INTERESTING INDUSTRIES

PEARL AND BUTTON INDUSTRIES IN STATE

40 YEARS OLD NEXT APRIL

First Gem Discovered in Black River In 1897 By Late Dr. J. H. Myers of Black Rock Led To Establishment of Now Flourishing Businesses That Give Many Jobs.

By TOM SHIRAS.

Black Rock, Nov. 28.— Dr. J. H. Myers, the man who discovered the Black Rock Button Gem, is regarded as the father of the famous Black Rock button industry. The discovery was made in 1897 while searching for the rare mineral, mica, in the Black Rock area.

Dr. Myers was a noted mineralogist and geologist, and his discovery of the Black Rock Button Gem led to the establishment of the button industry in the state. The industry has since grown into a major economic force, providing employment for thousands of families.

Discovering the Gem, a milestone in the industry's history, was not accidental. Dr. Myers was known for his thorough research and his dedication to exploring the state's resources.

The Black Rock button industry has become a symbol of the state's rich history and its commitment to innovation and development. Today, the industry continues to thrive, providing jobs and economic stability to the region for generations to come.

DIGGERS FOR PEARLS AND SHELLS

MUCH ENCOU RAGEMENT

Special to the Gazette.

Norfolk, July 2.— Shells digging on the Upper White River is getting off to a late start this year, and the industry is confronted with a serious shortage of the basic raw material. The shortage is due to a lack of pearl-bearing white shells in the state. In some cases, the shortage is so severe that the shell diggers have been forced to dig shells from the Black River, which is considered a last resort.

The shortage of pearl-bearing shells is a serious problem for the shell diggers, who rely on these shells to produce top-quality pearls. Without the necessary shells, the diggers are forced to dig other types of shells, which are not as valuable or as sought after.

The shortage is expected to continue for some time, which could have a significant impact on the shell industry and the local economy. The shell diggers are being encouraged to explore alternative sources of shells, such as the Black River, to help alleviate the shortage.

Mussel Shells Used For Making Jewelry

Special to the Gazette.

Inyo County, Dec. 6— Ed Ely, merchant here, is turning his mechanical aptitude to the manufacture of mussel shell jewelry.

Ely, a well-known merchant, recently entered the jewelry business, producing handmade pieces from mussel shells. He has been getting a lot of attention for his unique creations, and customers have been flocking to his shop to see his work.

The shells are collected from the local rivers and lakes, and Ely transforms them into beautiful pieces of jewelry, such as pendants, necklaces, and bracelets. His work is a testament to the resourcefulness of the people of the region, who have found a way to turn a natural resource into a valuable commodity.
AN ARKANSAS HITCHHIKER WHO DEFIES THE LAW

By Harold Wales.

It's a violation of the law to hitchhike in Arkansas, but one hitchhiker defies the law. He is the fresh-water mussel, whose life depends on his ability to swim a ride on fish.

For a period of nine or 24 days of his complex existence, the mussel lives as a parasite, embedded in a fish's gills or fins and in some cases, the scales. Since he has practically no other means of locomotion, that is Nature's way of distributing the mussel.

The life history of the fresh-water mussel, as told by fish culturists of the United States Bureau of Fisheries, makes an interesting study. The female sheds her eggs in a mucous pouch in her own gills, where they are hatched and retained in a larval stage for weeks, months and sometimes a year. A single mussel may nurse from 30,000 to 9,000,000 larvae, which are called glochidia. The larval mussel is a soft mass of flesh which has neither gills nor other developed characteristics of the adult mussel, but bears a thin shell like two tiny spoons hinged together.

When the larval mussels are discharged from the brood pouches, the mother has done all that she can for them, but they still need the services of a nurse or foster parent. And thus begins their hitchhiking career. They attach themselves to the tender membrane of a fish's gills or fins and within a very short time tissue grows over them. If the tiny mussel fails to come in contact with a fish it dies within a few days.

Fish culturists have discovered after years of observation and experiment that each species of mussels in the parasitic stage has a restricted choice of hosts. Yellow sand mussels prefer the catfish, while the black mussel has a choice of several hosts. If the larval mussel attaches itself to an unsuitable host, it will drop off after a time and become lost until it comes in contact with a fish suitable to it. Examinations showed that crappie, bluegill and sauger sometimes called jack salmon) carried the largest number of mussel species. The fresh-water drum, because it feeds on mussels, plays host to more mussels than any other fish.

Duration of the parasitic stage varies greatly with the season of the year in which it occurs, and other conditions not fully understood. It usually lasts 11 or 13 days, then the young mussel works loose and it drops from the fish to begin its active life.

The mussel gets its sustenance from the water filtering through its gills. The sand mussels grow more rapidly than the niggerhead and similar species. Observations of yellow sand mussels in the White River indicate a species that attain a length of four and four and a half inches in four years, that they may attain a length of four inches in three years, and that six years or more are ordinarily required to attain a length of five inches. Age of the shell is determined by the number of rings on the shell, each ring indicating a year of growth.

The shell industry is an important source of income on the Black, White and Red rivers in the state. Shells are used mostly for the manufacture of buttons and several button factories are operation along the streams.

Occasionally shell gatherers find valuable pearls in the mussels, which are formed when some foreign particle enters the shell and a secretion forms over it and hardens, resulting in a beautiful gem.

Shell gathering is a laborious task, but a few gatherers have made their work easier by using diving rings which enable them to dive in 40 feet of water.

But diving is dangerous and Clinton says his rig has been responsible for one man's death. So Nature's wheel of fortune spins, because a tiny mussel attaches itself to a fish for a free ride.

(For Wales will answer questions concerning wildlife in Arkansas & inquiries are accompanied by a three-cent stamp. Address letters to Harold Wales, Mammoth Spring, Ark.)

