

Springs and Trout Parks

There are three more springs in Old Pulaski that certainly need a mention, although they are not located on the Big Piney and Gasconade rivers as the previously described springs. They are large springs and quite well known for their recreational use today. They comprise three of the state's four trout parks.

Montauk Springs and State Park

The emergence of the underground water at Montauk in southwestern Dent County is more diverse than most springs. According to Bolon (1935), "The spring has two main branches. The south branch has two mouths 300 feet apart in a gravel bar, and the north one has three mouths; one comes out of the rocks at the base of a hill and the other two out of the gravel at the foot of the hill. The two branches join near Montauk, forming the beginning of Crooked Creek, and the combined flow is used to operate a grist mill."

That combined flow yields a daily discharge of 40,900,000 gallons, a considerably smaller discharge than the output of the other two trout park springs.

Several grist mills were built utilizing the power of the spring water. The first mill was built about 1835 by A. W. Hollerman. A second mill was constructed in 1860 by the Nathaniel Stevenson family. A vertical turbine-driven saw mill was also built nearby. The settlement post office was named Montauk in 1859 by these early settlers after their former home, Montauk, in Suffolk County, Long Island, New York.

In the fall of 1896, Timothy Hickman built the three-story grist mill that now stands in Montauk State Park. "The mill, which operated year-round, served a wide area because, located at the headwaters of the Current River, there were no large major streams to the immediate north or west on the geological area commonly referred to as the Salem Plateau, that could

Trout Comes to Missouri

It may surprise some readers to know that rainbow and brown trout are not native to the waters of Missouri. The average temperature of the spring water is 58 degrees Fahrenheit, varying little throughout the year, and perfect for rainbow trout which were native to California.

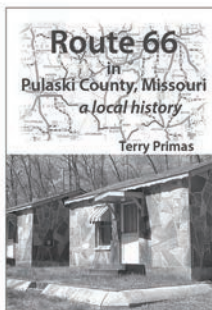
The federal government became alarmed at the nation's declining fish population in the late 1800s. Initial efforts were to stock California salmon in interior rivers during the years 1876-1896. This experiment ultimately failed but native rainbow trout from the McCloud River proved more adaptable. A trout hatchery was established in 1879 on the northern California river with the first egg harvest in 1880.

In 1879, the legislature created the Missouri Fish Commission. The Fish Commission first decided to give Eastern brook trout a try. They purchased 5,000 one-year-old brook trout from a hatchery in Wisconsin. The commissioners looked to the Ozarks for the best habitat for survival and released most of this first batch into Bennett's Mill Spring, along with 500 at Schlicht's Mill and 250 in Spring Creek and Bartlett's Mill in 1879. Brook trout were released over the next 20 years but they did not grow as fast or as big as rainbows.

The Fish Commission established the first cold water hatchery the next year at Brown's Spring near St. Joseph. In May of 1880, 10,000 rainbow trout eggs sent from the McCloud River arrived at the St. Joseph hatchery. The resulting fry were released in the headwaters of the Gasconade and Osage Rivers. Trout eggs were shipped by rail from the McCloud River to the St. Joseph hatchery, the last shipment being on February 17, 1987. From that date forward, all trout stocked in Missouri came from hatcheries using their own broodstock.

The popularity of rainbow trout with anglers had just begun. Missouri now operates five cold water hatcheries, propagating 1.5 million rainbows annually, including the 800,000 released for the daily stocking in the four spring-fed trout parks.

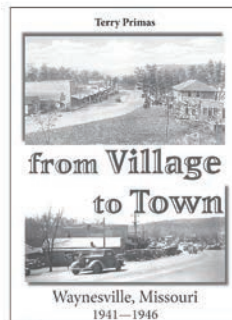
Interested in Local History? Try one of these reads.



Pulaski County has 33 miles of Route 66 and a rich road history to go with it. Spanning the years 1926 to 1980, this narrative includes the people, roadside development, and the changes to the road itself. Using a variety of sources and over 400 images and maps, this book records much of the local history adjacent to the famous highway.

Soft cover
238 pages **\$24.99**
Indexed

Waynesville, Missouri, county seat of Pulaski County, began the decade of the 1940s with a population of 468 citizens. The only paved street in the small village was Route 66 on the south side of the town square. There were no city utilities nor health services, except the local doctor. Then came the construction of Fort Leonard Wood. Before the decade was over, the rustic village was transformed into a modern Ozark town. This is the story of that transformation. Soft cover 214 pages Indexed **\$25.00**



Originally destined for construction in southcentral Iowa, the Army's Seventh Corps training camp was relocated to the Ozarks in Pulaski County, Missouri. The sprawling 68,000 acre camp subsumed part of the Gasconade National Forest and the private land holdings of over 500 citizens. The construction of the camp, christened Fort Leonard Wood, significantly altered the natural and cultural landscapes.

More than 320,000 officers and enlisted soldiers were trained at Fort Leonard Wood during World War II. This pictorial history provides nearly 250 images that depict the construction, training, and leisure activities of the soldiers during the period 1941-1946.

