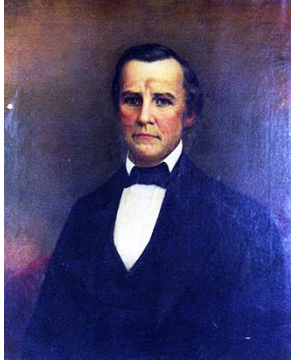


MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR - VETERANS REUNION
PRAIRIE GROVE BATTLEFIELD PARK
1887



Archibald Yell (August 9, 1797 – February 23, 1847) was an American politician who served as the U.S. Representative from Arkansas from 1836 to 1839, and 1845 to 1846. He was the second Governor of Arkansas, serving from 1840 to 1844.

Prairie Grove can always be relied on to furnish a crowd on all proper occasions and last Saturday, the day of the re-union of the Mexican Veterans, was such an occasion. Many people from a distance came to see the heroes of 1846 and to hear the story of the life of Gov. Yell by his intimate personal friend, Col. A.M. Wilson.

When the people had assembled in Neal's Park, the exercises were commenced about 10:30 with music by the Prairie Grove band.

Prof. T.W. Harris was elected President and S.E. Marrs secretary of the meeting. The roll call disclosed the fact that there were but eight veterans present, to-wit: J.P. Neal, R.A. Peck, J.T. Rieff, T.A. Reynolds, T.J. Kelley, Jesse Blakemore, Wm. Wherry, and J.H. McCravy.

There were six others on the roll who live in Washington county but were not present, to-wit: John Gilbert, Alex Eades, C. Barnes, James Henry, Robt. Gibson and Joel H. Webb.

Prof. Harris then delivered the welcome address as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen, It becomes my pleasing duty on the part of the people of Prairie Grove to extend to their visitors to-day their kindly greeting. Away from the plow handles, away from the workshops, apart from the toils and perplexities of life's struggle, amid these quiet shades we bid you welcome, to-day.-Let the plowman this day forget his plow, the wood-chopper his ax, the blacksmith his hammer, the weaver her loom, the seamstress her needle, and let this happy day, the twentieth of August, 1887, be unto us all a day of social enjoyment. And let this re-union serve to strengthen the cord that bind us together as an integral part of a great and prosperous people; a people to whom has been committed the high and sacred duty of keeping aglow the fires that burned in the patriotic bosoms of our forefathers who first flung to the breeze the flag that floats from the mast-heads of our vessels on all seas and proclaims to the nations of earth, "My home is the home of the free, my land is the land of the brave!" And now you veterans of 1846, you are the specially invited guests on this occasion. We do not forget to-day that forty years ago you imperiled your lives to bear our flag to victory. Paloalto, Monterey, Buena Vista, Churubuseo, Cero Gordo-these are names familiar to us as the theme of the historian. You doubtless remember them to-day as the scenes of bloody strife, in which you personally participated. Quitman and Taylor and Yell and Scott and a long roll of your gallant comrades,

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR - VETERANS REUNION
PRAIRIE GROVE BATTLEFIELD PARK
1887

now passed from the walks of life - "They sleep their last sleep, they have fought their last fight.

No sound shall wake them to glory again."

"On flames eternal battle-ground

Their silent tents are spread

And glory guards with solemn round

The bivouac of the dead."

You veterans of the Mexican war are among the few survivors of that noble band. Welcome veterans, thrice welcome to our homes, our hearts and our hospitality .At the close of the welcome address the band played a choice selection when Col. A.M. Wilson was introduced as the orator of the day.

His theme had been selected, "The life and services of Gov. Yell." He spoke with much earnestness and feeling in substance as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen: It affords me pleasure to meet so large an audience here today, but I have no right to conclude that your presence is intended as a compliment to me but rather the occasion that has called us together. In meeting together to-day we are but pursuing a custom long observed; that is, to commemorate the noble services and character of our distinguished countrymen who are called from the walks of life and to pass the same down to younger generations by tradition.

