



Explore The RiverBend: The myths, truths about Blue Pool

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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Blue Pool is a place that carries a legacy throughout Alton for its endless bottom, but that is a myth from the perspective of local historians and Godfrey's Nature Institute officials. The other speculation is that the Blue Pool area is haunted after multiple deaths in the area over the years.

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Blue Pool is about a mile outside the city limits of Alton, heading toward Grafton on the right side of the Great River Road. Today, the area is completely restricted and is considered very dangerous.



Other rumors and myths surrounding Blue Pool have said it contains a full-sized locomotive and mine cars found in the Hollywood movie series “Indiana Jones” at its bottom. That is not true, Nature Institute officials and Charles Norman III, who was part of a family that owned property in the area for years, said. Others speculate there are trees at the bottom and that is true, it was filled with those in the 1990s.

As far as Blue Pool being blue, on the winter day Riverbender.com visited there, it was not. Charles Norman III’s family owned the property along the River Road and had rights down to Blue Pool from 1905 to 2000. He speculated the myth about the water being blue is possibly because the water once was mostly clear it could have been the blue sky’s reflection on the calm water.

“It is just clear water that settles out and turns bluish,” he said.

Norman said Blue Pool emerged from the Hirsch family’s quarry site in the 1800s to 1900s. He said Blue Pool is simply a remnant of a quarry and hole in the bottom where rock was taken until those taking the rock hit so much water they had to stop.

“It was a quarry for construction rock initially,” he said. “When I was a kid it was pretty clear. Olin fenced it off. I never swam in it.”

When someone died in the Blue Pool in the 1970s, Norman said the area was pumped and he was present to see firsthand that there was a bottom to the area, disputing all the myths. He said those draining the pool area did discover a brand-new car and some old mining carts at that time, but no full scale locomotive.

The Norman family owned the property there along River Road and had river shore rights down to Blue Pool from 1905 to 2000, when the family sold it.

Charles Norman I, Charles III’s grandfather, donated 750,000 tons of quarry rock to the state of Illinois during the building of the Great River Road in the late 1930s, Charles III said.

The top ledge of the Blue Pool is about 80 feet from the bottom, Charles III added. The Norman family used the land near Blue Pool as part of its boat/barge/river trade business started by Charles III’s grandfather.



Today, the ledge above Blue Pool is not a place to visit in Alton. It is easy to slide off the bluffs and the water below is filled with snakes with the influx of trees, Tim Schofield, director of stewardship for the Nature Institute said.

As far as the past, jumpers have gone off the bluffs into the Blue Pool waters. One teenager who did so several years back died immediately on impact. There are no-trespassing signs posted all around the Blue Pool area and it is fenced off from the public. Six people are documented to have died jumping or swimming in the Blue Pool.

“It is very dangerous,” Schofield said. “Madison County Sheriff’s Department has strict orders to arrest anyone for trespassing. If you get in the water there are a lot of trees, bushes and snakes. We don’t want anyone to get hurt there.”

Schofield quelled the rumors by saying “Blue Pool is definitely not bottomless.” “There is not a tunnel there to the Mississippi River. There are no full-size railroad cars there. To my knowledge it was fully drained in the early 1980s. After it was drained it was filled in with sand.”

The trees were placed in the Blue Pool area in 1993 after the flood, Schofield said.

“Beginning in 1991, trees began falling over the trails and we felt this was a logical place to put them,” Schofield said. “During the 1993 Flood, the trees floated out and the Blue Pool area was a good place for them.”

Because of the deaths that have occurred in Blue Pool, talk about it being haunted will likely continue for years to come.

Charles III is always happy to hear people talking about Alton, the Piasa Bird and Blue Pool. He said he personally has never thought Blue Pool was haunted. He said he knows that will always be part of the mystery and folklore surrounding the area.



