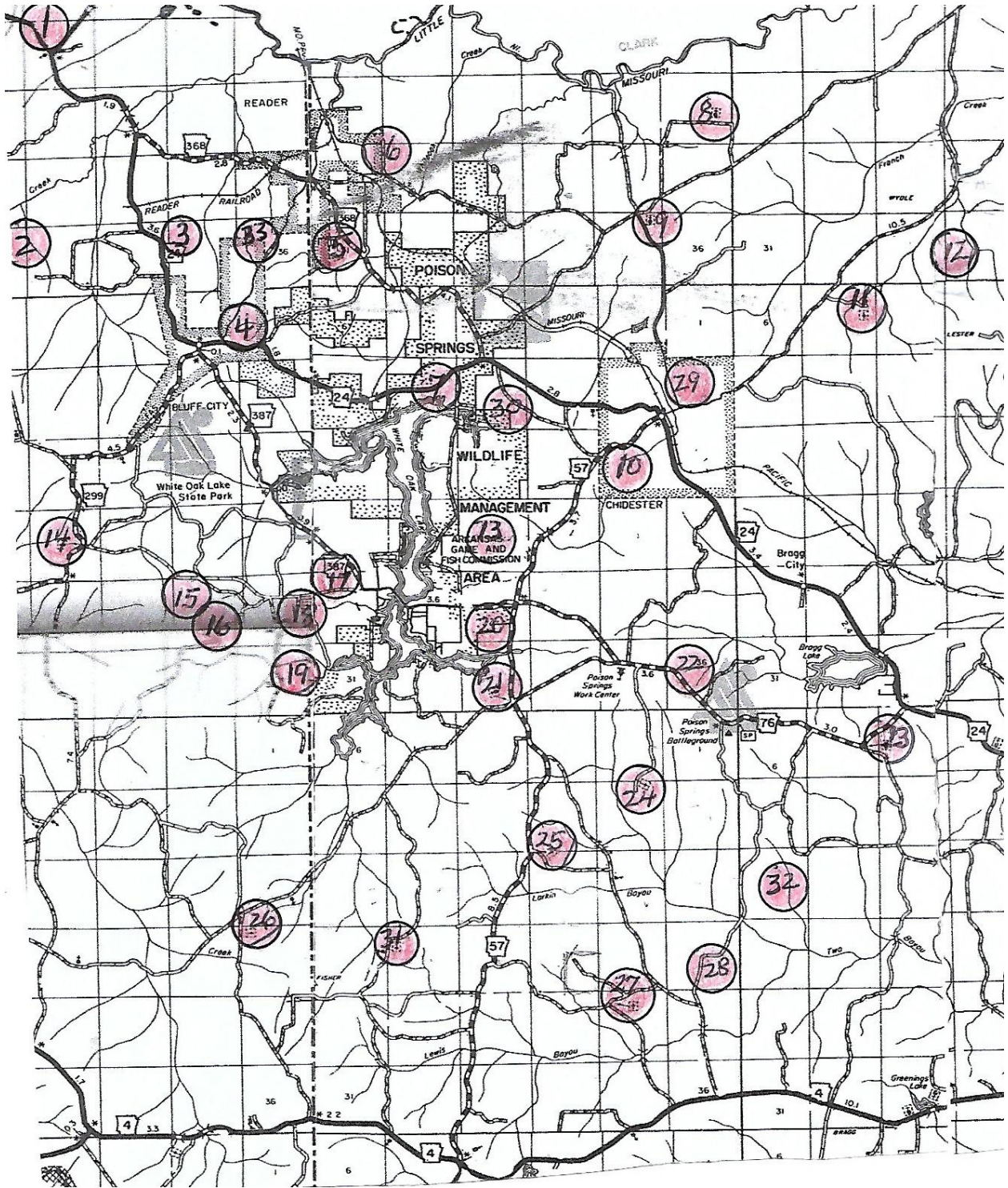
4. **Bluff City Cemetery** – a very large active cemetery containing about 1400 graves.

5. **Turner Cemetery** – On Hwy. 368. Active cemetery. Well-maintained and fenced.

