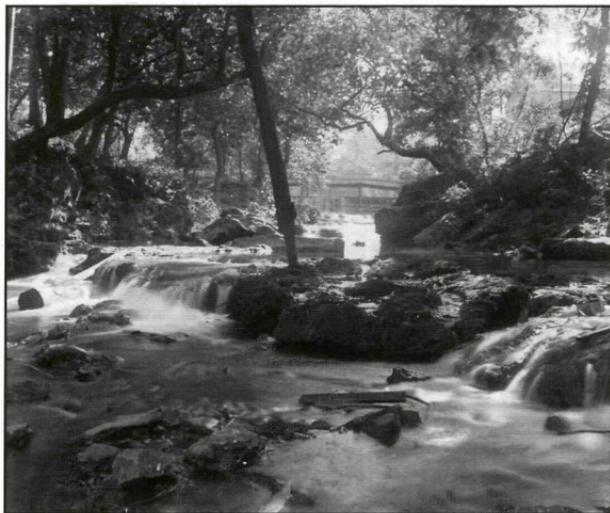


The Life and Times of the First Applicants to Platt National Park, 1906-10



By J Justin Castro and Lindsay Compton

John S. Kinkade never got a job at Platt National Park in Indian Territory, though not for a lack of trying. He appealed to two different superintendents for work in 1906 and 1907 only to be rejected. Kinkade poured his life onto the pages of his inquiries. His sincerity and honest language, warts and all, exhibit a different kind of application process than the calculated practices common today. His candor about his lame leg and his association with gamblers, however, failed to impress his potential employers, who still tended to hire from respected local families.¹ But at least for posterity's sake, Kinkade's letters and those of other applicants provide an insightful means of exploring how the people and events that surrounded the federal reserve—still the largest National Park Service site in Oklahoma today—made it such an interesting place.

The years that this study covers coincide largely with the service of the first two park superintendents: Joseph F. Swords and Albert

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R. Greene.² Although the Chickasaw Nation sold the property to the federal government in 1902 and Swords became superintendent in 1903, applications for employment became more commonplace after the Platt National Park designation in 1906.³ These portraits and overtures uncover a number of things, including the skill sets, political beliefs, and cultural traits that applicants felt were necessary to obtain employment. They also display how applicants perceived Platt National Park and what qualities supervisors sought in their employees. Job candidates commonly put significant details about their lives into their applications, describing the society and environment of the region during the late 1800s and early 1900s, which was a period characterized by national reconstruction, industrial growth, economic crises, aging Civil War veterans, and the transition from Indian Territory to Oklahoma statehood.⁴ As a result, these colorful documents reveal the interplay between local and national trends and developments.⁵

Multiple works chronicle the history of the park from its 1902 origins as a nature reserve to its current state as the Chickasaw National Recreation Area.⁶ But as is usually the case, the authors of these books and articles did not exhaust the sources available on the subject or the important stories worth telling. This essay highlights some of the unnoticed and underused primary materials, especially applications of people hoping to obtain employment at Platt National Park from 1906 to 1910 but never obtaining a position. In addition to applications, documents left by the first employees, townsfolk, newspapers, and the federal government were used to provide the historical context of these unsung lives.⁷

Most of the early applications to Platt National Park are enlightening and enjoyable documents. John Kinkade's letters, however, outshine all others if only in pure entertainment value. But his materials reveal much about life in the town of Sulphur (where the federal property was located), Platt National Park, and the greater area. Although Kinkade wrote multiple letters inquiring about a position, his final appeal to Superintendent Colonel Albert R. Greene in 1907 surpasses the others in breadth of information:⁸

I address you to see if I can secure a situation on the Reservation under you. And in order that you may fully understand my wishes and capabilities it is necessary for me to give you a brief outline of my life so that you may see why I desire to quit my present employment and go to work on the Reservation.

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Sulphur Brown Cottage in Sulphur I. T., 1890. Colonel Joseph F Swords is pictured second from the left, William H. D. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray is pictured between the horses (5972, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS Research Division).

I was born in Ill. in 1866 my Father served all through the Civil War in Co. E. 7th the Battle of "Lone Jack Mo" and also at "Pine Bluff Ark" he drew a good pension. That enabled him to give me a fair common school education. At an early age we moved to Kansas where I became a cowboy I rode the Range nearly four years when I got dragged by a wild horse my left foot hung in the stirrup and although I succeeded in drawing my sixshooter and in killing the horse he left me a cripple for life my foot being badly crushed and broken, shortly after this event my Parents died

I became a gambler not because I had any liking for such a life but because it was all I could do at that time. Not being able to do manual labor and not having education sufficient for a commercial career But I never have and never can learn to like this life. It is not the gambling itself that I object to so much it is the class of people I am compelled to associate with is what I object too. And I have long desired to quit this life and to do something better and more conducive to my own peace of mind now is occurred to me that possibly you could give me employment on the Reservation.

