

Jerry McKeiv's  
**SANDYLAND CHRONICLE**

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**THOMAS C. McRAE**  
**FAMOUS LOCAL CITIZEN**



One of Nevada County's most famous citizens was Thomas Chipman McRae, a lawyer, banker, and politician who served as governor of Arkansas from 1921 to 1925.

Thomas McRae was born December 31, 1851 in Union County to Duncan and Mary Ann (Chipman) McRae and spent his early boyhood days at Mount Holly. In 1861, the ten year old McRae boy was old enough to see the awfulness of war. One day on the farm he asked his father the big question: "Why do men go to war, shoot each other, kill the stock, put poison in the wells, burn houses, and leave women and children to suffer?" He lived to be seventy-eight years old, but never did he find a satisfactory answer to that question.

He never went to public school in his life. What little schooling he received was in short private schools. His father died in 1863 leaving his widow and five children. Thomas, at age twelve, was the oldest and it became his responsibility to take care of his mother and siblings.

His mother remarried in 1868, relieving Thomas of the responsibilities of caring for the family and he was able to further his education. He attended the academies at Mt. Holly and Falcon and one year at Soule Business College in New Orleans where he completed the two-year course in one year. McRae decided to go to college in 1871, and in June, 1872, Washington and Lee University conferred upon him the degree of LL. B.

In 1872, as Thomas McRae was getting his degree, the new county of Nevada had selected Rosston as the county seat. The idea of a brand new county seat in a brand new county appealed to the young man. He opened his law office in Rosston in January, 1873. He had already secured a boarding place, had moved all his books into his office, arranged his small amount of office furniture in the most effective way, hung out his shingle, and was ready to receive clients.

He took part in the election campaign of 1872 and was later made election supervisor. His law practice soon began to return an income. He was married Dec. 17, 1874 in Rosston to Amelia Ann White, daughter of W. R. and Mary Jane Clark White. Amelia had moved to Arkansas from Alabama with her family at age 4. Nine children were born to this union--six girls and three boys.

The county seat was removed to Prescott in 1877 and the McRaes decided to follow, moving

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there in 1877. They lived in a rented house for one year, just long enough to build their Prescott residence. For many years their home, "The Oaks", was a place of interest to visitors to that city.

McRae was elected to the Arkansas legislature in 1877, where he demonstrated his ability as a statesman. It is said of him that he was studious and sedate. When many of the representatives were out trading their daily allowance of postage stamps for grape juice, young McRae was bending over his desk trying to solve some of the big problems confronting Arkansas. He was active in politics, became a member of the Prescott town council, later was elected recorder and city attorney, and during his long law practice, he was known as "the honest lawyer". In January, 1876, he was admitted to practice law before the supreme court of Arkansas, and was engaged in banking.

Thomas McRae was made presidential elector on the Democratic ticket in 1880. In 1884, at the age of thirty-three, he was elected chairman of the Democratic Central Committee of Arkansas. In the latter part of 1884, he was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention and took part in nominating Grover Cleveland. He represented Arkansas in Congress from 1885 to 1903, where he took his work seriously and accomplished a great good. He retired to private life voluntarily in 1903. He purchased the Bank of Prescott and was president of the bank from the time it was organized in 1905 until his death. He became president of the Arkansas Bankers Association in 1909.

In 1921, McRae was called from private law practice to serve as governor of Arkansas. He agreed to enter the race in 1920 with the understanding that he would not have to make a strenuous campaign. He was elected on his four-plank platform over eight opponents. The four planks were (1) better schools for all children, (2) better ways of paying for good roads, (3) a fairer system of taxation, and (4) more economy in state government. He was sometimes called "The War Horse of Democracy".

C. P. Newton, McRae's private secretary said of him, "Thomas C. McRae is the most truly Christian character I have intimately known in public life."

One of McRae's private stenographers was Mrs. John V. Tedford. She worked for him many years before he became governor. She has the following to say of her great employer: "The state of Arkansas was fortunate in having a man with such high ideals for governor. Of his honesty, sincerity, and love for the common people, there could be no doubt. He bought and personally paid for all the stamps that he used in his own private business. He was very strict to keep his own private business absolutely separate from that of the state. He never infringed on the state's time or money in the conduct of his personal affairs."

Thomas McRae was known for his charitable contributions. He donated two city blocks in Prescott to the black people for a park. He also donated the site of the Prescott post office to the government and the site of the Masonic temple in Prescott.

