

# 1912 OUTDOOR NOTES

We thought we would bring you another installment of some vintage outdoor sporting news with a little whimsy added. The Gasconade and Big Piney rivers were favorite hunting and fishing destinations for sportsmen, particularly from St. Louis, in the early decades of the 20th century. They came first to Old Pulaski by train, taking horse and wagon rides to their chosen rivers and resorts. As roads improved beginning in the mid-1920s, automobiles increased the sportsman and tourist travel.

Fishing conditions, game status, and sportsmen's activities were covered in the "Rod and Gun" column of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, edited by E. T. Grether. Local conditions and news came to Editor Grether by mail, along with visits to and from outfitters and sportsmen in the Ozarks.

Thanks to **Lynn Morrow**, former Director of the Local Records Preservation Program, Missouri State Archives, for digging up these outdoor items of the past.

## March 24

Dick Flemming states he was one of the first anglers to be written up in Rod and Gun columns of the Globe-Democrat years ago, when William C. Jones told himself, Walter E. Dryden and

"Duke" W. H. Mephan of the City Hall about the great fishing then to be had on the Gasconade River. They went to Crocker and floated for miles, never seeing any one in that, then, wild country. They were old timers on that river and many were their exploits in the Rod and Gun columns of the paper. Game and fish were very plentiful then [it was always better in the 'old days']. Their favorite camping place was Portuguese Bend. Once, while at Bartlett Springs, they lost a bottle of whiskey in the water, and five years later one of the party dived into the spring and recovered the bottle of liquor.

## May 5

W. B. ("Buck") Taylor of the Boatmen's Bank and George F. Brigham, Jr., made a week-end trip to Waynesville, Pulaski County, Mo. Waynesville is on the Roubidoux, a mile from the Gasconade River. Right in the village of Waynesville there is a spring of great magnitude, among the largest in the state, flowing into the Roubidoux. They found the Roubidoux as clear as crystal and the Gasconade slightly murky. On their arrival at the Baker Hotel at 9 a.m. Saturday they asked young Jack Baker to direct them to the fishing grounds. He said: "Do you see that green house over



The new Baker Hotel, 1910, with young Jack Baker at left holding dog. Lee Baker, proprietor and Pulaski County Sheriff, is at far right. The Baker Hotel stood on the northwest corner of Benton and North streets on the square in Waynesville, located where the public parking lot is now across from the post office.. The 16-room frame hotel burned in 1914 and Lee Baker built a new three-story brick hotel with 26 bedrooms on the same lot. Courtesy of the Pulaski County Historical Society.

yonder?" He pointed to a house near the hotel. He said:

"Willie Gan lives there and goes fishing every day; you just follow him; he went down to the mouth of the Roubidoux on the Gasconade about half an hour ago. If you fish 'round him you will have luck."

After dinner they followed "Willie Gan" and found him with ten small-mouth bass. They had some little difficulty in locating "Willie" as he is a large man weighing fully 300 pounds. They found him a very pleasant gentleman who loaned them his cane poles. He caught his fish with live minnows, and after Taylor and Brigham tried all kinds of artificial bait they were glad to use minnows. In the two days they caught twenty-two small-mouth bass weighing from 1 to 2½ pounds. They only fished a part of the time. One forenoon was spent in going to Bartlett's Mill, four miles from Waynesville. On arriving there they found they had lost their cane poles on the way and returned to their fishing grounds on the Gasconade at the mouth of the Roubidoux. Ex-Chief Creecy's farm is in the Gasconade bottom. The chief found the poles and left them in a conspicuous place. Chief Creecy has a beautiful farm and enjoys life in that vicinity. [In 1908, Chief Creecy was the first person to drive an automobile from St. Louis to Waynesville.]

Another local fisherman at Waynesville is Mr. Fred Scott, prosecuting attorney, who is a pleasant gentleman and glad to give any information regarding fishing grounds.