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In 1888, the Neosho National Fish Hatchery was established and is the oldest continuously operational federal fish hatchery raising fish today. Rainbow trout is raised for release in Lake Taneycomo, as well as well as endangered pallid sturgeon and Topeka shiners. Neosho was originally chosen for a hatchery site because of two dozen or so springs in the area and the availability of rail service by which the fish were distributed. Hearell Spring, modest in size but the largest of the many springs, provided the cold water for the first ponds with additional water tapped from other springs as the operation enlarged.

Image of the hatchery in 1909 courtesy of The State Historical Society of Missouri.

power a large powerful grist mill. This valuable service afforded local settlers up and down the Current River and Pigeon Creek valleys, as well as in adjacent "side hollows," the opportunity to have grains processed and conduct other pertinent business in the Montauk community. Settlers came in oxen or horse drawn wagons, a one or two day ride from as far away as Licking, Raymondville, and Salem, to have their grains ground. Some folks would stay overnight in a near 'camphouse' and wait for their grains to be processed." (Bufkin, n.d.)

The once vibrant economy in the Montauk Valley began to decline in the 1920s. The wildlife and marketable timber were mostly gone and denuded ridge tops and hillsides led to eroded rocky fields.

According to Bufkin, "Some of the first Montauk trout brought from the railroad terminus near St. James, Mo., were transported into the Montauk valley on horse drawn wagons. The

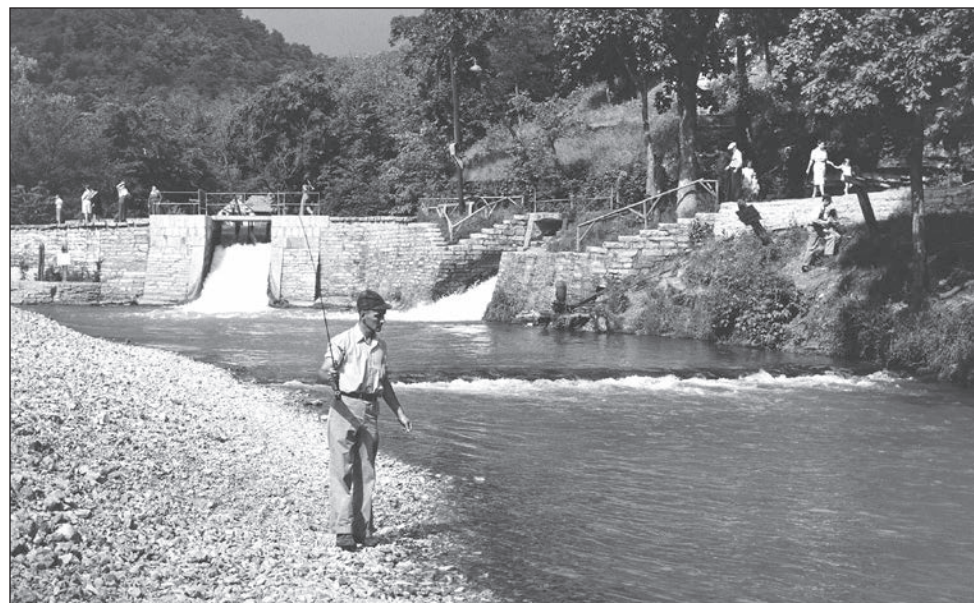
trout were contained within cream cans nestled in saw dust with blocks of ice dripping cold water through holes in the vessel lids, thus sustaining the precious cargo prior to release into the stream. Other fingerling trout were apparently procured by E. L. Vernon of Salem, Mo., and brought into the valley and stocked in the Current River in 1920 by Grover Brigman. The cream cans of this era commonly held about 50 trout fingerlings in each can."

The state began acquiring land for the park in 1926-1927. By 1932, a trout hatchery had been established and daily trout stocking began in the Current River. Much of the early rearing pools and dikes were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, along with several structures which are still in use.

Today the park covers 2,920 acres with 580,715 visitors in 2023. The hatchery annually raises 450,000-550,000 stocking size fish.



South spring branch at Montauk State Park.



Timothy Hickman's 1896 grist mill at Montauk still stands.



Original 1932 trout hatchery building. A new facility was built in 1948 and enlarged in 1967-68 and again in 1979 and 2001.

Roaring River State Park (left, in 1952) is not in our area but located near Cassville, Barry County, in southwest Missouri. It is the fourth state trout park located at a spring. Twin spillways form the outlet for waters emerging from Roaring River Spring that are contained in a pool above the spillways. Falling into the spring branch below, the cool water forms a near perfect habitat for the hatchery-reared trout, raised on the premises by the Department of Conservation. The spring flow fluctuates greatly, having been measured up to 69,800,000 gallons with a minimum of below 10,000,000 gallons a day. Thomas Mark Sayman, a St. Louis businessman, lobbied to make the popular recreation spot a state a park and when the state failed to do so, Sayman purchased the 2,400 acres surrounding the spring and donated it to the state in 1923. It was developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration between 1933 and 1939. Picture by Gerald Massie, courtesy of The State Historical Society of Missouri.

