

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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THE PANIC OF 1910

Edmund Halley, an English astronomer, predicted a comet would pass by the earth in 1758. His prediction came true although Halley died before the comet's return. This comet came to be known as Halley's Comet which passes by earth about every 75 years.

When the comet was scheduled to return in 1910, scientists said the earth would actually pass through the comet's tail. Some thought the comet was on a course to collide with the earth or that the poisonous gas in the comet's tail might end all life on earth. Sensationalist newspaper stories helped fuel the panic and many superstitious and uneducated people all over the world feared the return of the comet. Ancient people believed that comets brought doom and ruin and were a sign of some major event or disaster. On May 6, 1910, King Edward VII of England died and some claimed he was the comet's first victim.

As the time drew near for the comet's return, various products were offered for sale which were said to protect one from the effects of the comet. Many people purchased gas masks and some people stuffed rags around door and window frames to keep out the poisonous gas. Some dug cellars so they could go underground during the time the comet was close to the earth. Scammers offered sugar pills they called anti-comet pills for sale as well as comet protecting umbrellas. Some people put off paying bills in case the world ended when the comet came.

The panic was especially prevalent among the foreign-born population and among the uneducated black population. Negro workers in several counties in western Georgia quit work and spent all their time singing and praying. In large cities in America, people could be seen on bended knees praying on the streets and in the city parks. The panic was common in all parts of the world, especially in Russia and Europe. Churches in parts of the world remained open on the night the comet came.

Several cases of suicide were reported in various places about the time the comet came. Some people just couldn't handle the stress. Anything unusual was blamed on the comet. Some people turned to alcohol and became intoxicated.

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The earth survived the return of Halley's comet in 1910 without incident, much to the relief of many people. Halley's comet will next return in the year 2061.

The writer Mark Twain was born in 1835 when Halley's comet passed by earth. Twain is said to have predicted his own death. He said, "I came in with Halley's comet in 1835. It is coming again next year and I expect to go out with it." He died in 1910 a day after Halley's comet returned.

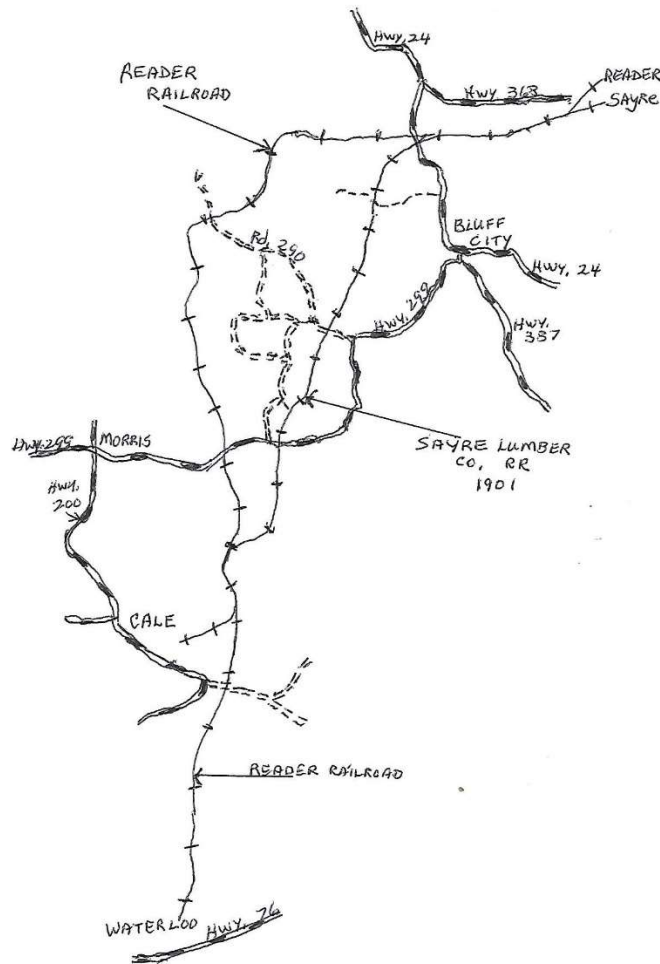
One of the most interesting stories about the panic of 1910 involved the sacrifice of a young girl to save the world from destruction by Halley's comet. The story was reported in several major newspapers. Researchers have tried to verify this story and have discovered several differences in the details given in some of the newspaper stories.