DIGGING MUSSELS ON WHITE RIVER OFFERS "OFF-SEASON" INCOME

BY PAUL T. WAYLAND.

Special to the Gazette

Caino Rock, June 17—Mussel divers along the upper stretches of White river and along Buffalo river are making ready for the annual mussel digging season. The annual mussel shell crop in this section in past years has been valued at up to $10,000.

Mussel diving means an extra list of cash during the summer when there are no other local jobs obtainable. Farmers, having "harvest" by their crops, sometimes take a few days off and a way to the river to take a flying mussel diving, hoping perhaps to find a pearl or two to add to their cash as a bonus.

During the summer months, buyers will be stationed along the river at convenient stopping points where the shell will be bought in cars and shipped by rail to button factories in Gtisic, Mount Olive, Caino Rock, Nevada, Cotter, Buffalo, Flippin and five more north Arkansas towns have considerable shell business each year.

Several button factories in the state buy "raw" shells and make them into button "blanks." The "blanks" are then shipped elsewhere for further finishing.

Tate Murrell states that mussel digging is a good job. According to the murrells in this section are comparatively shallow, most of the mussel digging is done with forks. A large, wide foot, known as a "foot" is used by the divers to keep the shells from the river bottom object until it develops into what is called a "pearl.

Some persons get the shells by diving, especially when the water is too deep to be "worked" or "ticketed," the equipment has been devised and used by some of the shell diggers of the hill. A few divers, seeing little fear of possible accidents, walk themselves down by taking a large stone about their necks and go down into deep water for their shells. When they have held their breath as long as possible they take hold of the stone and with one great leap come to the surface.

Using stones to weight oneself down in deep water is considered dangerous and of working, since there is always the possibility of the rock becoming stuck in the bottom of the river. Another method of getting shells from the river, one that is employed extensively in the clear waters of White river, is known as the "sliding Method."

This is done by the use of a long stick, sharpened at one end. The shell digger using the "sliding Method" first drives a stake into the bottom of a bed of shells where he sets and grabs them, one by one. The mussel in their natural state on the bed of the river, have their shells slightly open. The man in the boat brings the end of a stick into the opening of the mussel and drives them down and is slid off. This process is slow, but a person can slide a lot of mussels in a day. After the mussels are taken from the water they are separated from the shell. This is generally done by boiling which also serves to put the shell in a very sanitary condition for handling.

The mussels are allowed to boil a few minutes after being taken out and the meat removed. Some divers feed the mussel meat to dogs or chickens. Others use it for fish bait. After the meat has been removed the shells are ready to be weighed and sold. Shells sell by the ton.

On Yest glyphia.

The opening of the shell season also means the opening of the pear season because such a summer number of pearls, some of the valuable, but most of them practically worthless, are found. The pearls are found in the process of removing the shells from the boring mollusk. All mussel diggers watch closely for pearls as they take the shells from the hot water, because to find a good pearl means more money than several tons of shell.

Years ago a pearl weighing 126 grains was found about a mile west of Caino Rock. It was said to have sold for $2,100.

Pearls are not bringing as much money now as formerly, but they are still worth looking for. Pearls are said to form inside the shell as a test, or an injury to the membrane caused generally by the presence of some foreign substance. A grain of sand, working into a certain pocket and under the irritation that is caused by a natural process that sets up, forming a peary substance around the offending object. This substance continues to increase about the

Clarendon Pearl Factory
To Reopen

Special to the Gazette

Clarendon, June 21—The Claren

Clarendon Pearl Button Company fac

very recently has been purchased from the Harvey Chalmers Company of New York by Harry C. Harris and Albert Hastings of Clarendon. This factory has been closed for several months, but the new owners hope to resume operations soon and are obtaining a supply of mussel shells for this purpose.

Chester Wheelwright, who has been manager of the plant for several years, will remain in this capacity. In normal times the factory gives employment to approximately 50 people.
Buttons May Give State New Industry

Possibilities of increasing income from the production of Arkansas mussel shells by establishing button finishing plants in the state are revealed in a survey just completed by Mr. Paul Bryan, Bureau of Research, University of Arkansas.

Highlights of the survey announced yesterday by the Arkansas Economic Council-State Chamber of Commerce, which jointly sponsored the study, show that Arkansasians are using money by turning out only semi-finished material, so-called pearl button blanks, from which the finished buttons are made in Iowa.

Fresh water mussel shells taken from the state's oxbow streams go to 15 plants in the state where "pearl" button blanks are made by about 350 workers in eight towns. Newport is the largest market handling 27 per cent of total shell sales, followed by Clarendon, Augusta, and Brinkley.

1,000 Families Gather Shells

More than 1,500 families are engaged in gathering shells from East Arkansas rivers near White, Current and St. Francis. Last year they received more than $300,000 for 4,600 boxes of shells marketed in Newport, Corning, Clarendon, Little Rock, Fort Smith, Newport, Lake City, Brinkley, Bayview, Bayou Meto, and Pine Bluff. Prices in 1945 ranged from $1.50 to $7.50 a box for and shells down to 25 a cent for mixed sorts.

The button industry grew up in the state, a German immigrant, settled there and established the first factory about 1895.

Best plan for Arkansas, Dr. Braun believes, might be to induce Iowa branch manufacturers to open branch finishing plants in this state, although opportunity exists for Arkansas-finshed plants if suitable commission men in assured freight facilities favor Arkansas branch plants.

Iowa is the top shell producing state over the past 15 years, but much of it is imported from Iowa in quantities ranging from 30,000 to 100,000 a month.

A favorable alternative suggested is the establishment of a semi-finishing plant.