I am here to-day by invitation to speak of the character and services of Gov. Yell, who was Arkansas' greatest favorite. When called on to take part on this occasion, the weight of years and precarious health prompted me to decline, remarking impulsively, "We all knew Yell," but a moments reflection reminded me that Yell was called to his long home more than forty years ago, and that more than nine-tenths of our present population never saw him, and also, that there are but very few persons now living who knew him so well and intimately as myself. And so I had no just reason to offer why I should not lend my mite to swell the tide of tradition of a noble countryman who is gone.

History records great achievements of men, and they are handed down to other generations great men, and yet those who live after them know but little of them except as to the single achievement that gave them prominence; and it sometimes happens that one is gifted in one thing alone but wanting in nearly everything else, yet history rather erroneously records him a great man. Tradition or history should hand down to other generations great endowments relating to private character, and every day life as well, all of which should be taken into account in

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR - VETERANS REUNION
PRAIRIE GROVE BATTLEFIELD PARK
1887

estimating the truly great.

In the latter Gov. Yell was remarkable. In these his true greatness showed! His generous spirit, his attractive manners and peerless magnetism went forth and impressed his fellow men of every station in life, and in his day he stood peerless in Arkansas, and were he living, would so stand to-day.

It has been said, that he who has no enemies deserves to have no friends.’’ However true this may be as a general proposition, Yell was an exception to the rule; for if he had one single enemy I never heard of it, yet he was in public life for many years and actively participated in the politics of his day, and no man who ever lived or died was more outspoken than he. He was a democrat, and ever stood ready to give battle to the Whig party, and did it without reserve. Yet I never saw a Whig so violent as not to admit that Yell was a “number one man,” however much his politics were objectionable.

Gov. Yell was born about the year 1791. He was of very poor parentage and had very little education, and most of what he had was attained after he passed boyhood days. I have heard him speak of his early privations and trials. But being one of God’s noblemen he was destined to act a prominent part on the stage of life, however poor his opportunities in early life. In the war of 1812, Yell volunteered and entered the army in defense of his country with patriotic zeal and devotion that characterized his after years. He was a boy yet in his teens. He was a private soldier in the ranks. In the service he attracted the attention of Gen. Jackson, our immortal Old Hickory, who united young Yell to the company that constituted the life guard of the General. Yell underwent the hardships and privations of war with as much zeal and devotion to his countries cause as did old Hickory himself, and that is saying much.

When the war was over Yell returned to Middle Tennessee and betook himself to the profession of law, and located at Fayetteville, in my native county, and ever stood a favorite of Old Hickory. The first time I ever saw Yell I was quite a small boy but I shall never forget the impression he made upon me by his wonderful magnetism, of which I will say more by and by.

In about the year 1833, Gen. Jackson who was then President of the United States, appointed Yell judge in the then Territory of Arkansas and he afterwards located in the suburbs of Fayetteville, Arkansas, and called his home “Waxhaws,” the place now owned and occupied by Col. T.J. Hunt. His circuit as a Judge was very extensive, and consequently he was brought in contact with most of the pioneers of Arkansas and soon became the most popular man in the Territory. His superior strength with the people was scarcely questioned.

In the summer of 1836 Arkansas became a state, but before that, my lot had been cast in the

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR - VETERANS REUNION
PRAIRIE GROVE BATTLEFIELD PARK
1887

wilds of Arkansas, and like the rest of the pioneers, I went my bottom dollar on Yell, but unfortunately then I had no vote! When Arkansas became a state it was Yell's private wish to be her first Governor, but by reference to the constitution of 1836 it will be seen Yell was not eligible to the office, not having resided in Arkansas long enough.

This provision of the constitution was the result of political management in the convention; Yell thought so, for I have heard him say it. So James S. Conway was the first Governor and Yell the first Congressman-he was re-elected in 1838, and elected Governor in 1840. In a great political emergency in 1844 he resigned the office of Governor at the instance of the Democratic party, and was elected to congress in that year and also in 1846. It is not my purpose on this occasion to speak of his public acts at Washington for that is furnished by the annals of Congress. I need only to say he occupied high rank there as he would take anywhere. His pleasing manners, his generous soul, his honesty of purpose and wonderful magnetism proclaimed the presence of the greatest of Christian virtues, benevolence, charity, peace and good-will to all. These furnished him a ready passport to the affections of his countrymen every-where.

