

Report of the Superintendent of the Hot Springs Reservation, to the Secretary of the Interior, 1887.

Contributors

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Royal College of Surgeons of England

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REPORT

OF THE

SUPERINTENDENT OF THE HOT SPRINGS RESERVATION,

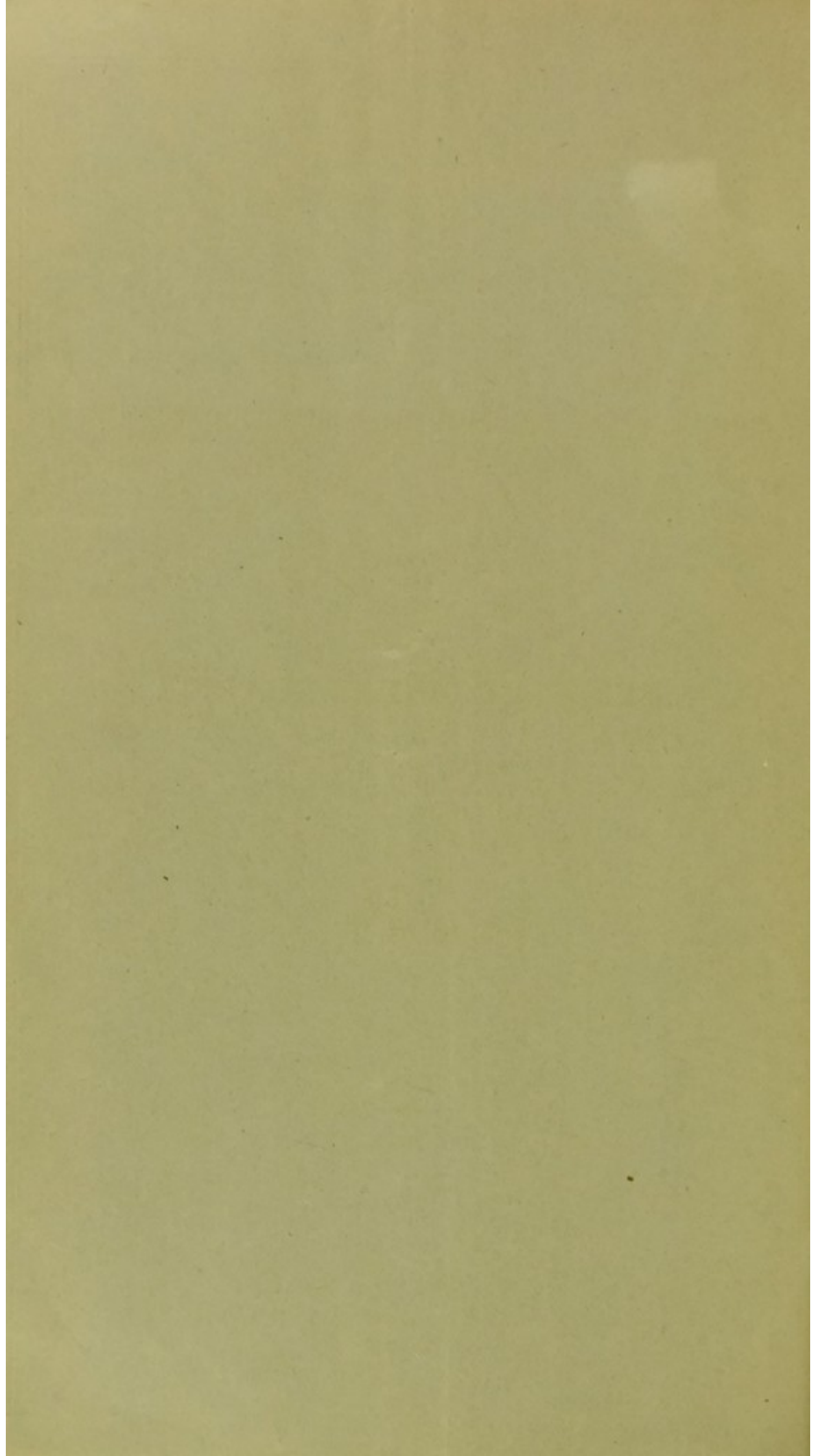
TO THE

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

1887



WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

SUPERINTENDENT OF THE HOT SPRINGS RESERVATION.

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT,
Hot Springs, Ark., July 27, 1887.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of this office for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1887:

This reservation, embracing four sections of land, is 2 miles square, of which the Arlington Hotel is about the center.

