

PHILLIPS COUNTY  
HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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"THIS OLD BOOK"

The Civil War Diary of  
Mrs. Mary Sale Edmondson  
Of Phillips County, Arkansas

Edited By

R. P. Baker, Archivist  
Arkansas History Commission  
1972

PART V

PREFACE

The vast majority of Civil War diaries which have come down to this present time are those of the soldier himself. They give a thrilling account of the battlefield, the campfire, and the march but usually little else. This diary is different. It is an account of a different kind of battlefield, the home front in the South. But it is no less a story of privation, destruction, and bravery.

This is the diary of a very literate southern gentlewoman. It reflects her interests in the welfare of her home, her husband and children, and her Negro slaves. In it is captured the essence of a way of life rapidly being destroyed forever by Yankee Soldiers. Gone were the gracious ways, the leisurely civilization and finally, life itself.

INTRODUCTION

MARY FRANCES SALE EDMONDSON was born November

16, 1816, in Amherst County, Virginia, the eldest of the eight children born to the Reverend Alexander F. and Sarah Crenshaw Sale. In 1812, the family emigrated with a large number of their fellow Virginians to Lawrence County, Alabama, and settled near the county seat of Moulton. Here they made their home for a number of years.

In 1848, Mary's brother, John B. a lawyer by profession and the fifth County Court Judge of Lawrence County, "was seized by a desire to try a new Country" and removed to Aberdeen, Mississippi. It was no doubt through her brother's new friends and acquaintances that Mary met a widower from Pontotoc County, Mississippi, Dr. Albert G. Edmondson. Dr. Edmondson's first wife was Caroline Pinson, and they were the parents of three children: William, Mary E., and Caroline L. The first Mrs. Edmondson died about 1848 or 1849.

Dr. Edmondson and Miss Sale were married in Mississippi on May 23, 1854. Their first child, Alexander, was born April 20, 1855, but died eight days later. Their second child, John Albert, was born on May 23, 1856.

In 1857, Dr. Edmondson, his father-in-law, Alexander Sale, and two of his brothers-in-law, William and Melville Sale, joined the great American move westward. Choosing Phillips County, Arkansas as their new home, they settled northeast of Walnut Corner. Here they bought over one thousand acres of land in the Blackfoot or Central neighborhood, along Spring Creek Road. William named his plantation Granmedi, and the home shared by Dr. Edmondson and the rest of the Sale family was called Holly Grove. Some of the other families which made up this neighborhood were these

of: Judge John T. Jones, George R. Johnson, Richard Ford, Thomas and John Gist, Joseph Green, Arthur Robinson, Richard Anselm Blount, Amos Jarman, James Cook, Alexander Graves, Warren and Jack Smizer, Dr. T. R. Welch, F. H. Dade and David Threlkeld.

On September 20, 1858, Mrs. Edmondson's third child, Sarah, Susannah, or Sallie, was born--only to die on June 24, 1860, ironically the same day as the birth of her fourth and last child, Louise Titus, or Lou. Mrs. Edmondson died on February 7, 1865, after several months of illness. Dr. Edmondson died in Phillips County in 1885.

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#### DIARY

December 10, 1863, Thursday. Last night Dec. 9 was made memorable to us by the reception of letters from Caddo (Parish, La.) and (my brother) Will--Jennings Blount brought them from over the creek; they were forwarded by (Capt. W. H.) Crawford for Will to us and were the first we have had since the 15th of Sept. My dear mother was taken ill the day our poor Davy died here; she seemed to be recovering the second week in November, when Will was with her--they had not received any of my letters, except one written in August and Sept.--Will's clothing started to him between the 15th and 20th of Nov. by (Frank H.) Hoyt and (W. R.) Coats, and letters by (J. C.) Shell; he had not got them when he wrote but I hope he has by this time. Another fearful battle has been fought in East Tennessee, whether it was such a defeat as we first heard remains to be seen; we hear conflicting rumors and Federal papers claim

it as a splendid victory.

December 20, 1863. Sunday before Christmas-- this time last year our hearts were gladdened by Will's return to us--and especially by the convalescence of my ever lamented father. I have dreamed such peculiar dreams of him and my dear mother of late, our troubles; and apprehensions are constantly multiplied and increased. I have found some comfort lately in private prayer and religious reading; my father's hymn book has been a sad, sweet companion to me, and I have found light and help spiritually in looking over his books and particularly such portions as are marked by his own hand--Oh my father, my father--how I lament my opportunity unimproved, now lost--if my soul had been in unison with yours more continually when I was blessed with your presence--(now I have no human face to turn to for sympathy or instruction in those things, which concern me most) I should be able to instruct my children but to (late), I am not--'tis but the "blind leading the blind"--here a life time has been by me wasted in trifles that are worth nothing! Lord help me to redeem my time, and grant me the guidance of thy Holy Spirit!

December 25, 1863, Friday. Christmas day, the children were made happy by having their stockings filled last night in a manner mysterious to them--although Albert suspected that the bountiful, (bewiskered) "Kriss Night" lived at home with us--but Lou's faith was entire--Henry, the (only) negro child on the place, was equally happy;

December 27, 1863, Sunday. The next day Albert was taken sick, then I was sick again and then Lou; the weather became rainy--I had one

visitor previous to the change of weather and my sickness--Miss Betty Lane, who brought Dr. (Hector M.) Grant's daughter, Katey,<sup>3</sup> to spend the day with me. Carrie has gone to Mrs. Robinson's to spend the Monday of Christmas with them--who have had like bereavements with ourselves. The previous Christmas, she, Mrs. Robinson, had around her table 7 or 8 young people at dinner; her husband and (her) brother (William J. Wilburn) also; now, of that company four were dead in the bloom of youth; our darling daughter Mary, Mrs. Robinson's sister Bettie Wilburn, Mr. Robinson's cousin, Mr. (William) Frewett, and a soldier named Suggs<sup>4</sup> --Mr. Robinson had been for weeks a captive at Alton (prison).<sup>5</sup> Mr. Wilburn (her brother, William J.) scarcely does stay a night with his bereaved sisters<sup>6</sup> --my honored and lamented father had also passed from this earth and entered into rest, since that Christmas day; so that both our families felt disposed to spend part of this Christmas together. The day had been spent by me mostly alone in reading and meditation, profitably I hope.

January 31, 1864. I have written nothing for this month. On the first day of the year we found, on rising the thermometer 4 degrees below zero, where it continued till 12 o'clock. It has been very cold this month; stock have suffered for want of food, shelters and attention; our old sorrel horse died of disease and cold. We got on extremely well having plenty of wood, and Dick and Jake to bring it to us. Dr. kept fine fires. He and Albert caught between 30 and 40 partridges in traps and pens--and I don't know how many other birds Albert caught in the yard of various kinds, chiefly snow birds, but Doves, Redbirds, Flickers and Larks were all abundant (how sad to have to

feed upon (them) instead of feeding and protecting such innocent bright creatures!) We fed them at the door, and our Holly trees afforded them substance for two weeks or more. Sure enough the way was opened for us to get salt. Dr. did not go to town--and met with opportunity, most unexpectedly, of getting it so that we could kill our meat at two different times. If the Yankees would let us alone now--I live as well as I can... while my country suffers. We have continued to get shoes for all who needed them this month and last. My dear husband has succeeded in getting boots of himself for which he was sadly in need. The Lord has been good to us. Oh, that our gratitude was equal to our mercies--undeserved as are they! Lord help us to keep our hearts--that we may trust fully and calmly in thy protections and guidance through the atoning blood of thy son--our Savior. Oh, keep us from sin; lead us not into temptation--but deliver us from evil--for Thine is the power--Thine is the glory--forever, Amen!

