

On The Gasconade

Forest and Stream, the most influential outdoors magazine of the late nineteenth century, published accounts of sportsmen tourists who traveled on the railroads to wood and water located in Missouri and Arkansas. In November-December 1887, the publisher ran a four-part series, "On the Gasconade," about an October 1886 trip by five participants from Lexington, Lafayette County, Mo.¹

Alexander A. Lesueur, businessman, banker, and politician, narrated the essay. His son, Alex, and three other men, comprised the party. On the river, Lesueur (the camp cook) and Will Hamlett, mayor of Lexington, led the group in a narrow, square-nose skiff, while Frank Trigg, Lesueur's brother-in-law, Billy (William J. Morrison), a Lexington merchant, and the twelve-year-old Alex, rode in a large, flat-bottom row boat. Lesueur, Trigg, and Hamlett were Confederate veterans. Two former Confederate colonels, who had been early Missouri Fish Commissioners, had encouraged the trip and one arranged for their rented boats in Jerome.

By 1886, this Crocker-Arlington float trip had become the Ozarks first, regular, seasonal outing where sportsmen tourists could schedule a guide and boats for a week or longer. Still, most brought camp gear and equipment in the railroad cars. The men were veteran sportsmen and represent urban tourists who began to express an incipient conservation ethic, as they witnessed a decline in wildlife. Lynn Morrow & Terry Primas, eds.

At 8:40 p.m., we left Lexington, all comfortably seated in a chair car on the Missouri Pacific. Those who love sport and nature have accompanied me. The days were balmy and soft, the nights deliciously cool,



but without frost; weather to make glad the heart of man, and with just enough chill in its nocturnal hours to discourage the mosquito.

Fish or no fish, game or no game, our party did not mean to go hungry. Do you want a list of it? One good, heavy A tent; each fellow his roll of bed clothes, gum blanket, coat and an overcoat. A mess box containing a boiled ham, a side of breakfast bacon, a big bag of beat biscuits, a pound cake. In tight tin buckets, 5 pounds of granulated sugar, 3 pounds of good coffee, ground; 5 pounds of lard, and 3 pounds of nice, yellow butter. Flour, meal, baking powder, a quarter of a pound of tea, salt, black and cayenne pepper, pickle, a sauce or two, and, don't avert your head, onions.

As to cooking kit we had the usual array of camp kettle, frying pan with a detachable hand for convenience of packing, coffee pot, two or three stew pans, ten plates and cups, knives, forks and spoons, cup towels and dish rags, for the cook, as the cook rules the roost in camp, wants the dishes washed after every meal as spick and span as would any woman at home. The cooking utensils are made to nest, so that with the table ware inside of them they occupy altogether about the same space that would a common three-hoop bucket.

All are packed in a strong box, three feet long and two feet wide, with a hinged lid, which when thrown back and resting on a firmly fixed peg or two made an excellent table. This box is furnished with rope handles at each end, so that it

may be checked as baggage upon the railroad.

The tackle. Well, each fellow has his joint pole, mine an old-time friend—ash butt and second and third joints, with three or four lancewood tips. The mayor has a light, fancy little thing, pretty to look at and nice to handle. Frank and Billy have substantial bamboo rods, the boy a cheap but strong affair. In our ditty bags we have all manner of fancy baits—flies, spoons, artificial minnows, etc.

In my ditty bag I find a neat little "housewife" containing needles and thread, buttons, pins, etc., very convenient to have sometimes. Things that "when you want 'em, you want 'em bad." Then there is a bottle of black stuff—oil of pennyroyal, castor oil and tar. A coat of that on the back of your hands, the middle of your forehead and the end of your nose, will render them impervious to the attacks of

mosquitoes and black gnats. A long minnow seine, two minnow buckets, live nets, a lantern, a number twelve breech-loader and 42 Winchester complete the outfit.²

All in good time our train reached Pacific, where we changed to the 'Frisco for Crocker, from which place we debarked for the Gasconade. The hour being so early the town was pacific, even the dogs were asleep.

