

# A Sense of Place in the Angelina National Forest: *Aldridge, Blue Hole, Bouton Lake, Boykin Springs, and Turpentine*

By Jonathan Gerland

*For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again.*

*— Job 14:7*





The southern portion of the Angelina National Forest is unique among forested places in the piney woods of East Texas. Here, the Neches River flows predominately from west to east as it cuts deep through exceptional geologic formations of sandstones and clays. Rock outcroppings in the riverbed and in the hills above inspired the naming of the nearby town of Rockland in 1883. Throughout the area, where soils, rock, and water mingle in distinctive ways, there are clear running spring-fed streams, natural waterfalls, high rock ridges, rolling hills, and tall forests.

A middle ground of sorts, this area was a natural boundary between various Indian tribes, including the Caddos to the north and the Atakapas to the south. Nearby, the short-lived Mexican Fort Teran, built in 1831 to arrest the influx of illegal immigrants into Texas, once watched over the region. Industrialists came in the 1880s, riding on railroads they had constructed, seeking timber and rock and leaving their own mark on the landscape.

Within this land of natural beauty, situated only a couple miles apart in northern Jasper County, are five distinct places where man has interacted with the natural environment in fascinating ways. There are the ruins of a century-old sawmill, a picturesque rock quarry filled with clear blue water, a placid natural lake, a recreation area constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps, and a long forgotten turpentine camp. In each, a forest remains and retains its sense of place.

left: Abandoned ruins of Old Aldridge, November 2009. After a devastating fire in 1915, holes were blown into these concrete walls to salvage steam engines and boilers. Photo by Jonathan Gerland.



## Aldridge

At the abandoned sawmill company town of Aldridge the forest has actually reclaimed the area. Large pines and hardwoods now grow out of concrete foundations and walls that once supported and housed the machinery that cut the ancestral trees of a century ago. The irony is increased when one considers the place remains authentic because perhaps very little has been done proactively to preserve it. Even the vandalism of the last three quarters of a century has seemingly become a part of the place.

Rocky Shoals on the Neches River is part of the Angelina National Forest's Upland Island Wilderness. Photo by Jonathan Gerland, July 2009.



The Blue Hole, formerly known as Kyle's Quarry. Photo by Jonathan Gerland, June 2007.





**This portion of the Forest Service's Sawmill Hiking Trail northwest of Old Aldridge follows the abandoned grade of the Burr's Ferry, Brownel & Chester Railway mainline, just below a high rock ridge. This view is looking west.**

*Photo by Jonathan Gerland, November 2009.*

Standing today among the stark and cold vine covered and tree shaded walls it is difficult to imagine the hustle and bustle of activity that once flourished here.

The dominating sounds of whirring machinery, screaming steam whistles, screeching saws, chuffing locomotives, the clickety-clack of steel wheels rolling on steel rails, and the yee and haw and grunts of laboring men and draft animals have been replaced by the softer sounds of insects, birds, and wind blowing through the pines, sounds that have always been.

The story of Aldridge is often told by focusing on the concrete ruins and how fire thwarted the doomed attempts of an unfortunate lumber baron.

Little is ever explored of the more human side of William Hal Aldridge and his complex, perhaps ill-advised, business relationship with the true timber baron of his age, a man known as "the prince of the pines," John Henry Kirby.<sup>1</sup>

William Hal Aldridge was born on February 26, 1867 in Tallahatchie County (present day Grenada County), Mississippi to an agrarian family of above average wealth. His parents were William Harris Aldridge and Sarah Eliza Tolbert, who together raised at least four children past infancy. Sarah died sometime during the 1870s, leaving Hal's older married sister, Lula, to care for her younger brothers and ailing father.<sup>2</sup>

In 1880 Hal's oldest brother, Frank, left home at the age of nineteen and settled in Beaumont, Texas, where he successfully entered southeast Texas' burgeoning lumber and railroad businesses. Frank gained experience in various jobs and positions and for a time was a passenger conductor on the Texas & New Orleans Railroad. In 1893 he joined rising lumberman and railroad builder John Henry Kirby in construction of the Gulf, Beaumont & Kansas City Railway, serving as general superintendent until Kirby profitably sold the line to the Santa Fe railroad interests in 1900.





These two images are believed to be the only extant photographs of William Hal Aldridge. The highly retouched image on the left is from the composite portraits of members of the Twenty-Third Texas Legislature in 1893. The heavy pencil and pen retouching belies Aldridge's youth, having him appear older than his 26 years of age, when he resided at Rockland, in Tyler County. The second image accompanied Aldridge's obituary in the El Paso Herald, March 1, 1921. Photos courtesy of the Texas State Preservation Board, Austin, and the El Paso Public Library.

Frank then became manager of mills and logging for Texas Tram & Lumber Company, before joining Kirby once again in 1901, this time in forming the giant Kirby Lumber Company, where he served as manager of mills and logging for more than a dozen sawmills as well as assistant to the president. These job responsibilities were not without stress; Frank died early in life, on May 3, 1906, at the age of only forty-three, in the Kirby offices in Houston, apparently from a sudden heart attack.<sup>3</sup>

Hal Aldridge and younger brother Charles joined their older brother Frank in career opportunities at Beaumont sometime about 1884. They undoubtedly benefited from Frank's business connections. Young Charles, who would outlive both Frank and Hal by several decades, would spend his whole career in the southeast Texas lumber industry as an accountant. Hal's rise in the lumber business was perhaps the most remarkable of the three brothers. In 1890, at only twenty-three years of age, he became a co-owner, with the Carroll family of Beaumont, of Rockland Lumber Company, which operated a large sawmill in northern Tyler County.<sup>4</sup>



John Henry Kirby made his fortune in the forest lands of East Texas and was widely known as "the Prince of the Pines."





**Frank M. Aldridge, older brother of William Hal Aldridge, died of an apparent heart attack in the Houston offices of Kirby Lumber Company at only 43 years of age. He was Kirby's manager of mills and logging and assistant to the president.**

The following year he reorganized the business as the Aldridge Lumber Company and in April 1892 he married Frances Ellen Wooten, the valedictorian of Woodville's Huntington Institute Class of 1891.<sup>5</sup> They would have two children to live to adulthood, Hal Jr. (born in 1899) and Sadie Ruth (born in 1902).

In 1893 Hal represented the state's 36<sup>th</sup> Congressional district in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, probably with the help of Tyler County's newly elected U.S. Congressman Samuel Bronson Cooper, who was a former state senator and early benefactor of John Henry Kirby. Cooper would later join the Aldridge brothers and Kirby in the formation of a second Aldridge Lumber Company in 1905.<sup>6</sup>

The Aldridge mill at Rockland was an above average-sized mill at the northern terminus of the Texas & New Orleans railroad, just south of the Neches River.

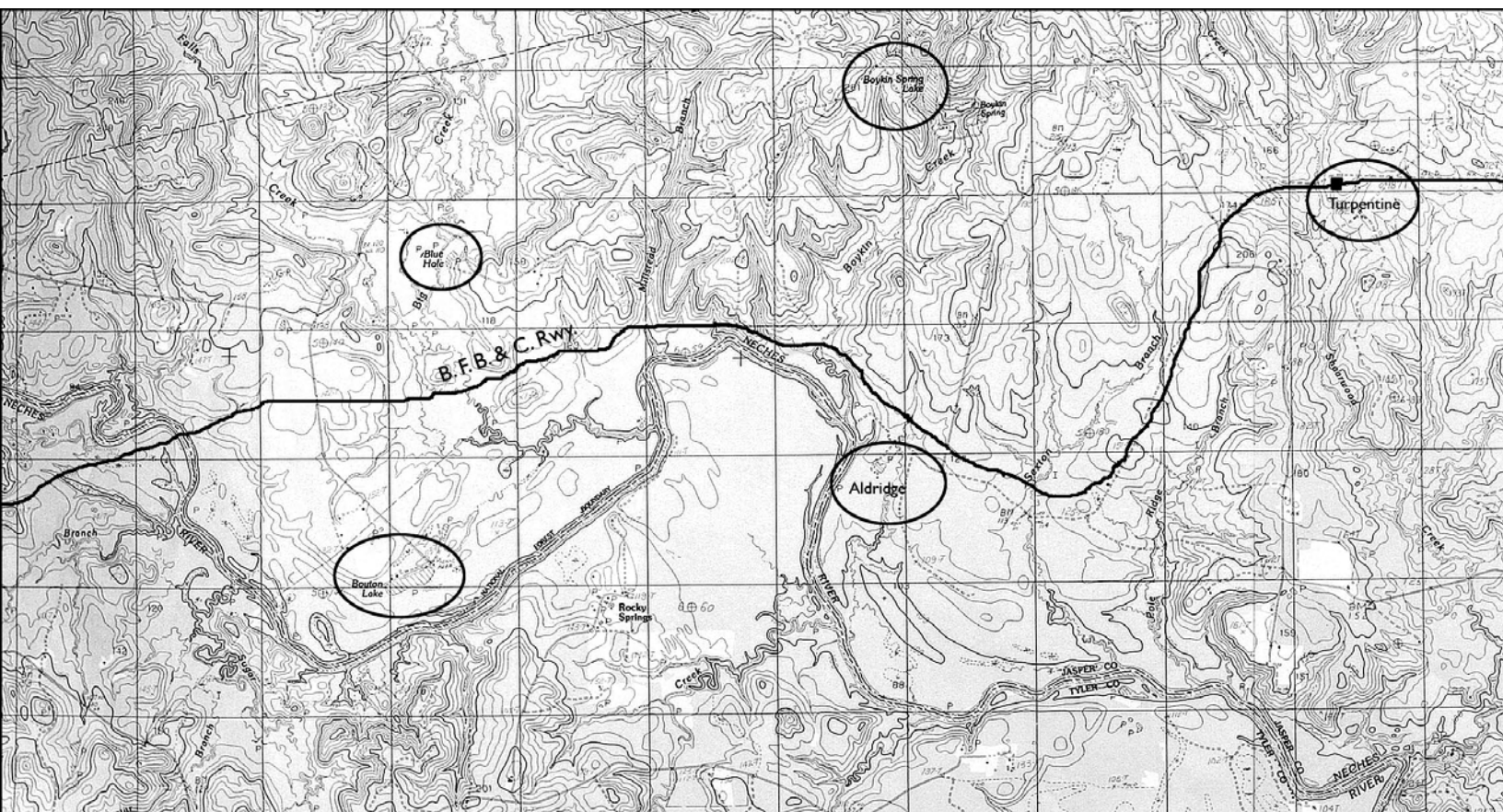


**A canoeist floats past one of many rock outcroppings in the Neches River near Angelina National Forest's Upland Island Wilderness. Photo by Jonathan Gerland, July 2009.**





An Aldridge Lumber Company letterhead from 1912. Photo courtesy of the Forest History Collections, Steen Library, Stephen F. Austin State University.



