

Nagogami Lodge by John Bradbury

Nagogami Lodge (pronounced “na-GOG-amy”) is one of the last resorts from the heyday of commercially-operated vacation destinations on the Gasconade River. It is on the right bank of that portion of the Gasconade River flowing between Interstate 44 at Arlington and Highway 63 near Vienna, and near the Gaines Ford crossing in Maries County. It is twelve miles northwest of Rolla on what is now State Highway E, but what was known then as the Gaines Ford road.

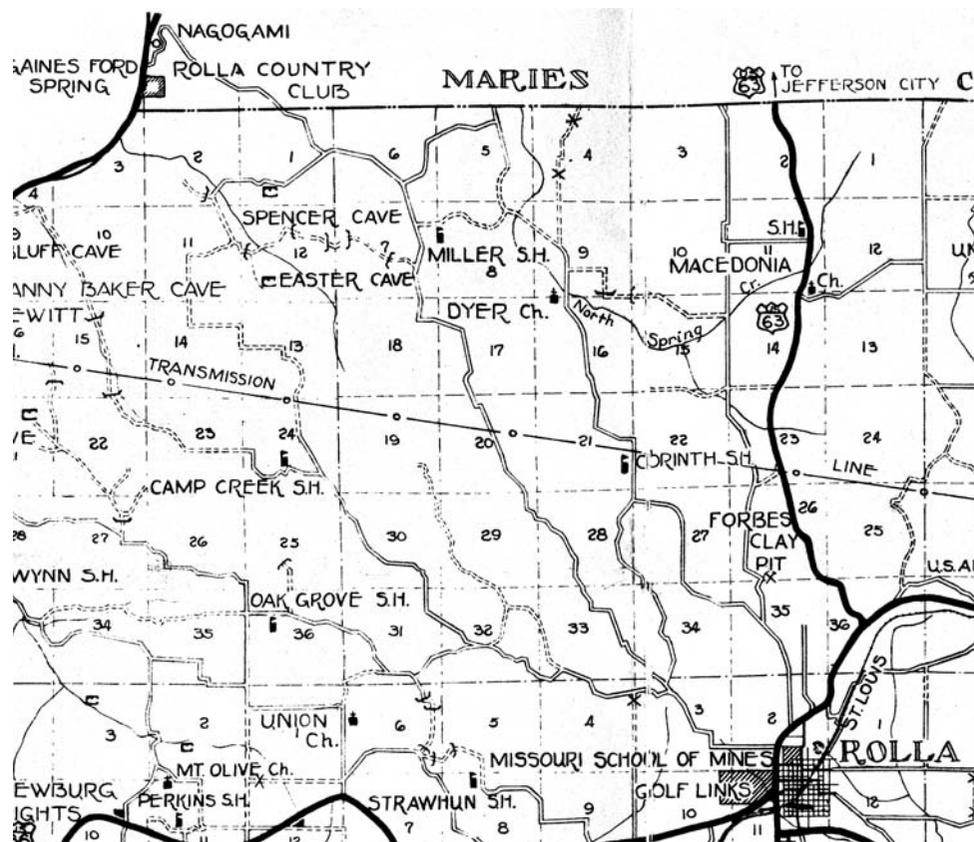
The Lodge got its start in 1923, perhaps taking a cue from an earlier group known as the Rolla Picknickers that organized in 1922 with a view toward purchasing a campground at Gaines Ford. Whatever the relationship (if any) between the Rolla Picknickers and Nagogami Lodge, Gaines Ford was already a locally-known campground when the lodge got under way. The Rolla Boy Scout troop made an annual summer camp there, and by 1920 there seem to have been private campgrounds and a few cabins along the bank below Gaines Ford.

By then the resort industry on the Gasconade was already a generation old. Born in the late 1800s in Phelps and Pulaski counties, it had grown up wherever the Gasconade River and the St. Louis & San Francisco Railway (the “Frisco”) intersected or closely paralleled one another. From rustic beginnings catering to sportsmen getting off trains at Arlington, Jerome, Dixon, Crocker, and Richland, a modern resort industry grew up to serve middle-class families arriving by train from the smoky, brick-oven heat of summertime in St. Louis and Kansas City. The Frisco railroad was happy to sell tickets to sportsmen and vacationing families and promoted the resort industry in its advertising and with special summer excursion fares. By World War One dozens of resorts dotted the banks of the Gasconade. They filled to capacity every summer with hundreds of happy campers enjoying the traditional benefits of fresh air, Ozark scenery, and fine, home-cooked country food, but also good fishing, boating, bathing, horseback riding, and lawn sports.

