

Jerry McKeiv's  
**SANDYLAND CHRONICLE**

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**POST OFFICES**

Americans in many communities have recently learned that their local post office is on the list to be closed. The United States Postal Service is losing money for several reasons. People are just not writing letters like they once did and many people pay their bills online. The price of postage stamps keeps increasing, but still they are losing money.

Our local post office closed in October. It was just a small building located at a very convenient spot for our part of town and only a half mile from my house. I mainly used this branch office to purchase stamps and to mail an occasional package. I probably only stopped there about twice per month, but many people rented post office boxes and stopped there every day to get their mail.

Once each month I mail a few copies of this paper to some readers who don't have computers. Since our post office had closed, I had to go the main post office last month which was about four miles from my house. A round trip would be about eight miles. Parking at our main post office is sometimes a problem. Once parked, a customer has to walk at least 250 feet to the front door. Most of us need the exercise, but it could be a real problem for a handicapped person. When I got inside, I had to stand in line for approximately 20 minutes to mail my papers. Needless to say, I'm not too happy about losing our little branch post office. It costs me more money for gas and more of my time waiting in line, not counting the stress and aggravation of it all. Efforts were made to save our post office. Petitions were signed, meetings were held, our congressman was contacted, but it still closed with not much advance notice.

Rural communities are also affected. The post office at Bluff City where I grew up is also on the chopping block and is scheduled to be closed in the next few months. There has been a post office there since 1876. I know the population has decreased, but many of the people who live in that area are elderly. The post office representative who met with the people told those who rented post office boxes they could rent a box at the Chidester post office which is seven miles away. That sounds good, but would require them to drive fourteen miles per day to get their mail. My advice to them is to get a mailbox at their home. Many of them pay their bills with money orders. They may have to come up with another way of paying their bills.

Towns all over south Arkansas are drying up. Stores are closing, schools have been consolidated, population is decreasing, and now many are losing their post offices. They plan to close about 3600 post offices nationwide and possibly stop mail delivery on Saturdays. I predict that all these measures will not solve the problem. The post office will still be losing money, more and more people will pay their bills online, and the price of stamps will continue to increase. Thousands of postal employees will lose their jobs. Many people will be inconvenienced and complain, but most will eventually adjust to the changes.

This might be a good time to refresh our memory of some of the history concerning mail delivery in America, especially RFD--Rural Free Delivery. People living in rural areas were pretty much isolated from the rest of the country in the early days. Someone would usually ride

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on horseback to the nearest post office to get the mail perhaps once per week. The idea of delivering mail to each house was at first considered too costly due to the poor roads especially in bad weather. RFD was first tried in a few places as an experiment to see if it was feasible. It didn't really get started in a big way until 1896. Rural mail service started at Prescott in 1903 with six rural routes served from the Prescott post office. Several methods of travel were used from horseback, buggy, mail cart, motorcycle, and automobile. The coming of RFD played a big part in improvements being made to country roads to make it easier for the mail carriers to make their rounds.

Farm families really appreciated the service. RFD and a Sears-Roebuck catalog made it possible for them to feel more in touch with the civilized world. They could send and receive letters, order what they needed from the catalog, and even receive newspapers and magazines to learn what was going on in the world.

With the coming of RFD, there were rules and regulations such as what type of mailbox, how high it should be from the ground, and what could and could not be sent by mail. One of the early rules stated a piece of red cloth should be placed in the mailbox. If you had mail to be picked up, you let part of the red cloth hang outside the mailbox as a signal for the carrier to stop.

The service improved as the roads and means of transportation improved. The highlight of the day for many farm families was the coming of the mail carrier. I have letters and postcards from 1910 which have one cent stamps on them. By 1958, stamps had increased to four cents. They have steadily increased since then, but a lot more rapidly in recent years. We are at 44 cents now with another increase on the way. No wonder more people are using e-mail these days.

Almost any community of any size had a post office in the old days. Sometimes it was just a little nook in one corner of a country store, but at least it was there. The postmaster was someone in the community that everyone knew. I think that was better than today's practice of assigning postmasters.

