

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

JERRY McK ELVY, EDITOR

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THE “BATTLE” OF LACKLAND SPRINGS

Lackland Springs was once a well known resort area in Nevada County. It was located about 12 miles east of Prescott near Caney Creek off what is now known as County Rd. 290. The community of Lackland once had a school, churches, post office, and was the home to several families.

Lackland Springs was a mile or two south of the community. It was a favorite camping spot for people from miles around and was known for the medicinal qualities of the water in the springs. There were six or seven different springs producing water thought to cure many types of medical problems. People would come to the springs and camp out for days at a time, fish in nearby Caney Creek, and drink from the springs. The springs were very popular back in the days of the Civil War and the popularity continued well into the early 1900's.

One article about the springs reads: “Lackland Springs is Nevada County’s health and pleasure resort. A half dozen springs bubble out from a series of hills in Redland Township and form a cluster that is not only of rare natural beauty, but also contains properties proven beneficial in more than one disease. For years, each summer has found scores of people camping on the hills above the springs and receiving wonderful benefit from the water and climate.”

For one reason or another, the interest in the springs faded away and people stopped coming. Many blamed the lack of upkeep of the grounds. The article continued, “Let someone build a few small cottages, rid the grounds of underbrush, burn up the ticks and redbugs, keep out the hogs, and clean up around the springs, and there will be a maddening rush for Nevada County’s most beautiful resort.”

It’s too bad that this area was not preserved since it played an important part in the early history of Nevada County. Today the area looks like the surrounding woods and one would never believe it was once Nevada County’s premier resort area.

THE RAID

A tragic event took place near the springs in September, 1923. The following article appeared in the 9-27-1923 issue of *The Nevada News*.

“In a raid on a still this morning City Marshall Murrah was shot and instantly killed. Sheriff Parker was shot through the hip and Deputy Sheriff Steele McLelland was wounded in the right hip and left side.

The posse left Prescott last night about 9 o’clock. It was composed of Sheriff J. D. Parker and Deputy Steele McLelland, City Marshal Fred Murrah, Constable L. A. Willingham, and his deputy, Willie Martin. They reached lower Redland about 10:30 o’clock and were piloted through the woods by a Negro informer. It was a long search and

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the officers had almost decided to abandon the search. They scattered, some of them going up a small creek and the others in the opposite direction. About 1:15, the Negro returned and stated he had the still located just across the creek. He wanted the officers to go around the moon-shiners and cross the creek so as to approach the still on the opposite side. They refused to do this and advanced to within a short distance from the still.

One of the lookouts for the moon-shiners opened fire on the officers when they were within 20 feet of him. This shot glanced the shoulder of Marshal Murrah and wounded Deputy Sheriff McLelland.

The officers could distinguish forms of five men around the still and immediately opened fire. After a short interval the moon-shiners returned the firing and it was during this that Marshal Murrah received a bullet in his breast that caused instant death. When he fell Sheriff Parker and Constable Willingham immediately went to his side, raised him up, and realized he was dead. It was at this time that Sheriff Parker received two wounds, one in the hip and the other in the side.

Constable Willingham assisted Sheriff Parker to their car, leaving Deputy Willie Martin and the body of Marshal Murrah near the still. They reached Prescott about 4 o'clock and aroused the people. Within a short time there were over 100 people armed and in route to the scene.

Federal officers Wilson, Cooley, and Barkmen arrived here at 9 o'clock from Hope accompanied by Sheriff Dodson and his deputy Jim Bearden and with Constable Willingham went to the still. It was located about one and one-half miles southeast of Lackland Springs. They found two stills, one of them a 40 gallon barrel and the other a 30 gallon barrel, both equipped with copper wires, two gallons of whiskey, 7 barrels of mash, and two empty barrels. The operators had dismantled one of the stills and had just made a "run" on the other. They were located on the A. S. Johnson Lumber Co. land.

Sheriff Parker, Deputy McLelland, and Constable Willingham were armed with shotguns and revolvers. Marshall Murrah and Deputy Constable Martin had only revolvers. The moon-shiners were armed with shotguns and revolvers.

Three of the Negroes are held in jail and there are two others held as witnesses. One of the Negroes was wounded in the wrist and was captured this morning at home about 8 miles east of Prescott. Officers are still out looking for the two who have not been captured and expect to have them in custody this evening.

City Marshal Fred Murrah was serving his first term and had previously held the office of constable of Missouri Township. He would have been 42 years of age tomorrow. He was very popular among the people of Prescott and throughout Nevada Co. As an officer he never shirked duty and as a citizen, he held the respect of everyone in Prescott. The funeral will be conducted by Rev. J. A. Sage tomorrow afternoon at 3 o'clock at the home of his brother-in-law, P. H. Herring. Interment will be in De Ann Cemetery."

