



## Intersections of Place, Time, and Entertainment in Nebraska's Hidden Paradise

(Article begins on page 2 below.)

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Article Summary: What did rural Nebraska travel and recreation look like in the early-to-mid twentieth century? A forested canyon at Long Pine became popular at a time when ordinary Americans saw expanding opportunities for leisure and travel. Hidden Paradise drew travelers, first by rail and later by automobile, to stay in little cabins beside a creek and enjoy a mixture of outdoor recreation and live entertainment.

### Cataloging Information:

Names: R A Hunt, Frank Hoag, Carl Pettijohn, Bob Chaney, Arleen Chaney

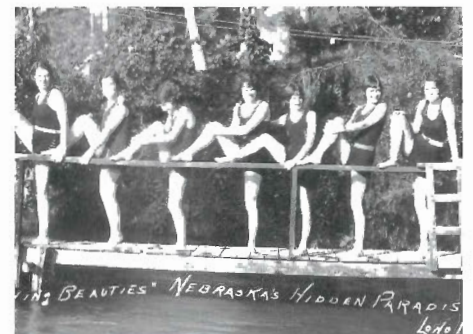
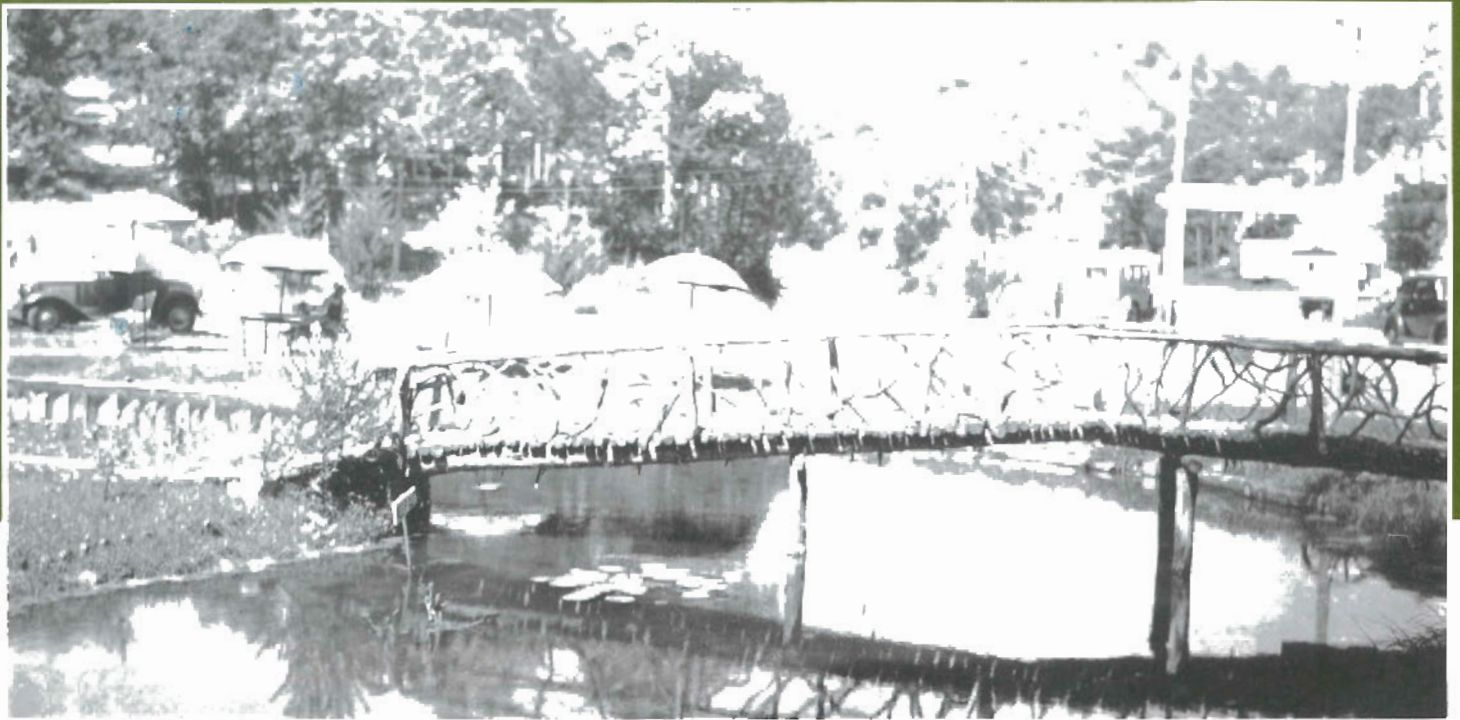
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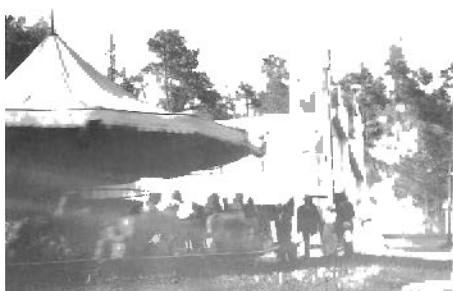
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Photographs / Images: five undated postcards and photos from Hidden Paradise, 1910s through 1950s; 1903 railroad map with detail showing location of Long Pine between Ainsworth and Bassett; 1884 bird's-eye view map of Long Pine; advertisement for hot and cold baths in the Bath Room, *Republican Journal*, Long Pine, July 22, 1896; Hidden Paradise in winter; inside the Plunge Bath, c 1910; Cotterill Sisters Orchestra at Hidden Paradise in the early 1910s; postcard showing cabins along the waterfront at Hidden Paradise; program for the July 3<sup>rd</sup> celebration at Long Pine, *The Long Pine Journal*, June 26, 1919; announcement of cottage sites and completed cottages for sale, *The Long Pine Journal*, June 19, 1924; announcement of grand opening of Hidden Paradise Park, *Ainsworth Star-Journal*, April 26, 1945; announcement of a dance at Hidden Paradise, *The Long Pine Journal*, May 10, 1934; Aces of Rhythm [band] at the O'Neill Legion Club, c. late 1940s, early 1950s; Anna Mae Winburn, director of the Cotton Club Boys from Omaha, an act appearing at Hidden Paradise, *The Long Pine Journal*, June 18, 1936; Hidden Paradise Resort sign on "the hill," 2008; year round "cabin" home of Bob and Arleen Chaney, 2008

Lists: categories of cabin names, 1911, from "Amusement Park News," *Long Pine Journal*, July 28, 1911, and August 4, 1911; contests and prizes at the September 10, 1910, Fraternal Picnic, from "Heard on the Streets," *The Long Pine Journal*, September 3, 1910



Undated postcards and photos from Hidden Paradise, 1910s through 1950s. Top photo is from Nebraska State Historical Society; all others on this page: Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.