6. **Wallace and Hawkins Graves** –at the old town of Sayre. Wallace graves west of road. Hawkins graves down a dim trail east of road. Several unmarked graves here according to family descendants.

7. **Abandoned Cemetery**— south side of Hwy. 24 and east of Starnes Landing Rd to White Oak Lake. Ellis "Goat" Harvey who lived nearby as a child said Hwy. 24 was constructed in 1928 and reported that one day, he picked up a skull and two silver buttons
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that had washed out of the high bank along the highway. His father made him take the skull and buttons back and bury them inside the cemetery. The name of the cemetery is unknown. Two graves are covered with a mound of native rocks and at the head of those graves is a marker for Little Mary, daughter of J. L. and F. A. Donaldson born 1883 and died 1891. Another more modern memorial marker was found for John W. and Anna Rogers Frizzell (no dates). A few native stones were found marking other graves.

8. **Missouri Cemetery** – active cemetery near Little Missouri River

9. **Red Hill Cemetery** – active cemetery at Red Hill Methodist Church.

10. **Abandoned Cemetery** – Marked graves with names Kirby and Butler. Oldest marked grave is Adam Butler who died in 1867. Three Kirby graves are marked. Some refer to it as Kirby Cemetery. A few native stones were also found. I have not been to this cemetery since it is on private land. This information is from an article written by Harmon Ross for the Ouachita County Historical Quarterly. Mr. Ross was a former manager of Poison Spring State Forest.

11. **Capernaum Cemetery** – a small black cemetery about three miles northeast of Chidester. An old church building was across the road from the cemetery, but the roof had collapsed when I was there in 2007. Approximately 100 graves are here.

12. **Powell Cemetery** – a small cemetery about five miles northeast of Chidester. It was not being maintained when I was last there in 1996. The last burial was in 1960. The road was so bad then that a winch truck had to be used to get the body to the cemetery. Several graves are surrounded individually by rock walls. Some of the surnames here are Dunn, Coker, Nussey, Bird, Bragg, Anderson, and Bratton. Edwin Bird, a veteran of the Spanish-American War, is buried here. The cemetery is sometimes called the Bragg Cemetery.

13. **Abandoned Cemetery** – According to Mr. Harmon Ross, he discovered this cemetery in 1952 and the markers were all intact. He returned 26 years later and found that logging equipment had broken or moved some of the markers. He had a crew to clean up the damage and they re-set the markers as best they could. I visited this cemetery in 2000 by riding a four-wheeler to it. I recorded all the names I could find. The oldest marked grave is 1834 and the last burial was in 1865 just as the Civil War was ending. Surnames found here are Parker, Lyerly, Steele, and Smith. It is believed to be a white cemetery.

14. **Ebenezer Cemetery** – about four miles southwest of Bluff City. The oldest marked grave is from 1853. The cemetery is active and contains about 500 graves.

15. **Gulley Family Cemetery**—located on the Arbor-Gen nursery property. The land was once part of the John Gulley plantation. It contains about 30 graves and is now being

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maintained by the timber company. Can be accessed by getting permission at the nursery office.

16. **St. John Cemetery** – a black cemetery at the former location of the St. John Baptist Church. Access to the church and cemetery was difficult at times. The congregation moved to a new building closer to Bluff City on Hwy. 299, but continued to use the cemetery. The cemetery is now fenced and better maintained than in the past. Best access is from the north via road through the Arbor-Gen nursery property.

17. **Holleman Cemetery**—an active white cemetery near White Oak Lake. Well maintained. A man, aged 100, told Mr. Harmon Ross that a black cemetery was once located just outside the present fence at the cemetery, but the graves have been lost.

18. **Mt. Moriah Cemetery No. 2** – a small black cemetery. A small church was here at one time, but the congregation moved and built a larger church on Hwy. 57 near Chidester. The cemetery is still active and a large area has been fenced.

19. **Mt. Moriah Cemetery No. 1** – It took me a while to find this old cemetery and I had to ride a four-wheeler to find it. This was the first location of the Mt. Moriah church and is south of what is known as Grayson Pond. It is in a very remote area and is not being maintained. There is evidence of about two dozen graves here.