Two-thirds of its surface is a group of bold elevations, seamed with gulches and narrow valleys, the whole everywhere clothed with vigorous specimens of pine, oak, gum, elm, and other trees indigenous to this latitude. In order to preserve the natural forest, which gives to the landscape its chief beauty, the Government retained the mountain spurs, with their rich coating of verdure, whilst throwing the valleys open for settlement. These having been laid out in building lots, many were awarded to actual settlers or claimants, at a moderate valuation, by a United States commission sent here to unravel the tangled skein of disputed titles.

Subsequently, in 1882-'84, sales of 250 more lots were made at public auction by authority of the Department, leaving about that number still in possession of the Government, to be sold whenever its interest or the growth of the city makes it advisable.

Just east of the center of the reservation is Hot Springs Mountain, rising 500 feet above the valley, its base 600 yards wide by a mile long. Three of its sides are abrupt, but the fourth has a uniform and moderate inclination to Hot Springs Creek, and is the seat of the wonder which gives a name to this place. So far as yet discovered, the hot-water area is included in a space 1,200 feet long at the western base of the mountain by 300 feet up its face. Its greatest volume now issues from the lowest level; but the large mass of tufa cropping out on the mountain (a remarkable deposit left by an unknown principle of the water) furnishes evidence of its having in the dim past flowed in a cascade down its now dry face. It does not follow from the statement of this theory that the total flow has diminished in ages, but rather that its course has been changed and lowered by the hand of man in his efforts to get possession of it.

In order to thoroughly insure its source against the destruction resulting from the greed and rivalry of individuals or corporations, Congress wisely declared that the ownership of this unique mountain should forever rest in the Government, and reserving it absolutely from sale or private occupation, made it a permanent reservation.

On its southern slope the War and Navy Departments have erected, upon ground allotted them by the Secretary of the Interior, large and imposing buildings, where invalids of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps are quartered. This institution, styled the United States Army and Navy Hospital, has lodging for not quite one hundred patients, and is under the immediate charge of an Army surgeon, with a quartermaster as financial assistant. Its appointments are most comfortable, not to say elegant; and the bath-house, especially, is in advance of similar establishments generally, having, besides the usual baths, two large pools. To remove every chance for question or misunderstanding as to the amount of hot water needed by the hospital at any time, it was thought best to assign it a specific share, to be managed at will. Accordingly a board of Army officers and myself looked the ground over, selected a very hot, bold spring, and set it apart, by authority of the Secretary of the Interior, for its exclusive use. The flow of this spring is twice the number of gallons that can be legitimately consumed, even when that institution is filled to its greatest capacity.

In my last annual report reference was made to a system of underground sewerage just then completed by the city, one branch of which, running through the whole front of the permanent reservation, drained all the buildings upon that domain. The wisdom of this sanitary measure—where buried pipes delivering their contents $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles below the city limits are substituted for the creek channel—is made manifest daily in the greater purity of the atmosphere of the culvert.

In prosecuting work upon the creek before and after this substitution, the change for the better was always apparent, in the absence of those foul odors previously emanating from the culvert at every opening. At times and under certain conditions the air in the culvert is still foul, from the presence of unwholesome matter carried into it by the city's neglect; but when the outlying districts are brought into the system the creek water will be as pure and healthful as nature made it.

Congress having appropriated the sum of \$20,000 for what is known as the creek improvement—chiefly extending the arched culvert, which had been constructed under previous appropriations, along Valley street—estimates were submitted to the Department, and the public invited to send sealed proposals for doing the work. Mr. Samuel Walton being the lowest bidder was awarded the contract at \$7.14 per cubic yard for masonry. Work was begun early in December and prosecuted daily till the following April, when the appropriation being consumed operations were suspended.

The low rate at which the contract was taken and the comparatively small amount of rock excavations enabled me to prolong the culvert for a greater distance (620 linear feet) than was anticipated.

Beginning at the junction of Park and Whittington avenues—whence two short branches reach out to receive and unite the water drained through those valleys—the culvert traverses the reservation front and ends about 160 feet north of Malvern Crossing.

Its total length, excluding the branches, is 3,500 feet; 17 feet wide, with an average height at the crown of 10 feet; which gives ample water-way, it is believed, for extraordinary rain-falls.