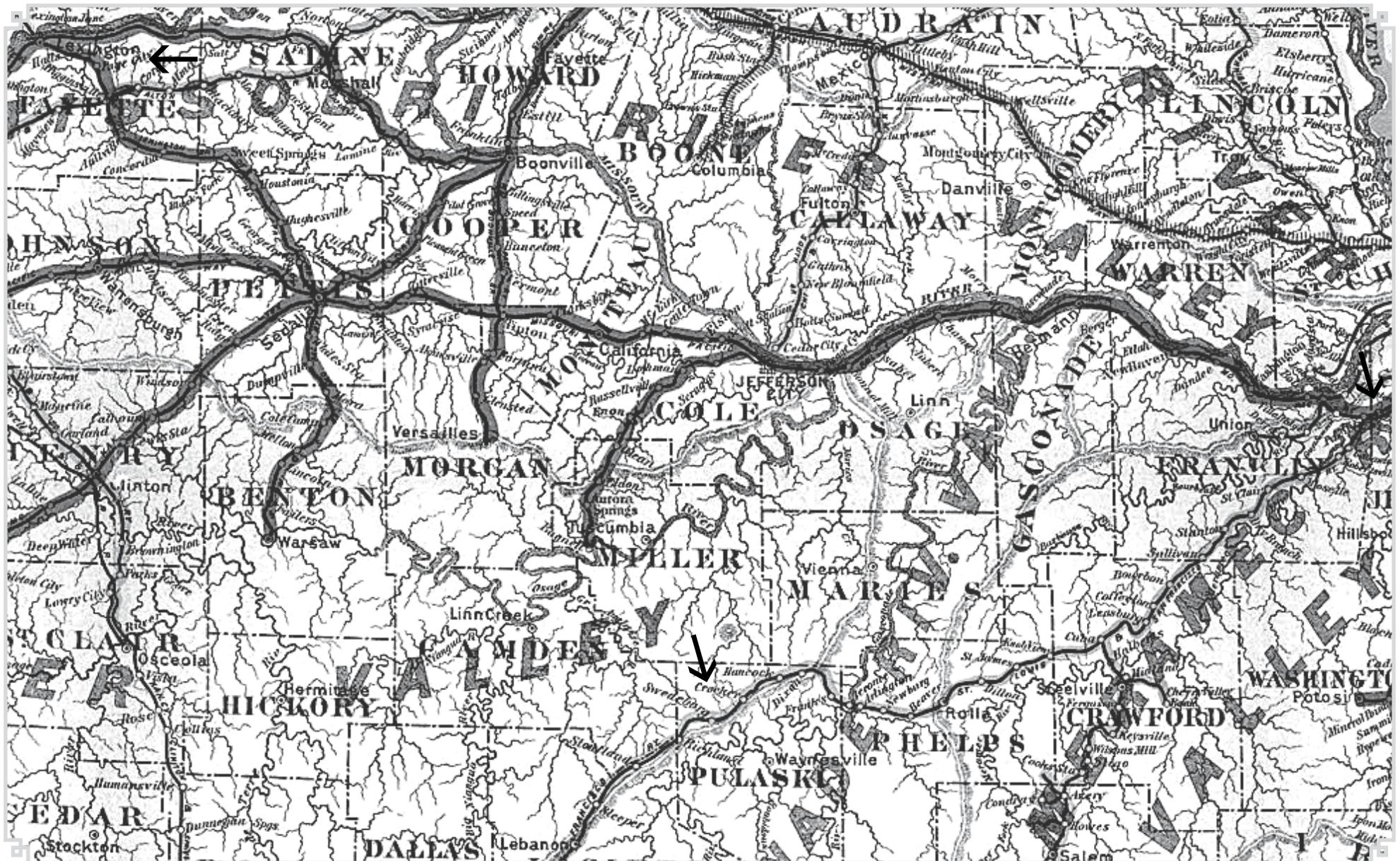
The 'Frisco train came along, and two trunks and lesser impedimenta were quickly loaded. From Pacific, the agent had kindly inquired by wire about the two boats engaged for us at Arlington by that prince of sportsmen, Dr. I. G. W. Steedman, of St. Louis, then chairman of the State Fish Commission, so that when we reached that place we found them upon the platform awaiting us. They were quickly put into the express car and away we went.³

We reached Crocker at 4:30 o'clock P. M., just twenty hours away from home. This is a village in Pulaski County, about five miles from the point at which we intended to begin our fifty-mile descent of the Gasconade River. Here we employed a gentleman named [James M.] Craddock, who, we are told, divides his time between acting as guide and philosophizing upon political economy, to haul our boats and other traps to the river. It was not



Crocker ca. 1900. Sportsmen tourists from the north and east took the train to Crocker (depot at far right) and floated the Gasconade a distance of 50 miles to Arlington where they boarded a train for home. This fishing trip usually took 5-6 days. Courtesy of Lynn Morrow.

a portion of the **Commissioner's Official Railway Map of Missouri Completed to January 1st 1888**



The lure of the clear fishing waters of the Ozarks must have been powerful for the sportsmen of Lexington in 1886. The distance from Lexington to Crocker would have been 160 miles by road, had there been one. Of course, it wouldn't have been much of road in 1886. They boarded a train on the Lexington Branch of the Missouri Pacific Railway (arrow in the upper left corner), rode the MoPac to Pacific (arrow middle of right margin) where they boarded a St. Louis-San Francisco Railway (Frisco) car and arrived in Crocker 20 hours later (arrow mid bottom).

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many minutes after we reached the station until our cortege was en route. The two Bills and the boy walked in advance of our artillery. I perched myself on the bow of one of the boats as ballast, and Frank, who carries a stiff leg from a minie bullet received at the Battle of Pea Ridge, seated himself elsewhere in the wagon.⁴

Craddock told us that the road we were traveling had been made by R. M. Boatwright, who had discovered guano deposits in an immense cave on the Gasconade. That he had built the road to prepare this guano for market. After the guano mine was fully developed Mr. Boatwright shipped five cars of it to Baltimore, where it was sold, bringing less than the freight alone, and so the speculation had fallen into innocuous desuetude.⁵

Mr. Craddock told us that he was a first-class bass fisherman, and we believe in that he told the truth. He assured us that it was impossible for us to find our way down the river without his pilotage; that we wouldn't know where to find the water in the river, the springs to camp by, or the places in which best to lure the wary bass. These oracular utterances delivered, he would expectorate and await an answer. None coming he would resume the thread of his discourse.

