

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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FINAL ISSUE

This will be the final monthly issue of *The Sandyland Chronicle*. I'm running out of interesting things to write about and the Covid virus has limited the opportunities for research. The Prescott library has opened back up with time limitations, but the genealogy room is closed at this time and that's where the microfilm is stored. I may publish some more issues later as material comes available, but this will be the last monthly issue.

I started *The Sandyland Chronicle* 20 years ago and never thought it would last this long. I have published nearly 2000 pages and all the back issues are online, so you can always go to the web site and read the articles again. I do that once in a while myself. I also kept printed copies of all the back issues and bound them in booklets—one for each year. These back issues contain a lot of historical information about Nevada County and the surrounding area which may be of interest to future generations.

I learned a lot about our local history by doing this project and I'm sure there are many more stories that could be told. I think most people don't care much about history when they are young, but as they get older, many become more interested in the past. Sometimes the "good old days" bring back pleasant memories, but they can also bring back memories of hard times and things we would like to forget. Looking at the world today, I am glad I experienced some of the harder times. Those memories help me to appreciate the things we have now such as air conditioning, electricity, television, computers, etc. Young people growing up today will never experience many of the things we did when we were growing up. It's good that somebody writes about the things of the past or they might be completely forgotten. I wish I had been more interested in things of the past when I was young and had asked my grandparents questions about their memories of the past. We usually don't think to do that until it's too late.

I appreciate all the words of encouragement over the years and I hope these chronicles brought some measure of pleasure to your life. Thanks to all who have contributed articles, pictures, and poems. I have no idea how many people read these papers. I have about 130 people on my mailing list, but I get emails from many others who happen to come across it while doing research on their families. Anyone doing research on Nevada County will more than likely come across it on the Internet. I've even heard from a few people in foreign countries who had some question about Nevada County people and places.

So, remember how to find the paper online to read the back issues. You can just do a search for "sandyland chronicle" or bookmark the web site which is <http://www.sandyland.dreamhosters.com>. There you will find the index and links to all the back issues.

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THE YEAR 2020

The year 2020 may be one most people would like to forget. We still have a month to go, so we will have to wait and see what transpires over the next few weeks. The big news for 2020 was the world-wide Covid pandemic which has affected all of us. From what we hear, it will probably last well into the coming year.

School children will long remember 2020 and how the schools handled the virus. We learned about virtual classes, virtual doctor's appointments, wearing masks, and social distancing. We had to get used to carry-out meals from restaurants, avoiding large crowds of people, having drive-in church services, and figuring out how we could get our hair cut. One of the saddest things about the pandemic was the strict rules about no visitors in nursing homes and hospitals. Many families lost loved ones to the virus or complications due to pre-existing conditions.

The pandemic brought high unemployment as most businesses shut down for a time. Many people started ordering groceries online rather than risk shopping in stores. Many small businesses will probably close permanently. Scientists are rushing to find a vaccine which will hopefully help to bring the virus under control.

We had an unusual number of hurricanes and tropical storms in 2020. I had some damage from Hurricane Laura at my house. We had another very wet year with above normal rainfall. Temperatures were cooler than usual. I don't think we even reached 100 degrees during the summer months which is unusual for Arkansas.

There were many protests and riots in the larger cities in 2020. Most of these involved groups like Black Lives Matter protesting the killing of black men by the police. Many people called for the defunding of police departments.

It was also a presidential election year. More people voted than in previous elections and it ended up a very close election in several key states. Joe Biden got the necessary 270 electoral votes according to most news sources, but Pres. Donald Trump is pursuing legal challenges in those close states due to reports of election fraud. Those legal cases will take some time to be resolved, so we may not know for sure who won for a few more weeks. Back in 2000, it took 37 days to decide who won the presidential election and only one state was involved in that disputed election.

RAINFALL RECORD

I received 2.6 inches of rain at my house in October. That makes a total of 64.8 inches for the first ten months of the year which is almost 13 inches above our normal annual rainfall. This makes October the driest month so far this year. The second driest month was July with 3.4 inches. November is almost gone and I have only received six tenths of an inch at my house, so it may end up being the driest month yet.

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STAN IRVIN UNIQUE CLAY WORKS

If you are looking for something a little different, you might want to check out some of the things created by my first cousin, Stan Irvin. Stan is originally from Camden and has years of experience in working with clay to make beautiful pottery, mugs, teapots, and other things. He now has a studio in Rockport, Texas and is well-known among the artists who do this type work. He offers some of his creations for sale on his web site.