The resort business changed after World War One. Like so much else in the 20th Century, the automobile and the consequent development of good roads figured in the transformation. Private ownership of vehicles freed vacationers from railroad schedules and the same old places; better roads opened up locations along the river not directly accessible by railroad. Getting to a place ten or twelve miles from the railroad, like Gaines Ford, formerly



Cover of the second Nagogami advertising brochure. Courtesy of Sharon Kenny.



Nagogami, in the upper right corner, is located about twelve miles northwest of Rolla. The brochure touted the amenities available in Rolla, including churches and the golf course at the School of Mines, where the green fee was 50 cents.

meant an all-day buggy or wagon ride—a mighty jarring beginning and end to a restful vacation. After reliable vehicle transport became widespread, travelers could detrain at the Rolla depot and be whisked to Gaines Ford by car in about two hours and in relative comfort.

By the 1920s, the clamor for better roads in Missouri sparked creation of the St. Louis-Joplin Highway Association and the first lobbying by “tourism” organizations that are commonplace today. The Missouri legislature responded by authorizing new bridges and major improvements to Route 14 between those cities, making it feasible for owners of private automobiles to drive themselves directly to the Gasconade and other rivers in the Missouri Ozarks. Those Route 14 improvements, many of which were subsequently incorporated into U. S. Highway 66, opened different locations on the river to a well-established urban and local clientele. The result was the last great round of resort-building, including new resorts at Gasconade Hills near Hazelgreen and Ozark Springs near Richland. Some of the older resorts such as the Pippin Place near Crocker and those at Arlington and Jerome changed their orientation from rails to roads and appealed to the new class of automobile-born vacationer. Similar developments occurred along other Ozark streams (for example, Wildwood Springs on the Meramec River at Steelville) giving the resorting public a wider

choice of destinations. Travelers prosperous enough to own vehicles generally wanted modern amenities, too, limiting the patronage of many of the timeworn, “rustic” campgrounds and clubhouses to the most seasoned fishermen and sportsmen.

Such were the times in late 1922 when James Claude Harvey (he went by “Claude”), T. A. Dunham, Dick Gale, and William “Shorty” Cole began to develop a 12-acre tract along the river just below Gaines Ford. The property consisted of a low narrow bench along the river backed by a steep bluff line tapering to a point where the lodge would be built. A spring issued from the bluff just above the property, its branch flowing down past the lodge and forming an island between it and the Gasconade. The island was carefully manicured and the tree trunks whitewashed. Messrs. Harvey & Co., as the Rolla Herald referred to them, looked to open Nagogami Lodge for the 1923 season.

The newspaper explained that the exotic-sounding name came from an Indian word for “River of Springs,” but just what Native American language was left unsaid. The “gami” part of the name sounds like the Algonquin



Nagogami Lodge and stone wall, 1939. There were rooms to rent on the bottom floor and a recreation room with card tables for games and leather couches for relaxation and conversation. Courtesy of John Bradbury.

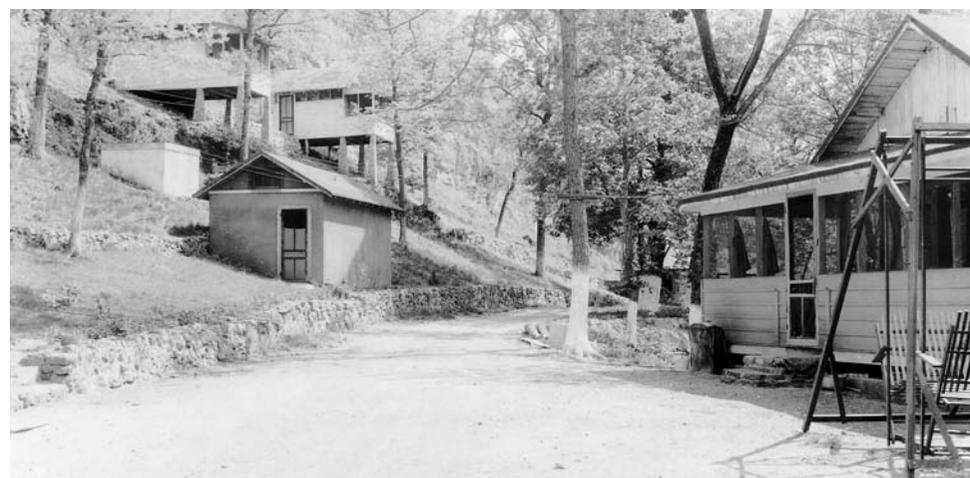


Early rustic cabin with outhouse on the hill, 1926. Courtesy of John Bradbury.

word for lake, and there is a Nagogami Lake in northern Ontario, but there is no apparent connection with the Gasconade. The name rings a little like Ha Ha Tonka overlooking the Osage River and similar claims to Native American derivation. Whatever its ancestry, the place name Nagogami began to take precedence over Gaines Ford, a process probably hastened by the demise of the short-lived Gaines Ford post office in 1932.

