

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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THE NAMING OF NEVADA COUNTY **(from information collected by Mrs. Joe Hamilton and published in the 11-14-1947 issue of *The Prescott Daily Mail*)**

A great many of Prescott's citizens will be surprised to learn that they dwell in a "snow-covered" county the year round. The word "Nevada" is a Spanish word which literally means "snow-covered". Although the area was created in March, 1871, and little snow could have been left from the winter, it is unlikely that the literal meaning of Nevada was intended when chosen for its name. The once accepted origin is a complex combination of the early U. S. history and the then "new" state of Nevada.

The eighteenth state legislature of Arkansas created three new counties, the first of which was Nevada County. The act which created it received the governor's approval March, 20, 1871. The county was formed from territory taken from Hempstead, Ouachita, and Columbia counties.

The original statues stated the county seat would be located "at Mt. Moriah". Later, in 1871, the county seat was moved to Rosston, where it remained until 1877, when it was moved to Prescott.

Tom W. Campbell, in his series of articles dealing with the naming of Arkansas counties, has this to say about the selection of the name "Nevada".

"To a student of the geography of the United States, it probably seems strange that one of the 75 counties of Arkansas should have been named for the far-away state of Nevada, the sixth largest state in area and by far the smallest state in population of all the 48 states in the Union. But a glance into the history of the two states at that period will throw light on the reason why this Arkansas county was so named.

"Just at that time, Nevada was the most talked-of state in the Union. It had sprung up like a mushroom, having been formed as a territory in 1858. The following year, the Comstock Lode was uncovered--the richest deposit of precious minerals ever found in the world."

The current interest in and popularity of the new state had a great deal of influence upon the entire nation. The influence in Arkansas was evidenced by the prompt naming of Nevada County. And since she cradled Nevada in her southern boundaries, California adopted the name for one of her counties. These are the only two states having Nevada counties.

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**HESTERLY-McKELVY REUNION
ROCKY HILL METHODIST CHURCH – JUNE, 1967**



ROCKY HILL CHURCH – 1975



ROCKY HILL CHURCH – 1993



ROCKY HILL CHURCH – 1996



**ROCKY HILL CHURCH – MAR., 2008
JUST AFTER TIMBER WAS CUT)**



ROCKY HILL CHURCH – APRIL, 2008 (ANOTHER LANDMARK GONE)

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ROCKY HILL METHODIST CHURCH

The little country church at Rocky Hill has been a landmark in Nevada County for about the last 100 years. My great grandfather, Alexander Fletcher McKelvy, donated two acres of land in 1907 for the site of the Rocky Hill Methodist church. The location was about four miles southwest of Bluff City. The deed was recorded in 1946 in Book 172, page 402 of the Nevada County records.

The community in which the church was located was known as Goose Ankle. The area was well populated at one time, probably reaching a peak in the 1930s. The church was located at a road intersection on top of a very rocky hill, hence the name Rocky Hill. My grandparents lived a half mile west of the church. Some family names associated with the Goose Ankle community are: McKelvy, Johnson, Irvin, Dunn, Parker, Nelson, Sarrett, Tunnell, Griffith, Green, Odell, and Plyler.

Over the years, the church building has been the location for many protracted meetings, funerals, reunions, and probably a few weddings. I can remember attending a large family reunion there in 1967 and also attending the funerals for some of my relatives. There was no cemetery associated with the church. Most of the families that lived there used the cemetery at Ebenezer, about two miles to the southeast.

The building was nothing fancy--just a typical frame building. It was made from rough un-planed lumber (called box planks) and constructed by the members. Improvements were made over the years. Electric lights were installed when electricity came to that area, probably in the 1940s. New outside siding was installed in the 1950s. Folding seats were added, but I'm sure the first seats were just wooden benches. A window air conditioner over the front door was probably the last improvement made to the building.

It served its purpose for many years as a place of worship for many residents of Goose Ankle. By the mid-1970s, most of the old members had passed on. The community was becoming less populated and finally the church closed its doors. Even though the building stood empty for many years, it was still a familiar landmark to me since I passed by it every time I checked on what we call "the old place".

The woods began to slowly creep toward the empty church building. Its floor began to sag and we wondered how long it would last. Finally, the Methodist organization sold it to a Prescott man who later re-sold it to Ronnie Johnson, who is a descendant of old Alexander Fletcher McKelvy who originally owned the land. The two acres also joined other property owned by the Johnsons.

In April, 2008, the Johnson family sold the timber on the land surrounding the church and had the loggers push down the old church building with their skidders. Even though the building was vacant and not being used, it's still sad to see the old church gone since it played such an important part in the lives of my ancestors.

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LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

by Jerry McKelvy

Have you ever been trapped in a high-rise building during a fire? Well, I haven't either, but I once had a first-hand experience of what it could be like.

