

Jerry McKelvy's  
*SANDYLAND CHRONICLE*

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**THE JOHN GRIFFITH PLACE (WINTER SCENE)**

Mrs. Zettie Griffith Link sent me this painting she just completed of the old John Griffith place which was located west of Gum Grove. The painting is so good I thought it deserved a place on the front page of this issue.

Mrs. Link is a self-taught painter and is now 95 years young. I asked her when she started painting and she said she was interested in painting as a small child and has been painting all her life. She laughed and said she did her first painting with a bottle of shoe polish.

She mentioned a few little stories in regard to her talent. One time a class project in school was to draw a map of the United States. She turned her map in and the teacher accused her of copying it instead of drawing it herself. She told the teacher she didn't copy it, but the teacher refused to believe her and made her draw another map to turn in the next day. So, she drew another map not quite as good as the first one just to please the teacher. She also mentioned that she once drew sketches of all her teachers and one of the teachers happened to walk by

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and noticed the sketches. He asked her to stay after class and told her that with her talent, she should be taking art class. That sounded wonderful to her. The teacher even asked if he could keep the sketch she drew of him.

Her excitement didn't last long because when she got home and told her father about it, he said he wasn't paying \$30 a month for her to go to school to draw pictures. He wanted her to study to be a teacher, so she had to give up the art class and stick with the other subjects.

I'm glad she didn't give up on her art work because she has drawn some wonderful paintings over the years. She has paintings of the Griffith place in all four seasons of the year. She says everyone seems to like this snow scene best. She has just about completed one for me of the old Berry Martin home place where I grew up. She says her hands are not quite as steady anymore and it's harder to do the fine detail work, so these will probably be her last large paintings like this. She will continue with smaller projects as long as she is able.

Thank you, Mrs. Link for letting us enjoy the results of your artistic talent.

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## **THE PRESCOTT RIFLE CLUB**

By the summer of 1917, it was pretty certain that the United States would be drawn into the war in Europe. It was at this time that the Prescott Rifle Club was organized with the purpose of encouraging rifle practice and in the case of an emergency to protect people and homes in the city.

One rifle was provided for each five members and each member was given 120 rounds of ammunition. Nearby farmers were also invited to participate. The following officers were selected: Sheriff Sam Munn, president; Ed Barham, vice-president; E. M. Sharp, recorder; Dan Pittman, treasurer; and T. C. McRae, drill master.

Any male over 16 years of age could join and the number soon grew to over 300 members. After the United States joined in the war (World War I), the War Department announced that there was shortage of guns for the various Home Guards.

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## **FAVORITE SEASON**

A recent poll shows that fall is the favorite season of most Americans (29%). Those over age 55 preferred spring (37%), followed by fall (30%), summer (20%), and winter (4%).

Those age 18-34 favored summer as their favorite season (30%).

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## **THE OLD PRESCOTT CITY JAIL**

Sometime when you are in Prescott, you might take a little tour of the old Prescott City Jail. It is located in an alley directly behind the city hall. I stopped there recently and took a few pictures. A person would really appreciate having the freedom to come and go as you please after looking at the place where prisoners were once held. There are three cells inside the small building. A small space by one cell contains an old toilet and a small sink. Another toilet is behind the other two cells. Everything inside is made of metal. Even the cots are held in place by a heavy chain which allowed them to be folded out of the way when not in use.

The jail was built in 1928 and was used until the 1960s. Another source says it was built in 1912. It is now on the register of historic places. The Chamber of Commerce spruced it up a few years ago. The locks were removed from the doors, so the building is open for inspection.



The jail is a cold, lonely looking place. All that exposed metal made it seem extra cold on the cold November day when I was there. I would think that a prisoner might consider changing his ways after being held there for any length of time. The cells are small, approximately six feet by nine feet. One cell is separated from the other two by a heavy metal door.

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Two adjoining cells at the rear of the building. A toilet is directly behind these two cells.

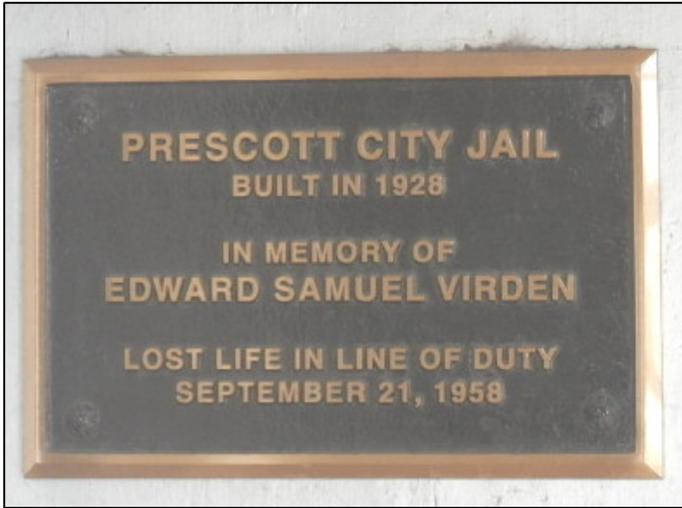


This cell is just inside the front door. You can see the metal cot on the left held up by chains. I suppose the cot could be folded up toward the wall when not in use. As you can see space is very limited. Cell dimensions are six feet by nine feet.



