

Springs of Old Pulaski and their early history

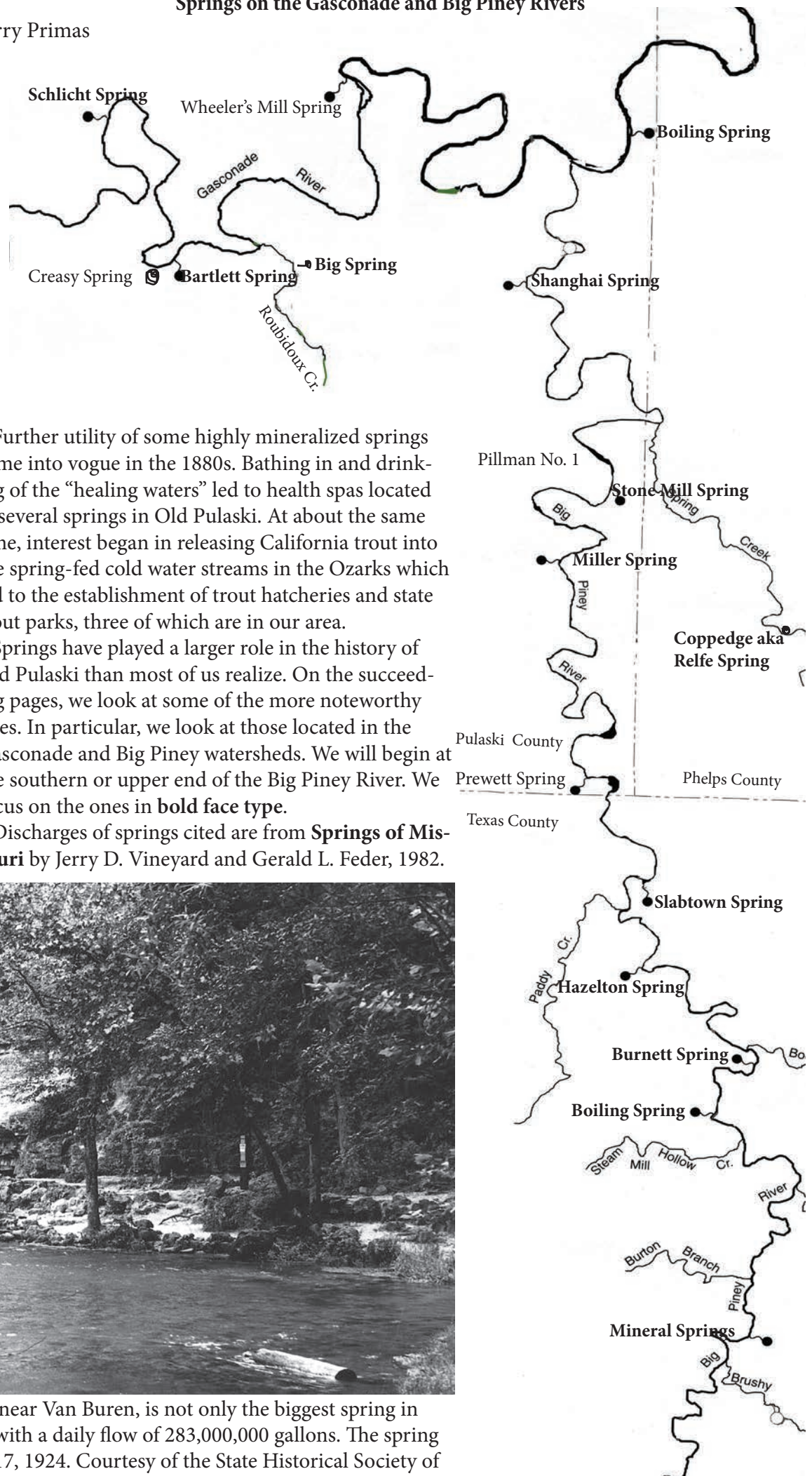
by Terry Primas

Our Ozarks region is defined by its hilly topography and abundance of springs, caves, and sinkholes that perforate our soluble limestone substrata. These features are well exemplified in Old Pulaski. (When we refer to “Old Pulaski,” we include the contiguous counties to modern Pulaski, which comprised a much larger Pulaski County in the antebellum era.) The Missouri Ozarks offers one of the nation’s highest concentrations of springs. These springs also provide another hallmark of the Ozarks—clear rivers and streams.

Springs have attracted prehistoric man, both for the life-giving water and for hunting the wildlife that gathered to drink. Early settlers in Missouri relied on springs during immigration. There are more than 4,400 statewide, more than half of which are unnamed in the state’s database. Perennial springs along a wagon road offered watering and camp sites. Local communities often grew up around these springs. Over seventy villages, towns, and cities in Missouri have the word “Spring” in their names.

The water issuing from underground streams also had other uses. The cool water, usually about 58 degrees, afforded an early form of refrigeration. Often a small structure was built over a small spring. This spring house was used to cool milk, butter, and other perishables. The hydrologic energy powered grist mills and saw mills in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Salt springs, although not found in the Ozarks, provided the compound used by settlers to cure meat and tan hides, the most notable being the salt works founded in 1805 by Nathan Boone, son of Daniel, along the east bank of the Missouri River in what is now Howard County.