So here we are, twenty-four hours from home, cozily camped on the banks of the Gasconade, our two boats floating lightly on its waters, a few yards higher up in rapids, making a roaring sound that inspires us with that uncertainty of what dangers may be before us, which constitutes the spice of adventure. Our first camp was named Trigg. It was upon a point of land between the road and the river's bank, under some grand trees.⁶

The next morning came bright and clear, and we had an opportunity to see what the river looked like. Above

the camp, opposite where our boats were moored, a smooth piece of water, evidently a shallow ford. The boats were both long, shallow, scow-shaped affairs, of a bright red color, drawing the least imaginable depth of water. The larger one was provided with oars, the smaller one with two paddles. Breakfast was hurriedly disposed of and the boats quickly loaded.⁷

Very few miles are passed that do not afford beautiful places to camp. There is no mud. The banks are gravelly and clean. In October, the whole river is a spring—the water as clear as crystal and as cold. To those who can take the time to explore the caves that abound in the mountains, the archaeologist can find much to interest him—Indian axes, hammers, spear and arrow points.⁸

It is, then, amid scenes such as these that we find ourselves quietly floating. During the day a few ducks and a luckless squirrel that ran out on a projecting limb are killed as we sit in our boats. After five miles we camp upon the left bank of the river, at Big Spring, an immense fountain of water which comes boiling up in the bed of the stream. This is a noted camping place. The trees are full of big nails to hang things on, but there is no “down wood”—all burned up long ago. So after cutting enough fuel, I found nice, straight tent poles, which were cut and trimmed.⁹

[We had] a level place, but with

drainage in every direction, the tent and poles deposited there to await the arrival of the boys. The bedding and other baggage were placed beside them, hung upon a tree that would be at the opening of the tent when stretched. Then get the supper. A fire quickly made, a coy little fire, between two 6 inch logs, which will soon furnish glowing hot coals upon which one can cook the victuals without roasting himself.

As it burns, I skin the squirrel and pick enough ducks to feed ten men at home. I cut them all up into moderately small pieces, put them in the camp kettle, with a good sized piece of breakfast bacon, cover them with two quarts of water, and hang the kettle on a pole fixed across the fire, to boil. I peel a half dozen good sized potatoes and three onions. After the meat has boiled an hour, I add the potatoes and onions. I season with salt and cayenne pepper, and let the mass simmer until the meat of the ducks is ready to fall from the bones and the boys come in to eat the burgoo. If thou dost not know the virtue of a burgoo, go to, thou sluggard, and learn! A pot of strong coffee, pickles, beat biscuit, nice firm, yellow butter, a dish of dried apples, and a few little knick-knacks, made out a meal which the ozone and the exercise turned into an Epicurean feast.¹⁰

Supper over, Billy and the boy wash the dishes, while Will, Frank, and I put up the tent. The dish

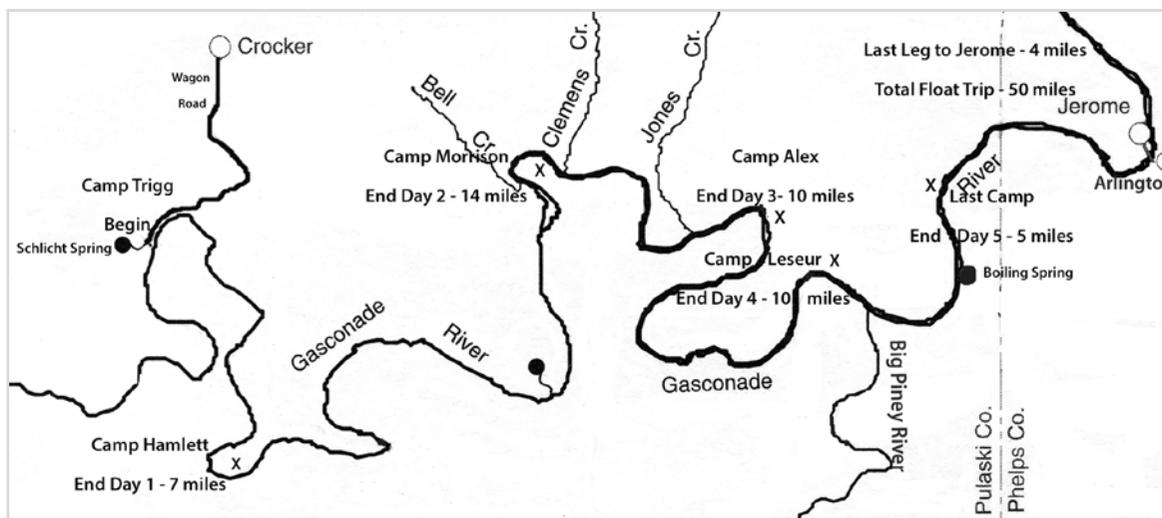
washing is done in boiling hot water, with soap and mop, the table top is also washed and dried, the dishes, pans, etc., put away for the night as cleanly and neatly as if at home. The tent once up and well secured, we make down our beds for the night, though it is not yet dark. A bigger fire is made. Sailors have a reputation for spinning yarns, but if the galley-fire beats the camp-fire in anything but cuss words, I am woefully mistaken.

At our feet flows the beautiful Gasconade. Its clear waters for many yards reveal the pebbles at the bottom. Above and about us in the bottom land are the mighty forest trees of Missouri, the oak, the elm, the sycamore, the hackberry, the cottonwood, the hickory, and others of the giants, bending their huge limbs toward earth and dipping their featured twigs as if in courtesy to our presence, and the wind gently swayed them to and fro, sounding a requiem as tender and soothing as the cadence of an aeolian harp. Opposite, rising sharp from the water's edge, there towers brown and rugged one of the mountains of the Ozarks.