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I can ride a horse fix a fence and I believe can do any thing to be done about the Park as well as an able bodied man I like outdoor work, horseback riding especially I do not drink and would not gamble at all if I should be fortunate enough to secure a situation. I am in fine health and can stand more than one would imagine to look at me. Remember, I am not a vulgar Slang using flashy looking gambler I am a gentleman and if you see fit to give me employment I assure you that you will not regret it ⁹

Kinkade alludes to a number of trends and events that impacted the southern plains. His declared proficiency in horsemanship and fence mending shows his familiarity with some of the plans for Platt National Park and the most common duties of the first rangers, such as chasing out cattle and building and repairing enclosures. Park employees were engaged in building fences around springs to protect them from waste left by visitors and cows, alongside paths, and around the superintendent's home.¹⁰ In November 1909, shortly after Kinkade's final attempt to obtain employment, federal officials and local day laborers finished a fence around much of the reservation.¹¹

Equestrian skills were a must for the first park rangers. People heralded Forest S. Townsley, the first man to hold the position at Sulphur, for his ability on horseback. After his career at Platt National Park, he took a job at Yosemite National Park in 1913, becoming chief park ranger in 1916. Three years later Director of National Parks Stephen Mather called on Townsley to establish a ranger unit at Grand Canyon National Park in 1919, where King Albert of Belgium honored him with a medal for superb horsemanship.¹²

While at Platt, Townsley used his impressive skills for rounding up intrusive cattle. In 1908 alone, Townsley and another ranger hired to assist him, Robert A. Earl, chased approximately six thousand "head of domestic animals" from the park, and this number does not include livestock passing through at late hours of the night.¹³ Complaints from superintendents to the secretary of the interior about this issue pervade the park's documents from this period. Exceptions existed, however, including a 1909 deal with cattleman Lon Polk, who owned pasture adjoining the park. Because of a drought affecting the region, Greene gave him permission to make an opening in the park fence in order to "construct a U-shaped inclosure, taking about 3 1/2 acres of park land nearest his pasture and including a portion of Travertine Creek for the purpose of watering his stock."¹⁴ Both Swords and Greene worked out deals with certain locals connected to the hotel or cattle industry who were in need of access to the park waters.

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Until the turn of the twentieth century, much of the region was open range. Major routes used by the cattle drovers, including the eastern and western forks of the Shawnee Trail, cut through the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations. Local roundups and drives from Texas commonly watered their animals at the springs during the last half of the nineteenth century¹⁵ Cattlemen largely resisted the federal regulations denying their herds unrestricted access to the reserve, but park superintendents were not the only people sealing off property¹⁶ The fencing of Platt coincided with a larger trend in the area, as exhibited by Susan Brown, a local Chickasaw woman who “built a two wire drift fence east of Mill Creek, about ten miles long” during the early 1890s.¹⁷ Although contested, the open range was coming to an end.

Abstinence from alcohol is another common theme in Kinkade’s and other applications. Soon after the 1834 Indian Removal Bill, Congress passed another measure that outlawed liquor in Indian Territory. The Choctaws likewise adopted regulations prohibiting the sale of whiskey¹⁸ Politicians later made Oklahoma a dry state by placing prohibition laws in the constitution of 1907¹⁹ But despite these efforts, alcohol remained a common part of life in the region. One letter from Superintendent Swords to US Marshal G. A. Porter describes persons coming “into the reservation in an intoxicated condition from liquor

Ex-Confederate veterans from Oklahoma who offered their services to President Woodrow Wilson during the Mexican Revolution, c. 1914 (19639, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS Research Division).



procured in the town, and riding through the roads at breakneck gallop, whooping, and firing pistols.”²⁰ Similar accounts of drunkenness abound.