A modified topographical map shows the five distinct places of Aldridge, Blue Hole, Bouton Lake, Boykin Springs, and Turpentine, each about two miles apart. Not all area shown is part of the national forest. Elevations range from about 80 feet at the river banks to more than 300 feet at ridge peaks around Boykin Springs.



Its timber supply came from virgin longleaf pine forests in Tyler, Jasper and Angelina counties tapped by a logging railroad that spanned the Neches River in 1892.<sup>7</sup> The mill burned in late 1894 or early 1895 but was rebuilt; then another fire in August 1895 destroyed the lumber yard. Mill fires were common, but for Aldridge they seemed especially frequent. In 1898 Aldridge sold the Rockland operation to lumberman William

Cameron of Waco, who owned a number of other mills and forest lands in Texas and Louisiana.<sup>8</sup>

After selling the large mill at Rockland, Hal Aldridge remained at least partly active in the area, although few details of this period in his life are known. For a time he was a partner in a smaller sawmill near Rockland, known as the Aldridge & Dunkin mill, and owned another mill on Pine Island Bayou in Jefferson County. He also served as a court-appointed receiver for at least one other lumber company.<sup>9</sup> Whatever Aldridge's exact business activities were between 1898 and 1904, it is clear by 1905 he and John Henry Kirby were aggressively developing new and ambitious milling operations in northern Jasper County involving arguably the finest belt of long leaf pine timber then remaining in Texas.<sup>10</sup> At this time Kirby's own company was in the hands of a court-appointed receiver, yet Kirby still owned or at least partially controlled many thousands of acres of virgin timber in the area and he needed another mill and business partner to harvest it.<sup>11</sup> Aldridge was certainly familiar with the area and the timber there, he was familiar with Kirby, especially through his

*Both pages:  
Various views of the concrete  
ruins at Aldridge. Photos by  
Jonathan Gerland, February 2007.*







older brother Frank, and he wanted to return to large-scale manufacturing.

Aldridge and Kirby finalized their plans from summer 1905 through summer 1906. They contracted with one another and traveled separately to San Antonio, Chicago, Boston, and New York to secure all the necessary business arrangements.<sup>12</sup> In all of their dealings, Kirby instructed Aldridge to keep Kirby's involvement a secret, since Kirby was entangled in multiple legal suits, many concerning Kirby Lumber Company, and since other interests might be unfriendly to their designs if Kirby's involvement was known.<sup>13</sup> On September 25, 1905, Aldridge and Kirby formed two corporations, the Aldridge Lumber Company, which did not contain Kirby's name in the charter (although half the stock was issued to Kirby), and the Burr's Ferry, Brownell & Chester Railway Company, which did include Kirby's name. To conceal his connection as long as possible, Kirby deferred filing the railroad charter until January 1906.<sup>14</sup> The railroad was a critical link in their plans.

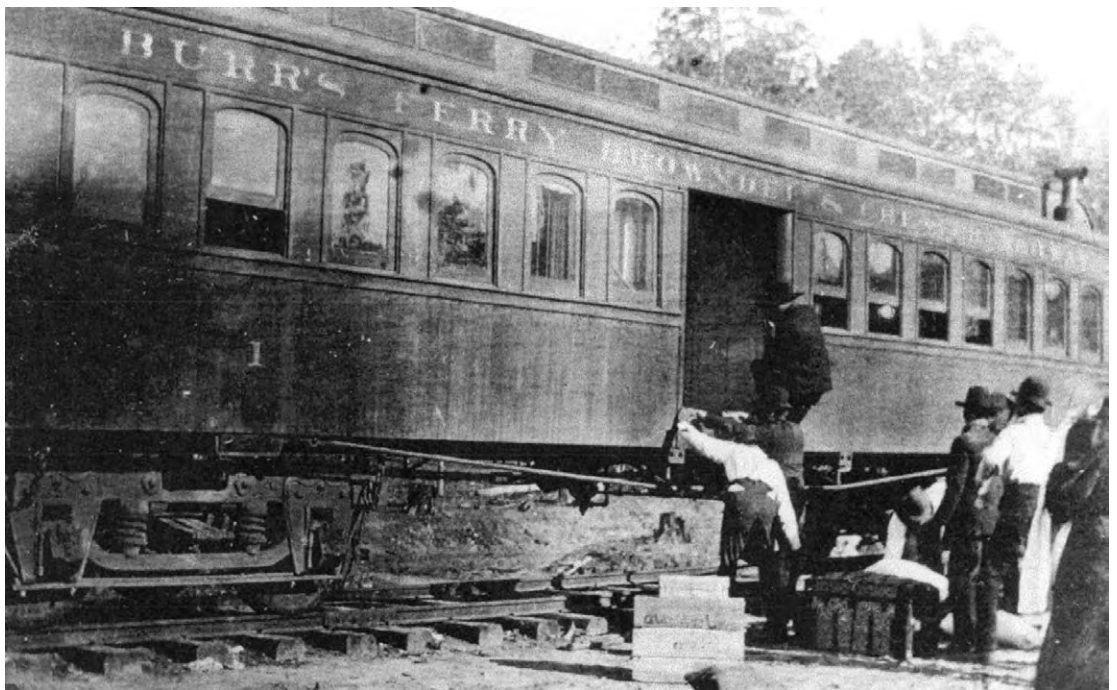
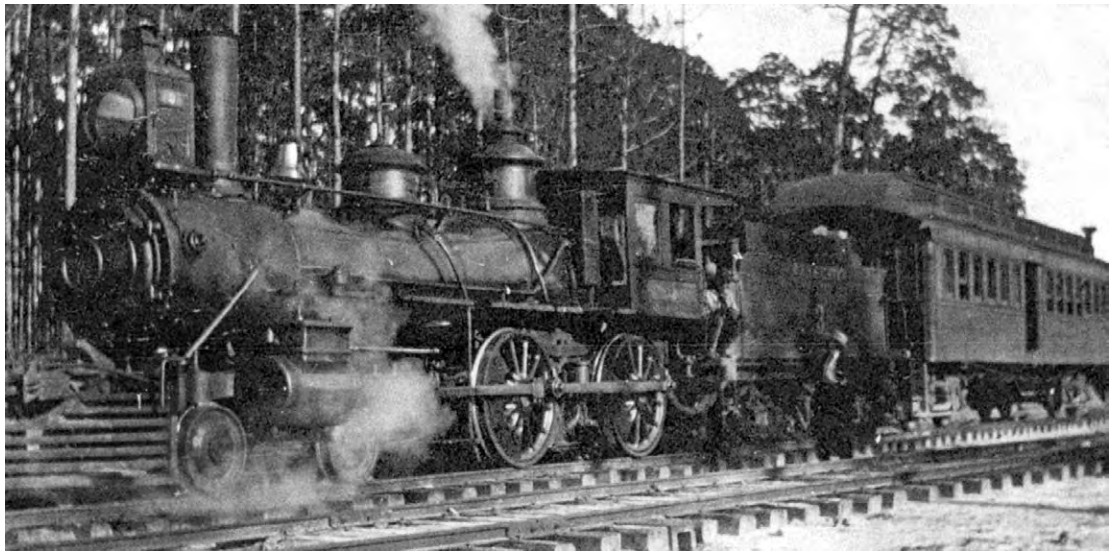
On paper the BFB&C Railway Company, which included corporate directors from



Houston, Beaumont, New York, and Boston, was a fairly ambitious project. It was to traverse six counties by way of main and branch lines and connect with at least five other railroads between Burr's Ferry on the Sabine River in Newton County and Chester in Tyler County.<sup>15</sup> Providing an outlet for lumber manufactured at the new Aldridge mill, however, was the key, although unstated, objective.



These rare photographs, although grainy, show a Burr's Ferry, Brownel & Chester Railway passenger train in about 1908. Both photos courtesy of P.R. "Bob" Griswold of Denver, Colorado.



Very little of the company's objectives, as presented in its charter and in the press, was ever realized.

While delaying filing the BFB&C charter, Kirby and Aldridge worked on securing rights-of-way and selecting a mill site. Construction of the BFB&C began conveniently enough by acquiring a standard gauge railroad already constructed from Rockland eastward across the Neches River to a rock quarry in the Joseph Conn survey in Jasper County, known at the time as Kyle's Quarry and earlier as Smith's Quarry. The road was the Rockland, Jasper & Northeastern Railway, obtained by Kirby from Beaumont interests including the Kyle, Stone, Wiess, Votaw, and Cunningham families, and it would serve as

the first four miles of the new railroad.<sup>16</sup> For a mill site, Aldridge and Kirby selected a terrace overlooking a bend in the Neches River, just east of Boykin Creek, on the J.C. Thomas survey in Jasper County, about seven miles east of Rockland.

