



Liquor, Lawmen, and a Conversation with Harvey McCoy, moonshiner

by Terry Primas



The French came with their wines, the English with ale, smugglers with rum, the Germans with beer, and the Scots-Irish brought whiskey.

Settlers of Scots-Irish descent found the springs and rivers, hills and hollows of the Ozarks to their liking and brought their distilling expertise to the region.

Whiskey had a traditional place in the lifeways of the settlers. It had medicinal and celebratory uses and almost every cabin had an ample supply. The 1840 census counted 152 commercial distilleries in the Ozark counties of southern Missouri and northern Arkansas with 11 of those distilleries in Pulaski County which produced more than a gallon per person.

For the early settlers, conversion of corn to whiskey was also a practical matter. Most of the cleared land was best suited to raising corn. It was supplemental stock feed to the grass and mast on the open range land.

In the antebellum period, the markets for any surplus corn were long distances over poor to nonexistent roads. The grain was bulky and a heavy load. Corn distilled into liquor was much more transportable. A market as far away as St. Louis was reachable by loading some liquor on a plank and later a tie raft headed down the Big Piney. The best part of a liquor transaction was that it yielded cash, no small thing in a mostly barter economy.

John Baldridge kept a large inventory of barreled whiskey at his pine mill at Boiling Spring for consumption by mill workers and rafters in the pineries. He may have acquired the liquor from Samuel Nesbit's distillery at Mineral Spring, which

was purchased by David Lynch and John Fourt in the 1830's. [See Lynn Morrow's article "Old Pulaski: A Lumbering and Rafting Legacy Part II" in the 2017 Old Settlers Gazette.]

A Taxing Situation

Distilled spirits, particularly whiskey, were the target of taxes shortly after the founding of the country. The federal government found itself deep in debt. The government's primary source of income was tariffs on imported goods. To generate additional revenue for debt reduction, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton proposed an excise tax on domestic distilled spirits, making it the first tax levied on a domestic product. It was quickly dubbed the "whiskey tax."

The whiskey tax particularly incensed the farmers on the frontier in the Appalachian states, especially in western Pennsylvania, who distilled their surplus grain for portability. Many of these farmers were Revolutionary War veterans and felt they had fought a war over unjust taxes. It also cut into their profits.

The whiskey tax launched three

years of demonstrations, beginning with its passage in 1791. The resistance resulted in little tax collection during 1791 and early 1792. No one even attempted to collect the tax in frontier Kentucky. The protesters became increasingly anti-government and violent.

The protests have been dubbed the Whiskey Rebellion. In September of 1894, President Washington issued a proclamation that authorized a federalized militia, which numbered nearly 13,000 men. The militia, with its massive show of force, marched into western Pennsylvania and quelled the protests without a shot being fired. The Whiskey Rebellion was over but political opposition to the whiskey tax continued until 1802. President Thomas Jefferson's administration abolished the whiskey excise tax.

The excise tax on whiskey was revived in 1812 due to a decrease in import tariffs caused by the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812. In a few years, tariff income recovered and in 1834 President Andrew Jackson abolished all excise taxes and they remained nil for almost 30

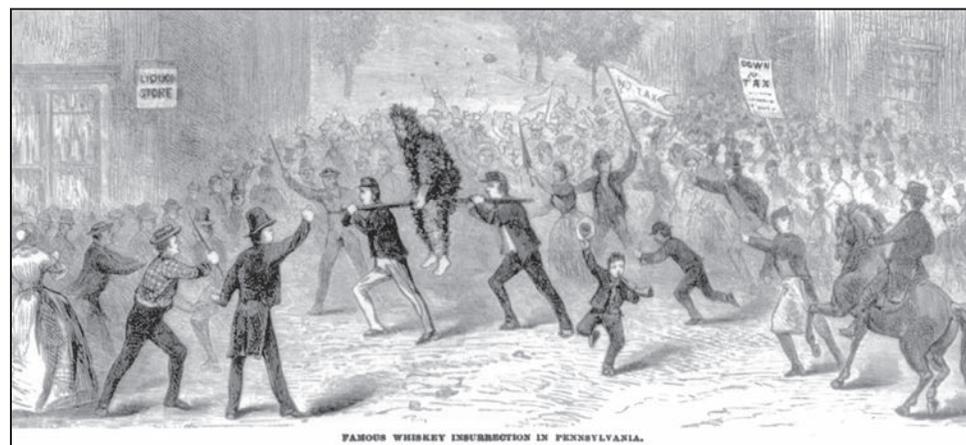
years.

The Civil War resurrected the national debt. The Internal Revenue Act of 1862 brought back the excise tax on liquor, plus taxes on a long list of other items, including an income tax. The act required distillers of even the smallest volume to buy a federal license and exacted a hefty tax of two dollars per gallon.

Closer to Home

The humiliating yet nonlethal deterrent of a tarred and feathered revenue collector on a rail used by the Whiskey Rebellion insurrectionists (below) seems to have gone out of style in favor of more deadly action as reported in the *Rolla Weekly Herald* in April of 1876 about a raid on a still in the Spring Creek neighborhood.