20. **Pharr Cemetery and Steele's Chapel Cemetery** – I used the same number for these since they are only about 50 yards apart. Steele's Chapel Cem. is fenced and has a sign on the gate. Steele's Chapel ME church was once located here. It is believed that Good Hope Chapel AME church (black) was located nearby and later moved further south. Surnames here include Pharr, Rushing, Pool, Cathey, Evans, and Toney (believed to be black). The Pharr Cemetery has not been maintained very well.

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21. **Good Hope Cemetery** – an active black cemetery next to the Good Hope Baptist Church
22. **Paradise Cemetery** – located near Poison Spring State Park north of Hwy. 76. It is covered with mature timber and only one marked grave was found – that of S. G. Goodlett who died in 1869. Mr. Harmon Ross spoke to an elderly man who told him about the Paradise Church that once existed there and also told him about a coal mine shaft that extended underneath what is now Hwy. 76. A few months ago, a young couple from Texas contacted me about the burial place of their ancestor, S. G. Goodlett. I flagged a trail for them off the highway so they could find his grave. They said they would have never found it without my help. Mr. Ross said they found evidence of many unmarked graves there. I wonder if some of the soldiers killed at the Battle of Poison Springs might have been buried there since it is near the battlefield and evidently existed at the time of the battle.
23. **Bell Chapel Cemetery** – an active white cemetery next to Bell Chapel Methodist Church.
24. **Purifoy Cemetery** – an old white cemetery on a dead-end road south of Hwy. 76. No recent burials there. I haven't been there in several years.
25. **Adams Cemetery** – a small white cemetery with occasional burials. Well maintained.
26. **White Church Cemetery** – has a white and black section separated by a fence. The black section is still active. Only a few burials in the white section in recent years. A church was once located there for the white congregation. The colored church was about a half mile to the east and was known as Waters Chapel. Some very old grave markers can be found in the white section. Many are broken or hard to read.
27. **Crain Cemetery** – an active white cemetery east of Adam's Chapel Rd.
28. **Gillespie Cemetery**—Three graves – M. A. Williams, Civil A. Gillespie, J. Gillespie
29. **Chidester Cemetery** – an active white cemetery in Chidester
30. **Rowe Cemetery** – a family cemetery on county road off Hwy. 24. Maintained by family members.
31. **Hickory Ridge Cemetery**—a small black cemetery. The Hickory Ridge congregation moved a few years ago to a location on Hwy. 24 near Camden.
32. **Hunter Cemetery**—I called this Hunter Cemetery because almost all the people buried there are Hunters. This is an abandoned black cemetery deep in the woods.

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33. **Union Grove Cemetery** – an active black cemetery located next to Union Grove Baptist Church between Bluff City and Reader.

WORDS I NEVER USE

I was reading a paperback book the other day and came across the following words. I didn't know the meaning of them, so therefore I didn't really understand what the author was trying to say. Evidently, this author was a very educated woman to even think of using these words in her book.

After each word, I have included a little of the context in which the word appeared in the book. I looked up the words in the dictionary and included the meaning of the word. I guess a person never gets too old to learn something new, but I don't like having to consult a dictionary when I'm reading a book to understand the story.

1. cognoscente – “a cognoscente like him”

Dictionary definition – a person who has expert knowledge of a subject

2. reliquary – “a reliquary of the past”

Dictionary definition – a container or shrine in which sacred relics are kept

3. beignet – “She was puffed up as a beignet”

Dictionary definition – a light square doughnut usually sprinkled with powdered sugar

4. dilettantish – “his dilettantish behavior”

Dictionary definition – an admirer or lover of the arts

5. habiliment – “his accent and his habiliment”

Dictionary definition – clothing characteristic of an occupation

6. avuncular – “appealed to him in an avuncular way”

Dictionary definition – suggestive of an uncle, especially in kindness and geniality

7. acolytes – “he was one of your acolytes”

Dictionary definition – one who assists a leader by performing minor duties

Rainfall for August – 2.1 inches

Total for the year – 57.6 inches

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Don Mathis submitted this article which might bring back some memories from your own school days.