February 10, 1864, Wednesday. The wedding day of my dear parents--on the first of this month I had a letter from Will dated Dec. 20th--had written to him previously by (B. F.) Reynold <sup>7</sup> going out with (John R.) Swan <sup>8</sup>--not gone yet. On the first of this month my husband was arrested by the Federals, from a scout of (Maj. Eagleton) Carmichael's <sup>9</sup>, who took one gun, Papa's old shot gun (single barrel) that had been a flint lock 40 odd years, and when the Confederacy took all the available guns in the country that were left; and we had a percussion lock (put on it) to kill hawks, owls, and other such things with. They also took dear Mollie's little Derringer Pistol, a gift to her from Mell several years ago and altogether

valueless to any but ourselves. They caused my dear husband to mount his horse, which he took out of the plough and ride with them several miles, when his remonstrance caused them to allow his return home that night--on condition he would report during the ensuing week as soon as the condition of a very sick patient would permit to Gen. Buford in Helena. This seemed a very sad alternative to us, for we were told he would in no case come out thence till he had sworn what he considered a most unholy oath unless he should be sent to prison at Alton (Illinois)--we were amuch troubled in spirit--sought council of men--some said go promptly, others said not--but he was only released from a ride that might have caused him much suffering--and the loss of his only horse worth the name--by promising to go.

February 14, 1864, Sunday. Mrs. Underwood, who had lingered long in a helpless disease, died on the tenth; the next day he prepared to go on the 11th, not knowing but it might be days, weeks, or months before he should see his family again. I do not know what his feelings were altogether except that he was much distressed at the impossibility of taking an oath impossible for him to keep, or to inhabit a prison he believed would soon terminate his existence. The cry of my heart constantly to God was "Lord help me to say honestly, Show us the right and help us to prefer it", political consideration and selfish feelings aside, strengthen him to do right--in Thy sight. "Lead him--us not in temptation" (this should be, I think, "Leave us not in temptation" for God tempts no man, St. James has said, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the power" (Aunt Sue) It seemed to me it could not be right for him to take false oath for any reason. I fasted and prayed and tried to become in a condition as well as I know how to pray

honestly and fervently that Our Father in heaven would make him a way of escape--I know that he could. I begged that he might find favor with his enemies--that friends might be raised up to (help) him--that he might have calmness and self possession--that he might, above all be saved from choosing to sin to avoid what seemed evil. And now my children--God, the good God, answered that prayer in every particular--a friend, was unexpectedly present at the General's when your father arrived there, whose introduction of him was a benefit. Your father did find favor with... General (Buford) in whose power he was, and was not required to take that oath. (He has told me (Aunt Sue) since that he had determined to do so, as he went to Helena--rather than leave his helpless family and go off to a distant prison...so the prayer of faith--the "effectual fervent prayer" of his wife saved him from that sin, which might have caused his spiritual (death).) He had several important favors granted him, and returned to us in health and safety--for which undeserved mercies we humbly gratefully thanked and praised over our gracious God! Yet severe trials are still before us--not-with-standing the kindness of our enemies in town--but the same God is able to deliver us, to strengthen us, to endure and will do it, if our hearts are right before him and we ask his delivering and sustaining grace trusting him.

February 15, 1864, Monday. Mrs. Winn 10 and Mrs. (J.) Warren Smizer 11 spent the day with me. It was rather a pleasant day. I was pleased for Lou to have a decent, well behaved little girl to play with--Lucy Smizer--Mrs. Fraser came over in the afternoon. Sister Winn and I had some religious conversation and covenanted to pray at a certain hour each day for the peace of our country

(and) the restoration of our Church privileges--and a revival of religion in our family and community.

\*

#### FOOT NOTES

<sup>1</sup> He was in Company A. Dobbins' 1st Arkansas Cavalry. Muster Rolls, Dobbins' 1st Arkansas Cavalry.

<sup>2</sup> He was a member of Company A, Dobbins' 1st Arkansas Cavalry. He was born in Pennsylvania, the son of Rolan Hoyt. He was captured "in the woods" May 12, 1864 near Helena by General Buford. He died at the U. S. Hospital at Helena of his wounds, July 11, 1864. Muster Rolls, Dobbins' 1st Arkansas Cavalry.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Hector M. Grant	37	Ky.
Sarah Grant	35	N. C.
Joshua H. Grant	8	Ark.
Sarah (Kate) Grant, Jr.	7	Ark.
Mary Epps	48	N. C.
Thomas A. Sale	47	N. C.
A. C. Quaite	28	Ky.

Household No. 830, 1860 U. S. Census. St. Francis Township, Phillips County, Arkansas.

Kate S. Grant (1853 - 1903): Inscription list Maple Hill Cemetery, Helena, Arkansas.

<sup>4</sup> Unidentified

<sup>5</sup> He was captured October 7, 1863 in Phillips County, Arkansas, and sent to Alton, Illinois. He escaped December 27, 1863 and was recaptured and

sent to Ft. Delaware, New Jersey, April 1, 1864.  
A. W. Robinson, Muster Rolls, Dobbins' 1st Ark-  
ansas Cavalry.

6 Jenny Graves and Mrs. Robinson

7 He was in Company A., Dobbins' 1st Arkansas  
Cavalry. He was captured March 23, 1863, and jail-  
ed at Helena, then exchanged April 28, 1863. At  
the time of his enlistment on January 1, 1862, he  
was 19, 5 ft. 8 in. tall. In January, 1864, he  
was on detached duty in Phillips County, Muster  
Rolls, Dobbins' 1st Arkansas Cavalry.

8 A captain in Company A, Dobbins' 1st Ark-  
ansas Cavalry. He was 5 ft. 11 in. tall, had  
light complexion, light hair and blue eyes. Ibid.

9 Commander of the 15th Illinois Cavalry;  
he was known as a notorious house-burner.

10 Winn or Wynne. Perhaps the wife of J. A.  
Winn. 1866 Phillips County Tax Book.

11 Joseph W(arren) Smiser (Smizer) 38 Tenn.  
Martha P. Smiser 23 Tenn.  
Lucy A. Smiser 8/12 Ark.

Household No. 428. 1860 U. S. Census, Planters  
Township, Phillips County, Arkansas.

*Glenn & Pickett*  
*have paper with the names of late Creek*  
*and are in the neighborhood of late Creek*  
*the owner of*  
*Long Gate House*  
*Condy*  
*J. H. Alexander*  
*A. H.?*  
*At the Prisoner's*  
*June 28<sup>th</sup> 1863*  
*-11-*

#### MELVILLE SALE PASS

This pass through the Confederate lines, which was issued just a few days before the Battle of Helena, was found recently in a scrapbook at the Phillips County Library.

