

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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A few weeks ago, I received an email from Robert Foster which contained the autobiography of his grandfather, Howard Cornish Foster, which was written in 1938. I always enjoy reading about this part of Nevada County, especially when it is a first-hand account. Many of you will recognize some of the family names mentioned in this article. I have divided it into two parts. In this part, he tells about his family, some early memories, and a description of the part of Nevada County known as Union Township. The second part will include his memories of his school days at Gum Grove. Thanks to Robert Foster for sharing this interesting article.

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF HOWARD CORNISH FOSTER
(written October 4, 1938)

It is not mainly because record keeping is the spirit of the age that this sketch is being prepared. Some keep records for a specific purpose; the purposes differing almost as widely as the individuals keeping them, and still others who make written records of themselves and others, do so, not knowing just why they are about it; yet many of us believe that there is a purpose behind it all. I am one who entertains such as belief. My purpose in writing these few pages, is to record events, traits, items of history, genealogical data, etc., which if not recorded by someone, will pass from memory with the passing of the ones who knew about them.

I was the youngest in a family of thirteen children; was born 21 February, 1893 in a log house in Nevada County, Arkansas. The family's post office at that time was Foss, but that discontinued a few years later, and the next was Theo, which had a short life as a post office, also passing into history, when Zama was the mailing address, and continued so up to the time we moved from my place of birth to another community, in 1903 (Zama was discontinued also, a few years later). The families of the immediate community of my childhood days were: The Daniell family--the Bevill family--the Thompson family--the McAteers--the Fombys--Jones--Blake--Darby--Griffin--Byrd--Schooley--Plyler--Slagul--Kirk--Willingham--Belk--Purifoy--Jetton--Barksdale--Shell. There were evidently others which I cannot recall but these were the majority of the white families within a three mile radius. There were some Negroes in the community, some of which were: Tidwell--Dansby--Blake--Miller, etc.

MY PARENTS

My father was Robert Thomas Foster, the oldest son, and second oldest child of a family of thirteen children, all of whom reached maturity before there was a death in the family. He was born in the District of Union, in the state of South Carolina on the 9th of January, 1839, near Pinckneyville. Moved with his parents in 1845 nearer to Unionville (now Union) in same county. In 1849, his parents moved to Woodstock, Cherokee County, Georgia where he grew up. He married 9 January, 1866 to Louise C. Oliver, and by this marriage had two daughters--Ollie Ophelia--and Lula. This wife died 10 December, 1870, and he married Mary Caroline Westmoreland 9 October, 1872. By this marriage thirteen children were

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born, viz: William Ellis--Robert Thomas--Bunyan Lester--Inez--Euanah--Charles Henry--Evey--Noah Benjamin--Ira Waine--Irene--Emily Jane--John, and Howard Cornish, who is myself. My father died 30 November, 1909 near Cale, Nevada County, Arkansas, and is buried in Ebenezer Cemetery, that county (see his record in other pages for detailed account of his life, and for his ancestry).

My mother was Mary Caroline Westmoreland, first daughter, and second oldest child of Lewis Griffith Westmoreland and Ann Moseley. Was born 16 August, 1851 near Tugalo, in what was a part of Habersham County, Georgia (in 1905, a part of Habersham and part of Franklin counties were taken to form Stephens County, and since that time Tugalo is in Stephens County. She died 20 May, 1930 at Malvern, Arkansas, and is buried by her husband in Nevada County, Arkansas (see her record another page).

When I was born, Dr. Shell was the attending physician, and it was the first case of birth to which he attended. I knew him well all the years as I grew up, and can remember even now, how nasty the medicine he gave tasted. Many a coated tongue did he take a look at, and prescribe calomel and quinine.

EARLY BUT DISTANT MEMORES

Shortly before I was three years old my grandfather moved back to Georgia after living in Arkansas for about two years. This was Lewis Griffith Westmoreland. He and his second wife, Jane Phillips staid at our place the night before their departure, and I can remember her going back and forth across the room as she proceeded to pack things into their trunks, while grandpa sat by the fireplace and talked with Father. His stocky build, and the way he crossed his legs, is still remembered, as well as the folks at home saying that he was our grandpa. If his wife was up and doing all the time as she was when packing their trunks that night at our place; then she surely was a hard working and busy woman. They had a son, Norman, a few years older than I, that I can faintly remember. It seems he kept getting in his mother's way, as it seems he wanted to see how the trunks were being packed.