# Intersections of Place, Time, and Entertainment in Nebraska's Hidden Paradise

BY REBECCA A. BULLER

During the Roaring Twenties, visitors found a wide variety of entertainment at Hidden Paradise, an eighty-acre resort-like area near the north-central Nebraska community of Long Pine. One could spend the day whooshing down the slide at the Plunge, swinging for a hole in one, fly fishing for a trophy trout, tubing the cool waters of the natural spring-fed creek, catching the latest flick at the theater, meeting friends for drinks and a steak, spending a quiet evening reading in a rented cottage, or dancing the night away at the Pavilion.

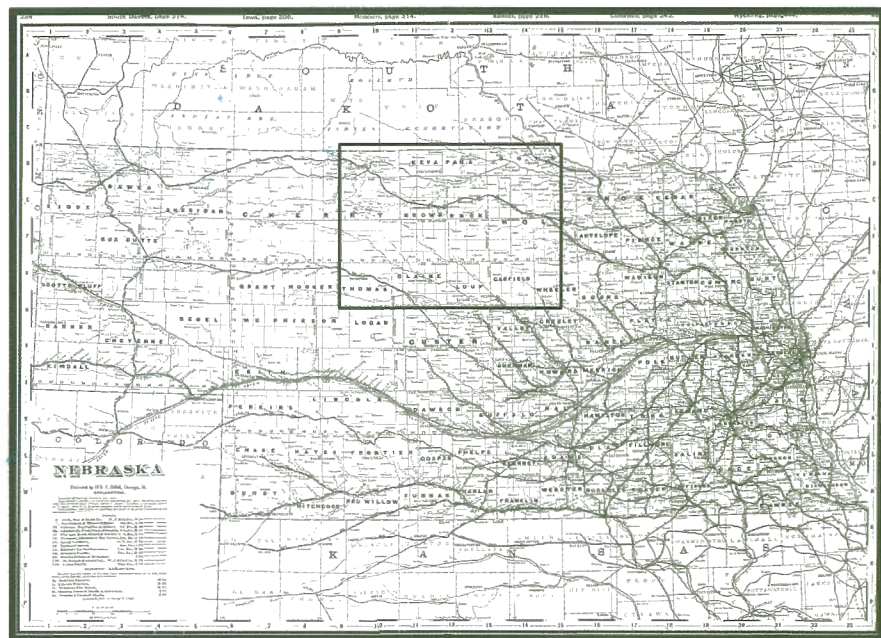
Hidden Paradise began in June 1910 when three local entrepreneurs created what was then known as Long Pine Amusement Park. Much of its success in the early twentieth century was due to its situation near Long Pine, a town that boomed economically, developmentally, and socially because of its association with the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad (C.N.W.R.R.).



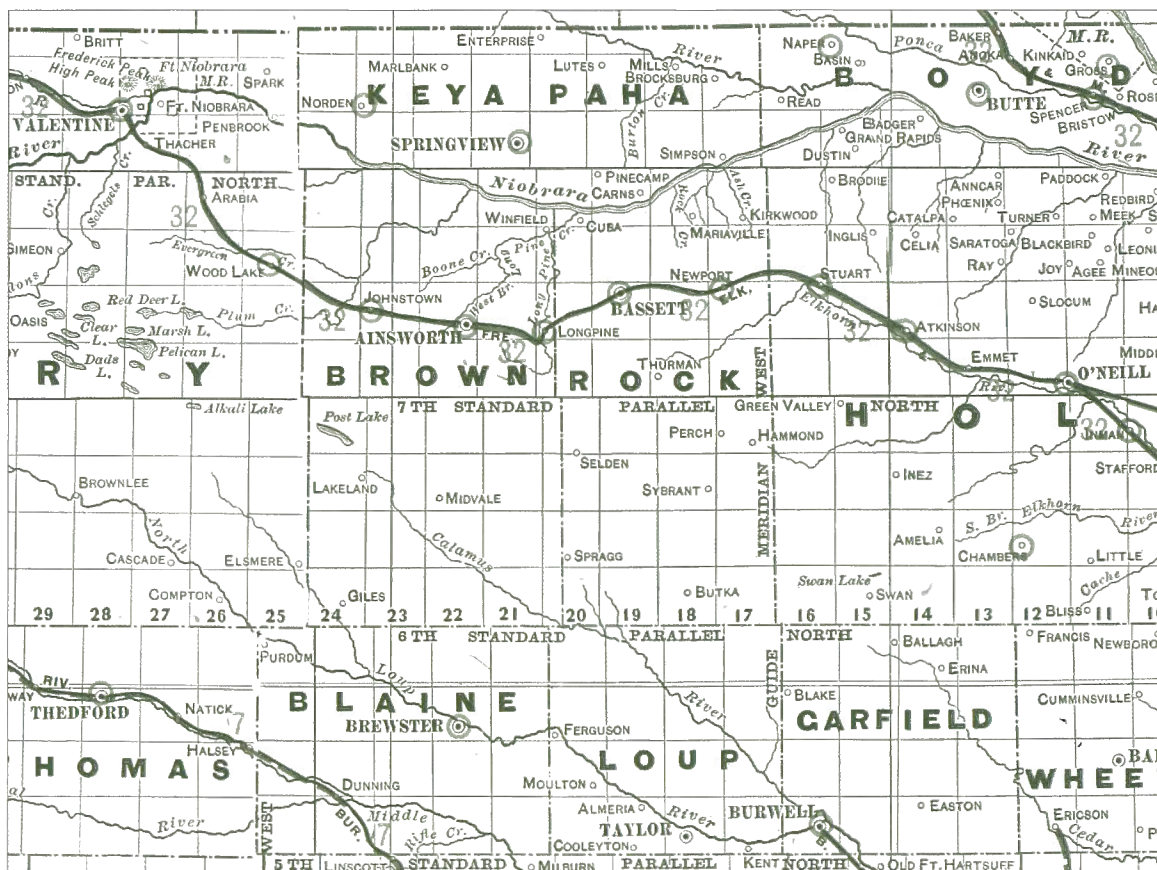
Like almost all Great Plains towns, Long Pine was founded near a fresh water source, but also had distinctive natural features. Long Pine Creek, which starts a few miles southwest of town and flows north to the Niobrara River, is a clear

