

Historic Sycamore Springs Offers Wide Assortment of Outdoor, Indoor Entertainment for Young and Old

Written by Nemaha County Herald

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Betty and Dale Aue couldn't bare to sit back and watch the gates to historical Sycamore Springs be closed. So, in 2001 they decided to buy the recreation area just down the hill from their farmhouse.

For the Aues, formerly of Auburn, closing the park was not just about losing a beautiful recreation area, but it would have also been about losing history.

"There was too much history to go under the bulldozer," Betty said.

The name Sycamore Springs stems from the two separate springs that run under the land. Long before the white man discovered the water, the Native Americans in the area considered the water to have healing powers.

The first hotel was built in 1890 to accommodate area cowboys and travelers. A post office was operational from 1896 until 1906. The "town was never incorporated.

Word got around about the healing powers of the spring water and doctors eventually built a 60-room hospital because of the popularity of the waters. So many people were making visits to Sycamore Springs that guests would be greeted by a man by the name of John Cook at the railroad depots in Falls City and Sabetha.

The popularity of the waters was so great that the water was bottled and shipped to towns all over. The water was thought to have the powers to cure Rheumatism, Neuritis, Neuralgia, umbago, Gout, Swollen Joints, Kidney trouble and other illnesses.

On a warm day earlier this spring, Dale, a retired farmer, gave a presentation to HTRS students and teachers about the springs. He said the two springs produce about 60,000 gallons of water every 24 hours.

The number one spring, he said, is good for curing diabetes, or at least helping to alleviate the effects of the disease. The number two spring, he said, is good for helping with arthritis. Taste wise, Dale said he like the number two spring water best because it has less sulfur.

A fire destroyed the two original hotels in 1916 but a new hotel was later built in 1923. That hotel still remains on the park grounds and continues to be available for guests. The hotel has the original walls as the previous hotel and it is a bit smaller than the original.

Inside the hotel, guests will find original hospital equipment, which was discovered in the attic, including a collapsible doctor's examining table. Each of the sleeping rooms has an antique bed and a handmade quilt.

For many years, Sycamore Springs was a private club and memberships were sold to pay for the operating costs. And, prior to the Aue's purchasing the park, the property was in bankruptcy for several years. During the first three years of bankruptcy, Dale said, no one was interested in buying the property. Eventually the property went to auction and the first winning bid did not materialize. Eventually the Aues would go into partnership with a couple other families, until they bought out the other partners.

They said they bought the land for several reasons, including they own land all around the park and they have deep family ties to the area. Dale said his three girls were lifeguards at the pool, which is no longer in use and their children were baptized in the Rock Creek Church on the park

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grounds.

Whether or not there is any truth to the power of the healing waters, visitors to the recreation destination will discover the tranquility of the park the Aues saved from closure. The park offers outdoor and indoor entertainment for guests of all ages.

Sycamore Springs offers a miniature golf course; tennis, basketball and sand volleyball courts; a large playground, outdoor picnic shelters, primitive cabins with bunk beds, small cabins with complete facilities. The park also has one larger cabin available for rent.

Rock Creek Church

The white church has what is considered to be the oldest pipe organ in Kansas, which was given to the park by a Presbyterian Church in Hiawatha, Kan. Services are held at 10:30 a.m. Sundays and each Sunday a new church group leads the service.

Dale and Betty began attended services in the church in 1952.

Barn

The big red barn on the park grounds is available for guests to rent for large parties and sleeping bag camping.

The facility comes complete with a access to a full-kitchen facilities, as well as a large grill.

Banquet Room

A large gathering hall is also available for big groups. This facility also has a full kitchen for use. The building is located near the front entrance of the park.

Skating Rink

Originally completed in the 1930s, today the rink still has its original hard wood maple floor. The facility is open in the evenings on the weekends, as well as for private parties.

The skating rink building also has a concession stand and arcade games.

For more information about costs and about Sycamore Springs or to reserve a cabin or campground site, call (785) 284-3088.