

## **The Mena Star**

February 13, 1908 page 5

### **AN HISTORICAL OLD NEWSPAPER**

*The Mountain Signal, printed at Bethesda Springs in 1884, contains names well known. County and City officers, some are still in public life, some living quietly and some gathered by the grim reaper.*

Through the courtesy of A.J. Davis *The Star* is privileged to peruse a copy of *The Mountain Signal* of date January 17, 1884.

This old paper was printed at Bethesda Springs at a time when that place was an incorporated city and a rival of Old Dallas. It was edited by W.T. McAuley, now thought to be located in Fort Smith. It is somewhat quaint in style, but on the whole a better paper than one would be led to expect from so small a community.

A feature of note in its advertisement is that nearly all of them were Hot Springs businesses houses, though Fort Smith is also represented. There was little local advertising patronage save homestead entries. It is a little surprising to note that advertising rates were higher per month for this little weekly than are not charged per month for *The Evening Star*. [Following are few of the prices were quoted]

The professional card of Alexander and Greene, is printed. The senior member was A.O. Alexander, who was also a preacher, and was long prominent in Polk county affairs, dying a few years ago. He was Polk county's first assessor, serving from 1862 to 1864, was represented in the state legislature one term, served as circuit clerk ten years, was a justice of the peace in Mena and was the Populist nominee for county judge at that time of his death. He was father of Lee and Will Alexander, and of Mrs. Pink Mount, Mrs. Reuben Harrison and Mrs. Leslie Moseley.

Another prominent man of this period was Pole McPhetridge, the lawyer, who located at Old Dallas in 1879. Later he was nominated and elected to the state senate, serving through the sessions of 1881-3, and during the following years won reputation as one of the best lawyers in this section of the state. Mr. McPhetridge with his family still resides at Old Dallas but maintains his law office in this city.

W.M. Greene, the other member of the law firm, was later prosecuting attorney of the Judicial Circuit, then of the Eighth Judicial Circuit, and died recently.

But it is the official life where the names are most familiar to the present day residents of Polk county. Some of them evidently early formed the habit of holding office and the "third term" idea never bothered them, and does not yet in some cases.

Here is the direct of the county officers in 1884:

County and Probate Judge—T.M. Carder

Circuit Clerk—W.J. Davis

Assessor—W.M. Williams

Treasurer—Levi Joplin

Coroner—Wesley bates

Judge T.M. Carder was Mena's first mayor and now lives quietly near the old town at Bethesda Springs.

J.L. Pipkin, sheriff, was father of W.M. Pipkin and died a few years ago while holding the office of sheriff of Polk county, his third term in that office, but not consecutively.

W.J. Davis, uncle Jack, has held office almost continuously since the early days, serving as circuit clerk for twenty-two years. He is now an active candidate for another term.

W.M. Williams, Uncle Marion, has just withdrawn from the race for assessor, his old office, because of ill health. He served Polk county in that capacity eighteen years, beginning in 1878.

Levi Joplin is living on a farm just west of Mena. He is a brother of ex-sheriff D.B. Joplin.

Wesley Bates, the coroner, was a member of the Bates family so prominent in Polk county affairs, many of whom live near Big Fork. He is now living quietly on a farm near Big Fork.

### **City Officers of Bethesda**

J.S. Piper was mayor in 1884. He was formerly a governor of a Central American state and served in the Mexican war. His widow, Mary Ann Piper, until recently lived near Bethesda, but now lives near Mena. She is about 80 years old and draws a Mexican war pension.

The aldermen were: T. Shedd, who lived where D.H. Hopkins now has his home, was a mail contractor; Minor Pipkin, grandfather of W.M. Pipkin, one time county treasurer and ran a hotel at Bethesda; L.D. Rosenberry, carpenter, recently a citizen of Mena, chairman of the Democratic central committee, now of Oklahoma; C.C. Murphy, for many years the only watch tinkerer in the county, now dead; Doc. Land, lived here many years.

The city marshal was B.H. Cecil, brother-in-law of Joe Hudgins and Sam Smith.

I.A. Morris was postmaster for many years, being succeeded by J.W. Cunningham, present sheriff, when Cleveland was elected: He was father of the wife of Dick Davis and of Mrs. J.M. Hilton of Board Camp.

Among the other names found in this old paper that are of part of the history of Polk county is found William W. Green, a hard-shell Baptist preacher and grandfather of Circuit Clerk W.I. Green and H.J. Green, one of the present candidates for that office. It is said of William Green that he dreamed Bethesda Springs into existence, and dreamed a place in the Bible where he found the name Bethesda. It is said that a strong effort was made to give the little town another name, but Mr. Green insisted on his choice and won.

It is related that he had been to Eureka Springs and on returning dreamed that the waters from the numerous springs where Bethesda was located had wonderful healing properties, and proceeded to form a town. William Green probably has more descendants and relatives in Polk county than any of the old time settlers.

Uncle Bob Suits advertised himself as "25 years at the Anvil." He was stepfather of D.B. and Levi Joplin and of Mrs. B.F. Thompson.

I.N. Lane was for many years a justice of the peace and established a good reputation. He now lives on a farm three miles west of Mena and writes all circuit court records, as he has done for years.

F.A. Waters was a justice of the peace and has been more recently. He is now a prominent farmer near Mena.

B.F. Cagle was then a prominent farmer, is now dead, but left a large family and many kinfolks in Polk county.

Col. Pat rice was a prominent attorney in 1884, and lived in the old log house now standing in Janssen Park. He later moved to Conway, where he died.

It is probable that the old paper was saved by Mr. Davis because it contained an account of the death of his sister, Sallie Davis, who is spoken of today by those who knew her as an exceptionally bright and beautiful girl.

Some years after this old paper was printed *The Mountain Signal* was edited by W.M. Pipkin, then a mere boy, and his work and ability as an editor is remembered in a very complimentary manner by old residents of Polk county.