The Gasconade has as fine fish in it as any waters in the country. Men who know, for instance Col. John Reid, who was for years Fish Commissioner of the State, and who is familiar with its waters, says “that its bass cannot be surpassed either in size or fighting qualities.”¹¹

We arose, and each performed his ablutions in the deliciously clear and cool water of the river. We leave Camp Hamlett with reluctance for it is a bewitching spot. But our time is marked. In so many days we must be at Arlington, and we do not want to have to hurry.

The day that we left Camp Hamlett was devoted to the river. Very little fishing was done and no shooting. The beauty of the stream claimed



The Gasconade float trip and locations of each evening's camp (x).

our attention, and fourteen miles of it was covered with ease. The bluffs and mountains were unusually striking and pretty, and the rapids frequent and exciting. Our boat being much the lightest and handled with paddles, we kept the front as pilot.

Coming to an unusually long and rapid decline Will remarked that it ran down hill. Standing up a moment to take our bearings we saw a number of large boulders, and the water dashing over them, raising a perfect cauldron of foam. To strike one of these boulders might mean a broken boat, if not something worse.

Fortunately the rapids were not long, and we were no sooner in the vortex than we were emerging from it into smooth water, and the passage was but a few feet wide. We shouted to each other that we must tell the other boat of this, and in order to do so we heaved an anchor

overboard and were brought up standing in pretty rapid water.

We waited some little time before the boys came, but they struck a boulder. For a moment the boat heaved up as if it was about to turn over, but the bachelors sprang to the upper gunwale and brought it to a safer position. We did not want to lose our bachelors. Besides, the provisions were in jeopardy.

The boys tried to help themselves with their oars. The situation became more precarious. We paddled and pushed on the rocks, seized hold of boulders and pulled, getting a deluge of water over us in response. Coming to them from below by a little prying and lifting, we slid them off into the water, and they slipped through as if they had been greased. Thanks to the staunchness of their boat, it was

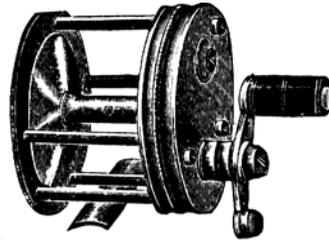
uninjured.

We went into Camp Morrison, the first camp on the right bank of the river. Beautiful cove for the boats; big trees all about; good place for tent; had a fine fish supper. Down wood plentiful. After supper we built up an old fashioned army fire, and then we had our usual *conversazione*.¹²

Morning on the Gasconade. We enjoy our breakfast comfortably and leisurely, and still get afloat before the fog raised. This was the red-letter day of our trip. Ten or twelve miles of the river were passed over, and the rapids were among the prettiest and most exciting we had seen.

[Will] quietly dropped an anchor, one of which was ready in either end of the boat, and made his cast. No sooner had his minnow settled in

the water than his float disappeared, and striking fast to a lively bass. Then away it went toward the middle of the stream, and his Kentucky reel whizzed as the line flew out. Then up the stream he goes until snubbed by a touch of the butt, when the line is rapidly retrieved as it slackens and the fish comes gradually back toward the boat. Quicker than thought it darts again for the shelter of the tree roots, the line swishes through the water, and the rod bends nearly to the hand as it meets the strain. Drawn by the rod out toward the stream he makes one dart for the bottom of the boat but is brought up stiffly, but again he is stopped. Then at last he submits to being drawn over the landing net and is lifted into the boat as game and beautiful a fish as one would wish to see, a small-mouth black bass, not as heavy-bodied as we have seen, but some 15 inches in length.



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Then comes the event. Having struck the fifth fish, it proved to be a fighter. It tried every stratagem known to the finny tribe to shake itself free from the stinging steel in its jaw. It leaped from the water and tried to shake the hook from its mouth. It doubled back toward the tree. Snubbed in that direction it darted back for deep water again, only to turn suddenly and fly toward the boat. The strain was immense. Will thought it was giving to the steady tension, but it seemed that it had merely steadied itself for a supreme effort; it churned the top of the water as it took a new start, and—the rod snapped in two about five feet from the tip.

Here an amateur would have reenlist, but Will is a veteran. He seized the line and succeeded in recovering the five-foot tip of the rod, just as it was about to disappear under the boat. Then by persuasion and humoring he at last got it out into the pool. By drawing it first in one direction and then the other, he finally wore it out and brought it to the landing net, measuring seventeen inches in length, but slender and not weighing over four pounds. The breaking of the rod was a catastrophe, of course. Will was in no sense discouraged. He fished on with his five-foot pole and managed in making his catch in that pool fifteen.

We went into Camp Alex rather late, upon the left bank of the stream, by the side of a country road. As we were getting things into shape an old lady passed on horseback with whom we exchanged compliments, the result of which was that after supper her son-in-law, Mr. Elias Riddle, his friend, a deputy sheriff of Pulaski County, and two young gentlemen called on us at our camp. Mr. Riddle is a substantial farmer who resides nearby. He and his party were very polite to us and gave us all the information in their power. They told us that the vicinity had once been full of game, but that game of all kinds was much scarcer

than it was a few years ago.¹³

We suggested that the enforcement of the game laws might do good in this respect, but we found that Mr. Riddle did not take very kindly either to game or fish laws. We had observed along the river a large number of basket nets or traps, say from 5 to 8 feet long—most deadly contrivances at some seasons of the year, and clearly in violation of the fish law. Mr. Riddle did not see any special harm in using these traps, though he admitted that they had been the means of pretty nearly exterminating the blue cat[fish] from this river.