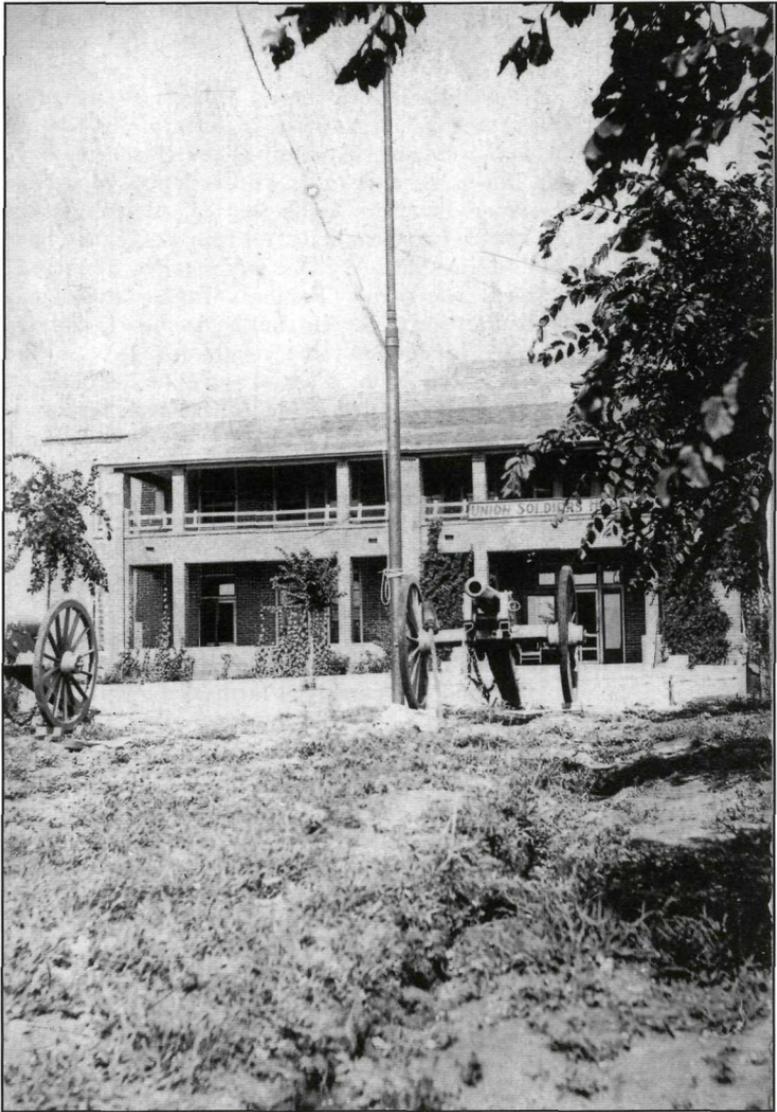
Swords especially despised alcohol and received personal satisfaction from banning those fingered as intoxicated. In an attempt to curb drinking and “obnoxious” behavior, he obtained permission to have Ranger Townsley and Robert Earl sworn in as US deputy marshals. He personally wrote numerous letters to the accused, informing them that they had to leave the park and could not return until invited back by the secretary of the interior himself.²¹ One park ranger, Thomas E. McDaniel, resigned after he was seen by Ranger Townsley “hilariously drunk” in Sulphur and admitting to Greene that he frequently violated the rule against drinking.²² Abstinence from alcohol was high on the list of traits superintendents looked for in potential and actual employees. After all, arresting people for possessing alcohol was a large part of the ranger’s job.

Kinkade also mentions the Civil War service of his father, a common reference point in applications, though more so by job aspirants who actually fought in the war. The first two superintendents, Colonel Joseph F. Swords and Colonel Albert E. Greene, served in the Civil War for the North, and many applicants hoped that connecting to this shared service would improve their employment chances.²³

The letter of Thomas R. Cook, a veteran, provides a good example. It also exposes aspects of life for war veterans during this era, such as aging, veterans’ benefits, and the perceived medical qualities of the reservation’s springs:

I was a member of Co. C. 3rd Wis. Vol Infy 1st Brigade 1st division of the 12th and then the 20th Army corps. [I] served about four years and four months. I have two honorable discharges, and am drawing a pension of \$12.00 per month for total disability under the law of 1890. I am able to ride a horse and do police duty within the government reservation at this place. Twelve dollars per month is not sufficient to keep the wolf from the door. I most respectfully ask a place on the reservation at this point. Two of the riders at this time are young men who are physically able to walk. Inasmuch as I have been an invalid since my discharge from the service with a limited education, I believe that I am entitled to consideration and preference to young men who have not ruined their health in the service of their country. The reason that I do not go to a Soldiers Home is because that I believe that the use of the waters is absolutely necessary to any continued existence. Col

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Union Soldier's Home in Oklahoma City, c. 1918-22 (7566, Mary Harvey Collection, OHS Research Division).

