



# LIFE WAS FINE IN '99

By Gary Knehans

The penultimate year of the nineteenth century greeted Pulaski Countians much like a lion in lamb's clothing. Old Man Winter soon would shed a mild-manner disguise and reveal his true cold-hearted nature. This non-election year would witness a very important election after all. And surprisingly, the country's victory over Spanish forces in 1898 did not result in a cessation of fighting in the Philippines in 1899.

Without any foreknowledge of these events, local citizens embraced the new year with the singular naivete and hope we still apply annually to this special time of the year. And so, with faith and hope in their hearts, the people of '99 continued to pursue their individual and family dreams.

George Spear, our popular grocery drummer, killed an eagle near Kerr's mill Sunday that measured 6 and a half feet from tip to tip of wings. It was a fierce looking bird.

-Waynesville Democrat article, reprinted in the Rolla Standard, Jan. 6th.

John Bray, near Bush Hill, who died recently, was 107 years old. His long hold on life is attributed to the fact that he never in his life took a grain or drop of medicine.

-Dixon Echo article, reprinted in the Rolla Standard, Jan. 6th.

Richland has issued \$2500 worth of 5 per cent 20-year bonds, at par. The money will be used to build a town hall, which the city badly needs.

-Lebanon Republican, Jan. 20th.

The weather took an abrupt turn for the worse around the middle part of January. Each successive cold front that cut through the Ozarks

drove the temperature down further. A roaring snowstorm swept the Ozarks on January 30th and dropped the temperature down to 20 below zero on the morning of February 1st. This major cold snap caught many by surprise and resulted in at least one death in Pulaski County.

Found dead in Woodland Hollow, Marion Lee of Clementine, Phelps Co., Mo., just over the line in Pulaski Co. Inquest was held by J. E. Lane, J. P. The verdict was rendered by the jury, that he came to his death by being froze to death. He started from home early Monday morning, Jan. 30th, and was found early Wednesday morning, Feb. 1, a half mile above Frank Merrell's and three quarters of a mile below the widow Ousley's. He was found by Wm. Ousley laying on his face and almost covered with snow. He had several gashes cut on his head, supposed to have been done on the rocks when he fell from his horse. He was taken to his home and kept a couple of days and was buried Friday in the Mill Creek cemetery. He was buried by Pulaski county. He was about 70 years of age, and he is a brother-in-law of Uncle Frank Gaddy. He leaves a wife and several children and relatives to mourn his sad death.

-Rolla Standard, Feb. 3rd.

Undaunted by the unusual severity of the weather, a prominent Pulaski County family decided to make an important move around this time.

J. C. Rigsby is moving this week back to his farm near Edanville. Mr. Rigsby and his estimable family have made many warm friends during their stay in Waynesville and we regret to see them leave.

-Pulaski County Democrat article, reprinted in the Houston Herald, Feb. 9th.

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Their first month of living back in the country surely proved most challenging and memorable for the Rigsby's, as winter's cold grip on the Ozarks unbelievably tightened further still. Even so, life and business continued as close to normal as humanly possible.

The Richland Cyclone has been bought by a stock company known as the Richland Printing Company, with a capital of \$500, divided in 50 shares of \$10 each. C. H. Howard is the lessee of the property and editor. J. A. Bradshaw is president and W. T. Wright secretary. Sam Keller retains connection with the paper as foreman and local editor.

-Lebanon Republican, Feb. 10th.

Any hope for an early spring that still might have remained in foolish hearts finally dissipated the weekend of February 11 and 12 when a massive Arctic cold front overspread a vast area of the nation from the Rockies to the East Coast and down into the Deep South. The St. Louis Post Dispatch on February 12 stated that it had been the "coldest night in the country known to the Weather Bureau." The temperature recorded at 3:30 in the morning in the metropolitan area was 16 below zero and still falling. It was even colder in rural areas and in the Ozarks, and destined to get colder!

Unbelievably, in this darkest, coldest moment of the winter, a Texas County farmhand barely out of his teens committed one of the most grisly, cold-hearted acts of murder many in Texas County and neighboring Pulaski County had ever seen.

