

Jerry McKelvy's
WAY BACK WHEN
May, 2025

EBENEZER CEMETERY NEAR BLUFF CITY



Ebenezer Cemetery was established in the 1850's when most of this area was first settled by our pioneer ancestors who had left their homes in the eastern states in search of a better life for their families. It took a lot of courage for them to make a move of several hundred miles, much as it took courage for their fathers who made the decision long ago to leave their homelands in Ireland, Scotland, and other parts of Europe and make the long, difficult journey by ships to the United States. Life expectancy in those days was much shorter than today and the days were filled with hard work. Families were large and farming was the main occupation. It is amazing how much some of these early settlers accomplished and we should appreciate their sacrifices.

The oldest marked grave in Ebenezer Cemetery is that of William B. Hackette, son of Dr. M. B. Hackette, Jr. and Mrs. E. A. Hackette. The child died in 1859 and lived almost three months. His father, Dr. M. B. Hackette Jr. died in 1861 at the age of 29 years. E. J. Otwell died in 1860. My great-great grandfather, Jabez McKelvy, died in 1862. All these older graves are near the center of the cemetery. According to family researchers, Lorenza Womble died in 1858, but his grave is not marked.

There are many unidentified graves marked with sand rocks and some of these graves could be even older. An unusual grave not far from the Hackette plot is surrounded by huge rocks stacked three high. The person buried here is unknown. Some of the older residents told me years ago that it was there when they were young. I always thought it must have been a prominent person of that time. The family went to a great deal of trouble to mark this person's final resting place with these huge

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stones. Imagine how much work was involved collecting and transporting these huge rocks to the cemetery by horse and wagon. The nearest place where those type rocks is found is in the Rocky Hill community a few miles west of the cemetery.



The name Ebenezer is a Biblical name and comes from the story of the Israelites, led by Samuel, doing battle with the Philistines as recorded in I Samuel, chapter 7.

I Samuel 7: 12

Then Samuel took a stone, and set [it] between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

There are many cemeteries in the United States named Ebenezer. The Find a Grave web site lists 24 cemeteries with that name in Arkansas.

We do not know the person responsible for naming this location Ebenezer. Early settlers may have named it for a similar place back east that was named Ebenezer or some of them may have remembered the story of how the Lord helped Israel in the battle with the Philistines and wanted to give the Lord credit for helping them in their journey to their new homes in Arkansas. Just as Samuel had placed a stone marker to mark the place where the Lord helped the Israelites defeat the Philistines, our families place stones at this place called Ebenezer to remember their loved ones who are buried here.

Those early settlers established a Methodist Episcopal church at this location as a place of worship, and as deaths occurred, the most likely place to develop a cemetery would be near the church. Ebenezer is shown on an 1865 map of this area and is marked with a cross symbol indicating a church was there at that time. In the early 1900's, a school was located across the road from the church.

A deed for the cemetery is recorded in Book 66, page 389 at the Nevada County courthouse. The grantors are A. C. Moody and Fannie C. Moody. The grantees are I. N. Tunnell, J. H. Griffith, and Walter Kirk and their successors as grave yard committee. The date of the deed is September 12, 1914.

This deed only covered the cemetery (two-and one-half acres). The church property (10 acres) was donated by J. W. Whaley and Rachel Whaley. Church trustees when the

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deed was recorded in April, 1896 were J. W. Whaley, W. D. House, and John P. Otwell. The deed stated that the land shall be “used, kept, and maintained as a place of divine worship and the residue shall be for the use and occupancy of the preachers who shall from time to time be appointed in said place”. As population decreased, the church was finally forced to close. The building was sold and moved sometime in the early 1970’s. Only two photos of the church have been located. I’m sure there were earlier church buildings at Ebenezer, but this is the one most of us remember.

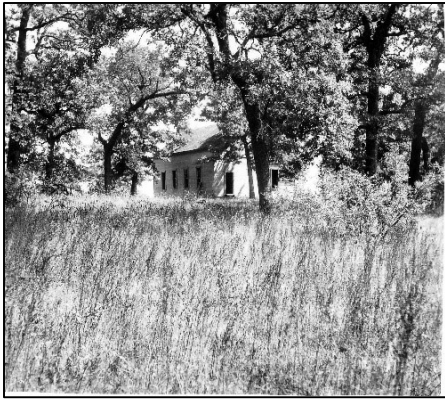


Photo by Glenn Foster (1946)



Rear of church seen in this photo taken at a funeral (c. 1960s)

The church property and cemetery were conveyed by deed on August 9, 1974 from the United Methodist Church to the Ebenezer Cemetery Association. This deed is recorded in Book 312, page 32.

