

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

The mad stone was used for treatment by soaking or boiling it first in fresh, sweet milk and applying it to the wound while still warm or hot. It was applied as many times as it would actually adhere or stick to the wound. Every time it fell from the wound, it was soaked or boiled again, and the milk actually turned green from the stone's absorbed poison. In rural America, when doctors were not always available, I guess one can understand why a mad stone might be someone's only hope.

According to a newspaper article I found from 1899, a former Texas resident said the mad stone was considered an article of religious faith by early settlers of Texas. He said there were so many mad stones one need never go more than 75 or 100 miles to find one. The precise location of each was known to almost every family within its radius. If someone was bitten by an animal known to be or suspected of being hydrophobic, a messenger was dispatched for the nearest mad stone. If there was a railroad, the messenger was carried on a special engine and given the right of way over regular trains. If the journey was overland, the messenger rode at breakneck speed on the fastest horse he could find. When the horse became tired, a fresh horse was obtained and he continued by day and night until the mad stone had been brought to the sufferer. The universal faith in the mad stone and the terror of hydrophobia made all with whom the messenger came in contact contribute to his expedition.

This article says that there is no failure on record of the mad stone when applied to the wound before the later symptoms of rabies appear.

Another article states the mad stone must not be taken to the patient, but the patient must be brought to the mad stone. So, there must have been various procedures used depending on the part of the country in which a person lived.

Other articles I found mentioned that these stones came from a type of European deer and had never been found in this country. Some say a stone from an albino deer was the best, but one from a brown deer would work if that was the only one available. Others mentioned some of the early settlers of this country bringing mad stones with them on their journey across the Atlantic. I found references to mad stones being used in many different states—especially southern and mid-western states. Some say the practice dates back to the 1700's.

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One article says that if the stone was ever sold it would lose its curative powers. I found another reference of a man being offered \$5000 for his mad stone. He said he might sell it for \$10,000 if he was allowed to use it himself if he ever needed it. One article says that the owner of the stone could not charge anyone for the use of the stone

One article I read says what we call the “dog days” of summer (August through early September) were originally called “mad dog days” and that the owners of mad stones were kept busy that time of the year because that seemed to be the time when most cases of rabies occurred.

I would like to know if any of you readers have heard your parents or grandparents mention mad stones. Do you know of anyone who owned one or someone who was treated by one? We learn from our research that they were used in Nevada County as late as 1912 as documented in the news item found by Cathy Straley. It seems that in our area, the patients were brought to the mad stone instead of the mad stone being brought to the patients, but there may have been exceptions. I can see why the owner of the mad stone might not want to loan it out since they were considered so valuable.

We know that many herbs and plants have medicinal qualities. I wonder if some of these remedies actually worked and might have they been lost over the years. I can remember when tobacco juice was considered “first aid” for a bee sting. Even today when I get a burn, I usually break off a piece of our aloe vera plant and apply the juice to the burn. Who knows what cures might be found if more research was done with things readily available to us? We know that some plants are poisonous and are to be avoided, but who knows—other plants may hold cures to some of our most dreaded diseases. Many things are discovered completely by accident.

Thanks to Cathy Straley for sending me the item about mad stones being used in Nevada County. It is always interesting to learn of the folk remedies used by our ancestors. With all the folk remedies and patent medicines available in those days, it's a wonder people lived as long as they did.

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PHILLIP GATES DEWOODY
(commonly known as "Uncle Cool")
Buried at Bluff City Cemetery
(picture courtesy of Charlotte DeWoody Woody)

(See next page for a newspaper memorial printed after his death)

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MEMORIAM OF PHILLIP GATES DEWOODY (from the 5-14-1908 issue of The Nevada County Picayune)

The subject of this memoriam was born in the state of Tennessee Dec. 26, 1833; moved with his parents to Arkansas in 1840; lived in Poinsett, Clark, Ouachita, and Nevada counties. Died near Bluff City, Nevada County, April 28, 1908. Age 74 years, 4 months, and 2 days. He leaves to mourn his death his wife, Mrs. Jane DeWoody; one son, Jas. L. DeWoody, and daughter, Mrs. Kate (DeWoody) Henry, besides a large number of other relatives and a host of friends and acquaintances.

He was an honest, upright citizen; a warm friend to the widows and orphans, visiting them in distress and time of need. He was one of the older Masons in this part of Arkansas; he had been active in furthering and advancing the principles of the noble fraternity for years; he took an interest in the welfare of his country; he was a Democrat in politics and in principle. He enlisted in Capt. Joe White's company in the Civil War; he was a Lieutenant in the 12th Arkansas Regiment infantry; made his escape from Island No. 10 when the Confederate army surrendered at that point; was in many battles and skirmishes. He remained in the service of the Confederacy until the close of the war; he came home to fight another battle of poverty and reconstruction.

