

Since I have discontinued The Sandyland Chronicle, I have decided to send out a weekly email that I call "Reflections". One of the definitions of that word is "the fixing of the mind on some subject or giving serious thought to some subject". We have much in our past history to reflect upon. We may even learn something from looking at past events or at least we might be able to better understand those events.

These will just be short emails about something I found in old newspapers that I thought was interesting. I may even include some things not really history-related. These emails will be sent to those on my old Sandyland Chronicle mailing list. If you do not want to get these emails, just let me know and I will remove you from the list.

Feel free to comment on any of these. I will include the comments in the next email with your first name unless you tell me not to print your name.

REFLECTIONS –(No.1)—November 30, 2020

Nevada County Picayune

Nov. 12, 1885

The early newspapers were filled with all kinds of advice such as health hints, housekeeper hints, gardening advice, home remedies and advice for farmers. It's interesting to me to compare these to our modern way of living. Here are a few health hints from 1885.

HEALTH HINTS

Never lean the back on anything that is cold.

Never begin a journey until breakfast has been eaten.

Never take warm drinks and then immediately go out in the cold air.

Keep the back, especially between the shoulder blades, well covered; also, the chest well protected.

Never go to bed with cold, damp feet; always toast them before a fire for 10 to 15 minutes before going to bed.

When hoarse, speak as little as possible until you are recovered, else your voice may be permanently lost or difficulties of the throat may be produced.

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From the same issue of the paper----

A parent who sends his son into the world uneducated and without skill in any art or science does as great an injury to mankind as to his own family; he defrauds the community of a useful citizen and bequeaths to us a nuisance.

A bill is pending in the Georgia legislature which provides that \$2.50 be levied upon all bachelors, the money raised to be used to educate fatherless children.

Comments---

This is great, thank you!—Amy

Great idea, interesting reading. --Pyllis

This is a good idea. I like the idea of toasted feet and other interesting ideas! Keep me on the list. Thanks. —Irma

I'm going to miss the Sandyland. Have you considered a quarterly publication?—Don

This is a great idea, Jerry. I am interested in getting the Reflections. Thanks so much for all your hard work over the years on the Sandyland Chronicle. I look forward to these tidbits. They are a hoot! I esp. laughed at the one where you toast your feet for 10-15 minutes before the fire before heading to bed. Ha!!! – Julie

I want to stay on your mailing list.—Ginger

This is great, thank you! -- Neva

We want to thank you for all your many, many hours you have spent on the *Sandyland Chronicle*. We have thoroughly enjoyed them all these years. Also, thank you for the interest you have shown in Perry's family and all the interesting items you have sent. We have appreciated them. We look forward to your "Reflections". – Joanne and Perry

REFLECTIONS—No. 2 – December 7, 2020

Prescott Daily News
April 29, 1907

ABBOTT FAMILY POISONED

The entire family of Charley Abbott of Gurdon were poisoned. Two of the children died and Mrs. Abbott and two other children are in precarious condition. Mr. Abbot's condition is less serious and he is expected to recover. It is not known if the family was poisoned by eating canned goods containing ptomaine poison or if they were poisoned by eating wild greens gathered in the woods.

Note: The names of the two children who died were May and Pearl—both are buried at Rose Hill Cemetery in Clark County. Evidently, the other children and the parents survived. Mr. Abbott died in 1925 and Mrs. Abbott in 1965 (from Find-a-Grave)

This brings to mind the wild greens known as poke salad. Actually, the correct name is poke sallet or poke salat. Rural people ate these wild greens especially during the Great Depression when money was scarce. All parts of the poke plant are poisonous to some extent, so poke salad must be prepared a certain way to be safe. I've never eaten poke salad, but I know people who really like it. From what I have read, it needs to be picked in early spring when the leaves are less toxic and then boiled several times with the water

being poured out after each boiling. I never felt too comfortable eating something that was poisonous no matter how it was cooked.

From another 1912 newspaper—

The poke roots are poisonous. The roots are used to treat itch and other skin diseases and rheumatism. Some birds will eat the purple-colored berries, but it is not advisable for humans to eat them. The poke plant is a violent, slow-acting emetic causing vomiting after two hours. It affects nerves and muscles and produces retching, spasms, and convulsions. Death is due to paralysis of the respiratory system.

The article pointed out that some people can eat poke salad with little or no problems while other people can become deathly sick. All I can say is eat it at your own risk and follow recommended procedures if you do try to cook a mess of poke salad.

Comments from readers—

1. I recall going out with the family gathering poke salat back in the Forties in the fields around Little Rock, which was quite a different/smaller town back then. I'm 78 now so I guess it didn't kill me--Duncan.

2. We ate poke weed greens. When I was a young kid, mother cooked the greens twice (once and poured the water off and cooked again) but after I was an adult, she cooked the greens only once. We ate young greens. But never after the plants were old enough to have berries. In fact, we were taught to never touch the berries. Poke weed greens taste a lot like spinach. I would like to have a place to pick the young greens but cities have taken over their range. I would also like to have sassafras tea, but again, no place to find the plants. And then, of course, when we dig up the roots the plant is injured and may not survive. – Mary

3. One has never really lived unless they saw Elvis perform "Polk Salad Annie"! (That's the way it is spelled on his recording). It isn't enough to just listen to him sing it; you would have to have SEEN him sing it. Thankfully it is on his DVD of "That's the Way It Is".-- Neva

4. Jerry: I want to thank you for the many years of work you have endured. I have learned many things about the family and the Prescott area from your writings. Thanks again. Don E., Callaway County, Mo.