A group of local individuals worked together during the 1960’s to improve the cemetery. A chain link fence was erected, a road was built completely around the edge of the cemetery, and a nice arch was built over the front gate with the name Ebenezer Cemetery. Some of those involved in this were Ruel McKelvy, Horace Kirk, Lee Roy McKelvy, Hildre Griffith, Sam Chamlee, and John McCain.

Although a cemetery committee had been in existence for several years, it was formally incorporated as the Ebenezer Cemetery Association June 9, 1975. The members of the first board of directors were: Ellis Johnson, J. D. Norman, Horace Kirk, Claudis Nelson, Ruel McKelvy, Opal Delaney, Keeley McDonald, Virda McCain, and John McCain. The association decided to have annual meetings the first Sunday in May to discuss cemetery business.

Good records of burials need to be kept for all cemeteries. The first cemetery survey of Ebenezer was done in the late 1950s or early 1960s by Howard Cornish Foster and Edward Dunn. They recorded 132 graves. They included some family information about some of the people listed. I was glad to get a copy of this cemetery survey given to me by Elaine Dunn Ritchie.

The next survey of Ebenezer Cemetery was done in 1970 as part of a county-wide survey of all Nevada County cemeteries done by the various home demonstration clubs in

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the county. The ladies who did this survey of Ebenezer were Mrs. Eve Nichols, Mrs. Goldie Meador, Mrs. Brodie Knight, Mrs. Laverne Green, and Mrs. Wilma Knight.

All the surveys done by the club members were compiled by Mrs. Scott Owen of Emmet and distributed to libraries and genealogical societies including the Clayton Genealogical Library in Houston, Texas.

My wife and I did another survey of Ebenezer in 1997, and since then, I have tried to keep it updated as burials occur. There have been 593 burials at Ebenezer as of this writing and 52 known persons are buried there who do not have a marker. About 50 more unidentified graves are marked with rocks. There are four doctors buried there and 55 veterans, three of which died while in military service. There is also a memorial marker for Harl Nelson who was on the USS Arizona when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Some of the family names found at Ebenezer include Ammons, Kirk, McKelvy, Otwell, Green, Gillespie, McAteer, Johnson, Hardwick, Griffith, Irvin, Delaney, Plyler, Tunnell, Schooley, Hesterly, Sarrett, Parker, Barksdale, Nelson, Hunter, Foster, and many others.

The land around Ebenezer Cemetery is very sandy. In the early days, the cemetery was much smaller and the grass was kept scraped off with hoes. Later, as lawn mowers became available, centipede grass seed was sown to establish a grass cover for the cemetery. The picture at the beginning of this article shows a nice carpet of green grass. That picture was taken in July of 2023 following a very wet period. I was glad I took that picture because the cemetery is usually not that green in the middle of the summer. Another problem is the scattered prickly pear cactus that grows well in very sandy soil. They are hard to control since they have deep roots and come back if they are cut down. Another problem in recent years is fire ants which affect everyone in this part of the country. They are also hard to control.