In the August 26, 1863 entry, Part I of the Edmondson Diary, Mrs. Edmondson wrote:

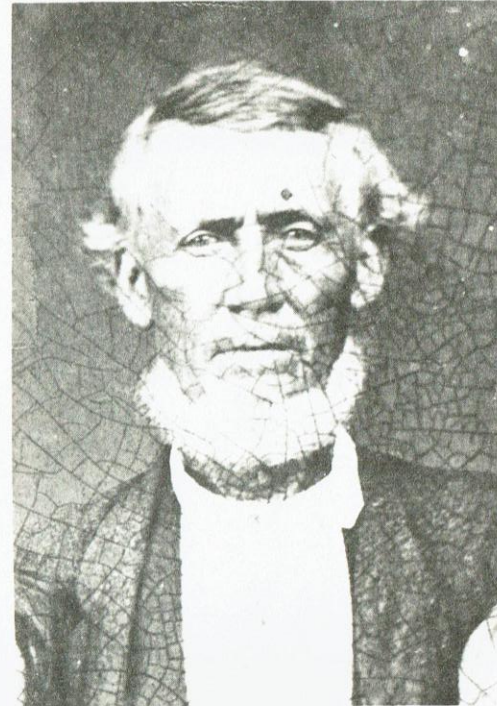
So my children, to begin aright I must say for the record that on the last day of June, 1863 your honored Grandparents (the Reverend and Mrs. A. F. Sale), Sister May (Mary Elizabeth) and your Uncle Melville Sale started to La. with the remaining servants who had remained with us.

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#### NOTES

The tour map guide to Helena was prepared by the Historical Society for the Helena National Bank, and copies were mailed to all Society members with the December, 1972, issue of the Quarterly. It has been reprinted in the amount of 5,000 copies by the Marquette Committee for the Marquette Tri-Centennial celebration in July.

Another project of the Historical Society whose successful completion can be attributed in large part to Tom Tappan, is the recent printing of a magazine of pictures and information, entitled, "Historic Helena - West Helena." This project was sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, and the magazine will be sold during Serendipity Week and as long as there is a demand for them.



BARTON W. GREEN, 1828-1893,  
after whom Barton, Arkansas was named.



#### THE OLD COURT HOUSE

On the preceeding page is a picture of the old Court House, which stood on the site of the present Solomon Playground, facing Market Street. The following article appeared in a 1912 issue of the Helena World.

#### INCIDENT OF THE PAST

As an incident of the remote past, implying more than its quota of pathos and regret, the following invitation of a date of upwards of two score years ago, to a state function of more than usual brilliancy, will bestir in the minds of surviving relatives and friends, rapidly fading memoirs of a most happy and felicitous event.

In the long list of names of prominent residents of both city and county which follows, the sad fact stands out that of the total number, but three are now alive, the remaining ones having long since passed into the Great Beyond, or else removed from this city.

The function referred to was in commemoration of the formal opening of the present county court house in the latter weeks of June, 1870, just 42 years ago. Following is the invitation as it appears today -- much yellowed with age.

GRAND COUNTY BALL.  
Helena, Arkansas.

You are respectfully invited to attend the Grand County Ball, at the new Court House, in Helena, on Thursday, the 16th of June, 1870.

Committee of Arrangements.

J. C. Tappan, W. H. Rogers, J. S. Monnier, L. H. Mangum, Jas. M. Hanks, Col. C. Polk, Jno. I. Foreman, Edward Porter, John T. Jones, Sam Brooks, W. E. Moore, B. Y. Turner, T. M. Jacks, Dr. D. A. Linthicum, J. B. Miles, David Bruton, M. Brennan.

Committee of Invitation.

A. Thompson, John J. Hornor, J. H. O'Connor, A. Wilkens, S. I. Clark, Rees Davis, L. L. Johnson, Thos. B. Hanly, J. A. Jackson, J. H. Penney, L. Cage, W. P. Taylor, R. N. Bailey, C. N. Underwood.

Floor Manager.

John J. Hornor.

Assistant Floor Managers.

R. N. Bailey, W. H. Stone, J. H. Penney, S. I. Clark.

Reception Committee.

J. C. Tappan, B. Y. Turner, M. Brennan, Thos. Brooks.

Dancing to commence at 9:30 P. M.

Gentlemen will present this at the door.

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AN OLD FRIEND GONE

HISTORIC OLD ARMORY HALL, OF CHECKERED CAREER, RAZED

From The Helena World, July 24, 1899

The old Armory Hall has been torn down; the workmen have completed the work of destruction that age and weather had advanced so far, and the building that has served more different uses and has had a more checkered career than many men live through, is to be known no more. It has had a brilliant rise and a pathetic fall; it has served out its usefulness and outlived many who once flitted gaily about over its floor and awoke mirth's echoes under its rough old roof. It has seen men as busy as bees when it served as a cotton house; it has guarded property as a warehouse when stillness reigned within its walls; it has seen brave uniforms and echoed to the tramp of marching men; it has seen such actresses as Fay Templeton and Julia Arthur, when they were in the beginning of their careers; it has looked down upon such gala affairs as the present day sees here no more; it has been honored by the greatest gatherings of the wit and the beauty and the gallantry of the past generation; it has resounded to the strains of dance music and the merry laugh of care-free men and women; it has seen a noted character die in pitiful loneliness; it has been left and neglected by the gay crowd that once filled its hall; it has been turned over to the colored brother and his festival and seen high revel held; it has been buffeted by wind and rain and fallen into decay beyond repair, and now has gone the way of all the world. So with many a man.

The Armory Hall was built by Mr. H. P. Coolidge in 1867 for a cotton house. It was erected on Water Street, between Water and Diagonal Streets, east of what is now known as the public square. Shortly after that Water Street went into the river; when the caving threatened to take in this building it was moved to Ohio Street, where it has been for so long a landmark. At that time there was a boat landing just above the foot of Perry Street and the cotton was rolled from the building to the river. In the division of the Coolidge estate it fell to Dr. F. N. Burke, and afterwards passed into the possession of Dr. A. A. Hornor.

Along about the year 1878 it was rented to someone for a skating rink and here is where its society career started. A good floor was built for the rink. Then about '79 the Helena Rifles went into it for an armory. In 1880, as near as can be ascertained, a minstrel performance was given there by such local celebrities as Elkin West (and there never was a better professional negro minstrel, they say), W. G. Williamson, Ike Brickey, Morris Bernhold, William Peterson Nelson, Frank Christiana, L. J. Wilkes, W. B. Denton, Sam Faulkner, and others, and it had been launched upon its theatrical career. In the Spring of '80, Fay Templeton and her opera company opened a week's engagement there and presented Pinafore, Juanita, Pirates of Penzance, and other light operas. She was then young in fame; she, John Templeton, and Alice Vane were starring in the company. In the following winter Julia Arthur, who has since attained to the pinnacle of theatrical fame, appeared there at the head of a barnstorming company in a three nights' engagement, presenting The Two Orphans (and by the way, the big old draughty building let in not only a realistic, but a real snow scene), The Banker's Daughter, London Assurance.

Later in the season Fay Templeton returned for another week, but a terrible blizzard raged and though tarpaulins were hung on the walls to keep out the bitter cold, the building could not be heated and the engagement was called off.

Later society took possession and many brilliant affairs were given there. For about ten years society reigned supreme there. It was the scene of all the gala occasions of those days. But its decline had begun before it was finally abandoned for the new Library Hall.