It all started when the company I was working for informed me that I would be needed to work on a special project out of town. The work was located in several parts of south Arkansas, but we would be spending the nights at the downtown Holiday Inn in Little Rock.

I never cared much for these out-of-town trips since they interrupted my normal routine. The best part was the good food we enjoyed at some of the better restaurants. Since the company was paying for the meals, we ate much "higher on the hog" than we normally did.

Now back to my story. We were all settled in for the night on the fifth floor of the hotel. The company had reserved about ten rooms on the same floor. About 2 a.m., we were awakened by a fire alarm. When I realized what it was, my first thought was to get out of the hotel. I got dressed quickly and had the presence of mind to grab my billfold and my room key and to lock my door as I left the room.

Out in the hallway, I was met by my fellow employees in all stages of dress (or undress). I noticed our supervisor, an older man from our main office, running down the hallway in his bare feet carrying his shoes. Later I heard him explain that during a fire in a tall building, you should not wear your shoes so you can feel the heat from the floor below you and know where the hottest fire would be.

We rushed to the elevator and someone reminded us that we should use the stairs in case the elevator malfunctioned. Another good tip I learned from all this is that you should always locate the stairs before you retire for the night so that you can find them easily in an emergency. You should also count the number of doors between your room and the exit in case the smoke is too thick for you to see.

We went down five flights of stairs in record time since we thought the building was on fire. When we reached the bottom, we saw a sign on the door which read, "An Alarm Will Sound When Door Is Opened". We thought that was good since we needed help. Sure enough, when we opened the door, a loud alarm went off. We found ourselves in a dimly lit alley in downtown Little Rock. We still had not seen any smoke or evidence of a fire, but we felt safer now that we were out of the building. Normally, I wouldn't want to be in a dark alley in the wee hours of the morning, but at least there were several of us and under the circumstances, we didn't have much choice.

Our group of 10-15 people walked around to the front door of the hotel about the time some emergency vehicles arrived. Everything seemed normal--no fire or

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smoke. I don't know how to describe how we looked, but you can imagine what a group of people looked like after being awakened from sleep at 2 a.m. We walked into the lobby and learned what had happened.

Some young people staying at the hotel had purposely set off the fire alarm on our floor. In all the confusion, many guests had forgotten to lock the door to their rooms. When they returned to their rooms, they found some of their property had been stolen. One guy lost an expensive wrist watch and several lost some money. I was one of the lucky ones. I had locked my door and everything was secure.

Needless to say, I didn't sleep any more that night. It was after 3 a.m. by the time we got back to our rooms and with all the excitement, I just couldn't get back to sleep.

I did learn some valuable lessons from the experience including some good safety tips. I rarely stay in a high-rise hotel now. I prefer to not be any higher than the second floor. As the old farmer said, "I don't want to be any higher than picking corn, or any lower than digging taters".

I also check out a hotel now before I turn in for the night. I learn where the stairway is located and check out the little diagram posted in the room that shows where the room is in relation to the stairs. I learned that sometimes you have to leave quickly, so be prepared for such an emergency. Always have a plan for escape.

We laughed about our experience later, but had it been an actual fire, things might have turned out differently.



WHAT IS THIS?

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If you think you know what it is, let me know as soon as possible. The correct answer will appear in the next issue. If you don't know, just take a guess. Don't ask me to reveal the answer until the next issue.

A PARABLE

(from the 5-5-1926 issue of *The Prescott Daily News*)

The camel at the close of day
Kneels down upon the sandy plain
To have his burden lifted off
And rest to gain.

My soul, thou too, shouldst bow to thy knees
When daylight draws to a close,
And let the Master lift the load
And grant repose.

Else how couldst thou tomorrow meet,
With all tomorrow's work to do
If thou thy burden all night
Must carry through?

The camel kneels at break of day
To have his guide replace his load,
Then rises again to take
The desert road.

So thou shouldst kneel at morning dawn
That God may give thee daily care,
Assured that he no load too great
Will make thee bear.

INTERESTING ELECTION IN OUACHITA COUNTY

An unusual election took place in Liberty Township of Ouachita County in 1937. Two candidates (Bailey and Miller) were running for some office. There were 31 registered voters in the township. On Election Day, nobody showed up to vote except for the two candidates. They refused to cast a vote for themselves, so the election results reported to the court house were Bailey-0 and Miller-0.

In 1912, there were 6,338 schools in Arkansas—235 were brick, 5,592 were frame, and 111 were log structures (from an article in *The Prescott Daily News*)

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Below are some responses I received to my questions in the May issue. I was hoping for a better response, but thanks to those who voiced their opinions.