Springs on the Gasconade and Big Piney Rivers



Further utility of some highly mineralized springs came into vogue in the 1880s. Bathing in and drinking of the “healing waters” led to health spas located at several springs in Old Pulaski. At about the same time, interest began in releasing California trout into the spring-fed cold water streams in the Ozarks which led to the establishment of trout hatcheries and state trout parks, three of which are in our area.

Springs have played a larger role in the history of Old Pulaski than most of us realize. On the succeeding pages, we look at some of the more noteworthy ones. In particular, we look at those located in the Gasconade and Big Piney watersheds. We will begin at the southern or upper end of the Big Piney River. We focus on the ones in **bold face type**.

Discharges of springs cited are from **Springs of Missouri** by Jerry D. Vineyard and Gerald L. Feder, 1982.



Big Spring, although not in Old Pulaski but rather Carter County near Van Buren, is not only the biggest spring in the Ozarks but one of the largest fresh water springs in the world with a daily flow of 283,000,000 gallons. The spring and surrounding grounds became the first state park on October 17, 1924. Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Missouri.

Mineral Springs aka Blankenship Medical Springs



Above A group of health seekers at Blankenship Medical Springs pose in front of a rock shelter and spring where meat, milk, and butter were kept. **Below** Four ladies sit on one of the numerous springs that was walled with field stones.

Courtesy of Texas County Missouri Genealogical and Historical Society.

Mineral Springs was an early mill site operated by sawmillers William Truesdale and George Hines, followed by St. Louis investors Laveille and Morton, and then in-laws David Lynch and John Fourt.

Located three miles north of the city of Houston, county seat of Texas County, in a hollow on the Big Piney River are numerous springs which, according to Indian legends, possessed restorative and curative benefits. Dr. John R. Blankenship bought the land around 1881 which contained 45 springs, including the twin springs, one of which was cold and the other hot. Blankenship built a hotel and several cottages, along with a bathhouse with spring water piped into a large round tub. The mud around the springs was used as a medicinal ointment and the water was bottled and shipped for sale. It was claimed a guest could pick his/her water treatment, as no two springs were alike. They contained sulfuric acid, carbonic acid, nitric acid, silicic acid, chlorine, lime, potassium soda, magnesia, iron, and alum. At its height, the hotels in Houston were crowded with guests who, when a bugle sounded, caught a stage for a day at the springs. In an 1883 *Houston Herald* advertisement, Blankenship claimed "about 100 springs" were on the park-like grounds. Board could be had for \$3 to \$5 per week and cottages to rent from \$3 to \$5 per month. Business seemed to wane in the late 1880s, maybe due to the remoteness and poor roads. Houston was also not directly served

by a railroad. An effort was made in 1888 to form a stock company with the purpose of improving the business, now called Blankenship Mineral Springs, occupying almost a square mile of land. No mention is made of Blankenship's venture after this time. John R. Blankenship was a pharmacist and medical doctor and operated a drug store in Houston for many years.



Boiling Spring

It can get confusing in conversation. There are two Boiling Springs in the Gasconade watershed: one on the upper Big Piney and one on the Gasconade River. There are four more Boiling Springs in the state. Here we are discussing the Boiling Spring on the Big Piney River, located about ten miles southwest of Licking. We will discuss the other Boiling Spring later.

This spring erupts at the base of a bluff along the river's edge, as shown below. The twelve-foot diameter rise pool is visible behind the large rock in the center of the picture. It has a flow averaging 42,000,000 gallons per day, as measured in 1964. Most of the springs on the Piney have an antebellum history tied to the exploitation of the short leaf pine trees that lined the banks and ridge tops of the river. The springs powered sash mills that cut plank lumber that was floated in rafts down the Piney to the Gasconade to the Missouri and finally the landings at St. Charles and St. Louis.

John Baldrige, after years of rafting plank for the McDonald brothers, Sylvester Pattie, and Morgan Boone, built his own sash mill at Boiling Spring and filed for a land patent in May of 1831. The following fall he also filed for a parcel near the Big Lick settlement that later became the village of Licking. The business at the mill seat included not only the production of pine plank, employing for a time five slaves, but some consumer trade such as shoes and whiskey. Following Baldrige at the Boiling Spring mill seat were Nimrod Snyder and Bartholomew Rice of St. Louis, who produced more than a million board feet of pine plank annually during the 1830s-1840s

Today there is a Missouri Department of Conservation Public Access facility with a boat ramp and ample parking across from the spring. Its logging heritage largely forgotten, the spring is now known as a popular departure point for a float trip down the river.



