

Jerry McKelvy's
WAY BACK WHEN

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FILLING IN THE GAPS

We can learn a lot about our local history from old newspapers, but sometimes none are available for certain years. The main papers for Nevada County were The Nevada County Picayune, The Nevada News, and the Prescott Daily News. The Picayune has papers available from 1885 to 1892 and then there is a skip until 1906. There are no issues of those papers prior to 1884. What about the years not covered? What interesting things happened in those years? One way to find out is to search other newspapers in the state, because papers shared news stories in those days. With the Internet available, I can sit at home on my computer and search these papers. The following items are what I found about the city of Prescott, Arkansas for the years 1873 to November, 1882. I will add more in the next issue.

Prescott was started in 1873 when the Cairo & Fulton railroad was constructed through Nevada County. It must have been exciting to be a part of the establishment of a new town. The early stores were in wooden frame buildings. There were no city services such as fire protection, a water system, telephones, or electric lights. Transportation was by horseback or wagons. Stores ordered merchandise from places like Little Rock or St. Louis and it was shipped to Prescott on the railroad. The railroad also brought people who were looking to make investments in business or buy cheap land for farming. Keep that in mind as you read these news items about the new little town of Prescott about 150 years ago.

December 14, 1873—The Arkansas Gazette

An ad for travel by stagecoach from Camden to Prescott. The stage, pulled by four horses, made tri-weekly runs leaving Camden on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. It left Prescott on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. The ad mentioned that there was no high water on this route and all the travel was in daylight.

March 10, 1875—The Arkansas Gazette

An article promoting Prescott. It stated that Prescott had churches, stores, and an academy run by Capt. J. A. Ansley. The land was cheap and fertile. It advised immigrants from northern states heading for Texas to stop in Arkansas instead.

March 13, 1875—The Arkansas Gazette

Our little town is growing. The Cumberland Presbyterian, the M. E. church, and the Masonic lodge have erected new buildings.

September 10, 1875—The Arkansas Gazette

Election results—the county seat of Nevada County will remain at Rosston

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November 24, 1875—The Arkansas Gazette

Prescott will soon have a newspaper called The Prescott Banner

July 26, 1876—The Arkansas Gazette

Prescott is improving rapidly. The sound of saw and hammer is heard in all parts of the town.

George Terry has been removed as postmaster, replaced by A. B. Parsons. Every man in town except four have signed a petition to have Terry reinstated.

August, 4, 1876—The Arkansas Gazette

A sick man who gave his name as John Sherer died and was buried at Moscow Cemetery.

October 12, 1876—The Arkansas Gazette

The Carouse turnpike from Prescott has been finished. The city council has ordered that the streets of Prescott be graded.

October 15, 1876—the Arkansas Gazette

Prescott has a new paper called The Prescott Dispatch. E. A. Warren is editor.

May 24, 1877—The Batesville Guard

The Prescott News has changed the name of the paper to The Prescott Clipper

County seat mania has taken over. The choice is between Prescott and Rosston.

May 31, 1877—The Russellville Democrat

The county seat of Nevada County, by the vote of the people, has been moved from Rosston to Prescott.

April 16, 1878—The Arkansas Gazette

The telegraph line from Camden to Prescott has been obstructed by people felling trees across the line. Violators are warned it is against the law to willfully damage telegraph lines.

May 36, 1881—The Russellville Democrat

Prescott is building a \$3,000 public school building.

August 30, 1881---The Arkansas Gazette—local news column called Prescott Prattle

Hogs are running at large through this city.

Nevada County has no court house.

Prescott now has a bank which was much needed.

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Crops are short due to drouth and extreme heat.

Long trains of wagons loaded with lumber from the numerous sawmills hereabouts arrive in Prescott daily.

Irish potatoes sell for \$2 per bushel, butter is 30 cents per pound, and eggs are 20 cents per dozen.

There was a tift in circuit court between prosecuting attorney John Cook and lawyer Hamby. Friends interfered and no damage was done. Both men were fined \$10 for contempt.

Farmers in Nevada County have organized the Nevada County Farmer's Club,

September 7, 1881—The Batesville Guard

The stage between Camden and Prescott was stopped by two masked men. The mail pouches were cut open but nothing valuable was found. There was only one passenger and he had no money.

Sept. 23, 1881—The Arkansas Gazette

The train was robbed north of Prescott by three men on the train. They ordered the conductor to stop the train and passengers were robbed of \$700. They also got \$16,000 from the express car safe.

November 14, 1882—The Arkansas Gazette—local news column called Prescott Parcels

Business of all kinds booms in Prescott. Our merchants wear beautiful faces and our farmers seem satisfied with this year's labor. Our streets are all jammed with wagons loaded with cotton. The Prescott Silver Cornet Band performed and was enjoyed by almost our entire population. Many delinquents were cited and appeared before His Honor, the Mayor for failing to work the streets. Frank Cassidy has two billiard tables in his place. Throngs of people who enjoy the sport are there each night. Licenses for saloons are \$20 per month. We now have four saloons. Mrs. Shankle, the milliner, cannot keep enough hats, bonnets, pictures, etc. on hand. Our school now has an average attendance of 300 pupils.