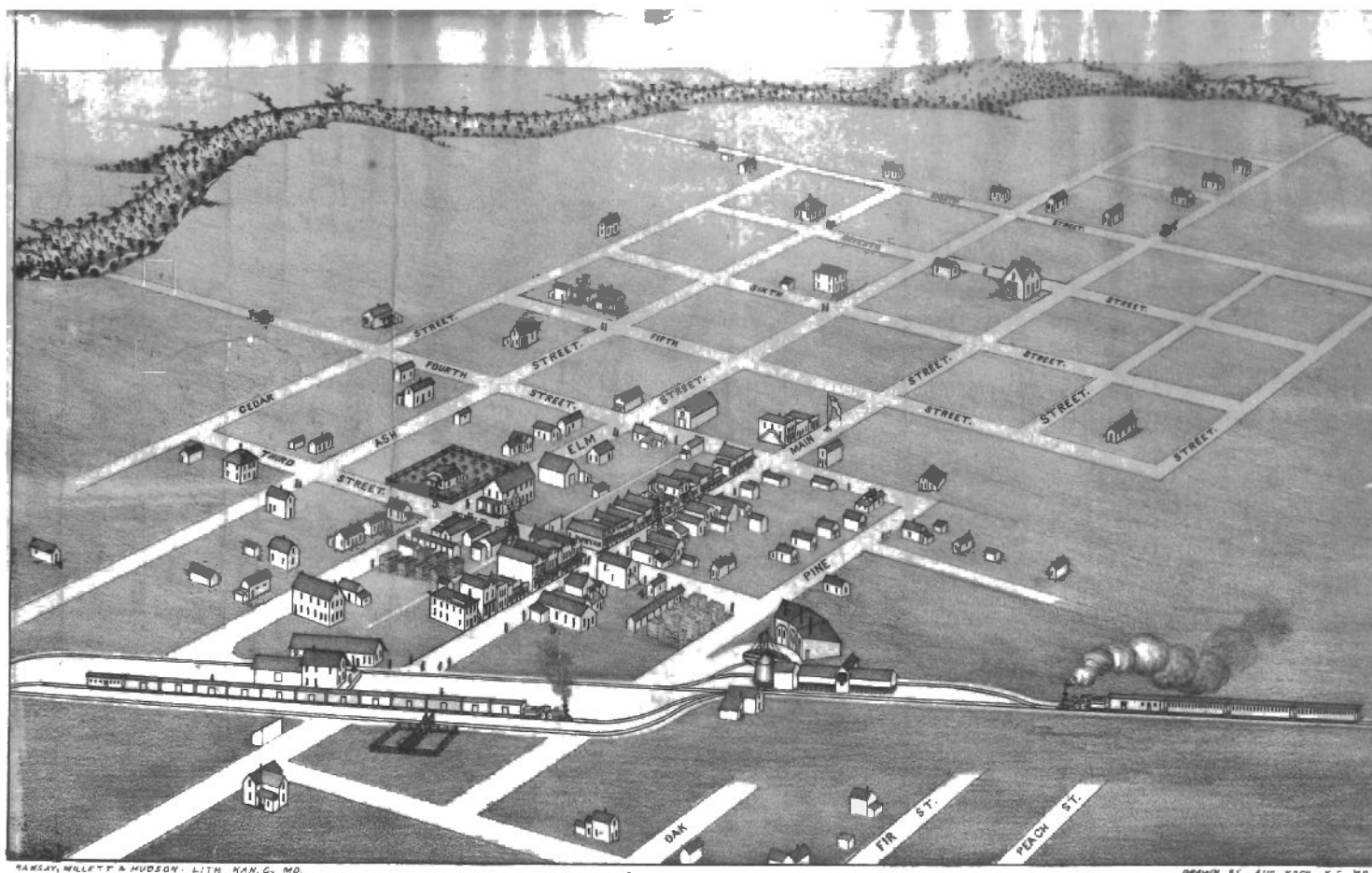
spring-fed watercourse with 55°F waters that run year-round. It is the state's longest self-sustaining trout stream. Its narrow, deep canyons, densely lined by large oaks and ponderosa pines, stand in stark contrast to the surrounding short grass prairie rangeland. It is an ecotone, where Eastern ecosystems meet those of the West—for example, it is home to both mule deer and whitetail deer. The canyon is a natural oasis amidst the semi-arid Sandhills that contain only the occasional cottonwood or ash. This setting attracted people to the area and, ultimately, led to the Park's creation.

From 1910 through the 1960s people flocked to Hidden Paradise to enjoy dances and live bands, local restaurant specialties, summer holiday celebrations, outdoor recreation, and family vacations.<sup>1</sup> The Park drew local people from the nearby towns of Ainsworth, Bassett, Valentine, and O'Neill, and also vacationers from Norfolk, Omaha, Fremont, Lincoln, South Sioux City, and Chadron, and even people from around the country. During the 1940s, the Park's owners lived at their home in Rosalind, California, from October through March, and at Hidden Paradise while managing the Park the rest of the year.



Detail from 1903 railroad map. Long Pine is between Ainsworth and Bassett. NSHS M782 1903 C84





RAMSAY, MALLETT & HUDSON. LITH. KAN. C., MO.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF  
**LONG PINE.**  
BROWN CO., NEB. 1884.

DESIGNED BY AUG. HODGKINS & CO. MO.

1. Brown County Bank.  
2. Railroad Depot and Waiting Rooms.  
3. School House.

4. Journal Office.  
5. Residence of H. H. Spivey, Esq.

Hidden Paradise is prominent in many people's memories, and portions of it are active to this day. Its story reveals how people experienced outdoor recreation and related activities during the early- and mid-twentieth century. Leisure activities are revealing because they are often in some ways unique and in other ways reflective of larger trends. Available entertainment reflects aspects of social life, sense of place, and place attachment. By examining the intersections of place, time, and entertainment in Nebraska's Hidden Paradise, we can better understand the historical geographies of individual and collective human experience, and recognize how entertainment reflected trends of race, ethnicity, gender, age, class, nationality, and religion.

Nomenclature depends upon time and place. Nebraska's Hidden Paradise has been known as the Long Pine Amusement Park, Hidden Paradise Resort, and Hidden Paradise Park. Today, the entire region, including private cabins, is known simply as

Hidden Paradise. In the past, when people mentioned "the Park" they were referring to the Long Pine Amusement Park Company and/or the *business* Hidden Paradise. In the early days, "the Park" mainly consisted of the Plunge, restaurant, dance pavilion (known as "the Pavilion"), and cottage rental properties. From the 1960s until today, "the Park" refers only to the restaurant/Pavilion structure.

### Long Pine's Beginnings

Long Pine was one of thousands of Great Plains communities created during the late nineteenth century. Settlers moved in to take advantage of free lands by way of the Homestead Act (1862), Timber Culture Act (1873), and Kinkaid Act (1904). In the early 1880s cattle ranchers and workers from the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad were among the first settlers in present-day Brown County.<sup>2</sup> A cycle of boom-and-bust settlement characterized the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Construc-

1884 bird's-eye view map of Long Pine, which boasted a railroad depot and a roundhouse. NSHS RG3183-3-6



## Bath Room



**HOT & Cold Baths**

From 8 a. m. to 8 p. m.

BATH WEEK DAYS.....25c  
SUNDAYS.....35c

All who desire Baths, in the well known Long Pine water, can now be accommodated.

I Respectfully Solicit Your Patronage.