Thomas Chipman McRae died June 2, 1929 at the age of seventy-eight from complications of influenza. All stores in Prescott and even the offices in the state capitol were closed for his funeral. The Presbyterian church was overflowing with flowers with some wreaths suspended

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from the balcony and the chandeliers. Boy Scouts in uniform were stationed at every intersection on the route to the cemetery. He was buried in the family plot in the old section of DeAnn Cemetery in Prescott. His wife died in 1947 at the age of 92.

Some information for this article came from the souvenir edition of *The Prescott Daily Mail*, *The Nevada County Picayune*, and from *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas* web site.

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## WHAT IS IT?



Norval Poe was the only reader who correctly identified this item pictured in the last issue. It is a corn sheller. Some corn shellers are not as fancy as this one. An ear of shucked dried field corn was fed into the chute on top of the machine. A bucket was placed underneath to catch the shelled corn when the wheel was turned. The cob was ejected through an opening on the side. This machine does an excellent job of shelling corn and is fun to use.

Field corn is the type you see in large fields while driving along the highways. It is allowed to dry on the stalk before harvesting and is used for animal feed, making corn meal, and other uses. Sweet corn is the type raised in gardens or found in the produce section of the grocery store. It is harvested when it reaches the proper stage of development and is much sweeter than field corn.

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Irma Hamby Evans sent me this “What Is It?” picture for this issue. She says the object is 13 ½” inches long and 1 ½” high. The metal piece goes up and down. If you think you know what it is or would like to take a guess, let me know by July 15<sup>th</sup>. See next issue for the answer.

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**What Is It?**

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## **READERS REMEMBER TOYS AND GAMES FROM THEIR CHILDHOOD**

From Earlene Lyle---

You'll probably get this answer from every female who answers your message. Back in my childhood, all girls got a doll -- not the Barbie dolls of today, but BABY dolls. Most of them had a head, feet, and hands made of some type of rubberized material and were hard. The body, arms, and legs were made of cotton and stuffed with some sort of soft filling. Features were painted on the head, including the hair, but there were really no moving parts. Way back then, in the dark ages, we had very little "store-bought" candy so one of our BEST gifts was the candy and small items (like jacks) we found in our stockings.

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From Irma Evans---

Good topic, Jerry. It's fun to think back to how we played.

Inside it was Parcheesi, Monopoly, Rook, Battleship cards, checkers. Paper dolls and real dolls. Our brother had Lincoln logs and marbles.

Outside it was roller skating up and down our long sidewalk in front, and even all over the downtown of Prescott on our side of the railroad tracks. I remember how bumpy the sidewalk was at the Bank of Prescott. Bicycle riding all over town. Hopscotch. Jump the rope. Croquet and softball in the front yard. Hide-and-Seek. Tree houses and tree swings. Sandbox. Climbing set our Dad made out of pipe. Treasure hunts with clues devised by our Dad (inside and outside).

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We didn't have so many toys as such, but we were always busy and having fun (after chores and schoolwork, of course).

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From Dave Cummins---

Doctor

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From Barbara Lyerly---

jacks  
hop scotch on the sidewalks and in dirt  
marbles (I beat the boys on keepers)  
red rover  
hide and seek (especially after dark)  
baseball  
paper dolls  
"funny books" from the drug store  
ollie, ollie oxen free  
tag (you're it)  
mother, may I?  
simon says  
cowboys and Indians (I wouldn't play unless I had the only gun we had!)  
walking the railroad tracks  
fishing with a bent pin at the branch  
climbing trees  
making "telephones" with tin cans  
bag swings  
tire swings  
bb guns  
cap pistols (for cowboys and Indians)  
slingshots (for bird shooting)  
big shots had little rubber wading pools!

Does it sound like I was a tomboy? Yeah!

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From Annette Lemons---

I grew up in a LARGE family of lots and lots of cousins, aunts, uncles. We all played, and laughed, and learned to amuse ourselves early on and not ask the proverbial, "What can we do now?" We ALWAYS ended up in the garden or fields when projecting ourselves so dull, learned quickly!! We played OUTSIDE incessantly, cold, hot, raining, or snow!!! I NEVER EVEN SAW A t.v. until I was in the 3rd grade, at a neighbor's house. (My

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grandchildren roll their eyes when they hear this one.) I still am not attached to DULL activities like Wii, electronic JUNK, etc. When grand babes come to visit for the summer or holidays, they are, I am sure, diving into a time zone, via time machine transposing!!! BUT, BUT, they are always happy, busy, smiling, and laughing with me. It's great to play jacks and paper dollies again. Cap pistols have given way to "nerf-gun" wars, and I am sure my neighbors think I am over the edge, running around my house screaming, "Got you last," before they get in their cars to leave, windows rolled down, chanting, "We love you, Neenie!!!" (Both of them usually crying.) Simply because they lost at some of my favorite childhood games, I AM SURE!!!