Aerial photo by Ron Simpson

Burnett Spring

This moderate spring of 1.9 million gallons daily flow in Texas County, three miles downstream from Boiling Spring, was also an early mill seat. Daniel Morgan Boone and partner James Morrison established it in the pineries as early as 1822 as one of the more valuable properties along the river, which included a house, farm, and blacksmith shop along with the mill. Boone and Morrison sold the mill to Samuel Nesbit in 1825 in consideration of future delivery of 125,000 board feet of plank. Nesbit then mortgaged the mill to St. Louis investors Laveille and Morton, who leased it to several succeeding operators. Along the way, initial ownership became murky and commercial entanglements led to lawsuits. Barney Lowe, who was operating the mill in 1831 was run off by Joseph Riden and Elisha Blankenship at gunpoint. By 1840 George Morton was operating the mill, which

continued to be very productive producing pine plank for the St. Louis market. In 1849, as a result of debt settlements among the timbermen, John Burnett, who had been active in the industry on the river since 1840, became the owner of the 156-acre site. Burnett met an untimely death in 1858 and the mill was leased from Burnett's estate by kinsman James Bradford. For more detail about the legal battles over this spring and others on the Big Piney, see Lynn Morrow's article "Old Pulaski: A Lumbering and Rafting Legacy Part II" in the 2012 *Old Settlers Gazette*. Today, the spring is not publicly accessible. Farmland, the Burnett Cemetery, and a vacation cabin are on the site. The river has changed positions in the last century-and-a-half. The spring branch was described in Boone's day as being 60-80 yards west of the east bank. The river channel has moved westward and the spring branch runs less than half that distance now.



Burnett Spring flows from the base of a small hill. The small rise pool, partially visible at right, is ringed with a heavy growth of watercress and other flora. Historians John Bradbury (left) and Lynn Morrow are to the left of the rise pool.

Hazelton Spring

Hazelton Spring is one of a few working mill sites that persisted into the 20th century. It was originally constructed in 1816 by James and son John McDonald. Along with Sylvester Pattie's mill at Slabtown, it was one of the first sash mills built on the Big Piney to exploit the virgin pine forests. John McDonald, aided by son-in-law Solomon King, spent fifteen years cutting pine plank at Hazelton. James McDonald died in 1821 and son John inherited his farm, saw mill, oxen and carpenter's tools. In the late 1820s, McDonald sold the mill to John Sullins, who lived in Newport. Henry F. Ormsby took possession of the land in 1831, while maintaining a herd of 40 oxen to haul the huge logs. James Truesdale acquired the mill seat about 1837, stepping up plank production. James A. Bates, who was at Slabtown Spring, aided the expansion by selling Truesdale land, fifteen yoke of oxen, hogs, chains, timber carts, log wagons, blacksmith tools, and other equipment for \$6,300 (\$128,000 in today's dollars). Although Truesdale was making good on his debts, he died in early 1849 and the Texas County court canceled the deed of trust of the site to Truesdale and ownership reverted to Bates.

Sometime in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a grist mill was built on the spring branch with an underwater turbine waterwheel to complement the sawmill. The spring has a discharge of 6,650,000 gallons per day. A general store, blacksmith shop, and tie yard rounded out the commercial activity. Hardwood railroad ties, not pine plank, were the major timber product during this era. No rural general store would be complete without a post office, which was established in January of 1890 with Frank Niles as postmaster. Niles was followed by twenty-four more postmasters until the post office was discontinued in 1944, the last being Lawrence Hadley, who operated the store for seventeen years. Around the turn of the



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20th century, an Oddfellows Lodge occupied the second floor of the store. In 1924 or 1925, the Hadley family bought the farm and buildings that were Hazelton. According to Lawrence Hadley, Jr., "The country that surrounded the little hamlet was dotted with farms whose residents depended on it for the support and maintenance of their families. It was here that they received their mail, bought their groceries, clothing and shoes, had their machinery repaired, their grain ground, men came to the lodge, women met to visit and exchange recipes and many other things that friends and neighbors do. Because of this Hazelton met many needs of the community." (Hazelton is sometimes spelled Hazleton. I have seen it spelled both ways in the same document.)

Hazelton also offered river recreation for tourists and another product during Prohibition. An interview with nearby resident Robert Lee Bates relates his selling moonshine to city folks camping at Hazelton. See *2006 Old Settlers Gazette*, "An Interview with Robert Lee Bates," or better yet, listen to Robert Lee tell the story on the podcast "Fruit Jar Drinkers" on our web site: <https://www.oldstagecoachstop.org/podcasts2.html>

Leslie Hadley was the last sawmiller at Hazelton in the 1920s and the grist mill ceased operation in the 1930s. The Hadley family closed the store when the post office was discontinued in 1944 and the hamlet ceased to be a hub of rural social and economic activity. Several entrepreneurial attempts utilizing the spring have been attempted in the last half of the twentieth century. A fish hatchery was short-lived and a business bottling the water was active for a while. Tree cutting continues on the early mill site but mostly by broad and flat-tailed furry mammals.



The grist mill at Hazelton Spring, built circa 1885, as it appeared in 2016. The field stone foundation has been reinforced in places with concrete piers. In the lower left of the picture is the top of the fore bay where spring water was directed into a deep hole housing the vaned turbine. The vertical turbine shaft turned a series of gears and belts which operated the grist mill. A belt from the turbine also turned a shaft that operated the nearby sawmill, which is no longer present. The water generated enough power to operate the grist and saw mills simultaneously.



