

Jerry McKeivly's
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THE DAVIS MEMORIAL IN HIAWATHA, KANSAS

If you are ever traveling through the state of Kansas, you might make a stop at the little town of Hiawatha in the northeast corner of the state. Here you will find one of the most unusual cemetery plots in America.

The story goes that John Wilburn Davis moved to Kansas about 1879 from Kentucky. He fell in love with the daughter of his boss and they were married even though her family did not approve of the marriage. They moved to Hiawatha in 1915. They were a childless couple and accumulated quite a sum of money. It is said that John secretly gave thousands of dollars to the needy people a little at a time. Sarah, his wife died in 1930 at the age of 92 years. He was a wealthy man at that time during the Great Depression when money was scarce. The town hoped that he would donate some of his money to help build a hospital for the town or maybe a library or something like that as a memorial to his wife. He had no desire to donate money to the town since he felt the townspeople did not like him and he also blamed the doctors for losing one of his hands to a bad infection years before. It is said he did not get along with his wife's family and didn't want them to get any of his money either.

After Sarah's death, he began to spend his money and decided to build a memorial to his wife at her gravesite in Mount Hope Cemetery. Over the next few years, he commissioned sculptors in Italy to make eleven life-size statues of him and his wife at various stages of their lives. He had a large stone chair installed labeled "The Vacant Chair" where Sarah would normally have been seated next to him in one scene. He had a 50 ton marble canopy installed over the plot supported by large columns. The entire project took seven years to complete. It is said he spent about \$200,000 on this memorial to his wife which would be about a million dollars in today's money. You can see why the townspeople thought the money should be put to a better use. He once told a reporter that it was his money and he would spend it as he pleased.

He started off using very expensive Italian marble for the statues, but as his money dwindled, he used granite in some of the later statues. Some vandalism occurred at the plot, so he installed a stone wall around the plot in an effort to keep the vandals out and keep people from walking among the statues.

About seven years after Sarah's death, he was diagnosed with cancer and was told he only had a few months to live. He tried to get rid of all his money in the next few months, but the doctors were wrong. He lived for ten more years and spent the last years of his life in the poor house. The town even had to pay for his funeral in 1947 which was attended by only a few people.

Despite the hard feelings the town had for John Wilburn Davis, the people soon discovered that they had a tourist attraction on their hands. It is said that 20 to 30 thousand people visit this

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memorial each year, bringing in tourist dollars which continue to benefit the city of Hiawatha, Kansas. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

There is still some mystery concerning why Mr. Davis built this memorial. Some say he honored his wife much more after her death than when she was living. Some think he did this to spite his wife's family since they didn't want him to marry her. Some think he was just eccentric.

If I'm ever in that area, I plan to stop by and see this for myself. You can check out the pictures on the Internet. Just do a search for "Davis Memorial in Hiawatha, Kansas" and you should find many stories and pictures of this unusual gravesite.

AN UNUSUAL GRAVE MARKER



Barbara Ray sent me this photo she took of an unusual grave marker at Morton Cemetery in Richmond Co., Texas near Houston. How would you like to have this marker placed at your grave? I'm reminded of a Bible verse (Proverbs 22:1)—“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor more than silver or gold.”

ISABELLA PLEASANT ROBINSON CLARK She Planned Her Own Funeral

Some people made detailed plans for their own funeral before they died and had the plans published in the newspaper. Such was the case with Isabella Clark. Her funeral plans were published in the November 2, 1940 issue of *The Nevada County Picayune*. We do not know if these plans were followed to the letter or not, but I suspect they were if at all possible. We do know that she is buried at Mt. Moriah Cemetery, but her marker does not have a date of death. I

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could not find an obituary for Mrs. Clark, but one of the local news columns mentions the death of "Grandmother" Clark August 24th or 25th, 1940. This article about her funeral plans was published a few months after her death even though it had been written in February, 1939. This article has a lot of good information for genealogists who might be researching Isabella Clark. Here are some excerpts from that article.

Isabella Pleasant Robinson Clark was born in Union Parish, LA July 28, 1861. She moved with her parents to Nevada County, AR in 1872 and professed religion in 1876. She joined the Methodist Protestant church at Mt. Moriah and Bro. Nesbit was her pastor. She lived a devoted Christian life and in 1884 was married to W. H. Clark and to this union was born nine children. Six of them died in infancy. Three lived to be grown--Oliver, Floyd, and Lucy.

Mrs. Clark wrote, "...and I reared three of Mr. Clark's children. I did my best to rear them right and good, so up to this day all are gone but Lucy, William, and Emma. Lucy is the only one of my children left. Floyd died at Broken Bow, OK June 19, 1929, and Oliver was killed in a car accident August 22, 1937 at Texarkana." *Note: Oliver Clark was actually killed in Aug., 1936. The date in this article is not correct. Oliver Clark was married to my great-aunt, Mattie Farah McKelvy.*

....."So when I am laid in my casket, I want to be taken to old Mt. Moriah church and if it is possible, I want Bro. John White and Bro. Thurman White both to be there, and of course I would like for Bro. Erwin to be there. He conducted my father's funeral. I want them to read a part of the 14th chapter of St. John and also the 23rd Psalm. I also would like a testimony service. I really do think it not best for a long service, for this is for the living, not for me.

