

From Whence We Came
by
Greg Bade

As many local residents know, what we now see as Poolville is not where the town originally started. The town originally took roots near the pool which was a little east of the bridge on 920 that now crosses the river about a block north of town. You cannot see the sight from the bridge, but it is located just beyond the tree line. From many printed accounts, the pool is described as “fifty to seventy-five yards long and ran six inches deep at the east end and six to eight feet at the west end...” It was fed by a cold spring, and as one might expect, there were many trees in the immediate area. As a result, saw mills were built in 1877 just east of the pool to provide siding and “rawhide flooring” (planks) for the dirt-floored cabins of the time. There are two names found in local history for the owners / operators of these mills. One is Tip Harrison and the other is Mr. L. Scott. It is thought that Scott owned the mill and Harrison helped haul the needed machinery. Any actual business connection is unknown.

Because the area was “bottom land,” the area was prone to flooding, and in 1884, the town was physically moved to higher ground (the present Poolville). Details of the how and who of this move are sketchy, but it is certain that the town began to prosper as a result. “By 1906, it had telephones, three doctors, a weekly newspaper (*The Searchlight* – only one known remaining original copy), two hotels, a bank, restaurants, saddle and harness makers, blacksmiths, a cotton gin, a pharmacy, and a photographic studio, among other signs of advanced civilization” (Jerry Ambrose, *North Texas Star*).



The photograph above is Miss Jane Holland’s school children, and was taken in 1903 at the bridge that spanned the pool. When Eddie Bradley bought the property in 1982, he had cleared some of the brush around where the pool had been. Then in 1984 after a “flooding rain,” he discovered that pieces of the bridge timber had been unearthed and washed-up to higher ground. In order to preserve a little of the town’s history, he had the foresight to collect the timbers and placed them under a nearby tree. A grass fire later destroyed them.

What I have learned about this photograph is that this bridge was not just a bridge over two creeks and the pool. It was actually part of a road from the north that went to Weatherford. It cannot be clearly seen in this photograph, but there is a portion of a road sign about waist high just behind the woman on the bridge at the far right. It is not visible in this picture, but the letters "...HERFORD" are clearly visible in other photographs. The letters not visible are "WEAT" because they are behind the woman, but the sign reads "Weatherford."

Looking at the picture, it is obvious that the bridge did indeed span a length of perhaps 100 feet or more. The history of erosion tells us that as water makes its way downhill, it widens its own path, so one would expect that this gully might well be much larger today, but this is not the case, and there are several possible contributing factors. One might have been the beavers that lived or live along the creek. There is evidence of this by the chewed logs found along the banks of the creek. As the water was dammed, the water flow was diminished, even in periods of rainfall. Another factor, and perhaps the more influential, is that as the trees were harvested for the timber mills and the area was cultivated for farming, the sandy loam soil was washed to the lowest point (the bottom of the pool), and eventually the pool disappeared. It is important to note that the word used is "disappeared" and not "dried up." The land surrounding where the pool once was is very moist even today. This is further substantiated by the existence of a small, short windmill that used to pump plentiful amounts of water, not more than 150 yards from where the pool used to be. It is thought that the well could easily be made workable again, so the water is still there; it just is not visible.

Once upon a time in a land not far from here, buffalo and Indians roamed the area and often rested near a pool of clear spring-fed water. The grass was lush, and trees were plentiful. As cattle drives and pioneers moved across Texas, the magic pool was "discovered" again, and it became a favorite, shady, lay-over. Eventually the area was settled. Lives and dreams were born and lived. That time is now gone, but it should never be forgotten. It remains today in the memories of a few descendants and a small town with no blinking light, called Poolville.



Don Hampton's Great Grandpa Robert Wilkerson is posed in front of the Davenport store before a two day trip to Weatherford. Robert Wilkerson hauled the lumber to Poolville to build the Methodist Church that is now a historic site and is still in use today.