



Trout Talk

**Bennett Spring State Park to mark
its 100th anniversary next month**

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by Laura L. Valenti

September 2024

Bennett Spring State Park to mark its 100th anniversary next month

LAURA L. VALENTI

This year marks Bennett Spring State Park's 100th anniversary, as the first land purchase made to establish the park took place on December 27, 1924. Josie Bennett-Smith, the proprietor of the Brice Inn, located in the village of Brice, close to the current Park Store and the Bennett Spring Church of God, sold her 8.5 acres to the state on that date. She was a direct descendant of James Brice, the first settler who came into this valley, along with his wife, Ann, in 1837. Josie's acreage was inherited from him, her grandfather. In April 1925, her brother, William Sherman Bennett, sold 565 acres, including the famous spring itself, to the state, the land that would become the heart of Bennett Spring State Park. Four hundred and twenty-seven of those acres could be traced directly back to his grandfather, James Brice.

Today's Bennett Spring State Park personnel have a day of historically-based activities planned for area residents and visitors alike, to celebrate the park's monumental birthday on Saturday, October 5.

Hayley Schnaath, the park and historic site specialist at Bennett Spring, lined out the day's activities, starting at 10 am.

"The day begins with EznDil, a pair of musician-storytellers, Mike and Nancee Micham of Taneyville, Mo., a



Submitted photo

The white clapboard Brice Inn was the lone hotel in the village of Brice and the first at Bennett Spring. Originally owned by Josie Bennett-Smith, she sold her inn and the surrounding eight acres to the state on Dec. 27, 1924 making it the initial purchase of land to establish Bennett Spring State Park. After the state purchase, different persons continued to manage the inn for the first few years including Juanita Donnelly, pictured here circa 1927, with her three year old son, David. Juanita's husband, Phillip Donnelly, a prominent Lebanon attorney became the state's governor 25 years later, making her the state's First Lady. Their son, David became a highly respected attorney in Lebanon, passing away at the age of 93 in 2018. The Brice Inn like the rest of the town of Brice was demolished by the CCC.

village just outside of Branson," Hayley shared. "They will be followed by the Gospel-Bluegrass band, Red Letter Edition, who will be playing from 1-3 pm and then Lindley Creek of Buffalo, also Bluegrass entertainment, will finish out the day's music from 4-6 pm. All of this

will be on the mobile stage over at the parking lot at Picnic Shelter B, located on the far side of the Whistle Bridge."

She continued. "Dr. Brooks Blevins, a historian of Ozark studies from Missouri State University in Springfield will be speaking at the Nature Center from



Hayley Schnaath

1-1:45 pm, presenting a program entitled Magic Waters and Silver Dollars: A History of Ozark Tourism."

Hayley added. "The Laclede County Route 66 Society will have a car show that day in Zone 1 and back at Shelter House B, there will also be a Dutch oven cooking demonstration. We plan to have rope-making demonstrations and

See 'ANNIVERSARY' /page 3

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historic toys including kits for making yarn dolls will also be available. We have staff and volunteers coming in from other state parks that day to help out."

Other plans for the day include a CCC re-enactor who will be on hand, wearing the kind of uniform the CCC workers used. He'll be talking about their life in the Civilian Conservation Corps, an economic relief program of the 1930s that saved thousands of Mid-

west farm families with work around the country, work that built parks like Bennett Spring.

Hayley continued. "We'll have other historical displays on site, like one of fishing equipment from past decades and we'll also have various artisan vendor booths that day, selling their crafts. The Missouri State Parks will have its own souvenir booth and of

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Submitted photo

James Brice and Peter Bennett Jr were both known to have built different mills at Brice, later known as Bennett Spring but nobody knows exactly how many. All were destroyed by flood or fire. This last mill was built in 1900 by several business partners from Lebanon. Like the others, it was used initially for local farmers crops and then for several years after the park's formation, to grind trout feed. And sadly, while two different groups were sparring over historical preservation versus tearing down the mill to expand the hatchery pools, this mill mysteriously burned late one night in the 1940s.



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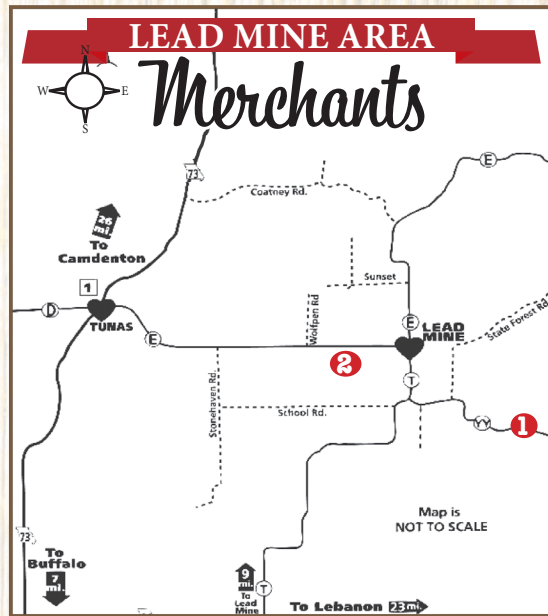
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Submitted photo