**B. H. Newburn.**

*Republican Journal, Long Pine, July 22, 1896*

Hidden Paradise in winter, showing the Plunge Bath building. NSHS RG3183-3-14

tion of the town exploded during the 1880s, and then faltered during the drought of the 1890s. The town's population declined from over 800 in 1895 to 151 by the spring of 1898.<sup>3</sup> The Kinkaid Act of 1904, an enlarged homestead act offering 640 acres free, enabled another (albeit brief) settlement boom.<sup>4</sup>

People had long noticed the special features of Pine Creek canyon. Earlier in the nineteenth century, fur trappers preferred the beaver pelts from the banks of the creek.<sup>5</sup> And—as with locations such as the natural springs near Paddock, Nebraska, to the east in Holt County—the town's early entrepreneurs had big ideas about capitalizing on the potentially medicinal properties of the waters.<sup>6</sup> Some individuals wanted to name the community Seven Springs for the source of the creek (five miles south of the town), while others argued for Long Pine.<sup>7</sup> The *Omaha Bee* described the creek as “remarkable,” with an average velocity of seven miles per hour, width of twenty-five feet, and depth of three feet, and promised that the effort to travel to see the waters bubbling from the earth at the seven springs would be well repaid.<sup>8</sup>

Despite periodic droughts and resulting loss of population, early settler C. R. Glover promoted the little town from 1881 to 1893, arguing that it “was the only place in Nebraska worthy of being called

a ‘summer resort’.”<sup>9</sup> An *Omaha Daily Republican* newspaper reporter known as “The Frontiersman” visited the area and penned a description that appeared in the paper's January 5, 1882, edition. He estimated that the “creek forms a strong body of waters, and affords in its gradual falls a force of at least thirty horsepower,”<sup>10</sup> and noted that a meticulous adventurer might even discover petrified wood, bone (such as the skeleton of a recently discovered mastodon), moss agate, and stones along the banks of the creek.<sup>11</sup> Prophetically, he remarked that the beautiful creek and canyon had the makings of a “grand summer resort.”<sup>12</sup> Three local entrepreneurs established the Long Pine Amusement Park twenty-eight years later.

### Establishment of the Long Pine Amusement Park

Like other states, Nebraska was home to several amusement parks in the early twentieth century, such as Capitol Beach in western Lincoln and Peony Park in Omaha. Nebraska's smaller communities had, among others, Horky's Park east of Crete, Valentine Park near Valentine, Oak View Park west of Verdigre, and the Long Pine Amusement Park southwest of Long Pine.<sup>13</sup>



These parks had neither the large scale nor the number of rides of today's amusement theme parks. However, like contemporary parks, they generally created a family friendly atmosphere, provided food and beverages, games, music, shows, and rides; they were places in which visitors spent a brief period of time (usually only a day or two), and were visited typically in the warmer months of late spring, summer, and early fall.

In June 1910 three entrepreneurs—R. A. Hunt of Bassett and Frank Hoag and Carl Pettijohn of Long Pine—created the Long Pine Amusement Park, a health and vacation resort that would become one of the most developed and longest lasting of all amusement parks in Nebraska.<sup>14</sup> Pettijohn led the efforts to transform what locals knew as “one of nature's pleasure grounds” into a “beautiful park,” clearing old brush and vegetation, nurturing bluegrass and clover, and creating picnic areas with tables and lawn chairs in the shade of “lofty oak and pine trees.” Workers built small bridges and a short road that connected the Park to the western end of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad yards.<sup>15</sup>

The Park was touted as a place that nurtured physical and moral health. Children could grow and play in “nature's nursery” while supervising



**Inside the Plunge Bath, circa 1910.** Heritage House collections, Long Pine, Nebraska.

adults could “rest . . . their weary bod[ies].”<sup>16</sup> All who were morally upstanding were welcome at the Park, free of charge. Gambling and drunkenness would not be tolerated.<sup>17</sup>

Large crowds came from miles around for the Park's opening Fourth of July celebration. Families were encouraged to spend a healthful day “in the shade of the lofty pines away from the dust of the town.”<sup>18</sup> Farmers, ranchers, and townspeople riding the train from the west arrived with their families in the morning. The evening train brought people from the east.<sup>19</sup>

Visitors could listen to a hired band at the Pavilion, followed by local judge J. S. Davisson's

**The Cotterill Sisters Orchestra, made up of three sisters from Bassett, was practically a fixture at Hidden Paradise in the early 1910s.** NSHS RG3183-3-15





hour-long address. Picnickers ate their meals outside or in the newly constructed VanMater dining hall. Acts, music, and races filled the afternoon. Roseinski, the “champion buck and wing dancer of the West,” performed dancing and comedy stunts. Several roughriders, eager to break stubborn horses, were disappointed when the bronco busting contest was cancelled since no one brought their broncos in to be busted. Visitors followed the progress of the Johnson-Jeffries boxing match in Reno, Nevada, with scores following each round being written on a large blackboard.<sup>20</sup> Heralded as “The Prize Fight of the Century,” the match saw Jack Johnson, the first black heavyweight champion, defeat former champion Jim Jeffries.<sup>21</sup>

Arguably, the “best and most daring attraction of the day” was when Dare Devil Jim, otherwise known as Clarence Porter, crossed the canyon on a cable 175 feet above the ground, by simply biting a pulley device connected to the line.<sup>22</sup>

Evening events included a “grand display of fireworks” and dancing at the newly constructed, open air “mammoth [sic] sized Pavilion.”<sup>23</sup> Ten pieces of the Ainsworth Band and Orchestra entertained visitors throughout the day, including at the eve-

ning dance, where countless young people enjoyed themselves until looming rainclouds cut the dance short at midnight.<sup>24</sup>

July saw continued construction. Electric lights were added to all the buildings, allowing visitors to enjoy the Park after sundown. A local man named Zane Musfelt built a sixteen-by-thirty-foot short-order restaurant near what was soon to be “the Plunge.” The Plunge Bath house was a swimming pool with a concrete floor and sides that measured fifty by eighty feet and varied in depth from three to six feet. Walls partially sheltered bathers from the sun’s rays, and separate dressing rooms for men and for women were located on opposite sides of the structure. One hundred and fifty swimming suits were preordered for patrons to rent or buy when enjoying the swimming hole. A boiler warmed the water transported from the Pine Creek via a waterwheel to the bath house.<sup>25</sup>

The weeklong grand opening of the Long Pine Amusement Park began on Saturday, August 5.<sup>26</sup> Activities included camping, live music and entertainment, attractions, dances, and swimming.

The Plunge opened to the public on August 3, two days before all other attractions.<sup>27</sup> Engineer

Postcard from private collection.





**PROGRAM FOR THE JULY 3RD CELEBRATION AT  
LONG PINE, NEBRASKA**

8-10 A. M. BIRTH OF THE LONG PINE THEATRE CLUB TO USHERS	10-11 A. M. BIRTH OF THE CLUB TO USHERS	1-2 P. M. BIRTH OF THE CLUB TO USHERS
10-11 A. M. BIRTH OF THE CLUB TO USHERS	1-2 P. M. BIRTH OF THE CLUB TO USHERS	2-3 P. M. BIRTH OF THE CLUB TO USHERS
11-12 P. M. BIRTH OF THE CLUB TO USHERS	1-2 P. M. BIRTH OF THE CLUB TO USHERS	2-3 P. M. BIRTH OF THE CLUB TO USHERS

GOOD NIGHT

### The Long Pine Journal, June 26, 1919

"Foxy" Bowers, master of ceremonies, led its dedication on Sunday the seventh. Bowers wished to christen the bath by being the first official person to go down the slide. Dramatically whooshing down the slide, he realized too late the shallowness of the water and emerged—with a skinned nose and dampened pride—to concerned sympathy by female witnesses and a roar of applause by the male observers.<sup>28</sup>