The slaying took place just across the county line seven miles northeast of Plato in extreme northern Texas County on the farm of the elderly victim, H. C. Thomas. While suspicion of murder was raised almost immediately, the bloody act was not confirmed until about a

week later when some travelers on the Richland Road found the farmer's mutilated body lying in a ravine just off the road about two miles from Cookville in Pulaski County. (See "The Bloody Trunk" elsewhere in the Gazette for a more complete account of this brutal murder and its subsequent gory coverup.)

Pulaski Countians had little opportunity to point an accusatory finger of lawlessness at their neighbors to the south, as they in short order had a local killing of their own to ponder.

Monday night of last week, between 8 and 9 o' clock, W. T. Simpson, owner of a saloon in Waynesville, shot and killed a man named Burton, a stranger in town, but little seems to be known of the trouble leading up to the tragedy, as those present claim that very little of the conversation between Simpson and Burton was heard.

The body was removed to the Court House where Squire McDonald empanelled a coroner's jury, who after hearing the evidence, returned a verdict that the deceased came to his death from a pistol shot fired by W. T. Simpson. Mr. Simpson was arrested on Tuesday morning and taken before Squire McDonald, who placed him under bond to await the action of the Grand Jury. He was released on \$10,000 bond.

But little is known of the deceased further than that he and another man, calling himself Hutchison, came to town Monday and put up their team at the livery stable.

They proceeded to have a good time during the day but did nothing to cause suspicion.

After the killing, Hutchison gave the name of the deceased as Martin Burton, but Tuesday he sent a message to Wm. Smiley, at Williams, Ind., informing him of the killing and gave the name of Martin Elliot.

He had upon his person a letter from a brother and sister in Indiana, the brother signing his name as Wm. Elliott and addressing deceased as Martin Elliott, another letter from a girl at Dubois, Nebraska, signing Florence D., addressed P. H. Linch, Dixon, Mo.

-Rolla Herald, Mar. 16th.

A new wave of Scandinavian immigration was poised to sweep into the county. Pulaski County residents earlier had heard word that

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more immigrants from Sweden were on their way here. The newcomers arrived in March.

A dispatch from Waynesville says Swedish Vice Consel Alfred Essendrup, of St. Louis, who is also the head of the American-Swedish Land Company, accompanied by a number of Swedish families direct from the old country, arrived at Crocker today on a special train from St. Louis. Several hundred acres of land in the county had been sold them, and many families will immediately take up their residence here and make for themselves homes. The Frisco Line has been instrumental in bringing the colonists here.

-*Lebanon Republican*, Mar. 17th.

This event constituted a second wave of Swedish immigrants who came to Pulaski County. The new settlers were greeted wholeheartedly by residents around present day Swedeborg, who had immigrated here several years earlier. The continuing cold, snowy weather brought bittersweet memories of home to the minds of these newest residents.

A couple weeks later, a family who used a Swedish name perpetrated fraud on a Rolla hotel operator. They were not connected in any way with the new Swedish contingent now settled in Pulaski County.

Several days ago a man giving his name as J. Christeson came to town and put up at the Ozark House. With him was his wife and two boys, step-children. They were suspicious looking characters, and Mr. Evans, the proprietor, kept an eagle eye on them. Tuesday Christeson left on No. 1, paying only part of his board, and leaving his wife and children here. That night Mrs. Christeson, after helping herself to a goodly amount of the property of the hotel, also went west leaving a note in the bed telling Mr. Evans that her father's name was Sanders and that he lived at Montauk, Dent county, and for Mr. Evans to write to him and he would come and redeem the boys and pay the baord. Mr. Evans telegraphed to Dixon and succeeded in locating them there, and the Sheriff brought them back yesterday. In the meantime Mr. Evans has two boys and an old trunk to pay for his trouble.

-*Rolla Herald*, Apr. 13th.



Congressman R. P. Bland's home in Lebanon. Courtesy of Sue Hansen.

An early April snowstorm reaffirmed winter's still strong but weakening grip. By May, the frigid events of earlier in the year were just a fading memory. Perhaps caught up in joyous revelry at the arrival of

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Richland's baseball club defeated a nine from Lebanon last Friday by a score of 21 to 27. The return game will be played here in the near future, when our boys hope to return the compliment.

The Lebanon baseball club has accepted a challenge to play a game at Waynesville within the next two weeks.

-Lebanon Republican, Jul. 27th.

seasonably milder weather, some of the more fun-loving citizens of our county threw themselves wholeheartedly into pranksterism.