To see what is available, just do a search for “stan Irvin unique clay works” or visit his web site at stanirvin.com. He also has a Facebook page.

SITTING UP WITH THE DEAD

Some of us older folks, especially the men, will remember the old custom of sitting up with the dead. I don't know if this custom was practiced in the large cities, but in our rural area of Nevada County, it was thought to be something that had to be done. In those days (1970s and earlier), when a person in the community died, the body was usually brought back to the home until time for burial. Furniture in the living room had to be re-arranged to accommodate the casket and the funeral home attached a ribbon or a flower (usually white) to the front door. Friends of the deceased would come by the house and pay their respects to the family, drink some coffee, and maybe eat a little food. Neighbors brought all kinds of food for the family so they wouldn't have to worry about fixing meals during their time of grief. Someone kept a record of who brought food so thank-you cards could be sent later.

In earlier times before people used funeral homes, some of the women in the community took care of the body. They bathed it and dressed it in the person's best clothes before it was placed in a hand-made wooden coffin which the men had constructed. The burial took place soon after death in the days before bodies were embalmed.

When I was growing up, it was common for some men in the community to dig the grave for the burial. Sometimes, employees at the Forestry Commission nursery were sent to dig the grave while they were at work. As far as I know, nobody complained about this. It was just a way of paying respect to the family.

It was thought that a body awaiting burial should not be left alone, so the practice of “sitting up with the dead” was very common in those days. Men who were friends or neighbors of the deceased were recruited for the duty of “sitting up” at the home of the deceased with the casket while the family tried to get some rest in the other rooms. Usually, two or three men did this for a period of about two hours until they were relieved by other men. Some of these men held jobs and it was a bit of an inconvenience to interrupt a night's rest to sit up with a body for a couple of hours in the hours after midnight.

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Usually, those who had jobs were given a time before midnight because they had to work the next day.

Ray Stevens, known for his humorous songs, had a song about sitting up with the dead. It was about his Uncle Fred. You can find that video on YouTube.

The last time I “sat up with the dead” was in 1980.

MICHAEL JUDSONIA (from the 8-28-1931 issue of The Prescott Daily News)

Editor's note: When I first read this obituary, I thought maybe the town of Judsonia, Arkansas was named for this fellow since many towns along the railroads were named for people associated with the railroad company. But according to the Encyclopedia of Arkansas, Judsonia is named in honor of a Baptist missionary named Adoniram Judson.

Michael Judsonia, probably the world's oldest pensioned railroad employee, died at his home near Bald Knob, July 30, at the age of 107. His death was attributed to extreme senility.

Judsonia was born of slave parentage at Salisbury, NC. According to his record, the date of birth was April 11, 1824. He served in the household of his master, Admiral Porter before the Civil War, and later enlisted in the Tenth Cavalry of the U. S. Army. Following the war, he made his way to Little Rock where he obtained employment in a labor gang constructing the Cairo & Fulton railroad.

He worked for the railroad for 46 years and retired in 1918. During his later years, he was employed as a station porter and a crossing watchman. He was 94 when he retired from service.

He resided alone and so far as known is not survived by any immediate relatives.

PRESCOTT'S OLDEST BUILDING DESTROYED BY FIRE The Prescott Daily News (10-1-1923)

The Park Hotel was built in 1879 and was destroyed by fire which also destroyed Mrs. Newth's home just north of it. Members of the J. H. Criner family barely escaped the flames. Two of the children had their hair scorched. There were few roomers at the hotel at the time. The hotel had 20 rooms.

By the time the fire company and hose wagon arrived, the building was engulfed in flames. Two streams of water were directed at the fire, but the pressure was too low to do much good.

The building was built in 1879 on the corner of East Main and Second Streets and was erected for a court house at the time the county seat was moved from Rosston to Prescott. It was built by Capt. Joe White, who at that time was sheriff of Nevada County. He contracted out the work to Dan O'Leary and gave the building to Nevada County for use as a court house for five years

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without rent. During that time, the county was building a brick court house on the block of East Second, Third, Elm, and Vine Streets. A modern structure has now replaced that brick building.