The heated pool with its slide was perhaps the most popular attraction during the Park's opening week. Swimmers from "hundreds of miles around"

could be found there nearly any time of the day. Due to its popularity, promoters scheduled several events there before the summer's end, such as establishing Tuesdays as Ladies Day, when the pool was reserved strictly for females.<sup>29</sup>

The Cotterill Sisters Orchestra from Bassett played for the last dance of the Park's opening season on August 27. Though it had been open only two months, summer vacation season was ending and the school year was about to begin. However, future summers promised longer seasons; with most of the basic construction completed, the Park could re-open in May.<sup>30</sup>

### Summer Seasons

Summer seasons usually followed a similar pattern from 1911 until the 1960s. Park owners made improvements in the spring, maintaining "the hill" (the Park's main entrance), and building rental cottages. The official season opening often featured special events such as dances that were open to the public. Sometimes before the opening, occasionally after, schoolchildren from nearby communities held field trips, proms, and sneak days at the Park. In late May 1949, for instance, over a thousand students visited from several area country schools, as well as from O'Neill, Bassett, Chambers, Kilgore, Stuart, and Crookston. That same week the Atkinson School Band picnicked and the Ainsworth junior and senior classes held their prom at the Park.<sup>31</sup> Every year the Park remained open until it held season closing events in September or October, when the weather cooled and the school year got into full swing.

Cottages (later called cabins) held campers throughout the summer season. The painted wooden cottages with rubber roofs were small and primitive, often no more than one-room buildings with simple stud construction and no indoor plumbing. Nevertheless they were, and are, one of the Park's main features. Using quirky puns and names drawn from the outdoors, owners named their cottages and painted signs for the exterior (Table 1). Some cottages were for rent by the management; others were built by visitors. People from areas as far away as Omaha were known to build and buy cottages. Vacationers could spend days, weeks, or even months at the Park. Two of the three managers, Hoag and Pettijohn, built summer homes in the Park that were much nicer than the rental cottages. The Pettijohn family lived in East End Cottage; the Hunts stayed in Peep Inn.<sup>32</sup>

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**Nebraska's  
Hidden  
Paradise**

**Announcement Extraordinary !!**

The Long Pine Park Company wishes to announce that on Sunday, June 22nd, 1924, they will place on sale a limited number of choice cottage sites in the Park.

There are a number of these lots upon which there are cottages already built, and will be priced accordingly.

**DANCING and SWIMMING—A BEAUTIFUL GOLF COURSE  
TENNIS COURT—SPLENDID TROUT FISHING  
CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND**

**TERMS**  
A liberal discount will be allowed for cash, monthly payments if desired.  
Salesmen will be at the Park on and after the above date and will be glad to show you the lots.  
The only camping resort in Nebraska where you can get a deed and own your own summer home in the beautiful Pine Creek.  
A good investment, look into it.  
Select your lot on the opening date and secure your choice.

**Free Concert Sunday Afternoon, June 22nd**  
**Address, NEBRASKA'S HIDDEN PARADISE,  
LONG PINE, NEBRASKA**

### The Long Pine Journal, June 19, 1924

**GRAND OPENING  
NEBRASKA'S  
HIDDEN PARADISE PARK**  
Sunday, April 29th

SOUTHERN STYLE CHICKEN AND RAINBOW TROUT  
SERVED UNTIL 1:30 P. M. ON SUNDAY. OTHER  
DAILY DINNER SERVICE UNTIL 11:00 P. M.  
Dance In The Evening by  
ELMER HALL'S ORCHESTRA  
EVENING APPROXIMATELY 7:45 TO 11:45  
TAX INCLUDED—NO EXTRA CHARGE FOR DANCING.  
DANCE FROM 7:45 TO 11:45  
MR. AND MRS. J. C. SCHLEPP, MGRS.

*Ainsworth Star-Journal,  
April 26, 1945*

## Categories of Cabin Names, 1911

### Cottages

East End Cottage  
East Side Cottage  
Sleepy Hollow Cottage

### Inns

All Inn  
Dew Drop Inn  
First Inn  
Inn Side Out  
Out Side Inn  
Peep Inn

### Miscellaneous

Angels Rest  
Between the Waves  
Cozy Corner  
Hillcrest  
The House of Dreams  
Idyll Nook  
The Limit  
Pop Corn Flat  
Seldom Sweat

Data sources: "Amusement Park News," *The Long Pine Journal*, July 28, 1911, pg. 5 and "Amusement Park News," *The Long Pine Journal*, August 4, 1911, pg 1.

Early on, Park ownership began selling both cottages and empty plots to private individuals. In 1920, the local lumber, coal, and grain company Galleher & Hamilton provided estimates for cottage furnishings and supplies to people who had purchased a plot of land and were planning on building a summer home. In 1924, the Park company again planned to sell off more of its rental cottages.<sup>33</sup> Thus, over time, the area became privatized.

Organizations, associations, and clubs frequently met at the Park, and area Sunday School teachers often brought their classes for picnics and recreation. On a Thursday in early August of 1911, nearly two hundred people attended Ainsworth's Congregational and Methodist Sunday School annual picnic at the Park. Most traveled the nine miles to the east by the morning train; others came by buggy and automobile. They spent the day enjoying a basket lunch, friends, and the Park's attractions. Two years later, in 1913, the Sunday School classes of the Ainsworth Congregational Church again held their annual picnic at the Park. In 1915, the Episcopal Church held service Sunday mornings at the Pavilion.<sup>34</sup>

Characteristically Christian, chautauquas were often held at the Park during the 1910s. Many lectures and activities focused on religious themes

and spiritual improvement. Since chautauquas were often held on weekends, Long Pine churches, like the Congregational Church, frequently organized joint Sunday morning services at the Park. In 1912, worship service attendees didn't have to pay the traditional chautauqua entrance fee. Sunday afternoon and evenings during the chautauqua were filled with Christian-themed events such as sermons, vesper services, and religious concerts.<sup>35</sup>

In 1914, a newly organized group of doctors, the Northwest Nebraska Medical Society Association, along with the Elkhorn Valley Editors Association, built a convention hall at the Park to house their regular meetings.<sup>36</sup> After that they often brought their wives and children along to the meetings; while the men attended the conference, prominent women of Long Pine entertained the wives and relatives of Society members by, for example, throwing a lawn party on the Northwestern Hotel's grounds.<sup>37</sup>

Youth organizations, such as the Campfire Girls, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts, all held both formal and informal events at Hidden Paradise during the summer. The last week of June 1952, for example, saw a record 394 4-H members attend the district campout at the Park.<sup>38</sup>

Fourth of July festivities were almost always the summer's largest event. Activities often had a patriotic flair—fireworks, nationalistic speeches by judges and prominent citizens, and oratorical readings of documents such as the Declaration of Independence. Recognizing that baseball was quickly becoming the nation's favorite pastime, the Park's management built a baseball diamond, organized a Park team, and brought in other teams for events that were sometimes days-long championship extravaganzas.

