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Memories of a River

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The Caddos have walked here on the banks of the river, the Northfork of the Red River, and sought food — turkey and deer and fish, wild grapes, sandhill plums — and sought peace.

Officials have disputed her position, the Northfork of the Red River, and she has been a boundary for Old Greer County, Texas (1860-1896) and since then an integral part of Oklahoma.

Summers found her lazy, slowed to a trickle (or less) shimmering in the hot sun, while only the spring before the headrises had come and foolhardy boys had ridden on six-foot walls of water.

Bottom lands flooded, bridges swept away like crumbling toothpicks and an empty coffin floated down from places unknown.

Bridge-building, year after year.

Headrises, spring after spring.

Men and mules and horses pulling Model T Fords across swift currents (sometimes for months on end) until new bridges take the place of old, spanning the wide river, the Northfork of Red River.

And still years later the headrises come and suck at pilings (new, strong, unmovable, the “unsinkable Tittle Bridge, six years in existence) and the bridge went once more, and two young lives went with it.

And until time healed that memory, the river, the Northfork of Red River, was not a fun place to be.

These waters have cooled the feet of generations of young from here and from there. These banks, always changing with the tides and the winds, have known camp fires and weiner roasts, angel wings in the sand, castles that dissolve in the dampness and are worn away by the wind, just as life is lived and disappears bit by bit, day by day.

Ah, the memories of a river, the Northfork of Red River, memories sad and haunting, memories lazy and satisfying, fleeting, like sunbeams caught for a moment on the water’s surface.

This place has made history and is history recorded in sand-choked beds and meandering trickles or insidious currents and recorded in the hearts and minds of all who have ever known the river, the Northfork of Red River.

MARGIE SNOWDEN NORTH lives in the Erick area. A regular contributor, she is WESTVIEW’s “nature poet.”

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