...News having reached St. Louis that illicit distilling was being carried on in the south part of Phelps county, in the Piney hills, Col. Ferd Myer, supervisor of Internal revenue, and Myron Coloney, Internal Revenue agent, were dispatched to this region to investigate the matter. They came here on Wednesday afternoon of last week, and there appeared here at the same time a man by the name of Richard L. Fruchte, who claimed to be a detective and who was in the employ of these officers. The detective got on a regular old bender and boasted on the streets and in the saloons that he was after crooked whiskey men. After being knocked down by Hank Devens, deputy marshal, for drawing a pistol on some parties, he sobered up and got himself in trim for the raid. Friday afternoon a party of some eight or ten persons ac-



This 1886 wood cut from the volume *American Progress: Or the Great Events of the Greatest Century Including Also Life Delineations of Our Most Noted Men* by Hon R. M. Devens (1882) depicts a tarred and feathered federal tax collector riding on a rail. This was one of the earliest acts of civil disobedience by our countrymen against our new government as a protest against the whiskey tax during the Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania.

compained these officers for the scene of war—or whiskey, the detective who was familiar with the location of the stills, leading. They traveled that afternoon and nearly all the following night before they reached their destination. After reaching the neighborhood of a still belonging to a man named Gentry, the party divided, part of them surrounding a small cabin containing the still, while the others laid in reserve. The still was found, and from appearances some one had before their arrival left the premises as a bright fire was burning, and this was just before day. The officers captured the still and a man who was on his way to the still with wood. The detective—Fruchte—after this, and about daylight, left the others to go to a house but a few hundred yards off to procure a wagon to convey the still away. Since then he has not been seen or heard of, and the supposition with many is that he became scared and deserted. It is said by people living in the neighborhood that near daylight two shots were heard in the direction taken by the detective. At any rate he is missing. The party returned here Saturday evening, bringing in the still.

It looks to us like a very bungling affair, and that there was bad management displayed

from the beginning to the end. There was no secrecy as to their intention and movements, and no doubt the parties whom they were after were fully posted as to their every movement.

Federal agents were determined to find infractions in Old Pulaski. The *Herald* reported a month later that

During the past weeks several raiding parties, under the direction of Mr. Myron Colony, a revenue officer, have been operating on the Big Piney, south of this county, and they have been pretty successful, having brought to this place five

“crooked” stills and five or six prisoners. The Bradford still was brought in last Saturday, and on Tuesday three brothers named Huff were brought to town, together with a still said to belong to them, though they deny the soft impeachment. They were committed to jail yesterday, being unable to procure bail.

The investigations have been held in secret, and at present we are unable to give the proceedings before the commissioner. The officers are determined to effectually put a stop to the violation of the revenue law, and all

parties who have been engaged in the illicit whiskey business will suffer the penalty of the law when caught.



A typical still in the the Great Smoky Mountains National Park area. This picture may have been staged, using confiscated equipment, by the Civilian Conservation Corps while working in the park during the 1930s.

IN THE DAYS OF LONG AGO.

There was liquor made on Paddy,
Lo, many years ago,
That your uncle and your daddy
Its whereabouts did know.

I often was escorted

In going to and fro,
And never was reported,

In the days of long ago.

Inquire of Richard Fielden,

Insist that he explain

If he had forgotten

That narrow, crooked lane.

A word to Jacob Huff,

A gay and jolly guest,

Who dearly loved the stuff,

And declared it was the best.

We were willing then and ready

On Paddy's Creek to go;

The onward trend was steady

And getting back was slow.

Our drinking booze is done,

With no resort to beer;

We are lank and shy on fun,

With Prohibition here.

Let us by law abide,

And be forever blest;

And strive to calm the tide

Of those who are dispossessed.

It was mean to be so frisky,

With a record that's a pest;

Down our funnels rolled the whiskey—

And Jake will tell the rest.

PHINEAS SMITH.

Hoxie, Arkansas

from *The Texas County Herald*,

August 23, 1923.

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A subsequent article of scheduled court hearings to be held at Jefferson City included some prominent citizens from the Spring Creek valley including L. L. Coppedge, J. M. Freeman, William Black, and William King. Brooks Blevins remarks in his *A History of the Ozarks* (Volume 3, 2021) that “In the postwar years ex-rebels resented the law and the small army of federal agents as yet another manifestation of Yankee imperiousness. Many Unionist distillers likewise objected to the exorbitant tax of two dollars per gallon.” Exorbitant is not an exaggeration, given that the value of a gallon of whiskey before the Civil War was less than the tax.

Law enforcement continued to pursue the defrauders of the government. The moonshiners were becoming more crafty by not setting up stills at their homes but in remote hollows, dispersing smoke,

and, moreover, showing some resistance to arrest. A Deputy United States Marshal hauled ten prisoners to court in Springfield in 1888 after apprehending them in southern Texas County. “The officers experienced some difficulty in making the arrests and were compelled to fire four shots at W. B. Garrison, the ringleader of the moonshiners, before he would surrender. The officers believe that there are two or three moonshine distilleries in the locality [*Jack’s Fork*] where the arrests were made, and are confident they will shortly discover the copper stills used by the accused men in the manufacture of crooked whiskey.”

Local Option

Attitudes began to change in the last decade of the 19th century. Public sentiment that had viewed moonshiners as rural folk carrying on a cherished tradition soured.

This might have been partly a reaction to the increasing number of publicized raids and the stills confiscated, along with increasing conflict. This fueled a growing prohibition movement, both at the national and local level. Large urban newspapers decried the evils of alcohol. Many local weeklies did, too. In 1906, the *Pulaski County Democrat* maintained “The Democrat is taking no part in the prohibition question...”. However, there were no articles or letters to the editor published that extolled the advantages or pleasures of alcoholic beverages. Of course, there might not have been anyone willing to express that opinion publicly. Plenty of ink was devoted to letters and articles condemning spirituous drink.