Outdoor recreation at Hidden Paradise often mirrored societal gender roles and expectations. In

*The Long Pine Journal*,  
May 10, 1934

## DANCE

to

### TED ADAMS' IMPERIAL RHYTHM AIRS

"Those Black Men from Alabama."

at

### Nebraska's Hidden Paradise

Sunday, May 13, 1934

COME EARLY
SURPRISES

**Aces of Rhythm at the O'Neill Legion Club, circa late 1940s, early 1950s.** Tom Gallaher, personal collection.





# Contests and Prizes at the September 10, 1910, Fraternal Picnic

Entrant Restrictions	Contest	Prize	Prize Value	Prize Donator
For All	standing jump	box of Tom Keene cigars	\$2.00	J. Vargison
	hammer throw	strip of premium bacon	\$2.50	C. M. Robinson
	run and jump	sweater	\$2.95	Otto Berger
	shot put	10 2x4x12	\$3.00	H. A. Hotchkiss
	oldest couple	stag horn carving set	\$3.50	J. D. Rose
Ainsworth vs. Bassett	tug of war	box of Robert Burns cigars	\$2.50	Geo. F. Strelow
Babies, blonde and brunette, less than 1 year old, non-Long Pine residents	baby show	blonde-baby bonnett	unknown	Mrs. Sheer
		brunette- baby carriage robe	unknown	Otto Berger
Babies blonde and brun- nette, 1 to 2 years old	baby show	blonde- cash	\$2.50	Brown County Bank
		brunette- cash	\$2.50	Commercial Bank
Girls Under 14 years	foot race	pair of shoes	\$2.50	E. P. Skillman
Girls Under 18 years	potato and spoon race	bracelet	\$3.50	R. A. Rose
Boys Under 12 years	pie eating	cash	\$2.50	Sing Lee Restaurant
Boys Under 16 years	potato race	cash	\$2.00	Krotter & Hall Lumber Company
Boys Under 18 years	three-legged race	two pocket knives	\$2.00	Long Pine Hardware
	sack race	baseball mitt	\$2.25	W. H. McKnight
	50 yard bicycle race	bathing suit	\$2.50	Amusement Park Managers
	banana eating	cash	\$2.50	Lew Weichelman
	35 yard hurdle race	razor and strop	\$3.50	J. C. Castle
"Misses"	bread mixing	1st place- four 10 lb sacks of graham flour	unknown	E. E. Upstill
		2nd place- 100 calling cards	unknown	The Long Pine Journal
Women	nail driving	selection of Advo goods	\$2.50	Long Pine Mercantile Company
	wood sawing	skirt or petticoat	\$5.00	G. A. Smith & Son
	ball throwing	sack of Eureka XXXX flour	unknown	O. E. Munns

Data Source: "Heard on the Streets," *The Long Pine Journal*, September 3, 1910, pg. 5.

The Cotton Club Boys were twelve African American men from Omaha; their director Anna Mae Winburn is shown in this ad. *The Long Pine Journal*, June 18, 1936

COMING



Nebraska's  
Hidden  
Paradise  
Sun. June 21

1911, the Park's management arranged a spectacle that forced the Park's baseball team to transgress their gender and ethnicity norms. The all-male Park baseball team played the all-female Hopkins team, and Park team players that weighed 160 pounds or less then wrestled world famous Greek champion wrestler Gus Pappas.<sup>39</sup>

Males were more often in the public limelight and were expected to be engaged in rambunctious outdoor recreation. Many people considered the Park's natural environment to be a nearly perfect location for developing rugged masculinity. The Methodist Reverend from Bassett, M. C. Smith, brought his troop of Boy Scouts to the Park in the late summer of 1915.<sup>40</sup> Engaging in outdoor sports such as fishing and baseball strengthened the masculine identity.

Society had high expectations of what it deemed to be appropriate masculine identity. To be a man, one had to possess and exhibit an intricate combination of outstanding characteristics. A man not only had to be a rugged, athletically skilled, strong, loyal, and protective brute, but also a refined, polite gentleman. For example, when the Chadron baseball team visited the Park in 1915, people expected the players to be great specimens of masculine ability and strength as well as respectable members of society.<sup>41</sup> The August 6 edition of *The Long Pine Journal* noted that even though "the members of the Chadron team... played in hard luck all week... [they were] a splendid aggregation of young men and [were] gentlemen in every sense of the word."<sup>42</sup>

When women gathered at the Park, it was usually for a social occasion. Groups of young, single women frequently had get-togethers such as "picnic parties."<sup>43</sup> On a Tuesday night in July 1912, for example, a group of young ladies staying at Seven Oaks had friends over for an evening of cards, light refreshments, and visiting on Evans Flat.<sup>44</sup> While camping, young Jess[i]e Brady received a postcard shower from her many gentlemen friends at Atkinson. Many women also hosted club meetings at the Park. In 1914 Mins VanMeter hosted the local chapter of the women's Kensington Klatter Klub (KKK). Gathered under the shade of the trees, the women enjoyed visiting, listening to music, doing their needle work, and drinking refreshments.<sup>45</sup>

Local orders of the Modern Woodmen of America, Royal Highlanders, Ancient Order of United Workmen, and the ladies' Degree of Honor Protective Association held a fraternal picnic in September 1910. Contests, with prizes donated by local businesses, involved gender distinctions.

Large scale agricultural goods like spring wheat, traditionally produced by males, and smaller scale garden goods such as onions, traditionally produced by females, were highly valued. In fact, the highest value prize—\$2.50 cash and 250 envelopes—went to the largest head of cabbage, a crop conventionally produced in a woman's kitchen garden. Prizes in other competitions often reflected societal values of gender identities (Table 2). Boys' competitions gave cash, sporting, and shaving prizes. Girls' competitions had clothing and food prizes. Women could earn a skirt, petticoat, or flour.

But gender distinctions were sometimes blurred. Women's competitions also involved contests such as nail driving, wood sawing, and ball throwing that involved females engaging in activities that society viewed as men's work.<sup>46</sup>

The Long Pine Amusement Park Company and the Hidden Paradise management often hosted entertainment such as acrobatic, comedy, vaudeville, and musical groups. Live music and dancing at the Pavilion was one of the Park's most popular activities. The Cotterill Sisters Orchestra, made up of three sisters from Bassett, was practically a fixture in the early 1910s. The management booked the orchestra for the entire season in 1913. Due to the popularity of dancing, a camper from Council Bluffs, Mary Aid, organized a temporary dance class that same year.<sup>47</sup>

The Park hosted dances and concerts even during times of war, but people weren't as eager to spend their money on amusement. With many of the local "boys" enlisting during World War I, for example, it seemed wickedly frivolous to spend leisure time in entertainment. Attendance at the Elkhorn Valley Editorial and Northwestern Nebraska Medical Society associations' meetings decreased. In response, the Park tried to show citizens that they could be patriotic while still enjoying themselves, hosting concerts of patriotic songs and dances with proceeds that went to the Red Cross.<sup>48</sup>

Nearly everyone involved with the Park was white, including owners, visitors, and local residents. People of other races who came to the area were usually entertainers. For example, in 1913 as part of Long Pine's celebration of Frontier Day, the Park hosted exhibition dances of Brulé Sioux and Crow from the nearby Rosebud Reservation.<sup>49</sup> For the 1916 Frontier Day celebration, the Park sponsored, in addition to cowboys and cowgirls, Indians who displayed their horsemanship skills.<sup>50</sup> It isn't known whether these dances and exhibitions were authentically traditional or simply showcases to entertain white spectators.