Marion Wilkerson, locally known as "the bachelor," has a home right on the bank of the Roubidoux and sup-

plies minnows. They are certainly fine ones and 15 cents will purchase a day's supply. The Baker Hotel is conducted by Lee Baker, who is county sheriff. Mrs. Baker looks after its management and it is noted for its excellent and well supplied table.

The elevation at Waynesville is 1240 feet and is one of the beauty spots of the Ozarks, and the boys hope to visit there again at an early date.

May 12—News reached St. Louis last week of the death of Mr. John J. Hooker, after whom the town of Hooker, Mo., was named, at that point. Mr. Hooker was well and favorably known by many St. Louis sportsmen, owing to the courtesies shown by him to them, and his death will cause sorrow among his many friends here. Mr. Hooker was 57 years of age, and his death came suddenly from heart failure. He was a member of the Masonic Fraternity and his funeral was conducted by the lodge at Dixon, where he was buried.

## July 28

The Pulaski Rod and Gun Club members were entertained by their friends at Knights of Columbus Hall Tuesday evening. Music and song helped to pass the evening pleasantly. The latest tales from the Ozarks were told by Messrs. Lieberstein and Lane, who had just returned from a very successful outing at the clubhouse near Mossy Springs on the Gasconade. Judge Rank M. Slater entertained the gathering with a few of his usual good stories...Reports made by the officers of the club show it to be in a flourishing condition, and the members wish to take advantage of this opportunity to invite all passing fishermen who are in the vicinity of Mossy Springs to drop in and have a smile with them at



The Pulaski Rod and Gun Clubhouse was built in 1908 on the Gasconade River at Mossy Spring Ford. The members of the club were men from the St. Louis post office.

**Outdoor Notes - continued**

the Pulaski Rod and Gun Clubhouse.

**September 22**

The following communication was received by Jim McDonald and Tom Glannon of the "Jumping Frog Club" from Tom Reilly at Gascondy. Mack says the allusion to a "good story for the Globe-Democrat" is intended as a roast on a story of his, which was printed some time ago, but that he was not "seeing things" at the time, having no "live bait" except Adam's pure ale from Shanghai Spring. Reilly's tale, as a fish story, is a gem. He writes:

Yesterday I started to float down the river in one of Pattison's [*Hugh Pattison, operator of the Gascondy Club on the Gasconade in Osage County—see below*] richly upholstered and mahogany finished gondolas. I had all of the paraphernalia usually carried by a faithful devotee of Izaak Walton, including three kinds of bait—live, artificial and liquid. I suppose one would say that "live" and "liquid" are synonymous when applied to bait, but not so in this case. The liquid bait was recommended by Pattison as the most tempting fish bait known. Luck was only mediocre and after drifting for two or three miles, catching a 3 or 4 pound bass every other cast, I turned the prow of the gondola toward the inviting shade of a large tree overhanging the river, determined to try my luck there. I had hardly anchored and thrown in my hook when the stillness was broken by an unearthly croak. It was weird and uncanny. I turned and there on the bank was one of the largest frogs I have ever seen. He was a solemn-looking creature and while I was gazing at him he grotesquely winked

his left eye and raised his right front leg in salute. My amazement grew as I followed his gaze and saw that he was watching with longing eyes the receptacle which contained the liquid bait, and I almost fell out of the boat when I heard him distinctly say, "Hello, old top, give us a nip." To my inquiry, asking him where he learned to talk, he said he had inhabited the waters of the Ozarks for many long years, and had been in the vicinity of so many fishing camps that speaking just grew natural with him. We became quite friendly and I invited him aboard. After partaking of several nips, he said: "Pull down the river and I will show you some sights you never dreamed of."