(more next issue)

A new fad was reported in Los Angeles in 1915. Women were tinting their ankles to match the color of the dress they wore.

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DEATHS IN PRESCOTT IN 1912

J. D. Cornish, Prescott embalmer, reported in 1912 that there had been only 63 deaths in Prescott that year out of a population of 3,000 people. Here is his report:

Race – 31 white and 32 Negroes

Meningitis – 10 (6 white and 4 Negroes)

Pneumonia – 6 (4 white and 2 Negroes)

Tuberculosis – 4 (2 white and 2 Negroes)

Dropsy – 9 (0 white and 9 Negroes)

Appendicitis – 1 (1 white and 0 Negroes)

Old age – 3 (1 white and 2 Negroes)

Congestion – 3 (3 white and 0 Negroes)

Only 60 or 2% died from disease in 1912 despite a raging meningitis epidemic during the first three months of the year.

NEW PRICES FOR MEDICAL SERVICES

Seeing a doctor has always been expensive. Someone once said the letters M. D. after a doctor's name could stand for "many dollars". We all understand that doctors are very much needed and most people are willing to pay whatever it takes to make them feel better after a severe illness or injury.

Health insurance was not available in the early 1900s. Some doctors were charging more than others for the same service. This caused people to think some doctors were not being fair in their pricing. To remedy this, doctors in Nevada County in 1918 got together and published in the paper a schedule of fees for their services. Prices were going up back then just like they do today and the doctors felt they deserved better pay for their services. The published article mentioned that becoming a doctor in 1918 required a high school education, two years of college, and five years of medical school. The total cost of all that education could be \$2000 or more. That was a lot of money back in 1918.

Here is the part of the article from the September 12, 1918 issue of The Nevada County Picayune which gives the new charges for medical services in Nevada County. Remember that in those days, doctors made house calls. The article also listed all the doctors in Nevada County at that time who agreed to these new charges.

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Office consultations with prescriptions	\$1.00
Office consultations and dressing small wounds.....	1.00
Day calls in city limits.....	2.00
Night calls in city limits.....	2.50
Telephone calls and prescriptions	.50
Obstetric fees (coming within the bounds of our practice)	15.00
Same out of the bounds of our practice with \$1 per mile additional	
For each mile from the city limits will be \$1.00 per mile one way or a call five miles from town \$5.00. Consultation visits \$10.00 and \$5.00 for each subsequent visit.	
Signed: Doctors C. W. Brandon, Rosston; Thos. J. Mendenhall, Rosston; Chas. F. Nelms, Laneburg; J. H. Sutton, Sutton; A. S. Buchanan, Prescott; S. J. Hesterly, Prescott; W. W. Rice, Prescott; G. A. Buchanan, Prescott; S. B. Gee, Prescott; A. A. Reeder, Prescott; J. E. Cox, Emmet; R. L. Hudspeth, Emmet; J. C. Tompkins, Bluff City; E. E. Shell, Cale; C. B. Hesterly, Willisville; W. M. Garner, Bodcaw; J. D. Merida (col.), Prescott. Dr. Chastain being away did not have an opportunity to sign the above.	
September, 1918	

I am old enough to remember when doctors made house calls. I remember one time about 1960 when a neighbor lady got very sick and was brought to our house for help. It was decided a doctor was needed and a call was made to Prescott for a doctor. I don't remember how we made the phone call, because at that time we didn't have a phone. My job was to go to George Henry's station in Bluff City and wait for Dr. Avery from Prescott and lead him out to our house. We lived about 22 miles from Prescott, so that house call took at least two or three hours of the doctor's time that day.

One time back in the early 1960s, Dr. Charles Hesterly was summoned to our house to care for my grandmother who was living with us at the time. The main thing I remember about that was the doctor's car—a Chevrolet Corvair. That model had the engine in the rear. I remember when the doctor arrived, he opened the hood of the car and took out his little black bag. I had never seen a car with the engine in the rear before.

I remember one other thing about that doctor visit. At that time, we kept our medicine in one of the kitchen cabinets. Dr. Hesterly had asked if we had some certain type of medicine on hand and he proceeded to open the cabinet and rummage through our stock of medicines. My mother didn't much like the doctor looking through her cabinets, but she didn't say anything until after the doctor had gone.

Don Mathis shares this memorial tribute to his mother----

Bernadine Walker Mathis Gillespie (Jan. 24, 1925–Feb. 18, 2010), from Bluff City, Arkansas, would be celebrating 100 years this month. On the occasion of her birthday 25 years ago, she wrote a few paragraphs about the lessons she had learned and the experiences that shaped her life. Her descendants are honored to share her thoughts.

Words of Wisdom – by Bernadine Walker Mathis Gillespie

Don asked me to write some for you. Ha! I thought he had heard of Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes. Please read the book ([Ecclesiastes, Chapter 12](#)) and don't expect wisdom from me.

