

Resorts – Catalpas

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1914-18 – The Catalpas - Mrs. E. Blake, Proprietor

The Catalpa Resort got its name from the Catalpa trees that were planted on the grounds. Several individuals' names are mentioned in connection with the history of the "Catalpas" and Catalpa Resort. Some of the dates that go with the names seem to overlap, creating a bit of confusion in the timeline.

The first names mentioned with regard to the "Catalpas" were Silas and Jane Gritzner. He was in the real estate business in Chicago and they came to Montague in 1902. They had 2 children: Olivia, born in Chicago in 1900; and a son Charles, born in Montague in 1908. The "Catalpas" was often mentioned in the local newspaper, but it seemed more as a place of personal social gatherings rather than "resort" functions. Information indicates that Silas died in Chicago in 1946 and his wife Jane died in San Diego in 1956. According to information in her obituary, Montague was her home from 1900 to 1928. She owned the "Catalpas" and built "Sunshine Bungalow" where they lived until going to San Diego from 1938-1956. They are both buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in Montague.

Gritzner's may have owned the property, but it appears that they had other individuals who operated it as a resort.

Around 1909, Edward Brodbeck and his wife Bertha came to Montague and opened the "Catalpas" as a resort. They were one of the pioneer summer resort operators of the area. Mrs. Brodbeck was known for her fine cooking and hospitality.

In 1914, it is reported that Mrs. E. E. Blake has many guests at her resort the "Catalpas" – a popular resort in the area. In May 1919, it was reported that she had backed up her belongings to return to Chicago due to ill health.

Edward Brodbeck and his wife were once again in charge of Catalpa Resort. In 1921 a grand opening banquet and dance was held on June 28th. Substantial improvements had been made to the place during the past year and it was now ready for summer guests. In 1925, they modernized the resort/hotel and added several cottages for their guests. They also built a small grocery store as a convenience for their guests and neighbors.

The Brodbecks continued to operate the resort until she died in 1940, at which time he retired. He operated the grocery store, and lived in the house but the resort remained closed for about the next eight years. He died in 1965 and is buried along with his wife in Aurora, IL.

In May 1948, Mr. & Mrs. Forrest Jahn purchased the store and resort hotel building on a contract with Mr. Brodbeck. They operated the store while they cleaned and redecorated the resort. However, business was slow, and they ended up closing the resort in 1953. They allowed the contract to lapse.

In November 1953, Mrs. Vincent Houseman came before the city council to ask for a permit to operate a lunchroom in the former store building at Catalpa Inn. She would be renting the building from Mr. Brodbeck. It is unclear if the permit was granted or not. Nothing seems to be mentioned in the local paper about the lunchroom.

The Catalpas was located on the corner of Cook Street and Old Channel Trail. The buildings that made up the Catalpa Resort have all since been removed.



Old Channel Trail in front of Catalpa Resort