



*Where beauties once bathed*

**... trash now abounds**

*Editor's Note: The above photograph from 1942 shows some Raeford girls sitting around after a dip in the creek. Almost any warm Sunday afternoon was like this with people swimming and getting some sun in and around the creek. In those days, the object was to beat the heat.*

**By Ed Miller**

Up until just a few years ago, there was always a place Raeford residents could go on a hot summer day to cool off, free of charge. The old swimming hole on Rockfish Creek was that place. Many people who still live in Raeford say they learned to swim in that very swimming hole, but their children never will. There is glass and rusted tin cans all over the bottom of the creek

now, making it almost impossible to swim there without shoes. The area around the swimming hole has changed a great deal too in the past few years. What used to be the parking area for swimmers and a beach of sunbathers is now covered with beer cans, empty cigarette packs, empty rolling paper packs and other assorted garbage. It has become the party spot for many area young people. Not that they have anywhere better to go, but the land that was once owned by the county is now private property and partyers are trespassing. The Hoke County Sheriff's Department and the Raeford Police believe young people under legal age openly drink alcohol and smoke marijuana down by the old swimming hole.

The Sheriff's Department has made many a midnight arrest at the creek, deputies say. To accompany the tales of illegalities that go on at the swimming hole after dark is the evidence that someone, whether of legal age or not, is doing some serious drinking out there. In the daylight, trash is everywhere. There is a large pile of ashes and stranded metal where bonfires made of old tires once burned. Because of the mess at the creek and the fact that the law is apparently broken at the spot, the property owners around the old swimming hole would like to see the dirt road leading to the beach closed.

"I've put posted signs up on my property and they are either ignored or torn down," said owner of the swimming hole W.E. Carter. Property owner Graham Monroe would like to see the road close if he can still get to his warehouse just a short distance down the road. "If they close the road a little ways down, it would be all right with me," Monroe said. When asked about the possibility of having the road closed, property owner Younger Snead replied: "I'd like to see it done." The rest of the owners agree with Snead, Monroe and Carter. One of Raeford's newest

neighborhoods borders the dirt road leading to the creek. There have been many complaints filed with authorities by residents about noise in the early hours of the morning. Damage done to personal property has also been tied to the goings on at the swimming hole. Owners of the creek area are now considering a plan to have the road closed. To do this entails a request from the owners to the Hoke County Commission to have the road taken off the state maintenance system. "If the owners of the property would come to us (the county commission) and request that the road be taken off state maintenance,

I'm sure we would consider it," said County Commission Chairman John Balfour. If no strong objections arose, the matter would probably be approved, Balfour said. The road must be taken off the state system before it can be closed, Sheriff Dave Barrington said. Apparently, even if someone were to mount the task of having the garbage cleaned up, it would not be too long before the place would be back in the same shape it is in now. As the situation stands now, if those who make use of the land near the creek do not start taking care of it, it could be made unavailable to everyone.



**Could be, and once was, pretty**  
In just one corner of the parking area around the old swimming hole of Rockfish Creek, there seems to be more trash and garbage than will be found in miles along the sides of other county roads. As can be seen

from this photograph consumption of alcohol among those who frequent the creek appears heavy. Authorities believe that some of the folks who hang out at the creek are under legal drinking age.



**A good place to swim?**  
Although a bit grown up, on the surface, this bend in Rockfish Creek looks like a nice spot for swimming. However, until the bottom is cleared, it is better to

swim with shoes on. This was the spot where many Raeford residents learned to swim and continued to do so until a few years ago.