

Shepherd of the Hills Country

By Lynn Morrow

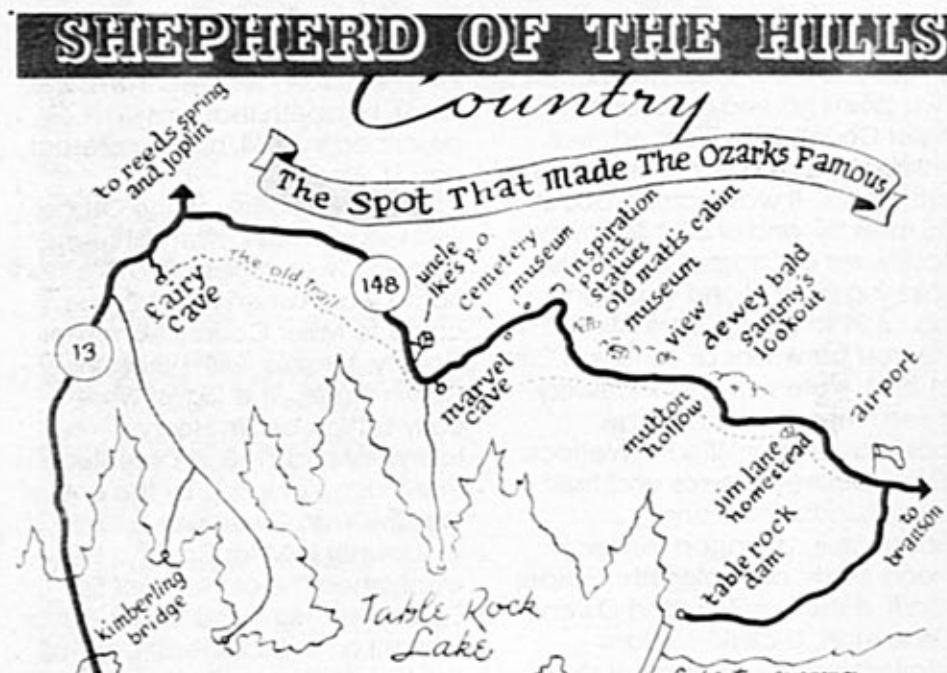
History buffs in our northern Ozarks know that Harold Bell Wright's famous novel, *Shepherd of the Hills*, published in 1907 was more than a commercial success for its famous author. In the early twentieth century public school teachers commonly used the book as required reading in a literature class. The book's phenomenal national success as a sentimental, morality play also spoke to our region for the truths it contained about the victory of Christian family values over the inroads of immoral cultural influences. Moreover, the Ozark lifestyles portrayed by Wright were ones that everyone knew by first-hand experience.

The Ozarks Collection of the University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, has now published a highly readable discussion of the transformation of a subsistence, open range economy into a modern economy, imposed by outsiders, but also embraced by Ozarkers themselves. It is Lynn

Morrow and Linda Myers -Phinney's *Shepherd of the Hills Country: Tourism Transforms the Ozarks, 1880s-1930s*. The book, according to a reviewer at the University of Missouri, shows how an Arcadian ideal, the stories by Harold Bell Wright, a favorable geography, and easy access provided by railroads and automobiles gave birth to "The Land of a Million Smiles." And there's hardly a hillbilly in sight, save those provided by an Ozarks version of "central casting."

Chapters that will especially interest our region are ones on the origin of Marble (later Marvel) Cave, a history of float fishing in the

Ozarks, and one of imagery in the Ozarks Arcadia and backwoods. The authors recognize journalists and folklorists who have contributed to the region such as Wright and Vance Randolph, but carefully, and correctly, remind us that they were not historians and that Randolph defined "a backwoods Ozarks for an audience saturated in myth and



Tourist still frequent sites made famous nearly a century ago.

stereotype." The result was "commercial hillbillism" that became just one more extractive industry in the Ozarks that allowed promoters, including insiders, to "perpetuate the collective

provincialism and hillbilly buffoonery into long-range profits, even at the expense of their own image."