Waynesville certainly has an idea that Vienna is full of liars. "Liar's Licenses" keep coming to our citizens, certifying that the recipient has "passed an examination before the Board of Liars of the Royal Lodge K. of A. and N. S., and is duly qualified to have and to hold this license." Some of the fellows disclaim any ability in that line.

-Maries County Gazette, May 5th.

Warm, settled weather allowed several people to return home after having to care for infirmed and elderly relatives.

Miss Addie Pippin, who has been spending the winter with her grandmother, Mrs. L. Cook, returned to her home near Waynesville last week.

-Plato item in the Houston Herald, May 11th.

Local denizens were shocked to hear in June of the death of veteran Congressman R. P. Bland, Democrat, of Lebanon. After observing a respectable period of mourning, leaders of both parties fervently launched efforts to select and elect his successor.

Another personal tragedy struck the middle part of July when Pulaski County lost one its own, Clark Pruitt. The harsh and demanding nature of late 19th century Ozarks environment did not give family members, friends and neighbors much time to grieve his demise before being forced to handle the demanding essentials of everyday life. Still, for some, there was time for relaxing diversions.

Several propositions have been sent to the leaders of the base ball team at Rolla within the last few weeks trying to induce them to come here and play a match game with the Waynesvilles, but so far no reply has been received. Our boys proposed to pay all their expenses from the time they leave home until they return, but some of the Rolla nine have had a touch of base ball with our boys and are surely afraid to stake their reputation in a game with them.

-Pulaski County Democrat article reprinted in the Rolla Herald, Jul. 27th

This comment by the editor of the Democrat elicited a snappy, sarcastic retort from Rolla interests.

Afraid! Of what? The Waynesville base ball team? Well, hardly! Your team should defeat some other base ball team before challenging a club that has a reputation.

-Rolla Herald, Jul. 27th.

Meanwhile, competition between Pulaski County and Lebanon shifted from ballfield to bar with "sobering" results. The tragic incident had nothing to do with a conflict over a baseball game. It did, however, cause many to remember the still unsolved murder of Sterling Teeple in Crocker the previous year.

As the result of a fight between Isaac Teeples, of Crocker, and a gang of drunken toughs in Hannigan's saloon, on last Tuesday afternoon, Teeples died last night at his home in Crocker, from concussion of the brain, from being struck with a beer bottle.

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Particulars of the trouble are meager and hard to get, but are substantially as follows:

The murdered man, who came up on the excursion Tuesday, was in the saloon and became involved in a free-for-all fight, in which he is said to have drawn a gun. The weapon was taken from him, however, and he was ejected from the saloon. Coming back again, in the afternoon, he was again set upon by the gang and another struggle ensued. Teeple again made an effort to draw a revolver, but it was wrested from him and thrown into the street.

It was during the time he was wholly unarmed that one of the crowd hit him over the temple, knocking him down and inflicting the injury that caused his death at 9:45 last night.

No arrests have yet been made, but the officers know the murderer and he will be apprehended as soon as the coroner's inquest is finished.

The dead man claimed to be a deputy United States marshal and had a permit to carry a gun.

Mr. Teeple was in the saloon business in Crocker. He was 34 years old and married.

-*Lebanon Republican*, Jul. 28th.

The *Republican* seized upon the opportunity presented by this unfortunate incident to mount a campaign to close down all the saloons in Lebanon. Emboldened by success earlier in the year of a "civic improvement" campaign, the paper's editor threw himself fervently in this crusade for temperance. He was not to be successful this time, undercut as he was by the fact that his report of Teeple's death was not accurate, which the editor later begrudgingly admitted.

The *Dixon Echo* insists that Mr. Teeple is not dead, but is still able to push the bottle across the bar. After being slugged with a beer bottle hard enough to paralyze an ox, Mr. Teeple shows scant consideration for good manners, to say the least, in not kicking the bucket with more ado (sic).

-*Lebanon Republican*, Aug. 11th.

Over in Dixon, many were fascinated by a newcomer who stepped off a Frisco train and revealed his special nature to them.