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Slabtown Spring



Water gushes over a dam and spillway at Slabtown Spring, discharging 10,000,000 gallons per day from the base of a ridge. Photograph by Gerald Massie, circa 1950. Courtesy of the Missouri State Archives.

Slabtown Spring is situated in a large floodplain along the Big Piney River about midpoint on the Piney's 85-mile course. The lumber mill was developed by Sylvester Pattie and his brother-in-law William Harle, both from St. Charles County. Their acquisition of the site involves a legendary tale retold by Lynn Morrow in "Piney Sawmillers at Gasconade Mills," **2008 Old Settler Gazette**.

William Thompson [*original squatter at the mill*] claimed that Sylvester Pattie "and his confederates," ex-militia men from St. Charles County and Portage des Sioux, formed a group that headed into the Ozarks interior. Thompson alleged that in November 1815, Capt. Henry Hight, Louis Tayon, Sylvester Pattie, William Harle, and several others approached him at his improvements "on the East side of the Piney Fork of the river Gasconade...about three miles below [James and John] McDonald's mill [*at Burnett Spring*]" and "with force of arms, and with a strong hand" drove Thompson from his homestead, a preemption claim on open range. Harle and Pattie then built a sawmill and began sawing pine. Presumably, Pattie and his workmen,

aided by a couple of slaves, sent their first raft downriver in 1816.

Of course, Thompson sued, the first in a long list of litigations involving mill seats and lumber on the Piney, and Thompson won a judgment in St. Louis circuit court in June 1818 giving him ownership of the mill property and all improvements. The improvements at the spring included "dwelling houses, out houses and barns, forty acres of cleared and enclosed land, including corn and grain fields, forty acres of timber land, and eighty acres of waste wild land," amounting to a \$3,000 investment (\$60,633 in today's dollars). Pattie and Harle appealed and in November the court set aside the ruling and reinstated the duo at the mill. Pattie and Harle sued for \$1,500 in damages. Thompson died in 1819. At some point around this time, a grist mill was added to the operation. By 1821, Harle had left the partnership in the mill. Pattie had enough of the lumber business by 1824 and in August he sold the saw and grist mills, tools, and preemption rights to Charles and Brazille Drolette. The sale price was only \$375.00, payable in cash or 50,000 board feet of plank delivered to St. Louis. Among the lumbermen, plank lumber was a medium of exchange.

The early sawmillers that we have discussed so far (the McDonalds, Daniel Morgan Boone, John Baldrige, Sylvester Pattie, et al) were squatters on the unsurveyed government land. They claimed a preemption or first right to buy the land when it was for sale at a Government Land Office (GLO). To actually own the land, all improvements and all rights, one had to file a claim and pay at a GLO. In September of 1831, Joshua H. Burckhardt filed for fee simple ownership of Slabtown Spring land at the GLO in Jackson, Missouri. In June of 1837, Burckhardt sold the mill and acreage to James A. Bates. This was Bates's first step in becoming the most successful lumberman in the pineries with an industrial career of 40 years.

The name "Slabtown" does not appear in print until after the Civil War. It seems that Union patrols dubbed the area such because of the piles of slabs that were cut from the sides of logs in the milling process. Some workers may have used the slabs to construct huts, too.

Today, the cottages in the picture at left have been replaced by a fine cedar house and the spring feeds a large lake in front on the floodplain.

Prewett Spring

This moderately large spring (10 million gallons per day) is 5.5 miles downstream from Slabtown Spring. We do not know any of its early history and today the once reportedly beautiful rise pool is used for watering stock.



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Miller Spring

Miller Spring is a rarity. It is an ebb-and-flow spring, one of only twenty-three in the United States and one of the five located in Missouri. It is also the state's largest of this type, with an average flow of 26 million gallons per day. These springs rise and fall in regular rhythms, despite the time of year or recent rainfall. According to archaeologist Gerard Fowke, the Native Americans called it Breathing Spring. The Anglo settlers called it Roaring Spring. The cause of the ebb and flow is not known with certainty.



The bowl-shaped rise pool at upper left, about twenty feet or better in diameter, is at the base of a tall bluff. The fast running spring branch travels 0.3 mile to its confluence with the Big Piney River. Aerial photograph by Ron Simpson.

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In 1833, George Hines, who had been partners with William Truesdale at Mineral Springs, moved forty-three miles downriver on the Big Piney and filed a land claim at what became known after the Civil War as Miller Spring. Hines, like so many other lumbermen, was in litigation about a promissory note about this time, a case he lost in 1834 in the Supreme Court in St. Louis. How much plank he sawed at Miller Spring is not known. In 1837, brothers Alexander and William McCartney were in possession of land around the spring and straddling the river. The McCartneys were from Bonhomme Township, St. Louis County, on the Missouri River south of St. Charles. Alexander had operated a sawmill there and the McCartneys surely knew other lumbermen from Bonhomme who were already on the Big Piney, such as the McDonalds. The lure of pine plank money must have been great.

