

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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PRESCOTT'S MOVIE THEATERS

Motion picture entertainment in Prescott dates back to at least 1908. Electricity had only been in Prescott a short time. When electricity first came to town, it was only turned on at night. Motion pictures shows were silent films until the late 1920s except for musicals and the quality was very poor. Vaudeville shows were popular during that time. The first movie with sound was "Don Juan" in 1926. The sound was recorded on a wax record that was synchronized with the film projector. Many theater owners refused to adapt to the taking pictures believing that the "talkies" would never replace silent pictures.

Dick Baird contracted with Dr. S. J. Hesterly in June, 1908 to lease a plot of ground east of the court house that joined Dr. Hesterly's residence for the purpose of constructing an air dome to be operated in the summer months. The motion pictures at that time were being shown in the Denman building on West Main St. Lumber was brought in for the air dome and construction was expected to be completed within a week. I could not find a picture of this air dome or a description of it, but we know that some lumber was used in the construction of it.

A week later, an ad ran in the paper for the electric theater in the air dome. Admission was ten cents. Dick Baird was the owner and Arl Warmack was in charge of the theater. Mr. Baird also operated other theaters in Hope, Arkadelphia, and Camden.

Open Every Night at 7:30
The Gem Theatre
Showing the latest in motion pictures
Always a good show; sometimes
a great show
PROGRAM
A Thanksgiving Surprise
The Gloved Hand
The Station Agent's Daughter
Get the habit—visit the Gem
Open every day at 7:30 p. m.
Popular Prices, 5 and 10 Cents

In 1912, the Gem Theater is mentioned. This is the ad from January, 1912. E. W. Barnett was the manager. The Gem Theater Co. also owned several theaters in other cities in Arkansas. The Gem advertised admission prices of five and ten cents. In September of that year, an orchestra was included to provide music with the shows and the theater offered Saturday matinees.

In 1937, The Nevada Theater opened on East Elm Street. The first show was "I Met Him in Paris" which was the outstanding picture of 1937.

These early theaters also were used as a place for other events. So, for many years Prescott had two movie theaters—the Gem Theater and the Nevada Theater. The Nevada theater was on East Elm St. and the Gem was across the railroad about the middle of that block of businesses.

In May 1953, Jeb Wylie replaced Oscar Peachey as manager of both the Nevada and Gem theaters.

In August, 1953, the film "Cheers for Chubby" was shown as a public service to encourage people to lose weight.

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Evidently, two theaters were not enough for the town of Prescott. In January, 1954, a drive-in theater was opened on Hwy. 67 north with C. R. Gray as the owner/operator. In February, 1954, the Nevada and Gem theaters were being remodeled. In December of that year, the Nevada theater installed wide screen cinemascope with George Wylie as manager.

In February, 1955, the Gem Theater advertised an adults-only burlesque show. In May of that year, Zack Fain became the new manager of the Nevada and Gem theaters.

In June, 1956, there was an Annie Oakley movie party at the Nevada theater with prizes being given to the lucky winners.

In June, 1965, the Nevada theater was destroyed by fire. I don't know exactly how long it was closed but I did find that it re-opened in 1974 after remodeling. Several different people managed the theaters over the years.

Many of us remember going to the movies at the Nevada theater. I'm not sure when each of these theaters closed, but for a period of time, Prescott had three movie theaters operating. Today, we must travel to a larger city to find a movie theater.



Nevada Theater photos. My Gal Sal was a 1942 movie

SOME SOUTHERN EXPRESSIONS

POOR AS JOB'S TURKEY

I've heard this old Southern expression all my life. The book of Job in the Bible tells about how Job lost all his worldly possessions to Satan but did not lose his faith in God. Because Job remained faithful during all his trials, God restored to him even more than he had lost.

This expression has been around for many years and is often used to mean someone who is really in bad shape financially. It was said that Job's turkey had only one feather and was so weak it had to lean against a fence post to eat.

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Actually, Job didn't have a turkey. Turkeys are native to North America.

BLESS YOUR HEART

An expression of sympathy

FIXIN' TO

Getting prepared to do something

DOESN'T AMOUNT TO A HILL OF BEANS

Not worth very much

MORE THAN CARTER'S GOT PILLS

This expression comes from a man named Samuel Carter who sold Carter's little liver pills which were very popular in the late 1800s. The expression means a great number of something. About a hundred years after Carter began selling his little liver pills, it was discovered that they had nothing to do with the liver, so the Federal Trade Commission forced him to quit advertising them as liver pills. He just removed the word "liver" and called them Carter's little pills.

MADDER THAN A WET HEN

Chickens don't like to get wet, so being as mad as a wet hen means you are really mad.

'TIL THE COWS COME HOME

Means a long period of time. Cows sometimes keep grazing and won't come to the barn. I remember as a young boy having to go over in the field and round up the cows and drive them to the barn.

IF I HAD MY DRUTHERS

Means "I had rather do something"

SHE'S AS PRETTY AS A PEACH

Self-explanatory. A ripe peach hanging on a tree is beautiful.