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THE FUNERAL

The funeral of City Marshal Fred Murrah was one of the largest ever seen in Prescott. The mayor issued a proclamation that all city businesses should close from 2:30 until 4:00 that day. A crowd of about 2000 people turned out for the funeral and cars were parked for about one mile along the highway by De Ann Cemetery. It took two trucks to haul all the floral offerings to the gravesite. Several members of the Ku Klux Klan, dressed in full regalia of the order, marched to the grave, deposited a large cross of red and white chrysanthemums, kneeled in prayer, and marched away. (from *The Prescott Daily News*)

THE TRIAL

The grand jury had indicted Tom Henry, Dodd Cummings, Lloyd Cummings, and Larkin Butler, a Negro, on charges of first degree murder. Dodd Cummings, age 24, was tried first in November of 1923. He had been wounded twice in the incident, but had recovered. The jury deliberated for four hours and found him guilty. He was sentenced to life in prison.

A few days later Tom Henry, Lloyd Cummings, brother of Dodd Cummings, and Larkin Butler were tried at the same time. Henry and Cummings denied that they knew anything about the still or had any knowledge of the shooting, but other testimony incriminated them. All three of these men were found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. According to newspaper accounts, the jury reached its verdict without leaving their seats.

The trial drew a large crowd of people. The judge admonished those present about making illegal whiskey said "Why in Heaven's name would a man take a gun with him to a still". The newspaper reported a pathetic scene in the courtroom as the verdict was read since the wives and children of the men found guilty were present in the courtroom. The names of the jurors were printed in the paper.

Eugene Butler, a Negro, had died from wounds received trying to escape after his arrest. N. C. Charles, a Negro, was also wounded and it was his testimony that placed those convicted at the scene on that fateful night. He testified that Tom Henry, Dodd and Lloyd Cummings, himself, along with Eugene Butler and Larkin Butler were on the way home from work when someone told them where they could get some whiskey. They met at a certain place on the railroad (the old Reader RR), but were told the whiskey was not ready yet. They were told to come to the still and waited until 1 o'clock in the morning for the whiskey to cook. It was at that time that the officers arrived and the shooting began.

LESSONS LEARNED

On Nov. 11, 1923, Rev. J. A. Sage gave a sermon entitled "Lest We Forget—The Moral Lessons of the Tragedy of Lackland Springs". The newspaper printed the sermon in its entirety which covered a full page in the paper. One paragraph of his sermon reads: "Because of this tragedy, a brave and popular officer is sleeping beneath the sod; two others are wounded for life, three white men and one Negro are in the pen under sentences for life, one Negro is dead and another is certain to die from wounds received on the fateful night of September 25th."

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BLUFF CITY SCHOOL GROUP-ABOUT 1932

*Identified by Mrs. Annie Mae Barlow Greer and Mrs. Aline McKelvy Gresham Claus
Let me know if you can positively identify any of the unknowns.*

Front row, left to right: (1) Herbert Knight; (2) ??? could be a Steed; (3) Estell Starnes; (4) James Harvey, (5) Vernon Creech; (6) Hershel Carter

Second row, left to right: (1) Agnes McGee, (2) Lela Gillespie, (3) Annie Mae Barlow; (4) Thelma Delaney; (5) Myrtie McKelvy; (6) Mae Plyler; (7) Lucy Greer; (8) Gradie Faye Cummings; (9) Dorothy Meador; (10) Aline McKelvy

Third row, left to right: (1) Nathaniel Sarrett; (2) Noel Gillespie, (3) Dervis Knight; (4) Woodrow Carter; (5) Elaine Dunn; (6) Hazel Moody; (7) Glen Gillespie; (8) Gladys Morgan; (9) Euna Norman; (10) boy in striped sweater-???- could be a McWilliams; (11) Lillian Moody

Back rows, left to right: (1) boy in dark coat-could be a Bevill; (2) girl in back- Bertha Mae Cummings; (3) girl with white dress- Ira Grubbs; (4) girl smiling- ??? could be Azell McGee; (5) boy in back by bricks-Travis McGee; (6) boy with hair combed down on forehead- Thurman Wynn; (7) girl in back with white jacket- Carlene Robinson; (8) tall boy by door- John Meador; (9) round-faced boy – Gerald Carter; (10) girl in checked dress by door- Minnie Meador; (11) girl with white trimmed collar- Goldie Barksdale; (12) boy in back right side of door- Vernon Wynn; (13) lady in corner- Teacher, Mrs. Reba Stuart; (14) in front of teacher- Joe Plyler; (15) dark haired boy in back- Everett Wynn; (16) boy with part of face hidden- Roy McKelvy; (17) girl in back- Thelma Greer; (18) girl by window- ????