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Confederate Home in Ardmore. The home eventually housed veterans of all wars (19397.471, Confederate Memorial Hall Collection, OHS Research Division).

Jos. F Swords, former Superintendent of the Platt National Park, is a personal enemy of mine for the reason that I did not approve of his methods of grafting. I most respectfully refer you to Dennis T Flynn, former delegate from Okla. Cassius M. Barnes, ex Gov of Okla. I also vote the republican ticket. Anything that you may do for me will be highly appreciated ²⁴

Cook's letter mentions two interesting topics relating to aging Civil War veterans in the early 1900s—the Dependent Pension Act of 1890 and Old Soldiers' Homes. By 1893, more than eight hundred thousand veterans, widows, and children received monetary awards based on the 1890 legislation. By 1900 there were nearly one million pensioners at the cost of \$1,531,390,400.²⁵ Popular among veterans and Republicans, both Swords and Greene—who fit both categories—likely supported the bill and the benefits. The pensions, however, became controversial, especially after the economic panic of 1893. Opponents charged that patrons abused the appropriations, which had lax requirements, and that Republican congressmen used the disbursements for political gain.²⁶ Indeed, the issue helped garner votes for Grover Cleveland's second successful bid for the presidency on the Democratic ticket in 1893.²⁷ Cleveland had vetoed similar pension bills during his first term in office (1885–89) in addition to vetoing legislation to provide aid for drought-stricken farmers in Texas. According to Cleveland, "Federal aid in such cases encourages the expectation of paternal care on the part of the Government and weakens the sturdiness of our national character"²⁸ However, as applications to Platt exhibit, many Civil War veterans faced difficulties solely living off of these pensions and faced limited options for assistance and health care, especially following the increased scrutiny of the federal government under Cleveland and the economic crises of the 1890s.

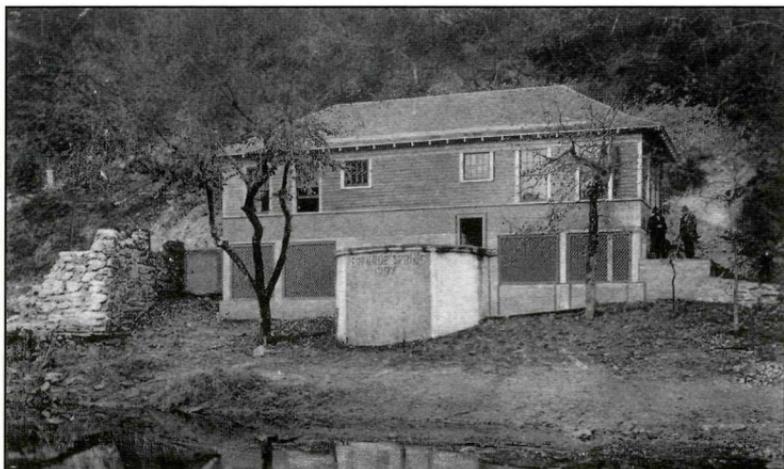
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Swimming at Platt National Park, Sulphur Oklahoma (21201.0GP 7 Works Progress Administration Collection, OHS Research Division).

Old Soldiers' Homes were one option disabled and elderly soldiers had for care and housing. These institutions originated in the 1830s for US Navy veterans with the US Naval Asylum and in the 1850s for the US Army. They were intended to be places where veterans could live out their last years with a sense of patriotism and pride. Some facilities, post-1900, possessed theatres, chapels, billiard tables, and small libraries.²⁹ In 1907 there was a failed attempt to turn the Bland Hotel, a building within the park, into a Soldiers' Home.³⁰ Although many of these institutions provided a place to live for numerous former soldiers, these places were in reality the last resort for destitute, mentally ill, and generally ignored veterans. Going to an Old Soldiers' Home carried with it the social stigma of being not only old but also mentally and physically unfit.³¹

Many of the applicants to Platt discussed what they hoped to gain from employment more than what they could do for the park. More than anything else, job seekers, both young and old, desired to be close to the medicinal qualities of the mineral springs that the government protected. The region's water had long been the draw to the area.



Postcard of Bromide Spring in Platt National Park, August 7 1924 (22564.1, Allan Stoddard Collection, OHS Research Division).

Sulphur, like nearby Hot Springs, Arkansas, became known as a health resort town during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Promotional material boasted the “eternal fountains which pour forth their life-giving waters.”³² People from all over the country, especially Texas and the Midwest, filled the streets and resorts. Pamphlet writers called the train that brought passengers to the town the “Health Special.”³³ Because of the advertised benefits of the creeks, those who sought jobs at Platt tended to have health problems, including the Civil War veterans.