My brother--Robert Thomas Foster--we called him Bob--born 24 December, 1874, died 28 June, 1896. I was three years and four months of age when he died, but remember it as distinctly as if it was but yesterday. He was in the South East room of the big log house in which we lived--when I was older, I remember we called it the little room--and it was in the afternoon, when they called me in from where I was out playing. They were all crying, and for some time I could not understand what it was all about, and when told that he had died, it took some time to convince me it was so. I told them he would be the same as he always was after a while, but when they told me that he would not, I commenced to realize that it was serious, and felt very sorry myself. When he was buried I can remember the crowd around the grave, and an oak bush about two inches in diameter that was at the East end of his grave.

Before he was sick I can remember sitting on his lap many times, and one thing that made me especially like him was that he would let me feel thru his pockets. Frequently he would give me a nickel or a dime, and sometimes let me keep what I found in his pockets. When I

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would start bragging what I was going to buy, the others would sometimes ask me where I was going to get the money, and I can remember that my answer was always: "In Bob's pockets". He owned a muzzle-loading rifle with a barrel about 45 inches long. (In later years I used it to kill squirrels, etc.). Once I remember going hunting with him, and he carried me most of the time. When my father was buried the oak at the grave was cut down. It was then (1909) about six inches in diameter.

On another occasion, --how old I don't remember--when playing in a path, a horse we had, named Dock, ran away, as it was called, and headed straight for me. He did not change his course, either, and just as he had jumped over me kicked back with both hind feet, missing my head, I was told, by about four inches. With these few recollections, I think my mind is mostly a blank as to what took place until I was around five or six years old, or perhaps some of the other memories cannot be properly timed.

At an early age I wanted to start swearing, or cussing as we called it. The slaps I got for it scared me till I had to be more careful, but I figured out a way to get away with it. I would crawl away back under the house and there would cuss to my heart's content, or until the flea bites made it so miserable for me I would have to come out.

I liked cats, and usually owned several. Since I was unable to hold my own when my brothers and sisters would tease me, I would pick out the scrawny cats out of each litter and give the cats the same names as they had. No, they did not like it. Also, I found that when I had candy, if I would rub it on a cat's back that I was not asked to give any of it away.

My bashfulness was nothing to speak of; when someone would come I would crawl under a bed and stay until they were gone. This staid with me for a long time. It made life miserable for me on many occasions.

I was a glutton in every sense of the word. My appetite was ravenous, and when given the chance would in spite of unusually strong digestive organs, eat so much it would make me sick. And this was not confined only to my youth. On several occasions I ate so much watermelon I believed I was going to die. Once I ate 500 muscadines before I stopped counting them, and then ate many more before I quit. (an ordinary muscadine is about three times the size of a large grape, and the pulp much tougher). Frequently at the late evening meal, the quantity of pork eaten (sic) would keep me in a nightmare dream until morning. Some of the hallucinations thus caused are indescribable. Falling off cliffs, chased by demons, being in public with no pants on, having a rabid dog corner me, and being unable to run to get away are only a few of the dreams caused by a gluttoned stomach from overeating.

When about three years old (I don't recall the incident), I fell off a porch and landing on the handle of a plow stock, became ruptured. It caused a lot of suffering all along thru (sic) the years of my early life until nineteen years of age, when I was cured by taking a treatment from Capt. W. A. Collings of Watertown, New York. Five months treatment affected a complete cure. Rupture has never bothered me since.

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UNION TOWNSHIP AND VICINITY, NEVADA COUNTY, ARKANSAS

It was mostly rolling and more or less hilly country. There was of course, level land, and some bottom land as fertile as is to be found. There was pine timber in abundance of several varieties. white oak, post oak, water oak, black oak, overcup oak, pin oak, etc. were plentiful, especially the three kinds first named. There were several species of hickory, two species of gum, elm, green bay, black walnut, iron wood, dogwood, willow, mayhaw, persimmon, ash, button willow, boisd'arc, cypress, papaw, etc.