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ARTESIAN CHURCH AND CEMETERY (Between Prescott and Emmet)

The land for this church and cemetery was donated by Jesse Johnson, Sr. April 20, 1855 by a deed to the Clerk of Hempstead Co. and recorded in Nevada County Deed Book G, pages 166 and 167.

The deed describes 30 acres of land to be a site for the Masonic Hall and church. The church was to be under the care of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Masonic Hall under the care of the Lodge of Masons now established at the place called "Artesian".

No murderers or thieves to be buried here

From the deed:

"A graveyard is to be laid off in the said block of land of four acres—one acre of which is for the interment of people of color and the residue being three acres are to be used as a burying ground for the members of said church and lodge and the citizens of the vicinity, but in no case shall any person be entitled to be buried in said graveyard or any part of the said land above conveyed who was a murderer of a thief."

OBITUARY OF JESSE JOHNSON, SR. Nevada County Picayune 7-16-1885

Jesse Johnson, Sr. died at his home in Prescott July 14, 1885 at the age of 85 years, 6 months, and 14 days.

Mr. Johnson was the most prominent citizen of the community. He was born in Randolph Co., IL on the first day of the year 1800 which was also the first day of the week as well as being the first day of the month. When he was 21 years old he moved to Clark Co., AL where he married. In 1841 he moved from Alabama to Arkansas settling in Hempstead Co. about two miles from where Prescott now stands. There he lived and prospered for many years and ranked among the foremost and highly respected citizens of the county. He raised a large family of children, all of whom became useful and highly honorable men and women.

Mr. Johnson was the founder of Artesian Church about five miles from Prescott where he was buried yesterday with Masonic honors. He donated the ground upon which the church and cemetery are situated upwards of forty years ago and at the same time selected the spot in the cemetery where he wished to be buried. Uncle Jesse Johnson's life was replete with good deeds and he bequeaths to his descendants a name untainted by any act of dishonor. May he rest in peace.

Correction: In last month's issue there was a picture of two young boys sitting on mules. One of the boys was identified on the picture as Lawrence Walker. I am told that that is incorrect. That boy's name should be Haskel Carter, known as "Shag". If that is correct, the picture can be dated about 1917, because Shag Carter died in 1918 at age 12 due to an accident involving a gun.

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Recipes from the 1939 Nevada County Home Demonstration Club Cookbook

APPLE PIE

Use tart apples. Pare, core, and slice apples very thin. Line pie plate with rich crust and fill with sliced apples. Round up apples and press together so the pie will be full. Cover apples with sugar and flavor with nutmeg. Dot over with bits of butter. Moisten the edge of lower crust with cold water. Fold the top crust before laying on pie to prevent breaking of the crust. Press edges of crusts together and scallop the edges. Be sure to leave gashes in top crust to allow for steam to escape. Bake in hot oven (425-450 degrees) for 10 minutes. Then lower heat to 375 degrees. Bake until crust is brown and apples are tender.

Mrs. Albert Barlow—Rocky Hill Club

DOUGHNUTS

4 cups sifted flour	1 cup sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder	2 eggs, well beaten
½ teaspoon salt	2 tablespoons melted butter or other shortening
¼ teaspoon nutmeg	1 cup milk
½ teaspoon lemon extract	

Sift flour once and measure. Add baking powder, salt, and nutmeg and sift together three times. Combine sugar and eggs and add shortening. Add flour alternately with milk, a small amount at a time. Beat after each addition until smooth. Add flavoring. Knead lightly on slightly floured board. Roll 1 to 3 inches thick. Cut with floured doughnut cutter. Fry in deep fat until golden brown turning frequently. Drain on unglazed paper. Sugar if desired. Makes 4 dozen small doughnuts.

Mrs. H. B. Irvin—Rocky Hill Club

FEEDBACK

Jerry,
Just wanted to drop you a note to tell you how much I appreciate your efforts with the Sandyland Chronicle; I know sometimes people don't let others know these things, but wanted to tell you that your E-Magazine means a great deal to me.

Though I did not grow up in Nevada County and my only real connection is through the Jones and Bemis families from years ago, your monthly publication represents a link to my past.

Thanks again, and keep up the excellent work; it is appreciated.

D. M. - Smyrna, Georgia

Editor's Note: Feel free to comment on *The Sandyland Chronicle* (pro or con). Why not try your hand at writing by sending in some family story or something you think would be of interest to the readers. My address is 2680 Warren St., Camden, AR 71701 or email to jmckelvy@cei.net