Railroad construction from the end of the line to the mill site progressed much slower than either man could endure, so in early 1906 Aldridge had the mill equipment and supplies transported by mules and oxen the remaining three miles from the quarry. Construction of the mill and town buildings began by using a small temporary sawmill, which also supplied material for constructing the larger main mill. Aldridge fired up the boilers of the main mill in late June and was soon ready for full-scale lumber production



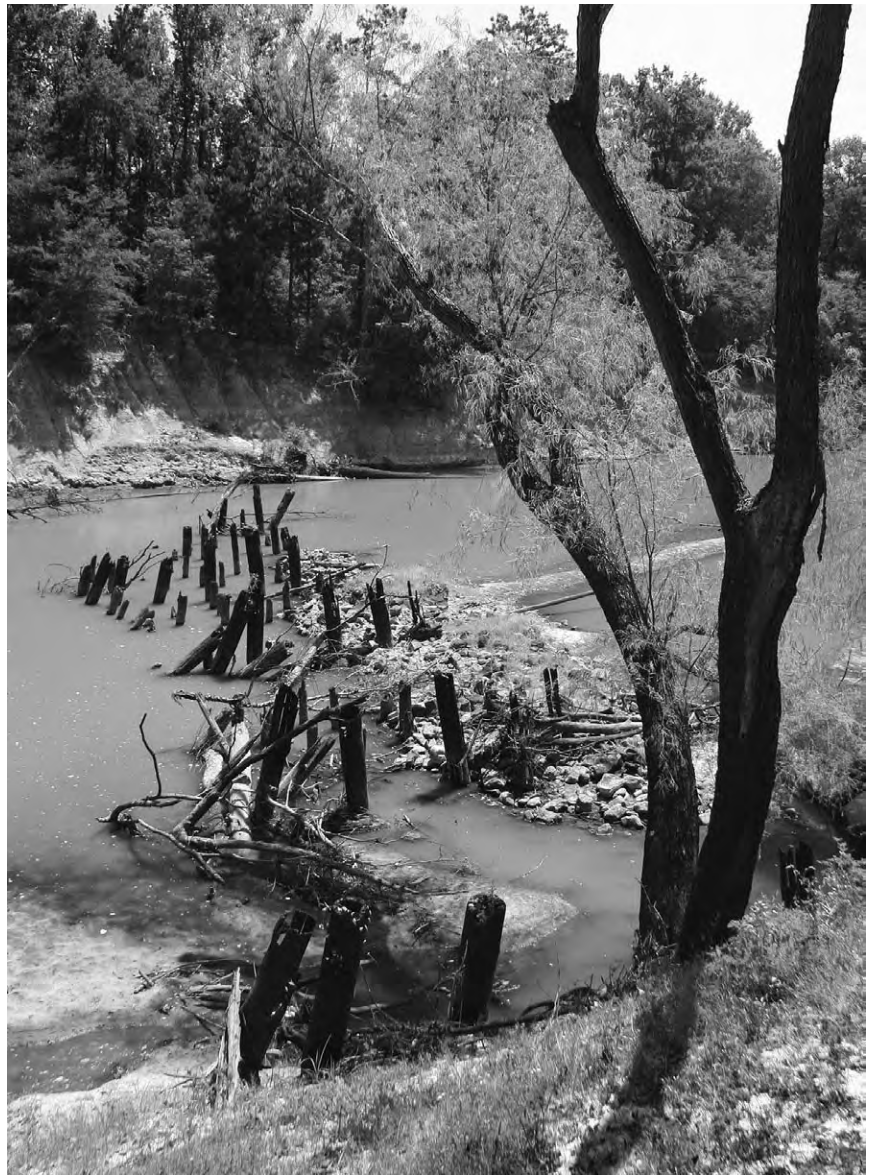
of about 85,000 board feet per day, but the railroad, which would provide an outlet for the lumber, was not completed to the new town of Aldridge until January 1907.<sup>17</sup>

Once in full operation by spring 1907, Aldridge seemed a typical company sawmill town, with racially segregated company-owned housing, schools, churches, a commissary, and a post office with Hal Aldridge serving as its first postmaster.<sup>18</sup>

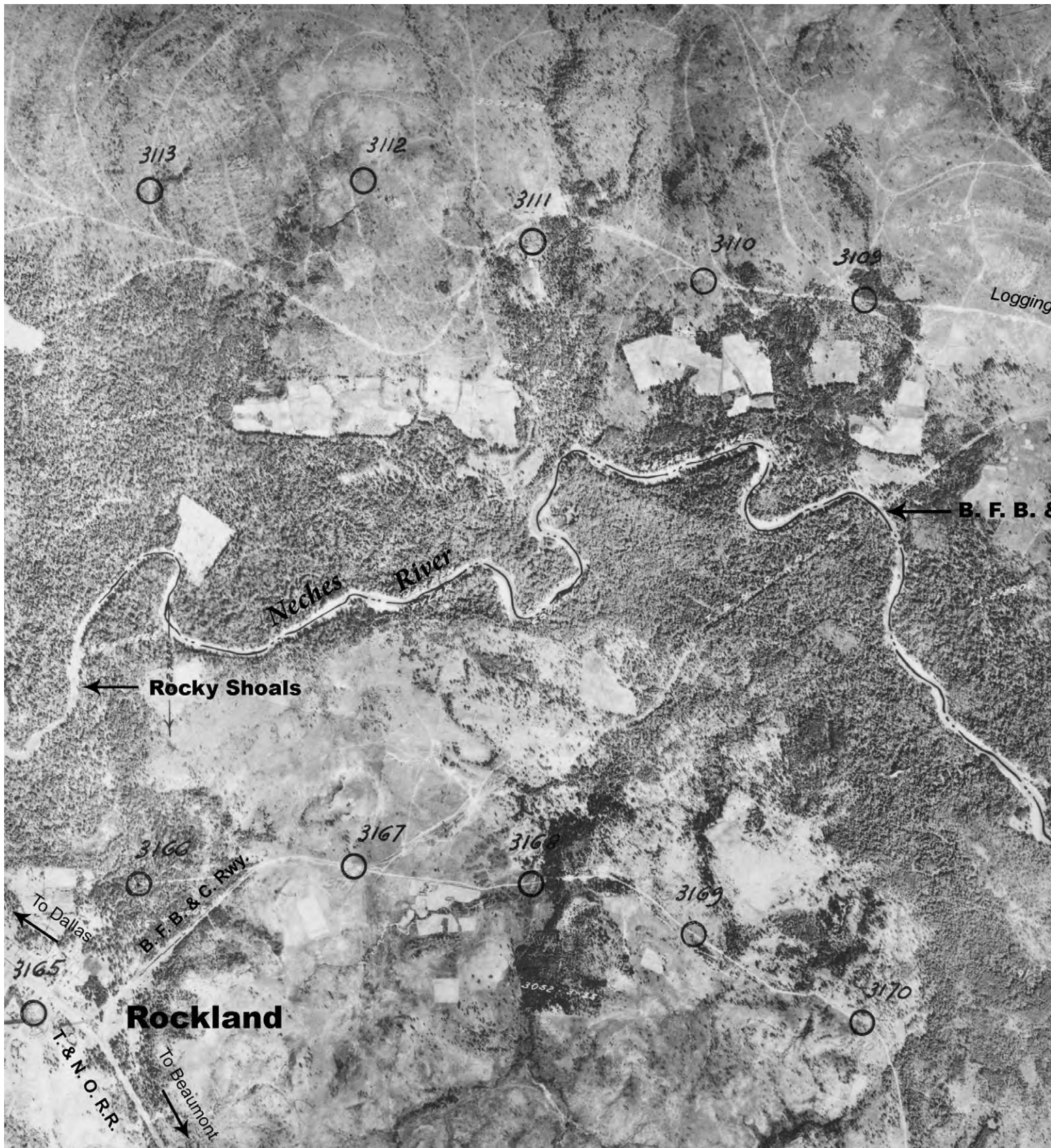
According to the federal census taken in April and May 1910, there were 562 inhabitants residing in 112 dwellings in "Aldridge Village." Of these, 194 were identified with occupations. Not surprisingly, most were mill, woods, and railroad laborers, and there were a few store and hotel managers and clerks, cooks, and house carpenters. In addition, there were two preachers, two river fishermen (one a native of New York), one physician, one butcher, one river ferryman, and one "horse trader."

*Below: At low water levels, pilings are evident reminders of the Burr's Ferry, Brownel & Chester Railway bridge that once crossed the Neches River. The view is looking downstream. The Rock Quarries Tram Road first crossed here in 1895-1896. Southern Pacific acquired the line in 1912 and abandoned it in 1927. Photo by Jonathan Gerland, July 2009.*

*Right: Another view of the BFB&C pilings, looking from Tyler County into Jasper County. The bridge is located at 31 degrees, 2 minutes, and 12.58 seconds North and 94 degrees, 20 minutes, and 16.13 seconds West. Photo by Jonathan Gerland, July 2009.*

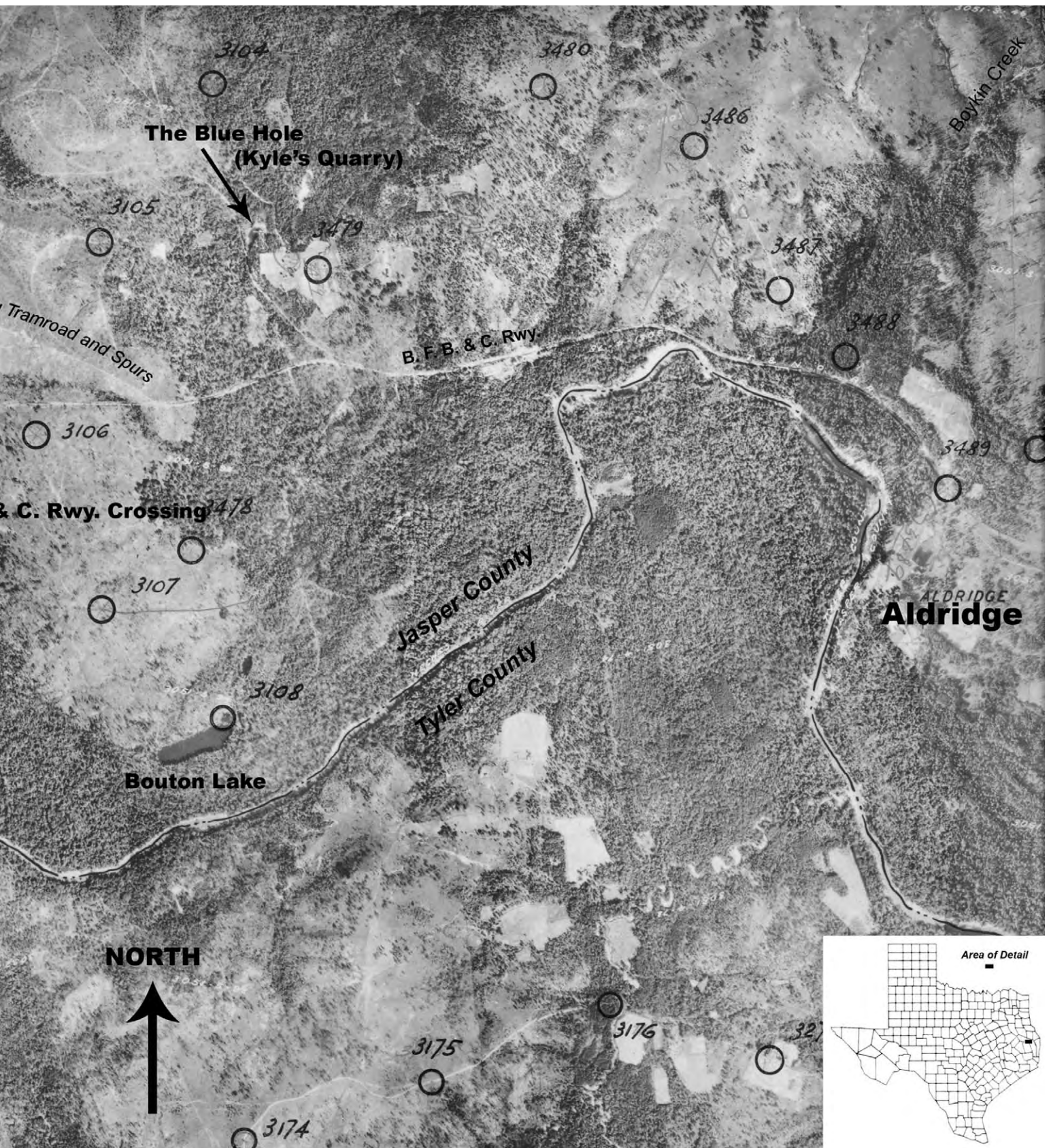






*narrative continues on page 14*





This aerial photograph from the late 1930s shows the Neches River valley between Rockland and Aldridge in Tyler and Jasper counties. The photo once belonged to the Houston Oil Company (one of John Henry Kirby's businesses), which drew the small circles and identification numbers believed to indicate sites of test wells. The photo shows the depleted forest resources of the area as well as the abandoned railroads that once served the quarry and lumber interests from the 1890s through the 1920s. Most other label identifications by Jonathan Gerland.