An old and distinguished man of Tennessee said of James K. Poke (sic), "he might not be the equal of Calhoun, Webster or Clay, but he was as safe and reliable as they in any position to which he might be called, for Jimmy was never much wrong if wrong at all. Gov. Yell was the most effective stump orator in Arkansas of his day, nor do I believe we have had his equal since his death. I know very well, however, we had and still have men of great ability on the stump and elsewhere, but I know of no man in the state able to electrify and sway the popular mind equal to Gov. Yell. In this he excelled, in this, one of the elements of his greatness was eminently manifested.

Gov. Yell was of easy approach at all times, and in all circumstances, by the old, the young, the rich and the poor, all alike. Even on slight acquaintance he never failed to leave his lasting impression. All were at ease in his presence. I believe he was the most attractive men I ever knew.

I have said Gov. Yell was elected to congress in 1846, and hence he was a member of that body at the beginning of the Mexican war. In that war Arkansas was called on for a regiment of volunteers to fight the battles of the country and Yell did what might have been expected of him. His patriotism and zeal for his country's cause prompted him to resign his seat in Congress and respond to his country's call in the hour of need, and he hastened home to join the Arkansas regiment, which elected him its commander.

He and his regiment bent their steps to the strife and conflict to do their duty. I leave for the surviving veterans of the Mexican war, who are with us here to-day, to narrate the particulars of

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR - VETERANS REUNION
PRAIRIE GROVE BATTLEFIELD PARK
1887

their march and privations to the field of strife. I come now to speak of that fatal day at Buena Vista, Feb'y 22d, 1817, which took from Arkansas her favorite son, whose noble endowments and virtues we are here to-day to commemorate-the man whom the people of Arkansas loved most and delighted to honor.

Our army was so situated at Buena Vista as to be compelled to fight against great odds. Santa Anna(sic) with his mighty hosts was near and advancing, flushed with the purpose and intent to crush and destroy by his superior numbers his opposing enemy. The day before that bloody conflict Yell wrote me hurriedly and briefly of the situation and concluded with the remark "Tomorrow we must fight." I expect that was the last letter he ever wrote, and I wish I had it here to-day to read to you, but like many other things I appreciated, it has long since passed out of my possession.

Tomorrow came, and the mighty hosts of Santa Anna came also, and the deadly conflict began. The noble volunteers from Arkansas caught the inspiration from their gallant leader and fought as soldiers seldom ever fought before. They and their comrades from other states resisted with heroic valor charge after charge by Santa Anna's superior cavalry force, contesting the field inch by inch until victory perched upon our banners.

A greater victory was not won during the war, or one which surprised the enemy more. It has been said Gen. Taylor, our commander, was heard to say after the conflict was over, that at one time the tide of battle was fairly against us and we were beaten, but those volunteers knew not when to yield the contest, but continued to fight. Such gallantry as was displayed by our Arkansas veterans on every field in the war with Mexico, should be the pride of our country. And I deem it a national shame that their patriotic devotion and services were not appropriately recognized by the government years before. But so be it. On the bloody field of Buena Vista, amid the clash of arms, the heroic Yell at the head of his regiment resisting a charge of the enemy's cavalry, fell mortally wounded and breathed his last! A braver or a better man never fought or fell. But few men combined in his make-up so many of the elements of true greatness as did Gov. Yell.