African American entertainers came to Hidden Paradise as vaudeville performers and musical acts. It often behooved a traveling show that included African Americans to give the impression that the entertainers were from the South. In May 1934, "Those Black Men from Alabama" who made up the musical group of Ted Adams' Imperial Rhythm Airs, provided the music for an upcoming dance. Though the Cotton Club Boys was a jazz group made up of twelve African American men from Omaha, in 1936, when it toured with director Anna Mae Winburn, also an African American, the group advertised itself as being from the South.<sup>51</sup> This geographic deception apparently added to the exotic image of the performers.

Aces of Rhythm was one of the regular dance bands at the Pavilion during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Based out of Bassett, the group was made up predominantly of returned service men who performed in the big band style. Since they were businessmen moonlighting as musicians, the band could not travel far and performed mainly in nearby communities.

Members included Jug Brown, Tom Gallaher, Bus Jones, Andy Anderson, Cecil Swanson, Oscar Peacock, and Forrest Kern. Ace's composer, Lyle Brown, was from Ainsworth. The band nicknamed him Jug Brown, as in "Little Brown Jug," after a popular tune of the day. Since Tom Gallaher doubled on saxophone and trumpet, Brown wrote his music with instructions for both instruments printed on one sheet. Sometimes Gallaher had only a measure or two to switch instruments, but Brown had a sense of humor and often wrote messages such as "good job, you made it through!" on the sheet music.<sup>52</sup>

By taking advantage of its combined skill and the popular culture of the day, Aces of Rhythm provided entertainment and earned its members some extra money—\$15 on a good night. Dance hall managers, who charged dancers for each song, frequently asked the band to keep their songs brief and play one at a time.<sup>53</sup>

### Recent History

As time passed and ownership and popular culture changed, fewer people patronized Hidden Paradise. By the 1960s and 1970s chautauquas were long gone, and big bands had become passé. The restaurant/steakhouse and dance Pavilion began to physically deteriorate due to age and lack of maintenance caused by frequent changes in ownership. People became more insular, preferring to spend leisure time with their family and friends at a cabin instead of at large, public gatherings like those the Park used to host.

As the area became privatized, some property owners tore down older, decaying cottages and built new ones. Bob and Arleen Chaney, who had long rented the Honeymoon cabin, bought the land on which the decrepit building stood, and in 1976 replaced it with a two-story home and shed. They and a property owner two cabins downstream became the only remaining year-round residents at Hidden Paradise. After Bob passed away in 1984, Arleen often had the canyon and its memories and natural beauty to herself. Hidden Paradise was her cherished home, one that she said she would never leave until, in her words, "the good Lord would take me to another type of paradise." Arleen died in 2007, but the Chaney's presence remains. They left their cabin home to their children and grandchildren to enjoy. Also, suitably, Bob and Arleen's bodies were laid to rest in Long Pine's Valley View Cemetery, on a hill that overlooks Hidden Paradise canyon.

As of 2011, there are roughly fifty-seven cabins in the Hidden Paradise area.<sup>54</sup> Most have a bridge that crosses Long Pine Creek, connecting the structure with Hidden Paradise Road.<sup>55</sup> Though most of the cabins were built between 1910 and 1960, several are more recent, including one built in 2004 and two that were nearly complete by early 2011.

Located on a bend of the creek apart from the other cabins, the five Telephone Point cabins are the farthest downstream within Hidden Paradise. The spot got its name from the many property owners who worked for Northwestern Bell. Three of the cabins sit on land that held some of the earliest cottage properties.<sup>56</sup>

Much of the historic material culture of Nebraska's Hidden Paradise remains. Sites of former roads, the sidewalk entrance, Devils Slide, and the golf course are not readily apparent to the untrained eye. Other things are easily visible. "Pine Creek Boulevard," officially known as "Hidden



Hidden Paradise Resort sign on "the hill," 2008. Author photo



Year round "cabin" home of Bob and Arleen Chaney, 2008. Author photo.

Paradise Road,” descends what is known simply as “the hill,” and winds down a high grade with sumac, poison ivy, ponderosa pine, bur oak, and ash trees covering the steep, sandy sides.<sup>57</sup> A slowly deteriorating sign (probably left over from the 1950s) hangs over Hidden Paradise Road, greeting visitors, “Hidden Paradise Resort, A Heavenly Place, Please Don’t Drive Like Hell!”

The motel and Pavilion are near the center of the Hidden Paradise area.<sup>58</sup> The Pavilion, one of the original, largest, and most recognizable features of the place, still stands.<sup>59</sup> It and the motel are the only components of the original Park that still constitute entrepreneurial properties. In the spring of 2010, the owners—with volunteer help from friends, family, and locals—demolished the dilapidated building that once housed the Park’s restaurant.

The Plunge is long gone. Its popularity faded after a few decades, and by the 1940s it was no more than a rectangular frog pond with concrete sides and floors.<sup>60</sup> Over the next several decades it slowly filled in with sediment and vegetation. But it could still be a hazard; dogs from neighboring cabins occasionally fell in and had to be rescued when unable to scale the concrete sides.<sup>61</sup> A local man bought the land to build a home and work shed, and in the 1980s filled the former pool with dirt. Today, if you examine the landscape closely, you can still make out a roughly fifty-by-eighty-foot flat area surrounded by trees where no tall foliage grows.

While some of the structures have fallen into disrepair, and crowds of visitors no longer flock to the restaurant, Pavilion, and motel, Hidden Paradise area remains a busy summer destination. It is popular with locals and people from other parts of Nebraska and the Great Plains. On July 4, 2010, longtime property owners marked the centennial of the opening of Long Pine Amusement Park. All but one of the fifty-seven cabins were brimming with visitors, grilling, drinking, tubing, and shooting off fireworks.

If you visit Hidden Paradise today you can easily see for yourself that it is neither abandoned nor forgotten. Go during the summer. Stand in front of the Pavilion’s doors. Look to your left, your right, and across the sandy parking lot towards the creek and cabins. Take it all in. Breathe in the perfume of the ponderosas. Feel the coolness of the breeze. Smell the hotdogs, bratwurst, and T-bones searing on the grill. Hear the pounding of nails and see the place-loving man—beer in one hand, hammer in the other—working on his cabin. Hear excited cries of children tubing down the creek as they vainly try to stay off the grassy, reinforced banks.