He explained to us the *modus operandi* of jigging fish when the river is low in winter, and the fish lie in the deep stretches between the rapids. At that time, the water being perfectly clear and transparent, the fish may be seen very easily, and Mr. Riddle said it was “no trick at all” for a man who knew how to jig to kill his sixteen or eighteen hundred pounds of fish a day. These are readily marketed at the railroad. The cook of this expedition had the honor to present in the Missouri Legislature the law creating the State Fish Commission, and providing severe penalties for the destruction of fish by seines, nets, traps, weirs, or any other device in which to catch fish, and hence could not well be in sympathy with Mr. Riddle’s

views. He only now regrets that he did not manage to have included in the law the obnoxious instruments of extermination, the jig and spear.¹⁴

The cook got sleepy early and went to bed. But Will, Frank and Billy, who have a mechanical turn, amused themselves making a fish box before they “turned in,” as it was becoming burdensome to lug our fish after us in live-nets and on strings.

Breakfast over, we made a run of five miles, and the cook was landed on a pleasant, shaded, wood spot, to get up a grand noonday feast. There was fish galore, and the ducks and squirrels killed the day before were turned into a burgoon with a most appetizing odor.

One of the most amusing incidents of our cruise took place in the afternoon. The big boat had stopped in a beautiful place, in order that its occupants might fish. All at once a noise was heard in the leaves some twenty yards from the water’s edge. Billy had the gun, and, remembering Mr. Riddle’s story of a deer, was all alert. The others were peering, too, to see what they could see, but nothing could they discover, only the rustling of the leaves.

“It’s a deer,” whispered the boy. “Or a bear,” said Frank. At last Billy could stand it no longer. He raised the gun, deliberately aimed at the spot whence emanated the noise

and fired, when such a squeal issued from the mouth of a pig which had been rooting there. Billy’s face grew long and longer, while the laughter of the others grew stronger and stronger. From that time on to say deer, or bear, or pig, to grunt or to squeal, would bring a lowering cloud to our Billy’s brow. He was very tender about it, until at last he got fighting mad, and to keep peace in the mess we had to desist from all allusions.

We went into camp on an island; a delightful place. Gravelly banks. Plenty of wood. Pretty view up the river. Light supper—too much dinner. Went to bed early.

The next morning found us determined to run down so near to Arlington that we could reach that place easily the following day. We had figured out “by dead reckoning” that we should be about twelve miles from our destination. After paddling for a mile or two we saw a man upon the bank and inquired how far it was by river to Arlington. He replied that it was thirty miles, and when we expressed surprise, insisted that he knew.

Will and I had the fish box in tow, and though it was modeled like a boat, and floated very nicely for a short pull, it began to assume proportions of a sea anchor. We proposed to the boys to leave it. This involved the slaughter of our fish, but the sacrifice was made. Released from the load, we went merrily bobbing along.

He [the local man] had a kind of wild expression about the eyes as we approached him, but upon inquiry told us that he had run a raft from the identical spot upon which he stood to Jerome from daylight to 2 o’clock p.m. and returned home by foot the same evening. He evidently thought that this statement gave us the exact miles, furlongs, rods, yards, feet and inches of the distance, and, if not exact, it did answer the purpose sufficiently well. We concluded, at least, that we were sufficiently near our destination to



This fishing camp seems to have all that it needs for a finny dinner. Courtesy of Lynn Morrow.

justify us seeking camp, as we were not due at Arlington until the next day.

As we floated along quite an event occurred—we saw a woman; yes, a woman, a young and very pretty woman. For as fresh and as rosy, as supple and as graceful as love's young dream, was this dear little maiden of the Gasconade. Her "jewlarky" [sweetheart] came along a few paces after, spurring to catch up. Bah! There was nothing romantic about him. His long legs tucked in his rather overgrown boots, his sun-browned coat cut for high water, and tow locks dragging from under the brim of a broad

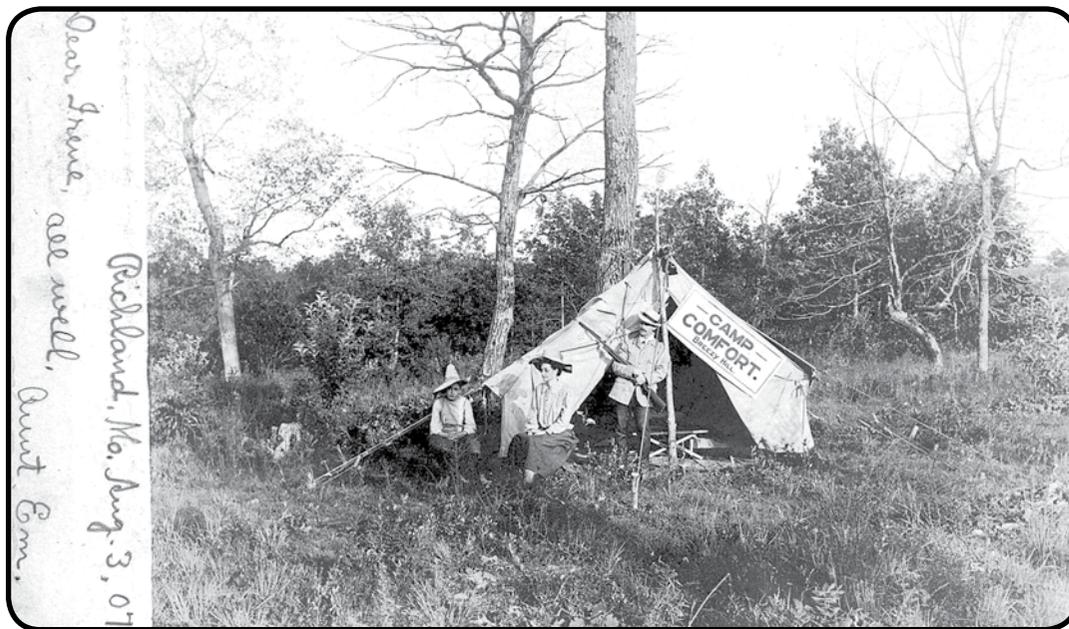
slouch hat, presented anything but a graceful appearance.