At the same time that visitors and residents alike promoted the curative power of the spring water, most park complaints centered on raw sewage and other pollutants in the streams and the miasmas, or the noxious atmosphere, created by the weeds along the creeks.³⁴ Although the concerns about miasmas would later prove to be unfounded, doctors in 1906 wisely warned Sulphur’s Commercial Club and Swords about the possibility of an outbreak of typhoid fever because of the sewage in the creeks.³⁵ In 1909 Superintendent Greene wrote to Department of the Interior officials that the Artesian Hotel’s septic tank, “little better than a cess pool,” continually drained into Travertine Creek at the border of the park.³⁶ He further stated, “The odor from this discharge is so offensive as to be an occasion of unfavorable criticism by visitors and the public generally It discolors

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and contaminates the water to such a degree that thirsty animals refuse to drink it.”³⁷ Indeed, many of Sulphur’s homes, hotels, and the Deaf Institute dumped their human waste into Travertine and Rock Creeks that ran through the park.³⁸ Health officials and park employees continued to rail about the unsanitary conditions of the water until workers built a sewage system, which the park and city jointly funded in 1912.³⁹ Even then the park and town continued to dump sewage one thousand feet below one of the park’s springs into Rock Creek until a sewage-treatment plant was built in 1931. While the community touted the springs and streams as the biggest health benefit of the area, the water was also the greatest health concern.

Although plagued by infirmities, many retired servicemen, including Cook, felt entitled to federal employment because of their service to the Union. But sharing a common veteran’s status with the superintendents did not guarantee a job, especially if the applicant was disabled. Additionally, as Cook points out, he had a poor relationship with Swords, who had previously accused him of drinking.⁴⁰ In turn, Cook charged Swords with graft.⁴¹ Greene likewise grew to despise Cook, as exemplified by a letter from Greene to the secretary of the interior.

Acknowledging receipt of Departmental letter of 3rd instant, “W B. A.”, without comment, application of Thomas R. Cook for the position of Ranger in Platt National Park, I have the honor to state that so far as I know and believe the said applicant is not possessed of a single qualification by reason of physical infirmities and in other respects, from even a tolerably acceptable performance of its duties. He is a chronic candidate for any position which he considers a “snap.”

I am anxious to proceed carefully in this matter, and by a thorough inquiry in regard to the physical condition, character, habits, and disposition of the various applicants for the place (which now number more than a dozen,) select a man who will faithfully discharge his duties, and reflect honor upon the administration of the Park.

I hope to be able send you the recommendation of a suitable man for the vacancy in a few days.⁴²

Greene was an ardent Republican and veteran, and he sympathized with other former soldiers, if not Cook. However, Greene took the

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duties of his rangers seriously and he made sure that his employees were capable of the hard manual labor that the new park demanded. Instead of Cook, the superintendent hired Carl Frederick Maxey, “32 years of age of robust stature, and perfect health, a man accustomed to hard labor all his life, temperate, of good character, and highly respected by the community”⁴³ Maxey also ran as the Republican candidate for Murray County sheriff, but lost because “the county [had] a Democratic majority of approximately 700 votes, the whole Republican ticket was defeated,” a reality that provided for serious tensions between the community and the Republican park supervisors.⁴⁴

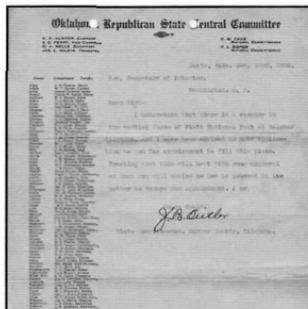
The early leadership of Platt National Park was devotedly Republican in a town that was heavily Democratic, mirroring old Civil War divisions. Many of the area’s residents considered the first superintendents Yankee outsiders; basically “carpetbaggers” with political connections to eastern money and politicians.⁴⁵ To others in the community, however, the federal agents brought new opportunities for power and wealth, possibly property, or at least a decent job for a relative. Many, if not most, of the applicants made sure to provide their Republican credentials.

Falls on Travertine Creek in Platt National Park (18827.624, Albertype Collection, OHS Research Division).



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J. B. Outler's letter with letterhead inset, on Oklahoma Republican State Central Committee, requesting employment at Platt National Park, 1908 (79-252-01, Platt National Park records, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas).



