

passed a boy on the bank with a nice smallmouth. The fish, it turned out, was for sale. But the Massey party declined the opportunity to buy the fish in the interest of honesty and fairness. Ernie remembered the way the fish was strung through both lips, which was different from the way the Rensch guides handled the fish in the live wells. The winning fish that day, caught by another boat, was interestingly enough about the same size of the boy's offered catch. More telling was the fact that the fish had marks through both lips. Ernie's fisherman was beaten that day, but not by fishing!

By the way, fishing lures of the late 40's included the Lazy Ike, Heddon's River Runt, Midget Didget, the lead-headed Lucky 66 spinner, Clark baits--especially the "Blue-Eyed Pussycat", and a top-water popper called a Plunker.

Fishing and guiding was the easy part of the job. The hard part was backing up to get lines un snagged. Fishermen learned to cast forwards as the boat progressed down the river. A snag in back of the boat would cost time and effort to back up. Ernie does remember a group or two that made the trip brutal with their errant casting. The veteran guide says, "There were a few fishermen that injured almost every rock and tree limb on the stream!"

A trip of several days

may have required a commissary boat with tents and camping supplies. The paddler/cook started with the fisherman, but simply travelled down to set up camp. Tents were erected and evening dinner was prepared at a gravel bar downstream. The fishermen came in, enjoyed dinner, a tent for the evening, and breakfast the next morning. As the fishermen took off, the commissary boat guide would disassemble camp, shove off, and pass the fishermen as he continued down to set up camp for the next night.

Ernie enjoyed flashing his guide license to local game warden John Reed. Reed was easy to get along with, although Ernie does remember paddling some fishermen customers into a slough to dodge the warden when the fishermen had forgotten to purchase fishing permits that morning.

Not everybody in the county got along with the game warden. He was enticed down a Gasconade hillside one winter evening by some giggers. At the bottom of the hill, Reed helplessly watched as the men pushed his truck off the cliff.

But generally, people on the river were always friendly and willing to help. Ernie remembers one incident in which the hooks of a lure were embedded in the back of a fisherman. Ernie was ready to pull them out, however, at the



Devils' Elbow Curve on Route 66 on the way to great fishing on the Big Piney. Postcard dated 1928 courtesy of John F. Bradbury.

fisherman's request. They pulled over at a cabin and were given a ride to Dewitt's Clinic in Waynesville. The rough ride may have been more painful than the extraction to the hapless angler.

Getting a good stringer of fish seemed to be much easier back then, says Ernie. The Big Piney was deeper, not gravelled in as much, but some gravel bars were six-to-seven feet high. Mr. Massey explains that the conservation laws allowed no gigging on the Big Piney because

of its clarity. Although game fish were never allowed to be taken in gigging, all fish populations seemed to be affected.

To illustrate how good the Piney's water quality was, Ernie says he could get a drink of its cool water at a streamside spring anytime during the day.

Many changes have gone on in the last fifty years. But the Big Piney continues to flow into the twenty-first century rated as one of the Ozark's best floating and fishing streams.

Hancock Was Wild!

Clark Duncan, who was born in Hancock November 26, 1892, recalled some 58 years later that "Hancock was a rather wild town," when he was growing up there.

"It boasted of a saloon," he added. "Horse racing and family feuds were not uncommon. Occasionally women engaged in hair pullings at public affairs. These were the days of weaving, apple outin's, square dances, and play-parties, where they played and sang, 'Skiptum-a-Lou, My Darling!'"

"In those days you often heard the expression, 'Jim Skaggs is sparkin' Bill Wilson's gal, Nancy, over on the Ridge.' When a young man was smitten with a girl, he waited for her at the door of the church, and asked her if he could see her home. He didn't have a flivver waiting either. They often walked down a rocky, moonlit road, which was ideal for the blossoming of a youthful romance."

Clark was the youngest child of Mary Frances Pittman and James Monroe Duncan.

When his father died about a year after Clark's birth, Mary was left with the burden of raising eight children alone. She moved the family to a hillside farm north of Hancock. After trying to make a go of it for about four years, Mary Duncan traded the farm for a house in Hancock. There, she had to "take up work by the day" to earn precious money to raise her family.

Clark Duncan learned telegraphy at the age of fifteen and worked for Union Pacific railroad company for more than thirty years. He also wrote at least three published books, Sunnyridge, Light on a Hill, and Starr Valley. The little farm north of Hancock on which his mother, siblings, and he struggled to make a living in the 1890's was the inspiration for Sunnyridge, the farm described in his book of the same title.

"Sunnyridge will always be my favorite story," he once said, "because it portrays the sort of life I lived around

Hancock back in 1905. Aunt Maria, one of the characters in the book, was patterned after my Aunt Cynthia Teeple, who was

as old fashioned as a tallow candle, and very flighty. But she had a heart of gold and a human sympathy unparalleled."

Pulaski County Names

By Gary Knehans

You've heard of Waynesville and Dixon and Bloodland and Crocker,

Hancock and Hawkeye, and Richland's no shocker, But do you recall, the least known names of all?

Curtis and Francis, Flynn and Fyan... Decker and Hawkins, Rigsby and Moab.

Yes, these are all names of actual Pulaski County towns and communities, according to Gram's Superior Map of Missouri. Just so no one feels left out, the other villages on that map are Bailey, Bartlett Springs, Bellefonte, Big Piney, Brownfield, East Richland, Franks, Hanna, Laquey, Richland, St. John, Schlicht, Swedeborg, Tribune, Waynesville, Wharton, Wheeler, and Wildwood.

The city of St. Robert, a much younger community, did not exist when the map was first published.

By the way, the following were place names of Pulaski County voting precincts in 1888: Bellfont, Crocker, Dixon, Dundas, Hancock, Lost Hill, Millers Mill, Richland, Swedeborg, and Waynesville.