During the time the building was used as a court house, John Bright operated a drug store on the first floor. The county used the second floor as a court house. When the county offices were moved to the new court house, the second floor was converted to an “open house” and used for amusement and public gatherings. The building was later made into a rooming house, was rebuilt several times, and finally moved from the corner of East Main and Front Street to East Main and Second Street where it was refinished and used for several years as a sanitarium. J. H. Criner bought the building and operated it under the name of The New Park Hotel.



Barbara Ray, originally from Chidester, found this item while going through some boxes. It's a promotional item from the Chidester Mercantile. The penny is dated 1946 and the front side says “KEEP ME AND NEVER GO BROKE”. On the back is says “CHIDESTER MERC. CO. . CHIDESTER, ARK. PHONE 19 with the slogan “PROVIDES FOR THE PEOPLE”.

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

Even though the Chidester Mercantile stands vacant today and is in a state of disrepair, many people in this area have fond memories of the days past when the Mercantile was going strong. The picture on the next page was taken September 1, 2014.

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WM. A. ROGERS SILVERWARE
Made and Guaranteed by Oneida, Ltd.

**CHIDESTER HARDWARE
& FURNITURE COMPANY**

CHIDESTER, ARKANSAS

1 card with each \$1.00 purchase
or bills paid promptly when due

ROGERS SILVERWARE
MADE AND GUARANTEED BY ONEIDA, LTD.

The Redemption of this WM. A. ROGERS SILVERWARE is conditional upon the holder having received same in the regular and ordinary course of trade.

- 1 TEASPOON—55 cards *No Cash* or 15 cards & 20c
- 1 SOUP SPOON—Round Bowl—115 cards *No Cash* or 20 cards & 40c
- 1 DINNER FORK—125 cards *No Cash* or 20 cards & 40c
- 1 DINNER KNIFE S. H. (Stainless Blade)—150 Cards *No Cash* or 20 cards & 50c
- 1 SALAD FORK—125 cards *No Cash* or 20 cards & 40c

Send for Catalog

ROGERS SILVERWARE REDEMPTION BUREAU, Inc.
855 SIXTH AVENUE NEW YORK 1, N. Y.

This card expires Nov. 15, 1956

Here's another promotional item from the Chidester Hardware & Furniture Co. located in a large building not far from the Mercantile. Evidently, the customer received one card for each \$1.00 purchase and could redeem the cards for silverware either by presenting the required number of cards or a lesser number of cards plus a small amount of cash. The date on the card is 1956.

I don't have a picture of the old Chidester Hardware Co. building.

Another general store in Chidester in 1940 was Smith's Cash Store, formerly operated by Bradford and Stott. Mrs. C. J. Smith operated the store, handling groceries, dry goods, meats, shoes, notions, feed, and also bought produce from local farmers.

Roy Holleman's service station in Chidester began in 1937 selling Texaco gas and oil, Goodyear and National tires, and batteries.

Chidester had two lumber companies in 1940—Walker Brother Lumber Co. employing 65 men and the W. I. Wilke Lumber Co. which employed 60 men.

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I Live in a Town So Small – by Don Mathis

Cops don't ask where you're going,
they already know.
Everybody knows everybody,
half of them are related.
The welcome sign just said Wel-
"You're now entering" and "You're now leaving" are on the same sign
It only had one horse –
and cows outnumbered people.
Curfew was when the street light came on;
and the street lights were so dim,
they were outshined by starlight.
City crews don't pick up road kill,
they just drag the carcass to the shoulder so the vultures don't get hit.
The grocery store stocker will tell you
NOT to buy a product;
it goes on sale next week.
The population grows 20 percent
at Friday night football.
They taught all 12 grades in one school
And my old teacher gets me confused
with my brother who graduated years before
The only stop light was one that blinked – and it only blinked once an hour.
Downtown starts shutting down at four p.m.
The main business was the cafe
and if you stayed there all day,
the whole town would pass through.
Pick-ups outnumber compact cars two to one.
The access road to the highway is two-way.
Folks still talk about that bus wreck in 2006.
The local library has 400 VHS tapes,
half of them are westerns.
The Post Office closes for lunch,
but they don't need an address to deliver your mail.
Republican primaries are the only election.
The church steeple is only this tall.
Churches outnumber bars and restaurants combined.
The newspaper is down to four days a week; sixteen pages.
The prison in the next county
is the town's biggest employer.
The funeral home keeps better track of families than the city, county, church, or census
bureau.
You can hear coyotes call...
and recognize their voices.