But something has been right and wonderful in my life for these 75 years. I give honor to our God for all the beauty that I have been blessed with and hopefully have shared with others. I

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ask God's forgiveness for not using these blessings more wisely and more effectively because He does keep the cup overflowing.

God taught me to LOVE. Without love we are nothing ([1 Corinthians 13:2](#)). There have been times I'm sure when I was just a clanging cymbal, but it must have brought joy to my parents. For they surely devoted love and attention to me.

Can you think of how hard it must have been lugging a three-year-old around for years because she couldn't walk? And imagine the time, effort, money it must have taken to put her up on two feet. Thank you, Mother and Daddy (Rose and Tom Walker)!

This must have been the time that they instilled in me to "be content whatever the circumstances" – and to complete this verse, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" ([Philippians 4:11-13](#)).

Mother would tell me the story that I was a happy child; would crawl around on the floor, pulling that little red straight chair that's sitting by my bed today, to the spot where I wanted to play, set the chair upright, sit in it until I was ready to crawl to another place – Contented and Happy.

As I grew, oh, how I wanted to play softball, basketball, bowl, or do so many other fun things with my peers – but there was pain in that old hip. To be involved and a part of the excitement, I had to use my loud, strong voice to cheer and encourage those nearby. I learned to be content.

Mother and Daddy sent me to business school rather than college. I wanted to learn shorthand, but no money. I became the janitor for the school. I was happy and contented.

Then came marriage and children and a LOVE that is impossible to describe. Without God's example, we couldn't comprehend the depth and true meaning of love.

Oh, yes, there were times when desires for worldly wants would almost cause deep shadows over love. I realize it was wants for my children – more food, more clothes, more toys, more things they considered necessities. Contentment in that respect was difficult.

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content," says [Hebrews 13:5](#), and I believed. Here, I think I must have added a phrase to my life that has helped me to accept things that will pass on and make me stronger and better for tomorrow – ["This too shall pass."](#)

Using the 'stumbling blocks' as 'stepping stones' in my path has made life easier. I could climb out of crises instead of wading deeper and deeper. Therefore, being content.

As life continued I was faced with illness, surgery, physical difficulties – not only of myself, but those I dearly loved. (*Don't any of you dare remind me of my discontent during 1997-98.*) Again, we search for a faith to sustain us and learn to be content.

Then, there is death – that is one of the most difficult burdens to bear. It strikes those whose love in our hearts is comparable to God's love for His Son.

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We learn and grow through the pain of suffering and loss. We accept the nearness of the Lord and are contented.

I truly believe the Lord works in our lives in great and glorious ways if we are content. There is no way I was looking for a man like General (General F. Gillespie) to share my life. And in no way were we worthy to receive all the love, gifts, and happiness extended to us by you – our family and friends.

Thank you. We are happy and content because of you.

Blessings continue to be evident even when we are not aware – or much less expecting them – when there is love.

Were we not content, would we be able to recognize our blessings? If we were constantly longing for great gain, we could fall into temptation or be trapped with many griefs.

[“Be content whatever the circumstances.”](#) And love. [“The greatest of these is love.”](#)

Bernadine Walker Mathis Gillespie



1944



1946



1990s

In the Beginning was the Word — by Don Mathis

Mother and Daddy gave me a Bible for Christmas in 1957. I was six and a half. It has a picture of a blond, bearded, white Jesus. He is barefoot and is carrying a lamb amongst a flock of sheep.

This edition has a zippered cover and I have never let it rust shut. I loved the Bible stories, but, oh, how I disliked the King James version. The Olde English was such a stumbling block to my reading and understanding, as was the seemingly random words that were italicized. The words of Jesus are in red, and slightly misaligned from the black text.

In June, 1968, Mother and Daddy gave me a new King James Version – and I still hadn't finished reading their 1957 gift! This one was even harder to read because words like Dā-vid and Běth-lě-hěm are spelled out phonetically – every time!

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It wasn't until 2009 did I gain an appreciation for 16th Century English – and that was in Robert Crumb's illustrated version of Genesis. Although the entire text of the first book in the Bible is presented in a comic book format, as Crumb writes in the introduction, "It is, nonetheless, a powerful text with layers of meaning that reach deep into our collective consciousness, our historical consciousness, if you will."

In 1996, Bill Moyers aired a 10-part television series entitled *Genesis: A Living Conversation*. He gathered leaders from the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and other faiths together with writers and artists, psychologists and professors, composers and lawyers, translators, and Biblical scholars to discuss and debate the great stories of Genesis. And it left me wanting more.

Genesis has the best creation story in all creation, the first murder mystery, tales of deceit and betrayal, and chronicles of hope and perseverance. It doesn't bother me that some people claim it is a fiction. If the Bible is mythology, it is the best there is!

The parables in the book of Genesis continue to inspire me to do good and encourage me to live a life of truth. It could do the same for you.