IF THE LORD'S WILLING AND THE CREEKS DON'T RISE

Means I will do something unless I am providentially hindered.

WELL, I DECLARE

HE WAS AS FUNNY AS ALL GET OUT

Very funny. Means extreme, however it is used.

HEAVENS TO BETSY

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Nobody know who Betsy was. Some think it might have been Betsy Ross who designed the American flag.

TOO BIG FOR HIS BRITCHES

Somebody acting like he is grown up when he is not.

WELL, I SWANEE

I've heard this all my life, although it was sometimes shortened to "I swan". Some think it comes from the Swanee River in Georgia. Others think it is used instead of saying "I'll swear" like using "doggone" or "dadgum" in place of a curse word.

WENT OUT LIKE LOTTIE'S EYE

Nobody knows who Lottie was or how her eye went out. Means the end of something. Clyde Barrow of Bonnie and Clyde is quoted as saying "I'm just going on 'til they get me, and then I'm out like Lottie's eye".

LIVING IN HIGH COTTON

Cotton was once the main crop grown in the South. Means being successful or wealthy.

CATTYWAMPUS

Means something that is crooked or out of sorts

POT CALLING THE KETTLE BLACK

Being guilty of the same thing you accuse someone else of doing

ABOUT TO FLY OFF THE HANDLE

Someone who is pushed to the limit or about to lose their temper

DOOHICKY

Name for an object for which you don't know the correct name.

GIVE ME SOME SUGAR

Means give me a kiss

A YANKEE DIME

Also means a kiss or a hug. Older people in the South sometimes tell their grandkids "If you will bring me a glass of tea, I'll give you a Yankee dime".

CARRY ME TO THE STORE

Means provide transportation to take me to the store. I was reminded about this when I was in Missouri and told someone I had to carry my car to the Ford place.

THAT DOG WON'T HUNT

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An idea that won't work or an excuse that will not fly

HISSY FIT

A temper tantrum. I've also heard the term "conniption fit".

COKE

Any carbonated beverage—not just Coca-Cola.

PLUMB

Totally or absolutely such as "plumb tired out" or "plumb crazy"

RAINING CATS AND DOGS

A heavy downpour—sometimes called "a gulley washer" or "a frog strangler".

These are just a few common Southern sayings. I use many of these myself. You might have to explain them to someone visiting from another part of the country.

Sometimes people make up new words such as:

Warsh and rench (wash and rinse)

Too tejus for me (too tedious)

Roseneers (corn -- roasting ears)

Blinky – (milk that has gone bad)

Stove up—(I'm all stove up from cutting that firewood.)

Get shed of --- (As soon as I get shed of these)—get rid of

Het up – (He got all het up about that.)—heated up

I get amused by some of the posts on social media when people use the wrong word such as:

A teenager posted this—"Anybody want to talk? I am board." (should be bored)

"Your good dead will never be forgotten" –(should be deed)

Someone posted a picture of a new baby and said "my little angle". (should be angel)

"God must have liked stupid people. He made a hole bunch of them". (should be whole)

RAINFALL RECORD

I received 5.8 inches of rain in September. That makes 62.2 inches for the year so far which is about 10 inches above normal. The wettest month was April with 10.4 inches and the driest was July with 3.4 inches.

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THE DEATH OF MARK TWAIN (as reported in the 4-22-1910 issue of The Prescott Daily News)

Redding, Conn., April 21—Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain) died painlessly at 6:30 o'clock tonight of angina pectoris. He lapsed into a coma at 3 o'clock this afternoon and never regained consciousness. It was the end of a man worn out by grief and acute agony of body.

Yesterday was a bad day for the little knot of anxious watchers at the bedside. For long hours the grey, aquiline features lay molded in the inertia of death, while the pulses sank lower and lower, but late at night, Mark Twain passed from a stupor into the first natural sleep since he returned from Bermuda and this morning he awoke refreshed, even faintly cheerful and in full possession of all his faculties.

He recognized his daughter, Mrs. Ossip Gabrtiowitch, spoke a word or two, and, feeling himself unequal to conversation, wrote out in pencil, "Give me my glasses." These were his last words.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT MARK TWAIN

His real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens.

The phrase "mark twain" is a steambot term meaning two fathoms deep.

Mark Twain was born Nov. 30, 1835 on the night Halley's Comet came.

He was born in Florida, Missouri.

He named his dogs I Know, You Know, and Don't Know.

He ran away from home often.

He hated to go to school.

Mark Twain thought he would die when Halley's comet returned and he was right. He said, "I came in with Halley's comet in 1835. It's coming again next year (1910) and I expect to go out with it". Twain died on April 21, 1910, one day after the comet's closest approach to earth.

Remember November 11 -- by Don Mathis

Children become soldiers; there are a thousand reasons why.

Some will die in combat, others will survive.

I won't forget their sacrifices, their families who had to wait,
and their careers they put on hold. So, if it's not too late,

I want to thank the veteran. What he had to do, he did.

Soldiers grow old too fast. It seems yesterday he was just a kid.

We can flower and flag the cemetery. We can shed a little tear.

We can offer our thanks to the living veterans who are still here.