Maramec Spring and Park



The dam at Maramec Spring, built in 1826, backs up water from the spring to create a pool of potential energy for the torrent of the spring branch.

Maramec Spring is the fifth largest spring in Missouri at 93,000,00 gallons per day. Waters of the spring rise in a circular basin beneath a high bluff of Gasconade dolomite. An artificial lake has been created by the damming of the spring branch. The dam, which raises the water level 8 to 10 feet, was

built in the early 1800's to provide water power for a charcoal-fueled iron industry. Maramec Spring played an important role in the early development of Missouri. Near the great spring were deposits of the red iron mineral hematite, brown limonite, and iron pyrites. Thomas James, an iron

monger from Ohio, came to Missouri in 1826 and began to build the Maramec Iron Works at the spring, which produced until 1876. (Vineyard, 121.) It was the first iron works west of the Mississippi.

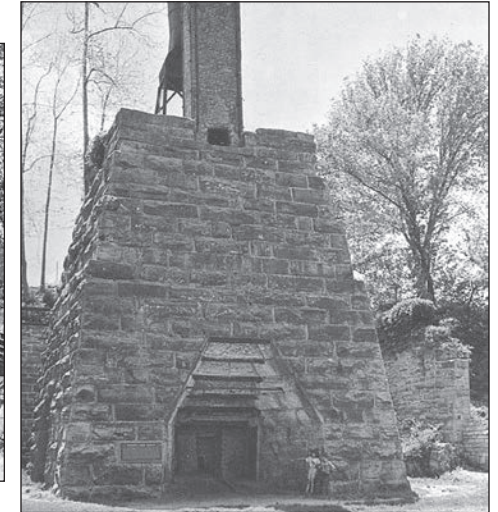
The spring powered the giant pistons of the air compressors and the heavy refining hammers. The spring also powered flour and grist mills, as well as a sawmill. The early saw mills on the



These early tourists stand on one of the large undershot wheels used to power the iron-making machinery.

Big Piney and Gasconade were Maramec Iron Works customers.

The surrounding 200-acre public access park is privately owned by the James Foundation. There is an Agricultural Museum and interpretive display about the iron works. The Missouri Department of Conservation operates a hatchery and the fishery with daily stocking of rainbow trout.



The large iron furnace stands primarily intact.

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Bennett Spring and State Park



Four flour and grist mills were constructed to utilize the power of Bennett Spring to process grains. Above is the fourth mill which stood until 1944.

Bennett Spring rises in a circular pool about 50 feet in diameter in the bed of Bennett Spring Creek. The daily average flow is 96,000,000 gallons.

The spring was first utilized by James Brice for a mill in 1837 and named Brice Mill. Shortly thereafter Peter Bennett also located a mill near the spring. Both mills were destroyed by flood waters prior to the Civil War.

Peter Bennett rebuilt his mill and the area became known as Bennett Mill and spring. Bennett's second mill burned in 1895. Another mill was opened in 1900 by the Atchley family, who used the salvaged overshot wheel from Bennett's burned mill. The Bennett and Atchley mills used a dam made of logs to provide power for their overshot wheels. This mill, which

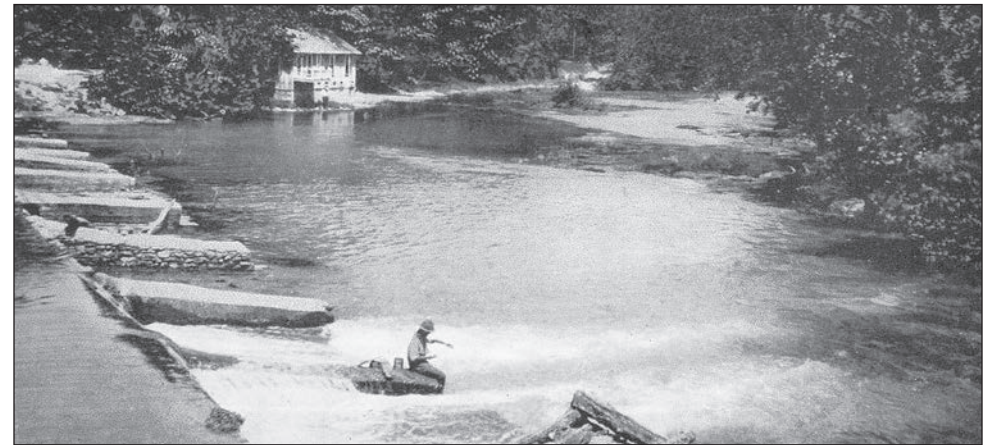
had become a prized feature of the new state park, burned in 1944.

The Bennett family sold the spring to the state in 1924 and the trout hatchery became a state facility in 1927. During the 1930s, as at other state parks, the CCC made improvements. It built six cabins, a dining lodge, trails, roads, and shelters. The CCC also replaced the log dam with a concrete one and constructed an arched stone bridge over the spring branch, which

are important features in the park today.



Tourists and anglers stayed at this 1920s hotel at Bennett Springs.



Dam and hatchery building (in background) ca. 1932.



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