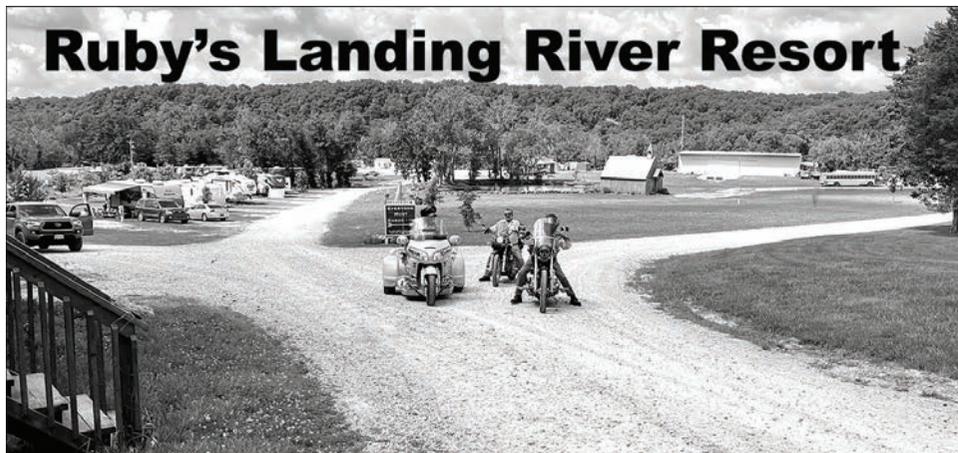
Very active in the campaign to banish booze in Old Pulaski and elsewhere were the local churches. The Woman’s Christian Temperance

Stillhouse “Holler”

Have you heard of Stillhouse “Holler”?
Well, they make corn ‘likker’ there;
(Not so many years ago too,
They still made it good elsewhere!)
Just one place it was shipped to,
And ‘twas really close at hand,
Was the California’s Tavern--
In the cellar it would stand.
There were many local people
Made a trip to get a jug
And would tip it up with one hand
“Till they took a great big tug.
Then away on the old wagon;
Way back home they’d tend to go
And take the jug and hide it
So that Mom would never know.
Some of them have licked the habit
Or gone on to their reward;
Better yet if they had left it
At the Still where it was stored!

Pulaski County Democrat,
October 14, 1976.

[Stillhouse Hollow is located on Highway 7 near its crossing of the Gasconade River.]



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Union and the County Anti-Saloon League, headquartered in Dixon, were also locally active.

The Revised Statutes of Missouri of 1899 (Article 3, Chapter 22) provided that the question of whether liquor could be sold or not by a licensed saloon in a county or city could be decided by a majority vote. An election could be called for after a qualified petition was presented. Another election on the question could not be held again for four years. This provision was commonly known as the Local Option Law. It pitted those in favor of legal liquor, known as the Wets, against the prohibitionists, known as the Drys. The Drys were the most vocal in print but what mattered most was what was said at the polls by vote,

Phelps County remained wet in a special election on the question in August of 1906 by a 500 vote majority, although the town of Newburg

voted to go dry in 1910. Laclede County went dry in September of 1906. The Drys were victorious by 644 votes in November of 1907 in Pulaski County. Texas County voted to go dry in 1906. Another vote was held in 1910 and the county continued dry with a larger majority than before.

The Pulaski County Wets tried one more time in 1912, amid grumbling over the \$1,000 cost of such an election. The drinkers took a drubbing at the polls with a vote of 1,368 to remain dry and only 325 votes for saloons. The Democrat remarked that "The 'wets' were so overwhelmingly defeated that they will probably never try it again in Pulaski county." That prediction proved to be correct.

Phelps County, steadfastly wet in the past, went dry in January of 1913, flip-flopping the vote of 1906 when 57% of the citizens voted in

favor of saloons to 57% against the liquid evil.

The local option law, all in all a democratic process, allowed small governmental jurisdictions with their diverse populations to decide whether they would allow "thirst parlors" or outlaw them. The passage of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919 and the enabling legislation, known as the Volstead Act, established nationwide prohibition and made the local option choice moot.

Rising Moonshine

Prohibition sparked the market for illegal alcohol manufacture and sales. While the public health arguably may have improved, crime increased and federal tax revenue declined. There might have been less roar in the Twenties without Prohibition.

The requisite parts for a still were, for the most part, easily obtainable

by the hill folk. A wooden barrel, usually 50 gallons, held the mash (grain, yeast, sugar, and water) for the fermentation process. A copper pot or boiler was used to heat the fermented liquid. Copper was the preferred metal as it conducted heat efficiently, evenly, and improved the taste. A hearth was built to heat the boiler over a wood fire. Therefore, a good supply of firewood was necessary. Another barrel held cold water wherein copper tubing used as a condenser was inserted. The copper tubing, about 40 feet in length, was bent into coils to fit inside of the second barrel. This was the most difficult part to acquire. Moonshiners called this essential feature, the coiled tubing, the "worm." Continual cool water flowed through the barrel and around the worm. Therefore, a spring or small running creek nearby that could be diverted to the barrel was also necessary.



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Crocks, jugs, or fruit jars were on hand to collect the distilled spirits

The process of distillation is temperature sensitive. Fermentation

changes the sugars in the grain to alcohol. The mash needs to be kept warm (not hot) for the process to continue. In cold weather, lanterns



Boilers came in a variety of sizes and configurations.

might be used to keep the mash warm and working. The mash mixture might sit a week or so before it was ready.

We all know that water becomes vapor at 212 degrees Fahrenheit. Alcohol becomes a vapor at 176 degrees. The watery fermented liquid in the mash barrel is placed in the boiler and heated to 176 degrees. The vapor enters the worm, condenses, and collected at the bottom end of the worm. To further refine the distillate, thus improving taste and enhancing the alcoholic content, the whiskey is distilled again and is known as a "double run."

Water-rich, forested, and secluded locations for such a still were a must. Texas County was an ideal place for moonshining. There certainly was already a tradition of distilling. It had all of the above attributes, plus it was the largest county in Missouri geographically,

providing lots of area for the revenue agents to cover. The county was also sparsely populated but the customer base was enhanced by numerous urban sportsmen looking for outdoor adventure on the rivers and in the forest—and maybe a jug or two.

