

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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Dr. William R. Rooks

I first became interested in Dr. William R. Rooks when I discovered he once lived near where I grew up. By doing a little research, I learned a little about him and exactly where his property was located. In fact, I spent the first three years of my life on land that Dr. Rooks once owned.

Dr. Rooks was born in Tennessee in 1834 according to census records. He settled in Ouachita County near Bluff City (now Nevada County) sometime around 1860. His wife's name was Mary Jane and they had three children listed in the 1870 census, age 16, 11, and 9.

The next record I found concerning Dr. Rooks was in the official military records from the Civil War. Brigadier General E. A. Carr's report of April 13, 1864 stated that his army consisting of about 600 mounted men plus a forage train (wagons) was camped at Dr. Rook's plantation. The army was headed to Camden. He was camped at White Oak Creek the next night (April 14th). The Battle of Poison Spring was on April 18, 1864, and it appears that Gen. Carr's army had already reached Camden by that date. But it is interesting to know that this large army regiment was camped for at least one night at Dr. Rook's plantation.

In order to know exactly where the army was camped, I had to check the deed records to see where Dr. Rook's property was located. I found that he owned about 660 acres of land. The map at the end of this article shows the location of his land taken from the deed records. His property took in all of what is now the Arkansas Forestry Commission's seed orchard on Hwy. 299 out of Bluff City and stretched all the way to where Ebenezer Cemetery is today. That property contains several large level fields suitable to growing cotton.

There is a story about some lost treasure buried near Ebenezer by a Civil War soldier who was camped there during the war. The land where the treasure is supposed to be buried was later owned by Mr. Hildre Griffith and was originally a part of Dr. Rooks' plantation. Many people have searched for the treasure, but it has not been found. A

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news article from September 7, 1961 issue of *The Nevada News* (reprinted from *The Ouachita Citizen*) states that, according to the legend, a Confederate soldier buried a considerable amount of gold or silver in a crockery vessel, possibly a churn, while the army was camped there in 1864. The spot was marked with an iron marker above it near the surface. Only one other soldier knew about the buried treasure and after the war, he made several long trips back to search for it but could not find it. The article states that Mr. Griffith plowed up the piece of iron marking the spot while cultivating his field in 1928, but didn't know the significance of it. He kept it along with many other items he had found while plowing his fields. I once hauled hay with Mr. Griffith when I was a teenager. I wish I had known this story back then and asked him about where he found the piece of iron and other Civil War artifacts.

I find it a little hard to believe that a Confederate soldier would have a large amount of gold or silver with him as he traveled with an army. The article mentions that he was with a Confederate army that was camped there. Brig. General Carr's army that was camped there was a Union army. Of course, it is possible that soldiers from both sides may have camped at the same spot at different times if there was a good water source available for the men and their horses.