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From Betty Thomas---

Games: Many were accompanied by verses to be sung. Also, as teenagers we played some of these games at parties.

Drop the Handkerchief  
Red Rover, Red Rover  
Flying Dutchman  
Mother May I  
Ring-around-the-Rosie  
London Bridge  
Annie (Ante?) Over  
Statues  
Pop-the-Whip (I learned not to be the kid on the end!)  
Three Deep  
Tag

Toys: There is a rather odd mix of "boy" and "girl" toys but being a only child in my family I wanted and asked for both. I played with both and had the "correct" toys to bring out when I had company. Also I was something of a tomboy.

Dolls (of course) one special present I had the year I was seven at Christmas was a "Lady Doll" and my mother had made a complete wardrobe for it and put it in a doll trunk. At 78--I still have the doll and the clothes in the trunk.

Tinkertoys

A wind-up train that ran on a track

A little cast iron stove with a skillet

Chinese Checkers

Regular Checkers

Old Maid Cards

Wagon that I could use to haul wood

Bicycle (December 25, 1941-my folks had bought it right before Pearl Harbor)

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Puzzles

A set of small pots and pans--got irritated because my mother would let me cook in them because they had mud from numerous mud pies/cakes

A one octave piano

A gyrocopter/airplane--right out of the future

An ice delivery truck complete with ice tongs and two glass cubes of "ice"

A rubber sedan car

Paper Dolls (I remember having a book of Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret Rose, especially)

Jump Rope

Yo-Yo

Coloring books and crayons

I didn't regard them as toys but I loved to get books as gifts and I would read them over and over.

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From Ginger Patterson---

My favorite childhood toys: BOOKS (I loved to read and still do) Heidi, Black Beauty, The Bobsey Twins, The Sugar Creek Gang, Tom Sawyer, etc;

My other memorable toys: Toni "perm" doll; Toy trumpet; Tricycle; Loom and loops to make pot holders; Paint by numbers set; Hula hoop; Tiny Tears doll with layette; Record player & Roy Rogers records; Bicycle with a basket; Bride doll w/lots of clothes; Mini-sewing machine; Shoe skates w/carrying case; Poor Pitiful Pearl Doll; Various baby dolls; Transistor radio; Record player with Elvis & Buddy Holly records; Slinky; Monopoly game; Checkers with Grandpa; Mr. Potato Head; Chutes & Ladders; Jacks; Marbles; Bubble stuff; Paddle ball (w/rubber band); Bow & arrow set with rubber suction cups on the arrows; Indian costume; Ballerina costume; Cowboy suit w/gun & holster set; Doctor or Nurse kit; Baking set with real usable miniature cookware. (I learned to cook with them at Grandma's house); Embroidery; Knitting & crochet;

My brother liked: BB Gun; Fort Apache set; Plastic cowboys & Indians; Plastic army men; Peddle car; "Gas station" w/cars & trucks; Baseball & bat, football, basketball; Plastic models to assemble and paint (I helped); Tonka trucks; Kid sized tools; Cowboy outfit; football outfit; Wood burning set; Tinker Toys; Erector Set; Cap guns; Firecrackers; Kites; Toy boats; Magnets; Slingshots that Grandpa made from a china berry branch; Checkers with Grandpa; Fishing with Grandpa; Following Grandpa around all day "helping";

I and my siblings loved the sand box that grandpa built and replenished with clean sand at the beginning of every summer. Many summer days were spent in that sandbox under the china berry tree with old soup cans and kitchen spoons for "tools". Lots of the best toys were free: Rope swings and buttons from Grandma's button box to string and make whizzers.

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From Barbara Dyson---

I'm sure this is not a complete list, and I may have forgotten a really important one!