A "human pincushion" has been causing considerable of a stir among the Dixonites this week. He has been giving exhibitions on the streets, permitting large hatpins to be thrust through his tongue, wrist, and other portions of his body, swallowing swords, and performing other remarkable and blood-curdling feats. He claims to have the power of controlling his heart and thus stopping the flow of blood, as not a drop of the red fluid escapes when the pins are thrust through his flesh, so we are told. Well, the American people certainly like to be humbugged, and mountebanks must ply their trade.

-*Maries County Gazette*, Aug. 4th.

The local area "boys of summer" hardly paid attention to events of this nature as more exciting developments awaited them on their "field of dreams." Then too, the decreasing minutes of daylight prompted an increasing sense of urgency in the baseball ranks.

Lebanon and Waynesville baseball clubs played two games, one Monday afternoon and a second Tuesday morning at Waynesville, Lebanon winning both. The score in the first game was 11 to 5 and the second 10 to 2.

-*Lebanon Republican*, Aug. 11th.

The Lebanon baseball club was here Monday and Tuesday and played our nine two match games of ball. The visitors were victorious in both games. The score Monday standing 5 to 11 and in the one Tuesday 2 to 8 in their favor. Lebanon furnished as gentlemanly set of players as

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Early photograph of Pulaski County loggers preparing to float ties on the river. Courtesy of Paul Rice.



ever met on the diamond and that they defeated Waynesville in two, games is evident of their ability as ball players.

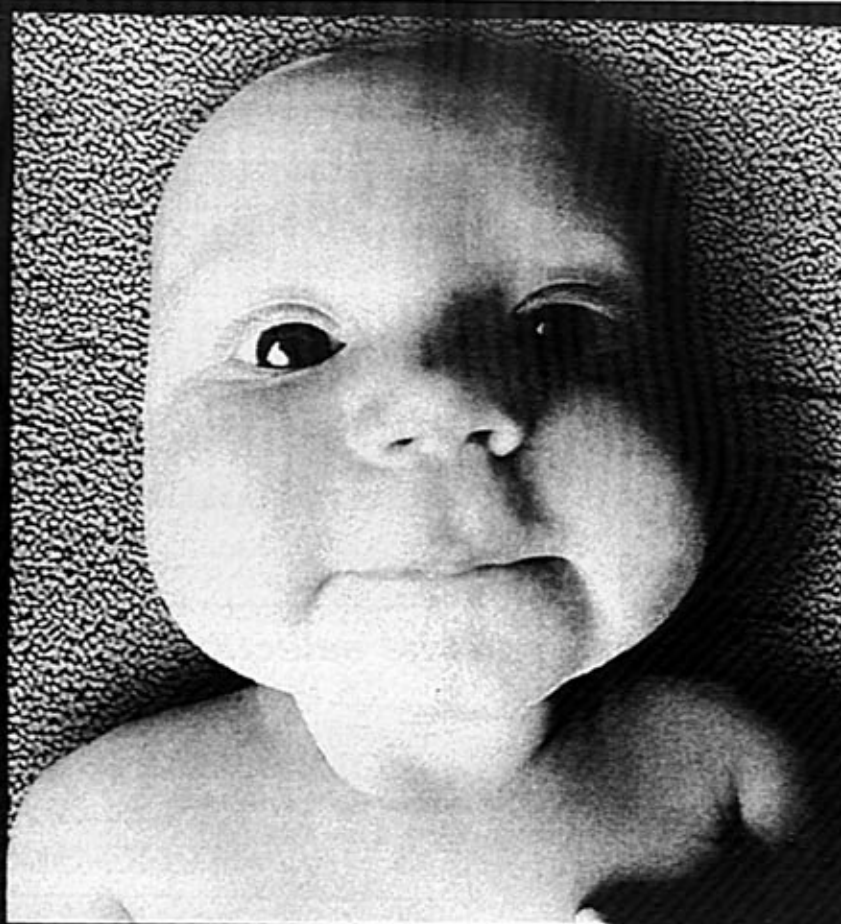
While our boys regret their defeat, they are proud it was done by a set of boys that conducted themselves as gentlemen.

-*Pulaski County Democrat* article reprinted in the *Lebanon Republican*, Aug. 13th.

The August primary resulted in the nomination of three candidates for the late R. P. Bland's seat in Congress. The Democrats selected Judge Dorsey W. Shackleford of Jefferson City. Republicans again picked Vosholl, who had been defeated by Bland in 1898. The People's party nominated William R. Hale. All three candidates hit the campaign trail with high hopes and lofty ambitions.