....."My favorite songs are: "How Firm a Foundation", "Amazing Grace", "When I Can Read My Title Clear", and "I Am a Soldier of the Cross". Brother Thurman White can lead the singing and I want him to sing right out of his heart.....I want Bro. Thurman White and his wife to stand close to my casket and sing "Zion's Hill". I always feel so good when she sings that part.....".

Composed and written February 1st, 1939. I do hope this will be carried out if possible---
Isabella Pleasant Robinson Clark

OLD JACK IN THE WELL

(author unknown)

(from the 9-4-1890 issue of *The Nevada County Picayune*)

For twenty years an old man of our county, whom we call Jack Baldwin, has cultivated the soil and drawn therefrom support for himself and wife-- he is childless. Not long since, Jack left his home in search for a missing cow. His route led him through an old worn out piece of land of about six acres in the center of which was a well about thirty feet deep that at some time had probably furnished the inmates of the dilapidated house nearby with water. In passing the spot an ill-wind drifted Jack's hat from his head and maliciously wafted it to the edge of the well, and it tumbled in. Now, Jack had always practiced the virtue of economy, and immediately sat about

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to recover his hat. He ran to the well and finding it was dry at the bottom, he uncoiled the rope which he had brought for the purpose of capturing the cow, and after several attempts to capture the hat with a noose, he concluded to save time by going down into the well himself. To accomplish this he made fast one end of the rope to a stump, and was soon on his way down into the well.

It was a fact of which Jack was less oblivious than the reader hereof, that a mischievous fellow whom we will call Neal Willis, was in the old building and saw Jack go down into the well; and it so happened that Jack's old blind horse was nearby with a bell on his neck. The devil himself, or some other wicked spirit, put it into Neal's head to have a little fun; so he unbuckled the snap and approached the well with the bell in his hand. Ting-a-ling. Jack thought the old horse was coming and said in an audible tone: "Hang that old blind horse; he's coming this way, and he ain't got no more sense than to fall in here on me--Whoa, Ball!" But the sound of the bell came closer, and Jack was resting at the bottom of the well. "Great Jerusalem!" said Jack, "the old blind fool will be right on top of me in minute--Whoa, Ball! Whoa, Ball!" Just then Neal got close to the mouth of the well and kicked a little dirt down on Jack's head. Jack thought Ball was about to come, so he got close to the side of the well and began to pray: "Oh Lord, have mercy on me--Whoa, Ball! Our Father who art in --Whoa, Ball! Hallowed be Thy--gee, Ball, gee, what'll I do--name. Now I lay me down to sl--gee, Ball! (just then, more dirt fell on his head). Back, Ball! Oh Lord, if you ever intend to do anything for me--back, Ball, whoa! Thy kingdom come--gee, Ball! Oh Lord, you know how I was baptized in Smith's mill dam--whoa, Ball! Hold up! Farewell, world."

Neal could hold it no longer and showed himself at the top of the well, with a big horse laugh which might have been heard two miles. This was more than Jack could stand, and he climbed up the rope like a monkey. "Blast your pictures. I'll make your ears ring worse than that bell." Neal took to his heels and ran like a quarter horse, and the last that was seen of him, he was half a mile from the well with two big dogs grabbing at his coat tails, and Jack close behind him.

STONEWALL JACKSON AT THE FIRST BATTLE OF BULL RUN (from the May 28, 1885 issue of *The Nevada County Picayune*)

Gen. John D. Imboden, whose battery bore the brunt of the artillery charge at Bull Run, relates some of the incidents of the battle in the *May Century*, from which we take the following: "Several other batteries soon came into line so that by the time Griffin and Ricketts were in position near the Henry House, we had, as I now remember, twenty-six fresh guns ready for them.

'The fighting was renewed and was terrific. Jackson ordered me to go from battery to battery and see that the guns were properly aimed and the fuses cut the right length. This was the work of but a few moments. On returning to the left of the line of the guns, I stopped to ask Gen. Jackson's permission to rejoin my battery. The fight was just then hot enough to make him feel well. His eyes fairly blazed. He had a way of throwing up his left hand with the open palm toward the person he was addressing. He threw up his hand as he told me to go. The air was full

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of flying missiles, and as he spoke he jerked down his hand, and I saw the blood was streaming from it. I exclaimed, 'General, you are wounded.' He replied as he drew a handkerchief from his breast pocket and began to bind it up, 'Only a scratch- a mere scratch.' and he galloped away along the line.