When Nagogami Lodge opened in June 1923, it consisted of the two-story lodge building proper, with rooms for guests above and a well-appointed kitchen and dining room below. Later a screened-in dining room that doubled

as a dance hall was built near the lodge. There were also several two and three-room cottages, and rustic cabins of "artistic and unique" design (with names such as "Bird's Nest" and "Crow's Nest") higher on the bluff. The cabins and cottages were built of vertical poles chinked like more conventional horizontal log buildings, a construction design appearing at other cabins and clubhouses such as Blue Springs near Leasburg and Idlewild Lodge at Cuba, both on the Meramec River. The lodge and cottages were no more than a hundred yards from the river, although that distance was pretty much vertical for the cabins on the bluff. Lodging was by the day, week, and month. Patrons and afternoon visitors at



View down the road through Nagogami, toward spring. Trees were whitewashed about six feet up the trunk. Courtesy of John Bradbury.

Nagogami could eat at the lodge (fried chicken was the house specialty) or get picnic dinners for riverside enjoyment. A large bath house with private lockers was available for bathers and the island and a large gravel bar were nearby. Canoes, rowboats, and motor boats were available for a dollar a day under the supervision of Shorty Cole, said to be an expert fisherman, guide, and camp chef.

Quite a few local folks visited the lodge during the first season--two hundred people arrived to celebrate July 4th. But there were complaints about the road from Rolla. Maries County had gotten its shorter section in good shape, but it wasn't until spring of 1924 that Phelps County got its gravel road from Rolla to the county line in first class order.

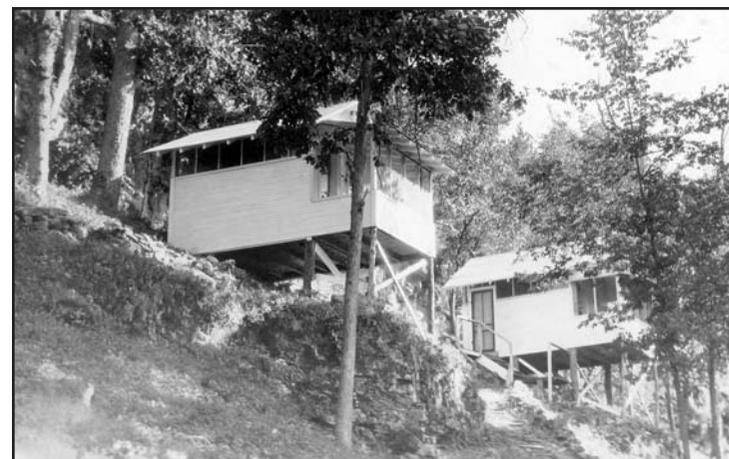
Shorty Cole and Dick Gale, and perhaps T. A. Dunham, sold their interests in Nagogami after the season of 1923, leaving Claude Harvey as the principal owner and proprietor of the lodge. His father, James Clayburn Harvey, was prominent as a former sheriff of Phelps County (1897-1900); Claude and his wife Emma Lee (Pryor) Harvey were well-known themselves as proprietors of Harvey's Restaurant on Pine Street in Rolla. Claude shuttled back and forth to Nagogami, making improvements on the property and preparing for the 1924 season while Mrs. Harvey managed the restaurant in Rolla. Al Smith of Rolla partnered with him at the lodge and dining room, but Claude bore most of the burden of developing the property, which came to include additional cabins, a generator house for electric lights, an icehouse, a boat-house at the mouth of the spring branch, and a stable for riding horses. Later on, Harvey got help from his sons James Pryor (called "Pryor") and Bert Charles (called "Si"). Si proved to be an able stonemason, and eventually built native stone walkways and steps connecting the lodge and cabins, a sandstone chicken house, decorative rock walls, a stone table for table tennis, a bridge across the spring branch to the island, and stone steps leading to the spring outlet.

Messrs. Harvey & Smith hosted the rain-delayed Grand Opening of Nagogami Lodge on Sunday, June 15, 1924. Motor coaches shuttled passengers back and forth from Rolla all day at a dollar a head. A great local crowd of Harvey friends and acquaintances toured the lodge and grounds and demolished a heap of fried chicken. The Rolla Herald reported it a grand success, commended the "special attention to the dining room" by the proprietors, and predicted that Nagogami Lodge would soon become the most favored recreational place in the area.