Like the applications of Civil War veterans, job candidates actively involved in Republican Party politics exhibited a sense of entitlement. Oftentimes these letters were typed on paper with a large Republican Party letterhead and the names of all the members of the Republican leadership in Oklahoma. In the case of J. B. Outler it was the Oklahoma Republican State Central Committee, of which he was a member

I understand that there is a vacancy in the working force of Platt National Park at Sulphur Oklahoma, and I have been advised to make application to you for appointment to fill this place. Trusting that this will meet with your approval or that you will advise me how to proceed in the matter to secure the appointment, I am ⁴⁶

Outler, like Cook, wrote his appeal directly to Secretary of the Interior James Rudolph Garfield, not to the park superintendent. Unlike most applicants, Outler did not provide much personal information. Instead he assumed that the government would give him a position because of his place in the Republican Party, which not only dominated Platt National Park leadership, but also the federal government. Outler also had fellow Oklahoma Republican officials write letters of recommendation. C. E. Hunter, the chairman of the Oklahoma Republican State Central Committee, highly recommended Outler, calling him "far above the average man who usually gets this character of employment."⁴⁷ There are no documents that show how Superintendent Greene reacted to the application and the recommendations that Garfield forwarded to him, but they did impress Frank Pierce, the first assistant secretary



Rock Creek in Platt National Park with dam and bridge visible in the background, c. 1900 (10536, L. L. Shirley Collection, OHS Research Division).

to the secretary of the interior ⁴⁸ Maxey, however, had already filled the position that Outler desired. Swords and Greene did not hire every candidate that promoted their Republican affiliation, especially those incapable of hard manual labor, but they did prefer Republican employees.

In addition to people who wanted a job as a political favor or for access to the healing qualities of the water, other applicants desired to take advantage of the real estate boom spurred by the widely promoted springs. One of the few job aspirants from outside Oklahoma, James Dooley of South Carolina, hoped to become a park employee while selling land plots in Sulphur—a little security to hedge his bet in real estate:

I wrote you a postal sometime ago but I have no answer up to this time. I am making up a party of prospective lot buyers to come to Sulphur 3 Tuesday in this month if nothing prevents. I was

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in Sulphur and Platt National Park a little more than 2 years ago. I am very anxious to know if there is any chance to get a situation in the park. I am a farmer and gardener here—I tend my orchard & strawberry patches. I can do most any kind of work. I understand the government is going to have more work done in the park—I hope you will consider this letter at once, as I am anxious to hear from you before I leave here. I enclose a stamped envelope—I am selling lots in “Highland Park.” I hope to make a try worth something to myself and to Sulphur.⁴⁹

Dooley was not the only speculator hoping to profit from the medicinal draw of the springs. A steady stream of people speculated, some more successful than others, in the real estate boom in Sulphur Springs from the 1890s to the 1920s. Colonel Richard A. Sneed, a former Confederate officer, initiated much of the original development of the area as a health destination, founding the first hotel in addition to helping plat the townsite.⁵⁰ Sneed later became superintendent of the park (1913-19), an interesting fact since it was his actions, in addition to those of other developers, that the Chickasaws used to argue for federal protection of the springs.⁵¹ A Union veteran and park applicant, D. Martin, planned to invest in land to sell to probable customers from Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, and Illinois.⁵² He further stated in his application to Greene: “Personally, I want a good healthy location, the real-estate business is no experiment with me, I have a large acquaintance in the state named and when I locate I will bring in a great many good people.”⁵³ This trend continued until the 1930s when a number of factors, including the Great Depression, the professionalization of American medicine, and greater government regulation brought an end to Sulphur’s health businesses, which failed to hold up to scientific rigor.

None of the aforementioned job aspirants ever obtained employment at Platt National Park. Interestingly, there is no trace of the applications of the first employees. In many cases they never applied. They instead obtained employment through personal connections. For example, Swords was related to Senator Orville Platt, the namesake of the park. Forest Townsley and his brother John Townsley, who worked as a laborer, knew the superintendent well. Their father, Willis Townsley, a local businessman, worked as a surveyor and appraiser for Inspector Churchill in 1902.⁵⁴ The following year Willis briefly provided services as a temporary clerk under Swords, who also hired him and his business associate H. P. Weems as committee members “to open bids for certain buildings on Sulphur Springs Reservation” in 1905.⁵⁵ A large portion of the original buildings of Sulphur Springs had



Photograph of Travertine Creek in Platt National Park, exhibited March 11, 1964, by the Oklahoma Camera Club (20242.66, Leslie H. Butts Collection, OHS Research Division).

remained within the park boundaries, but most were removed under Swords's leadership. Willis bought some of the properties himself, including the Park Hotel for \$1,615.⁵⁶ Townsley also held shares in the Chickasaw Land, Loan & Investment Company, of which George M. Weems, president of the First State Bank of Sulphur, was the senior shareholder.⁵⁷ This company additionally owned and helped create the Vendome swimming pool and amusement hall that bordered the park.⁵⁸ Swords and the Townsley family had a close and mutually beneficial relationship. Willis Townsley possessed influence and powerful allies in the town and Swords allowed his family to profit from the park in exchange for their support.