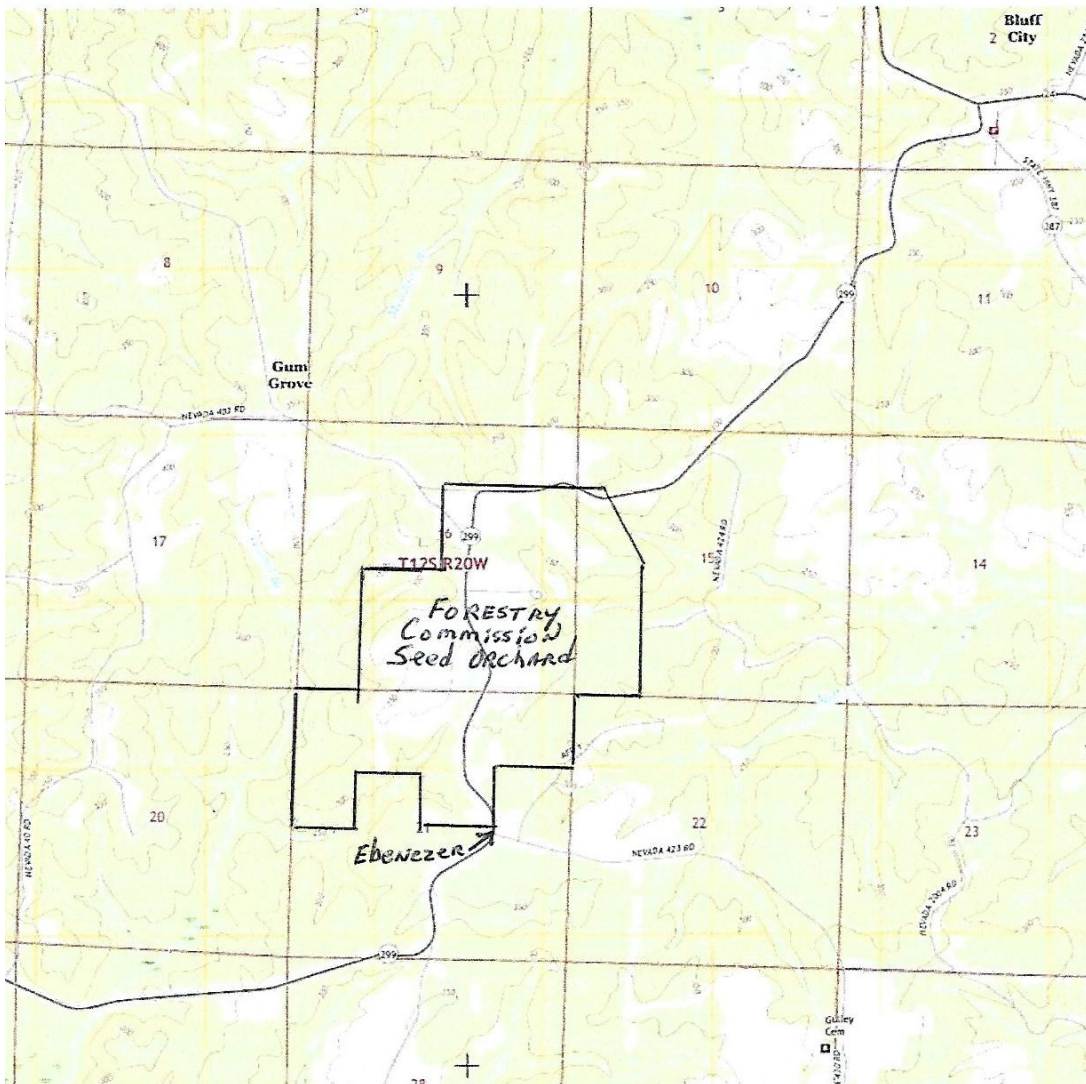
I found a deed dated May 8, 1872, by which Dr. Rooks deeded Robert Bowman 40 acres of land in the Southwest Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of Section 21. Another deed stated that two acres of that property was deeded to Mr. Bowman provided he complete a suitable building for a church and school and kept for that purpose. If not, the two acres went back to Dr. Rooks. This is near where Ebenezer Cemetery is located today, so we learn that Dr. Rooks donated land for a church and school at Ebenezer in 1872.

I learned from the deed records that Dr. Rooks owed money to a couple of men and signed over a deed to his property to them if the debts were not paid. He also signed over some of his horses and crops along with the land. One deed listed along with the land one small house, one dark brown horse, one dark brown mare, six head of cattle, some hogs with a mark in the right ear, and the crops that had been planted. The deeds stated that if the debts were paid, the deed became null and void. The debts were paid and the land remained in Dr. Rook's possession.

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The last record I found at the court house was a deed dated January 22, 1876, in which Dr. Rooks sold his 658 acres to Harriett J. Blake. She in turn sold the land in 1882 to Della Blake, her daughter-in-law and wife of Green Blake. So, Dr. Rooks' land in Nevada County was now in the possession of the Blake family, but what happened to Dr. Rooks?

All I could find was that he appeared in the 1880 census in Bowie County, Texas near Texarkana. Evidently, he moved to that area after leaving Nevada County. He was 51 years old in 1880. I could not find a burial place for him.



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THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DAVID LANG

David Lang was a farmer living near Gallatin, Tennessee with his wife, Emma and two children, George who was age 8 and Sarah, age 14. On September 23, 1880, Mr. Lang happened to be walking across the field near his home. His wife and children were outside at the time and a buggy was approaching driven by Judge Peck, a family friend accompanied by another man.