See the flickering sparkle in the eyes of friends and family members around the campfire. This is the Long Pine Amusement Park and Hidden Paradise of today . . . especially if it’s the Fourth of July. ☐

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> At one time or another, the region contained, among other attractions, a hotel, café, lake, motel, newspaper, earthen slide, boxing exhibitions, taxi service, public telephone, trail rides, ice house, dance pavilion, bingo stand, hen house, swimming pool, Plunge Bath, merry-go-round, summer theater, bowling alley, pool hall, parking garage, convention center, baseball team, short-order food stand, sand green nine-hole golf course, restaurant/steakhouse, concession stands, tennis courts, rental cabins, and electric light and telephone poles.

<sup>2</sup> Hazel Schmidt, “Long Pine,” in *Pioneer Stories of Brown, Keya Paha, and Rock Counties, in Nebraska*, ed. Shirley M. Skinner (Ainsworth: Brown County Historical Society, 1980), 105; unknown author, *Progress on the Prairies: Ainsworth-Brown County Diamond Jubilee, Official Historical Souvenir Booklet, August 6, 7, 8, 9, 1958* (Unknown City: Unknown Publisher, 1958), 41.

<sup>3</sup> *Progress on the Prairies*, 43.

<sup>4</sup> Schmidt, *Pioneer Stories*, 121.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca A. Buller, “Settlements of Holt County, Nebraska: A Historical Geography of Failed and Successful Communities” (Masters Thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2004); *The Republican Journal*, July 22, 1896.

<sup>7</sup> Schmidt, *Pioneer Stories*, 108.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>9</sup> “A Letter from C. R. Glover,” *The Long Pine Journal*, Aug. 4, 1911, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Schmidt, *Pioneer Stories*, 109.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>12</sup> *Progress on the Prairies*, 110.

<sup>13</sup> *The Long Pine Journal*, June 16, 1911, 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, “Work Started at Park,” June 24, 1910, 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*; “Fine Park Being Planned. One of Nature’s Pleasure Grounds Being Transformed to a Beautiful Park. Good Road a Feature.” *The Long Pine Journal*, June 3, 1910, 1.

<sup>16</sup> “Work Started at Park”; “Fine Park Being Planned.”

<sup>17</sup> “Work Started at Park.”

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> “The Celebration at the Park,” *The Long Pine Journal*, July 8, 1910, 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*; “Work Started at Park.”

<sup>21</sup> Robert Greenwood, *Jack Johnson vs. James Jeffries: The Prize Fight of the Century—Reno, Nevada, July 4, 1910* (Reno, Nevada: Jack Bacon & Company, 2004); Wallace Matthews, “Johnson vs. Jeffries, 95 Years Later,” *The New York Sun*, January 15, 2005, <http://www.nysun.com/sports/johnson-vs-jeffries-95-years-later/7809/>.

<sup>22</sup> “The Celebration at the Park.”

<sup>23</sup> “Work Started at Park.”

<sup>24</sup> “The Celebration at the Park.”



<sup>25</sup> "Home News," *The Long Pine Journal*, July 15, 1910, 4, July 29, 1910, 5; *ibid.*, "Opening Week at the Park," Aug. 12, 1910, 7; "Work Started at Park."

<sup>26</sup> "Home News," *The Long Pine Journal*, Aug. 5, 1910, 1.

<sup>27</sup> *The Long Pine Journal*, Aug. 5, 1910, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Excerpt from *The Chadron Journal* in *The Long Pine Journal*, Aug. 12, 1910, 7.

<sup>29</sup> "Opening Week at the Park"; "Heard on the Streets," *The Long Pine Journal*, Sept. 3, 1910, 5.

<sup>30</sup> "Heard on the Streets," *The Long Pine Journal*, Aug. 26, 1910, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Helen Upstill, "Long Pine News," *Ainsworth Star-Journal and Brown County Democrat*, May 26, 1949, 9.

<sup>32</sup> "Amusement Park News," *The Long Pine Journal*, July 28, 1911, 5, Aug. 4, 1911, 1; *ibid.*, "Heard on the Streets" May 19, 1911, 5, July 28, 1911, 4.

<sup>33</sup> *The Long Pine Journal*, June 3, 1920, 10, June 19, 1924, 9.

<sup>34</sup> "Amusement Park Episcopal Church Services," *The Long Pine Journal*, July 9, 1915, 1.

<sup>35</sup> *The Long Pine Journal*, Aug. 2, 1912, 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, "Amusement Park Notes," May 5, 1916, 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, "Annual Meeting Northwestern Nebraska Medical Society," July 23, 1915, 1.

<sup>38</sup> "Record 4-H District Camp at Long Pine Closed June 28," *Ainsworth Star-Journal and Brown County Democrat*, July 3, 1952, 1.

<sup>39</sup> "Heard on the Streets," *The Long Pine Journal*, May 19, 1911, 5.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, "Amusement Park News," Aug. 6, 1915, 8.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 15, 1913, 8.

<sup>44</sup> *The Long Pine Journal*, Aug. 2, 1912, 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, "Local News," July 24, 1914, 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, "Heard on the Streets," Sept. 3, 1910, 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, "Amusement Park News," July 18, 1913, 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, "Local Gleanings," June 22, 1917, 8.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, "Frontier Day," July 25, 1913, 1.

<sup>50</sup> *The Long Pine Journal*, Aug. 25, 1916, 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, June 18, 1936, 8.

<sup>52</sup> Tom Gallaher, interview, Mar. 16, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Cottages and cabins built between 1910 and 1960 ascribe to no particular formal architectural style. However, frequently the older, more original structures lack a substantial foundation, are one-story and of a smaller size and rectangular shape, and possess rectangular, screened windows with vertically lifting wooden shutters. Materials used to construct Hidden Paradise's cabins' foundations, walls, and roofs vary. Foundations may consist of wood, concrete, or earthen materials. Wood, synthetics, stone, and stucco make up the walls of various cabins. Roofs can be covered in wood or metal materials. Many cabins have wood decks or concrete patios.

<sup>55</sup> Most bridges are of simple construction, lacking side rails and utilizing wood materials. Some more elaborate bridges contain metal or wood side rails.

<sup>56</sup> Numerous properties have retaining walls, many of which are suitably built from railroad ties, assembled between a cabin and the creek.

<sup>57</sup> Because the community of Long Pine, with a roundhouse, was a major hub along the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad (C.N.W.R.R.), many long distance visitors arrived at the recreation area via the railroad. Thus, the location in southwestern Long Pine, where the train depot used to be, is connected to Hidden Paradise's main entrance less than one quarter mile away via a sand road.

<sup>58</sup> In between the dance pavilion and Long Pine Creek stands the motel. Built in the 1950s the small motel has an office and less than ten rooms. The long, narrow structure, with window air conditioning units, has a concrete (i.e., block) foundation, wood (i.e., weatherboard) walls, and wood (i.e., shingle) roofing.

<sup>59</sup> With a wood foundation, wood (i.e., log) walls, and metal (i.e., tin) roof, the main structure measures approximately forty by eighty feet with an additional sixteen-by-forty feet stage on the east and sixteen-feet-wide veranda on the south.

<sup>60</sup> Stan Burkinshaw, interview, May 20, 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Pat Wax, interview, May 20, 2010.