William R. McCartney died prior to the Civil War and Alexander in 1862. The McCartney Mill may have been a gathering place for local bushwhackers. On January 18, 1865, a scouting party of Union soldiers from the post at Waynesville engaged in a skirmish at the mill and reported killing three guerrillas named McCartney, Anthony, and Stephens. The McCartney may have been one of William's sons, either James or Joshua. In 1867, Comfort McCartney Williams, eldest daughter of Alexander, sold the mill site and farm to Richard Miller upon the death of her husband, Meredith Williams.

Richard Miller immigrated to the United States from Baden, Germany, in 1854 via Canada. Miller was not a lumberman nor sawyer but a farmer and miller. He farmed the 336 acres around the spring, raising hogs and cattle. Emma Page Hicks remembers a big water wheel and grist mill at the spring in the early 1900s where corn was ground by Mr. Miller and son Danny. The spring remained in the family another generation and became known as Miller Spring. The hollow where the spring and farm are located is still known as McCartney Hollow.

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Stone Mill Spring

Seven miles downstream from Miller Spring is Stone Mill Spring, located today on Fort Leonard Wood. It is noteworthy as being the largest spring in the Big Piney basin with an average daily flow of 19 million gallons, as indicated on a sign at the rise pool, but a maximum discharge of 34 million gallons per day as recorded on the Department of Natural Resources's Geo-STRAT map (<https://modnr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3ac3a61da4af4834811503a24a3cb935>). This would exceed Miller Spring's flow by about 25 percent.

An antebellum railroad survey map indicates that a "Stone and Smith Mill" existed at the site but there was no mill recorded or mentioned at that location after the war. Milling needs of the sparsely settled neighborhood were more than being cared for at the next spring mentioned.

In the early 1900s, sportsmen from St. Louis who desired a fishing and hunting location were attracted to this stretch of the Big Piney River. The St. Louis wholesale grocery firm of Gildehaus Wolfing purchased 400 acres along the east bank of the river that included the spring where they erected a clubhouse nearby.

Today, the spring is owned by the U. S. Forestry Service, stocked by the Missouri Department of Conservation, and managed by the Fort Leonard Wood Department of Natural Resources. The spring branch (below) is the shortest trout stream in Missouri at 1,055 feet. Its landscaped banks provide benches and outhouse facilities.



Coppedge Spring aka Relfe Spring

Entering the Big Piney River about 4.5 miles downstream from Stone Mill Spring is Spring Creek. About five miles from the mouth of the creek is Coppedge Spring. It emerges from the roadside of County Road 6410 with an average daily discharge of 12.5 million gallons. There is no rise pool and the spring branch rushes to the channel of Spring Creek.

In 1823 or 1824, Adam Bradford arrived on Spring Creek and built a mill downstream from the spring. According to John Bradbury, "Bradford and his sons, Isaac Neely Bradford and James Bradford, were drawn by the short-leaf pine timber for which the Piney rivers [Big and Little] are named. The vast stand of pine began at Pine Bluff on the Big Piney (near Hooker, Missouri, and visible from Interstate 44) and stretched to the Arkansas border. From mills in what are now Phelps, Pulaski, and Texas counties, the Bradfords and their slaves sawed the virgin pine and rafted finished lumber down the Big Piney, Gasconade, Missouri, and Mississippi rivers to St. Louis, where it was used in that city's great development before the Civil War."

The sawmilling operations at Spring Creek expanded to include a grist mill, distillery, and store. The early farming and cattle operations were subsistence activities, but the rich bottom soil along the creek led to expanded farms and stock raising. In 1844, Lindsey Long Coppedge moved from the



Coppedge Spring emerges from under the roadbed of County Road 6410. The spring branch flows about 400 yards before joining the main channel of Spring Creek. Aerial photograph by Ron Simpson.

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Standing beside Coppedge Spring, also known as Relfe Spring, are Mr. and Mrs. James M. Freeman with their granddaughter Blanche sitting at their feet.



An early view of the Relfe community looking east. Adam Bradford's mill was a cotton gin. In the view above are (1) James M. Freeman's flour mill in center foreground; (2) James M. Freeman's mansion at left; and (3) Loring Freeman's house (James's son) in the center background. Other buildings are the tenant houses, store, and blacksmith shop. Both images courtesy of S&T Archives, Clair V. Mann Collection

Little Piney to Bradford's settlement, building a new mill at the spring and adding a carding machine. In 1847, he and partner James A. Bates bought the spring, mill operation, and 430 acre farm from Bradford. This neighborhood acquired a post office in 1847, naming it Relfe after a prominent Democrat politician, and the upper Spring Creek community took on that name as did the spring.

In 1842, brothers Pleasant and John Wayman settled near the mouth of Spring Creek where there was another but smaller spring, 7,490,000 gallons per day, and today identified as Pillman No. 1. They also built a mill and distillery utilizing spring power. In 1854, Lewis F. Pillman joined the lower community, operating a store and post office named Spring Creek, which became the name of the lower community. Both communities in the valley were thriving, powered by spring water, until the Civil War.