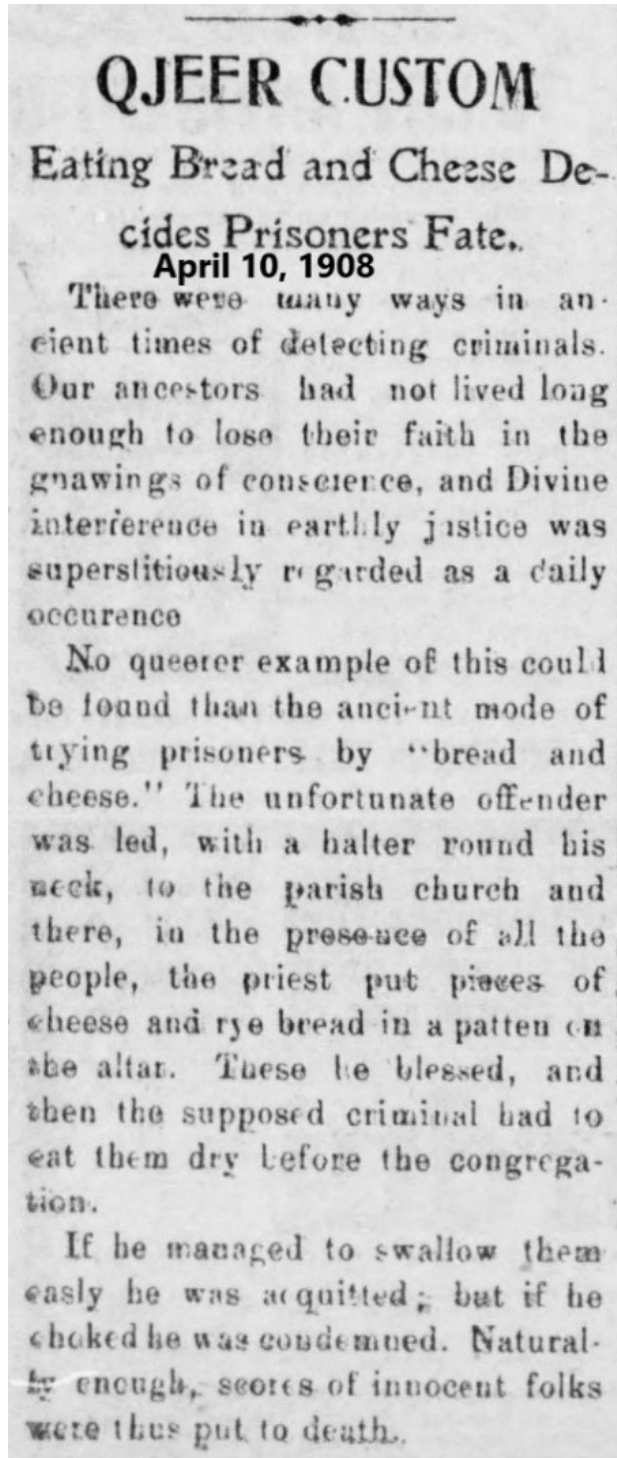
Near midnight on March 14, 2025, the cemetery was in the direct path of an EF2 tornado which did much damage. All the trees in the cemetery and the parking area were destroyed except for one. About 1,000 feet of chain link fence was destroyed. A total of 65 tombstones were over-turned and five were broken. The cemetery will never look the same, but we are making progress in removing the debris and getting the grave markers back in place. Thanks to all who donated money or physical labor to help us recover from this disaster.

*“A cemetery is a history of people—a perpetual record of yesterday
and a sanctuary of peace and quiet today. A cemetery exists because
every life is worth loving and remembering—always.”*

(Unknown Author)

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From The Washington Telegraph
Washington, Arkansas



ALL STOVE UP

I did a lot more physical work the last few weeks than I usually do and my body let me know about it. The best description I know of to describe my condition was that I was "all stove up". I have heard that expression all my life. I know what it means—feeling sore, stiff, or bruised from physical exertion or injury.

I tried to find out the origin of that phrase, and like most of the old sayings, there are several possible theories of how the phrase first started. The most common explanation is that the word "stove" as a verb is the past tense of "stave". We know that old wooden barrels were made from thin strips of wood called staves. Logs cut into short lengths for that purpose were called stave bolts and a mill that made them was called a stave mill.

The verb "to stave" means to break or damage something especially a wooden vessel like a barrel or maybe a wooden boat. Some think that this evolved into the phrase "stove up" meaning a state of being physically worn out or battered.

There is not a definite explanation of how the phrase got started, but we all know what it means. The phrase is common in the South, but it is also used in other parts of the country even as far north as Maine.

So, to avoid being "all stove up", we need to be careful not to over-exert ourselves especially if we not accustomed to being physically active.

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National Train Day is May 10; a time to celebrate the romance and history of the locomotive.

After you read this poem, read it again from the bottom up for a different track.

Train, Come Again – Don Mathis

Watching a train go down the track
I wish I had my baby back
Cars of white, cars of blue
I'll always miss my days with you
Those cars of memories go by fast
Each car holds thoughts from our past
Engine, engine, black and red
I won't forget the things you said
I wish our life could stay the same
I wish I could reverse this train
I watched the Sunset leave the station
I arrived at the depot with reservation



Pictured is Winford Eugene Mathis, 1919-1995, of Fordyce, Ark.