After this the Helena Light Guards occupied it as an armory for some time.

A few years ago old Red Mike (Mike Malloy), who was for years a curious character here, was found dead there. Mike had been living in one of the little rooms adjoining the stage and was supposed to have considerable money hidden about the old building. But Mike drank too much for a miser and the treasure hunter about the ruins of the old hall will probably be poorly rewarded for his trouble.

Of late years the colored brother has held high revel there occasionally with his festivals. The recent hard wind, about a month ago, inflicted some damage; the work of tearing it down was begun a few days ago and Saturday's sun poured its purifying heat and light down upon the dank ground that the old building had kept from the light of day and reserved for a home for vermin for more than a quarter of a century.

So must decay give place to new life.

CONDITIONS REPORTED IN PHILLIPS COUNTY  
MORTALITY SCHEDULE REPORT-1850

PHILLIPS COUNTY - Q. K. Underwood, Ass't Marshal

Mooney Township: The soil is Mississippi River bottom, the entire township is liable to overflow. The water used is principally from the Mississippi River. The growth is principally cotton annual.

Laryville Township: There are two causes which are calculated to make this township unhealthy; the first, at least two thirds of the township is liable to almost annual overflow and the next the description of water used, it being generally from the St. Francis River which in character is very unpleasant.

Big Creek Township: The greater part of Big Creek Township is what might be termed first rate upland and is generally high and dry. The water is generally from wells.

Town of Helena: It will be seen that the scarlet fever prevailed to some extent in the town of Helena within the year ending June 1, 1850. The character of the soil is immediately in the town near the river, Mississippi bottom but within half mile of the river rich clay hills set in. The timber in these hills is principally oak, ash beach, etc. Water used is Mississippi River, cistern and wells.

Searcy Township: A large portion of Searcy Township is liable to overflow unless protected by levees. The soil on the second bottom is of

the best character. There is much cistern water now used, previous to which the township was very unhealthy as the natural water is very unwholesome.

St. Francis Township: As will be seen, a large majority of the deaths recorded are from cholera and scarlet fever, which diseases have prevailed in this township at intervals for two years. The soil is diversified - partly river bottom, partly second rate upland, and partly poor hilly land.

Walnut Township: Walnut Township lies between the Mississippi and St. Francis Rivers and much of it is low and liable to overflow. As will be seen the cholera killed a number of Negroes. It was thought that many of those who died could have been saved had good management prevailed.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Cause of death</u>
Atchley, John	12	M	Tenn.	Mar.	Fever, 6 days
Atchley, Sarah	36	F W	Va.	Nov.	Dropsy, chronic
Bailey, John	9	M	Ark.	Aug.	Unknown, 2 days
Barney, Mary J.	25	F M	Ala.	Oct.	Fever, 21 days
Bayliss, Adella	45	F M	Tenn.	Apr.	Consumption, chronic
Bayliss, Ann	20	F M	N. C.	Apr.	Fever, 6 days
Bayliss, Mary	27	F	Tenn.	July	Fever, 7 days
Bayliss, Mary	70	F W	Tenn.	Apr.	Cong. fever, 8 days
Bond, Sanford H.	2	M	Ark.	Sept.	Worms, 3 days
Boyd, Margaret	9/12	F	Ark.	May	Teething, 20 days
Brent, J. N.	50	M W	N. C.	Jan.	Cholera, 2 days
Brown, John M.	1	M	Tenn.	Mar.	Unknown, 2 days
Brown, Mary	13	F	Ky.	Nov.	Scarlet Fever, 4 days
Brunson, Robert	60	M W	N. C.	Oct.	Consumption, 60 days
Capflumer, John	47	M M	Tenn.	Dec.	Consumption, 42 days
Carpenter, Elizabeth	17	F M	Ala.	Feb.	Unknown, 3 days
Carter, Sarah	8	F	Miss.	Dec.	Scarlet Fever, 5 days
Chillers, Sylvester	10/12	M	Miss.	Aug.	Cong. chill, 2 days
Clarke, C. M.	28	M	Ia.	May	Cholera, 4 days
Clements, Isabel	22	F W	Ark.	Feb.	Pneu., 7 days
Collins, Wm.	45	M M	Miss.	Dec.	Billious Fever, 9 days
Coollege, Ema	1	F	Ark.	Feb.	Scarlet Fever, 1 day
Cowley, John H.	3	M	Ark.	Mar.	Scarlet Fever, 15 days

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LIST OF PHILLIPS COUNTY DEATHS  
from

1850 MORTALITY SCHEDULES OF ARKANSAS

The surname is listed first. Age is given in years, unless an infant of less than one year, which is given in months or days. Sex is noted by M and F. An M or W in the 4th column indicates if married or widowed. Place of birth, state and if known, also county. Month in which death occurred. Disease and cause of death. Length of illness is generally given in days, or as chronic, sudden, etc. Deaths were listed from the county where family was enumerated, although the death may have occurred elsewhere.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Cause of death</u>
Alier, Mary J.	3	F	Ark.	Aug.	Unknown, 4 days
Alexander, Hester	28	F M	S. C.	June	Infl. of liver, 10 days
Alexander, Mary A.	2	F	Ark.	Aug.	Cong. chill, 2 days
Anderson, Anna	40	F M	Ala.	April	Unknown, 10 days
Anderson, Elizabeth	19	F	Ala.	April	Unknown, 6 days
Anderson, John	7	M	Ark.	Feb.	Cong. chill, 2 days

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Cause of Death</u>
Gilliam, Mary A.	3	F	Ark.	May	Scarlet Fever, 20 days
Gilly, Harvey	2/12	M	Ark.	Sept.	Unknown, 3 days
Gilly, John	26	M	S. C.	June	Mortification, 10 days
Gilly, Margaret	18	F	Unk.	Sept.	Fever, 6 days
Gilly, Wesley	24	M	S. C.	June	Billious Fever, 6 days
Grimes, L. L.	60	M	N. C.	Aug.	Fever, 3 days
Grimes, Wilson	21	M	Tenn.	Mar.	Pneu. 14 days
Grisham, Narcissea	1/12	F	Ark.	June	Croup, 1/2 day
Hacker, Mary	10/12	F	Ark.	April	Teething, 42 days
Halsell, Calvin	30	M	Ky.	Sept.	Cong. chill, 5 days
Halsell, William	4	M	Miss.	June	Fever, 20 days
Hardy, Joseph P.	7	M	Ark.	April	Scarlet Fever, 8 days
Hathway, Alice E.	3/12	F	Ark.	Oct.	Cong. chill, 3 days
Hayden, James J.	7/12	M	Ark.	Feb.	Unknown, sudden
Hayden, Sarah F.	35	F	Ky.	Aug.	Fever, 8 days
Hicks, Edwin	41	M	N. C.	May	Unknown, sudden
Hicks, Sally C.	9	F	Ark.	June	Cong. chill, 1 day
Hicks, W. F.	5	M	Ark.	Mar.	Scarlet Fever, 33 days
Hicky, Mary	2	F	Ky.	Aug.	Diarhea, 18 days
Hicky, W. S.	48	M	Tenn.	Sept.	Unknown, 5 days
Higgins, John	8/12	M	Ark.	Sept.	Cholera, 1 day
Hodges, Ann P.	38	F	Ga.	Aug.	Cong. Fever, 4 days
Hodges, Spence	1/12	M	Ark.	Sept.	Unknown
Holt, Henry	12	M	Ala.	Sept.	Billious Fever, 5 days

