



# Piney Lodge - The Piney Story

## Discovery and purchase

The Piney Lodge Hunting and Fishing Club. Such an elegant name--so given because of the gentle and beautiful Ozark stream that flows gently by its one acre of land. It had as its origin an agreement signed October 1, 1903, between George Barbour and his wife Grace of East St. Louis Illinois, and Mary Ann Ousley and her 4 children of Pulaski County, Missouri. This lease was made for the consideration of \$5.00 per year. George Barbour was ill of what was thought to be consumption, a fatal illness in the early 1900's. He and his lovely young wife hoped that by moving from industrial East St. Louis to the beauty and cleanliness of the Ozark mountains that he would recuperate. George was sufficiently optimistic, despite his doctor's gloomy prediction, that he signed a 10 year lease for the property with Mary Ann Ousley, who, incidentally, was later to be known as Granny Ousley to all Piney Lodgers. George and Grace built on their newly acquired property ("one acre of land on the West Side of the Piney Fork of the Gasconade



River above and adjoining the mouth of the Dry Creek in the County of Pulaski in the State of Missouri") a two-story, four-room house with a fireplace--two rooms down and two up.

Within a year's time, George did regain his health, and within that

time he and Grace became parents. With this they were eager to return to the city, and on November 21, 1904, he assigned his lease to Fred Giessing of East St. Louis, Illinois, acting on behalf of himself, Philip Becker, F. B. Jordan, J. M. Bramlette, Conrad Reeb, Fred Ahring and Jule Hueseman.

Upon returning to the city, George and Grace became parents for a second time. Despite medical predictions of an early death, George, as president of the Barbour Metal Boat Works of Valley Park, Missouri, died of infirmities in June 1940 at age 75. He was survived by his widow, Grace (It is not known when she died), a son, Charles, and a daughter, Frances. As late as 1972, Frances was living in Belleville, Illinois, at Our Lady of the Snows Retirement community. Nothing is known about Charles.

On December 5, 1904, the 7 persons for whom Fred Giessing had been acting, including himself, met and agreed to pay \$50.00 each toward the purchase of the ground known as George Barbour's on the Big Piney River. This included a two-story, four-room house on the site. Also at this meeting, a motion was made and passed that the organization be known as the Piney Lodge Hunting and Fishing Club. Mr. Fred Giessing was elected President. He was the owner and operator of Schaub Hardware Company, located on East Broadway at Main Street in East St. Louis, Illinois. Mr. Conrad Reeb was



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elected Secretary-Treasurer. He was the President of the Southern Illinois National Bank, located at East Broadway and Collinsville Avenues. Both men, prominent in the community in which they lived, held these offices until their deaths many years later.

Despite the resolution of 1904 to buy the property for \$350.00, the lease was renewed in 1913 and the property was not purchased until August of 1918 for \$350.00. The property was then owned by a Mr. G. W. Lane. Granny Ousley had sold the property to a Mr. Davidson Hand and he in turn to G. W. Lane.

Prior to the 1920's, Piney had been a hunting and fishing lodge for men only. Occasionally local area belles were invited in for dancing. The dancing was in the living room and downstairs bedroom. The wall between the two was hinged and easily opened its full width. By this time, the dining room and kitchen had been added to the clubhouse, giving ample room for social activities.

#### Founding families

At last the war was over and it was a time, perhaps, when adults began to relax



and look for new adventures in living. In or about 1918, Dr. O. J. Culbertson acquired membership in the club. The discovery and description of Piney Lodge as a family vacation ground was wonderfully mysterious and exciting for the first three children ever to go there. This group consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Jordan and daughter, Rosalind; Mr. and Mrs. Geissing; Dr. and Mrs.

Wilbur Mc Nary; Dr. and Mrs. Culbertson, son Roy, and daughter Irma. Rosalind was 12, Roy, 8, and Irma, 5.

This ended the "men only" character of the club, and it soon developed into a vacation home for families. The following year, F. P. Beckwith became a member of the lodge. With this, the Culbertsons and the Beckwiths, while their children were

growing up, spent many happy summer vacations together on the banks of the Piney. The Reeb and Harris families along with the Culbertsons and the Beckwiths made this acre in the Ozarks a truly wonderful place to be in the summertime.