Two time tables of the Burr's Ferry, Brownel & Chester Railway. One is from July 1908, when the road was recently constructed, and the other is from April 1926 when Southern Pacific owned and operated the line.

# BURR'S FERRY, BROWNDEN & CHESTER RAILWAY.

JOHN H. KIRBY, President,  
Houston, Tex.

F. A. REICHARDT, Treasurer,  
Houston, Tex.

JOHN S. BONNER, Vice-President,  
Houston, Tex.

A. A. BROOKS, Auditor,  
Houston, Tex.

B. F. BONNER, Vice-President,  
Houston, Tex.

W. T. HANCOCK, Traffic Manager,  
Houston, Tex.

JNO. W. HORNSBY, Gen. Attorney,  
Houston, Tex.

J. A. TURNER, General Supt.,  
Rockland, Tex.

No. 1	Mis	July 1, 1908.	No. 2
.....	.....	[LEAVE]	[ARRIVE]
*1 30 P M	0	.....Rockland <sup>1</sup> .....	4 30 P M
1 35 "	1.4	.....Dobbins.....	4 20 "
1 45 "	4.9	.....Kyle Quarry.....	4 10 "
2 00 "	7.1	arr.....Aldridge.....lve.	4 00 "
2 01 "	7.1	lve.....Aldridge.....arr.	2 40 "
2 15 P M	10.1	.....Turpentine.....	*2 25 P M
.....	.....	[ARRIVE]	[LEAVE]

**Under Construction**—Turpentine to Brownel, distance of 19 miles.

\* Daily.

STANDARD—Central time.

**Connection**,—<sup>1</sup> With Texas & New Orleans R.R.

EASTWARD				WESTWARD					
TURPENTINE SUBDIVISION									
Length of sidings in cars, location of bulletins, water and fuel stations, stand "rd clocks, interlock plants, turn tables, wyes & phones	SECOND CLASS		Distance from Track End	TIME TABLE No. 4		Distance from Rockland	SECOND CLASS		Train Order Office Hours
		173		April 4, 1926				174	
		Mixed						Mixed	
		Leave Daily Ex. Monday		STATIONS				Arrive Daily Ex. Monday	
		7.40AM	113.4	TURPENTINE		10.2	7.30AM		
		f 7.55	110.3	3.1 ALDRIDGE		7.1	f 7.05		
		f 8.10	108.6	1.7 EARLE		5.4	f 6.55		
		f 8.20	108.2	0.4 KYLE QUARRY		5.0	f 6.50		
	BKFWY	8.40AM	103.2	5.0 TO-R ROCKLAND		0.0	6.30AM	Continuous	
		Arrive Daily Ex. Monday					Leave Daily Ex. Monday		
	173					174			
(1.00)		.....Time Over Subdivision.....				(1.00)			
10.0		.....Average Speed per Hour.....				10.0			
Westward Trains are Superior to Trains of the Same Class in the Opposite Direction (See Rule S-72)									

Of the 562 total inhabitants, 248, or 44% were identified as black or mulatto. There were 64 white children and 22 black or mulatto children identified as attending school within the year.<sup>19</sup>

From the beginning, the Hal Aldridge-John Henry Kirby relationship was entirely business, with Kirby clearly the dominant partner. Kirby's communications, always direct, quickly turned terse, often condescending, especially after the death of Frank, Hal's older brother. Kirby regularly

sent men to Aldridge to monitor operations, especially auditors to inspect the books. As Aldridge became less able to meet contractual requirements, Kirby's tone became increasingly admonishing. Several years into their venture, Kirby remained frustrated that Aldridge was still not sending "the right kind of reports," and Kirby more than once scolded Aldridge for simply the way he sent and received his mail. After chastising him for once not personally receiving his certified mail, Kirby wrote Aldridge on May 19,

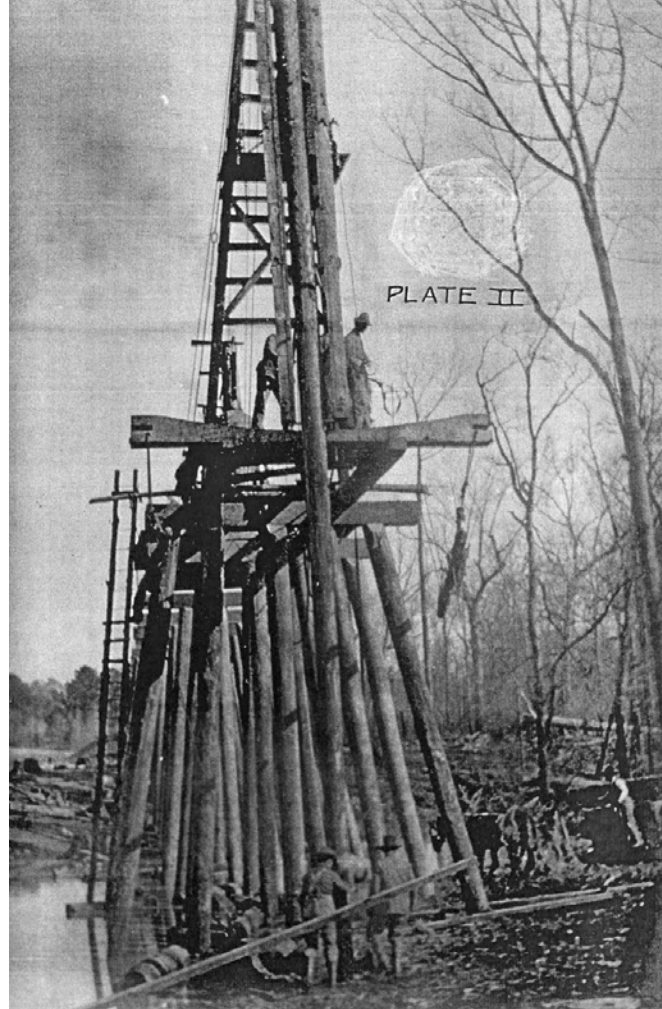


1911: "And another thing: I note that your correspondence is signed on the typewriter. You ought to quit that so that we will know when we receive a letter that it is genuine. Anybody can use the typewriter and write any kind of communication on your letter heads they may please."<sup>20</sup>

Kirby considered buying out Aldridge in 1910 and included the Aldridge mill properties in a series of appraisals of all Kirby Lumber Company facilities in February 1911. A satisfactory price was never agreed upon, so the two men spent the remaining years of their business relationship engaging in a series of complicated timber, milling, and marketing contracts under which Aldridge never seemed able to succeed.<sup>21</sup>

After the Aldridge sawmill, along with the dollyways and about 200,000 feet of lumber, burned in a late August 1911 fire only partially covered by insurance, Kirby and his top officials in Kirby Lumber Company became directly involved in planning the new mill. They quickly determined the contracted value of the original mill was too high from the beginning, possibly overvalued as much as twenty percent, and claimed the recent outside appraisal of some properties should be devalued by as much as fifty percent, then depreciated twenty-five percent beyond that, if given credit at all. With one official admitting he had "hit these properties pretty hard," Aldridge was left to scrape together all he had, including his diminished credit, and was still \$10,000 short a month before completion of the new mill. When he wrote to Kirby asking for help in late April 1912, he shared it was his "first day out," since he had "been sick in bed some 8 or 10 days." In the coming months, Aldridge's health would only deteriorate more.<sup>22</sup>

The new mill had a cutting capacity of 125,000 board feet of lumber per day, greater than the original mill, yet Aldridge continued to be unable to satisfy Kirby and his managers. By spring 1914, Aldridge was many thousands of dollars in the red and Kirby officials took every opportunity to remind him his milling results remained "most disappointing."<sup>23</sup> Aldridge made frequent trips to Beaumont and Houston to plead with banks and Kirby for more credit, more time, and more freedom (specifically, Kirby was restricting access to more desirable timber stands at the most inopportune times), once describing matters



to Kirby as "almost a life and death case" for the Aldridge Lumber Company, yet "of such trifling importance to the Kirby Lumber Company." By December 1914 Aldridge's creditors were themselves coming to Kirby. Since Kirby felt Aldridge's "embarrassment" in no way helped Kirby Lumber Company's own interests he advised his managers to work out a new contract with Aldridge, who he described as "anxious to meet our views in any way," for if not, he would be "himself in a devil of a fix."<sup>24</sup>

Burr's Ferry, Brownell & Chester Railway construction of bridge pilings in the Angelina River bottom, ca. 1908, from Robert A. Wood's June 1910 University of Texas thesis, "Description of a Steam, Skid, Tilting, Drop-Hammer Pile Driver Used On B.F.B. & C. Ry. Construction, 1907-1908." The area shown is now under the impounded waters of Lake Sam Rayburn, just north of the dam and spillway.

#### BOAT SERVICE AT ROCKLAND.

The first passenger boat service that has ever been had so high up the Neches river, has recently been established, running between the sawmill town of Rockland and the town of Aldridge. Capt. Sim Strand is the author of this original plan of navigation, and he recently launched a new gasoline boat, the Flora Dora, and placed her in this service, with himself as captain and crew. He makes two trips daily each way between the two towns, and it is reported that his innovation is being liberally patronized, as there is considerable traffic between the two towns.