1. If you could choose a time period in which to live, when would it be and why?

---Today, because my grandsons are too precious to miss out on. --B.M.-Arizona

---Pre-Civil War days in Natchez, Mississippi--T.H.-Arkansas

---I like to read about earlier times, but I am happy with the present. Too much hard work in the old days, especially if you grew up on a farm.--J. R. - Arkansas

2. If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?

---Arizona--because the weather is just about as perfect as it is possible to be. We have underground sprinklers that keep plant/trees watered automatically. We have green year round--no snow to shovel or ice to slip on--no huge weather extremes--and our grands are here. B.M.-Arizona

---In the Smokey or Blue Ridge mountains of the US, probably near Asheville, North Carolina--T. H.-Arkansas

---I would like to travel around the country spending a few months in each state and then decide where to call home. Another option would be to move north when it's hot and south when it's cold. Even some of the birds have figured that out. - J. R.-Arkansas

3. Describe a job you once had that was unusual.

---A receptionist for a construction company in DC...On bid day--with a 14-line phone system and every call had to be transferred in order of receipt.--B.M.-Arizona

---Worked as a historical researcher for writers.--T.H.-Arkansas

4. What do you think was the greatest invention up to the present time? Why?

---The computer--because we can communicate with anyone in the world and google for an answer to most every question.--B.M.-Arizona

---The printing press because knowledge was able to be widely shared.--T. H.-Arkansas

---There are too many to choose just one--the automobile, television, telephone, antibiotics and vaccines that cure many of the worst diseases are some that have had a great impact on people's lives.--J. R.-Arkansas

5. If you could live your life over, what changes would you make?

---I don't think I could handle all this fun again!- B.M.-Arizona

---I would get a degree in history and I would ask my grandparents about their lineage and life experiences. I would also take more vacations and not take life so seriously. - T.H.-Arkansas

6. Do you think the United States has already reached its peak, or do you think our best days lie ahead? Explain why you feel the way you do.

---The best is yet to come. Every generation is better than the last. People live healthier and new inventions/discoveries are yet to be made.--B.M.-Arizona

---The US has peaked. We are lazy and greedy and often don't even vote. I hope I'm wrong!--T. H. --Arkansas

---Many of the things that have caused other great civilizations to fall are present today in

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America. Many people have no appreciation for the sacrifices our parents and grandparents made so that we could have the freedoms we enjoy. We face new and dangerous threats today. I am concerned about the future for our children and grandchildren. J. R.--Arkansas

7. If you could spend 30 minutes with a famous person, living or dead, who would it be? What would you ask him or her?

---Pope John Paul. I would ask if heaven is truly as wonderful as we are told --B.M.-Arizona

Dear Jerry,

I very much enjoy reading *The Sandyland Chronicle*. I was born (1944) and grew up in Waldo, Arkansas and my brother and I still own our old home there. My father's family was from Nevada County and I have always felt a strong attachment to the area. The Wallis homestead was located south of Waterloo, and I remember going there when the old house was still standing. My grandmother Leodocia Wallis' maiden name was Warmack, and I believe there are probably many relatives from that side of the family still living in the area.

My late aunt Helen Wallis Elmore and uncle George Elmore lived in the county for many years, operating a general store at the intersection of highways 371(old 19) and 76. Their home was located within walking distance of the store, separated by a garden and orchard. I spent a part of many summers and other times visiting them, on occasion riding the bus from Waldo. I have many fond memories of those days and can recall the many smells that permeated the store: uncle George's pipe, wood stove burning, cattle feed, hay, gasoline, candies, etc., and I especially remember the icebox that held all those cold, cold drinks and the freezer with all manner of ice cream treats.

My aunt Halcyone Wallis Marsh and uncle Jim Marsh also lived in Nevada County, way back in the country, near the Gale community as I remember. I believe one or both of them taught school. We had a lot of family reunions at their farm, usually at Thanksgiving. Aunt Halcyone and Uncle Jim were almost self sufficient, growing and raising all their vegetables, fruit, meat, eggs, milk, butter, even grinding their own corn meal and making their own syrup. My older brother's recollection of his summers with Aunt Halcyone and Uncle Jim is reminiscent of a labor camp, where he and other nephews and grand kids toiled to bring in and process all the home grown crops and products.

My great aunt Leona Warmack (I don't remember her married name) lived near Aunt Helen along highway 76 toward Waterloo. Her daughter and son-in-law, Mildred and George Gresham, lived nearby.

Many of my family members are buried at Mt. Olive Cemetery, including my grandparents, and numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins. I have attended a lot of funerals there but also many church services, reunions and dinners-on-the ground before it was closed. I usually go by the cemetery when I come to Waldo.

I worked at Berry Asphalt (Berry Petroleum) at Waterloo for several summers while I was in college. During a recent trip home, I tried to find the location of the old refinery and there was hardly any evidence that it had ever been there.

Just a few of my fond memories of Nevada County.....I may have some old pictures which I will try to find and share with you at a later date.

Phil Wallis
Casselberry, FL

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