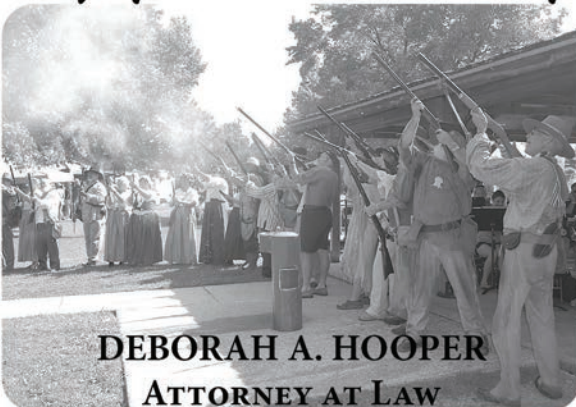
The communities were split in allegiance during the Civil War. Relfe and the Bradford kin were Confederate sympathizers, several serving in the Rebel army. The Waymans and Pillmans at Spring Creek were Unionists, as were the Coppedges (even though they were slave owners like the Bradfords) at Relfe. Bushwhackers harassed the Waymans, causing them to spend the war years in Iowa.

After the Civil War, Relfe experienced a slow decline. The Waymans did not return to Spring Creek but Lewis F. Pillman did, operating Wayman's grist mill, which became known as Pillman's Mill. This mill was located at Pillman No. 1 spring on the lower section of creek, with about half of the discharge as that of the Coppedge Spring upstream. The mill was between the two fine antebellum brick houses built by the Wayman brothers in the verdant valley of farms.

For nearly a century, the Spring Creek valley's industry and economy thrived because of water power. The distilleries operating alongside the mills produced many gallons of spirits and became a target for government "revenooers" in the late 19th century. The cold spring water of the creek was recognized early for another attribute. In 1879 Spring Creek received a stocking of brook trout, the first year of such efforts. Subsequent stockings of rainbow trout established a naturally reproducing population and the lower six miles of the creek is a Blue Ribbon Trout Management Area.

Note: County Road 6410, off Highway J, provides a picturesque drive through the Spring Creek valley, beginning at Pleasant Wayman's 1840s barn. John Wayman's antebellum brick house still stands and former Senator John Danforth has preserved the early 19th century frame two-story houses of Loring Freeman and Isaac Neely Bradford, whose home graced the cover of the 2016 *Old Settlers Gazette*.

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Blue Spring aka Shanghai Spring

Located 5.7 miles upstream from the Big Piney's confluence with the Gasconade, this spring was labeled on early maps as Blue Spring. The most recent flow data measures 12,283,000 gallons per day.* The large and deep rise pool reflects the blue of the sky on a clear day. The spring spills over a ledge and races 500 feet to join the Big Piney. Charles H. Southerland secured the first patent in 1851 on the spring and forty acres but there is no indication that he developed the spring for any use. Dr. P. J and Mary Heurer acquired the spring in the 1920s and renamed it Shanghai. Seems that folks from St. Louis liked to name their cabins, camps, or summer homes with exotic



Blue Spring by Gerald Massie, 1950, courtesy of the Missouri State Archives.

names or what they thought sounded like Indian names. The Heurers told the story that an Indian chief by the name of Shanghai used vegetable colors to paint his picture on the cliff overhanging the spring. Dr. Huerer had the grounds planted in many varieties of shrubbery and flowers hardy to this region and had the grounds landscaped fitting the natural setting. In 1949, Mary Heurer sold the spring, house and grounds to Clyde Collier who soon sold it to A. B. Cantwell of Kansas City. The property has had a succession of owners since.

When construction of Fort Leonard Wood began in earnest in January of 1941, the contractors hauled water from Blue Spring, as well as from Roubidoux Spring, until a water plant and tower were finished in April.

* May 2024 flow measurements courtesy of Michael Ronayne and Jeremy Shaw, scientists from Colorado State University who are studying regional hydrogeology.

Schlicht Spring

We now turn our attention to springs in our area on the Gasconade River. Several of these were developed into well-known resorts.

Schlicht Spring is not a large spring, with a discharge not exceeding 650,000 gallons per day, emerging from a hillside. In 1840, Jefferson Strain from Tennessee found the spring and valley. The spring was sufficient to fill a mill pond so he dammed up the spring branch. Strain labored hewing timbers and hauling stone, completing his grist mill in 1844, naming it Gasconade Mill. In 1862, Strain sold his mill and land to John Hensley and returned to Tennessee.

James A. Schlicht (1846-1918) immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1866. He was a miller, as were the male members of the family for the previous seven generations. Schlicht came to Pulaski County in 1876 and purchased the small water mill. James substantially improved the mill's capacity in the next two decades, augmenting the water wheel with a series of three turbines while adding a second mill pond. In 1885, he had supplemented the water power with a steam engine. Like Hazelton and Relfe, it became the commercial center for the neighborhood, adding a general store, post office, and even a barber shop by 1914 (the barber was also a cigar maker). James was ably assisted by his son Charles (1875-1945) in the operation of the mill and 900-acre farm. Charles also led the expansion of operations into the tourist and recreation trade.

No longer called Gasconade Mill, Schlicht's Mill gained its widest fame as a resort, having a large clientele from St. Louis. It promoted its two spring-fed lakes as ideal for the ladies to learn how to cast a fishing line. Along with Spring Creek, Schlicht was a release site for brook trout in 1879, the first year of stocking by the Missouri Fish Commission. The spring branch and ponds also received a stocking of rainbow trout, salmon, and grayling in 1896 from the federal Neosho Hatchery. Stocking of the spring ponds continued. For instance, the *Pulaski County*



The hillside spring had a catchment basin that provided artificial falls.