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One topic most assuredly none of these officeseekers voiced was today's hot button issue of tobacco reform. Most people then understood the dangers posed by smoking cigarettes, which they called "coffin nails." The prevailing thought in 1899 was, "Let the buyer beware." It never occurred to them to blame or seek money from others for the consequences acquired from a dangerous or unhealthy habit or activity that they themselves could readily avoid.

Six of the young men in Richland, for years addicted to the cigarette smoking habit, entered into a compact about six weeks ago to discontinue the use of the "coffin nails." Up to this time the agreement has been kept and the young men who are parties thereto feel and look better.

-*Richland Cyclone* article reprinted in the *Lebanon Republican* Sept. 29th.

The November election resulted in the election of Shackelford, a Democrat, to fill the vacancy left by the death of R. P. Bland. The winner beat Republican Vosholl by over 2700 votes. Hale received only a scattering of votes.

About a month later, a Pulaski County publisher made known his determination to change a long-established subscriber tradition.

Bro. Goforth, of the *Dixon Echo*, announced last week that on Jan. 1st he would positively establish a pay in advance system. He has been having all sorts of trouble lately with delinquent subscribers, which possibly led him to take the step. In one place in his last issue, he very aptly tells his patrons that if they can't pay when they owe only one dollar, they certainly can't pay when it is more, and that the longer it runs, the harder it is to pay, and the harder it is on him. Of course, Bro. Goforth is right about it, but the question is, "How long will he maintain the cash system?" It is a pretty hard thing to establish in this country.

-*Maries County Gazette*, Dec. 1st.

The last month of the year also witnessed both tragedy and triumph in the days approaching the Christmas season.

A stranger was run over by a Frisco train two or three miles east of Dixon Tuesday and instantly killed, the relentless wheels cutting his body in two. He was noticed about Dixon two or three days previously, and from what information we can obtain, he was apparently crazy. We have not been able to learn the name of the unfortunate man, but there were papers on the body from which the authorities will likely be able to find the relatives or friends of the deceased.

-*Maries County Gazette*, Dec. 8th

B. F. Imboden, formerly of this county and later of Dixon, was married at Waynesville last week to Susan M. Gillet, of Dixon. Frank and his wife departed immediately after the ceremony for Duenweg, near Joplin, where they will reside.

-*Maries County Gazette*, Dec. 8th.

As Pulaski Countians celebrated a peaceful Christmas season, no doubt some were troubled by the uncertainty that a new year always bring. Many remembered last winter's unusually sharp bite and hoped such bitterness would not revisit them in January.

There was no talk then of the advent of a new century on January 1, 1900. For all their educational disadvantages in 1899, the populace well understood that the arrival of the twentieth century was still a full year away. Our unabashed eagerness to celebrate the arrival of a new

millennium this coming January 1, a year before its actual arrival, would shock the sensibilities of our ancestors of a hundred years ago.

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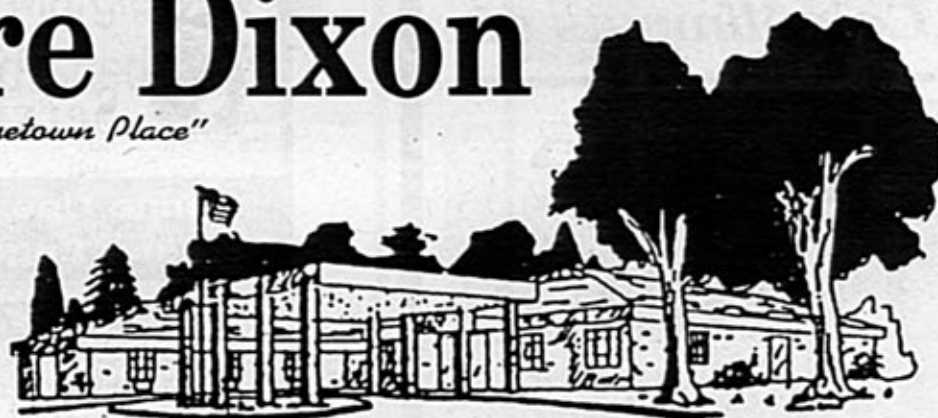
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