*Southern Industrial and Lumber Review, June 1908, p. 40*

This interesting clipping tells of passenger boat service between Rockland and Aldridge in 1908. According to the 1910 Jasper County Census, the Sim Strand mentioned in the clipping was a young check clerk at the Aldridge mill and his wife's name was Flora, undoubtedly the inspiration for naming his boat "Flora Dora."





**Tall trees now grow out of the concrete mill building foundations at Old Aldridge.**

*Photo by Jonathan Gerland, February 2007.*

The new contract for 1915 began somewhat encouragingly, with Kirby congratulating Aldridge that his cutting average for February was “about up to the Kirby standard.” Yet Kirby still criticized Aldridge for the way he prepared his cost statements, claiming it was “one of the leaks in your business.” By May, still controlling Aldridge’s access to the timber, Kirby advised Aldridge to consider running the mill on short time, since Kirby did not wish Aldridge to continue further cutting due to “that terrible European war” driving lumber prices down.<sup>25</sup>

Of course Aldridge’s only way to pay himself out of debt was to operate full time and he told Kirby if he had known in 1911 that “profitable cutting contracts” were not to be forthcoming he “most certainly would not have rebuilt.” Besides, Aldridge explained, “the men working for low wages can barely exist, since the cut in wages, and they could not live on short time and neither could we.” The bad conditions would not continue indefinitely, he advised, and there was no feasible way out but to endure a “temporary sacrifice.”<sup>26</sup>

Kirby responded immediately in a terse letter, “You took your chances in rebuilding your mill and if the market for lumber had been such as to afford any profit, no doubt the option which this company took upon your mill (to purchase it) would long ago have been exercised. It is simply out of the question for you to suppose that this company can pocket a loss in order to permit you to operate your plant and make earnings. It is no encouragement to the Kirby Lumber Company and its officials to try to help you and to take even the losses we are now sustaining if you are going to feel that it is our obligation to do so and that we make such sacrifices in pursuance of such obligation.”<sup>27</sup>

Less than two months later, on July 19, 1915, as Hal Aldridge sat in a Kirby Lumber Company auditor’s office in Houston, word came that Aldridge’s sawmill, planing mill,

and lumber yards had burned to the ground.<sup>28</sup> The houses, commissary, and most other structures were okay, but the manufacturing plant and several million feet of lumber were completely destroyed. Kirby’s Houston offices were not good places for the Aldridge brothers.

Hal returned to his burned out sawmill town, where he became ill again. Although he had suffered several mill fires earlier at both Aldridge and Rockland, this one effectively put an end to his sawmilling days. He dealt with business matters as ably as he could, including fighting charges of arson, but by January 1916 he had moved to El Paso for a drier climate and higher altitude to ease his suffering from what was later identified in his correspondence as pleurisy and influenza. He lost at least 35 pounds and never regained it. Kirby offered encouraging words from time to time, but often closed his communications with regrets he could not “financially ease your suffering.” Although Aldridge occasionally considered returning to East Texas, trying to restart another mill was “equivalent to your committing suicide,” Kirby advised him. Thus, Aldridge spent most of the rest of his life liquidating assets and paying off the debt of Aldridge Lumber Company.<sup>29</sup>

Kirby received his share of the final disposition of the Aldridge venture on January 6, 1920. He stated in a letter to Aldridge he was disappointed the settlement was not greater but said he accepted Aldridge’s honesty and accuracy. Kirby instructed his accountants to write off the balance of his investment as a loss. Aldridge died just a little over thirteen months later and was buried in El Paso’s Evergreen Cemetery, more than 800 miles away from the concrete walls and foundations that remain as sort of a strange memorial in the Jasper County woods.<sup>30</sup>

Kirby would sell some of the remaining timber in the Aldridge area to the Carter-Kelley Lumber Company and harvest the rest by extending his Kirbyville tram as well as using a small sawmill near the Aldridge site. The Burr’s Ferry, Brown del & Chester Railway, which he sold to Southern Pacific in 1912, was abandoned in 1927; its rails never reached farther east than the Angelina River.<sup>31</sup> In 1935 Kirby sold most of the Aldridge and Kirby lands in the area to the National Forest Service, and he retained the Houston Oil Company lands.





Two photographs of The Blue Hole. One is from a 1918 publication "The Geology of East Texas," when the site was known as Kyle's Quarry; the other is from June 2007, photo by Jonathan Gerland.



## ***The Blue Hole***

Although it is located on a private inholding within the Angelina National Forest, the Blue Hole's mystique has intrigued East Texans and national forest visitors for generations. The former sandstone rock quarry was developed in the 1890s, briefly had a post office in the 1910s, and filled with clear spring water sometime in the 1920s, providing a unique and popular swimming hole.

Situated near Chalk (or Big) Creek on the Joseph Conn Survey in Jasper County,

the quarry opened in 1893 to supply rock for construction of the Sabine Pass jetties extension. When John Henry Kirby chartered his Gulf, Beaumont & Kansas City Railway in March 1893, connecting to the quarry was an objective.<sup>32</sup> Government contractor F. A. Hyatt, who had already opened nearby quarries south of the Neches River near Rockland during the previous decade, sought the quarry's new supply of sandstone rock for the federal government's continuing



improvement of the port and shipping resources of Sabine Pass. In 1895-1896 a standard gauge railroad was constructed across the river that connected the quarry with Rockland, a distance of about five miles. Seeking legal recognition of the road, Hyatt and his fellow Beaumont investors chartered the line as the Rock Quarries Tram Road in January 1897.<sup>33</sup> In 1905 the road was reorganized as the Rockland, Jasper &

Northeastern Railway Company, again by Beaumont investors, including members of the Wiess, Kyle, Votaw, Cunningham, and Stone families. Then John Henry Kirby acquired the road in 1906 and made it the first several miles of his Burr's Ferry, Brownell & Chester Railway.<sup>34</sup>

By 1905 the quarry was known as Kyle's Quarry, named for William Wesley Kyle (1876-1945) of Beaumont. When noted geologist Edwin T. Dumble published his University of Texas Bulletin "The Geology of East Texas" in 1918, he described Kyle's Quarry as being in a deposit of "quartzitic" sandstone of the Corrigan (or Catahoula) geologic formation. After removing ten to twelve feet of Lafayette overburden, the quarry was yielding the desired sandstone rock from a layer of thirty-five to forty feet thick. "The hard rock is very light gray or gray blue in color...made up mainly of quartz and chert," he wrote. "It contains angular fragments of hard whitish and greenish clays." It is believed the coloring of the clays and rock, as described by Dumble, is what gives the Blue Hole's deep waters their distinctive blue-green color.<sup>35</sup>

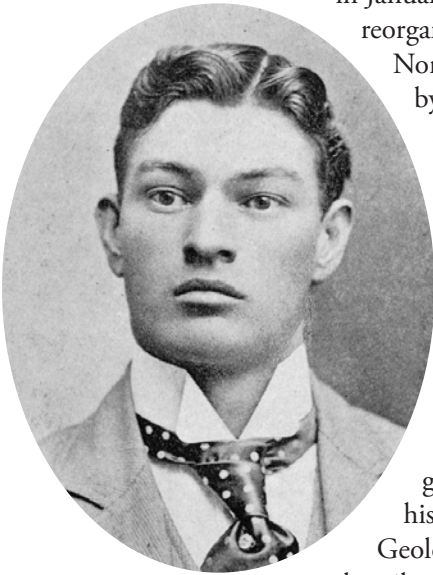
Most of the Blue Hole's rock went to port improvements at Sabine Pass from the 1890s through the 1910s, but after construction of the first phase of the Galveston Seawall in 1904, which was of granite construction not sandstone, it is likely that some of the Jasper County sandstone went to Galveston jetty work as well as extensions of the seawall. Sandstone for earlier Galveston jetty work came from quarries near Ledbetter and the granite came from quarries in Burnet County. Rock quarried from the Blue Hole in the 1950s and later may have gone to nearby

highway and road projects as well as work on the Lake Sam Rayburn dam and spillway.

Longtime *Dallas Morning News* columnist Frank X. Tolbert wrote about The Blue Hole frequently from the late 1950s through the early 1970s.<sup>36</sup> "It is as pretty a spot as you'll find in the hemisphere," he told his readers in 1960. He especially enjoyed swimming, sometimes nude, in the "brilliantly colored waters" surrounded by white sandstone cliffs and shady green pines. Several times he gave detailed driving directions to this "jewel of the East Texas forests."

Swimmers apparently did not need much encouragement, for by the early 1970s traffic had increased and Tolbert was disappointed to find "mounds" of discarded beer cans and bottles during his visits, which he said "defiled" the place.<sup>37</sup> Tolbert also was one of the first writers to dispel a long held legend which said a lost locomotive and one or more rail cars rested deep at the bottom of the hole. He reported in a January 1960 article that the lake had been recently drained by engineers working on the Sam Rayburn dam. All they found, he said, were "a few small perch." He said divers had earlier disproved the "ancient yarn" and "beloved East Texas legend" but "some folks weren't convinced until the inky waters were drained." The Blue Hole soon refilled, and remains so today, giving life again to the legend of the lost train.<sup>38</sup>

Southern Pine Lumber Company acquired the land containing the Blue Hole in 1945 and 1946 from heirs of the Wiess, Townsend, and Shands families among others. The title, which involved at least two federal court decisions of the early 1900s, was described as "circuitous."<sup>39</sup> By 1950 Arthur Temple Jr. had a hunting camp house on the old BFB&C right-of-way about a mile southeast of the Blue Hole.<sup>40</sup> In the 1970s, when the forest service laid out the Sawmill Hiking Trail which connected Boykin Springs with Bouton Lake and Old Aldridge, Southern Pine's successor company, Temple-Eastex, granted trail access across the private lands and assisted in preparing the trail. This trail access continued during the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s under Temple-Inland ownership, until about the time of the reorganization of the company and the sale of forest lands in 2007.



**W. Wesley Kyle of Beaumont, namesake of Kyle's Quarry, Jasper County. From The Standard Blue Book of Texas, 1908-1909, Beaumont Edition (Houston: A.J. Peeler Standard Blue Book Company, ca. 1908).**





## ***Bouton Lake***

Outside of myth and legend, little is known about this twelve acre natural lake that appears almost boat-shaped in aerial photographs and seems always placid. It is presumably named for Nathan Bouton, who in 1854 patented the land upon which the lake rests.<sup>41</sup> It has long been a camping and fishing destination, especially during the days of the Aldridge sawmill operations.