According to the story, a man named Henry Heinman was the leader of a religious cult in Oklahoma known as The Select Followers. He told his followers that the world would end when the comet arrived. The group burned all their possessions and were preparing for the end of the world. Mr. Heinman then told his flock that he had received a direct message from God that the only way to save the world from destruction from the comet was to offer a virgin as a human sacrifice. A 16-year-old girl named Jane Warfield volunteered to offer her life to save the world. The girl was dressed in a white robe and had a wreath of white roses on her head and her hands were tied behind her back. The group formed a circle around her chanting and singing. Just as Mr. Heinman was about to thrust a hunting knife into the girl's heart, a sheriff's posse arrived and saved the girl's life. They untied the girl who had fainted and the crowd scattered. Mr. Heinman was taken into custody.

The Hale-Dopp comet in 1997 also caused panic. Thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate cult in California committed mass suicide. They believed they would ascend to an alien spacecraft hidden behind the comet which would take them to the kingdom of heaven.

The comet Neowise came in March, 2020. Some conspiracy theorists believe that comet brought Covid-19 to the world.

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THE SAYRE LUMBER CO. RAILROAD

We are familiar with the Reader Railroad (the Possum Trot Line) and many of us remember riding the train from Reader to Waterloo. Long before that railroad, there was another one called the Sayre Lumber Co. railroad. Its purpose was to bring logs back to the Sayre Lumber Co. mill at Sayre. I don't know too much about it, but it is shown on a 1901 map I have. It extended into Nevada County from Sayre and ended near Cale.

A name associated with this railroad was Oscar Rowley, a timber man. An item in the Bluff City local news in 1891 stated that Oscar Rowley was moving rapidly with his tram road. That leads me to believe that this railroad tram was being constructed in 1891.

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I have a notice of a huge sale being conducted in April, 1896 for the benefit of the creditors of Oscar Rowley. Evidently, he had some financial difficulties and had to sell some of his property and equipment. The sale notice has a list of property located in Nevada, Clark, and Ouachita counties being sold (about 3740 acres). Also being sold was personal property including 350 bushels of corn, 4,000 feet of iron pipe, a steam pump, a pile driver hammer, a boiler engine and driver for pile driving, a two-horse wagon, a bay mule named Frank, and a brown mule named Jim. The sale notice says that the right-of-way of the tram road of Oscar Rowley running from Sayre into Nevada County is not included in the sale of the land which it crossed.

The old railroad bed can still be seen in places. I can remember squirrel hunting when I was a teenager and using the old tram as a guide to keep from getting lost.

WE DIDN'T DO IT!

Let me tell you about an incident that happened many years ago when I was still working for the timber company. My partner and I were working in Columbia County and happened to drive by an old dead-end road in a remote area where many people had dumped their trash. Dumping trash on the sides of old roads or in ravines was common in those days. We decided to drive along this old road checking out the piles of trash for anything useful that might have been thrown away.

As we were slowly driving along, we happened to notice in our rear-view mirrors that a police car was coming up behind us with his blue lights on. We stopped and an officer got out of his car, approached our vehicle, and asked what business we had on that road. The officer was dressed in a nice uniform and his badge stated that he was with the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry police. I never knew we had such a law enforcement agency.

We told him we worked for a timber company and were just checking out the trash piles and he then explained that some chicken farmers had been dumping dead chickens in that area and he thought we might have been doing that.

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He was very friendly after he discovered we were not dumping dead chickens. We talked a while and then he got in his car to leave. As he was turning his car around, he managed to get it stuck in a wet place. We helped him get his car unstuck and he went on his way.

We laughed about it later as we told others about getting stopped by the Livestock and Poultry Police.

