

Eureka Springs History as an Artist Enclave

The city of Eureka Springs was founded as a 19th century resort, attracting those seeking a cure in the nearby mineral springs, known for their healing power.

Like much of the Ozark Mountain region, Eureka Springs has a rich history, from Native American journeys and early settler life to prehistoric civilization. Woven through the stories and legends is a common thread of healing, rejuvenation, and creativity.

As early as the 1800s, artists began arriving in our scenic area. Many stayed to paint and sculpt, to write and to teach others. By the 1930s and 1940s, Eureka Springs had gained a reputation as an artists' colony.

Artists' Bridge Studio

In 1931, according to historian and author Susan Schaefer (I Didn't Know That! about Eureka Springs), two local men built a bridge to span a ravine where artists and writers could find solitude to do their work.

The bridge had five compartments on a lower level which hung beneath the walking bridge. These were outfitted with tables, chairs and electric lights. The combined length of the two levels was 231 feet.

The legend is that this bridge created at Camp Leath (behind what is now the Inn of the Ozarks) was the dream of Sam Leath and Steele Kennedy, perhaps to make the area an artists' colony and bring more prosperity to Eureka Springs.

The two men built it one section at a time, alternately, coming together in the middle. Originally, the span was decided by a rifle shot which, when the bridge was completed, proved to have been quite accurate.

Eventually Camp Leath was sold and, like many buildings during the Depression, was torn down to salvage the lumber.



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