With the advent of the participation of families, as early as 1924, a special assessment of \$10.00 each member was made for improvements to the Lodge. Dr. Culbertson and Mr. Beckwith were appointed a committee on Building and Grounds, with instructions to procure new beds, springs, mattresses, and bedding, and to see to the repair and painting of the club house and boats. In February 1928, Dr. O. J. Culbertson and F. P. Beckwith reported that all repairs to the club house, including the fencing of the grounds and the building of a two car garage, would be completed by April 1, 1928. (The garage never was constructed).

At a club meeting that following September 1928, it was decided that a new stone and brick well with hand pump be built. (The remains of the original well is still to be seen under the side porch.) The site of the new well of 1928 is to be seen on the west side of the front porch near the large sycamore tree. The well was built by

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Harvey Sheldon. The 1928 well and pump remained in use until April 1947, when the present well was dug by Dick Gray in anticipation of the coming of electricity to the lodge. A hand pump and a sink was installed in the kitchen at this time.

Also at this September 1928 meeting, Bill Sheldon, Piney Lodge's second fishing guide and handy man, (his brother Harvey had been the first), was instructed to build a new toilet. This 1928 toilet, known for years as the "Boo Potty" (so named because of the inability of some younger members to pronounce the word, "blue,") remained in use until it was replaced in 1975. The next toilet was dubbed the "green latrine", or "flower pot," because of its color and/or decor. It was destroyed in the December flood of '82, along with the kitchen, dining room, back, and side porch.

In the fall of 1927, the club unanimously instructed and authorized the Secretary-Treasurer to take up any individual memberships at anytime at a price not to exceed \$100.00. In January 1929, it was unanimously agreed that membership in the Piney Lodge Hunting and Fishing club be limited to the then present six members and their heirs, and that no



Big Piney River fishing has always been enjoyable. Harvey Sheldon, Louis Wilde, Conrad Reeb, and a Mr. Barker put their lines in the water September 11, 1910. Courtesy of Sharlotte Smith.

membership was to be sold without the consent of all other members. The then membership included Mr. Conrad Reeb, Dr. O. J. Culbertson, Mr.

F. P. Beckwith, Mr. M. L. Harris, Mr. Fred Giessing, and Mr. F. B. Jordan. Deaths and withdrawals resulted in further reducing the membership

when on May 22, 1967, the Mabry-Beckwith family was instructed to buy in the outstanding shares of the Harris and Reeb families at



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\$100.00 each. This action left the Culbertsons and Beckwiths as the remaining members. Also at this meeting, consideration was given to obtaining new members. This consideration was discarded, for it was agreed that there was sufficient interest and numbers in the two remaining families to maintain and occupy the Piney Lodge Hunting and Fishing Club.

The trip to Piney was not always the easy two to two-and-a-half hour drive via Interstate Highway 44 that it is today. The first members had to travel by St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad from Union Station in St. Louis to Dixon, Missouri, (near Devil's Elbow, Missouri).

Planning began weeks ahead for these two weeks, for clothing, lines, fishing gear and, mainly, enough food for the stay. All of it needed to be packed carefully. The only means of travel was by rail to Dixon, Missouri. The day of departure finally arrived. The train arrived in Dixon late in the afternoon, where they were met either by a neighboring farmer or the guide, Harvey Shelton, who managed to load all the persons and all the luggage into a buckboard. The long trek to the lodge began. It began to grow dark as they bumped over the gravelly, dusty roads. The children were excited, but a little frightened, for lanterns provided the only light as they went into the deep valley and along the river, the light glinting on the scary, black water.

Elaborate plans had to be made with the guide weeks in advance so that all necessary preparations could be completed before the members arrived. The Lodge had to be cleaned, weeds had to be cut, and provisions had to be purchased. Visits were never for less than one or two weeks duration.

Upon arrival, chores would be assigned to everyone. Kerosene lamps were cleaned and lighted, and after the sweeping of the mattresses and unpacking of the bed linens by the women. The tired children were put to bed. In the dim light of a lamp, the musty smell and the black void of an exposed attic of the upstairs were eerie. The adults stayed up most of the night. They built a fire in the large wood stove to heat water for washing the odd-lots of dishes, pots, and pans. Food had to be unpacked and stored. The few perishables (ham, butter, smoked sausage, cheese, etc.) were quickly put down in the cellar.

In a day or two, it was the children's chore to bring the food from the cellar. It was dark down there, damp and musty, and they believed

that "creatures" must be hiding, as the light of a lamp cast its shadow on the walls. The only entrance to the cellar was by the sloping storm doors outside. Later, a trap door and steps were installed in the living room.