When John Henry Kirby entertained here, he usually gave specific instructions to Hal Aldridge concerning supplies and arrangements. For a week-long camping trip at the lake in early May 1906, Kirby instructed Aldridge about two months in advance to construct “two or three wide bottomed skiffs” as well as a raft made from “dead logs...with a floor on it and let the ladies fish.” There would be 40 to 50 people in the party, including

about 10 servants, Kirby advised, and he directed Aldridge to hire a “man cook as it is no light job to cook for this many people.” Kirby would send tents, stoves, dishes, bedding and other supplies from Houston, but he wanted Aldridge to provide barrels of fresh drinking water and “to arrange with some of the citizens in the neighborhood, if there are such, for milk, butter, eggs, chickens, onions, radishes, and other vegetables,” since “it will take quite a lot to feed as many hungry fishermen as we shall have with us.”<sup>42</sup>

The U.S. Forest Service developed Bouton Lake Campground in the early 1960s. It is a no-fee area that provides visitors with picnic tables, primitive camping, fishing, and hiking amid a bottomland hardwood and cypress forest. The west side of the lake is private property.

**Cypress-lined Bouton Lake reflects an interesting cloud formation in November 2009.**

*Photo by Jonathan Gerland.*



**The Boykin Springs  
Campground's log  
pavilion in November  
2009. The area was  
hit hard by Hurricane  
Rita in September 2005  
and was closed until  
November 2008. Photo  
by Jonathan Gerland.**



**The reconstructed  
Boykin Springs Lake  
spillway, November  
2009. Photo by  
Jonathan Gerland.**







## Boykin Springs

Developed and constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, Boykin Springs Recreation Area is an excellent place to visit, as are most CCC projects across the country. The area includes a lake for swimming and fishing, a bathhouse, camping sites, picnic tables, a pavilion, the Sawmill Hiking Trail, and beautiful pine forests.

Boykin Springs has long been a popular encampment for all kinds of youth gatherings, including the Boy Scouts of America and the Future Farmers of America. In the early 1940s, FFA groups of 400 to 500 boys, representing two dozen East Texas high schools, participated in three-day summer camps. Activities included swimming, boxing, softball, horseshoe pitching, checkers, dominoes, volleyball, washer pitching, ping pong, tug-of-war, and musical entertainment.<sup>43</sup> In 1942, seven East Texas companies of the 44<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Texas Home Defense Guard participated in combat

training maneuvers at Boykin Springs and in the surrounding forest. About this time, even a nearby practice aerial bombing range was included in the World War II training.

For many years the forest service partnered with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department in stocking rainbow trout in the Boykin Springs Lake and in Boykin Creek. Several stockings a season of 8 to 10 inch trout usually occurred from late December into February, when target water temperatures are 60 degrees or lower. During the middle 1970s each season's initial stocking included more than 3,000 trout in the lake and another 1,100 in the creek.<sup>44</sup>

Boykin Springs, as well as Boykin Creek, is named for Sterling Boykin (1800-1871), who settled the area before the Civil War and is buried within the campground. The small Boykin Cemetery is fenced on a small hill near some of the springs.

A portion of the Burr's Ferry, Brownell & Chester Railway mainline west of Aldridge serves as part of the U.S. Forest Service's Sawmill Hiking Trail, as seen here looking west toward the Boykin Creek crossing in November 2009. To the left lies the mouth of Boykin Creek and the Neches River; to the right a high ridge rises between 30 and 70 feet above the abandoned rail bed.

*Photo by Jonathan Gerland.*



The Sawmill Hiking Trail follows Boykin Creek from the Boykin Springs Recreation Area to Old Aldridge. This small waterfall greets hikers just south of Boykin Springs Campground.

*Photo by Jonathan Gerland,  
November 2009.*



This dilapidated sign marking the Sawmill Hiking Trail near Boykin Springs Recreation Area still stood in November 2009. The faded lettering acknowledges the Forest Service's cooperation with Temple-Eastex, a company that was absorbed into Temple-Inland in 1984 and which sold all its lands in the area in 2007.

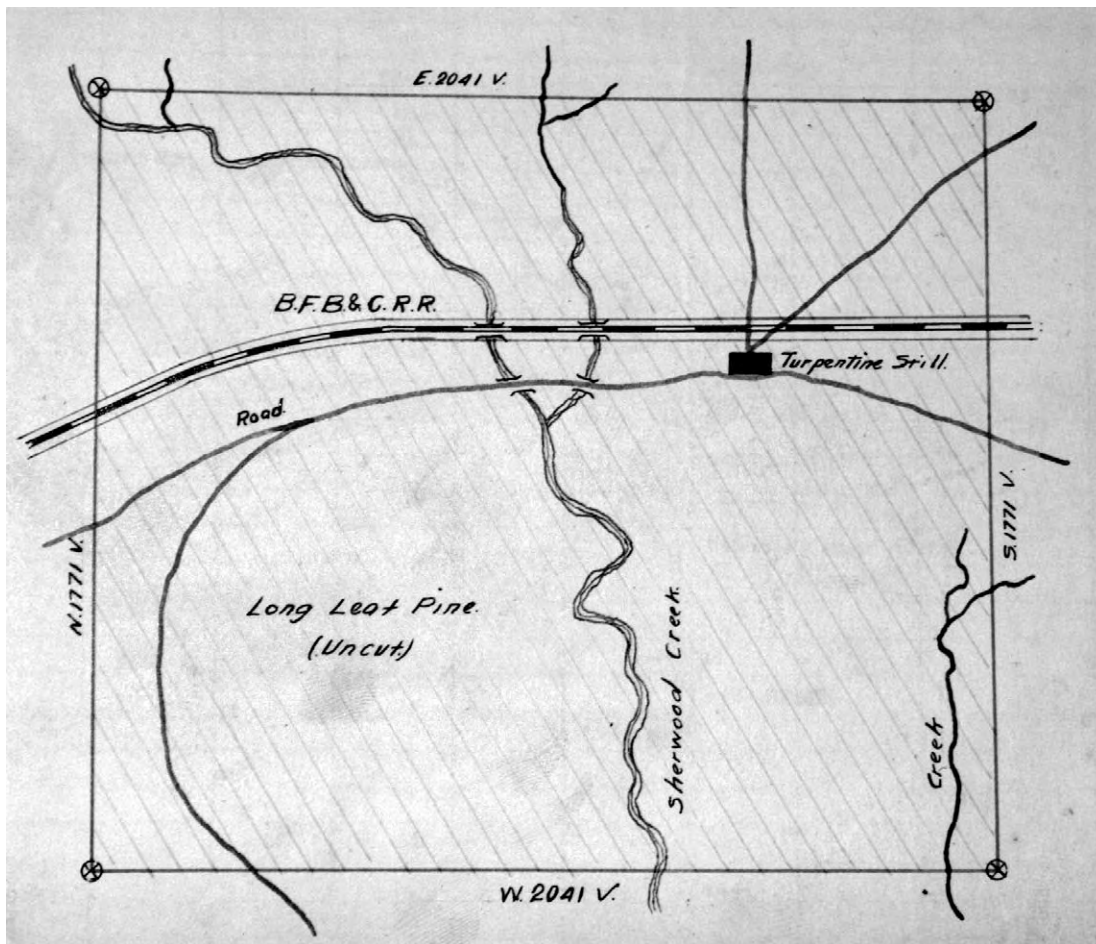
*Photo by Jonathan Gerland.*



Lufkin author Richard Donovan described Boykin Springs during a 1999 canoe expedition as “a masterpiece of human skill at melding together nature’s components of water, trees, and rocks to form a superb recreation area.” Since that time, Hurricane Rita greatly impacted the area in September 2005. Uprooted and fallen trees caused

significant damage to most structures, including destruction of the original rock spillway. After considerable tree removal and structural rebuilding, the area reopened to the public in fall 2008. Although greatly changed from its former beauty, the area remains among the favorite places of many East Texans.<sup>45</sup>





This map shows the location of Turpentine near Sherwood Creek in the 640 acre Houston & Texas Central Section 249 of Jasper County. It is from a Houston Oil Company timber cruise of 1910. Note the identification of the Burr's Ferry, Brownel & Chester Railway and the surrounding "uncut" longleaf pine forest.

## Turpentine

Although Aldridge, Blue Hole, Bouton Lake, and Boykin Springs are well known places today, it is actually the long forgotten town of Turpentine that had the longest running post office, which continuously operated from 1909 to 1926. In fact, when Aldridge lost its post office in April 1916 and again for the last time in October 1923, its mail was forwarded to the Turpentine post office on both occasions.<sup>46</sup>

Turpentine was located near the banks of Sherwood Creek, less than three miles northeast of Aldridge by railroad. It was situated on land owned by John Henry Kirby's Houston Oil Company. Kirby saw the sale of turpentine leases and franchises as an added bonus to his timber harvesting plans and he eventually included turpentine activities on most all his longleaf pine lands, including those cut by the Aldridge mills.<sup>47</sup>

Turpentine operations are more widely known as the naval stores industry because of the ancient practice of applying pine tar and pitch to ship's hulls, decks, and rigging, and it remains one of North America's

oldest industries. English settlers in Virginia made their first exports of tar and pitch to England in 1608. Naval stores were eventually produced in all of the original thirteen colonies, but by 1700 the industry settled in the longleaf pine of the southern colonies. The industry also developed in Florida and moved westward to Texas by 1903.

In Texas, crude gum, or oleoresin, was obtained from living trees by removing the bark, wounding the tree, and collecting the secreted gum for distillation into spirits of turpentine and rosin. Both products are essential ingredients in numerous other refined products including paints, varnishes, thinners, medicines, waxes, polishes, inks, insulations, and soaps.

Beginning at the tree's base about a foot from the ground, a worker chopped the tree with an ax in a V-shape that would encompass the width of the tree upward about two feet. Metal cups and gutters were nailed into the tree below the scraped "face" to collect the crude gum from late spring to early fall. Workers collected the gum from the



**Turpentine workers collecting gum resin in the longleaf pine forest, ca. 1910.** *Photo courtesy of Tyrrell Historical Library Archives, Beaumont, Texas.*



**Old bottles and a broken cup near Turpentine, June 2007.** *Photo by Jonathan Gerland.*

cups about once every two weeks during the growing season. At the beginning of the next season, another two feet would be chopped and scraped, moving the cups and gutters up along the way. Workers usually worked a tree this way for three years and up to a height of seven feet, after which time the tree would be cut for saw timber.<sup>48</sup>

Most of Texas' turpentiners were experienced men from other states. The owners and managers were generally white men in their forties from Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida. Most of the laborers in the woods and in the still were black men in their twenties and thirties from Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Louisiana and Mississippi.<sup>49</sup>



**A charred barrel lid near Turpentine, June 2007.** *Photo by Jonathan Gerland.*

The town of Turpentine was a company town belonging to the Western Naval Stores Company and it regularly maintained a population of about 150 people. The owners and managers included L.M. Autrey, G.M. Maxwell, and W.B. Gillican, well known names in the business. The company also ran similar operations in Texas at Newton, Brookeland, and Browndell. Many other naval stores companies also operated in Texas, with each camp producing tens of thousands of gallons of turpentine and barrels of rosin annually.<sup>50</sup> Generally turpentine camps were considered to be rough and rowdy places, although census records show they often included the families of the workers.