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Cause of death</u>
Craig, Wm.	56	M	Unk.	Mar.	Pneu., 10 days
Daniel, Mary	16	F	Ark.	Sept.	Unknown, 21 days
Daniels, Wm. C.	1	M	Tenn.	Aug.	Worms, 3 days
Davis, Catharine	6	F	Ark.	Aug.	Cong. fever, 2 days
Decker, Francis	1	F	Ark.	Feb.	Small Pox, 11 days
Delk, Baldwin	5	M	Miss.	Feb.	Scarlet Fever, 4 days
Delk, Mary C.	7	F	Ill.	Feb.	Scarlet Fever, 3 days
Diamond, Isadore	10	F	Tenn.	May	Scarlet Fever, 4 days
Dickson, Joseph	5	M	Tenn.	Oct.	Erysipelas, 10 days
Dickson, Mahala	30	F	Tenn.	Oct.	Fever, 3 days
Duke, Rebecca C.	10	F	Unk.	Jan.	Unknown, 9 days
Elliot, Sarah	60	F	Tenn.	Jan.	Fever, 6 days
Elliot, Sarah	34	M	Tenn.	Jan.	Cholera, 1 day
Filbric, Dudley C.	22	M	Tenn.	Jan.	Cholera, 1 day
Filbric, Mary	5	F	Miss.	Apr.	Scarlet Fever, 16 days
Foster, Jasper	16	M	Tenn.	Apr.	Scarlet Fever, 17 days
Foster, John	14	M	Miss.	Apr.	Scarlet Fever, 13 days
Foster, L.	14	F	N. C.	July	Cholera, 9 days
Foster, Rebecca	2/12	F	Ark.	July	Inflammation, 3 days
Garretson, E. J.	40	M	Md.	Sept.	Accident, 15 days
Gatlin, E. E.	10	M	Ala.	July	Fever, 40 days
Gallen, Jacob	3	M	Ark.	Oct.	Cong. chill, 3 days
Gallen, Wrlc Z.	3	M	Ark.	Oct.	

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Cause of Death</u>
<u>McKenzie, Martha</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Ark.</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>Phen, 14 days</u>
Moonland, Eliza	3	F	Ark.	May	Spasms, 3 days
Murry, James B.	32	M	Tenn.	Feb.	Dropsy, chronic
Neely, Julia A.	24	F	Ky.	July	Cholera, 14 days
Neely, Wm.	31	M	Ill.	June	Cholera, 2 days
Nickols, Nancy	3/12	F	Ark.	July	Croup, 1 day
Olinger, Mary	7/12	F	Ark.	Feb.	Cholera, 2 days
Parker, Ophalia	3	F	Ark.	Jan.	Croup, 3 days
Patterson, Eleanor	11	F	Ark.	Jan.	Worms, 3 days
Petkins, Salina	44	F	S. C.	Jan.	Fever, 8 days
Platt, Robert	2	M	Ark.	June	Poisoned, 10 days
Pulk, John	2	M	Mo.	May	Cholera, 1 day
Porter, James M.	5	M	Ala.	Aug.	Unknown, 12/ day
Prather, Mary	8	F	Miss.	Sept.	Cong. chill, 1/8 day
Prince, Giles	23	M	Ga.	Feb.	Consumption, 45 days
Reed, James H.	44	M	Ky.	April	Infl. of lungs, 20 days
Reeder, Wm.	15	M	Ark.	Aug.	Unknown, 6 days
Rice, Edward	37	M	Conn.	May	Cong. of lungs, 1 day
Riley, Francis	6	F	Miss.	June	Fever, 5 days
Riley, Lethla O.	25	F	Miss.	Nov.	Infl. of brain, 10 days
Roseberry, Mary	1/12	F	Ark.	Mar.	Unknown, 1 day
Roseberry, Wm.	6	M	Ia.	June	Cholera, 1 day
Royal, Davis T.	1	M	Ark.	Dec.	Unknown, 3 days
Ryan, Mary A.	31	F	N. C.	Sept.	Unknown, 7 days

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Cause of Death</u>
<u>Holt, Margaret</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Ala.</u>	<u>Sept.</u>	<u>Bilious Fever, 7 days</u>
Jones, Almira	4	F	Ala.	April	Scarlet Fever, 6 days
Jones, Davis T.	3	M	Ark.	Oct.	Worms, 5 days
Jones, Henrietta	7/12	F	Ark.	Dec.	Chills & fever, 3 days
Kidd, Geo. W.	11/12	M	Ark.	Dec.	Scarlet Fever, 5 days
Kidd, Sarah F.	2	F	Ark.	Sept.	Scarlet Fever, 5 days
King, Edward B.	1	M	Ark.	April	Fever, 60 days
Kincaid, Oscar	26	M	Ia.	April	Winter Fever, 3 days
Knightly, Aron	9	M	Tenn.	Nov.	Pneu. 3 days
Koonce, John H.	44	M	Tenn.	Nov.	Cholera, 1/2 day
Lowary, John G.	32	M	Tenn.	Sept.	Fever, 20 days
Martin, Leanova	2	F	Ark.	May	Scarlet Fever, 9 days
Martin, Littleton	33	M	Ky.	June	Cholera, 1 day
Martin, Mary C.	4	F	Ark.	Oct.	Fever, 9 days
Martin, William	5	M	Ark.	June	Cholera, 1 day
May, Monroe	8	M	Tenn.	Aug.	Cong. fever, 3 days
May, Theophilus	3/12	F	Ala.	April	Cong. fever, 2 days
McCloud, Dorothy	4	F	Ark.	Sept.	Cong. chill, 1 1/2 days
McCloud, Nancy M.	7	F	Ga.	Nov.	Scarlet Fever, 10 days
McCone, Henry L.	2	M	Ark.	April	Infl. of bowels, 18 days
McCone, John E.	2	M	Ark.	April	Infl. of bowels, 12 days
McCone, Mary	7	F	Ark.	Sept.	Infl. of brain, 12 days
McGone, Mary	2	F	Ark.	Aug.	Unknown, 2 days
McGonigal, James H.	33	F	Tenn.	Aug.	Childbed fever, 6 days

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Cause of Death</u>
Williams, James	3	M	Ark.	July	Cholera, 4 days
Williams, W. W.	7	M	Ky.	Sept.	Unknown, 3 days
Withrow, Geo.	3	M	Ark.	Oct.	Cong. chills, 1 day
Woods, Emily	33	F M	N. C.	March	Fever, 20 days
Wright, Elizabeth	28	F	La.	Feb.	Dropsy, chronic
Wright, Martha	6/12	F	Ark.	July	Infl. of brain, 1 day
Yerby, Henry	47	M	Va.	Oct.	Killed by his slave