Nagogami Lodge thrived for the next fifteen seasons. In addition to lodging and meals (at \$3.50 per day or \$20.00 weekly), the resort offered all the accustomed amenities for fishermen (boats were available for casual paddlers and also for floats from Devils Elbow to Nagogami and from Nagogami downstream to the Highway 63 bridge), but also horseback riding, lawn sports (tennis and croquet), weekend dancing, and home-made games appealing to a broad base of middle-class family patrons. Even during tough times in the 1930s, the lodge filled to capacity (about thirty guests) and the cabins were always booked. Claude and Emma personally directed operations at the lodge during the season while Pryor handled the restaurant in Rolla. The Pine Street restaurant, on the original Route 66 through Rolla, served as a clearing-house for Nagogami news as well as reservations. Travelers on the road learned about the lodge through the restaurant, and the Harveys advertised the lodge in St. Louis newspapers. The result was a loyal, long-term clientele of local and city guests.

The resort was in its prime when Si Harvey contracted pneumonia and died suddenly in 1939. He was only twenty-five years old. He had come to manage everything but the lodge and restaurant and did the maintenance and upkeep. Pryor was managing the family business in Rolla, and Claude and Emma could hardly handle the lodge and keep up the property. It wore out Claude. When he died in

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This view shows the long front stilts required for those cabins built on the steep hillside. Higher up the bluff were cabins called the Bird's Nest and Crow's Nest, reached by steep stone steps. Courtesy of John Bradbury.



Claude Harvey proudly showing his large catch. Nagogami also had live bait for sale to guests. Courtesy of Sharon Kenny.



Folks with a big catch of frogs and fish. The Gasconade had long been recognized as a premier fishing stream. Claude Harvey is standing far right, his son Si behind, and wife Em to his right. Courtesy of Sharon Kenny.



The stone and concrete table tennis structure built by Si Harvey across from the lodge still awaits a game. Photo by Terry Primas.



Boats were furnished free to guests. Canoes were rented for \$1.00 per day. Courtesy of John Bradbury.



Claude Harvey's daughter, Marie, rides with a young guest. "Gentle riding horses" were available for \$0.50 per hour. Courtesy of Sharon Kenny.

Spend Your Vacation
at
NAGOGAMI LODGE
On the Banks of the Gasconade River!
Located 11-3/10 miles Northwest of Rolla, Mo.
on Highway E — good highway.

Cottages Rented By Day or Week	Mailing Address Nagogami Lodge R-3, Rolla, Mo. Art McDaniel
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**NAGOGAMI LODGE is the Vacation
Spot for the Whole Family!**

OPEN MAY 15 to OCTOBER 15

1-2 & 3-Room Clean Modern Light Housekeeping Cottages,
With Good Well Water In All Cottages.

**ELECTRIC-LIGHTED PICNIC GROUNDS, BOAT DOCK
BOATS - CANOES - SWIMMING - FISHING - HUNTING**

Large Dance Hall, Swings, Lawn Chairs, Refreshments,
Cigaretts and Groceries, etc. available at the Lodge.

Nagogami business cards, above, give concise particulars about the lodge. Courtesy of John Bradbury.

Nagogami Lodge promoted the "open-air freedom that is found in this setting of rugged hills, green forests, and swift-flowing river." It was claimed that no cabin was more than 200 feet from the river. Opportunities for outdoor recreation were plentiful. The resort was open from May 1st until December 31st.

1941, Emma closed the lodge. The family sold the property after World War Two and built a cabin just upstream in the development known as the Rolla Country Club.

Art McDaniel of Rolla bought the Nagogami property from the Harveys. He continued to rent the lodge and rented light-housekeeping cabins by the day and week. There was less emphasis on fine country dining, but McDaniel continued renting boats, hosting weekend dances, and booking the hall for picnics and parties until 1955. Facing extensive repairs after a damaging winter, McDaniel closed the property to the general public and offered yearly leases of the various cabins and cottages to his long-term customers. He had no problem attracting leasers and the new arrangement ended Nagogami's days as one of the finest resorts open to the public on the Gasconade River.

