

Jerry McKelvy's
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THE CHIDESTER MERCANTILE

The Chidester Mercantile Co. dates back to February 4, 1911. The first officers were G. R. Riffe, president; H. E. Kirby, vice-president; W. C. Stinnett, secretary-treasurer; and Thomas H. Benton as manager.

For many years this firm served the people of Chidester and the surrounding area with a good selection of groceries, meat, clothing, shoes, and other items found in a typical general store. Chidester, like so many other small towns, has lost population in recent years. Small stores cannot compete with large stores like Walmart. Chidester residents these days must drive to Camden to do their shopping.

Even though the Chidester Mercantile stands vacant today, many people in this area have fond memories of the days past when the Mercantile was going strong. The above picture was taken September 1, 2014.

THE ARKANSAS ROAD LAW OF 1915

These days we pay high taxes for the upkeep of the roads and bridges. We complain sometimes about pot-holes and rough roads, but we have it so much better today than folks had it a hundred years ago.

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Roads were in bad shape back then and most of the county roads were not even graveled. When the heavy rains came, the roads turned into mud and deep ruts and were almost impassable. Bridges couldn't handle heavy loads and were constantly being washed out by heavy rains.

The Arkansas road law of 1915 provided for improvements to roads and bridges, but I wonder how such a plan would work these days. The law required all able-bodied men between the ages of 21 and 45 to work at least four days each year on the public roads and bridges in the township where they lived. If a man furnished a team of horses or mules for a full day, he was exempt from further road duty that year. A man could also pay the county \$3.00 and be exempt from road duty for a year. That doesn't sound like much today, but in 1915, it was enough to get your attention.

Each township had a road overseer that was in charge of seeing that the work got done. The justices of the peace in each township compiled a list of all men subject to road duty. They received ten cents per name from the county. The justices of the peace had to certify the names on the list were not fictitious names and if found guilty of submitting false names would be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined not less than \$10 or more than \$25.

When a man was needed for road duty, the overseer contacted him to report to work. He must pay the overseer \$1 per day for each day he did not report to work after being warned. Twelve hours notice from the overseer was considered a legal warning.

All bridges and culverts were numbered and signs were erected at each intersection giving the number of miles to the principal center of each county.

The overseer reported to the county at the end of each week the names of all men who worked, what kind of work they did, and how much money he had collected which he turned over to the county at the end of each month. The overseer could hire laborers to work if needed but could not pay them over one dollar per day. No person under the age of 18 could be hired. The overseer was paid \$2.00 per day for each team being used. Four teams were used to pull road graders.

This law applied only to Nevada, Clark, Pike, Little River, and Howard counties.

THE LAST HANGING IN NEVADA COUNTY (POSSIBLY)

There have been a few legal hangings in Nevada County in the past, but possibly the last hanging happened May 27, 1916 and it was not legal by any means.

Felix Gilmore, a black man about 21 years old, had been accused of attacking a seventeen year old white girl, the daughter of one of Nevada County's most respected citizens, while she was

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home alone. A posse searched the nearby woods but couldn't find him. Gilmore was finally found hiding in a loft near town and was arrested by police officers and placed in jail.

There was much talk and threats against Gilmore, so Sheriff Munn decided to move Gilmore to the jail in Arkadelphia for his own safety. The sheriff along with deputies Theo Elgin and Lee Griffith accompanied the prisoner when they left Prescott for Arkadelphia. About two miles out of town, they were stopped by a mob of about fifty heavily armed men who demanded that the prisoner be turned over to them and they told the sheriff and deputies to return to town.

When people found out what happened, a large number of people went to the scene and found the body of Felix Gilmore hanging from a tree near the road just past Rose Hill Dairy. The mob had carried out their mission without a shot being fired. Early Saturday morning, the body was cut down, brought to Prescott, and turned over to Undertaker Cornish.

A coroner's inquest was called and a number of people were questioned, but there was not a clue as to the identity of any member of the mob. (*The Nevada News—June 1, 1916*)

Felix Gilmore is not listed in the cemetery surveys, so he was probably buried in an unmarked grave somewhere around Prescott.

LOGAN GROCERY CO.