Lawmen

The moonshiners were pursued in Texas County during the first decade of Prohibition by Sheriff Harry Kelly. Kelly was elected Texas County Sheriff in 1920, defeated by Ben C. Meador in 1924, and elected again in 1928. Kelly assiduously arrested moonshiners during his two terms. Investigations in the latter part of 1932 by Sheriff Kelly and federal officers resulted in raids on December 7 and 8 in Mountain Grove and Houston that swept up 30 men and two women for violations of prohibition laws.

Sheriff Kelly missed the big raid



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that he helped plan. He was in the hospital where he died December 10 from a slight wound received in an automobile crash that turned into septicemia. His obituary ended with "Widely known over the Ozarks, Mr. Kelly, who was serving his second term, had been particularly active in enforcement of the dry laws and had co-operated closely with federal agents when they worked in his county."

Andy P. Johnson was a Raymondville farmer, politically engaged, with aspirations for law enforcement. Andy unsuccessfully applied to the newly formed Missouri Highway Patrol in 1931. He then ran for the office of Sheriff of Texas County in 1932 against Republican Carl H. McKinney.

Andy Johnson was elected sheriff in the November election of 1932, a month before Sheriff Kelly died, but Johnson's term would not begin until January of 1933. At a special meeting on December 12, the County Court appointed Kelly's widow, Bessie, as Sheriff to serve the remainder of his term "or until her successor is duly qualified."

The Pursued

In 2004, we interviewed Robert Lee Bates, part of which was published in the 2005 *Old Settlers Gazette*. The Bates family lived in Harmon Valley, Lynch Township, in Texas County. Robert Lee helped his father, James J., make a little moonshine, often finding customers around the mill and store at Hazleton (or Hazelton, sometimes spelled both ways on the same map) on the Big Piney River. The customers included local people, tie rafters, and fishermen but Robert Lee averred they never sold to young people. He and his dad were also arrested by Sheriff Harry Kelly.

Robert Lee was 97 years old at the time of the interview, blind and hard of hearing, but his memory was good and he told a lively story. You can hear part of that interview in Robert Lee's own voice as a featured podcast on the Old Stagecoach Stop's web site (www.oldstagecoachstop.org). Talking with Robert Lee whetted our whistle for more reminiscences by moonshiners. Now, 18 years later, we have another one.

A Conversation with Harvey McCoy

The following is a transcription of an interview by retired physician Dr. William Michael Duff, familiarly called Mike. Mike recorded his conversation with Harvey McCoy, retired moonshiner, of Success, Texas County, in 1970. Texas County Sheriff Andy Johnson was Mike Duff's grandfather.

Mike Duff: How old are you now, Mr. McCoy?

Harvey McCoy: I'm 82.

MD: What is your full name?

HM: William Harvey McCoy.

MD: What was your daddy's name.

HM: His name was Adam. He's buried over here at Success.

MD: What was your mother's name?

HM: Her name was Annie was her given name. She was a Langley.

MD: How many children did you have?

HM: I got married about 25 years old. We had 15.

HM: There used to be a station at Cabool but they don't have a station there any more, do they Mike?

MD: What do you mean "station?"

HM: Well, I mean railroad station.

HM: I used to freight from Mountain Grove, you know.

MD: What do you mean by freight? Did

you haul freight from Mountain Grove?

HM: Yeah, hauled it with a team. We'd go to Mountain Grove. We couldn't get no liquor down in here, these fellers couldn't so they would pay me to get on the train, you know, to go to Springfield and get a suitcase full of whiskey.

MD: Why couldn't they get liquor down here?

HM: Well, that was when things were dry, you know, here but they



The wedding photograph of Harvey (1888-1974) and Nancy Isabell Ramsey McCoy (1888-1966) on July 22, 1914 at Success, Upton Township, in Texas County. Courtesy of Dr. William M. Duff.



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by Terry Primas

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could send up there and get it.
 MD: Couldn't you make it here?
 HM: They could make some but you was liable to get in trouble making it. I have, anyhow. I made whiskey. I can take a sack a sugar yet and a good still and can still make 12 gallon outa a sack of sugar.
 MD: Twelve gallons of whiskey? What would you make the whiskey out of?
 HM: You just take your sugar and corn tops, you know, and put crush cobs and all and just put it in a barrel and put your 50 pounds of sugar to each barrel and make a hundred gallon of mash, you see, and take that hundred gallon of mash and let it work about a week and you crush it cob and all and it will form a big top on there and when it goes to set-

ting clear, as clear as water puttin near, and then it's ready to run.
 MD: How do you run it? Do you just put it in a big kettle or something?
 HM: (Laughs.) That made me think. There was a preacher, he's a living yet, who didn't know how to make whiskey and I told his brother that we were going to make some and tell just when and I wasn't afraid of him, he didn't drink and he don't drink yet and he was a hell of a good feller and a helluva good man and I said you tell him to come on down and we'll just show him and he stayed there for an hour or two and he never took a drink of the mash nor he never caught none of that liquor that came through there, he never took a drink that's all.

MD: He just really wanted to know.
 HM: Well, he was just really a good feller and me and his brother were making some liquor and he just wanted to know how it was done, you know. That's all he wanted to know and that's all I ever did hear, he never said a word. He just wanted to know how it was done. Now, it would be just like you, you want to know how it's done.

MD: Yeah, I've heard stories but I didn't know really how it was done. Did you ever run into the law? Did you ever have trouble with the law?
 HM: (Laughs.) I imagine I have, yeah, I imagine I have. I was in the Neosho jail.

