

Elegance And Change--Hot Spring's Trademark

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long with thirteen white pillars at the front, representing the original thirteen colonies. The facilities could not be equalled in any of the larger cities of the day.

Veteran Is A New Land



NO NEED FOR A SIGN - The sign is still up but there's no room available at the inn. The sign does, however, point out the temperature of the spring's ever-bubbling mineral water.

By the time Madison County was created in 1851, the Warm Springs Hotel was a veteran, a prosperous veteran. The healing power of its water and the mountain setting it provided had flung the new county into a spotlight not known by many places at the time.

"Nowhere in America have I found a sweeter and more restful spot than at these springs," asserted North Carolina's Governor, James Fowle, on a visit in 1860.

The Greatest Change

The Civil War brought the greatest period of change to Hot Springs that it had ever known before and has known since. That accomplishment has been credited to a Greenville man, James Henry Rumbough was a Confederate officer and, when the war started, he realized that Greenville was no place to raise a family due to the intense feelings from both sides here. So he went shopping for a new home.

He had become familiar with Hot Springs in his business—he was a stagecoach line owner. He owned the route between Greenville and Greenville, S.C. He had passed the beautiful hotel at Hot Springs many times.

The Pattons were apparently wanting to sell the hotel when Rumbough was wanting to buy,

because accounts tell of a quick agreement. Rumbough, his colorful wife, Carrie, and the children left Greenville and moved into the hotel. It was under Rumbough's management that the hotel was to reach its greatest heights of popularity.

The hotel managed to get through the war years in good condition. There was some activity there but nothing that hindered the operation. On one occasion, when Mrs. Rumbough heard that the Union Army was coming through, she burned the bridge. The army never showed.

On another occasion, she rebuked a Union soldier who was trying to steal her best horse. The Union officer in charge was so impressed with her iron will that she got to keep the horse. After the war's close and upon the return of Col. Rumbough, things began to happen that established the Rumbough name around the globe. The coming of the railroad through Hot Springs in 1882 iced the Rumbough cake, marking a peak of prosperity for the Warm Springs Hotel.

Prosperity Interrupted

But the prosperity was interrupted in 1884 by another fire, leveling the architectural masterpiece. Rumbough, apparently disheartened by the tragedy, sold the property to a group of New York businessmen, who called themselves, of all things, Southern Improvement.

The company went right to work and built a third structure, following the trademark with a beautiful mountain palace. They named it the Mountain Park Hotel.

But Southern Improvement soon headed back north because they went broke. Col. Rumbough, being in the town, with money and with knowledge of the business, was approached for the purpose of buying the Mountain Park. He did.

Through the 1880's, 1890's, and just after the turn of the century, Rumbough's name was identified with those of governors, presidents, European royalty and the like. He kept the hotel until he sold it to a son in 1912.

It's Not Been the Same Since

The political and economic ills of the world just prior to World War I moved into the mountains of Madison County just like they did Wall Street. The Mountain Park felt the pinch.

In an attempt to salvage the hotel's business during the impending world war, the Rumboughs negotiated an agreement with the U.S. government to lodge a large number of Germans who had been arrested upon the arrival of their luxury liners in U.S. ports.

German doctors, scientists, technicians, sailors and many of their wives, around 2,500 strong, rode into Hot Springs by train just after the beginning of the war to begin a period of confinement that was as much unlike a prison camp as can be imagined.

The government described the Germans as prisoners but not in the sense that the German

soldiers were considered prisoners. Indeed, the Germans didn't feel like prisoners. They liked Hot Springs and the services provided so they wouldn't have left if they had been given the opportunity. There was one report of an "escape." The man managed to get to Mexico but reports indicate he had a miserable existence after his leaving Hot Springs.

The women were allowed to board with the residents of the town, earning money by doing house and garden chores. Reports say they loved it and friendships evolved that are still carried on.

The brass bands that had played aboard the luxury liners were also moved into Hot Springs. Many residents of today remember the melodies of the Sunday afternoon performances by the German musicians at the camp. They had never heard anything like it.

Cabbage For The Germans
J. J. Moore, soon to be 94, a Greenville transplant from the Spring Creek section of Madison County, well remembers the wagons he filled with cabbage, potatoes and apples and hauled into Hot Springs for sale to the Germans.

He remembers a German, named Pinard, as the "boss," the man responsible for the spending of the money. It was Pinard who decided how much cabbage was to be bought. "Them people loved cabbage best of anyone I have ever seen," Moore remembers.

A Time To Go

Near the close of the war, the Germans were shipped out of Hot Springs the same way they came. Reports say they were taken to a midwest Army post and the men used in the harvest of grain. Other reports indicate they were released immediately and went back to Germany. Their confinement at the springs had lasted just under two years, according to stories now told around the village.

After the Germans left, business continued to be slow. The Mountain Park was not prospering as it once was. Roads were made better, services were better than they had ever been but the people still didn't come like they did in days of old.

Fire Causes Death

The death of the Hot Springs success story happened in 1920. Once again, fire destroyed it. The Mountain Park was forever gone.

The property stayed in the Rumbough family for a number of years following and a building was erected but it has never been successful by any measure as compared to the past. It is the one that still stands near the springs.

The Springs Have Stayed
In all the activity, the springs alone have proved inflexible. Their waters are still flowing after many have come and gone. They created a market that made families very rich. They appear just as refreshing as the day they were discovered by white men in 1778.

The Pattons, the Rumboughs, the Germans, and those that followed have left behind a chapter of Hot Springs history so prominent that seldom a history of North Carolina is completed without it.

Hundreds of newspaper and magazine stories have been written on the subject. It has served as themes for college students at nearby Mars Hill College to write about. It has appeared in medical journals over the world.