Let his name and deeds be preserved in memory, and handed down to our latest posterity. And let our Mexican veterans be remembered and honored also, and their names passed down the current of time to other generation hand in hand with Gov. Yell. The remains of Gov. Yell were brought home to Arkansas and now sleep at Fayetteville, and we may indulge the belief his noble spirit rests in peace at the right hand of Him who gave it. Col. J.H. Van Hoose was then introduced and after a few explanatory remarks, read a letter from Gen. Albert Pike and recited a poetic description of the battle of Buena Vista by Gen. Pike written a few days after the battle. The letter was written in answer to an invitation to be present and was as follows;

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR - VETERANS REUNION
PRAIRIE GROVE BATTLEFIELD PARK
1887

Washington D. D., July 31, '87.

Dear Bro. Van House,-I thank you for the flower from Bro. Yell's grave. I have placed it among the relics collected by our Supreme Council, and have thought much, and as I always do, kindly, of Bro. Yell, since I received it.***

I wish it were likely to be in my power to be present at your meeting of the Mexican War Veterans at Prairie Grove. Tell them so and tell them that I am too old to go far from home; the state of my health also forbidding it.

Tell them there is no journey I would so gladly take if I could as that which would enable me to see them together, to take them by the hand and exchange remembrances of our service in that war, so glorious by its victories, so entirely free from the excesses and outrages that make war horrible and bring shame upon nations.

Those of us who yet live can look upon our days of military service and upon the whole conduct of the war with a just pride.

Tell them that the day of their meeting will be for me a day of mourning and grave regret because I shall not be with them, but that if I know afterwards that they remembered me and wished that I had been there, their remembrance and regret will be much more to me than the most eloquent tributes paid to my memory, if the dead hear no words that we spoke of them.

I send them a comrade's kindly greeting and best wishes. I am always truly your friend, Albert Pike.

Bro. J. H. Van Hoose: When Col. Van Hoose had concluded Co.1. J.P. Neal introduced the following resolution which were adopted unanimously:

Whereas, we have been favored and very much interested in the rehearsal by J. H. Van Hoose of an eloquent description of the battle of Buena Vista which was written from that historic field, only a few days after the battle by one of Arkansas gallant sons, who was present and took part in that bloody fray, to-wit: Capt. Albert Pike of Yell's Regiment Arkansas

Volunteers, and Whereas, we have been further gratified and delighted on this re-reunion occasion by the reception from him of a kind and fraternal message in which he expressed his regrets at not being able to accept our invitation to be present and sends a comrade's kindly greeting and best wishes to all the survivors of that gallant American army which achieved such glorious results in Mexico, and concluded by saying "those of you who survive can look back

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR - VETERANS REUNION
PRAIRIE GROVE BATTLEFIELD PARK
1887

upon the service in Mexico and upon the whole conduct of that war with a just pride.”

That we look back with a just pride to the time when Arkansas was the home of our illustrious friend and comrade in arms, and that although he has changed his place of residence to our nation’s capitol, Washington City, we yet feel that we have claims upon him and are proud of the distinction he has won in the nation-that of being the first lawyer in America.

Resolved, That we will ever cherish for him the kindest feelings and most grateful remembrances for the many kind words spoken and his manly defense of the honor and reputation of our loved Southland.

That we hereby most heartily reciprocate the kind and fraternal feelings expressed by him in his message to us of recent date, and would gladly give him a cordial greeting, an old time Arkansas reception, if he were present in person instead of proxy.

Resolved, That it is the unanimous sentiment of this meeting that our distinguished brother, comrade and friend may be spared many years in the enjoyment of health and his mental faculties, and that he may continue to be regarded by all who have the pleasure of his acquaintance as the champion of constitutional liberty and the true friend of humanity. Resolved,

That these resolutions be spread upon the minutes of the Veteran Association meeting, that copies be furnished our county papers with the request to publish and that the secretary of this meeting be requested to forward a certified copy to our distinguished friend and former comrade in arms, Gen. Albert Pike, Washington, D. C.

This ended the program for the day. There was dinner on the ground for all present and if anyone went away hungry it was his fault. Many remained on the grounds until late in the afternoon enjoying the excellent music by the band and the vocal music of the famous Captain Walker.

To all present, it was a day pleasantly spent. [Fayetteville Democrat 8/26/1887]