All at once, Mr. Lang just disappeared witnessed by his family and friends. They ran to the spot where he was last seen, thinking he must have fallen into a hole but no hole was found. Neighbors were called and they all searched the field looking for some sort of hole but nothing was found. Mrs. Lang became hysterical and had to be taken to her bed. There was no explanation for what happened to Mr. Lang. No funeral was ever held since they could not find a body.

It was said the vegetation in a fifteen-foot circle where Mr. Lang was last seen turned yellow and no animal would graze in that spot and no insects were inside the circle even though insects could be found all around the circle. Weeks later, his children were playing near the spot and said they heard their father calling for help in a faint voice which finally faded away.

The story of the disappearance of Mr. Lang appeared in a magazine in 1953 and in other publications later. There was no explanation of how a man could just disappear off the face of the earth in front of five witnesses.

Finally, some researchers decided to investigate the story further. They went to the local library to find the newspaper accounts of the event in 1880, but nothing was found in the papers. Surely, such an event would have been reported in the newspapers. They also went to the court house and checked the deed records. They found no record of David Lang ever owning the property. They also checked census records and could not find the David Lang family listed. They could find no marriage records for David and Emma Lang. They concluded that the story was a hoax.

One theory of how this story came about was that a man named Joe Mulhatten, a traveling salesman, came up with the story. He was known for being a story teller and had also

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entered some lying contests. He was known for coming up with outlandish stories which he submitted to newspapers as true stories. Even though he came up with many strange stories, there is no real evidence that he was responsible for the David Lang story.

Most think that Stuart Palmer came up with the story since he wrote the first published article about it for Fate magazine in 1953.

Others think a man named Ambrose Bierce was responsible. He was a well-known writer. He ended up going to Mexico in 1913 and disappeared without a trace.

You can read more about this strange case on the Internet by doing a search for “the disappearance of David Lang”. Thousands of people can be fooled into thinking something is true without checking the facts. This was probably one of the most famous “fake news” stories from the past.

FAMOUS PROVERBS

Below are some well-known proverbs. See if you can fill in the blanks. Answers are on page 8.

1. Blood is thicker than _____.
2. The early bird catches the _____.
3. Beggars can't be _____.
4. _____ is skin deep.
5. A watched _____ never _____.
6. Too many cooks spoil the _____.
7. A fool and his _____ are soon parted.
8. _____ speak louder than words.
9. Don't cry over spilled _____.
10. Better to be _____ than sorry.
11. Practice makes _____.
12. A _____ in the hand is worth than two in the bush.
13. Every _____ has his day.

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14. Two _____ are better than one.
15. Make _____ while the sun shines.
16. A barking dog never _____.
17. As the twig is bent, so grows the _____.
18. Like father, like _____.
19. Spare the _____ and spoil the child.
20. _____ should be seen and not heard.
21. Let sleeping dogs _____.
22. There is no fool like an _____ fool.
23. You can't teach an old dog new _____.
24. Familiarity breeds _____.
25. Where there's smoke, there's _____.
26. A little _____ is a dangerous thing.
27. You can't have your _____ and eat it too.
28. Don't look a _____ horse in the mouth.
29. _____ is the best teacher.
30. Still _____ run deep.
31. Don't put off until _____ what you can do today
32. The empty _____ rattles the loudest.
33. Birds of a feather _____ together.
34. A rotten _____ spoils the whole barrel.
35. A new _____ sweeps clean.
36. Better to carry an empty purse than an empty _____.
37. It is never too late to _____.
38. _____ in haste and repent at leisure.
39. The road to _____ is paved with good intentions.
40. _____ is the best policy.
41. It's an ill _____ that blows nobody good.
42. Time and _____ wait for no man.
43. Jack of all _____, master of none.

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44. Nothing succeeds like _____.
45. Every rose has its _____.
46. _____ is golden.
47. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw _____.
48. Every _____ has a silver lining.
- 49i. Nothing ventured, nothing _____.
50. He who dances must pay the _____.
51. There are two sides to every _____.
52. It's the hit _____ that hollers.
53. A man is known by the _____ he keeps.
54. All that glitters is not _____.
55. _____ makes the heart grow fonder.
56. _____ wasn't built in a day.
57. Don't put all your _____ in one basket.