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SHEPHERD of the HILLS COUNTRY



Tourism Transforms the Ozarks, 1880s-1930s

**LYNN MORROW AND
LINDA MYERS-PHINNEY**

famous Galena-to-Branson float trip had antecedents on the Gasconade and Big Piney rivers. The Frisco railroad allowed sporting businessmen to have easy access to these rivers by the 1870s and a brisk float fishing business flourished at Arlington by the 1890s. These wilderness safaris of businessmen who became acquainted with the region sometimes led to corporate investments in the Ozarks. The urban sportsmen and railroads hauled their commissary, boats, dogs, weapons, and more and stimulated the birth of guided float fishing enterprises. The fishing camps on wide gravel bars provided the stage for a flowering of Ozarks folklore and its retelling by urban journalists in Sunday features. Many sportsmen enjoyed the tradition of the fall camp hunt. By the late 1890s the St. Louis Globe-Democrat estimated that 5,000 St. Louisans left

Union Station and "took to the woods and waters" at the beginning of the fall hunting season.

Railroad economies spurred

investments, brought new people, and began new traditions in the Ozarks. Stockraising is shown to have been the major revenue-producing enterprise for most families. But the canning industry offered new experiences, especially for women. The seven-week manufacturing cycle in late summer often gave women their first wage-paying jobs. The small factories created a social setting for meeting new people, learning of larger worlds, and meeting a future spouse. By the 1920s, for example, women held two-thirds of the manufacturing jobs in Stone and Webster Counties, Missouri.

In short, the main theme of this study is the development of tourism, but it is also a social history of the Ozarks. Interested readers should run, not walk, to the nearest bookstore or library and review this book. Be forewarned, it is not Ozarks "history" as you've known it. It's not fable; it's not folklore; it's History.

The book may be ordered in paperback directly from the publisher at 800-626-0090.

TEXAS COUNTY IN THE EARLY DAYS An 1888 Eyewitness Account by Tom T. Lynch of Houston

I have been in Texas county ever since she has been a county. I think she was made in the early part of the year 1845. I came to this place in 1841, in the month of May, when everything was very beautiful, and the grass was green and lovely; also, the water was very green, and not very familiar with the laws of this part of the great state of Missouri and Texas county. It was at that time, 1841, in May, Pulaski county. It was afterward made Wright county, and, lastly, Texas. When I came here the wild deer swarmed the hills in large herds and turkeys were more numerous than pigeons are now. You could have the black bear for a pet more readily or more easily than you can a deer at this day.

We had for the carnivorous animals the black bear, panther, the black and grey wolf, the wild-cat and catamount, and then, we had an abundance of the smaller (animals), such as the raccoon, opossum, mink...prairie chicken...the pheasant, snipe, duck and wood-chuck.

All of these I have seen and plentifully, bountifully and abundantly.

When I came to this county, she, in fact the whole of South Central Missouri, was very thinly settled. (It) was from thirty to fifty miles from farm-house to farm-house. The principle business followed here was milling pine lumber and shipping it to St. Louis, Mo., the nearest market.

All goods not manufactured here had to be brought from the city of St. Louis on wagons.

When this was Gasconade county, the people here had to go to Pinkney, a small town on the Missouri river, eighty miles above St. Louis, to court. When it was Crawford county, they had to go to Steelville to court; when it was Pulaski county, they had to go to Waynesville to court; when it was Wright county, they had to go to Hartville to court, and when Texas county was made, court was held on the old home-stead, where I first landed, in section 7, township 31, range 9, on the banks of the Big Piney river. I think Peter O' Miner was the sheriff of the court when first held in Texas county.

I don't suppose in that day Texas county had any more population than the town of Houston has to-day and public schools were unknown, as were almost any other kind of schools.

Houston was located in about the year 1848, with about thirteen families and one store.

One more matter of the dark past, and that is the mills, the milling men and the milling business. From the south part of township 33 in Range 19 to the south part of township 31 in range 9, west, there were fourteen lumber mills, and the owners and managers were free to use promiscuously the finest pine and oak lumber from the forests, regardless of the title. I branched into the milling business, as was very natural. The laws of our country are far different now, and so am I.

I will leave the dark days as proudly as possible and take up the present and look at the other side a while. The bear and the elk have gone and many of the other creatures mentioned. Our county has become one of the leading counties in her farming and mechanical industries and her population has increased to about 18,000. Her voting population is about 8,000. She has about 100 public school sub-districts under the system of the public school laws of the state. Texas county has about 740,000 acres, of which about 70,000 acres are government lands and can be had at \$1.25 per acre, or 160 acres can be homesteaded for \$32, with seven years to pay \$16, with no interest.

Texas county is rapidly filling up with an honest, high-minded class of people. You can tell that by her increase in the public schools; you can tell that from the United States census report. I helped take the enumeration of my own county in the year 1870, when the population was about 9,000; and I helped to take the census in 1880, when the population was about 13,000.

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