Robert A. Earl, the second ranger hired by Swords, also possessed connections to the Townsleys. Earl was another business partner of Willis Townsley. Before Earl joined the park staff, Earl & Townsley, as their firm was known, won a bid to remove some of the buildings from the reservation.⁵⁹ Indeed, Swords recommended that their business obtain the contract instead of another local resident.⁶⁰ They

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additionally worked as caretakers of the reservation "without expense to the government," which eventually raised concerns over legality and conflict of interest.⁶¹ In need of another ranger, Swords decided to hire Earl, with whom he had already built a trusting relationship.⁶² In addition to other duties, Earl often carried Swords, whose Civil War injuries had become more troublesome, in a wagon whenever the superintendent traveled.⁶³

George T. Clark worked at the park as one of the watchmen. These employees supervised the springs to make sure locals did not take more water than needed. They also kept the peace at the springs, answered questions, and wrote down the amount of water taken each day. Superintendent Greene hired Clark after firing the first watchman, who Greene personally disliked. According to Dennis Muncrief, a Sulphur journalist, Greene obtained Clark's service by asking J. A. Thomas, commander of the local "G.A.R., Post No. 40" for a recommendation of a good man who was a member of his lodge and a former Union soldier.⁶⁴ Thomas recommended Clark, a former captain of the 91st Indiana Infantry, whom Greene soon after described as "68 years of age but well preserved."⁶⁵ Like Clark, Earl, the Townsleys, Maxey, and McDaniel, most of the initial park employees, and a number of stand operators and unnamed laborers, were locals of good standing.

But not all of the first employees of Platt National Park came from Sulphur. John J. Ziegler, the first trained forester, came from Saint Louis. Although Townsley and Earl had worked as foresters in addition to their duties as patrolmen, they knew nothing "of tree culture, save that which is known to the ordinary farmer."⁶⁶ In Saint Louis Ziegler had worked for three years at the city's exposition grounds in their forestry department for \$2.50 per day.⁶⁷ He took a dollar per day pay cut when he came to Sulphur. It is not clear if he contacted the park or vice versa, but advertisements for the springs existed in Saint Louis. Ziegler was an aging Civil War veteran and he may have seen the federal job as a means to keep employment while having access to the waters.⁶⁸ It is not clear if Swords personally knew Ziegler, but a lack of professional foresters in Sulphur at the time made a local hire difficult if not impossible.

Una Roberts, the longtime park clerk-stenographer, hailed from Texas. She personally knew Swords, though it is not clear exactly how.⁶⁹ Roberts replaced the first stenographer, Ralph B. Eisenberg, who the superintendent forced to resign for "dereliction of duty."⁷⁰ Swords personally acquired the service of Roberts, who lived in Dallas, in April 1905.⁷¹ Previous to supervising Platt, Swords had lived in Dallas with his wife Emma Alice, who taught at a local school, and

it appears that Swords encountered Roberts while a resident of that city, if not before.⁷² Roberts became the highest paid employee at the park, excepting the superintendent. She prepared letters and reports, received visitors in the absence of the superintendent, and replied to inquiries from visitors. Swords considered her service rendered to him “particularly valuable.”⁷³ Roberts became well situated in the social scene of Ardmore and Sulphur, making multiple appearances in the daily life sections of area newspapers, though she retained a residence in Dallas to which she returned on occasion.⁷⁴ She remained with the Department of the Interior for many years. In 1919 she became the acting superintendent of Platt for two weeks, making her the first woman to hold that position in the National Park Service.⁷⁵ Her life and career definitely merit further investigation.