Sometime later, we were working in the same area and were driving on a woods road or trail into a tract of timber. We actually came upon a man dumping dead chickens in the woods. Our truck had a radio antenna on it and looked sort of like an official type vehicle. He saw us looking at him as we went by and he began to pick up the dead chickens he had just tossed and started putting them back in his truck. I'm sure he probably dumped them again when he found out we were not law enforcement officers.

There are certain rules about the proper way to dispose of dead chickens. All chicken farmers have to deal with this problem. Large chicken houses have thousands of chickens and each day the farmer must check the flock for dead birds. He has to collect the dead birds and dispose of them in some way such as burial or incineration. Just dumping them in the woods is not an approved solution. I suppose wild animals or buzzards would take care of dead animals and chickens dumped in the woods, but there are certain rules that have to be followed. Now I know that in Arkansas, there is such a thing as the Livestock and Poultry Police and they are on the lookout for people who are not disposing of dead chickens in the proper way.

RAINFALL RECORD

July was a very hot month bringing back memories of the summer of 1980. I only received 1.8 inches of rain at my house, and most of that came at the end of the month. Air conditioners were working overtime trying to keep us cool.

We have had several heat waves in the past. The Prescott paper reported in 1930 that there had been 57 days between June 19 and Sept. 1 with temps above 100 degrees. The highest temperature was 112 degrees on July 29. The highest temperature ever recorded in Arkansas was 120 degrees at Ozark, Arkansas on August 10, 1936.

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A HISTORY LESSON

There have been ten people who have died in the White House.

1. William Henry Harrison—Aug. 8, 1841. President William Henry Harrison died only 31 days after taking office. It was thought he developed pneumonia after speaking outside in a cold rain. Modern historians argue that he died from intestinal fever from drinking water from the city's tainted water supply.

2. Lelitia Tyler—Sept. 10, 1842. Wife of President John Tyler. Death caused by a stroke.

3. Zachery Taylor—July 9, 1850. President Taylor died from a digestive ailment believed to have been caused by eating a large number of raw cherries with cold milk on a hot day. Modern historians argue that his death was more likely caused by drinking the tainted city water.

4. Willie Lincoln—Feb. 20, 1862. Third child of President Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln. Willie was 11 years old when he died from typhoid fever which may have come from the tainted city water supply. Another son of President Lincoln was sick with typhoid fever at the same time. Mary Todd Lincoln was very depressed after her son's death. She refused to enter the room where he died.

5. Frederick Dent—Aug. 16, 1873. Father of First Lady Julia Grant. He was living at the White House at the time.

6. Elisha Hunt Allen—Jan. 1, 1883. Minister of the Kingdom of Hawaii. He died of a heart attack while attending a reception at the White House.

7. Caroline Harrison—Oct. 25, 1892. Wife of President Benjamin Harrison. Died from tuberculosis.

8. Ellen Wilson—Aug. 6, 1914. First wife of President Woodrow Wilson. She tripped and fell which was not serious, but her doctor discovered she was suffering from Bright's disease (a kidney disease). She and the doctor kept her diagnosis secret from the president for several months.

9. Charles G. Ross – Dec. 5, 1950. Was serving as the White House press secretary. He died from a coronary occlusion while sitting at his desk.

10. Margaret Wallace – Dec. 5, 1952. She was the mother of First Lady Bess Truman. From all accounts, she was a difficult woman who was not well-liked. She didn't think Harry Truman was good enough to marry her daughter. He was a dirt farmer who never went to college and was a failure in business. She hated Harry Truman. After her alcoholic husband committed suicide, she lived with Harry and Bess Truman for the next 33 years. When Truman became president, she moved into the White House and had her own bedroom. Even after Harry Truman became president, she still considered him a failure and only referred to him as "Mr. Truman". She died at age 90.

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Paper Boy – by Don Mathis

September 4 is National Newspaper Carrier Day – a time to remember the Paper Boys who delivered the news in the early morning hours and the heat of summer afternoons. And September 5 is Labor Day – a time to recognize the men and women whose labor built this country. To commemorate, Don Mathis reminisces about his first job back in the early 1960s.