WHAT IS IT?



(answer on page 8)

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Answer to What Is It?

This was a woodworking project when I was in high school back in 1957. It is a towel holder. You mount it on the wall and slip a towel under the marble which holds it in place. We made several things like broom holders, knife racks, bookcases, etc. I remember one of the first projects we had was to cut a board into a 12-inch square which had to be perfectly square. If it wasn't, we had to cut a 11-inch square and so on until we got it right or ran out of board. Another thing we did was to switch with the girls for two weeks. The girls took shop class and made bookcases. The boys took Home Ec. and learned etiquette, how to make beds, and cook (and we got to eat what we cooked).

ANSWERS TO PROVERBS

1. water; 2. worm; 3. choosers; 4. beauty; 5. pot/boils; 6. broth; 7. money; 8. Action; 9. milk;
10. safe; 11. perfect; 12. bird; 13. dog; 14. heads; 15. hay; 16. bites; 17. tree; 18. son; 19. rod;
20. Children; 21. dogs; 22. old; 23. tricks; 24. contempt; 25. fire; 26. learning; 27. cake; 28. gift;
29. Experience; 30. water; 31. tomorrow; 32. wagon; 33. flock; 34. apple; 35. broom; 36. head;
37. learn; 38. Marry; 39. hell; 40. Honesty; 41. wind; 42. tide; 43. trades; 44. success; 45. Thorns;
46. Silence; 47. stones; 48. cloud; 49. gained; 50. piper or fiddler; 51. story; 52. dog;
53. company; 54. gold; 55. Absence; 56. Rome; 57. eggs

FROM THE MAIL BAG

I have always enjoyed the Chronicle and hate that you will be cutting back on it. I can understand that you do spend a lot of time on each edition. I enjoy going back over them and it helps pass many cold, rainy days. I still have my printed editions also. Thank you for the wonderful work you have done. It is appreciated more than you know. --- *Yvonne Munn*

I'm not sure I've been able to express how impressed I've been with your historical work in southwest Arkansas over the years. Yes, please find time to do your *Sandyland Chronicles* six times per year until you realize that it's time to stop all together. I have all of your back issues archived in my digital files for Nevada/Ouachita County. So, if you never do another one, those past issues are priceless I feel. The works you created will never be obsolete and will actually increase in value going forward, don't you think? — *Ken Brown*

Your Chronicle was been informative, entertaining and valuable as a historical resource. I have been blessed by your efforts and have appreciated the results of your labors. And yes, I can understand what has gone into your finished product. Many people have no inkling what kind of effort goes into writing like yours. If and when you hang up your Chronicle "pen", I hope you'll consider contributing articles to the OCHS Quarterly. Many of our readers don't know that part of Nevada Co. was once in Ouachita County. There comes a time when there just isn't a lot more to say. The Genealogical Society is in same situation.

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Each of you has created a rich volume of material as a resource for those who come after us. That is a generous and significant legacy! – *Teresa Harris*

As usual, I really enjoyed this edition. I look forward to it every month, but I can understand it has taken quite a while to publish this unique and most interesting publication. Your fans will be happy to read anything you publish. – *Irma Hamby Evans*

I always enjoy reading the Chronicle; however, this month I especially enjoyed reading about Mr. Randolph Hamby. I did not know he was mayor of Prescott at one time. He and my Dad became friends when Daddy was working as County Clerk. I remember Daddy telling me about their conversations and some of the wisdom he passed along. Daddy would occasionally send me an article of interest that Mr. Hamby had pulled out of his "barrel" file.

Thanks for all the work you put into this publication! — *Charlotte Woody*

I don't know where you found the info on Honeaville as I had found the map you showed, but never could find any info on the town. Anyway, concerning the William Honea, my genealogy records show a William Honea was born in 1855 which would make him about 30 years old when serving as postmaster. He married Ann Elisa Evans in Jackson, Nevada County, Arkansas in 1876. His father was John who was the son of John Sampson Honea. John Sampson was my great-great grandfather.

