

A WEEKEND AWAY AT “UNCERTAIN, TEXAS”



Photo by Francine West

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In Uncertain, a town with just 150, resides the largest Cypress forest in the world and the largest natural fresh water lake in Texas, Caddo Lake.

Caddo Lake is a 25,400 acre lake and wetlands located on the border of Texas and Louisiana. It is an internationally protected wetland under the Ramsar Treaty.

Caddo Lake was created by the “great raft”, a 100-mile log jam on the Red River in Louisiana. Steamboats used the shipping channels to carry pas-

engers, supplies and trade goods to different ports. Jefferson, Texas and Mooringsport, La. quickly became large river boat ports. The towns grew and prospered un-

til the log jam was removed. Captain Henry Miller Shreve did not like the fact that Shreveport was not growing due to Jefferson and Mooringsport, so he began removing the log jam. Once the jam was removed, the lake changed shape and the water level dropped by 10 feet making the shipping channels unusable. Captain Shreve got what he was after Shreveport began to grow and prosper quickly. Jefferson and Mooringsport soon dwindled and almost became ghost towns.

Oil was discovered in Caddo Lake in the early

1900's. The world's first over-water oil well was completed on Caddo Lake in 1911. Gulf Refining Company erected the well, *The Ferry Lake No.1*, and it produced 450 barrels per day.

In 1914, Caddo Lake Drawbridge at Mooringsport was built to replace the ferry. The Midland Bridge Company of Kansas City, Missouri built the bridge under authority of the Caddo Parish Police Jury. The design permitted the entire center span to lift in a vertical

direction to allow tall oil equipment to pass through, especially Gulf Oil Company's pile driver.

In the summer of 1941, just prior to World War II, the

bridge to open. Consequently, the concrete counterweights were removed from the bridge's tower and dropped in the lake.

On October 18, 1996, Caddo Lake Drawbridge was officially entered into the National Register of Historic Places under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

A major pearl industry operated on Caddo Lake in the 1920's. Pearls were found in the freshwater mussels in the sandy shallows of the cypress brakes. Building of the dam brought the water level back up

of Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson and the Old City of Jefferson, famous as the commercial center of northeast Texas during the first half of the 19th century.

Boat tours of Caddo Lake are offered by Caddo Outback Backwater Tours, Caddo Nature Tours, and Caddo Lake Tours, to name a few. For steamboat rides, Caddo Lake Steamboat Co. has an authentic recreation of an old time paddlewheel steamboat, the *Graceful Ghost* will transport you to a lost world through the timeless, enchanted waters of Caddo Lake. A guided boat



Photo by Jo Gilbreath

and ended the pearl industry.

Caddo Lake State Park was formed in 1934, constructed by the Works Progress Administration. The State Park offers many things to do at Caddo. You can rent canoes and jon boats with motors. Boaters should carry a map of the lake and a compass to avoid getting lost among the densely wooded, confusing channels. Go hiking along nature trails, as well as swimming.

Fishing: Anglers, from novice to professional, take advantage of opportunities to limit

tour is the way to explore the amazing wildlife and large beautiful Cypress trees in the bayous and sloughs of Caddo.

Need a place to stay? No need to look very far. Uncertain has many cabins for rent. Just to name a few: Hoot-n-Holler's guest cottage has three bedrooms, full bath, fully equipped kitchen, living room, with den and dining area overlooking Caddo Lake. Hodge



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Podge Cottages allows you to choose between five cozy cottages situated on the banks of the mysterious natural Caddo Lake. Spatterdock has six different houses to choose from, each offering you the opportunity for gracious lakehouse accommodations with a distinct and unique style. "The Gallery" offers comfortable accommodations for small or large groups.

No matter what you choose to do at Caddo Lake, don't forget your camera. Wildlife is abundant and the trees covered in Spanish moss are a wonderful site to see and photograph.

Caddo Lake, with all its mysterious beauty, its myths, legends and history seems to be a place that time has forgotten. It is a place that is calm, peaceful, and many miles from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Photographers Notes: While there are many choices of places to stay at

Caddo we chose "Hoot-n-Holler" owned by Sam and Randi Canup, a cozy cottage with decor of the 1950's including a red Chambers stove and red General Electric refrigerator. Birding books, miscellaneous videos, games, music and the next mornings breakfast was supplied for us. We also enjoyed the use of the accompanying boat house on the water to watch the wildlife.

For our boat tour, we chose "Caddo Outback Tours", owned by John and Diane Winn. John is a native of Caddo lake area. He has lived there all his life. The boat tour was great. It is still hard to believe that three adults could go through about eight inches of water and not get bogged down in the mud, but we were in a specially designed boat called a "Go Devil". John had no problem maneuvering the boat in the backwaters of Caddo, a sight not many people have seen at Caddo.



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United States Army held maneuvers in and around Mooringsport as a means of preparing the soldiers for war. During the maneuvers, Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower and George S. Patton came to Mooringsport and led the Red and Blue armies in the "capture" of the bridge. They also bombed the bridge with sacks of flour.

out on Caddo's 92 species of fish in the most scenic of all Texas lakes.

Birding: On the Neotropical flyway, songbirds of great variety, forage the banks and tree-tops along this migration route. Bitterns, herons, egrets and woodstorks are common sights on Caddo.

Hunting: Duckblinds dot Caddo's waters, while hiding hunters are ready to ambush 17 species of migrating waterfowl that are purported to visit Caddo annually.

Area attractions include Starr Family State Historic Site in Marshall; and nearby, Karnack is the childhood home



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