On the sandy soil watermelons were a success. Almost everything except tropical crops could be grown. Up to 1916, there were no stock laws, and all unfenced land was open range. Cotton and corn were the two main crops. When I decided to let 1912 be my last year to grow cotton, I did so against the advice of those who best knew me, for it was thought by the people there that to refrain from growing cotton would be at once disastrously ruin any farmer who attempted the wild venture. I did better right along from the time I let cotton alone. We would generally have a turnip patch, especially in the fall. After having things my way, I grew sweet potatoes, peas, corn, peanuts, pumpkin, sorghum cane hay, peaches, watermelons, musk melons, and a variety of vegetables. Twice I tried to grow hogs, but cholera cleaned me out after getting well started.

Big Caney Creek was a good fishing stream, and I fished in it a great deal and caught many for several years. Occasionally, I would catch a loggerhead turtle; then we had meat unsurpassed as well as turtle soup.

Crab grass was what made the growing of field crops difficult. It would grow thicker than lice on a dog's back and grew fast. Cockle burrs were pestersome on wet land. If bermuda grass got started it was best to turn the infested land into pasture, for the summer rains made it almost an impossibility to kill it out completely.

Our farm consisted of 120 acres and lay in the shape of an L. It is located in Section 7, Township 12, Range 20. We moved on and rented John Greer's farm. In 1906 and thereafter we had enough land in cultivation to keep us busy at home. On our place were a number of petrified hickory logs, the only ones I ever saw in that locality. I plowed up Indian pottery several times, and found a number of flint arrowheads. It evidently had been the stamping ground of Buck Indians in earlier times.

The largest family in the community was that of John and Rebecca Otwell. They had 15 children, all living.

The neighborhood had one noted gossip, Minnie Irvin, wife of Will Irvin. She talked about everyone she knew except the one she happened to be with. She was not despised, however, as a gossip generally is, because everyone seemed to realize that she couldn't help it and got quite a kick out of hearing her talk.

Methodist was the prevailing religion of the district. Gooseankle was the name of the location of their church. Some resented this name, and it was changed and came to be

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known also as Rocky Hill. I have heard some fiery sermons preached there.

(PART TWO WILL BE IN THE NEXT ISSUE)



Mr. Foster mentioned finding petrified logs on their farm. This piece of petrified wood was found about a quarter of a mile from the Foster place when I was working for IP. Our fire plow uncovered a small piece and we started digging and found a whole petrified log. It broke into several pieces as we dug it out. I got this piece which measures about 20 inches long and nine inches wide plus another round piece about four feet long. Several other workers took home a piece of the log. For some reason, petrified wood is pretty common in that particular area. People sometimes used these as grave markers. There are several at Ebenezer Cemetery.

RAINFALL RECORD FOR 2015

January --- 5.6 inches

February--- 3.6 inches plus about five inches of snow and ice

ITEMS FOUND IN *THE DYNAMO*, THE PRESCOTT HIGH SCHOOL NEWSPAPER (1930s)

SIX AGES OF WOMEN

Safety pins

Clothes pins

Hair pins

Fraternity pins

Diamond pins

Rolling pins

Man is born

Man dies

Man is buried

Man turns to dust

Grass grows from dust

Horse eats grass

Moral: Don't ever kick a horse—you might

kick an ancestor

The owl is dumb and the bat can see, in spite of the long established popular belief that the owl is wise and the bat blind. Compared to other birds, the owl is very stupid. The bat has good eyes but can see best at twilight.

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This is a picture of Perry Westmoreland and his brother, Jake taken in the 1930s. The is a mid-1920s Model T modified with a bed on the back.

Their uncle, Leonard Westmoreland, went into Prescott one day and came back with it, but his wife, Anna Lee, didn't approve.

Perry and Jake had earned \$50 or more from a bale of cotton they had planted and picked. They bought the Model T from their Uncle Leonard for \$47.50.

Thanks to Joanne Westmoreland for sending me this picture and story.

I love these old vehicles. If you have pictures of old vehicles (or other interesting pictures) that you would be willing to share, please send them to me.

THE NEW SCHOOL AT BLUFF CITY

The start of the school year in 1929 found Bluff City in the process of building a new high school. Several smaller schools in the area had just been consolidated into the Bluff City school

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district. Governor Parnell had been scheduled to deliver an address at Bluff City at the opening of the school year but since the new building was not quite completed, he delivered his address at the Cale School instead.