When I was a kid, we lived on what was known as a "star route". The term refers to a route in thinly populated areas where the mail delivery is contracted out. Tommy and Lucille Kirk delivered our mail. Neighbors living about two miles from our house were on the Rosston route. I'm sure much thought went into establishing the different mail routes, but the result is that sometimes houses within sight of each other might be on different mail routes. Since 1970, some of these "star routes" are called HCRs--highway contract routes.

Postmasters sometimes have to deal with unusual mail in rural communities. I can remember when we ordered baby chickens through the mail. We would get a note in our mailbox to come to the post office and pick up a package. My mother always felt sorry for the baby chicks since they had no food or water. Usually, these were shipped so they would reach their destination within two days. Honeybees can also be shipped by mail, but I don't remember anyone ever ordering any.

I always thought being a rural mail carrier was a pretty good job. The carrier could see quite a lot of the country as he or she made their rounds, but seeing the same scenery every day might

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get boring. It also required working six days per week and racked up a lot of miles on your vehicle. A mail carrier in the city might drive his mail truck around town, but there is a lot of walking involved. I asked my mail man one day how many miles per day he walked and he said about ten miles. That's a lot of walking! He also has to contend with vicious dogs along his route and carries a can of spray in case he encounters a bad dog.

The most remote mail route in America is the Supai route in Arizona. About 525 Indians live on a reservation deep below the south rim of the Grand Canyon. The only way out is by foot, mule, or horseback over an eight mile trail which is very treacherous. A mule train delivers mail and supplies to the community making the three to five hour trip five days per week in all kinds of weather. Each animal carries about 200 pounds of cargo.

I'm glad we have good mail service in this country even though sometimes I get aggravated when the wrong mail gets left in my box. That has happened a lot lately. Every profession has some employees who are better than others and the same is true of mail carriers.

I think we are in for some major changes in the way we receive our mail. It's going to cost more for less service. I expect Saturday mail delivery will soon be eliminated and I don't see much problem with that. That just means we won't get a box full of junk mail or bills to pay until Monday. Computers have changed the way we do things and e-mail is probably the biggest reason why the postal service is in trouble today. E-mail is so much quicker than "snail mail" and so far it is free if you don't count your monthly Internet charge. Times are changing and we must change with them or get left behind.

We live in a time of great technological changes. Just think how nice it is these days for families of those serving in the military to be able to communicate with each other while serving in places like Iraq and Afghanistan by using the Internet and even be able to see each other on video. Back in World War II days, it took many days or sometimes weeks for a serviceman to hear from the home folks or vice versa.