The toilet and sink in the small space to the right of the cell in the above picture. The prisoner in the above cell would have this view from his cell.

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Just inside the front door on a wall is this plaque. Edward Samuel Virden was a city police officer who was fatally shot in the jail by a prisoner in 1958.

Edward Virden had only been working for the police department for fourteen months. He was 35 years old, married, and had three small children.

Officer Virden had stopped a motorist named Kenneth Nicely from London, Kentucky and had placed him under

arrest and proceeded to lock him up in the Prescott city jail.

About 11:00 p.m., state trooper Tommy Himes noticed Officer Virden's car parked outside the jail which was unusual and went to investigate. Inside the jail, he found Officer Virden dead from a gunshot wound. No other prisoners were in the jail at that time.

At first, it was thought Officer Virden was killed with his own gun since it was missing. His billfold was also missing. After more investigation, it was determined he had been shot with a 45 caliber automatic pistol. Two other 45 bullets were found in the wall inside the jail.

Law officers from all the surrounding states assisted in the search for Virden's killer. Nicely was suspected to be the killer, but there was no actual proof. Then word came that Kenneth Nicely had been stopped in Kingsville, Texas for speeding in a school zone. During the stop there was an altercation with the Kingsville officer. Shots were fired and Nicely was critically wounded by a gunshot to the neck and he was hospitalized. A search of his car turned up a 45 caliber pistol in the glove compartment. Bullets from that gun matched the bullets found in the wall of the Prescott city jail and the one that had killed Officer Virden.

Nicely had also been wanted in connection with the murder of an auto salesman in Kentucky named Tony Brown.

Extradition papers were quickly prepared and three officers from Prescott traveled to Kingsville, Texas to bring Nicely back to Prescott. Kentucky also wanted to extradite him but the Prescott papers arrived first so he was turned over to the Prescott authorities.

It was not certain that Nicely would be able to return to Prescott since he had been severely wounded during his arrest. His doctor finally agreed to let him return to Arkansas if he could be transported by plane. An airplane was sent from Arkansas to pick him up. Two officers accompanied him on the plane while the third officer drove the car back to Prescott. The plane

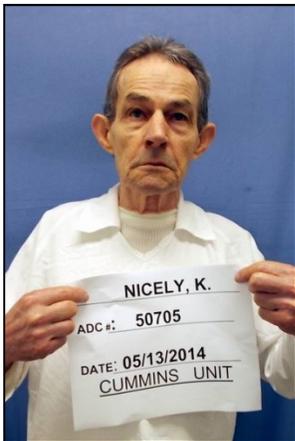
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landed at the Hope airport and Nicely was transported by ambulance to the Cora Donnell Hospital in Prescott where he was guarded day and night for the next ten days. During his hospital stay, he celebrated his twentieth birthday.

While being questioned in the hospital, Nicely admitted he had killed Officer Virden. He denied having anything to do with the murder of the salesman in Kentucky.

Nicely was sent to the state hospital for 30 days of observation. He was transported there by ambulance. After this observation period he was returned to Prescott and was declared to be sane.

About three months after Officer Virden was killed, Kenneth Nicely faced a jury in Prescott on the charge of first degree murder. Even though he had admitted killing Officer Virden, the jury had to determine his punishment. The jury was made up of eleven whites and one Negro. During the trial, he stated he shot Officer Virden because he thought Virden was going to shoot him. The trial resulted in a verdict of life in prison for Kenneth Nicely who was 20 years old at the time. *(from the files of The Nevada News)*



An inmate search of the Arkansas prison system reveals that Kenneth Nicely is still alive and is serving his sentence at the Cummins prison in Arkansas. He is now 77 years old. He has been a guest of the Arkansas prison system for the last 57 years.

Officer Edward Virden was buried in DeAnn Cemetery in Prescott.

It is somewhat sobering to visit the old jail and know what happened there back in 1958. Policemen have dangerous jobs and have to deal with all sorts of dangerous people. Officer Edward Virden was the only Prescott officer to be killed in the line of duty with the exception of City Marshal Fred Murrah who was killed while helping other officers raid a whiskey still near Lackland in 1923.