In the early 1910s, William Hal Aldridge more than once reported problems with nails left in the trees to be cut at his mill. The nails "spiked" the expensive band saw blades sometimes as often as four times a day, causing "a thousand dollars in lost time changing saws and damage done to the saws."<sup>51</sup> One of Kirby's other mill managers reported at the same time that he was having as many as five saws "spiked" per ten hour day, because the turpentiners were not careful in removing the cup and gutter nails, which was a violation of their contracts.





When water levels at the Rockland USGS gage are at about 3 feet, like here, the Neches River makes a beautiful waterfall over sandstone rocks and hard clays of the Catahoula geological formation. *Photo by Jonathan Gerland, July 2009.*



The national forests in Texas are comprised of many broken tracts of land, with private inholdings throughout. Signs like this are common. Visitors should be careful not to trespass on private property. *Photo by Jonathan Gerland, November 2009.*

With the depletion of most of the virgin long leaf pine forest in the 1920s, most crude gum turpentine operations in Texas closed. The town of Turpentine ceased operations in 1926. At the time, the assessment of turpentine effects on the forest was mixed. Turpentine trees, because their base trunks were severely weakened by the turpentiners' axes, were often wind damaged. The exposed gum resin of tens of thousands of trees in large stands of timber was also an added fire hazard.

Only a few traces of the town of Turpentine can be found today. It, like the Blue Hole, is also on a private inholding within the national forest. All that remains are a few areas exhibiting charred rosin residues, a few manmade earthen hills, and discarded bottles and other items in and around the nearby creek.

## Conclusion

The history presented here is only a very small part of the past and continuing story of these unique places. Generations of past human experience are yet to be revealed and discovered. Time has brought change, to be sure, but many things are unchanged. The rocks, ridges, hills and valleys, skies, winds, streams and woods remain, inviting new experiences and explorations to be shared in a national forest.



## ENDNOTES

(Endnotes)

- <sup>1</sup> Some examples of the Aldridge story are Margie Kirkland, "Why Concrete Buildings In The Forest?," *Houston Chronicle*, April 25, 1971; Richard Stewart, "Forest Reclaims Town," *Beaumont Enterprise*, March 4, 1979; W.T. Block, "Sawmill Town Aldridge Had Sad History," *Beaumont Enterprise*, January 29, 2000; "Trees Now Thick Where Aldridge Mill Once Thrived by Cutting All Trees," *Jasper Newsbay*, March 17, 1993; Kyle Pevero, "Crumbling Walls All That's Left of Jasper County Sawmill," *Beaumont Enterprise*, March 8, 2009. For a slightly different perspective, see "Aldridge Sawmill and the East Texas Logging Bonanza" in the University of Texas "Texas Beyond History" website at <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/aldridge/index.html>.
- <sup>2</sup> Manuscript returns of U.S. Census, Mississippi: 1860 (Tallahatchie County, p. 377), 1870 (Grenada County, p. 242), and 1880 (Grenada County, p. 246). See also "Many Attend the Aldridge Interment," *El Paso Herald*, March 1, 1921.
- <sup>3</sup> "Frank M. Aldridge," *Southern Industrial & Lumber Review*, May 1906, p. 18. For Beaumont's late nineteenth century lumber industry history, see Jonathan Gerland, "Sawdust City: Beaumont, Texas, on the Eve of the Petroleum Age," *Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record* 32 (November 1996): 20-47.
- <sup>4</sup> W.T. Block, *Mill Towns and Ghost Towns*, Vol. 1 (Lufkin: Best of East Texas Publishers, 1994), pp. 339-341. See also Rockland entries in the East Texas Sawmill Database, Texas Forestry Museum, Lufkin.
- <sup>5</sup> "Aldridge, Frances Ellen Wooten," in John William Leonard, editor, *Woman's Who's Who of America, 1914-1915* (New York: American Commonwealth Company, 1914), p. 41. In other sources, including the 1910 Jasper County Census and in letters written by John Henry Kirby, Hal Aldridge's wife is identified as "Fannele."
- <sup>6</sup> *Members of the Texas Legislature, 1846-1962* (Austin: Texas Legislature, 1962), p. 152. See also "Cooper, Samuel Bronson" and "Kirby, John Henry" in The Handbook of Texas Online ([www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/)) and "Many Attend the Aldridge Interment," *El Paso Herald*, March 1, 1921.
- <sup>7</sup> "Rockland Shavings," *Dallas Morning News*, November 28, 1892; "Yellow Pine Country," *Dallas Morning News*, April 30, 1893. By 1904, the Rockland logging road had reached near Zavalla, crossing the Texas & New Orleans Railroad twice. See "Zavalla in East Texas," *Dallas Morning News*, May 29, 1904.
- <sup>8</sup> "Mr. Cameron's New Mill," in *Dallas Morning News*, July 9, 1898; R. J. Tolson, *A History of William Cameron & Company* (Waco, Texas: privately printed, 1925), especially the "chronological history" chapter with unnumbered pages; "Fire Record: Lumber," *Dallas Morning News*, August 16, 1895; Block, *Mill Towns and Ghost Towns*, Vol. 1, pp. 339-341.
- <sup>9</sup> For the Aldridge & Dunkin mill near Rockland, see "Tyler County Mills," *Dallas Morning News*, May 9, 1899. For the mill on Pine Island Bayou, in Jefferson County, see the Texas Forestry Museum's East Texas Sawmill Database entry for W. H. Aldridge (JE-6, sawmill i.d.: 11171), which cites "The Southern Texas Mill District," *American Lumberman*, July 22, 1899, p. 32. For Aldridge as a court-appointed receiver, see *Dallas Morning News* articles "Receivership Perpetuated," December 11, 1903 and "Sale of Lumber Confirmed," August 13, 1904.
- <sup>10</sup> For their plans, from Kirby's perspective, see numerous letters from Kirby to Aldridge contained in volumes 24 through 31 (1905-1906) of John Henry Kirby's letterpress books in the Kirby Lumber Collection at Steen Library, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas (hereafter cited as KLC Steen Collection).
- <sup>11</sup> For insight into some of Kirby's complicated business activities, see William Osborn, "You Might Lack the Ability Unless We Helped You: John Henry Kirby's Financial Angel, The Archison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway Company," a manuscript presented at the September 2001 fall meeting of the East Texas Historical Association, Nacogdoches, Texas, copy provided by William Osborn of Austin, Texas. See also the three-part monograph, "John Henry Kirby: Man and Legend," in volumes 4-6 (1968-1970) of *The Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record*.
- <sup>12</sup> See Kirby's letters to Aldridge in John Henry Kirby letterpress books (KLC Steen Collection), volume 24, especially pages 87 (June 28, 1905) and 556 (August 23, 1905), also volume 29, page 197 (July 2, 1906).
- <sup>13</sup> Some of Kirby's concerns for concealing his involvement are explained in letters to Aldridge dated September 22, 1905 (letter press book vol. 25, p. 164) and January 24, 1906 (letter press book vol. 26, pp. 664-665), both KLC Steen Collection.
- <sup>14</sup> The Aldridge Lumber Company charter was filed on September 30, 1905, while the charter of the Burr's Ferry, Brownel & Chester Railway Company was not filed until January 2, 1906. Office of the Secretary of State Records, Austin, Texas. Kirby explained the delay in filing the railroad charter in a January 24, 1906 letter to Aldridge. See Kirby's letter press book, Vol. 26, pp. 664-665. Kirby later explained some of the details in organizing Kirby Lumber Company by reviewing the process in a letter to Aldridge dated October 28, 1915, in Kirby's letterpress book volume 70, p. 610.
- <sup>15</sup> "New Road Chartered: Kirby the Leading Spirit," *Beaumont Enterprise*, January 3, 1906; "Railroad News," *Beaumont Journal*, January 2 and 3, 1906; "Kirby's New Railroad Rockland to Brownel," *Beaumont Journal*, January 4, 1906; "Kirby Railway Plan," *Dallas Morning News*, January 3, 1906, p. 9; "Chester to the Sabine," *Dallas Morning News*, January 27, 1906; "For Recognition of Road," *Dallas Morning News*, March 14, 1906.
- <sup>16</sup> "Kirby's New Railroad," *Beaumont Journal*, January 4, 1906; "Chester to the Sabine," *Dallas Morning News*, January 27, 1906; "For Recognition of Road," *Dallas Morning News*, March 14, 1906; "The Aldridge Lumber Company," *Southern Industrial and Lumber Review*, October 20, 1905, p. 40; R.A. Thompson, inspecting engineer, letter to Railroad Commission of Texas, November 14, 1907, in Burr's Ferry, Brownel and Chester Railway Records, Texas State Archives Record Group 1991/8-2, Austin, Texas; Tyler County Deed Records, Book 16, pp. 146-147 and Book 21, pp. 277-278.
- <sup>17</sup> New railroad construction began in Jasper County, just north of the river bridge. See P.G. Omohundro Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin.
- <sup>18</sup> For an inventory of Aldridge town buildings with specific identifications, see "Appraisal of The Aldridge Lumber Company, Aldridge, Texas, February 1, 1911," in Kirby Lumber Company Records, Steen Library, Stephen F. Austin State University; Walter G. Schmidt, *An Encyclopedia of Texas Post Offices* (Chicago: Collectors' Club of Chicago, 1993), p. 36. No teachers, white or black, are listed in the 1910 federal census as residing at Aldridge, but the February 1, 1911 site appraisal did identify a two-story, 24x50 feet school house for blacks and a 24x60 feet school house for whites.
- <sup>19</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Population, Texas, Jasper County, Enumeration District 66, Sheets 1a-7b, stamped pages 286-292 part 2.
- <sup>20</sup> Quotes are from Kirby's letter to Aldridge dated May 19, 1911, in Kirby's letterpress books, KLC Steen Collection. See also letters dated April 11, 1911 and July 2, 1906.
- <sup>21</sup> See Kirby's letters in his letterpress books, especially those of September 28, October 8 and 18, and December 27, 1910, and February 13, March 6, April 5 and 11, 1911, in KLC Steen Collection. The appraisals were done by The American Appraisal Company, also contained in KLC Steen Collection.
- <sup>22</sup> See the correspondence of Kirby, Aldridge, B.F. Bonner, and C.P. Myer in boxes 171, 172, and 221 of Kirby Lumber Company Collection, Steen Library, Stephen F. Austin State University. See especially Myer's letter to Bonner dated October 10, 1911, Bonner's letter to Aldridge dated January 11, 1912, and Aldridge's letter to Kirby dated April 29, 1912. "Lumber Plant Burns," *Dallas Morning News*, August 28, 1911, p. 6.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid. See especially Bonner's letter to Aldridge dated March 7, 1914, Kirby Box 172.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid. See especially Kirby's letter to Bonner dated December 1, 1914, Aldridge's letters to Kirby dated December 12, 13, and 17, 1914, and Myer's letter to Kirby dated December 15, 1914, in Kirby Box 171. See also Kirby's letters to Aldridge during December 1914 in Kirby's Letterpress Book 68.
- <sup>25</sup> See Kirby's letters to Aldridge dated February 3, 1915, March 26, 1915, and May 15, 1915, in books 68 and 69 of Kirby's letterpress books.
- <sup>26</sup> Aldridge's letter to Kirby dated May 23, 1915, in Kirby Box 171.
- <sup>27</sup> Kirby's letter to Aldridge dated May 25, 1915, in Kirby's letterpress books and also a copy in Kirby Box 171.
- <sup>28</sup> Letter from E.D. Blossom to B.F. Bonner dated July 19, 1920, in Kirby Lumber Company Records Box 291; "Aldridge Mill Fire: \$250,000 Damage," *Galveston News*, July 20, 1915.
- <sup>29</sup> The Aldridge-Kirby relationship can be followed during the years 1915-1920 in John Henry Kirby's letterpress books volumes 69-87 in the KLC Steen Collection and in the Aldridge correspondence in the John Henry Kirby Papers at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, MSS 148, Box 254 (accessed by the author in October 1994).
- <sup>30</sup> Kirby's letters to Aldridge and E.J. Eyres dated December 31, 1919 and January 6, 1920 in Kirby's letterpress book 87, pp. 120-121 and 206-208.
- <sup>31</sup> *Railway Age Gazette*, September 27, 1912, p. 600. See also P.R. Bob Griswold, *Cousin Robert and the Burr's Ferry, Brownel and Chester Railway* (Brighton, Colorado: Sherm Conners Publishing, 2007).
- <sup>32</sup> Articles of Incorporation of the Gulf, Beaumont & Kansas City Railway Company, March 15, 1893, in Railroad Charter Ledgers, Book D, pp. 271-274, Texas State Library & Archives, microfilm call number 385.09764 R132c, reel 2.
- <sup>33</sup> Charter of the Rock Quarries Tram Road, filed January 15, 1897, Office of the Secretary of State, Corporations Section, Austin, Texas. See also "Railroad Matters: Gulf and Beaumont," *Dallas Morning News*, March 29, 1895.
- <sup>34</sup> Articles of Incorporation of the Rockland, Jasper & Northeastern Railway Company, June 14, 1905, in Railroad Charter Ledgers, Book F, pp. 82-83, Texas State Library & Archives; Tyler County Deed Records, vol. 14, pp. 464-465, vol. 16, pp. 137-147, vol. 17, pp. 585-586, vol. 21, pp. 277-278; Tyler County District Court Minutes, vol. J, pp. 375-377, 380-381.
- <sup>35</sup> E. T. Dumble, *The Geology of East Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Bulletin 1869, December 1918), p. 374 and plate XI preceding p. 225.
- <sup>36</sup> For example, see Tolbert's *Dallas Morning News* articles titled "On Mystery Lake Called Blue Hole," October 22, 1958; "About a Journey to the Blue Hole," January 6, 1960; "The Blue Hole," May 12, 1962, and "On Skinny Dipping in the Blue Hole," April 29, 1975.
- <sup>37</sup> See Tolbert's *Dallas Morning News* articles "Only Runt Fish Live in The Blue Hole," July 22, 1971, and "On Skinny Dipping in The Blue Hole," April 29, 1975.
- <sup>38</sup> Bob Bowman, "The Blue Hole," *Rusk Cherokeean-Herald*, March 4, 2009, p. 3A. Tolbert's January 6, 1960 article reappeared in the *Diboll Free Press* as "Blue Hole Legend is Shattered," January 27, 1960.
- <sup>39</sup> See letter of Kester Denman to H.J. Shands, March 21, 1945, in Southern Pine Lumber Company Records. See also Angelina County Deed Records volume 113, p. 482 and volume 115, pp. 511-513.
- <sup>40</sup> Southern Pine Lumber Company land records (1993-015) and maps of the Blue Hole, map numbers 248 and 249, The History Center, Diboll.
- <sup>41</sup> The land grant upon which Bouton Lake is situated is in both Angelina and Jasper counties, although the lake itself is wholly in Jasper County, near the Neches River. Nathan Bouton cannot be found in U.S. Census records for Texas. A Susan Bouton, age 12, appears in the 1860 Angelina County census residing with William and Mary McGee, both age 58. The relationship, if any, is unknown. The patent information is from the Records of the General Land Office, Jasper County abstract numbers 68 and 69 and Angelina County abstracts 684 and 685.
- <sup>42</sup> For camping plans see Kirby's letters to Aldridge in Kirby's letterpress volume 28 dated April 4, 1906 (p. 109), April 20, 1906 (pp. 290-291), and April 24, 1906 (p. 319).
- <sup>43</sup> See *Dallas Morning News* articles "400 Young Farmers To Attend Encampment," August 4, 1940, "Friendly Boxing Bout Results in Boy's Death," August 6, 1940, "500 Future Farmers to Attend Encampment," August 15, 1940, and "FFA Etx Encampment Scheduled in August," July 27, 1941.
- <sup>44</sup> See the *Dallas Morning News* articles "Texas Streams Get 116,000 Rainbow Trout," December 21, 1975, "Rainbows Stocked in Boykin Area," January 11, 1976, and "Brazos River To Get Stock of Rainbows," March 28, 1976. See *Houston Chronicle* articles "Rainbow Trout Program Puts Stamp on Texas," November 29, 1989, "State Rainbow Stockings," October 30, 1988, and "Stocking Puts Rainbows Within Casting Distance," January 23, 1991.
- <sup>45</sup> The best description of Boykin Springs Campground and history of Sterling Boykin is Richard Donovan, *Paddling the Wild Neches* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2006), 185-190.
- <sup>46</sup> Schmidt, *An Encyclopedia of Texas Post Offices*, p. 211.
- <sup>47</sup> See Kirby's letterpress books, volume 27, page 366, volume 30, page 87, and volume 71, page 742. See also various correspondence in the Kirby Records, box 189.
- <sup>48</sup> See the *Southern Industrial & Lumber Review* articles "A New Method of Turpentine Orcharding" (July 20, 1903), pp. 22-24, "Improved Turpentine Orcharding" (September 20, 1905), pp. 27-28.
- <sup>49</sup> For example, see U.S. Census population returns for Jasper County for the years 1910 and 1920.
- <sup>50</sup> "Turpentine" in *Texas State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (Chicago: R.L. Polk and Company, 1914); Texas State Almanac, 1910, p. 113.
- <sup>51</sup> Aldridge to C.P. Myer, February 17, 1914, Kirby Lumber Company Records, Box 189, Steen Collection.