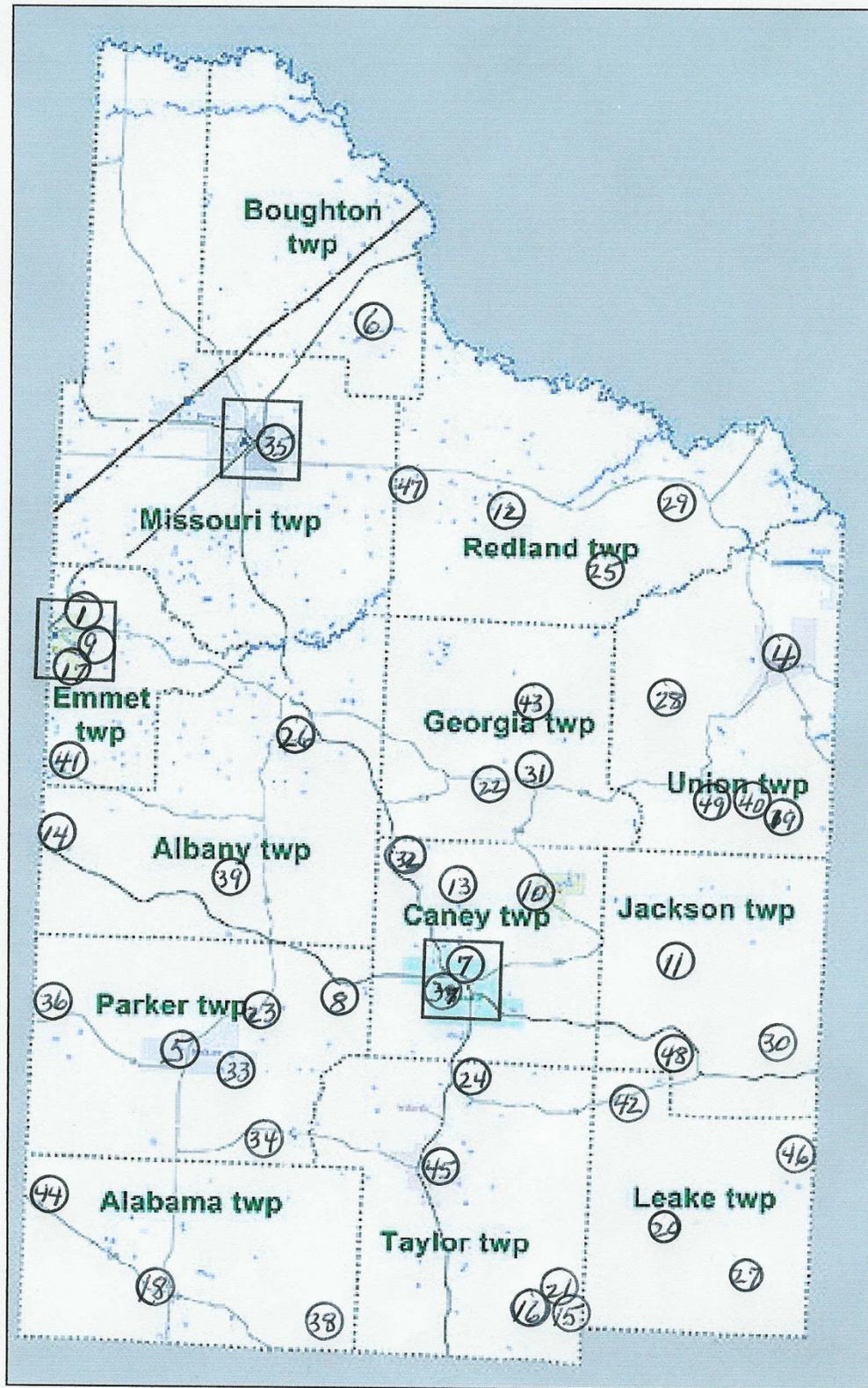
How about you? When was the last time you wrote someone a letter? Do you use the postal service to ship packages or do you use UPS or Fedex? Is your local post office on the list to be closed? What can the postal service do to become profitable once again?

On the next page is a map of Nevada County showing the location of post offices both past and present. As you can see, post offices were once scattered all over the county. If all the targeted post offices are actually closed, Nevada County will be left with only three post offices--Prescott, Emmet, and Rosston.

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*A minister asked a little boy how to get to the post office. After the boy told him, the minister said, "Why don't you come to church tonight? I'm giving instructions on how to get to heaven." After thinking a minute, the boy replied, "I don't think so. You don't even know how to get to the post office."*

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## POST OFFICES IN NEVADA COUNTY (PAST AND PRESENT)

Numbers correspond to the numbers on the map. Names and dates of post offices from *Historical Directory of Arkansas Post Offices* by Russell Pierce Baker.

The three squares on the map show the location of the three post offices that will remain in Nevada County if the proposed closing plans are implemented. That will mean a population of almost 10,000 people will be served by only three post offices—Prescott, Emmet, and Rosston. Some people will live 25 or 30 miles from a post office. At the present time, there are six post offices in the county—Bluff City, Cale, Emmet, Prescott, Rosston, and Willisville.

How many post offices do we need? How far apart should they be? In my opinion, our government wastes millions of dollars on projects that are far less important to the people than having a post office within a reasonable distance from where they live. The main expense for a post office is the postmaster's salary and the lease/rental/utilities for a small building. It may not "make money", but it would provide a needed service to the people of a community. The post office representative said the rural mail carriers will be like a "mobile post office". You can leave money in your box for stamps or you can stock up on stamps when you go to town. From what I hear, the postal representatives did not offer much encouragement to local citizens who met with them about the closing of their local post offices.