MD: Neosho?
 HM: Yeah, that was a federal jail, a federal jail in Springfield. It was a nice place. We had plenty to eat and everything was all right and we played all kinds of games in there 'course I never learned to play cards. I wouldn't do that but they played cards and once in a while they'd get into a fight and the law would get after 'em, you know. Then they'd have to lock 'em up in the dark house.

MD: What was the dark house?
 HM: A dark cell, you know. They'd get loud of a night and just holler and hooting and cut around there. They didn't have anything to drink but, you know, they didn't have nothing else to do and the law would come up there and tell 'em "Now, listen here fellers, you gotta

cut that out. If you don't, why we got a place to put you fellers." Now they would do. 'Course, I was never that way. We had to mop that jail house every morning and we had to sweep and then mop and do all them things and just part of us would do that, you know, they'd just be certain fellers one week and then the next week some more of



"Still in business" is the caption for this picture taken by Vance Randolph in 1931. Courtesy of Lyon Library, School of the Ozarks.



Andy P. Johnson (1890-1982) was elected to two terms as Sheriff of Texas County. Courtesy of Mike Duff.

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'em, you know. They'd be coming in and going out. There was 25 or 30 and sometimes 40 in that jail. But we kept things just as cleaned and sprayed everywhere. There was one feller had a dose of crabs and he didn't tell it until they caught up with him. Hell, they sprayed him and he bucked like... (laughter). Well, he oughter told 'em and they would have treated him all right but they sprayed him all over.

MD: Just like an old cow.

HM: Well, yeah, they had to get rid of them crabs, you know.

MD: Well, they didn't want to catch them.

HM: There wasn't nothing like that

allowed in there. We all had our own cots and of a morning we got up and made up our own bed and they had a pigeon hole there and they had the trusties that cooked and they put our feed through there and we had plenty to eat. It wasn't a mean place to be only just to be away from home. I was about 40 or 50 years old. I lived right here [Success] but I was away from home. They locked me up there for three months in there.

MD: What happened then?

HM: Well, they turned me loose, you know, and gave me a two hundred dollar fine and two year parole. When I got to Springfield I had

some bills in my shoe, maybe ten to fifteen dollars in my shoe, and they never did know I had that and when I got to Springfield I got me a bottle of whiskey. They took me to Springfield, you see, the government did and I had to make my way home.

So I went on the bus on down 'til I got to Houston and I had part of my whiskey drunk but I was afraid of the sheriff up there a little bit and I was afraid of they might be watching me and I wouldn't mind getting me another pint but and I come on home. When I got down here why there was a feller had my outfit and he just run off a batch brew.

MD: With your own outfit!

HM: Well, he kinda stayed here and took care of things. He'd made a crop with me, you know.

MD: Would you raise your own corn?

HM: Oh, hell, yeah. I used to farm all this land in here. I used to rent ground, you know, raise wheat. That's all I ever done was work on the farm. When I got over here I got to making liquor. I could make twelve gallon whiskey a day with the last outfit I got.

MD: Did you make your own outfit?

HM: Oh, no. I had a

Moonshine seems to have been a popular subject of poetry and song. We include one more selection for your reading or singing enjoyment.

This good old song is sung to the tune of "My Old Kentucky Home."

The Moon Shines on the Moonshine

Oh, the moon shines a fright
In my old Texas county home;
'Tis summer, the Prosecutor keeps away;
The corn mash is ripe
And the still is in my room,
Where the force makes liquor all the day.
The barrels are rolling on the little cabin floor,
The proceeds will net me many cent.
By and by if the Sheriff
Comes a-knocking at the door,
Then my Texas county home will be for rent.

Chorus:

Weep no more, dry Texas county,
Oh, weep no more today;
Just bring your empty bottles
To my old Texas county home—
There is booze where there ought to be hay.
The moon shines bright
On the old Missouri still;
'Tis summer, the rumhounds are gay;
The corn tops ripe in the field beyond the hill.
And the wops make whiskey all the day.
The hooch lies stacked on the little cabin floor,
The hopper is shining and bright,
By and by Moberly and Meador
Will come a-knocking at my door,
Then my old Missouri still good night.

Chorus:

Weep no more, my lady,
Oh, weep no more today;
One song we will trill
For the old Missouri still—
For the old Missouri still far away.

Houston Herald, July 1, 1926.



Sheriff Harry Kelly, left, and Prosecuting Attorney Dale Moberly stand among confiscated moonshine stills, circa 1929. "It was said there was always grass in the rim of Sheriff Harry Kelly's tires. He kept moonshiners on the run." Kelly was in office when Prohibition began and died from septicemia as a result of a car crash in 1932. Kelly's widow, Bessie, finished his term, becoming Texas County's first woman sheriff. Andy Johnson was sheriff-elect. From *Images of Our Lives* (2006), published by and courtesy of the *Houston Herald*.

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feller who, well, we just rigged it up. I could make twelve gallons of whiskey a day and I could draw off a hundred gallons of mash a day. Well, [Sheriff] Andy Johnson got my worm. He got it and told me he would give it up but he never would. Went over there twice after it but he wouldn't give it up.

MD: Why wouldn't he?

HM: Well, I don't know, I guess he wanted to make some whiskey or wanted somebody to. (Both laugh.)

I voted for Andrew twice and helped put him in there but I didn't vote for him anymore and he didn't get in there but he run twice but he lost out, you know. I'll tell you right now, if you can get the whiskey man's vote, you can darn near win.

MD: Well, everybody likes to have a drink now and then, right?

HM: Yeah.

MD: Can I ask you a question which you don't have to answer but

I was wondering how they caught you. I mean, what did you do wrong that they caught you? I know you were making liquor but did they see your smoke or something?