By the 1920's, after the "men only" character of the club had been changed, it was possible to reach Piney by a newly constructed highway, U. S. 66--gravel for its entire length. Visits were still for one or two weeks, more often two weeks. The trip from East St. Louis to the Lodge consumed a day of about 10 to 12 hours, leaving home at 4:00 or 5:00 a.m., arriving in mid afternoon or later. Many stops were involved on the way--one for breakfast, another for lunch, and several for flat tires. The loose gravel played havoc with the tires, but a holiday atmosphere always prevailed to alleviate the unpleasantness of changing and repairing tires.

One of the most exciting parts of the trip was the stop at Rolla, Missouri (20 miles from destination) to buy ice and other provisions that would be necessary for the stay. A 300 pound block of ice would be strapped to the front bumper or the running board of the car. A visit would be made to the A & P Grocery with its luscious smell of fruits, vegetables, bakery goods, and freshly ground coffee. After all purchases were made and secured, a visit would be made to the Rolla Dairy to purchase a double or triple dip cone of one's favorite ice cream. What a treat!

Then, on to Piney Lodge, driving down the farmer's dusty road, opening and re-closing gates so the farm animals would stay in their enclosures. Upon arrival at the Lodge, the 200 pound block of ice would resemble a 200 pound block. It was quickly removed from the car and stored in the huge ice-box in the cellar, where its remains would surely but slowly be chipped away.

Snakes and mice had to be chased out and the cobwebs swept away before preparations for the evening meal could begin. Depending upon the weather, and the supply of wood, a fire was either started in the old wood stove or the kerosene beauty in the kitchen was put in readiness to cook the meals. Kerosene lamps were filled and lighted and a fire laid in the fireplace in the event it should be needed. The bedding had to be brought out of storage and aired, and bed springs had to be sprayed for red spiders before the beds could be made for the night. The men had to see to the fishing tackle and put out a trout line for

fishing was what it was all about--or so the men thought.

From the beginning, the members of Piney Lodge were fortunate in knowing and entertaining many interesting persons who were natives of the area as well as friends and associates from East St. Louis and Belleville. One of the most interesting of the Ozarkians was Mary Ann Ousley, who, along with her children, had leased the ground to George Barbour and his wife in 1903--the lady known to all Piney Lodgers before the 1940's and her own neighbors in the Piney River Valley as Granny, a name that was given to her by her oldest son at the birth of his first son. She was generally beloved by all who knew her. She was generous and kind with a genuine love of other people.

One of her first acts of kindness that for years had been a part of the Piney lore, was her gift to Mrs. Barbour of a small rocking chair in which to rock the Barbour infant of 1904. Rocking chairs had not been part of the primitive Barbour household, and Granny had noticed this. For years, the chair had been a cherished Piney possession. Granny, who lived and was active to 90 plus years, dying in the early 1940's, never

failed to visit Piney Lodge when the ladies were present. Riding side-saddle on her pretty black mare with a basket of fresh garden "goodies" in one hand and the bridle in the other, she was always a welcomed visitor. On her visits, she always shared her knowledge of the folk-lore and wood-lore of the Ozarks. She loved to gather and share the blackberries, the huckleberries, the wild gooseberries, and the hazelnuts that were plentiful in the area. For 25 years, she helped to make Piney summers happier and wiser for the adults and the children.

Another interesting character from the hills of the Ozarks was "Old Man Shannon", a long-haired, heavily bearded hermit, who, somewhere in the valley, was reputed to have a wooden shack in which he and his herd of pigs lived. He came to visit several times, would talk, but not of himself, and would share a meal. They were prepared to withstand his "scent." One year, when they arrived for the annual vacation, they found chaos. It had been a severe winter. The old man has obviously taken refuge in the lodge for the winter (verified by neighbors). The women screamed when they went into the kitchen. Every dish, glass,

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cup, pot, pan, and skillet had been used and stashed around the kitchen. Not one of them had been washed. Soon, we began to scratch. The place was alive with fleas, for the pigs had come with the old man and had lived under the house throughout the winter. After several days of washing and intense cleaning, life became more tranquil. "Old Man Shannon" never visited again, nor did they know what had happened to him.