1. Arkla Village Rural Station (1964-1972)
2. Azor (1892-1914)
3. Bell's Store (1867-1885)
4. Bluff City (1876-present)
5. Bodcaw (1878-1959)
6. Boughton (1874-1954)
7. Bourland's Store (1877-1886)
8. Brisbane (1889-1906)
9. Burkville (1871-1874)
10. Cale (1901- present)
11. Caney (1850-1906)
12. Carouse (1859-1890)
13. Cedar Hill (1877-1880)
14. Clayton (1869-1906)
15. Davidson (1900-1909)
16. Delta (1882-1912)
17. Emmet (1874-present)
18. Falcon (1852-1866)
19. Foss (1896-1917)
20. Glenville (1885-1936)
21. Godbold (1848-1852)
22. Honeaville (1885-1891)
23. Huts (1900-1906)
24. Irma (1896-1906)
25. Lackland (1888-1907)
26. Laneburg (1885-????)
27. Leake (1900-1909)
28. Lone Grove (1858-1866)
29. Lyda (1902-1908)
30. Mendenhall (1891-1901)
31. Morris (1893-1909)
32. Mount Moriah (1844-1918)
33. Parker (1902-1906)
34. Pink (1896-1898)
35. Prescott (1873-present)
36. Register (1895-1907)
37. Rosston (1872-present)
38. Stockton (1894-1903)
39. Sutton (1892-1907)
40. Theo (1904-1935)
41. Verde (1901-1906)
42. Waterloo (1927-1971)
43. Weaver (1902-1912)
44. Wildcat (1896-1907)
45. Willisville (1883-present)
46. Woodlawn (1846-1909)
47. Wyre (1902-1903)
48. Young (1892-1906)
49. Zama (1887-1909)

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## POSTMARKS FROM OLD POST OFFICES



Blevins—1916



Bluff City—1930



Camden--1915



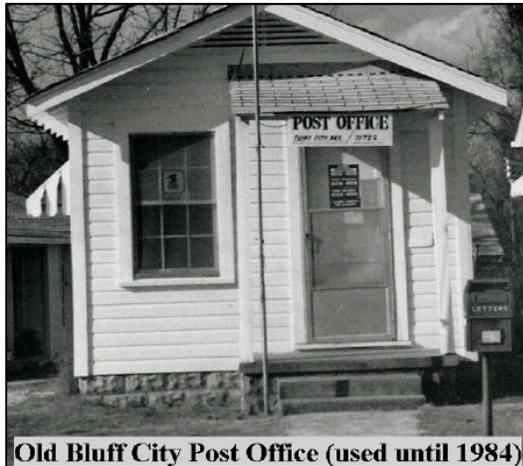
Gurdon—1915



Sayre—1910



Theo--1911



Old Bluff City Post Office (used until 1984)



Zama—ca 1908



Prescott--1958

If you have a postmark from an old post office in Nevada or Ouachita counties, please send me a copy of it to add to my collection.

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## DOWN ON THE FARM

Our farm consisted of cultivated fields where we grew all types of crops, but we also had cattle and timber. In this issue, I'm going to focus on the cattle part of the operation.

We sometimes named our cows, but I don't remember many of the names. One I remember was called Hi-Lo, because she had one horn that stuck up and the other pointed down. We raised our own hay and corn. My dad bought a hammer mill and then we could grind up feed for the cows using whatever was available such as a mixture of hay, corn, and peanut vines with maybe a little store-bought grain mixed in.

Raising cattle has its problems. Fences have to be maintained, the cattle have to be fed during the winter, and sometimes one gets sick and needs a professional veterinarian, although most farmers are pretty good at doctoring their own cows and assisting in calving when needed. Money can be made raising cattle, but the farmer has to keep up with the markets and know when to sell. An extreme drought like we have had recently can spell disaster for a cattle farmer. Ponds dry up and too many cattle are placed on the market which drives the prices down. Raising cattle also ties a person down. Someone has to be close by in case of a problem and to make sure the cows are fed during the winter months.

I can remember three different barns on our place. It seems we always needed to enlarge the barn to store more hay or else the barn just needed replacing. Our herd of cattle usually consisted on about 25 to 30 cows and calves and a bull. We would have to move most of the herd to our old place in the summer because the pasture had better grass during the dry summer months. Most of the time we loaded the cows in the back of our pickup fitted with a cattle frame and hauled them two at a time. The older cows soon became accustomed to this, but sometimes it was quite a chore to load a cow. We didn't have a fancy loading chute or a cattle trailer at the time.