The Wuenscher family of St. Louis were among those leasing one of McDaniel's cabins, and in 1977 they purchased the property. The old lodge is occupied full time now, and six of the cabins, greatly rebuilt and modernized, are still leased every year. The place looks a lot different than when Claude Harvey & Co. determined to open a first-class resort on the Gasconade, both from man-made and natural causes. The river has changed its channel in front of the lodge and the picturesque island is no more. The gravel bars and spring branch are different now, too, after the great flood of 1983. The flood also damaged many outbuildings and improvements on the low ground. In the last fifty years there has been considerable development upstream toward Gaines Ford at the Rolla Country Club. As at Nagogami Lodge, many of the former summer cabins have been rebuilt or replaced by fully modern homes occupied year round. But if a visitor looks closely, vestiges of Si Harvey's handiwork can still be seen in stone stairways and walkways; the arched rock wall, a rock table for table tennis, and the sandstone chicken house still standing near the former lodge building.

A place you'll find that's hard to beat
Where all friends, young and old, will meet
There you are always greeted with smiles
If you have come from near, or if you've traveled miles.
[brochure from Helen Kenny]

[Thanks to Claudie Harvey Wilkinson, Carmen Harvey McNelly, Charles L. Harvey, Helen Kenny, and Bill Wuenscher for sharing their knowledge about Nagogami Lodge.

We met with Helen Harvey Kenny at the Harvey farm, not far from Nagogami. Helen was Claude Harvey's niece and spent several summers as a young girl at the resort. She had fond memories of the people and idyllic summers at Nagogami. John Bradbury and Jan Primas [comprising the OSG below] interviewed Helen about those days more than seventy years ago.

Helen: I remember a family who stayed here year after year, the Krumenacher family. He owned pharmacies in St. Louis. It was mostly St. Louis people [who stayed at Nagogami.]

I stayed at Nagogami Lodge in the summers from the age of nine until twelve or thirteen. [Helen was born in 1922 so it was the years 1931-1934.] The cabins were rented out by the week. Everything would be rented over the Fourth of July and [it seemed] it rained every Fourth of July. It was not a big money maker.

OSG: There was a Smith who was involved.

Helen: Yes, Al Smith. He was a bachelor and he lived by the spring, on the road that went around the spring. He played the piano on most weekends and people would wind up there. My uncle's land extended along the road to the spring. There was the power plant on one side of the road and the boat house on the other side. The tennis area was up there, too.

OSG: Did they hire local people to help?

Helen: When I first started going, they had a black couple. His nickname was Ink and his wife's name was Blanche. I was crazy about Ink. I didn't have anyone to play with so I'd follow him all over the place. His wife was an intelligent, hard working lady and I liked Blanche a lot.

OSG: So they ran the lodge?

Helen: No, they worked - actually, my aunt and uncle ran it but my uncle had gone into politics and after he did that he was going to quit this [resort business]. They opened a restaurant in Rolla, Harvey's Restaurant. Pryor, the oldest son, ran the restaurant and Si, the youngest, worked mostly at the resort and I was so crazy about him, probably because he was so patient with me.

OSG: How about the lodge? Did the lodge serve meals?

Helen: Oh, yes, three times a day. When I first started going, Blanche was the cook and after they were not there any longer, my Aunt Em cooked and she would hire local help when they needed it. All the cabins were done [by 1931], the Bird's Nest was way up on top, and there was ground behind that that went down to the road that the School of Mines used to teach their students.

OSG: What was the recreation down there? You mentioned tennis and horseback riding.

Helen: They had a concrete and rock table tennis table. They had swings, canoes, and other types of boats they rented. That was pretty much it.

OSG: What about canoes. Did they haul you up and put you in for a float as we think of it today?

Helen: No. They owned their canoes and the guests were allowed to use them. Whether they paid for them, I don't know. They didn't really float, just paddled around. Although, I guess, if they got far down they could call the lodge and they would pick them up. The last few cottages down toward the spring were housekeeping, where people could cook their own meals.

The Bird's Nest was way up high [on the bluff] with a lot of steps to it and when the people got up there, there was no bathroom. They had to come back down to the bath house. They couldn't even take a shower in their cabin so it was pretty primitive.

The lodge had two floors, with rooms to rent out. [The top floor] had leather couches and card tables. When I stayed there, I had one of the rooms that looked to the bluff behind it and I used to look out at the little chipmunks. There was an area on the bottom floor where they did the ironing and had a linen closet. The dining room was across the road. It was not heated or cooled but it had an overhang to keep the rain off of them.



Helen Kenny



The screened dining lodge at Nagogami. The specialty was fried chicken. "We serve pasteurized milk, and obtain our chickens and vegetables from farmers in the neighborhood. Serve three meals each day and guarantee that you will have plenty of well-cooked food. Courtesy of John Bradbury.