The only drawback to these outings is that they are made to exclude the women. Why should they be? Is there any experience in them that they would not relish? Are there any beauties of the mountains and the valleys, the springs, the brooks or the rivers that they would not enjoy with a keener appreciation than do we? Then the flowers and the foliage! How very much more they know of them! Then think of their dainty hands about the table and tent—what cozy pictures they would themselves make, and what delightful camps they would create.

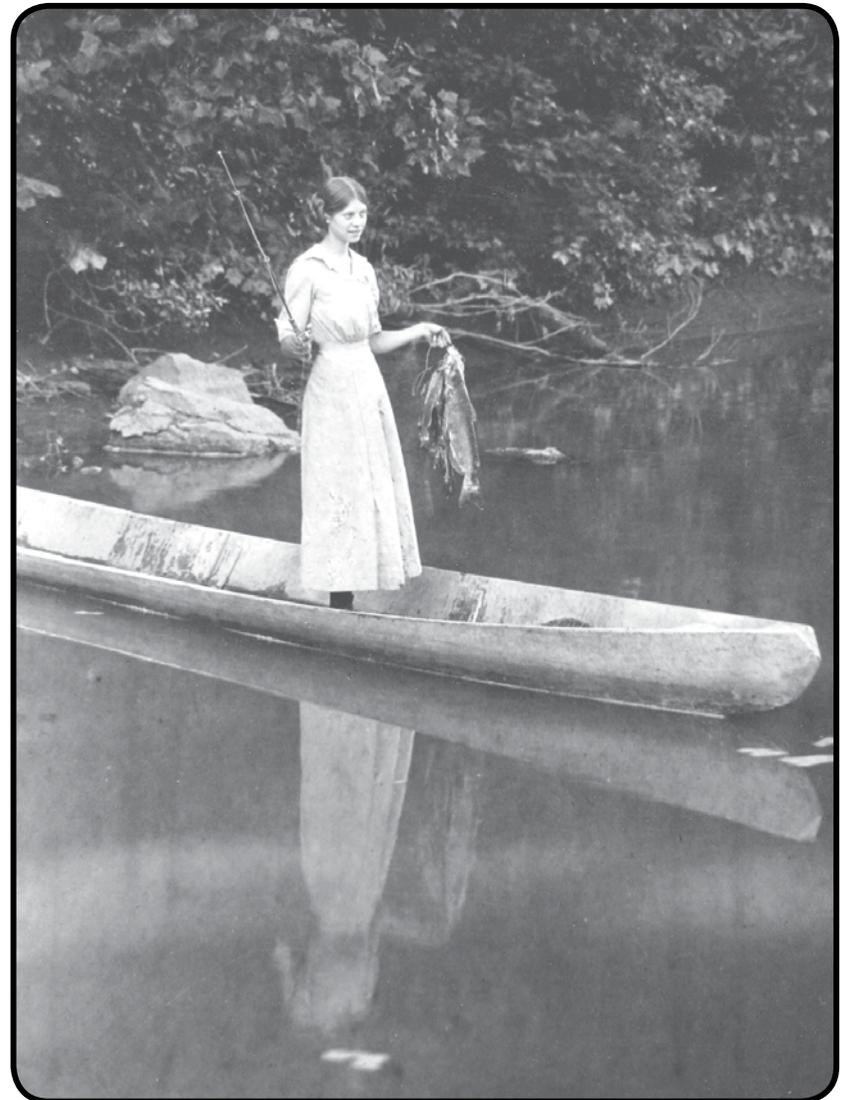
Oh, yes, by all means take the ladies. They will enjoy it ever so much. They are not such tender exotics that they cannot bear a breath of fresh air upon their faces, or a drop of rain upon their heads. Our word for it, American women would be the better for more of the woods and the streams, and less of the hotels and the [railroad] routes.¹⁵

Near the scene of the above

incident, we passed a sawmill on the left and the biggest spring, welling right up out of the bottom of the river, near the right bank, that any of us had ever seen. It is a perfect wonder. Coming from a depth unfathomable by any device we have at hand, it rises to the surface in three streams that come with such force that if one of the boats is rowed upon it it immediately



It would be another decade or so before the women took to the river and woods in Old Pulaski in numbers. Ladies came in groups to Forest Lodge at Schlicht Springs by 1904 to enjoy the magnesia water and received fishing instruction on one of the stocked ponds maintained by the resort. See the next feature. Images courtesy of Lynn Morrow.