This is a transcription of one of John Henry Kirby's letters to William Hal Aldridge, who was then living at Rockland, Texas. The letter is dated September 17, 1906. It is uncertain what was happening exactly, but Kirby's words are fascinating. At the time, Kirby regularly wrote twenty or more letters a day.

*(Transcribed by Jonathan Gerland from John Henry Kirby's letterpress books, volume 31, pp. 54-56, Forest History Collection, Stephen F. Austin State University).*

Dear Aldridge:

After receiving your letter this morning I called up the office of the Chief of Police here to see if I could locate some good men. He was not in and then I called up Sheriff Anderson. Anderson said he could supply me the men in a day or two but his first recommendation would be that we apply to Capt. McDonald of the Ranger Force or to the Governor to send Rangers. After talking with Anderson I called up my lawyer at Austin, Judge R. L. Batts, and requested him to see the Governor and the Adjutant General about sending Rangers. Batts immediately called on the Governor and then telephoned me that the Governor said he was not authorized to send Rangers until requested to do so by the Sheriff of Jasper County or advised that the Sheriff of that County refused to act; that if the Sheriff requested the Rangers he would send them immediately and would have them at Rockland on Wednesday; that if the Sheriff declined to act in the matter and give you proper protection and that fact was known to him he would still send the Rangers.

I told Batts I could not act in the matter except through you and that I could not communicate with you before noon tomorrow but would give him information one way or the other just as soon as I could hear from you.

Now, I think you should call on Sheriff Brown to give you protection. If he does not do it and I can truthfully say to the Governor through Judge Batts that Brown has refused to do it then the Governor will send the Rangers and will straighten those fellows out.

In meantime anticipating that there is going to be delay and that you need prompt assistance in your fight against these criminals I am sending you four men. This letter will be delivered to you by my nephew, Henry C. Burch, who is known to you and who is one of the four. John Williamson is also one of the four but the other two at this writing are unknown to me. John Williamson is brave and true. He is trustworthy in every particular but he has been at times a booze fighter and I would suggest that you keep him sober while he is on this raid. I am paying him and each of his companions \$ 3.00 per day and expenses.

I assume that you have plenty of firearms but in order to make sure I am having Burch put four 12 gauge shotguns, four Colts 45 six shooters and one Savage Rifle into a trunk together with 250 rounds of ammunition and take them up with them. The Rifle is sent thinking it might be needed for picket duty. It will hit the mark at a great distance in the hand of a man of experience.

It isn't proper that you should have this expense of policing your property. The Government ought to do it for you. If you will make your appeal to Sheriff Brown and he fails to perform then as hereinbefore stated I am sure I can get you as many Rangers as may be needed to put a quietus on the ring leaders of this mob.

I would come myself to assist you in this crisis but my presence would be known and heralded everywhere and we could probably therefore not make the quiet defense which you anticipate. I am showing my solicitude for you, however, and my desire to share the dangers as nearly as it can be done by proxy, by sending my nephew whom I love to be sacrificed on the same altar if these scoundrels get you.

Your friend,  
Jno. H. Kirby