I do remember once or twice when we had our version of a cattle drive. This was before Hwy. 299 was paved. We drove the whole herd down the road from one farm to the other, a distance of about four miles. It was not an easy chore to keep the cows together and going in the right direction. We had someone drive ahead in the truck with someone in the back throwing out ears of corn, etc. to lure the cows on down the road. It worked pretty well until we met a vehicle which tended to spook the cows. We also had to pass a few houses and of course their dogs came out to see what was going on which didn't help any.

I think we were one of the last families in our part of Nevada County that still milked a cow instead of buying store-bought milk. I never did much of it because it was not one of my assigned chores. Most of the time it was my job to go find the cows and drive them to the barn in the evenings after school. They were usually over in the back pasture almost a half mile from the house. The closest thing to a dairy farm in Bluff City

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belonged to Clyde and Doris Hildebrand. We just had one or two milk cows for our own family use.

I can remember the bucket we used for milking. There was a short stool to sit on while the chore was being done and the cow was given something good to eat to make her more contented. It was not unusual to get a swipe of the cow's tail across your face while milking.

When the job was completed, the milk was brought to the house and strained through a clean cloth into a large gallon jug. The milk was not pasteurized, homogenized, or sterilized, but it was utilized. Straining the milk would remove any trash or other impurities that might happen to get in the bucket while milking. It's a wonder we didn't get sick from drinking raw milk, but I never heard of anyone getting sick from it or maybe they just blamed it on something else. Sometimes the cows would graze on bitter weeds in the pasture which made the milk taste bad, but we knew the reason for that and tried to keep the bitter weeds under control.

After straining, the milk was put in the refrigerator. Before electricity, there were different methods of keeping the milk cold such as letting it down in the well or a spring. That was a little before my time. Electricity had just come to our part of the world when I was a kid and it was welcomed by just about everyone.

I can remember the gallon jugs of milk in the refrigerator with about two inches of heavy cream on top. It definitely was not 2% milk. We usually had milk with our supper meal as a beverage or used it in the southern delicacy, cornbread and milk.

Most farms had some sort of cream separator which separated the cream from the skimmed milk. Some of the cream was used to make butter or transported in metal milk cans to buyers such as the Odell Garrett store in Prescott.

Sometimes milk would spoil, and we sometimes said it was "blinky". I guess that phrase came from the facial expression when it was first tasted. There was buttermilk and sweet milk. I never cared for buttermilk to drink, but it is good in some recipes. If you want to confuse a young waitress these days, ask for a glass of sweet milk in a restaurant and see the reaction.

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## COW CHIP TEA

This is the time of year when people have colds, congestion, and flu. One of the old home remedies used by some folks was cow chip tea. I had never heard of this until a fellow I worked with told me about it being used in his family when he was a child. In fact, he says his brother and aunt still believe in it.

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Cow manure is boiled with other ingredients such as pine needles, sugar, and lemon juice and then strained several times and put in a jar. Supposedly, this will loosen up congestion.

I did a search for cow chip tea on the Internet and found it is mentioned frequently as a home remedy. I found several different "recipes" in case you want to try it. Personally, I think I'll stick with what I find in the drug store.

I read one article in which a fellow stated that we might need to learn about some of the old time home remedies since there may come a time when that's all the medicine we will be able to get. I recently heard that many medicines people need are in short supply because drug manufacturers have quit making them due to not enough profit from the sales.

If you remember an unusual home remedy from your childhood, write and tell me about it and I'll share it with others in the next issue.

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## PICA

I know pica refers to the size of type on a typewriter, but it also has another definition. Pica is a medical disorder characterized by an appetite for non-food items such as metal, clay, coal, sand, dirt, chalk, pens, pencils, batteries, spoons, toothbrushes, soap, lip balm, contact lenses, tacks, and other office supplies. The name originates from the Latin word for magpie, a bird which is reputed to eat almost anything. (*source: Wickepedia*)

I probably ate my share of sand growing up, but most of it was accidental and caused by not washing my hands as often as I should. Most small children will put anything in their mouths, but this is normal. Parents just have to watch them closely. I don't remember having any desire to eat the other things mentioned above.