In seventh grade, I delivered the *San Antonio Light*, the afternoon newspaper, up and down the streets of Terrell Hills, a nearby suburb.

I would ride my bike near the Fort Sam Houston shopping center to the back door of the Baptist Church on Harry Wurzbach Road. I would claim my bundle, and then shoot the breeze with the other paper boys as we rolled the *Light* with wet string or rubber bands.

Sunday morning deliveries were the worst. Although traffic was light, the weight of the morning edition was anything but. I took my life into my hands every week. I would not slow down at the stop sign at the bottom of the hill; it was way too much effort to gain momentum again with 50 pounds of newsprint in my saddlebags.

There were few ads on Wednesday's paper, so I was able to fold the pages into a triangle instead of rolling with a rubber band – and those triangles could sail like a frisbee! I could skip it off the sidewalk for a perfect porch landing.

One guy would leave his garage door open eight inches; he wanted to pick up his newspaper without going outdoors. One Wednesday, I skipped the folded newspaper just

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under the door – and I heard the resulting crash as the paper rose to hit his storage shelves. No tip from him!

Few people tipped anyway. I had to go door-to-door to collect payment. My share was only \$30 for more than 60 hours of work!

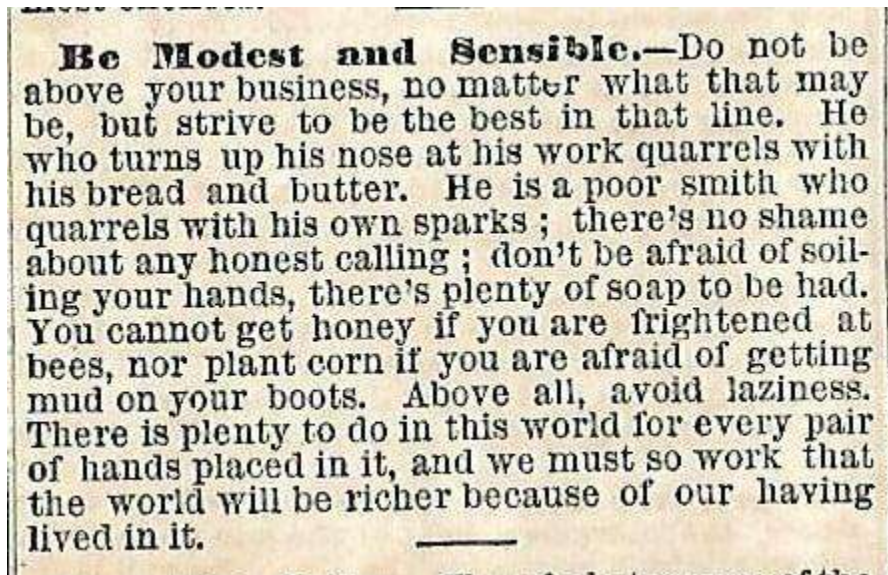
And to make matters worse, I failed seventh grade English. And my parents made me pay for summer school out of my earnings. \$30 down the tube!

Years later, I learned that was called natural and logical consequences. It was certainly a learning experience for me. I didn't fail any other classes for years!

Funny thing; nowadays when I drive through the heights of Terrell Hills, my arm twitches. Although it's been 60 years, the motor reflexes in my elbow's memory tell me which houses are subscribers; and to throw the newspaper. ☺

GOOD ADVICE FROM 1874

I found this bit of advice in an 1874 almanac I purchased at an estate sale.



Be Modest and Sensible.—Do not be above your business, no matter what that may be, but strive to be the best in that line. He who turns up his nose at his work quarrels with his bread and butter. He is a poor smith who quarrels with his own sparks ; there's no shame about any honest calling ; don't be afraid of soiling your hands, there's plenty of soap to be had. You cannot get honey if you are frightened at bees, nor plant corn if you are afraid of getting mud on your boots. Above all, avoid laziness. There is plenty to do in this world for every pair of hands placed in it, and we must so work that the world will be richer because of our having lived in it.