At a thrift store last year, I found a book, "A Father's Legacy, A Lasting Heritage for Your Children." It contains more than 200 blank pages to record "your family history, your childhood memories, humorous incidents, and meaningful traditions from your own life."

It offers writing prompts (in italics) to generate a personal biography (my interpretation is in boldface); my working title is centered.

What was your favorite sport or outdoor activity? Why was this your favorite?

Tell me about your playground

Recess!
(by Don Mathis)

Monkey bars were multiple grids of galvanized pipe bolted together about every 2½ feet. They were easy to climb, hard to fall off of, but easy to bump your head upon.

The metal slide was blistering hot in the summer and the wood handrails were weathered with age. You couldn't hold on to the edge because you'd get splinters. A thick ½ inch sliver of wood went up my elbow one time; it's still there. The best slides were 20 feet off the ground.

The merry-go-round was the most popular – and the most dangerous. Kids would stay on until they puked with dizziness. Children would try to enter the spinning platform, misjudge the speed, and hit their teeth on the iron handles. Other kids would fall off the spin cycle and hit the ground tumbling. Eight-year-olds would sit with their feet hanging off the edge, a five-year-old would come walking by and get kicked in the gut or butt.

A horizontal ladder allowed us monkey-boys to cross a 12-foot span, hand over hand, with legs a-dangling. I wouldn't stop until I got huge water blisters on my hands. I'd pop them and peel the dead skin off of my raw, red palms. But a few days later, I'd do it again!

And then there was the see-saw. It gave kids a sense of balance – and splinters covered with lead paint. It allowed pre-teens a platform to walk up one side, balance on the fulcrum, and step down the other side. Once in a while, one kid would actually sit on one end, another kid on the other, and they would rock back and forth. But only for a while. Invariably one kid would try to jolt the other one off. Souvenirs from this apparatus included tailbone injuries, chipped teeth, and crushed fingers.

Nowadays, playgrounds have climbing walls, Tic-Tac-Toe boards, steering wheels, pipes that can convey voices between playmates, maybe a plastic ball pit, suspension bridge, or a zip-line; all of it positioned above a ground covered in wood chips or foam padding

Playgrounds still have slides (plastic, not metal) and swings (now for the disabled, yay!) but the dangerous fun stuff has all been removed. In an effort to minimize harm on the playground, schools and parks actually minimize enjoyment. Is there a correlation between risk and fun? More research is needed!

(Don Mathis of San Antonio is the son of Bernadine Walker Mathis Gillespie, born 1925 in Bluff City, and Daniel Hearnberger Mathis, born 1921 in Fordyce.)

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Thanks, Don for the memories. It's a wonder we all made it to adulthood when I think about some of the dangerous things we did growing up. We did get hurt occasionally, but a few bumps and bruises back then were just considered a part of growing up.

I think the most dangerous thing we had around our house was a "flying jenny". It was actually an old truck axle placed in some concrete at a slight angle with one end (the wheel hub) sticking up. A board was fastened to the hub and it would go around and around—close to the ground on one side and high in the air on the other side. It was like a see-saw that went in a circle instead of up and down. If one of us had fallen off and that board had come around and hit us in the head, we would have been permanently brain damaged or dead. It was dangerous, but fun to ride. I guess it was considered too dangerous because it didn't stay around too long. Even the regular seesaws are considered too dangerous for most school playgrounds these days.

I remember trying to learn how to ride a bicycle. I had to stand on a bale of hay to help me get on the seat and of course, I had a few wrecks before I learned how to ride it. Somehow, I survived childhood without having any broken bones from bicycle wrecks, climbing trees, swinging on a rope swing, and all the other fun things we did growing up. I feel sorry for kids these days who spend so much time with electronic gadgets and miss out on all the fun and creative things we did growing up.

Feel free to share some of your memories on this subject of school recess and the type games you played or the playground equipment at your school.

WHAT IS IT?

I had lot of fun with one of these when I was growing up. Hint: A small chain was attached to it and it was about six or eight inches wide. Send me your answers or take a guess.