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recedes in some direction. After gazing at the phenomenon for some time in astonishment and awe we came to the conclusion that there is water enough poured from the cavernous throat of that wonderful fountain, if it could be properly utilized, to furnish motive power to turn all the machinery in the State of Missouri. It is said to be a great place in which to murder fish in winter. The spring and the river some distance from it never freeze, and the locality is therefore sought by thousands of fish which fall as prey to the jiggers and other pot-fishers.

We went into camp on the left bank of the river, about 3 o'clock. A long raft of railroad ties passed, floating on down to the railroad at Arlington, engineered by five or six long, lank-looking specimens of the *genus homo*, ostensibly clad, but whose combined wardrobe would not have sold at an old junk shop for thirty-five cents. They observed Will and Frank in the boat and the boy and me as they passed, and Billy, who was hid behind a tree some distance down the river, heard them talking together about "them damned dudes."

Dudes! Great Jehosophat, I wish you could have seen us! What an eye for dudes those fellows must have had. Frank had on an old gray coat that looked as if it might have been a veteran of two wars, a flannel shirt, a pair of ancient though warm and comfortable pantaloons, and an old slouch hat that once was black but now was gray. Will and I were similarly clad, with our pantaloons stuck in our boot.

The men of us had not shaven for over a week, and were generally pretty rough-looking diamonds; but these poor "raft bodies," as a Scotchman would say, took us to be dudes! In thinking over this grievous wrong done to us the only justification I could see for it was



Although the location is not known, these rafters on several tie rafts could be pulling up to the tie yard at Jerome, which handled thousands of ties each year. Courtesy of John Bradbury.

in Frank's spectacles. The creature can't see 40 feet without them, and no doubt the raftsmen concluded therefrom that he was a dude, and, as birds of a feather flock together, that the rest of us were also dudes.

We had a splendid bass supper. Our camp was a very pleasant and cozy one, and we naturally fell into a talk about our experiences of the past few days. We found that our "hindsight" was more accurate than our "foresight," and, despite our familiarity with bass fishing in other waters, that we had learned by experience something about bass fishing on the Gasconade.

Now with us the orthodox way to fish for bass is with a float, and a live minnow at a depth of 18 inches to 2 feet. This doesn't seem to work in the Gasconade in autumn. At that time the bass have followed the catfish to the bottom, where he is feeding not on minnows, but upon crawfish. This we discovered by dissection of the fish we caught. Not one of them had a minnow in its stomach.

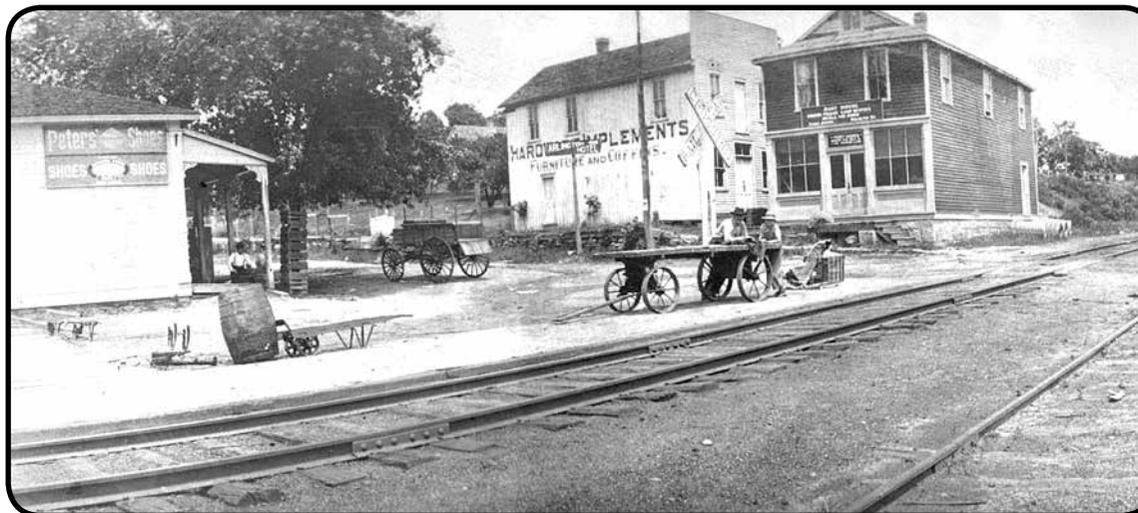
The fish are found in what local parlance is called the "holes," that is, the long reaches of deep water between the rapids, and generally toward the upper end of these,

and upon rocky or sandy bottoms. These "holes" are from 10 to 12 feet deep, and in fishing them a float is of no particular benefit. What is needed is 150 or 200 feet of fine sea grass or linen line on a good, plain, simple reel, and a handy, light rod. The hook, a number 2 or 3 O'Shaughnesy or Limerick, should be tied to a single gut [line], and the rig would be better a little too light than too heavy.

It is quite remarkable how big a fish you can handle with a light line, especially when you use a landing net, and do not have to lift your fish out of the water. The delicate line does better work and catches the most fish, as the small-mouthed black bass is as skittish as a red deer or a wild turkey. Insert your hook from below through the tail of your crawfish, and carefully and without noise make your cast as far from the boat as possible. Let it settle to the bottom, and move your line gently every minute or two until it is brought close enough to necessitate another cast, which make in another direction.