Under the last contract 2,200 cubic yards of rubble masonry was built over the creek, on which only a thin layer of earth was thrown, leaving to the city the task of filling Valley street (through which the culvert is built) to the crown of the arch at its own convenience. The money thus saved was used in the more important work of filling the space on the reservation front, between the culvert and bath-houses. Seven

thousand cubic yards of earth and broken stone were deposited there, the entire area leveled and graded to the street, and a gravel foot-path laid throughout its length.

To reclaim this frontage from further misuse as a town commons and public highway it has been inclosed by an inexpensive post and chain fence, and the line of demarkation separating the Government from city property defined and settled. The division-fence and walk are plain and meant to be temporary, but will serve as a basis and guide for some future time, when larger means will admit of their being replaced by something more substantial and ornate.

Even as it is, the change in the reservation worked by this small outlay of money and labor is a source of favorable comment by every one; and when a year hence its surface is set in grass and trees it will be a fresh and convenient promenade for invalids.

In my report for last year some observations were made which, being applicable with equal force now as then, I incorporate with this.

I said :

A 12-inch pipe (buried low enough to receive by gravity the water from the springs at the lowest elevation) is laid for 1,000 feet along the reservation front, and is connected by lateral pipes of 3 and 4 inches in diameter with every spring not otherwise utilized.

A rough measurement of the volume of hot water, thus for the first time collected and flowing out through this main, gives 300,000 gallons per day, which for the want of reservoirs to receive and store it, or any means of conveying it to the bath-houses, is temporarily led into and mingles with the water of the creek.

I respectfully recommend that Congress be again asked to appropriate the sum (\$31,000) embraced in the Secretary's last annual report for supplying reservoirs and machinery, which are absolutely required to give effect and use to this 300,000 gallons of invaluable water.

Until some adequate provision is made for storing and pumping this water to a height from which it will naturally flow to the bath-tubs, neither the Government nor invalids can reap any benefit from the work thus far completed.

The system now and heretofore advocated has been adopted for the service of the Army and Navy Hospital, and is now in process of execution under a recent special appropriation made for that purpose.

I beg to renew my recommendation of last year that the water-rent be increased to \$40 per tub per annum. I believe that the lessees of the water privileges can pay that sum and still make a fair profit; and the additional revenue accruing from this source, if used to improve and beautify the grounds, would bring a substantial return to the lessees themselves in the greater number of visitors that would be induced to come and bathe here.

That water still runs to waste, benefiting no living thing, because the Department is powerless to give it a useful direction till Congress makes the appropriation asked for. With the number of tubs now in use the supply of water under control does not exceed greatly the demand, and when this number is nearly doubled, as it probably will be before the new year, how they are all to be filled is a problem whose solution has not been arrived at. I trust the Fiftieth Congress will recognize the propriety of appropriating the sum of \$31,000, estimated as required to build two reservoirs and equip them with the necessary pipes and machinery for storing and distributing this now wasted water at points where it will serve the double purpose of healing the infirm whilst yielding an appreciable income to the Government. People come here for the water only, and to deny it to even a few at such times and in such abundance as is healthful would be a hardship; but, leaving humanity out of the question, the Government would be gradually reimbursed for its expenditures by the larger revenue arising from water rentals.

Many more persons have taken the baths during the last year than in any previous one, and as the fame of this water is steadily spreading abroad it is reasonable to expect that the number who come hereafter

will grow larger year by year. That the citizens of Hot Springs see and act upon this idea is shown in the many hotels and lodging-houses being added to the existing list, and the Government, in the exercise of a prudent forecast, should be prepared to meet a larger demand by securing in its grasp every gallon of the liquid treasure issuing from Hot Springs Mountain.

I beg to invite the attention of the Secretary especially to the condition of the building known as the Free Bath-House. This is an institution set apart by the Government, where the poor and diseased may come and take the baths without price or question. Nearly or quite 400 individuals of these classes avail themselves of this gracious privilege daily, and the number is getting larger, so that the time is rapidly coming when there will not be room for all. This is made apparent by a glance at the building, which consists of only four small rooms (a dressing and pool room for each sex). The pools are so small (9 feet square) that sometimes standing room is not to be had in them. The building itself is a piece of patch-work, of rude construction, thrown together at different periods, the women's side being contracted, but fairly comfortable otherwise, whilst the part set aside for men is a small, flimsy shanty, uninhabitable in severe weather. Its entire appearance and reality is stunted, mean, and shabby; not in accord with the benevolent designs of the Department, and unworthy to be owned by this great Government. I respectfully recommend that Congress be asked to appropriate the sum of \$6,000 with which to erect upon the present site a free bath-house, with larger and better pools and rooms, where that friendless class of unfortunates who are driven to it by disease and poverty may receive humane treatment in their fight for health. I cannot imagine a charity more worthily bestowed or one which will yield richer fruits.

