

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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POISON SPRINGS RECREATIONAL PARK (NOW KNOWN AS BRAGG LAKE)

Most of the local residents of Ouachita and Nevada counties are familiar with Poison Springs State Park, a small park in Ouachita County located at the site of the Civil War battle. The park was developed back in the 1960's. In fact, one of my first public jobs was working for the Arkansas Forestry Commission during the summers while I was going to college. One of our jobs at that time was to clear the underbrush at the park site. We were cautioned to leave any ornamental trees such as dogwood, but I suspect that a few were accidentally cut down. Some of those working there didn't know a dogwood tree from a broom handle. We also developed a trail visitors could use to visit the springs. Later a display was built to explain the historical significance of the battle and a few picnic tables were provided for public use. It is the ideal place for a small family picnic, although there are no toilet facilities available. Those were removed years ago due to vandalism. Some folks just seem to get a thrill out of causing mischief.

Although the name implies that these springs are poisonous, this is not true. The story goes that a group of men were cutting a road through the forest in mid-summer and became over-heated. One of the men took a drink of cold water from one of the springs while he was too hot and died. The other men thought the water had poisoned him, and that's how the place became known as Poison Springs.

This small park today is maintained by the Arkansas Dept. of Parks and Tourism along with the larger White Oak Lake State Park which is nearby.

Plans were made back in 1936 for a park to be known as Poison Springs Recreational Park, but this park was to be located along Hwy. 24 between Camden and Chidester. The location was only two or three miles as the crow flies from the Poison Springs battle site. This park was to be 200 acres in size with a 140 acre lake to be constructed by building a dam on Bragg Creek. A flour mill once operated on this creek to provide flour for the Bragg family, a pioneer family in that area.

The plans also called for cabins to be constructed around the lake and a baseball diamond to be built. A large community building would be constructed for reunions, picnics, etc. The project had already been approved by the WPA in 1936 and construction would begin as soon as a few more deeds were signed. The cost of the park was estimated to be \$20,000. I don't know when the project was finally completed, but I am sure construction began soon after all the deeds were signed.

I have admired many beautiful sunsets over this lake as I have traveled on Hwy. 24 coming from Camden toward Chidester. You have to be there at just the right time on the right day for the best view. I remember once back in the mid-1970's when the dam broke

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due to heavy rains and the highway was temporarily closed with traffic diverted around by Poison Springs park to Upper White Oak Lake and on to Bluff City. When the dam broke, fishermen were allowed to catch the fish by dipping them up in nets. Hundreds of people joined in the fun. That was quite a sight to see.

I'm sure you have noticed the island in the middle of Bragg Lake, but you probably don't know the history concerning that island.

Some of the land for the park project was donated by T. J. Gaughan, a local attorney, but in the deed for the land, he included certain conditions for the two acre island in the middle of the lake. The island was to be a bird and game refuge. Trees were present on the island, but the attorney desired to plant mulberry and persimmon trees there also.

The land was conveyed with this stipulation: "This conveyance is made on the condition that the buyer will maintain this island in its present state, permitting only such timber to be removed as may from age or decay become dangerous. It is a condition of this conveyance that the county of Ouachita will not permit anyone to build a house or other similar structure or permit any bird or animal to be killed on this island during the next 50 years. The county court of said county may grant a temporary license to some certain person or persons, if in the opinion of the court, it shall become necessary and proper, to kill birds of prey or animals destructive of wildlife on this island."

"It is requested that the said county will make adequate provision for the care of such animals as squirrels, coons, etc. and swallows, etc. on this island. During the said period of 50 years, no one will be allowed to carry a gun or pistol of any kind on said island without a permit from the county court of said county, for the above named purpose." This deed concerns only the small island to be left in the center of the lake. It will add beauty to the lake and become a bird and game refuge for all time.

So, now you know the story behind the island in the middle of Bragg Lake. The 50 year time period specified in the deed has now expired, but as far as I know, the island is still pretty much off limits for hunting.

In the last few years a new animal has surfaced at Bragg Lake—alligators. Signs warn visitors to watch for alligators. Several houses have been built near the lake and fishermen can be seen in their boats or fishing from the bank along the dam or by the highway below the dam. The pavilion that had been constructed overlooking the lake was torn down a few years ago. There was recently some talk about building a new one, but as always, the lack of funds is the major obstacle. Some repairs were recently made to the dam to prevent another break in case of severe flooding.