Yet, it's gone. Nothing remains but the ruins of a decaying group of buildings. Unless something is soon done, they too will go the way of all the earth.

But the springs will stay.



Dining Room

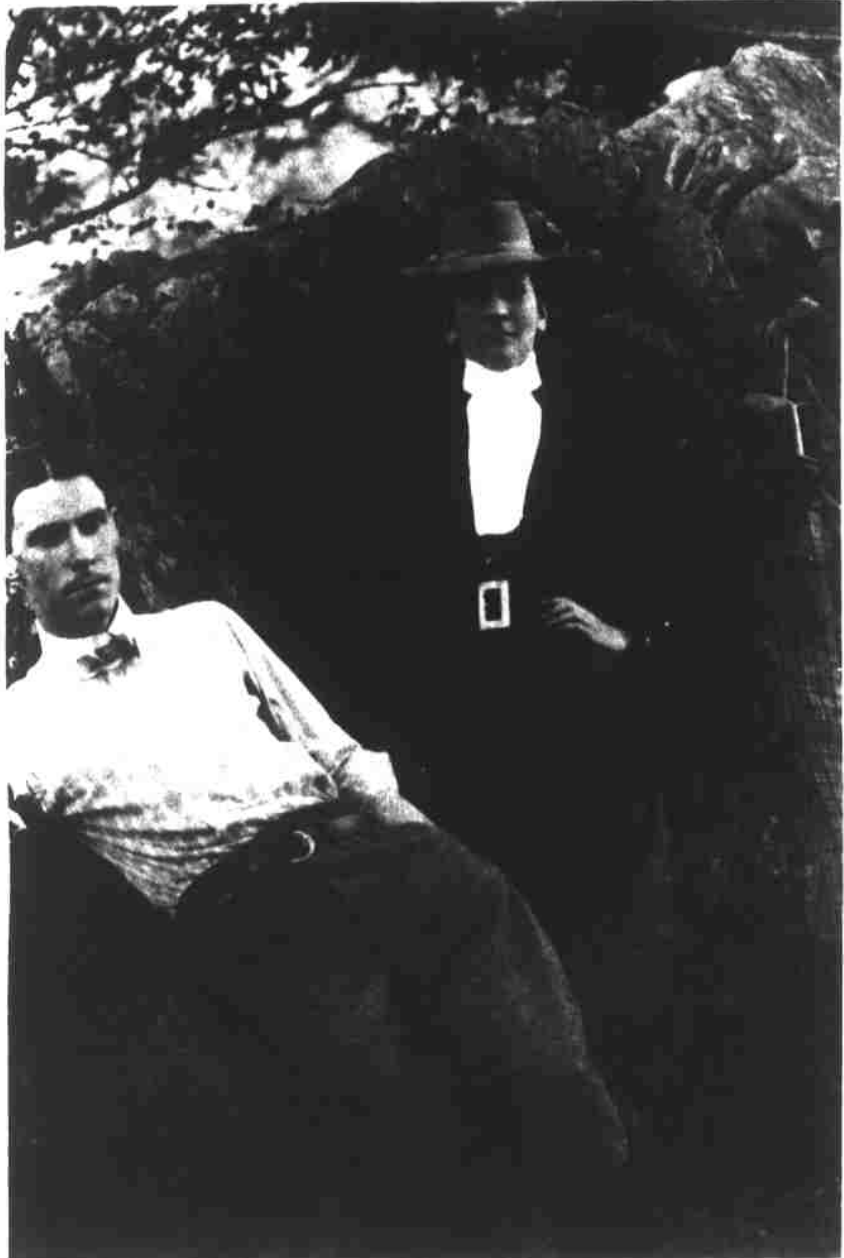


Bath House Entrance And Drinking Spring



Swimming Pool

MAGAZINE PUBLICITY - These three pictures, along with many others, appeared in a travel and health magazine when the hotel was at its peak. At top is the dining room, seemingly matchless in elegance for the turn of the century. In the middle is the bath house and drinking spring with well-kept, graveled walkways and a neat lawn. The buildings were kept in expert repair. At bottom, the swimming pool, supplied by the mineral water from the springs.



PRESENTED TO QUEEN - So remarkable was the fame of this woman, Bessie Rumbough Johnson Safford, daughter of Colonel J.H. Rumbough and whose first husband was the son of President Andrew Johnson, that she was presented to the court of England's Queen Victoria. She was noted for her elegance in fashionable taste and her unquestionable beauty. After the death of young Andrew, who was only around 26 at the time of his death, she married a millionaire many years her senior. The man in the picture is neither husband. He is unidentified.



THE BATH HOUSE TODAY - Locked, out of touch with the world that once flocked to its doors for a dip in the water that has been proven to be of healing and curative value. Tests over a century and a half reveal that the quality of the water has remained almost the same. Some reports indicate that the water is so strong in minerals and chemicals that persons have been permanently injured from prolonged stays in it. When the hotel was prospering, a doctor was on its staff to advise bathers on the correct therapy.

If you think you'd like to make more of your skills, think about the Army Reserve.

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1. TITLE OF PUBLICATION: The News-Record
2. FREQUENCY OF ISSUE: Weekly
3. LOCATION OF HEADQUARTERS OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: (Street, city, county, state, ZIP code) (Not printers): Main Street, Marshall, Madison County, N. C. 28753
4. LOCATION OF THE HEADQUARTERS OR GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHERS (Not printers): P. O. Box 7606 - Asheville, N. C. 28807
5. NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR, AND MANAGING EDITOR: PUBLISHER (Name and address): Community Newspapers, Inc., 20 N. Spruce St., Asheville, N.C. 28807
EDITOR (Name and address): James I. Story, Marshall, N. C. 28753
MANAGER EDITOR (Name and address): None
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48 Form 3526 July 1971