Having a suitable place to house criminals has always been a problem for local governments. The present Nevada County jail just south of the court house has failed inspections in recent years and was in danger of being closed. Voters approved a tax increase to construct a new detention center (fancy name for a jail) and offices for the sheriff's department. That building is beginning to take shape and is located near the court house on the spot formerly occupied by a grocery store and a pharmacy.

Here are a few little tidbits from the county newspapers concerning the early jails in Prescott:

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### **2-12-1885**

About nightfall last Thursday, Mr. Geo. McGraw, bailiff and jailor, went to give the prisoners their supper. He was hit on the head and stunned and the three Negroes confined escaped. The weapon was an old lock wrapped up in rags. Mr. McGraw's injuries are quite serious...

### **8-27-1885**

There is also a complaint made by the neighbors of the stench caused by the buckets from the jail being emptied on the vacant lot near the jail.

### **5-19-1886**

From the grand jury report—We find the jail well kept, but it needs some bars across the lower sashes and wire screens over the windows to keep parties from communicating or handing things in.

### **1-4-1888**

T. J. Mendenhall of Caney captured and brought in and re-jailed Frank Ellison (col'd). It will be remembered this man and others escaped by knocking down the jailer two years ago. Mr. M. is a very good detective and deserves credit for his unpaid trouble.

### **2-12-1890**

We learn that this county has arranged with Sheriff Abraham of Clark Co. to keep its prisoners until a jail is built here. *(Note: the previous jail had burned)*

### **2-19-1890**

It is probable a new county jail will be built on the site of the one recently burned next year—a tax to be levied for that purpose. A good, substantial brick should be erected.

### **1-28-1892**

From the grand jury report--The county has no jail and it is recommended that a new one be built. The poor house is not in good condition. It needs repairs and a person to keep same.

### **11-18-1905**

A sick tramp who said his name was Walker is being held at the county jail. Doctors are doing what they can for him. The man later died and was buried in the city. Nothing whatever could be learned about him or his people.

### **1-27-1906**

From the report of the grand jury: We find the jail well kept and everything is being done for the health and comfort of the prisoners. We find the court house in perilous condition, the walls being cracked in many places rendering it dangerous to those who work there and to anyone who has business there.

### **7-28-1910**

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From the grand jury report: The old jail on the south corner of the court house yard needs to be torn down. It is a very unsightly structure and should not be allowed to remain there any longer.

## 8-9-1910

A dusky damsel of the lewd order was taken in tow last night by Marshal Johnson and placed in jail where she languished during the night. She was turned out this morning and given orders to leave town.

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## NECROLOGY (2014)

Our new word for the month. Necrology is a list of deaths for a certain period of time. These people with connections to this area passed away in 2014:

Early Purifoy Jr. (Jan. 7) –St. John Cem.  
Leona Murphy Powell (Jan. 14)—Bluff City Cem.  
Randy Wayne Glass (Feb. 18)—Bluff City Cem.  
David Benjamin Harrison (Feb. 23)—Ebenezer Cem.  
Margie Adams Knight (Feb. 28)—Bluff City Cem.  
Myrtle Martin Knight (Mar. 1) –Bluff City Cem.  
Johnnie Stovall (Apr. 4)—Friendship Cem.  
Helen Florine Hardwick (Mar. 9)—Bluff City Cem.  
J. W. Glass (Mar. 14)—Caney Cem.  
Sandra Elaine Hildebrand (June 10)—Bluff City Cem.  
Judy Barlow Wells (June 23)—Mt. Horeb Cem.  
Mary Ella Sims Haynie (June 12)—St. John Cem.  
Jerry L. Chambless (Aug. 20)—Bluff City Cem.  
Gwendolyn Upton Butler (Sep. 20)—Bluff City Cem.  
Edith Garner (Oct. 7)—Bluff City Cem.  
Loritta Meador Johnson (Nov. 4)—Union Hill Cem. at Ingalls, AR  
Michael Gulley (Nov. 30)—Union Grove Cem.  
Al J. Plyler (Dec. 16)—DeAnn Cem.