There were other colorful Ozark men who were important in the early life of Piney Lodge. Perhaps the first and foremost being Harvey Sheldon, a native of Hooker, Missouri, who was the first guide and handy-man. Harvey knew every fishing hole in the river. In addition to guiding the men to the very best fishing, he cleaned the day's catch and did the cooking for the "boys," as he referred to them. He looked after the clubhouse in the off season, doing whatever repairs or improvements were necessary. Later, Harvey's younger brother, Bill, took over the guiding and custodial duties until about 1924, after which time his activities became sporadic and mainly custodial until about 1935.

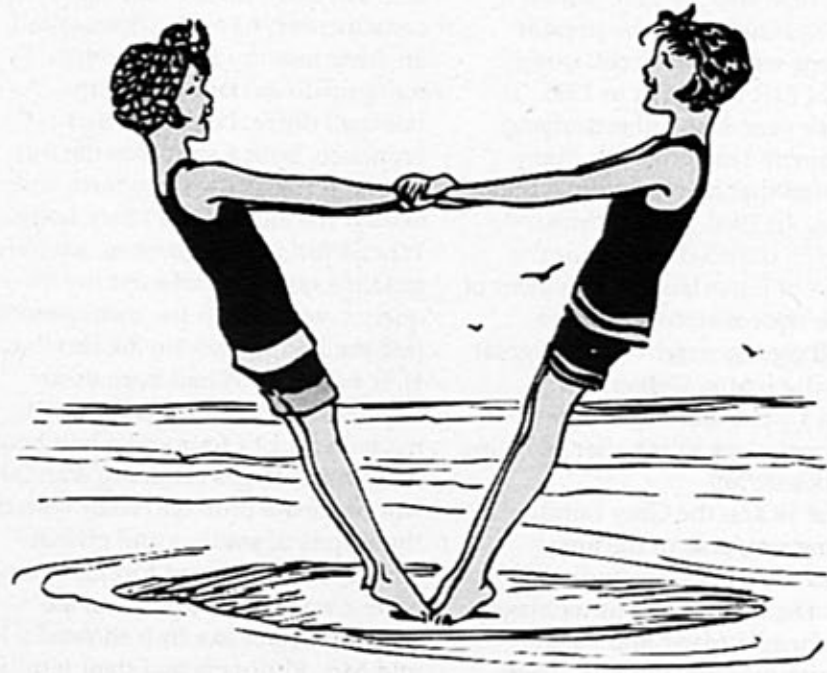
Shortly after World War One, the Rigsby family had acquired the farm

surrounding Piney Lodge, either through rental or purchase. Mrs. Rigsby, a widow, and her 4 or 5 teenage children visited Piney often to sell butter, eggs, and fresh produce. A daily walk along a dusty and rocky road by the Piney Lodge youngsters to the Rigsby farm to buy fresh milk was a never to be forgotten experience, especially if one arrived early enough to watch the cows being milked.

It must be noted that prior to this time, the infamous "Dishwasher Association" was formed. It consisted of four permanent members: Roy Culbertson, Irma Culbertson, Bill Beckwith, and Louise Beckwith. They were noted for the vicious manner in which they attacked pots and pans. Also, they were ruthless in their efforts to temporarily enlist others to participate in their activities. Temporary members of this gang were known to have been Freddy Leber, Audrey Leber, Marian Harzy, and quite possibly many others. It is believed that two members of the "Outdoor Barbershop" gang, Dr. O. J. Culbertson and F. P. Beckwith, along with their molls, were instrumental in the formation of this infamous association that showed no mercy to a dirty dish.

After the resolution of 1929 limited membership to the then remaining six families, Piney truly became a vaca-

neighbors in the "Hill" area of the city, met weekly during the cold winter nights in Belleville for a game or two



tion utopia for its members and their children. Among the many friends who visited for fishing and relaxation were Mr. and Mrs. John Harzy and their daughter Marian. Those who went for fishing with a "men only" group included Mr. Frank Craig, Mr. Charles Schiele, Mr. W. L. Wimmer, and Dr. J. Waddell. These men,

of billiards while swapping tall tales of fishing on the Piney. All, along with Dr. Culbertson, were prominent in the business and civic life of East St. Louis, Illinois.