5. The Abbott family poisoning reminds me of an incident from my childhood. It may have been the late 50s or early 60s when the adults were talking about a terrible murder in Camden. My memory tells me it was a lawyer was killed in his home. No motive. No suspects. Do you recall this incident? If not, perhaps some of your readers do. I'd love to know if this cold case was ever solved.

Note: You are probably thinking of the disappearance of a woman lawyer named Maud Crawford in 1957. The case has never been solved and her body has not been found. You can find much about the case online. There is even a Facebook group called "The Maud Crawford Mystery" with over 2000 members.

6. I can remember as a child living off Hwy 67 between Prescott and Gurdon. I use to go pick poke salad and give it to my Grandma Johnson to cook it for me. I would eat it all the time. Now I wouldn't know what to look for at all. Lol – Geneva

7. I have never been a big fan of poke salad. My mother or my aunt cooked some once and I agreed with the person that said it tasted like spinach. I worked with Jerry for many years and know that he is real detailed with the subjects that he presents. –George

8. I never ate Polk salad, but did hear my dad talk about it, he wasn't a fan. But as a child of the Depression, he didn't quibble about eating it. We have some growing wild on our property during the summer. It grew wild in the wooded area across from my home when we were growing up but mother didn't cook it. As kids we smashed the berries to make ink and used a chicken quill to write "messages". We were sternly warned to never eat the poison berries. We got in trouble more than once since the berries stained anything they touched, including your hands 🤢🤢—Teresa

REFLECTIONS – No. 3 (DECEMBER 14, 2020)

When I was growing up, it was common for children to have what we called "a risen". It was actually a "rising" or a boil that came up somewhere on the body. It was very painful for a few days until it "came to a head" and ruptured or was lanced to drain the pus. That would usually relieve the pain.

I don't remember ever having a serious risen, but my brother did. He had a large one on his leg near his knee cap. It was close to an inch in diameter and I think he still has a scar from it.

Some thought that risens were caused by lack of iron in the blood and that raisins were good to help build up the iron in the body. I went to school at Bluff City for my first two grades. I remember the teacher showing us how to make a paper cup from a piece of notebook paper and then she would fill it with raisins for us to eat. Some health experts still say that eating raisins every day is very beneficial to the body.

My father-in-law in Missouri had problems with arthritis and he heard of a home remedy that was supposed to help. The recipe said to spread a box of golden raisins in a shallow glass dish and pour gin over them until the raisins were just covered. Cover with cheesecloth and let them stand for a week or so until they soak up the gin. Then you were supposed to eat nine of the raisins each day. He tried it but I don't think it helped him much. Maybe he didn't give it enough time. They say it takes four to six weeks for it to work. One word of caution--people who are allergic to sulfites should avoid eating golden raisins.

I'm glad that risens no longer seem to be a major problem. People still have various types of boils and some require medical attention, but I haven't heard anyone use the word "risen" in many years.

Comments from readers—

1. I love your new writing project, even more than the Sandyland Chronicles since I have no Nevada County connections. This new venture gives you an even more broad area to explore and share.

Now, I never ate Polk salad, but did hear my dad talk about it, he wasn't a fan. But as a child of the Depression, he didn't quibble about eating it. We have some growing wild on our property during the summer. It grew wild in the wooded area across from my home when we were growing up but mother didn't cook it. As kids we smashed the berries to make ink and used a chicken quill to write "messages". We were sternly warned to never eat the poison berries. We got in trouble more than once since the berries stained anything they touched, including your hands 😬👁️—Teresa

2. I am enjoying these, Jerry! Please keep them coming. And it is good to know the Sandyland Chronicle is online, hopefully forever. – Barbara

3. I remember my Granddad Johnson and my Dad Alvin Johnson had risens on back of their necks. They did leave a scar there too. – Geneva

4. I saw boils (risens) when I was a kid. My dad said they were even more common when he was a kid. Remember the old saying when something hurt-- "Yep- it's sore as a risen". It may be that was a deficiency in something (iron) was the cause, but we think it was more likely the lack of frequent bathing access. People could not be as clean as they are now with no running hot water. Infections of the skin would erupt from hair follicles, scratches, insect bites --all sorts of things. The sandy soils were quite hot in summer and probably contributed plenty of bacteria. Crawling in the sand while playing or pulling crops and weeds and lots of handling unwashed dogs, cats, and dead game too. Possible discussion item--are we too clean now? Do we build proper immunity to infections? Will all this hand cleaning and mask wearing-- someday have unwanted consequences? – Dan

5. Dear Mr McKelvy, I feel terrible! For YEARS I've read your wonderful Almanac, and am now enjoying Reflections...THANK YOU!!! As someone who also "published" on the net, I find that sometimes I wonder if ANYONE reads what I struggle to produce! Sorry I've been a silent appreciator all these years. – T. B.