"We had proceeded only a short distance when I heard a peculiar purring, like a cat after a satisfactory meal. He told me it emanated from a wise old catfish who, true to his feline instincts, left the water every day and captured field mice; then went back to his lair, purring in a self-satisfied way, until sleep overcame him. Mr. Frog said the catfish went so far as to play with the mice before finally slaying them. A little farther on Froggy asked me to steer toward the middle of the river so as not to disturb school, which was then in session in a quiet pool near the bank. He explained it was a school of minnows and that school would not be out for an hour. He was mistaken, however, as a loud barking at that moment caused a scattering of the pupils. I learned from Froggy that it was a dogfish barking and that he was the watchdog of the river bank where there was lot of green (grass). "His bark," said Mr. Frog, "is worse than his bite, but I advise you, in case he bites, to cut the line and let him go, as his appearance and the liberal use

of your liquid bait, do no make a happy combination."

Hurriedly, I pulled away, and as the barking died in the distance, my friend, the frog, gave me a history of labor conditions in the fish world. He said the jack salmon was the most shiftless of all the finny tribe; that as soon as he got a job he was "canned" on account of his lazy habits, which explained the superabundance of canned salmon on the market. His story was interrupted by a weird chant, accompanied by a loud thumping as though the Salvation Army was holding service. "No," said the frog, "I will show you the most wonderful sight of all. But in order to do so, it will be necessary for me to endow you with the gift of seeing into the water." He stood on his head, made a few mysterious kicks with his long legs, croaked several times, and, lo and behold, everything in the river was as plain to my eyes as the trees on the river bank. His prophesy of wonderful sights was no idle boast. I saw a band wagon, drawn by a red horse and a buffalo. In the rear of the wagon, on a perch, was a German carp singing "De Wacht Am Rhein," accompanied by an eel on a bass drum. "The bass drum," said the frog, "has a peculiar history. He can trace his ancestry back to the stone age, when his family was known as the stone perch. His father, however, became mixed up with the bass family and the bass-drum came into being. He is in great demand on all festive occasions requiring music. That party," resumed Froggy, "is on its way to a GAR reunion."

We took another nip of the liquid bait and continued our interrupted journey. The frog told me many queer experiences of his life. "This scar," said he, indicating a long gash on his neck, "was

the result of brotherly love. It happened on the Current, Piney or some other Ozark stream some years ago. I do not remember which one. Our family was a distinguished one. My brother was the philosopher of the frog tribe. One fine day, sitting on a log, lost in thought, he was captured by one of a party of fishermen, this man jabbed his long knife in my brother, pinning him to the log. The fisherman, no doubt, intended coming back and adding him to his string later in the day. In the meantime, a meeting of the king's advisers was called for some purpose, and, my brother's presence being necessary, I was delegated to find him. He was suffering untold agonies when I located him but refused to be freed until I took his place. "For," said he, "should that fisherman come back and not find me, it will spoil a good story for the Globe-Democrat, and he will be much disappointed thereby." The knife was jabbed in me and I lay there for some little time. But as soon as the meeting was over he came and took my place. I fastened him to the log but not very securely, hoping the water would wash him away. My plan was partially successful, for later on when I returned he was missing. I understood that he floated down the river with the knife still sticking in his back. But he was so conscientious that as soon as he could reach a log he climbed upon it and with one mighty kick of his leg he drove the knife into the log, pinioning himself to it where he was found by the fisherman to his wonderment and amazement.

My friend, the frog, appeared much affected by the recital of this narrative, but he became so depressed when he found all the liquid bait gone that with a scant good-bye he flopped overboard and was seen no more.



Hugh Pattison, St. Louis businessman and sportsman, established the Dixon Club on the Gasconade south of Dixon in 1902. In 1905, he began development of the Gascondy Club on the lower Gasconade in Osage County, east of Freeburg. It was located next to the Chicago-Rock Island railroad. Above is the 1908 layout of

the resort. For more on Gascondy, see Lynn Morrow's "Gascondy Club: Railroad Tourism in the Gasconade Valley" in the 2004 *Old Settlers Gazette*. Panorama courtesy of the John Bradbury Collection, The State Historical Society of Missouri.