William Lenz, dubbed 'The Boy Photographer' due to his youthful appearance despite being in his 20s, left us dozens of excellent black and white photos of Bennett Spring. It was taken at a time when producing photographs included not only lugging bulky awkward equipment from place to place, but also required the photographer to carefully align his subjects before taking the shot. Then he had to spend hours developing his prints in a dark room setting to make certain all his previous efforts hadn't been wasted. The Confluence, taken in 1925, just as the dream of Bennett Spring State Park that had been as fleeting as the area's morning mists, was becoming a reality. A favorite rendezvous point, where lovers, friends and families met for picnics, the mixing of the waters of the Spring Branch and the Niangua River still draws fishermen to its tranquil shores.

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Picking up pawpaws contest is Sept. 14-28

LCR STAFF

Bennett Spring State Park will host the 6th annual picking up pawpaws contest Sept. 14 through 28.

The pawpaw is Missouri's largest edible fruit, according to information from Missouri State Parks. It can grow up to 6 inches long and is often described as a banana with mango flavor. The fruit can be eaten raw or baked. Lewis and Clark were known to eat them on their expedition in 1806; American Indians wove the inner bark into fibers

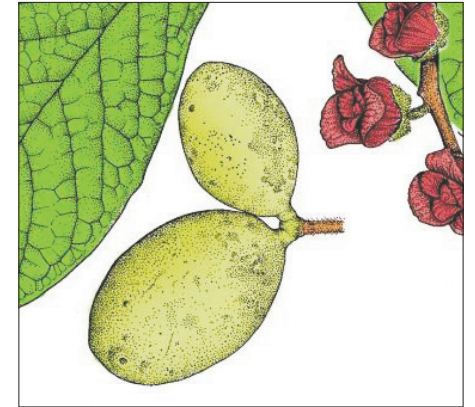
for cloth, and pioneers used the inner bark for stringing fish, according to the contest announcement. The pawpaw is also Missouri's official state fruit tree.

"We invite you to go for a hike or search your own private pawpaw patch to find the biggest pawpaw you can. Bring it to the nature center at Bennett Spring State Park to be officially entered into the contest. The winner will receive a prize. Peak ripening is in September," according to the parks press release.

Pawpaws will be weighed at the nature center Wednesday through Sun-

day from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Pickers will provide their name and phone number along with the county in Missouri where the pawpaw was harvested. A photo will be taken of each picker and pawpaw.

The winner of the contest will be announced at 1 p.m. on Sept. 28 at the nature center. There will be wild edibles to try prior to the announcement.



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course, the Bennett Spring Park store will have plenty of 100th anniversary merchandise available, too.

"Finally," she concluded, "we'll finish the day with an outdoor movie at Shelter B, A River Runs Through It."

Anyone with questions or interest in a vendor's booth may contact Hayley

Schnaath at the Bennett Spring State Park Office, Wednesday through Sunday at 417-532-4338.

Schedule for October 5
At Shelter B -
10 am-Noon - Music and Storytelling by EznDil
1-3 pm - Gospel and Bluegrass music

by Red Letter Edition
4-6 pm - Bluegrass music by Lindley Creek

All day - Dutch oven cooking demonstrations
Rope-making
Yarn doll making
Vendors Zone 1 - Car show courtesy

of Route 66 Society
Nature Center - 1-1:45 - Magic Waters and Silver Dollars:
A History of Ozarks Tourism by MSU history professor Dr. Brooks Blevins
Shelter B, 6:30-8:30 pm - Movie, A River Runs Through It



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Bridge project reroutes Bennett Spring traffic

LCR STAFF

The Goodwin Hollow Creek Bridge Replacement Project remains on track for its set completion date in December, according to Resident Engineer Chris Graham. "Currently, the contractor is working to complete the bridge substructure and installing rock fill to accommodate the alignment shift on Rout 64 to tie into the new bridge," Graham wrote.

"Upon completion of the substructure, the contractor will set girders for the new bridge - around the end of August," he continued.

Graham noted that projects original completion date of

December 1 remained unchanged.

"Based on the current progression, the project is a couple weeks behind schedule; however, we're optimistic the contractor can still make the December 1 completion date," Graham wrote.

Graham advised motorists to follow detour routes designated by the appropriate signage. Visitors headed to Bennett Spring State Park are being directed to take Route 32 to Route OO.

More information on the project can be found on its page on MoDOT's website.



Work continues on the Goodwin Hollow Creek Bridge on Route 64. Visitors to Bennett Spring are directed to take Route 32 to Route OO.