REFLECTIONS – No. 4 (December 21, 2020)

The legendary Santa Claus we know did not always look like our modern Santa. The image has changed greatly over many hundreds of years. England had Father Christmas who was once pictured as wearing a long, green, fur-lined robe who delivered good cheer and the spirit of Christmas. Sweden had a tradition of Santa riding a Billy goat or riding in a sleigh pulled by goats instead of reindeer. Italy has Le Befana, a good-natured witch who flew around on a broomstick bringing gifts for the good children and a lump of coal for the naughty ones. The early American settlers from European countries brought their Christmas traditions with them when they came to America.

In the late 1700s, writers and artists begin to picture Santa as being a jolly fellow wearing spectacles and having a big round belly and a long white beard.

Thomas Nast, a writer and cartoonist for Harper's Weekly magazine, is credited with coming up with our modern idea of Santa Claus. He drew pictures of Santa over a period of thirty years, making some changes as he went. He first pictured Santa wearing a tan coat, but later changed it to red. He came up with the idea of Santa being from the North Pole and having a workshop there where he made toys for the little boys and girls. Thomas Nast is also the one who came up with the elephant and donkey as symbols for the Republican and Democratic parties.

The myth that Coca-Cola invented our modern Santa is not true, although they did use the image of Santa created by Thomas Nast in much of their advertising.

The two pictures I have attached show some early Santas as pictured on Christmas cards. I was visiting with Mr. Claudie White of Rosston one day and he brought out a box of old greeting cards. I took some pictures of some of them. I don't know the dates of these cards, but as you can see, Santa has changed quite a bit over the years. I like our modern Santa much better.



Comments from readers--

1. For whatever reason, I hadn't noticed that your writings had a new title of "Reflections"; yes, it does seem to, as another reader mentioned, it does seem to give you added areas to explore and possibly be of more interest to a wider audience. GOOD LUCK, with your new efforts!!!—Duncan

2. We must remind voters that our belief that Jesus is the Christ, present tense, is the democratic majority. -- James

REFLECTIONS – No. 5 (December 28, 2020)

I mentioned in a previous email about the Abbott family of Gurdon being poisoned in 1907 possibly from eating wild greens or from ptomaine poisoning. There was another incident a year earlier involving the Abbot family.

It was reported in May, 1906, that Walter Abbott, a young man from Gurdon, took twelve grains of strychnine and died immediately from the effects of the poison. According to the news report in the Nevada County Picayune, he had become infatuated with his niece, Miss Nora Martin, of Prescott and wanted to marry her. Learning that he could not do that, he committed this rash act.

I believe this was Walter Nathan Abbott who was age 22 at the time of death. He was a younger brother of Charley Abbott whose family was poisoned in 1907. Walter was buried in the Rose Hill Cemetery in Clark County where other members of the family were buried.

The cause of the poisoning of the Charley Abbott family was never proven. It was just assumed that they ate some poisonous wild greens or developed ptomaine poisoning from canned goods. I'm not suggesting anything intentional regarding the poisoning of the Charley Abbott family, but accidents involving poisons can happen.

Strychnine is one of the most potent poisons known to man. It is a white, odorless, crystalline powder used mainly to kill rats. At one time, strychnine was used for medicinal purposes and was available in pill form. It was sometimes used as an athletic performance enhancer and as a recreational stimulant. Izzat Artykov, who won the bronze medal for weight lifting in the 2016 Olympic games, tested positive for strychnine and was forced to give up his medal.

Strychnine was also used at one time to treat paralysis, nervous diseases, and used as eye drops for vision problems. Of course, extreme care had to be taken when using it for medicinal purposes.

Many families once kept strychnine on hand for a rat poison and to kill moles and gophers. I don't know if pure strychnine can even be legally purchased today. All poisons should be kept in the original container out of reach of children. I remember hearing of one case of strychnine poisoning when the powder was kept in the kitchen cabinet and was mistaken for baking powder.

Rural doctors often kept medicines at their homes. A sad accident occurred in the Artesian community of Nevada County in 1885. Dr. Milam's little son, Charley, was having chills and Mrs. Milam decided to give him a dose of quinine, but mistakenly gave him a heavy dose of morphine which caused his death. She went to wake the child later and discovered her mistake.

We can never be too careful when using products that can be deadly when not used in the proper way.

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Comments from readers--

1. Really enjoy your Reflections. Keep up the good work. --Jo Anne

2. Thank you for your interesting articles and comments! – Amy

3. My Dad as a young man before WWII (and a short time after) worked at Buchanan Drug store on HWY 67 in Prescott. I guess they had lax rules about pharmacy in some of those days. He had no formal training but said he was allowed to dispense all manner of what are now controlled substances such as Paregoric (opium based), morphine etc, but he said I knew the ones that were "up to no good" and turned them away.

Have liked old British mystery story books for many years. Poison was a favorite murder weapon in many of them. Clever they could be. Or very clumsy too once in a while. --
Dan