HM: Well, well there was a feller who turned me in. He's over here at Licking. I don't know, you might have heard of him, old John Jones?

MD: John Jones? No, I don't know him.

HM: He's over at Licking. I seed him a few days ago. I ain't never saw him at the right place. I don't give a damn, I don't like him yet.

MD: He turned you in then?

HM: Oh, yeah, he turned me in. We'd put on some mash, you know, and so he got sick right now.

MD: Oh, he was working with you?

HM: Yeah, he was gonna work with me and he got sick and him and Red Hubbard [Texas County Sheriff at the time] planned this on me, pulled this on me, and locked me up in the Neosho jail and cost me two hundred dollars or something. I haven't forgot neither one of them and haven't seen Red in a long time and I don't speak to him and I got no use for anybody who's a stool pigeon on you that-a-way.

MD: What was bad is that he was sort of working with you anyway. I mean, it wasn't like the sheriff coming out and arresting you.

HM: While this mash was working and getting ready, he was sick and Schumake from Springfield came down here.

MD: Was he

a FBI agent or what? A Treasury agent?

HM: He was a government man, a federal man and he come with Red Hubbard down here and so in the morning we was supposed to run this stuff. Why John Jones didn't show up and so we didn't run it but they drove up over yonder on the road over there and they come over, you see, and we wasn't down there running it but they came up here and arrested me anyway and took me.

MD: Were you expecting any trouble?

HM: Yeah, you damn right, 'cause we poured the mash, we had it in the smoke house, and we poured it out into cream cans, me and two more fellas, but I didn't get them into it, now I didn't tell on them. One of them was right here when the law come and the other'n wasn't here yet and he went on home and

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we carried that mash down there and hang it up, cut off some limbs of saplings. There was some hogs out here then, you know, and you had to hang it up, couldn't leave it in the cream cans [on the ground for the hogs to get] and they come down the line and they found that and they come up here and arrested me. And they finally arrested that feller that was here. Well, the way it was that old Schumake, he had a sawed-off shotgun and this other feller was pretty damn wicked and pretty damn stout and younger than I was a whole lot and he just talked to them just as rough as hell. Well, after awhile why ole Schumake he drew his gun back like he was marking it and he was just ready to grab his damn gun and ole Schumake he seed what was going to happen and he said we'll just take you to Springfield, too. The other feller said "I don't give a G-d-

where you take me. You just take me wherever you damn please" and he's just cussing black and blue and when they went to leave they said, "Well, we'll not take you then." They didn't have nothing on him but they did on me, you know, and they left him here, although he cussed them (laughs). Yeah, Red Hubbard's the one that got me and John Jones over there, the stool pigeon.

MD: You remember you say Grandpa took your worm. Well, Andy Johnson was my grandpa.

HM: He didn't take me. He wanted to get the other feller and he got him, you know, he got the other feller when he took my worm. Well, you know, when you are going to fighting whiskey why you are just perty much up agin. I know what these fellas said, he'll never be sheriff anymore and I knowed the Sudheimer boys and everybody up and down the river. I knowed all

these boys.

MD: Did the Sudheimers make whiskey?

HM: No, they didn't make whiskey but they liked it. They like to come up here and visit with me and drink with me just like we are now. Did you know them?

MD: No, I didn't. What was their first names?

HM: All of those boys up and down the river, they all said he can't be sheriff anymore when he done me like he done me. That's what they said about Red Hubbard, he'll never be sheriff any more. [Red served just one term as sheriff.]

MD: Now don't you think Grandpa treated you better than Red Hubbard?

HM: Well, yeah, he treated me better than Red did. You see, he let me go but he got the other feller and he went to Springfield. He was locked quite a while.

MD: What was the other feller's name? Do you care to tell us? Does it make any difference?

HM: (Just chuckles.)

MD: Don't think you should, huh?

HM: Well, he's a feller that lives over here. I made liquor with all these fellers around here.

MD: I'm sure if Grandpa had your worm, he would be happy to give it to you today.

HM: Andy always treated me good. I could tell you a lot of things if I would.

MD: Well, why don't you?

HM: Well, he would come down here and I'd give him whiskey. One time I took him a half gallon or a gallon up there and drove around the back of the courthouse and then went there and told him and he come and got it. Well, me and Andy we was good friends.

MD: Yes, he always liked you. I saw him today. He said for me to ask



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you if you knew something about Steam Mill Hollow. If you'd ever heard of Steam Mill Hollow? [Steam Mill Hollow is a long valley whose mouth opens on the west bank of the Big Piney River just upstream from Boiling Spring. The head of the hollow was in walking distance of McCoy's farm. The still was on government land.]

HM: (Laughs.)

MD: What was that story?

HM: Steam Mill Hollow, well at the head of Steam Miller Hollow is where we were making the liquor down there. He took my outfit away, he took my worm and he shot up the rest of it and took what liquor we had and, well, if he hadn't took my worm away from me, a three-quarter inch worm, you know, about 45 feet I believe it was, long and coiled just to fit a damn [barrel]. If he hadn't took that I wouldn't gotten mad at him. I was out getting

wood and the other feller, why he was at the still. Me and Andy used to get along awful good but after he done me that-a-way why...

MD: Well, I think he still considers you his friend.

HM: Well, I ain't an enemy, I don't reckon, to him but if I ever see him, I ain't seen him in I don't know how long, but if I ever see him I'll ask him if he wore that worm out. Oh, it was a copper worm, you know, three-quarter of an inch across.

MD: Now tell me, how did he catch you? George [Harvey's son] said you got wind of him coming.