CAUSES OF DEATH IN 1907 AND 1908

Some obituaries in the old days gave the cause of death. As I was doing some research one day, I made notes of some of these just out of curiosity. I thought it would be interesting to

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compare the causes of death almost a hundred years ago with the causes of death today. This information is from Nevada County newspapers.

1907—

Mrs. J. L. McGough- consumption
Jeremiah Cress—dropsy
John L. Eagle- typhoid fever and measles

1908—

Ernest Smith—murdered
Dr. Albert Hesterly—pneumonia
Buck Hawley—typhoid fever
John Johnson—acute attack of grippe
George Hathcoat—organic heart trouble
Henry Bowles—ran over by a train engine
Mattie Evans—pneumonia
May A. Moore—la grippe
P. C. Hamilton—la grippe
Lucille Fore—congestion of the stomach
Seth Williams—measles
W. H. Hill—shot during argument
Annie Carrigan—congestion of the lungs
Willie D. Gillespie—erysipelis
James T. Gossett—heart failure
Edna May Yancey—pneumonia and measles
J. W. Hornaday—cancer
Mrs. J. R. March—rhuematism
Mary Lee—heart failure

The following communities were once located in Nevada County south of Bluff City

SMASH-UP NEWS (from the Dec. 19, 1913 issue of The Nevada County Picayune)

Hog killing is the order of the day.

Health in this community is very good.

Sunday school is progressing fine at this place.

J. H. Boswell will preach at this place the ensuing year every fourth Sunday.

Soon be time for old Santa Claus to come around, and how glad I will be.

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There was no prayer meeting here the past week on account of bad weather.

Building and moving is also the order of the day. We wish both movers and builders success.

We wish the new married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Aron Waters, a prosperous journey through life.

There will be a big Christmas tree at Ebenezer on the night of the 24th. Everybody is invited to come early and stay late.

COUNTY LINE NEWS

(from the Dec. 19, 1913 issue of The Nevada County Picayune)

Health is fine in this community now.

Farmers are about through gathering their crops now.

Bennet Tally of Emerson is contemplating moving to this vicinity soon.

We have no school at County Line this year for causes known to most people.

Mrs. Leta Knight is staying at the home of her father-in-law while her husband is gone.

E. A. Beaver has just returned from Hot Springs where he has been for his health.

Mesdames Josie Beaver, Esther Mooty, and Lizzie Beaver spent Sunday with their parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Knight.

We are sorry to learn that Mrs. W. A. McAteer severely scalded her foot by oversetting a pot of hot coffee on it Sunday.

Eddie and Oscar Knight and Bynum Holleman have gone to visit relatives in and around Lufkin and Huntington, Texas.

THEO NEWS

(from the April 24, 1914 issue of The Nevada County Picayune)

As there is no one writing from Theo, I will write a few items.

Health is very good at this writing.

We are having some pleasant weather which is welcomed by the farmers.

Bro. Fincher preached a very interesting sermon at County Line last Sunday. He is a good man and a fine talker. Let everybody come out to hear him the third Sunday.

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Uncle Dick Knight of Lufkin, Texas is visiting his brother, Calvin Knight.

There will be a Sunday school organized at County Line next Sunday.

We are sorry to hear that Miss Laura Kirk has typhoid fever. Hope she will soon recover.

Eddy Harvey and Bennie Benton of Bluff City and Milton Knight of Chidester went to County Line last Sunday. Come again, boys. We are always glad to see people from other neighborhoods.

Ask Miss Gertrude if she likes two black mules better than one grey.

Mrs. Beulah Cline made an interesting talk on China at Ebenezer last Saturday. We learn that Mrs. Cline will return to China in July with the intention of never returning home any more.

Milton Knight of Chidester was a guest at Limus Gulley's last Sunday.

Mrs. Wadley is visiting her nephew, Eugene McAteer of McNeil.

Mrs Limus Gulley returned home after three days stay at her father's, B. C. Cross.