(some information from the 6-10-1976 issue of *The Nevada County Picayune*)

Logan Grocery Co. in Prescott was organized in 1919 by Sam O. Logan , Emond Logan, J. M. Pittman, Dan Pittman, and Charlie Pittman. They rented a building from W. B. Waller and later purchased it in 1935. This building at 211 East Front Street would be the home of Logan Grocery Co. for the next 57 years.



This old Prescott photo is a little blurry but you can see the Logan Grocery Co. sign on the building on the right side of the photo. You can also see the large Prescott Hardware Co. building in the background and Joe Boswell's Department Store. The white building on the left was a Ben Franklin store at that time.

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In the early days, Prescott streets were unpaved and most of the county roads were not even graveled. The company had wagons pulled by mules or horses to deliver goods to the many small country stores in the surrounding area. The company had a 1 ½ ton Dodge truck but only used it in town since it could not handle the bad roads out in the county. About once each summer, an oil tank was installed underneath the truck and oil was sprayed on the streets of Prescott to keep down the dust.

In 1924, Logan Grocery Co. built a warehouse in Gurdon to better serve that area and a few years later, the company bought out Goff Wholesale Grocery Co. at Norman. In 1936, they opened a warehouse at Arkadelphia and closed the ones at Gurdon and Norman.

The company carried a complete line of groceries, dry goods, and notions. They also had a good selection of school supplies. Everyone growing up in Nevada County remembers the Blue and Gold tablets and paper used in schools. I can remember when the Logan salesman stopped at the stores in Bluff City to take orders for the next truck delivery.

Sam Logan and Emond Logan served as chairman of the board, president, and secretary for almost fifty years each and left a solid company to carry on.



In 1975, the company began construction of a new building with 32,000 square feet of space. This building was located on Hwy. 24 where the P & NW railroad cross the highway. The grand opening of that building was in June, 1976. The officers of the company at that time were Floyd Leverett, president; Floyd Crain, vice-president; Billy Don Simpson, secretary along with Dan Walter Pittman, D. L. McRae, H. H. McKenzie, T. M. Bemis, and Gus McCaskill.

Logan Grocery Co. went out of business sometime in the late 1980s. The large building they occupied is still there but is used now by another firm (see photo above). Logan Grocery Co. was one of the major business firms of Prescott for many years.

RAINFALL RECORD

January – 1.2 inches
April – 5.8 inches
July – 5.2 inches
October—7.8 inches

February—3.6 inches
May—5.5 inches
August – 8.2 inches

March—5.0 inches
June—4.0 inches
September— .6 inch

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The object in the last issue is an early version of a refrigerator. Milk was put in the container. Butter was placed in the bowl and placed inside the container over the milk. The lid was put on and the container was let down in the well to keep the milk and butter (or other foods) cold.

Those who got the correct answer were: Jean Cunningham Harville and Norval Poe. Geneva Smith called it an antique thermos, so I guess we can count that as a correct answer.

Other answers received were: (1) a lunch pail; (2) used to carry ashes when cleaning wood cook stove, (3) used in making cheese.

OLD RECIPES

When I come across an old cookbook, I look for unusual recipes or something that sounds unusual to me. I recently found an old cookbook from 1927 put out by a church in Oklahoma. It says the recipes have been thoroughly tested by home cooks. Here are a few recipes from that book. You might want to give them a try.

PRUNE ICE CREAM

1 cup prune pulp
1 cup cold water

1 cab sweetened condensed milk
2 tablespoons lemon juice

Wash and rub the prunes in lukewarm water until clean. Cover with cold water and let them soak 10 to 12 hours. Stew them in same water closely covered until tender. Add sugar to taste, about 2 tablespoons to 1 pound of fruit. Cook ten minutes longer or until syrup is thick.

Measure a heaped cup of the prunes, remove the stones and rub the pulp and juice through a puree strainer. Then mix it with the milk diluted with the cold water, add lemon juice and when smooth, freeze as directed.

BAKED APPLE

1 firm apple; 1 tablespoon sugar; 1 tablespoon butter

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Wash and core apple. Set in muffin pan or individual custard cup. Sprinkle with sugar. Dot with butter. Place in a hot oven (400 degrees) and bake until tender. Scrape pulp from skin and serve with milk (or cream if allowed).