I really enjoyed reading about Honeaville and to know it was an actual town at one time. Do you know what happened to Honeaville? If you get any more Honea info, I would appreciate if you would pass it along. – *Mary Ann Honea Sanford*

The article about the old pine tree reminded me of the pine on the property we now own that was your and my great grandfather's place. It was east of the old home place about a quarter-mile just up the hill from a spring where our great grandmother and Aunt Laura did the washing. It had been hit by lightning and was dead when Daddy bought the property in 1942. When we moved to the place someone helped him cut it down. I don't know that Daddy ever measured the stump but I could lie down on it and didn't "hang over". I was eight years old at the time. He cut the tree into enough fence posts to re-fence most of our property east of the road. He had enough left to fence the "big pasture" across the road from the house. I do not know if it was white or yellow pine, but it was one big tree! — *Betty Thomas*

I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the June Chronicle. Knew that Great Aunt Georgia had married a Gulley and little beyond that. In reading through the issue, I discovered how I was "kin" to lots of other folks and learned a few that I didn't know I was related to!

I have a couple of stories to pass along that I think you might enjoy. When we were in high school Earlene Mathis and I were good friends and double dated a lot (her folks didn't allow her to go out with a boy without another girl along and my parents had to know the boy really well before I was allowed to "single date", too, and we frequently were each other's date friend). She had a date with Woodie Beaver and he brought along Perry Joe Beaver to be my date. Earlene's mother and my dad were first cousins. Woodie's father, Perry Joe's mother and father were my father's and Earlene's mother's first cousins. On the way into Camden, Woody commented about a Yellow Cab Taxi stopped on the side of the highway just as we were entering town, "Betty, that's one of your Uncle Oscar's cabs isn't it?" I thought about it a bit and replied, "He's your uncle, too. Earlene, he's yours, too and Perry Joe, he's yours, too!"

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The next morning I told my parents, "I have to get out of this place! I'll never find anyone to marry! I'm kin to everyone!"

The other story:

There is a spring across the road from our house that my Dad always called "Big George Spring". I asked one day who Big George was and Daddy told me that he was an old slave that lived in a little house near the spring until he died. He was one of the Gulley slaves. Daddy said that when he was a kid the old man would tell the kids stories what life was like and one story that stuck with Daddy. The old slave told about the Gulley's buying a cook stove for the kitchen. After the appliance was put together Big George was told to build a fire in it. He laughed and told the kids that he didn't know where to put the fire for he had never seen a stove before so he built it in the biggest opening in it--the oven! Harriet Lee Kirk, widow of James Marion Kirk managed to hold that place together until Jasper Newton was old enough to take over. I suspect that Big George helped her. — *Betty Thomas*

RAINFALL RECORD FOR 2019

The year 2019 will go down as one of the wettest years. We ended the year (at my house) with 74.3 inches of rain which is much above normal. The normal annual rainfall for this area is about 52 inches. Wettest month was April. Driest month was September.

My Father Always Said... (by Don Mathis)

"A short pencil is better than a long memory." – Daniel Hearnberger Mathis

My father's maxim was sort of smart aleck but Daddy had a sense of humor as well as a sense of wisdom. If I write something down, I am more apt to remember it. If I forget it, I can refer to my scribbles.

I am a list-maker; if something is not on my list of things to do, it probably will not get done. What's more, I always record debits in my checkbook and reconcile them with the bank statement at the end of the month. This leads me to his next quotation:

"A man with no money has no business leaving town," Dad would say.

I ignored this advice when I hitchhiked to California – and lost ten pounds. Nowadays, I don't even consider a weekend trip without a financial pillow.

"It's not important to like what you do," Dad would say, "It's important that you do it."

I think of this when I'm faced with an unpleasant task; a plumbing chore or yard work. Then I just rear on back and 'git 'er done.'

Back in the Great Depression of the 1930s, it probably was not as important to like what you do; jobs were in such scarce supply you were lucky to have a livelihood. But as regarding a 21st century profession, I think it IS important to like what you do.

"If you like your work, it's not work." That's my motto.

(Dan Mathis was the son of Walter and Alice Mathis of Camden, Arkansas)