EDGAR ALLEN POE ONCE WORKED IN CAMDEN (from *The Camden News*—June, 1936)

Edgar Allen Poe, one of America's leading literary figures, once worked as a printer in Camden. He spent several weeks here at work on the old *Ouachita Herald*, according to J. H. Marable of Stephens, Arkansas, former editor of the *Homer (La.) Journal*, who tells the following story:

"My maternal grandfather, James A. Jones, familiarly known in Camden at that time as Jim Jones, was editor and publisher of the *Ouachita Herald* for some years prior to 1863. In that year, on account of many Union soldiers being in this section of the country, and the final issue of the Civil War being uncertain, he refugeed to Smith County, Texas with his Negroes, and in a few months died there. It was from his wife, my grandmother, that I got the story in 1892 of Poe's sojourn in Camden.

"One day at lunch he said to grandmother, 'Martha, guess who I have working for me in the office today.' She guessed several of the journeyman printers that had worked and passed on. Grandfather smilingly shook his head and said, 'You could not guess in thousand years. He is the poet, Edgar Allen Poe.'"

While attending a press meeting in New Orleans some time before, grandfather had met Poe. Whether it was because of an incipient friendship that the poet decided to drift into Camden, grandfather did not say. At any rate, he had been on a long spree in New Orleans when he came to Camden. He was broke and presented a very un-kept appearance. These sprees were

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common talk throughout the country 40 years ago. He was simply a genius with some of the weaknesses that occasionally are to be found in men of high intellect and delicately wrought nervous systems.

Poe spent three months in Camden working at the *Herald*. He was a good printer and industrious, trying to be worth his wages. While doing this mechanical work, he wrote several poems which he permitted my grandfather to publish in his paper. Whether any of these are in present collection, I do not know for the files of the *Herald* at that time were destroyed in 1879. He boarded with my grandparents. Grandmother said he was agreeable, but sometimes moody, almost melancholy-brilliant, but unassuming. His conversation was replete with knowledge of things discussed, yet being great, his respect of the views of others evidenced the polish of a true gentleman.

Being still a rattle-brained youth when grandmother died in 1897, I thought little of this incident, which if properly recorded would have been of great historical value. I wish I could give the exact date of Poe's sojourn in Camden, and a more intimate story of it. One thing it tells us and that is, that he was in some respects an ordinary mortal with ordinary failings.

During his sojourn in Camden, Edgar Allen Poe was not feasted nor feted. To most of the people of the town, he was merely a printer who edged up in his composing stick those little metallic messengers of thought that have revolutionized knowledge. This was also art with him. Whatever he did it was with an artistic frame of mind. It seems paradoxical that occasionally he would consort with old John Barleycorn.

Although when he was in Camden, he was looked upon as being only a journeyman printer by ordinary folk, many Camdenites now of course recognize that he was a great genius. Perhaps they will be proud to know that he was for three months one of their citizens.

THE EXECUTION OF CAPT. GYNES IN CAMDEN (from *The Camden News*—June, 1936)

An interesting bit of Civil War history was the execution of Captain John T. Guynes, Co. F, 23rd Texas Infantry, as related by the late S. B. Lide, who was Captain of Co. B, 33rd Arkansas, who was an eye witness to the execution. Captain Guynes was a brilliant young lawyer and a leader in his section of Texas, where his family had been famous for many years. Guynes enlisted in the Southern army and was in a number of battles and skirmishes, all west of the Mississippi River, in Arkansas, when an order came directing the regiment to join General Hood's forces in Tennessee. Guynes immediately objected. He declared that his company had enlisted in defense of the state of Texas only; that it was unlawful to order the Texans across the Mississippi River.

Guynes was arrested while making a speech to his company, urging them to refuse to obey the order. A court martial was hastily organized which cited Guynes with insurrection. Trying his own case before the court, Guynes cited the Constitution of the Confederate states and the laws of Texas in support of his position. This speech is said to have been a masterpiece of logic

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and eloquence. The court found him guilty as charged and sentenced him to death. Believing himself right in principle, he preferred to face death rather than to submit to what he considered tyranny. His execution was delayed for many months and his friends sought executive clemency for him, but President Davis refused the pardon after thoroughly reviewing the case.