HM: He slipped up on the bank and he told me now that I wasn't gonna bother you a'tall but he says he was going to get that other feller and

he was down there at the still. Our signal was and before I could get around on the hill and hoot like an owl, he was closer to the still than I was and before I could holler like an owl.

MD: What does an owl hoot like? Why don't you try one for me?

HM: I haven't tried in a while but (Harvey gives a good hoot and both laugh.)

HM: You can hear that holler.

MD: Yeah, but I could never do that, though.

HM: I used to do it better, me and Jim Holback, a feller that lived on Roubidoux and he ain't living now, but me and him used to make liquor together. Well, that's what I was going to do. Now, Andy told me don't you do the things I'm going to catch him, he said, and I'm going to

let you go, he says, and I'm going to catch him.

MD: Why would he let you go and want to catch this other guy?

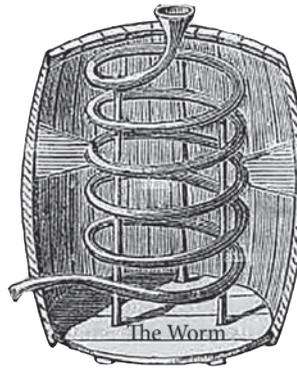
HM: I'd voted for him and worked for him twice in the elections. Harry Kelly had me in the Springfield jail.

MD: Was that Bessie Kelly's boy?

HM: Her name was Bessie, his wife, her name was Bessie.

MD: Harry Kelly's wife was Bessie? I thought his mother was Bessie.

HM: Harry was the sheriff. I voted for him twice and the last time I put him in there he was just as mean as the devil about this liquor and he had me in the Springfield [jail]. Well, I was coming home from Springfield that night when Harry died. I don't know but some of 'em said he died of lead poisoning and some of 'em said he was in a car wreck. I never did know, you know, but he was in the Springfield hospital whenever I was coming home



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that night and I got to Cabool and I stayed the rest of the night at Cabool and it was snowing that night. It was an awful bad night. Now I helped and voted for Harry twice, worked for him all I could.

MD: Was he a Democrat or a Republican?

HM: He was a Republican. Andy was a Democrat but that didn't make a damn bit of difference to me. If a man treats me right I'll treat him right and he didn't hardly treat me right. (Pause for opening up another beverage.) If he did treat me right, well, if had just give me back my worm. If he hadn't kept it..

MD: That was a pretty valuable worm, wasn't it? How much would a worm like that cost, Mr. McCoy?

HM: Well, I don't know, I forget now, I got [the tubing] in St. Louis, you know. Me and a feller coiled it around a big tree just to fit in a 50 gallon barrel and you could work it

in a 60 [gallon] by putting chunks down the sides of it to hold it. You got to keep those worms level, they got to run level.

MD: Now, how would you put it?

Would it be horizontal or vertical, the worm, as it came off the still?

HM: They're just coils that run around and around. You gotta condense that liquor, you know. It was the best outfit I had. I could run 12 gallons of liquor a day. Me and a feller went over there twice and he said I'll give it to you some day but he never did.

MD: It's probably up in the attic.

He's got some slot machines up there.

HM: He probably sold that copper.

He didn't lock me up but he did the other feller.

There Still Were Stills

While Prohibition increased the demand for spirits, the passage of the Twenty-first Amendment in

December of 1933 that rendered the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act null and void did not extinguish the demand for moonshine. The tax on pre-Prohibition alcohol accounted for 14% of the revenue for federal and state coffers. Repeal restored this revenue stream and distilled spirits were again heavily taxed, which was certainly helpful during the Depression.

Andy Johnson served as Sheriff of Texas County for two nonconsecutive terms: 1933-1936 and 1941-1944. Andy did not run in 1936 and Homer (Red) Hubbard served as sheriff that term. Andy won a close election in 1940 against Mac Gum of Licking.

Andy continued his pursuit of moonshiners. On September 11, 1941, the *Houston Herald* reported

Sheriff Johnson has been watching evidences of a moonshine still down Piney, near Boiling Spring,

and made a search last Sunday, finding a well equipped moonshine factory in a cavity in a large bluff. He brought the worm and a quantity of liquor to town with him, also arrested Doug Romines on charge of operating the still. Romines is held in jail to answer charges.

Andy Johnson did not seek reelection in 1944 and resumed farming near Raymondville. Harvey McCoy spent his entire life on his farm near Success. He and his son George may have acquired another worm for a few more batches to serve visitors at home.

Our appreciation to Dr. William M. Duff, who grew up in Texas County, for sharing his recorded interview of Harvey McCoy and several photographs with us. Hear part of the recording at www.oldstagecoachstop.org.

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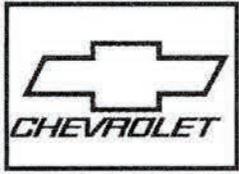


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Dru L. Pippin (1899-1981), son of Dr. Bland Nixon Pippin (1874-1945) who created Pippin Place, wrote a short feature for "Postscripts," the newsletter of the Officers' Wives Club at Fort Leonard Wood. The club is now known as the Fort Wood Community Spouses' Club and still publishes the newsletter. Dru's piece was reprinted in the January 31, 1980, issue of the Pulaski County Democrat. In addition to operating Pippin Place for more than four decades, Dru served two terms on the Missouri Conservation Commission and was a much sought after raconteur. Dru died three years before Pippin Place burned, sparing him the sight of his father's dream going up in smoke (see page 47).

Pippin Place: A Dream That Became History by Dru L. Pippin

When asked to write something about Pippin Place, my mind immediately reverted to a quote appropriately used to identify this picturesque setting "Out of the smoke zone with Ozark beauty at its best." I said yes immediately, because here is history; here is a lifetime of family operation and cooperation. Here is dignity and unblemished reputation. Here is a story that can never be duplicated, or attempted for that matter, because of changed economic conditions and stresses.