'General Jackson's wound, received under the circumstances I have described, became very serious when inflammation set in. On hearing three days after the fight that he was suffering with it, I rode to his quarters in a little farm house near Centreville. Although it was barely sunrise, he was out under the trees, bathing his hand in the spring water. It was much swollen and very painful, but he bore himself stoically. His wife and baby had arrived the night before. His little daughter, Julia, was still in long dresses, and I remember tossing her, to her great delight while breakfast was being made ready on a rude table under the trees. Of course, the battle was the only topic discussed at breakfast. I remarked in Mrs. Jackson's hearing, 'General, how is it that you can keep so cool and appear so utterly insensible to danger in such a storm of shell and bullets as rained about you when your hand was hit?' He instantly became grave and reverential in his manner, and answered in a low tone of great earnestness; 'Captain, my religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time for my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready, no matter when it may overtake me.' He added after a pause, looking me full in the face; 'Captain, that is the way all men should live, and then all men would be equally brave.'

Note: The first battle of Bull Run was the first major battle of the Civil War in 1861. Gen. Thomas Jonathan Jackson was given the nickname "Stonewall" because it was said his brigade stood up to the assault "like a stone wall".

Stonewall Jackson is one of my favorite generals of the Civil War. His life story is very interesting. He lost his parents and most of his siblings when he was very young. He was very strong in his religious beliefs. His men were very devoted to him even though he pushed them to the limits in their training and in battle. He and General Robert E. Lee fought many battles when they were heavily outnumbered, but they had the military genius to plan how to win these battles. Stonewall Jackson was a man General Lee could depend on to carry out whatever task he was assigned. Jackson participated in some of the bloodiest battles of the war in Virginia. His reputation was known throughout the South as well as the North.

At the battle of Chancellorsville in Virginia in 1863, Gen. Stonewall Jackson was out checking the lines during a lull in the battle at night with the air full of smoke and fog. As he approached his army, he was shot three times by his own men who thought it was northern soldiers approaching. An artery in his left arm had been severed and the only treatment at that time was to amputate the limb. One of his men took the severed arm and gave it a proper burial. There is a monument there today with the inscription "The Arm of Stonewall Jackson". He developed pneumonia and died eight days later. He was buried in Lexington, Virginia. His last words, according to historians, were "Let us cross the river and rest under the shade of the trees."

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milk and into the parlor, ruining a brand new \$20 carpet. During the excitement, the oldest daughter ran away with the hired man; the dog broke up 11 setting hens, and the calves got out and chewed the tails off four fine shirts.



GARLAND HARDWICK
July 5, 1898-Dec. 23, 1918

On his grave marker:---Son of J. M. and G. A. Hardwick; U. S. Navy; "He gave his life for liberty"—"A brave spirit lies buried here who died a glorious death in his country's cause"

Garland Hardwick, aged 21 years, a member of the United States Navy, died in the naval hospital at Brooklyn, N. Y. December 22nd of bronchial pneumonia, and the remains arrived here last Monday and were carried to his home near Cale where funeral services were held. Interment was had at Macedonia Cemetery. (*Note: The obituary had Macedonia Cemetery, but his marker is at Ebenezer Cem.*) The deceased volunteered his services in the navy some time ago and had made a number of trips across on convoys accompanying troop transports. While he was enroute back to the United States a couple of weeks ago, he wrote his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jno. M. Hardwick, that he expected to be home shortly on furlough, but upon arriving in port at New York, he became ill with pneumonia and was taken to the hospital at Brooklyn, where he lived only a few days. (From the 1-2-1919 issue of *The Nevada News*)

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GONE TO THE BLUFF

My grandpa “Gee” McKelvy lived in the Goose Ankle community of Nevada County about four miles southwest of Bluff City. I never did learn how he got his nickname since his real name was James Columbus. I always figured it probably had something to do with the commands farmers gave to their horses like “gee” and “haw”. That's one of the many things I forgot to ask him while he was alive. I'm sure there is a good story behind how he got the nickname.

Grandpa drove an old green International pickup when I was growing up. These were known as pretty tough trucks, more suited for farm use than for pleasure driving. He parked it in a shed across the road from the house which my grandmother always called the “car shed”, even though it was a truck--not a car.

The shed was open on each end. Actually, it was more like a barn and the truck was parked in the hallway. That was convenient for Grandpa since he could drive in one end and drive out the other. I've learned over the years that it's always best to drive forward instead of backing up. There's less chance of a mishap.

Grandpa's truck (I forget what year model it was) had the starter in the floor next to the foot-feed. When was the last time you heard of a foot-feed? You had to sort of turn your foot sideways so you could mash the starter while giving it a little gas with the foot-feed while adjusting the choke to get the thing started. When it finally started, there was usually a big puff of black smoke from the tailpipe. I don't remember ever having a mosquito problem around Grandpa's house.

I don't remember Grandpa ever going on a long trip in his old pickup truck. He probably drove the truck to Prescott in his younger days, but as he got older, he avoided big cities like Prescott. Bluff City had the closest store in those days. I've heard him say “I've got to go to the Bluff and get some nails” or something similar to that.

Grandpa died in 1959 when I was fifteen years old. I can't remember what happened to his old International truck.

HOG TIGHT FENCE (a news item)

Plans are to build a hog-tight fence along the railroads tracks from St. Louis to Texarkana. The fence will be woven wire 47 inches in height with a strand of barb wire on top, making a total height of 52 inches. The fence posts will be of red and white cedar (264 per mile). The company figures the fence will save thousands of animals for which they now have to pay.