Guynes was brought to Camden for execution. Seated on a plank coffin in an open wagon, he was carried to the bank of the Ouachita River. The officer in charge offered to bind his eyes with a black handkerchief, but Guynes refused. He faced the 12 executioners without a tremor. Head erect, hands clasped behind him, ten bullets pierced his heart.

MORE FROM THE 1931 BOOK—*COMPLIMENTS TO THE BRIDE AND GROOM*

BARBECUED SQUIRRELS

Build a hardwood fire between two green logs lying about two feet apart. Drive four forked stakes about fifteen inches apart, so that the four stakes will form a rectangle like the legs of a table. The forks should all be about eighteen inches above the ground. Choose young, tender squirrels. Prepare spits by cutting stout switches of some wood that does not burn easily, peel them, and sharpen the points. Impale each squirrel by thrusting a spit through flank and shoulder, on one side, and another spit similarly on the other side, spreading out the sides. Lay two poles across the fire from crotch to crotch and across these lay your spitted squirrels. As soon as heated through, baste with a piece of pork on the end of a stick. Turn the squirrels as required. Cook slowly, tempering the heat, if needful, by scattering ashes thinly over the coals; remove the ashes for a final browning. When the squirrels are done, butter them and serve.

TO MAKE BEDS ROLL EASILY—Lift the iron bed with an automobile jack, knock the rollers out with a hammer. Grease thoroughly and put the rollers back. The bed will roll with one hand.

TO KEEP CELERY FRESH—Bury several bunches of celery at a time in a cool place, laying the bunches obliquely and covering lightly with dirt. It will keep fresh for two or three weeks.

CHOW-CHOW—When you don't have green tomatoes, try watermelon rinds. Use the same amount, grind it up, and season the same as you would tomatoes. You will find it quite as good.

TO KEEP LID ON A BOILING POT—If you will drop a teaspoonful of butter into the water in which you are boiling dry beans or other starchy vegetables, you will not be annoyed by having the lid of the pot jump off, as it will otherwise do. The butter acts "as oil on the troubled water" and keeps it calm and manageable.

EGG SHELLS—Broken egg shells, rubbed over cooking vessels to which food adheres, removes each sticky particle and cleans the vessels nicely.

If you want to forget all your troubles, wear a pair of shoes that are too tight for you.

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Texas Casserole

From "This Is A Favorite" Column of the *Houston Chronicle*

Contributed by Barbara W. Ray

Houston, Texas

This recipe can be made with low-fat soups, sour cream, and cream cheese, and ground turkey can be substituted for hamburger to make it much lower in fat without changing the flavor. We love it, even when I use the low-fat ingredients.

1 pound of ground beef
Garlic powder, salt, and pepper
3 to 4 coils of vermicelli, cooked
1 (11-ounce) can condensed tomato soup
1 (10 ³/₄-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
1 bunch of green onions, chopped (I use plenty)
1 (8-ounce) package of cream cheese
1 (8-ounce) carton of sour cream or plain yogurt
Grated Parmesan cheese or bread crumbs (use plenty)

Brown and season meat with garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Arrange ingredients in a 3-quart casserole dish in layers from bottom up as follows: vermicelli, ground meat, tomato soup, onions, cream cheese, sour cream, mushroom soup. Top with Parmesan cheese or bread crumbs. Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees 30 to 40 minutes. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

From Barbara Helsel Woelzein of Phoenix, Arizona

CALICO BEANS

1 can B & M baked beans	½ cup Ketchup
1 can kidney beans	½ cup chopped onion
1 can lima beans	1 teaspoon dry mustard
1 can butter beans	2 Tablespoons white vinegar
½ jar Hormel real bacon bits	¼ cup brown sugar

Combine the five ingredients on the right and mix as a sauce. Put beans in crock pot. I usually pour off about half of the liquid from the kidney, lima, and butter beans, leaving the rest with the beans. Use the baked beans straight out of the can. Pour sauce over beans and cook 2 hours on low or high. Lid of crock pot can be removed toward the end of the cooking time if beans are "too juicy". I usually double the amounts if making for a group and they are yummy as leftovers.

Editor's Note: I asked Barbara if some other brand of baked beans would work. She says B & M baked beans are the best for this recipe, but others would probably work. We could not find this brand in our local grocery stores.