LCR Photo/Jack Silberberg

Black vultures visit park



A wake of black vultures watch the waters of Bennett Spring. The birds appeared to abide by the prohibition on flies and artificial lures.

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Last public comment period for Bennett Spring sirens signals progress, O.E.M. director says

JACK SILBERBERG
REPORTER@LACLEDERECORD.COM

The Office of Emergency Management closed the final public commenting period for Bennett Spring severe weather sirens project proposal on Monday. O.E.M. Director Randy Rowe hopes that the period signals the final steps of the approval process for federal funding.

“Under Executive Order (EO) 11988 Floodplain Management and EO 11990 Wetlands Protection, FEMA is required to consider alternatives, and to provide a public notice of any proposed actions in or affecting floodplains,” the notice says.

According to the notice, the proposed project aims to install two outdoor warning sirens in Bennett Spring State Park. This aims to address the lack of severe weather warning devices in the

oft-visited park.

Because of the park’s location in a One Percent Annual Chance Flood Hazard Area, the notice advises that the sirens may be impacted by future flooding events.

The first listed alternative was not installing the severe weather sirens, which the notice notes would continue the current risk of visitors and staff missing alerts.

The second listed alternative was utilizing mobile sirens on vehicles, which the notice reports would place park staff at high risk during severe weather as well as delay the warnings.

To give a comment on the impacts of the proposed project, readers could have either emailed or mailed their submission.

“It’s been a learning process,” Rowe



LCR Photo/Jack Silberberg

Bennett Spring Waters: Park visitors float on the waters of Bennett Spring. According to O.E.M. Director Randy Rowe, the position of the park in a 100-year floodplain has added additional steps to the funding approval process.

commented on the work to gain FEMA approval for funding. He further noted that this siren approval process has novel steps to it that may act as an example to future projects around the state.

The full public notice is available on

the Record’s Facebook page as well as the physical site of the proposed project, with the impacted areas designated by coordinates on the notice. Comments submitted after August 26 will not be considered.

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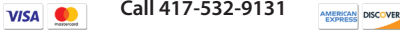
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Trout Talk

BENNETT SPRING STATE PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA



LITTLE LUNKER CATCHES



Clark, age 5, with his first Trout in Zone 3!



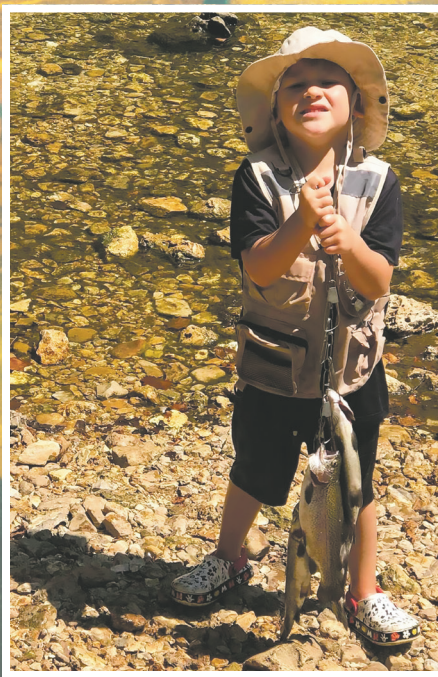
Jacson, age 6, Zone 3, caught with Minnows



Easton, age 8, Zone 2, caught with a Cream Mop Fly, first time using a fly rod!



Sophia, age 8, Zone 3. Excellent Work!



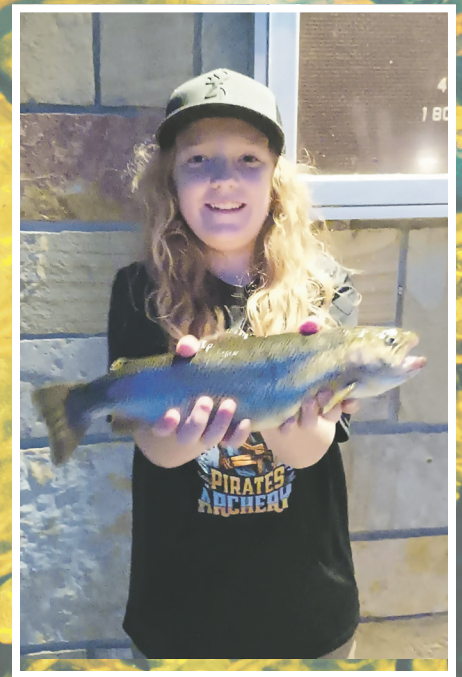
Mason first time limiting out! Congratulations!



Sophia, age 8, Zone 3, caught with a plastic worm, 3 1/2 pounds!



Danny, age 10, Zone 3, caught using Minnows



Maxwell, age 10, zone 3. Great Job!

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