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Cause of Death</u>
Saint, John W.	3	M	Ark.	April	Scarlet Fever, 20 days
Sanderlin, Mary M	3	F	Tenn.	Sept.	Billious Fever, 10 days
Sevorn, John	49	M M	Ky.	Dec.	Consumption, 35 days
Shell, Margaret	19	F M	Ky.	Nov.	Fever, 4 days
Shrader, H.	8	M	Ga.	Jan.	Scarlet Fever, 7 days
Simpson, Elizabeth J.	13	F	Ala.	Oct.	Dropsy, 7 days
Simpson, P. L.	3	M	Ark.	July	Worms, 60 days
Simpson, Rld'd	37	M M	Tenn.	June	Cholera, 5 days
Steel, James	6	M	Miss.	Jan.	Fever, 6 days
Stevenson, James	28	M	Ky.	Jan.	Cholera, 2 days
Sullivan, F. P.	27	M	Tenn.	Aug.	Typhoid liver, 5 days
Thomas, Bethany	14	F	Tenn.	Sept.	Fever, 4 days
Thomas, W. J.	16	M	Ga.	Sept.	Infl. of brain, 4 days
Thompson, Martha	21	F	Ky.	April	Consumption, chronic
Thornton, Helena	20	F M	Ark.	Oct.	Consumption, 10 days
Tolleson, Luisa	41	F	Va.	Jan.	Cholera, 1 day
Tolleson, Sarah Jane	13	F	Ark.	Jan.	Cholera, 1 day
Tully, Arabella B.	2	F	Ark.	Oct.	Cholera, 1 day
Tully, Henry	18	M	Miss.	June	Unknown, 14 days
Tully, L. B.	13	M	Miss.	May	Shot accidentally
Tully, Luisa	75	F W	N. C.	Oct.	Fever, 10 days
Tunstall, Geo.	9	M	Miss.	July	Cholera, 12 days
Underwood, Susan	63	F W	Va.	Nov.	Unknown, 14 days
Webb, Wilson	28	M	N. C.	April	Dropsy, chronic

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EARLY SETTLERS OF  
BARTON  
PHILLIPS COUNTY, ARKANSAS  
PART ONE

FOREWORD

The following account of early settlers of the community known as Barton is based upon facts found in Census records of Lauderdale County, Alabama and Phillips County, Arkansas, in Family Bibles of those families named, notebooks, and other papers of Columbus Shackelford Belsha and James L. Belsha, records of C. S. Belsha and Company of Barton, records in the Phillips County Courthouse at Helena, discussions by mail and otherwise with present day and former citizens of the area, four letters to and from Mr. Henry Minbourne Cook of Los Angeles, California for which deep appreciation is hereby expressed, some family legends, and other miscellaneous sources. If any of it is based upon belief, conjecture, or fiction, the text will so indicate. It is the hope of this writer that this article will stimulate others who possess like information on other families of Phillips County (which in its original area unquestionably included all or parts of all present day counties east of the White and Big Black Rivers and south of the south line of Lawrence County as originally established by the Legislature of Missouri) to write down such information for preservation in records of Phillips County Historical Society. All rights are hereby reserved to use all or any part of the following material in future publications.

James Vachel Belsha

WHAT WAS THE COMMUNITY OF BARTON?

It has been found difficult, if not almost impossible, to write of the comings and goings and items of interest about the early settlers and citizens of Barton, Phillips County, Arkansas, without including some of those within a radius of five or more miles of its Depot and the stores and residences clustered around it, including the town itself and the communities of North Creek, Lexa, Latour, Lick Creek, Planters and Vineyard, all of which at various times had post offices, none of which were ever incorporated, but nevertheless were so close as to be actually in walking distance or short trips by horse and buggy to Barton, where much of their business dealings were transacted. With this in mind, the following is found in a pocket-size Notebook of Columbus Shackelford Belsha apparently used as a "Day Book" of items as they happened. The item is not dated, but other items preceeding and following it indicate it was in the 1876-1878 period:

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 ENUMERATION

Coolidge Place	(11)	24
Mrs. Renfro	( 8)	6
Tom Wallace	(10)	11
*Barton (a person)	( 6)	7
*Jarman	( 1)	26
*Blount	( 4)	4
West		11
*Keese	( 2)	11
Sawan (Swon?)	( 4)	4
*Weatherly		7
Euty	( 1)	13
Kloene	( 2)	2
Blankenship	( 4)	4
*Waters	( 3)	12

Murphy	( 2 )	5
Green, B. W.	( 4 )	12
*Bibb	( 2 )	15
Hughes		5
Bush	( 2 )	28
Cook	( 6 )	18
Johnson, Olin	( 2 )	2
Totals	(69)	227

227

69

158 - - colored

This addition was obviously done before some changes of numbers were made in both columns, therefore the error in the first column (69); however, it is clear the intent was to show numbers of whites and numbers of colored in the families, or more correctly of those attending school from each farm or plantation. (Asterisks indicate those known to have been north of present Highway 49). Note that Mrs. Renfro was named; the 1880 Census shows she had married Jos. F. Graves prior to that census, so the enumeration had to be before her marriage. The Coolidge family owned the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  Section 4 and all of Section 10, Township 2 South, Range 4 East, being 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of the Barton Depot, as shown on the map drawn by Mr. F. B. Sheldon in February, 1871, attached to Vol. 7, No. 3, Phillips County Historical Quarterly. The children of both Belsha families were no doubt listed with those on the Tom Wallace farm; where they are known to have lived for a time. Family legend tells that Columbus Shackelford Belsha taught school somewhere and authored an arithmetic textbook, but time and place, or whether or not the book was ever published are uncertain. Time of their arrival in the North Creek-Barton area is known to have been before or in May, 1866, when Benjamin Lafayette

Belsha, son of C. S. Belsha, was born at North Creek. Note particularly that the School District extended as far north as the Keesee plantation.

While both Belsha families were living at or near Barton when the foregoing Enumeration was made, the following Lease shows their interest in farming land believed to have been in the North Creek or Vineyard neighborhoods; (Actually a Deed of Trust - - Mortgage on a leasehold interest).

Book "V" of Deeds, pages 683-84, Phillips County records: Deed of Trust from James L. Belcher and Columbus S. Belcher, dated June 17, 1869, recorded September 18, 1869 - - mortgages crop on the Williamson Bonner place, shown by Census records to be in the North Creek Post Office area, but from adjoining owners to Mr. Bonner, quite near the Barton area. Family No. 280 was William-son Bonner; No. 282 was John Vineyard, and No. 283 was William I. Vineyard, Presbyterian Minister.

While some originally thought the Cook-Belsha correspondence was too exclusively about Central Church and Cemetery to be included in an article about Barton, considering the foregoing we believe it will be agreed that it is basically informative of people who settled and lived in the original community of Barton - - even before it was so named. It is true that some of the Lane and Long families moved north as far as Rondo, Moro, Marianna, Haynes and Gill in Lee County and Forrest City and other parts of St. Francis County.

#### THE LANE AND LONG FAMILIES

The family of Drury H. Lane are descendants of Thomas Lane, born in year 1635 and died in

Surry County, Virginia in 1708; the family history is traced down to Drury H. Lane in "Layne-Lain-Lane Genealogy" by Floyd Benjamin Layne, Chapter "K". Drury H. Lane and family came to Lauderdale County, Alabama, before 1850 and resided near the family of Craven Belsha who lived on land he and his son James F. Belsha had homesteaded in 1820, on the Tennessee River near a community called Gravelly Springs. That area is about half way between Florence and Waterloo, Alabama; therefore the two families were of long acquaintance before coming to Phillips County, Arkansas. Drury and his family were listed in the 1840 Census of Bedford County, Tennessee, where all of his children except Julia Ann were born.