*Death leaves a  
heartache no one  
can heal; love leaves  
a memory no one  
can steal.—from an  
Irish headstone*

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## COMMENT RECEIVED FROM READER

Your info. concerning the abandoned cemeteries reminds me of a quote by Chief Joseph that is under an exceptionally large portrait of him at the entrance of the Mormon family library in Salt Lake City, Utah: "He who does not tend to the grave of his fathers is worse than a wild animal". I sat staring at that quote and portrait for some time before I began the formal research about my lost Great, Great Grandmother, Elizabeth Cornelius. I have been searching for her ever since, as you well know. It was the initial motivation from that experience that spurred me on. It makes me ache inside to think she may be somewhere unattended, miscellaneous, like these others so disrespected. Wild animals, indeed! (*Annette Leamons*)

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**Correction:** I accidentally left out George Robinson's name in the list of those who correctly identified the "What Is It?" item in the last issue. Sorry about that!

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| <b>RAINFALL FOR 2014</b> |                   |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Jan. – 1.2 inches        | Feb. – 3.6 inches | Mar. – 5.0 inches |
| Apr.—5.8 inches          | May—5.5 inches    | June – 4.0 inches |
| July – 5.2 inches        | Aug. – 8.2 inches | Sept.-- .6 inch   |
| Oct. – 7.9 inches        | Nov. –5.1 inches  |                   |

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## **A LOOK BACK AT 2014**

The year started out with some bitter cold temperatures. Lows were around 10 degrees in January which resulted in many broken water pipes. That's pretty cold for this part of the country.

We are accustomed to having storms in the springtime and this year was no exception. A severe wind storm in April caused major damage in Camden and some of the surrounding towns. The weather service called it straight line winds. The Terrapin Neck community was hit by a hail storm in April and the ground was covered with hail for a short time.

Many hardwood trees have died due to the extreme drought the last two or three years. Rainfall in 2014 was about normal with 52.1 inches at my house through November. August and October were the months with the heaviest rainfall which is unusual. September was the driest month. We still have a few days to go before the rainfall results are finalized.

One of the unsolved mysteries of 2014 was the disappearance of a Malaysian passenger plane in March with 239 people onboard. Experts believe it crashed in the Indian Ocean but no trace has been found.

A new terrorist group called ISIS took over much territory in the Middle East. We learned how brutal they could be when they beheaded several journalists and aid workers. We were told it would take years to defeat this group. it seems there is no shortage of terrorists these days.

We learned about the Ebola virus in 2014 and became very concerned when a man died from the disease in Dallas in October. Several nurses treating the man also contracted the disease.

The year was marked by racial unrest and protests in Ferguson, Missouri and other places after the grand jury made their decision to not indict the police officer involved in the shooting death of a black man.

Locally, not much has changed in 2014. I wish I could report that some new industry had decided to move to this area, but no such luck. In Camden, the Chevrolet-Buick-GMC

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dealership has remodeled their building and McDonald's has moved to a new building near Walmart. A new detention facility is being constructed in Prescott near the court house and a new Family Dollar store opened there. The smaller towns seem to be getting even smaller.

Hopefully, the economy is beginning to improve. Gas prices are coming down which should give consumers a little more money to spend.

Our wish is that 2015 will be a better year for our world, our country, our state, our local communities, and for our families.

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### **2014 ABECEDARIAN – By Don Mathis**

An abecedarian is a poem where the first word in each line is arranged in alphabetical order.

Aircraft in Malaysia disappeared and caused a futile investigation.  
Baseball's Giants beat the Royals in the World Serialization.  
Comet landing was the latest in outer space exploration.  
Dalai Lama meets with Barack Obama. Was it predestination?  
Ebola outbreak is a crisis with no cure or medication.  
Ferguson protests highlight racial profiling and discrimination.  
Global warming is a real threat according to the United Nations,  
Heat is beat by Spurs in the National Basketball Association.  
ISIS militants disgust the world by practicing decapitation.  
Japan comes under fire for whaling commercialization.  
Korean ferry capsizes and hundreds die of suffocation.  
Latvia adopts the Euro in the spread of Europeanization.  
Marijuana use rises to new highs as states vote for legalization.  
Nigerian Girl's School is the site of Boko Haram depredation.  
Obama Care goes into effect. Opponents call it socialization.  
Palestinian Gaza Strip dislikes Israel's Protective Edge Operation.  
Questions of gay marriage are resolved for most of the population.  
Rock and Roll Hall of Fame has a KISS and Cat Stevens inauguration.  
Seattle Sea Hawks defeat Denver Broncos in the Super Bowl elimination.  
Texas governor Rick Perry's indictment gives him indignation.  
Ukraine protesters react with violence to Russia's troop mobilization.  
Voters favor Republicans over Democrats in the electoral ordination.  
World Cup in Brazil, Germany is champion of the Soccer Federation.  
XXII Olympics in Sochi, Russia bring a touch of modernization.  
Yemen is in turmoil from the Houthi faction insubordination.  
Zehaf-Bibeau brings violence to Canada's peaceful confederation.