My father, born and raised about ten miles from the Pippin Place site, had daydreams as most boys do. His chore was to shell corn and take it to Bartlett Mill in a meal sack across the back of his trusted nag. To him, this was not a task, rather a day eagerly anticipated from one trip to the next. Water power was the source of energy that rotated the two French stone burrs producing a product that cannot be duplicated in any other way. Sometimes the head of water was diminished and he had to wait his turn until the water caught up behind the earthen dam. This was his opportunity to fish or swim or just daydream about a time when he might own this very spot.

As he grew, went to school and became a prominent dentist in St. Louis, this dream never left him. Rather it matured with adult planning and determination, until in 1911 he bought 40 acres of land, spring and dam site.

Thus was the beginning of a family-operated vacation resort that lasted until 1969. Acreage was added, changes made, and additions built, but over a half-century of hard work and love is the hidden beauty only those of us who participated can see or appreciate to the fullest.

In 1914, virgin oak and sycamore trees were felled and the logs cut into dimension lumber to frame the building under construction. World War I was in progress and men unable to pass a military physical dug the foundation with pick and shovel. Sweaty teams and tired men "slip scraped" the hardpan away to meet grade specifications; others hauled sand and gravel from the river, others brought cement from the railroad, and everyone had a chance to mix the aggregate and cement and pour concrete or carry hods to the stonemasons. Two carpenters, a stonemason, a plumber and an electrician were the only non-resident workers; all others were natives. An historic spot was being erected and a boy's dream coming true.

The three-story mill was torn down and replaced with a smaller two-story structure. The stone burrs for grinding grains were installed on the first floor; the forebay and turbine at stream level and a five kilowatt direct current generator placed on the second floor. The brightness of light produced depended on the amount of water going through the turbine. Many, many times the lights were as dim as that of a coal oil lamp, but storing water in daytime gave energy for the night.

An electric pump sucked water from the spring and forced it uphill some 60 feet above the house level so that gravity pressure from a concrete tank gave ample water pressure for indoor facilities.

The first vacation guests came in 1915. The Frisco trains stopped in Crocker for passengers going to or from Pippin Place. Livery operators at Crocker met all trains, first with teams and buggies, and then with Model T Fords; and drove them fifteen miles to their destination. Modern accommodations, good food, wholesome environment,



Dr. Bland N. Pippin

congenial associates and good fishing made this new business a promising endeavor.

In 1919 twelve bedrooms and a spacious recreation hall with a hard maple floor was added to the original structure. Self-supporting straight logs 40 feet long with bark intact were framed into trusses and raised to their positions for roof support. In those days dentists used vulcanized

rubber as material for dentures. My dad included strong wire as reinforcement in the uppers to withstand the jaw pressure. The design of the roof trusses is the same design he used for wiring his dentures!

A local couple operated the place for two years [lawyer Fred Scott and wife], then my mother [Nancy Vaughn Pippin] with my help for four years. My wife and I bought additional adjoining land and we operated Pippin Place for forty-four years before selling. For forty-three years we were fortunate in having, as Duncan Hines called him, "John, Dean of Chefs," a black man famous for his cooking, his love of people, and his loyalty to the Pippin family. His reputation for hot rolls, cornbread sticks, and peppermint ice cream spread far and wide.

Compare these rates with today's prices and you wonder how it was done. Rates included three meals a day and rooms varied from \$3.50 a person per day to \$6.00 per person per day depending on whether or not the room had a private bath or was located upstairs or down. Food was served family style for all to enjoy regardless of room rates. Monthly rates were quoted and references were required. The secret of success was a 95 percent occupancy and a large portion of the food, including milk and meat, being produced on the farm.

Then came the depression and World War II seriously hampering the ability of people to take vacations. The building of Fort Leonard Wood was not conducive to the quiet, tranquility and peace so necessary for a vacation spot. Because of a shortage of houses in the area, quarters at Pippin Place were in demand for contractors and white collar employees keeping all rooms occupied. R.E.A. solved

the power problem. Drilling of a deep well solved the water problem. Highway improvements solved the transportation problem and installation of a circulating hot water heating system solved the heat problem.

All Army health standards were met so Army officers and their families continued to keep all rooms occupied and regardless of rationing, food stamps and price freezes, the rates did not change. References were still required and we depended as before on satisfied customers for our advertising. Duncan Hines and "Scenic Inns of America" unsolicited on our part, gave us their blessings and recommendations.

Special parties, weddings, receptions, school banquets and reunions, regular civic club meetings, dance and card clubs, as well as individual dinners, all by reservation only, were daily events. We always accepted a customer's check and not once in 53 years of operation was a check ever returned. So as I said in the beginning, this true story is one of a man who would be 105 years old today, proving that "We are such stuff as dreams are made of."

As you view the etching on glass of the northern elevation of Pippin Place, maybe what I have said will remind you of the depth of etching made on the hearts and minds of those who were a part of a dream that took over a half-century to unfold.

The future, you ask? I understand that again 40 acres of land and the building have been sold and that an operation similar to ours of years ago will be resumed. Could this be history repeating itself? Could it be another dream in the making? The beauty of the glass etching is completed as the etching of history goes on and on.

The Gazette has published several articles about the resort's history, e.g. "Pippin Place-Serving Pulaski as a Long-time Ozarks Resort" by Gary Kremer and Lynn Morrow, 2001 Old Settlers Gazette. Listen to two of Dru's entertaining stories in the podcast section of our web site at <http://www.oldstagecoachstop.org/podcasts2.html>

More of Dru's memoirs and musings can be found on our website at <http://www.oldstagecoachstop.org/geezerindex3.html>.