Board games:        Scrabble  
                         Concentration  
                         Stony Burke  
                         ESP  
                         Monopoly  
                         Tammy  
                         Bingo, Chinese checkers, checkers

Playing with baby dolls, Barbie-type dolls, pretending to be a nurse or doctor  
                         Pretending to be a teacher; pretending to go to church with the  
                         "babies"  
                         Pretending to be a movie star or singer  
                         Having tea parties

Outside Games: house – using pine straw to build the walls of the house  
                         Chase; Red Rover; Simon Says; Red Light-Green Light; and  
                         others  
                         Riding bicycles  
                         Restaurant (Mud pies & cakes made for the restaurant and coffee  
made from dirty water)  
                         Playing with pets: dogs and cats  
                         Marbles  
                         Softball or baseball (mostly at school, because it was just my sister  
and me)

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From Mary Ann Sanford---

Here is my very long list of toys and games: TOYS – Dolls, doll bed and dresser, small metal cooking stove, toy dishes, story books (my mother read to me), toy cars and trucks (I played with my older brother), tricycle, Roy Rogers toy pistols, "pine saplings" my cousin and I pulled over and rode for horses, paper cut-out dolls, crayons and coloring books, jacks, a yo-yo, skates, ball and paddle, bicycle

GAMES – Played pretend house a lot, Cowboys and Indians with a cousin, Fishing with same cousin using a "cane pole" and worms, Hop Scotch, Jump Rope, Hide and Go Seek, Musical Chairs and Gossip with groups of kids

P.S. Jerry, under toys I started to list Mud as I made a lot of "Mud Pies" and "Red Clay" I used to make all sorts of dishes for my mud pies when I played house. Ha!

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## ROCKY HILL COMMUNITY

There is not much community left to the old Rocky Hill community located about four miles southwest of Bluff City. The area was once pretty well populated with most families being involved in farming. Families living here included the McKelvys, the Irvins, the Dunns, the Parkers, the Nelsons, the Sarretts, the Johnsons, the Griffiths, the Greens, the Odells, the Stones, the McMurrays, and the Plylers.

The community was named Rocky Hill because of the huge rocks such as those in this picture. These rocks (or boulders) are a few hundred yards from where the Rocky Hill Methodist Church once stood. My great grandfather, Alexander Fletcher McKelvy, gave two acres of land for the church in 1907. The church finally closed its doors in the early 1980s after the population had dwindled. I have several pictures of the vacant building which show its gradual decline until it was finally demolished in 2008.

Children from these families attended school at Gum Grove which meant some had to walk about three miles twice a day carrying their lunch pails with them. The school had 70 students and two teachers in 1922. It was consolidated with Bluff City in 1929.

Rocky Hill was the official name for the community, but all the local people called it Goose Ankle. Nobody knows where that name originated, but I found an item in the newspaper written in 1909 in which the writer stated that it had been called Goose Ankle for as long as he or she could remember. Gordon Irvin, who wrote about his childhood in this community, said that if you were in the church you were from Rocky Hill, but if you were outside the church, you were from Goose Ankle.

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## OTHER COMMENTS RECEIVED

I loved this issue probably more than most. Especially liked the toys article.—Teresa H.

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Enjoyed this issue. What an amazing array of fun and games! Others' memories helped jog my memory about some of the games I played. Thanks.—Irma E.

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The June issue is a great read, indeed. Didn't realize Eddy Arnold sang the "Ole' Porch Swing." He is one of my ABSOLUTE favorites, and I MEAN IT NOW!!! Of course, his "Cattle Call" is a permanent ear worm in my head!!! However, I did NOT remember that Slim Whitman recorded it first. Pulled up both these guys and reminisced, oh, yes!!!—Annette L.

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A Great Happenstance !!



I received the Chronicle today and your article on front porch swings (FPS) and am attaching a pic of not a swing but a glider that I'm building for a client.

The blurry photo is of one I built a bit over 20 years ago and a fellow I do some work with now and again saw this pic and decided he needed a new glider to go along with his new (?) house of 7 years.

Anyway, I guess this is my most relevant story about swings except for a much beloved aunt I had in Little Rock who along with her mother had a magnificent FPS that often subbed as a stage coach or covered wagon during my play time after humongous family meals when all the adults would lay around on couches and beds and even the floor, with one arm over their eyes trying to catch forty winks whilst we kids fought off the Indians—Duncan M.

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**RAINFALL IN 2013**

January (4.3 in.); February (2.8 in.); March (4.1 in.); April (3.7 in.); May (4.2 in.)