Some bass may be taken, even in the fall months, with minnows, and even with the red worm, or with small frogs, but after the water becomes a little cold and the bass seeks the deeper places, the most killing bait is unquestionably the crawfish. If we had known all this earlier in our trip we should have caught more fish, but we got a plenty as it was.

The next morning we reached Arlington at 10 o'clock, our train being due a little after noon. We returned the boats to their owner at Jerome with a present of a number of catfish. At Arlington we found the general merchandise store of Mr. [L. F.] Pillman to contain the post office, which was presided over by a very pretty and intelligent young lady. Our trunk—Frank's and mine—with our civilized clothes in it, was there, and Mr. Rogers, the clerk



The fishing trip began with a wagon shuttle from the Frisco depot at Crocker to the Gasconade River near Schlicht Mill. The Gasconade brought the sportsmen to the end of their trip at the railroad and river community of Arlington. L. F. Pillman's general merchandise store is at the extreme left. For a bluff top view of Arlington, see page 17. Courtesy of the Old Stagecoach Stop.



The boat owner across the river in Jerome surely was pleased that part of his gratuity included Gasconade catfish. Courtesy of Lynn Morrow.

politely permitted us to use the warehouse as a toilet room. Arriving in top boots, slouch hats, rough clothes, unshaven faces and with a decided cowboy appearance, when we emerged with smooth shine, “biled” shirts, fairly cut clothes, derby hats and polished boots, the transformation drew an exclamation of surprise—not from the young lady, but from the old gentleman, Mr. Rogers.¹⁶

In due time our train came along, and our bachelors tore themselves away from the contemplation of the sweet young lady at the store, and we hurriedly got aboard. Until I have another story to tell of the mountain and the valley, the river and the wood,
Farewell. A. A. L.

NOTES

¹*Forest and Stream* (New York: Forest and Stream Publishing Company), Nov. 10, 309-10; Nov. 17, 328-29; Nov. 24, 347-48; and Dec. 1, 366-67, all 1887. Our edited version is about one-fourth of the original text and includes modifications for easier reading.

²Sportsmen tourists commonly furnished long descriptions of their commissary and fishing and hunting equipment to newspapers, magazines, and “rod and gun” columns.

³Dr. I. G. W. Steedman was a wealthy St. Louis physician and served a couple of times as Fish Commissioner during the 1880s. He was a Confederate Colonel and a former POW in Union prisons.

⁴The party put in near Schlicht’s Mill, an established beginning point since the mid-1870s. Craddock was

a widely-known river character. He lived near Crocker on a farm, and hired out to sportsmen tourists until Moses Wetmore hired him in 1896 to be gamekeeper at the St. Louis Game Park in Taney County. He was there about three years and moved to Springfield where he worked as a stone polisher. He died in 1900 and family buried him in the Crocker Cemetery.

⁵The exploited cave is probably the modern Bat Cave, upriver from the mouth of the Roubidoux and Gasconade.

⁶Sportsmen commonly named their camps after one in their group. Frank Trigg was Lafayette County circuit clerk and his sister married camp cook and article author, Alexander A. Lesueur.

⁷Painted boats identified them as craft used in the sportsmen tourist trade, and kept them from being mistaken for another person’s boat. The oar-locked boat was propelled like a row boat, not poled like a flat bottom skiff.

⁸The karst nature of the Gasconade Valley was well known. Faculty and students at the School of Mines, Rolla, took field trips to them and St. Louisans sought them out for excursions.

⁹The party camped near Boiling Spring, a long time resort in the Ozarks. J. D. Haskell, a Rolla carpenter, was also a market fisherman and developed a local trade with sportsmen whom he catered to at his Boiling Spring cabin for the Crocker-Arlington float. In 1889, businessmen hired Haskell to manage the Current River Fishing and Hunting Club north of Doniphan.

¹⁰Burgoo is an old Southern term for stew or soup, often served outdoors.

¹¹Col. John Reid served under Gen. Sterling Price in Missouri’s Civil War, was a wealthy businessman and banker in Lexington, and he served as Missouri’s first Fish Commissioner, 1879-83.

¹²Alexander Lesueur often used French terms in his writing. He was Missouri Secretary of State, 1889-1901.

¹³The Riddle Bridge across the Gasconade is named for Elias Riddle’s large family; Elias died in 1891 and was buried in the Riddle Cemetery.

¹⁴Jig/jigging was the common nineteenth-century spelling for what today is gig/gigging. Riddle shipped his commercial fish in “refrigerated” or cooled railroad cars to St. Louis.

Missourians argued over the influence of gigging until the General Assembly outlawed gigging of protected game fish in 1913. Alexander Lesueur was editor of the *Lexington Intelligencer*, a one-term state representative when he introduced the Fish Commission bill in 1878, president of the Missouri Press Association in 1881, secretary of the Confederate Soldiers’ Reunion Association, and he died at 81 in 1924 in Los Angeles, CA.

¹⁵The term “route” was a common railroad word used in advertising tourist excursions, e.g., the St. Louis and Southern Mountain Route.

¹⁶L. F. Pillman was a Phelps County businessman of many enterprises including merchant, saw and grist miller, and hotelier. He bought and sold railroad ties and supplied numerous sportsmen tourists for Gasconade River excursions at his Arlington store. Pillman owned one of the early gasoline-powered boats on the Gasconade. He died in 1903.

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