In obedience to Department instructions, I recently made a special inspection of the bath-houses on the reservation, and pointed out to the lessees such alterations and improvements as the Government demanded in the interest of the public. The lessees gave ready acquiescence to the propriety and necessity of placing those houses in better order, and have to a large extent refitted them, beside diminishing the waste of water, through a better system of piping. It is understood that, as the wooden cooling tanks get out of repair, they are to be replaced by iron ones of a more agreeable appearance.

As a matter for general information, I submit the medical history of a few persons, taken almost at random, who have been taking the baths at the Government free pools recently. Many more testimonials to the virtue of the water could be added, but these are sufficient specimens.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

CHARLES W. FIELD,
Superintendent.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, D. C.

Statements of the effect of the water at the Government Free Pools by persons now bathing there.

N. H. T.; residence, Omaha, Nebr.; age, 43; afflicted with inflammatory rheumatism; occupation, barber; says:

"I commenced bathing at the Free Pools December 25, 1886, but left off bathing for about two and one-half months; was perfectly helpless when I commenced bathing; could not walk or even raise my hand to my head; have taken no medicine, and I consider myself entirely cured, and owe it entirely to the Free Pools."

E. H. ; residence, New York ; age, 26 ; occupation, switchman ; afflicted with constitutional syphilis, says :

"I commenced bathing at the Free Bathing Pools about May 25, 1887. When I commenced I could not walk, was almost paralyzed, was almost blind, and covered with fearful sores. I used some mercury and potash, but the water has been the main instrument of my cure. Now I feel as well as I ever did, and am entirely free from sores ; my sight is good, and muscles in fine order. I can truly say that the Free Pools have been the means of saving my life."

C. B. Z. ; residence, Kansas City, Mo. ; age, 26 ; afflicted with syphilis, says :

"I commenced bathing at the Free Pools January 1, 1887 ; was fearfully diseased ; covered with ulcers ; could not walk, and if I had not come when I did, I believe I would have died in a week. I am now about well, and have full possession of all faculties. I have used some mercury and potash, but the water has been the principal means of curing me."

H. B. (colored) ; residence, Saint Paul, Minn. ; occupation, hotel porter ; age, 45 ; disease, paralysis of entire right side ; says :

"I commenced bathing at Free Bathing Pools on 7th of April, 1887 ; right side of head, right arm and leg were entirely helpless. Am not entirely well, but am improving rapidly ; can now use my arm and leg quite well, and think in a few weeks I will be entirely restored. Have used no medicine, but owe it entirely to the baths."

E. A. D. ; residence, Winterset, Madison County, Iowa ; age, 20 ; disease, eczema ; says :

"I have been troubled with eczema all my life, and have been treated for it since a child, but without any relief until I came to Hot Springs. Commenced bathing May 13, 1887, at the Free Bathing Pools. When I began I was a solid scab from head to foot ; my face and hands were so sore and broken out that I wore a veil over my face and a thin pair of gloves on my hands. To-day I am a new man, and persons who saw me when I came often fail to recognize me. I am satisfied that the water was the means of curing me."

M. W. (colored) ; residence, Sherman, Tex. ; occupation, carpenter ; age, 40 ; disease, sciatica ; says :

"I commenced bathing at Free Pools March 6, 1886, but have only bathed irregularly, not half the time since then. When I begun I could hardly move my right leg, and had the most excruciating pains in back and right hip. Now I am entirely well, and am working at my trade every day and am in splendid health generally. I ascribe my cure entirely to the Free Bathing Pools."

Miss E. E., residence Hot Springs, Ark., says :

"I have been bathing at the Free Pools since last August, 1886, and have seen a great many wonderful cures. I have been afflicted with rheumatism for fifteen years, and not able to walk without crutches or cane for eleven years until last month. I feel that too much cannot be said in praise of the Free Bathing Pools."

Mrs. J. L. ; residence, Hot Springs, Ark. ; age, 59 ; disease, inflammatory rheumatism ; says :

"For four weeks was confined to bed, and had to be turned over, so helpless was I. Finally, they carried me down to the Free Pools. Have taken eleven baths and am almost well. Yesterday I walked a half-mile without assistance. I owe everything to the wonderful effects of the baths at the Free Pools."

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