The 1850 census of Lauderdale County, Alabama lists Drury H. Lane with wife Agness and children Henry, Sarah, Mary Elizabeth, Susannah, Phillip, Agness, Moses and Julia Ann. Another daughter, Caroline Matilda was listed that year as wife of Richard Long, who she had married December 31, 1849; she was probably a twin of Henry. Henry married Georgiana \_\_\_\_\_ and lived in Lauderdale County, Alabama, with children Caladonia, a daughter, age 2, and son Drury, age 1, as reported in the 1860 Census; they apparently never came to Phillips County, Arkansas; Sarah married Columbus Shackelford Belsha February 11, 1857; Susannah (called Sanannah and Nonie) married Charles Lafayette Long December 19, 1857, both marriages in Lauderdale County; Mary Elizabeth married James L. Belsha in Phillips County, Arkansas October 18, 1866; also in Phillips County, the daughter Agness married William Jacks, and Julia Ann (called Julia Frank) married Thomas W. Wallace; Moses never married, and we have no record of Phillip except the 1860 Census of Phillips County, so it is supposed he died young.

The 1860 Census of Phillips County, Arkansas,

lists the family of Drury H. Lane and Agness and the family of Richard Long and Caroline M. in Planters Township, Williams Shop Post Office. Note that two men named Belsha married daughters of Drury H. Lane, and two men named Long married his daughters. The Layne-Lain-Lane book is to be found in the Genealogical Section of Arkansas Archives, Little Rock. It contains histories of many other families of those names, and the writer of this article has some further facts on the family set out therein in Chapter "K".

#### THE LONG FAMILY

Michael Long, said to have been born in Ireland and called "Irish", is found in the 1830 Census of Lauderdale County, Alabama, with wife, five boys and one girl. They also settled near the Craven Belsha homestead. We have no record of him prior to that, but his wife Nancy is reported to have been born in Georgia, in which state is found records of a Long family of early seating there, in which the name Michael appears repeatedly. The 1850 Census of Lauderdale County shows Michael and Nancy with children Lafayette, Jasper, Rebecca, Mary, Phillip, and George, all born in Alabama. Lafayette's full name was Charles Lafayette Long, and he and Richard and their families appear to have been the only ones to come to Phillips and Monroe Counties, Arkansas. Richard appeared in the 1860 Census of Phillips County, with wife Caroline M. and children Angeline P. age 10, Nancy E. age 7, and Mary F. age 3, all born in Alabama, which indicates they also arrived in Phillips County about 1857.

Charles Lafayette Long first appears in the 1870 Census of Monroe County, Moro Post Office, which shortly thereafter was included in Lee County, where in the 1880 Census Charles Lafayette

Long and his wife appear in Spring Creek Township, with children P. W. (Phillip Washington - called Jaba), R. O. (Richard Owen), both born in Alabama, and Ida, age 13, born in Arkansas (which indicates they arrived about 1866-67. Ida, William W. and L. O. (a girl called Lilla Lee - - true name probably Drucilla) both born in Arkansas. Charles Lafayette Long, known as Jaba was a well-known farmer near Gill and Haynes, Lee County and on his homestead in the southwest part of St. Francis County. He and many of the Long families are said to be buried at or near Gill. Mrs. M. W. Miller (Eula Vernetter) Miller, who operated a custom bakery at 1235 Perry Street, Helena, is a descendant of Richard Owen Long. Mrs. Charley Waters (Gladys Long) of Poplar Grove is the youngest daughter of Jaba Long. She has a son by a former marriage, Custer Thomas, who lives in Marianna. Others of the family are still to be found at Gill, Haynes, and other parts of Lee and St. Francis Counties.

#### THE HENRY WINBOURNE COOK CORRESPONDENCE

The following letters are published here verbatim as written, with a few exceptions suggested by Mr. Cook. Asterisks indicate a deletion, none of which detract from the original texts but were made for clarity and continuity of the story and its intent. (JVB)

Mr. H. W. Cook  
Apartment 1-F  
357 Curson Avenue  
Los Angeles, California 90036

Re: North Creek--  
Latour--Central  
Church and Cemetery-- and Early  
Settlers of  
Phillips County

Dear Mr. Cook:-

While in Helena and Phillips County last month your name and address were given me with the suggest-

ion you might be able to give me some of the basic facts about old Central Church and Cemetery at North Creek, Phillips County and by what method lots, plots, graves, etc., were transferred to the families whose members are buried there. Also, can you tell me when the church was abandoned and finally burned or otherwise destroyed? I believe I attended services there with my father as late as 1915 or 1916. Was that possible? - I mean in the last church building there.

My interest in this is by reason of the fact that my father told me many of our family or families are buried there, yet as of now there are only grave-stones for Moses W. Lane and his sister Bettie (Mary Elizabeth Lane) Belsha, first wife of James L. Belsha, my great uncle; also Uncle Tom Wallace and his wife Julia Ann Lane Wallace, along with their only child, Julia Frank Wallace. Della Slate Walker, wife of Ed Walker, is buried in the same lot, but is not actually a relative. Her tombstone is still intact. She was daughter of Sarah (Chappelle) Slate Belsha, second wife of James L. Belsha, by a former marriage.

Other relatives known to be buried there are Agnes Lane Jacks, wife of William Jacks; Sarah Pearse (Belsha) Spain, wife of Charles B. Spain and daughter of James L. Belsha who is known to be buried there next to his wife Bettie, but there is no stone for him.

Relatives believed to have been buried in the plot include Drury H. Lane and his wife Agnes; two young sons of James L. Belsha; three young sons of my grandfather Columbus Shackelford Belsha, and Bettie, a young daughter of Sarah Pearse Belsha Spain. I am searching for the facts as to the burial of these people, but cannot find any proof

of their burial at Central-- only family legend to that effect. I also want to prove up on our rights to the plot\*\*\* and to prevent any attempted burials there that would interfere with the resting places of our deceased relatives, once a very closely knit family group.

Drury H. Lane and his wife Agnes Lord Lane were listed in the 1850 Census of Lauderdale County, Alabama with those children who had not already been married; however, they were in Phillips County, Arkansas when the 1860 Census was taken; they lived in Planters Township and their post office address was shown as Williams Shop. Their children listed there were Bettie (Elizabeth) who married James L. Belsha; Phillip, of whom I have no further information so presume he died young; Agnes who married William Jacks; Moses W. mentioned above and Julia Ann who married Thomas Wallace, whose fields you remember crossing on your way to school at Barton, as you state in your letter published in the December, 1968 issue of the Quarterly and in which you mention the burial of Uncle Tom Wallace, and you also mention my great uncle "Jim Belsha, who ran the Jottum Down Store at Barton." Incidentally, I was born at Barton in 1901, when my father was working on the thread mill.

