



A LAST LOOK AT ROLLINS SPRINGS ▶



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There's a grassy field south of the campus, perfect for touch football in the fall, ideal for picnics in the spring. Bordered on the east by hilly woods, the legendary Hinkson Creek cuts across about mid point.

For nearly 100 years, Rollins Springs has served as a Mecca for MU students on lazy Sunday afternoons and moonlit evenings. But as part of progress, the park is about to see its last lovers, last baseball games and last scholars studying under the oak trees.

In place of blankets, beer and books will be a modern super four-lane highway. Route K is to be relocated in order to better serve the increasing traffic in that area to the Medical Center, new Veterans Administration Hospital, the Research Park, new multi-purpose auditorium, Memorial Stadium, and the University-wide administration building soon to be built.

A new recreation area is being established across from Rollins Springs, south of the nuclear reactor. Equipped with a shelter house, parking lot and barbecue pits, the new park will answer part of the need for more and better student facilities.

But improved facilities and modern equip-

ment won't quite replace Rollins Springs, which has become as much of a landmark to the Columbia campus as the columns, the Journalism School arch or the Engineering School sidewalk shamrock.

In 1870 James S. Rollins sold the property to the University. It had been beautifully cared for, and Rollins had employed a German to terrace the hill and plant grape vines like those on the Rhine.

"Many were the escapades of the students in those days," Thomas Estill Holland, '71, wrote in 1916. "Among others, took place what was known as the 'powder plot' and 'wine cellar raid,' and on the first day of May 1871, the senior class leading, the whole school took a vacation and went to the Hinkson, and there was not a class held in the University on that day. Most of us seniors were on the ragged edge up to commencement day because of this infraction of the rules, but we were all forgiven."

The 1900's weren't any different. Rollins Springs has always been a natural place for picnics. "We went in groups or by couples. It hasn't changed any today, although it was much more secluded then," a 1917 graduate says.

"It was quite the place to stroll. And students drank the water in the spring although they ran the chance of typhoid." Even townspeople went to the park to get the water cress in the spring for their salads.

Through the woods was a Lovers Leap and in another spot, a boulder called Balanced Rock, because it stood straight up even though it was top heavy. These were the days of hiking and students spent hours climbing among the rocks and discovering caves.

The late 30's saw some midnight picnics with 15 to 20 couples. "The girls used to sign out of their sorority houses and stay at Read Hall because it was easier to sneak out of," a former student says. "We had food from a restaurant where one of the fellows worked and food from the dormitories, and, well, I guess a lot always happened out there over the years that hasn't been conducive to publicity, but it certainly holds many memories."

Rollins Springs also has been the scene of polo games and animal grazing. Agriculture students brought their animals out to the rich green grass and the University actually had a champion polo team in the late 30's.

Then there was the Red Barn, a popular beer joint, right on the Hinkson bank but not owned by the University. Sunday afternoons featured jazz concerts and it was impossible to find a place to sit outside much less inside.

In the early 60's the Alumni Association built a shelter and large group picnics were easier to accommodate. In recent years the annual Greek Week steak fry has been held there in the spring along with egg-throwing contests, tugs-of-war and Greek marathons.

"I can remember as a high school senior being warned to stay away from the Hink and Rollins Springs," one student says, "Of course I didn't." Another student remembers being all dressed up and trying hard to impress his date when he slipped on a rock and fell into the creek.

But for each person the memories are different. Eugene Field, while a student at the University in 1871, reminisced:

"Of evenings, it is just the thing,
To walk or ride to Rollins Spring,
Where clear water flows every day;
In that same place, in that same way."