He has fought his last battle and conquered the last enemy. He is now camping on the other shore with Lee, Albert Sidney Johnson, Jackson, Cleburne, and thousands of others who have gone before, who died to uphold constitutional rights, liberty, freedom, and individual rights. He will be missed by his neighbors and friends. We will all miss him. He passed peacefully away. Death had no terror to him.

Peace to his ashes and rest to his soul. (Written by C. M. Norwood)

A MARRIAGE CEREMONY WITH A DIFFERENT TWIST

(published in the 9-20-1912 issue of The Nevada County Picayune)

The location was not given in the article, but it is said a local magistrate actually performed a wedding ceremony for Jim and Bet, a colored couple, using these words:

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“Jim, will you take Bet,
Without any regret.
To love and cherish,
‘Til one of you perish,
And is laid under the sod,
So help you God?”

After Jim answered in the affirmative, he then turned to Bet and said:

“Bet, will you take Jim,
And cling to him,
Both out and in,
Through thick and thin,
Holding him to your heart,
‘Til death do you part?”

The happy pair was dismissed as follows:

“Through life’s alternate joy and strife,
I now pronounce you man and wife,
Go up life’s hill ‘till you get to the level,
And salute your bride, you black, rusty devil.”

**from the 2-13-1936 issue of the Nevada County Picayune
(local news column written by Mr. Plyler)**

Again the wedding bells pealed forth their merry chimes when J. C. Bevill of Bluff City and Miss Alvenia Whitten of Rosston route 1 were quietly married at this place Sunday afternoon. Only a few friends witnessed the ceremony. Your humble scribe had the privilege of tying the nuptial knot, and as I chronicle this event, the following comes to mind:

As the law did authorize
I did my best to solemnize.
I hope you two will realize
That your home should harmonize;
Make all your faults a compromise,

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And keep the tears from both your eyes;
Secure a home of modern size
Work like thunder and Hooverize.

MAN DISCOVERS HIS LANDLADY IS LONG LOST SISTER

**Separated for More Than Fifty Years—Pair Have Much to Discuss
(published in the 9-18-1930 issue of The Nevada County Picayune)**

Topeka, Kansas—After having been separated more than fifty years, Mike Warren and Mrs. Sarah Green, brother and sister, now have much to discuss.

Mrs. Green is seventy nine; Warren, sixty-five, and until Mrs. Green came to Topeka to make her home with her brother some weeks ago, the two felt that while each existed, neither was certain.

Mike Warren, employee of the city water department for 20 years, through some twist of fate became separated from his brothers and sisters near Beatrice, Nebraska after his parents died.

Warren married and for years lived at Osage City before coming to Topeka 20 years ago. His brothers and sisters scattered, but from time to time he heard from them, all except the oldest sister, who had married before the death of his parents.

Warren worked for a construction company in Topeka for years and his work took him to different parts of the country. One of the construction jobs was in an Iowa town where he put up at a rooming and boarding house operated by a Mrs. Green.

Warren registered and stayed more than six weeks. He met the landlady, and like other workmen, thought her a very congenial sort and a good cook.

Later the crew went on and Warren forgot about the Iowa job. But all the time he was in correspondence with his brothers and sisters seeking some line on his older sister.

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Recently through a brother he learned his sister's first husband and died and that she married a man named Green. Last heard of, she was running a rooming and boarding house in Iowa.

Following up the trail, Warren found the rooming house operator, who proved to be the sister he had not known as such since he was seven years old. The rooming house business wasn't so good, the second husband had also died, and Warren induced her to sell out and live with him. Mrs. Green, although seventy-nine, is quite active and walks to town, twenty blocks or more.

So, Mike Warren and his sister, Sarah, have much to discuss, and during the winter evenings, they can take up, one by one, the events of their diverging lives of the last half century.

DEATHS IN 2007 (as of Dec. 27, 2007) (Bluff City and Ebenezer Cemeteries)

Edie Mae Wetherington Huffman Sutor (1-3-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Mable Marion Wood Watson (1-10-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Minnie Mae Heldebrand (1-29-2007)—Bluff City Cem. **(see article about her in the August, 2004 issue)**

Herman Orland McKelvy (2-11-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Cora Starnes Bolls (3-20-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Julia Faye Nelson (4-4-2007)—Ebenezer Cem.

Jack L. Stewart (5-6-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Garland Andrew Horton, Jr. (5-6-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Jewell Russell (5-25-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Leslie Ingram-Harbour (6-2-2007)—Ebenezer Cem.

Doris Sarrett (6-11-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Carol Sue Horton (6-11-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Jimmy Bean (8-4-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Peggy Jean Byrd Powers (8-20-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Verda Tunnell Delaney (9-11-2007)—Ebenezer Cem.

Billie C. Greer (10-17-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Bernell Johnson (11-24-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

Dorothy Jean Butler (12-21-2007)—Bluff City Cem.

I regret to report the death of Carlton E. Denny (age 103) on Christmas Day (see article about him in the October, 2004 issue)