Evidently, this condition is more common than one would think. It affects mostly children, but also some adults and pregnant women are afflicted.

I do remember one experience I had with this. When I was teaching at a small Nevada County school, I was surprised one day when several of the African-American students appeared to be eating clay. One of them had a paper sack with chunks of clay and he was sharing it with the other students. I questioned them about it and was told that they always ate it. I asked where it came from and they said a certain spot in a roadside bank on Hwy. 278 east of Rosston. They said this was the only spot you could find this particular good tasting clay. I assume they were telling me the truth, but whether true or not, I did witness these children eating clay like candy.

Perhaps the clay had a salty taste or maybe these kids had some type of vitamin deficiency. They say that could be one reason some people eat non-food items. To

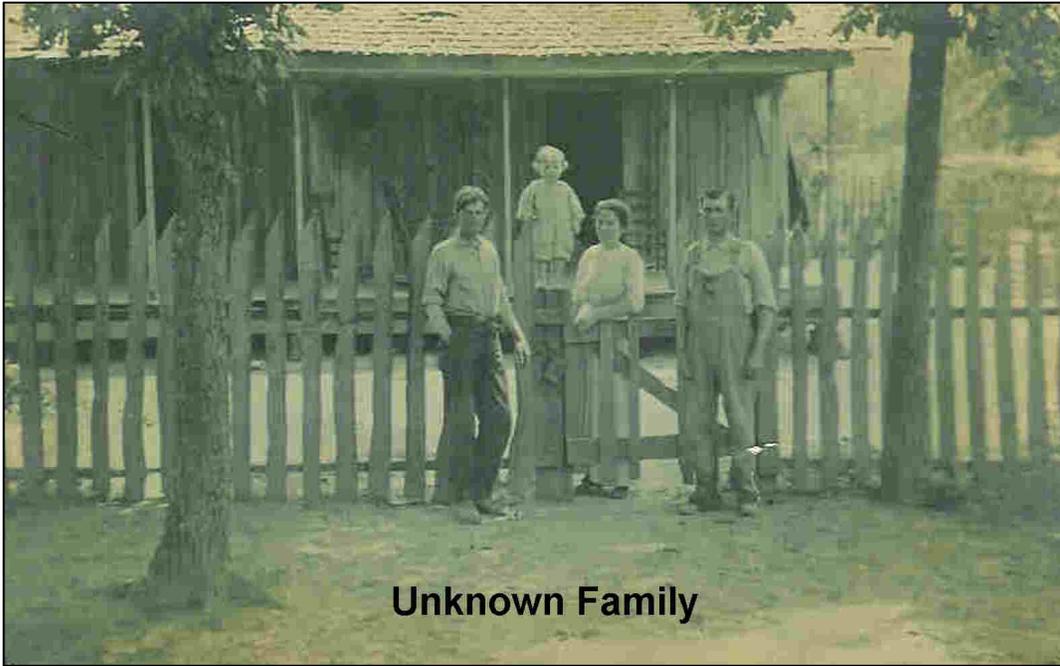
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learn more about pica, do a search for it on the Internet and read about the causes, symptoms, and treatment for this unusual disorder.

A comment from James Daniels--

In late Dec. 1939, my friend, Sen. John Drummond, his dad, and three brothers attended the Cotton Bowl game on Jan. 1, 1940. The temperature was in the single digits. They drove from their home in Ninety Six, SC to Dallas in a '34 Ford. It had no heater. The night before, they heated bricks in the fireplace, wrapped them in tow sacks, put them in the floor of the car. They took a big sack of sausage biscuits and baked sweet potatoes. They saw Clemson beat Boston College 6 to 3. Attendance was just under 15,000. Times have changed.

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**Unknown Family**

Here's another old photo with no identification. The photo belonged to Miss Mollie Henry of Bluff City. Let me know if you can identify these people.

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I would like to wish all the readers of *The Sandyland Chronicle* a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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*“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

*In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths”.*

**Proverbs 3: 5-6**