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Democrat reported in May of 1902 that “The Missouri Fish Commission deposited 6,000 wall-eyed pike in the ponds” and in July “that ten cans of trout are being again put in Schlicht’s Springs.”

The Schlichts also recognized the interest in healing waters and touted the medicinal qualities of its Magnesia Water flowing from the spring. For the first three decades of the twentieth century, the local newspaper reported crowds of locals and tourists alike who came to imbibe the purportedly healthy tonic of spring water. With the death of Charles Schlicht in 1945, the glory days of the spring, mill, and resort also passed. The family sold it to a St. Louis businessman in 1976 and it became a private vacation retreat for several owners since.



Schlicht Spring, circa 1902, with the mill complex on the right end of one of the ponds and the general store and post office on the left end. On the hill at left is a rental cabin that was enlarged and became Forest Lodge. Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Missouri.

Bartlett Spring

Bartlett Spring empties into the Gasconade River slightly less than eight miles downstream from the Schlicht Spring branch. It has a recorded average discharge of 10,000,000 gallons per day. Interestingly, just a half mile upstream is Creasey Spring with a flow of 12-15 million gallons per day, somewhat larger than Bartlett, but early settlers chose to develop Bartlett instead because Creasey floods when the river is high. The Bartlett Spring branch is relatively long at about 100 yards.

In 1816, the families of Johnson, Cullen, and Dulle came from Mississippi and settled in the Gasconade valley seven miles west of Waynesville, where the men mined saltpeter in a large cave for the manufacture of gunpowder. According to Goodspeed, “About a year after their arrival Mr. Cullen start-



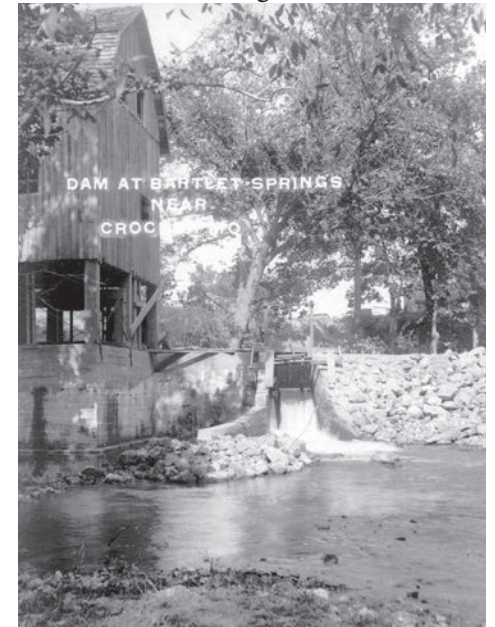
The spring setting is not particularly impressive as it emerges from low ground. Courtesy of John Bradbury.

ed out with his usual load of powder to supply some neighboring customers, and was never heard from again. Mssrs. Johnson and Dulle soon after removed to Bartlett’s Spring [unnamed at the time], and built a mill, which has been much improved since then, and is now [1889] one of the best in the vicinity.”

In 1841, Larkin Bates and family moved from Little Piney Creek in Phelps County to Pulaski County on the Gasconade River and built a sawmill and gristmill at the spring. In 1857, Solomon Bartlett (1831-1917) bought sixteen acres from Bates, including the saw and grist mills. He upgraded the water powered mill in 1866. Bartlett ground grain for the neighborhood and also for Waynesville. Even though Waynesville had a large spring, it was never developed to run a mill.

Dr. Bland N. Pippin, who taught dentistry at Washington University in St. Louis, grew up in Pulaski County. He began spending vacation time at Bartlett Spring, a favorite camping spot for St. Louisans floating the Gasconade.

Dr. Pippin bought the property from Bartlett in 1911 for \$3,000. Pippin hired local craftsman Billy Robinson to build a native stone clubhouse east of the spring, which was completed in 1914. The old mill burned in 1915 but Pippin had it rebuilt and also installed a 5-kilowatt generator. He hired Waynesville lawyer Fred Scott as caretaker and miller who resumed grinding meal, the last mill in the county to do so. This was the beginning of the famed Pippin Place resort. We have devoted considerable space in the *Gazette* over the years chronicling its operation.



Dr. Bland Pippin, front row and second from left, along with his uncle William Bradford, front row far right, pose with Pippin dental school colleagues in front of the old mill before it burned. Bradford and wife raised Bland after he was orphaned in 1881 at age seven. Courtesy of Lauramae Pippin Eckert and William Eckert.

Roubidoux Spring aka Big Spring

Two-and-a-half miles downstream from the Bartlett Spring branch, Roubidoux Creek enters the Gasconade River. Two miles upstream on the creek a large spring emerges from the base of a bluff, discharging an average of 37,000,000 gallons daily. Local history records George W. Gibson as a “squatter” on the future town site near the spring in 1831 or 1832 but he did not secure a patent. In 1839, Cherokees on the infamous Trail of Tears stopped at the spring to rest. The National Park Service has placed signage in the surrounding Laughlin Park that describes the forced march stop.