My grandfather, Columbus Shackelford Belsha, married Sarah Washington Lane (another daughter of Drury H. and Agnes Lane) in 1857, in Lauderdale County, Alabama, where he and his brother, James L. Belsha, were born. Both served the Confederacy in the Civil War and immediately after its close moved to Phillips County. My father, Benjamin Lafayette Belsha, was born at North Creek in 1886, and later his sister, Ruth Dora Belsha, was born in that same area. She became the wife of John W. Terry, and they lived at Marvell, Arkansas. An older brother was Thomas M. Belsha, who lived in

Helena most of his married life.

My grandfather was a partner with Mr. Amos Jarman (the elder) in C. S. Belsha & Company running a store at Barton for a number of years, later moving to Marvell, where in 1908 he and our grandmother died and are buried.

If you have any memories of these Belsha, Lane, Wallace, Jacks, and Spain families, and if you can give me any further information as to where I might be able to find these early records of Central Church and Cemetery--or to whom I might write for such information, I will be gratefully indebted to you and I will take steps to preserve any such information in the local libraries for the benefit of all parties interested, now and in the future.

June 9, 1970

Sincerely,

James V. Belsha  
1244 North 24th Street  
Phoenix, Arizona 85008

TO BE CONTINUED

## HISTORIC ARKANSAS SCENES INTRIGUING

by

Kent Ruth

From the Sunday Oklahoman, October 29, 1972  
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Contributed by

Calvin Jarman

If one insists on getting himself locked up for the night in a cemetery, a hillside affair in Helena, Arkansas, is probably as happy a choice as most. Of course it helps if you're a Southern sympathizer. And are not overly apprehensive of "hant's" and such.

The Confederate section, with its towering memorial shaft to Cleburne, crowds a ledge on the upper terrace of the old burying ground. Even this damyankee found it extremely impressive. The Wilderness, Helena, Vicksburg, Chickmauga...all the battles Helena young men participated in are inscribed on the shaft. But the beauty of the scene belies the bitterness and death.

Each stair-stepped shelf in the fertile loess is handsomely landscaped, immaculately kept. One's eyes are drawn easily from the white-on-green embroidery of stones and grass to the town beyond with its life and activity.

That evening we had the place to ourselves. It was quiet, pleasantly relaxing. And that almost proved our undoing. Suddenly we realized it was almost 7, closing time, and we started back

down the maze of winding roadways.

As we turned the last corner, the caretaker was swinging shut the ornate iron gates. We honked. He grinned, pushed them back, and we paused long enough to tell him how beautiful it was.

But the end is not yet. And that's what worries us sometimes about cemeteries.

Next morning, downtown in this pleasant little Mississippi River port city of 10,415, we looked for someone to tell us how to find the Storm Lake-Bear Creek Road and Crowley's Ridge. Everything you read about this southeastern corner of Arkansas mentions Crowley's. Some 1,300 miles from the Pacific, 600 miles from the Atlantic, and a good 200 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, the Ridge is said to be the world's largest oyster shell bed. From it have been taken mastodon bones (to such places as the Smithsonian.) And over it grows some of Arkansas' most beautiful forest.

So next morning we asked road information from the first man we saw. And he looked at us for a moment, smiled faintly, then said: "Well, you know how to get to the cemetery. Start there and..."

Yes, it was he. And it still bothers us. But we followed his directions, found Crowley's Ridge without trouble. It was even more interesting than we'd expected.

DeSoto may or may not have crossed the Mississippi River here. But Helena--which before the advent of the Arkansas River Navigation Project, dubbed itself "Arkansas' only seaport"--has other claims, if not to fame, at least to a few hours of the traveler's time.

With a bit of hunting you can find several interesting ante-bellum homes. Like handsomely restored Estevan Hall. And the Hornor House, in the walls of which you might still find a cannon ball or so, according to the local legend. After our experience with the cemetery keeper, we wouldn't argue the point.

Interesting, too, just northwest of Helena, is the gray marble boulder marking the 1815 base from which were surveyed the lands of the Louisiana Purchase (including all of Oklahoma but the Pan-handle). It's been developed as a state park.

As for the Storm Lake and Bear Creek recreation areas--with their beaches, camp and picnic grounds, and other facilities--they are but icing on the Crowley's Ridge cake.

The narrow, pleasantly winding St. Francis National Forest road (Arkansas 44) threads the crest of the oyster bed for miles, often through a tunnel of trees so thick and matted overhead that the sun fails even to dapple the surface of the graveled road.

Such is Helena, then, should you wish to tarry briefly on your way to Florida this winter. An idyllic byway that makes one feel he's in Heaven. And a well-manicured cemetery that makes him feel...

Either way...we found the town delightful. If you go, take U. S. 49 from Brinkley on 140. The toll bridge across the Mississippi leads you to U. S. 61 north of Clarksdale, Mississippi.

\*\*\*\*

The Sea Dream to the Mississippi  
by Lily Peter

A review by Carolyn Cunningham

Miss Lily Peter has written a most informative book about the trip down the Great River of Father Marquette and Joliet. Joliet was seaching for a water route to the west, and the Jesuit priest sought to bring Christianity to the Indians. The book begins with a twenty line lyrical poem, "In Praise of Dreamers, Who are the only Discoverers." The book is divided into five parts, the first being the Sea Legend of New Spain. Here she begins to build the history of the Mississippi River as it was first known to man as only a rumor, or yet a dream. She tells of De Soto's visit to our shores. And next of the heightening interest of New France. In part three she moves on to the two men who came here 300 years ago this summer, and whose memory and deeds we are preparing to commemorate. She tells about the Pageant in the Wilderness with such vividness and depth of feeling that one can hardly realize it took place in 1671 on the shores of the Northern Lakes. And then she tells us of the voyage. She speaks of men with vision and dreams, and says there is no greatness without the dream. On May 15, 1673 seven men in the two canoes edged out into the waters of Lake Michigan to begin a voyage that was to take them into unknown regions and put their name on the lips of every school child in the hundreds of years to follow. Miss Lily has shown her great respect as always for fact, having adhered completely to Father Marquette's journal, the only record in existence of the trip, Joliet's having been lost in a tragic accident.

## NOTES

It is with sadness that we report the vandalism and desecration of one of our oldest cemeteries, that of Central in the North Creek neighborhood. Many of our members have family and friends buried there, and those of you who do not, have become familiar with it through articles in the Quarterly. Thirteen stones were turned over, misplaced, and some broken, perhaps beyond repair. The Helena World has offered a fifty dollar reward for information leading to the identity of the guilty persons.

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I am happy to be serving as your editor, although Dale Kirkman is a hard one to follow. I sincerely hope that each of you will join me in a concentrated effort to find and record our county history. I urge each of you with family records packed away in boxes and cabinets to share this information with us. We need the cooperation of every member. We want your suggestions, ideas, and above all, material and information for publishing. If you will write an article for us, we will be very happy, but if you have material to share but prefer that someone else do the writing for you, let us know and we will find someone for that job, too. Alma Faust has graciously consented to continue her review of the Quarterly for the local newspapers.

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The Phillips County Historical Society supplies the QUARTERLY to its members. Membership is open to anyone interested in Phillips County History. Annual membership dues are \$3.50 for a regular membership and \$5.00 for a sustaining membership. Single copies of the QUARTERLY are \$1.00 QUARTERLIES are mailed to members.

Neither the Editors nor the Phillips County Historical Society assumes any responsibility for statements made by contributors.

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