COFFEE

Allow one tablespoon coffee for each cup. Put white of an egg and enough cold water to mix together. Then add a cup of boiling water for each tablespoon of coffee and boil 5 minutes.

PEANUT BUTTER

Put in vessel on fire 1½ cups of sugar, stir constantly until it melts, then add 1 cup peanuts broken in pieces; take from fire immediately and pour out on wet bread board, roll desire thickness with damp rolling pin and lift from the board.

CHICKEN WIGGLES

1 cup cooked chicken (cut up fine)	1 tsp. butter
1 cup sweet milk	½ cup chopped celery
½ cup cream	1 cup walnut meats
2 egg yolks	½ can peas
1 tsp. salt	

Scald the cream and milk, beat egg yolks with butter, salt, cook until thickens, add chicken, peas, celery, cook until heated through, add nut meats, serve hot.

ANGEL DREAMS

6 slices stale bread	6 strips bacon
6 slices American cheese	Paprika

Cover bread with cheese. Put bacon strip on top. Place in broiler and cook until bacon is crisp. Dust with paprika. Serve hot.

BAKED EGGS

Break the number of eggs desired, leave yolks in the shell, beat the whites with a pinch of salt until stiff, put in buttered pan, drop the yolks equal distance apart, sprinkle a little salt and pepper over and put in moderate oven and bake until white is done. Cut in squares with yolk in center and serve.

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OUR FORGOTTEN CEMETERIES

I suppose every county has some abandoned cemeteries. Some are old family plots with just a few graves and others are an acre or more in size. I'm sure people who lived a hundred years ago never thought that one day their cemeteries would be completely neglected and grown up with trees and brush.

There are many reasons for this. Old communities cease to exist and people leave for other places to find work. The cemeteries were probably maintained for several years until the caretaker got too old to do the work. Most cemetery associations these days have perpetual funds invested in CDs with the interest being used for the upkeep of the cemeteries. The problem with that is the interest rates have been so low the last few years that many small cemeteries are struggling to have enough money to pay for the mowing. Some family members who live far away make monetary donations to help with the upkeep of the cemetery, but the older members pass on and the younger people who are most able to contribute just don't seem to be interested in the cemeteries.

I know of at least 27 abandoned cemeteries in Nevada County (about one fourth of the total number). Ouachita County also has many very old cemeteries that are no longer being maintained. Some of these old cemeteries are deep in the woods completely forgotten except for a few interested individuals and the local deer hunters. If there is a cemetery in the woods, some deer hunter will usually know about it.

Some people buy property and later discover an old cemetery somewhere on the property. Most people will protect these old cemeteries, but there are a few individuals who could care less. Some small cemeteries are accidentally being damaged by logging equipment.

There should be strict laws regarding old cemeteries so that they will be protected. All property deeds should show any known cemeteries located on that property. I wish our lawmakers would consider passing stricter laws to make sure these burial places are preserved.

In some places, caring individuals are adopting some of these old cemeteries and clearing away the brush. Some counties are using non-violent prisoners to help with the work of clearing the brush and some organizations like the Boy Scouts have also helped in some places.

Here are just a few pictures of some of our local forgotten cemeteries. There is plenty of work to be done if anyone is interested in preserving these old burying grounds. I'm sure that there are people somewhere who are probably looking for the burial place of their distant relatives. This type work is like most volunteer work—a lot of labor involved and no pay, but it will give you a good feeling knowing that you helped save an old cemetery that was in danger of being completely lost.

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Smyrna Cemetery north of Prescott. On private land. At least 75 graves here. Overgrown with brush and trees.



Christopher Cemetery –a small cemetery off Hwy. 278 in Nevada County. One marker is leaning against a tree. His wife’s marker is lying flat on the ground on the left side of picture. At least six graves are here included a 10 ft. x 10 ft. plot surrounded by an iron fence.



Seminary Cemetery north of Stephens in Ouachita Co. About one acre in size. Many markers are in good shape. At least 70 graves here. Overgrown with mature timber. Access by a woods road.



Pharr Cemetery in Ouachita Co. near White Oak Lake. Some markers are 100 feet or more from other markers. There are probably many lost graves here. Overgrown with timber and brush.