Edwin Swink acquired a patent on the spring and 160 acres in 1844. It is rather surprising that no one developed the water power for a mill in the county seat. Waynesville did not have a mill until P. W. Peterson erected one, the Waynesville Exchange Mills, in 1909. It was an engine driven roller mill where Reinke Income Tax Service is located. That same year, the City of Waynesville bought the spring at auction for \$200. In 1920, Dr. Pippin tried unsuccessfully to organize a company to be called Big Spring Development Company that would build a dam at the spring and the water power would run a dynamo to light the town. Nothing came of the proposition. For all of the 19th and early 20th centuries, locals called the spring Big Spring.

For generations the spring and grounds have been a popular recreation site for church and school picnics. Fishermen try to lure the stocked trout and the spring’s more than two miles of surveyed cave passage offers a challenge for intrepid cave divers.



View of Roubidoux Spring from the bluff.

Boiling Spring

Back on the Gasconade and 27.4 miles downstream from Roubidoux Creek is Boiling Spring, a second magnitude spring with a discharge of 42,000,000 gallons a day. This makes it the largest spring in the Gasconade watershed and the fifteenth largest in Missouri. The spring erupts in the riverbed near the right bank at the base of a tall bluff.



This drone photo was taken shortly after a 3-inch rain and the river was muddy, hence the gray color. The darker gray is the discharge from the spring in the riverbed. The force of the water was enough to propel jets upstream like tentacles. The original color photo was striking in that the darker gray was a deep blue from the spring amid the muddy brown. Aerial image by Ron Simpson.

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The *Rolla Herald* reported in December of 1882 that J. D. Haskell, a Rolla carpenter and “bold fisherman of the Gasconade, has erected a fine hunter’s cabin near the ‘Boiling Springs’ for all parties who may wish to use it, and has christened it ‘Castle Cavern.’ Haskell did not own the land near the big spring and was apparently squatting on the plot where he built his cabin.

Joseph Loughrige patented 80 acres adjacent to the spring in 1900 but also squatted and used the clubhouse near the spring as early as 1895, where he rented accommodations, boats, and fishing gear. Joe was described as a “long-eared and quaint character, nearly 7 feet tall” by Charles M. Meade, editor of the “Rod and Gun” column in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*.

In 1909, Loughrige sold his property to F. P. Wheatley, a banker in St. Louis. Wheatley originally intended to build a “beautiful bungalow in keeping with the surroundings” and establish a chicken farm on “the high gravelly and rocky ground running down to the water’s edge.” Seems that the chicken farm idea laid an egg and Wheatley went into the resort business. By 1917, he had taken on a partner, a Mr. Horne, and was renting the six room bungalow for \$25.00 per week, along with three cabins on the grounds. Vineyard and Feder remarked that “Years ago the spring was used as a water supply for a bluff-edge lodge and cabins above the spring. A cable was stretched from the bluff to a point above the spring, and a bucket could be lowered into the spring and water drawn upward to the lodge.”

Another unusual feature of the spring is its recharge area to the east and southeast. It includes two sinkholes.

The smaller of the sinks is called Conical Sink. Slaughter Sink is about a mile east-southeast. This sink is 175 feet deep, said to be the deepest of Missouri’s 16,000 known sinkholes. It is a quarter of a mile wide. Fluorescein dye put in Slaughter Sink made a speedy trip of two days to Boiling Spring. The whole recharge area is very porous karst topography with twelve caves within a one mile radius. The largest of these is Onyx Cave, high on the hillside and one-third of a mile from the spring.

There is no longer any tourist development on the east side of the river adjacent to the spring. However, there is the large Boiling Spring Campground that has been developed on the west side near the spring.



F. P. Wheatley’s bluff-edge “beautiful bungalow” above Boiling Spring, 1917.

We have featured selected springs in the Big Piney and Gasconade watersheds. We have not described all of the forty springs in the area but those with the largest discharges and particularly interesting histories. There are a couple of other histories associated with smaller springs that are noteworthy. Ozark Springs on the Gasconade was developed into a popular resort by E. A. Steckel in the 1920s. The namesake Ozark Spring was a small one, discharging only 6,000 gallons per day. John Bradbury detailed Steckel’s various developments in “E. A. Steckel: The Man Who Put Richland (and Turkey Ridge and the Ozark Springs Resort) on the Map,” found in the *2011 Old Settlers Gazette*. Another spring of note, Mossy Spring on the Gasconade, with a slightly larger flow than Ozark Spring (775,000 gallons per day), was the location of the Pulaski Rod and Gun Club clubhouse, built in 1908 by St. Louis postal employees.

Sources

Most of the information about the early history and lumbering activities at the springs on the Big Piney River came from a series of three articles written by **Lynn Morrow** for the *Old Settlers Gazette*. They are:

“Piney Sawmillers at Gasconade Mills (2008)

“Old Pulaski: A Lumbering and Rafting Legacy - Part I (2016)

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A special thanks to **Ron Simpson** for several field trips to take drone pictures.



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