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Stars Fade as 2020 Draws to an End - by Don Mathis

The year 2020 saw the death of many of our favorite stars. Americana and Country Music really took a hit (COVID-19 deaths are marked with an asterisk). Here is a sampling of a few musicians worth remembering.

Do you recall the Willie Nelson hit, "Me and Paul"? That would be Paul English (Nov 6, 1932 – Feb 11), Nelson's long-time drummer. In his early days, one of English's duties was to serve as a strong-armed collection agent for overdue payments from club owners.

The career of Kenny Rogers (Aug 21, 1938 – March 20) ranged from folk (New Christy Minstrels) to psychedelic (First Edition) before finally focusing on Country. His Grammy winning "Gambler" led to a popular Western film series.

Mention Alex Harvey (March 10, 1941 – April 4) to someone and you may see a question mark on their face. But more than a couple of country stars had a hit with his tune, "Delta Dawn."

"Hello In There" is a haunting examination of age, enduring love, and time's merciless hand. The music of John Prine* (Oct 10, 1946 – April 7) ranged from the humorous to the introspective, often bordering on melancholy.

Charlie Daniels (Oct 28, 1936 – July 6) was a North Carolina singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist known for Southern rock, country, and bluegrass. "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" remains his biggest hit.

Starting in 1969, Bill Mack* (June 4, 1929 – July 31) was the host of The Country Roads Show, a Fort Worth radio program catering to truckers and music lovers across the South. This Grammy Award Winner also penned hits for George Jones, Ray Price, George Strait, and other stars.

Trinidad López* (May 15, 1937 – Aug 11) was a musician's musician. "If I Had a Hammer" and "Lemon Tree" were folksy hits in the 1960s; then he went on to design guitars for the Gibson Corporation.

Composer Bill Pursell* (June 9, 1926 – Sep 3) played piano on many of Johnny Cash's albums in the 1960s, and worked as a session musician and arranger for Patsy Cline, Johnny Paycheck and countless others. Listen to his lush arrangement of "Our Winter Love," a top ten hit from 1963.

Roy Head (Jan 9, 1941 – Sep 21) was another Texas musician. In 1965, he scored an international rockabilly hit with "Treat Her Right."

Lubbock, Texas, produced some outstanding Americana musicians, among them Mac Davis (Jan 21, 1942 – Sep 29). In 1972, "Baby Don't Get Hooked on Me" became a hit on the Billboard, Country, and Easy Listening charts.

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Country Caruso Johnny Bush (Feb 17, 1935 – Oct 16) was known for his distinctive voice and for writing the Willie Nelson staple, "Whiskey River."

Jerry Jeff Walker (March 16, 1942 – Oct 23) never had a Top 40 hit, but "Mr. Bojangles" became a standard, and he became a mainstay of the outlaw country movement.

Another outlaw was Billy Joe Shaver (Aug 16, 1939 – Oct 28). His song, "I've Been to Georgia on a Fast Train," tells the story of his life: "I wudn't born no yestday / Got a good Christian raisin' and an eighth-grade education / Ain't no need in y'all a treatin' me this way."

Other country music fans may remember Doug Supernaw (Sep 26, 1960 – Nov 13), Margie Marie Bowes (March 18, 1941 – Oct 22), and Stan Kesler (Aug 11, 1928 – Oct 26). As the year 2020 ends, let us remember these country musicians and others who rode off into the sunset.

Collins Dictionary say the word "lockdown" is the word of the year for 2020. It was used about 4000 times in 2019 and 250,000 times in 2020.

The definition of "lockdown" is the imposition of stringent restrictions on travel, social interaction, and access to public places.

Albert Marrin is an American historian and author. This is what he wrote about the 1918 influenza pandemic.

"No other disease, no war, no natural disaster, no famine comes close to the great pandemic. In the space of eighteen months in 1918–1919, about 500 million people, one-third of the human race at the time, came down with influenza. The exact total of lives lost will never be known. An early estimate, made in 1920, claimed 21.5 million died worldwide. Since then, researchers have been continually raising the number as they find new information. Today, the best estimate of flu deaths in 1918–1919 is between 50 million and 100 million worldwide, and probably closer to the latter figure.

– **Albert Marrin, Very, Very, Very Dreadful: The Influenza Pandemic of 1918**