The depression of the 1930's, sad though it was, in no way diminished the enjoyment of Piney Lodge by its members and friends. During those

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years, the club lost two of its charter members through death, Mr. Conrad Reeb in 1933 and Mr. F. B. Jordan in 1937. The building of the present front steps with native rock was a project of F. P. Beckwith in 1935. In that same year, Dr. Culbertson and Mr. Beckwith fashioned the Piney Lodge sign that hangs over the Lodge entrance. In 1940, Dr. and Mrs. Culbertson donated \$81.40 for the purchase of materials and payment of labor for the construction of the screened dining porch. What a great addition! As Mrs. Culbertson remarked, "The ladies did indeed need a cool place to eat after sweating over a hot stove."

In the 1930's, the Gray family, long-time residents of the area, acquired the farm surrounding Piney Lodge. Dick Gray and his teen-age son performed many and various custodial activities for the club. These activities became less and less after the beginning for World War II. Prosperity had come to the area because of the many services required by the newly established Fort Leonard Wood, and less and less time could be given to assist in the custodial needs of the Lodge.

As remote as it was, the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941,

contributed indirectly to a changing life style at Piney. In late 1940, the Federal Government had begun the construction of Fort Leonard Wood, an army infantry training center, 7 miles upstream from the lodge. A railroad, the St. Louis and San Francisco, built a spur into the fort. It passed through the Gray farm and skirted the entrance to Piney Lodge. When World War II became a reality, gasoline rationing affected the frequency with which the members visited the Lodge, despite the fact that U. S. highway 66 had been vastly improved and a trip could now be made in four or four and a half hours. In addition to gas rationing, vandalism became a problem, what with the thousands of soldiers and civilian employees at the new fort just a few miles away. Because of this, the membership of the club allowed a Mr. and Mrs. Ed Roach and their family to live at Piney Lodge during the war.

The war and Fort Leonard Wood had brought electricity into the vicinity of Piney Lodge. As soon as feasible after World War II, negotiations were started with Laclede Electric Cooperative of Lebanon, Missouri, to furnish electric power to Piney. At that time, Laclede had 3,000 applications for service. No progress was

being made in the efforts to obtain service for Piney, and so on the 19th of November of 1947, Carl Reeb,

Congress. Despite the fact that negotiations for electric service were slow, a cousin of the Reeb family wired the clubhouse in the fall of 1947 in anticipation of service being extended at an early date. Finally in May of 1948, electric service was provided for the Lodge. On May 7, 1948, a refrigerator (still in use) was purchased from the East St. Louis store of Sears, Roebuck, and Company for \$289.95. The Reeb family and their cousin from Columbia, Illinois, installed and connected a new electric water pump to the new well that had been dug in the spring of 1947 in anticipation of the coming of electricity. This pump served well until it had to be replaced in 1970.

Electricity and improved highways have now made it possible to spend week-ends at Piney. No longer are elaborate preparations necessary for a visit- just jump in the car and take off for any provisions or necessities may be obtained in the nearby modern shopping centers or at Leon Holdinghausen's "Grandview Market" at the top of the hill, or at Jiggs Miller's "General Store" at Devil's Elbow. The only modern convenience that have been prohibited from disturbing the serenity of the Lodge is the telephone and television.

#### PINEY FIGHT SONG (To the tune of the "Blue Ridge Mountains")

In the Ozark Mountains of Missouri  
Stood a cow on the railroad track,  
Such a nice old cow with eyes so fine.  
But you can't expect a cow to read a railroad sign,  
So she stood in the middle of a railroad track.  
Along came a train and hit her in the back.  
Now her horns are in the mountains of Missouri,  
And her tail's on the lonesome spine.

recently returned from the war (he and Dr. Roy Culbertson were the only Piney Lodgers to serve in the military during the war) wrote to his friend, the newly elected Mel Price, U. S. Congressman from Illinois, for assistance. Through the efforts of Congressman Price, Carl and other club members, a commitment was finally obtained to the effect that possibly service could be extended to the Lodge late in 1948. Even this was contingent upon obtaining sufficient steel supplies and sufficient loan authorizations from the U. S.

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(The preceding account of Piney Lodge history is believed to have been written by Dr. O. J. and Louise Culbertson. Some additions were made by an unknown contributor.)



Remember when the 'Saints and the Sinners' held court once a year? Let's see, who were the 'Saints' and who were the 'Sinners'? Hmm. Wilbur Harbaugh is wearing a big number 22 in this photo. Harvey Dye is the leftmost figure in the back row. Courtesy of Wilbur Harbaugh.

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