The Bluff City School had previously been located at the end of what is now Knight Street just past the now vacant home of Tommy and Lucille Kirk. The old building was a wood frame structure. A few pictures survive showing small parts of that building. The new brick school being constructed in 1929 was located at the intersection of what is now Hwy. 24 and the road to Reader. That building was used until January, 1945, when it was completely destroyed by fire. A new brick building was then constructed at the same location. That building still stands. When the Bluff City School consolidated with Prescott in 1951, the building was sold to the Bluff City Church of Christ. The building was remodeled and the dedication of the new church was held August 24, 1958. The church continues to meet there today.

The people of Bluff City, both students and adults, were excited about the new school building in 1929. It takes a lot of money to furnish a school properly and at that time much of the money was raised locally. A weekly newspaper, *The Nevada News*, gives us some idea of what it was like back in 1929.

The high school organized two literary societies in October, 1929, called The Hubs and The Spartans. Literary societies were quite popular in those days.

The Hubs chose these officers: Clyde Moore, president, Myrtle Martin, vice-president, Nellie Mae Morgan, secretary, and Dovie Black as treasurer. They chose black and gold as their colors. Their motto was "Always spinning". The program committee members were Sula Nichols, Clyde Moore, Myrtle Martin, and Ethel Gillespie. The local committee members were Gussie Byrd, Lee Roy McKelvy, Carl Greer, and Geneva Irvin.

The Spartans chose these officers: Laura Gillespie, president, Mary DeWoody, vice-president, Elsie Mae Moore, secretary/treasurer. Their colors were red and white. Their motto was "Never Give Up". Program committee members were Helen Harvey, Bill Nichols, and Mary DeWoody.

Marie Hildebrand won a prize for being the best looking girl in Bluff City.

The freshman class organized as follows: Herbert Moore, president, Hassel Starnes, vice-president, Cora Starnes, secretary/treasurer, and John Meador, reporter. Class colors were blue and white. The freshman class motto was "To Make the Best Better".

The school reported that they had three buses with one bus making two trips.

The school library had about 800 volumes in 1929 and three encyclopedias had just been added as well as a new dictionary.

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The Smith-Hughes building was nearing completion under the leadership of Mr. Frank Pfieler.

Landscaping of the school grounds was in progress. The news reporter wrote: "The school ground looks different and everyone has blisters on their hands from pulling cotton stalks." Evidently, the school had been constructed where cotton had just been grown.

There were several events to raise money for the new school. There was an "Old Hen's Day" which raised \$25 for the school. I would love to know more about that event. To raise money for playground equipment for the primary grades, each student was told to bring one egg per week until enough money was raised.

A PTA was organized with Mrs. C. C. Harvey as president, Miss Artie DeWoody, vice-president, and Miss Belle Morgan as secretary/treasurer.

A new volley ball had been purchased for the junior grades. Both basketball teams had new suits and two new balls and were ready to take on any school in the county.

The Home Ec. girls raised money by selling candy, popcorn, peanuts, and hamburgers.

School subjects for the tenth grade in 1929 included Plane Geometry, Trig., Ratios, Sine, Cosine, and Tangent, and Latin. The 11th grade studied Biology, American history, Human Conduct, English Literature, and Algebra.

There were 170 students enrolled at Bluff City in 1929 with eight teachers.

The school was the focal point of the community as long as it existed. Many different programs were held there including plays, music shows, debates, banquets, political speeches, various money-raising events, box suppers, and singings. The school building was the logical place to have inside events which drew a large crowd of people. Basketball games also brought large crowds. These were played on the outside basketball court since there was no gym.

NEWSPAPERS DELIVERED BY AIRPLANE (from the 8-7-1947 issue of *The Nevada County Picayune*)

A new newspaper started in Prescott in 1947, *The Prescott Daily Mail*, was the first newspaper in the state to be delivered by airplane. Two planes from the Prescott Flying Service were used. One plane flew to Little Rock where it was met by Gov. Ben Laney who was presented the first copy of the newspaper to come off the press.

Another plane dropped off bundles of the paper at Delight, Okolona, Blevins, Gurdon, Emmet, Bluff City, Laneburg, Rosston, Bodcaw, Willisville, and Mendenhall.