Personal connections to the superintendents appear to have driven the initial hiring process. Political ideology, reputation, physical stamina, skills, and moral character also played important roles in how the Platt leadership viewed applicants and workers. Although some hires, like McDaniel, ended after only a brief stint and on a sour note, some of the other employees served long and impressive careers with the federal government, and after 1916 with the National Park Service specifically

As for the unsuccessful applicants, they likely never knew that they had little to no chance of acquiring a job at Platt National Park. And like so many others, their lives faded into the dustbins of history. But nestled tightly among other countless folders in federal archives, their brief letters of application show much more than aspirations for employment, they show a country divided by political loyalties, memories of war, stories of aging soldiers, and beliefs in miracle waters. They show dreams of outsiders who saw real estate profits in a land newly opened to non-Indian settlement, and the aspirations of disabled souls forced into lives they never wanted, but who remained proud gentlemen, not vulgar, slang-using gamblers.

Endnotes

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¹ John S. Kinkade to A. R. Greene, May 9, 1907 Sulphur, IT record group 79-PL-1, National Archives Southwest Region, Fort Worth, TX (hereafter cited as NASWR).

² Frank C. Churchill was the first federal employee put in charge of Sulphur Springs Reservation, the predecessor to Platt National Park, in 1902, but his title was US Indian

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Inspector. For more information on the earliest years of the property, see the works mentioned in endnote six. Swords oversaw the park from 1903 to 1907. Greene was superintendent from 1907 to 1909. He was replaced by William J. French (1909–13).

³ The Chickasaw sold the land largely because of two factors: the allotment of Indian land into private plots following the implementation of the Dawes Act of 1887 and the encroachment of settlers and businessmen drawn to the area by the potential profits of the medicinal springs. Chickasaw leaders hoped that in federal hands the public would retain access to the waters.

⁴ Oklahoma became a state November 16, 1907 combining Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory

⁵ Sulphur, Oklahoma, in the 1890s and early 1900s was officially Sulphur Springs, though many people referred to the community simply as Sulphur. The park was originally titled Sulphur Springs Reservation in 1902. Congress renamed the land Platt National Park in 1906 in honor of Orville Hitchcock Platt, a senator from Connecticut. Often associated with the Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution of 1901, which he largely authored, Platt also played a prominent role in legislating US Indian policy. He was additionally instrumental in the creation of Sulphur Springs Reservation and Congress authorized the name change to Platt National Park shortly after his death. In 1976, after combining two separate units of the national park system—Platt National Park and the Arbuckle reservoir—Congress again changed the name of the property to the Chickasaw National Recreation Area.

⁶ Perry Brown, "A History of Platt National Park," unpublished manuscript, n.d., c. 1956, Chickasaw National Recreation Area Archives, (hereafter cited as CNRAA); Palmer Boeger, *Oklahoma Oasis: From Platt National Park to Chickasaw National Recreation Area* (Muskogee, OK: Western Heritage Books, 1987); Jacilee Wray and Alexa Roberts, *An Ethnohistory of the Relationship between the Community of Sulphur Oklahoma and Chickasaw National Recreation Area* (Sulphur, OK: National Park Service, 2004); Heidi Hohmann and Katarzyna Grala, *Cultural Landscape Report, Platt Historical District: Chickasaw National Recreation Area, Oklahoma* (Aimes: Iowa State University and National Park Service, 2004); Dennis Muncrief, *A History of Platt National Park* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2007).

⁷ The majority of the documents used for this paper come from the Chickasaw National Recreation Area Archives and the National Archives Southwest Region. However, some material also came from the Indian-Pioneer History Collection at the University of Oklahoma and multiple collections held by the Oklahoma Historical Society.

⁸ Most of the letters are presented how they were written. However, the authors did break up some of the applications into more readable paragraphs and made minimal changes when deemed necessary for clarification for the reader.

⁹ John S. Kinkade to A. R. Greene, May 9, 1907 Sulphur, IT record group 79-PL-1, NASWR.

¹⁰ "Sanitation-General," December 9, 1907 record group 79-203 "Complaints," NASWR.

¹¹ Muncrief, *A History of Platt National Park*, 42-43.

¹² "Forest Townsley," Chickasaw National Recreation Area website, accessed January 4, 2011, <http://www.nps.gov/chic/historyculture/forest-townsley.htm>; Loyd W. Brubaker, Laurence V. Degnan, and Richard R. Jackson, "Guide to Pioneer Cemetery," *Yosemite* 38, no. 5 (1959), online, http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/pioneer_cemetery/

¹³ Office of the Secretary of the Interior, *Report on Wind Cave, Crater Lake, Sullys Hill, and Platt National Parks, Casa Grande Ruin and Minnesota National Forest Reserve, 1908* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1909), 10.

¹⁴ Office of the Secretary of the Interior, *Report on Glacier Wind Cave, and Platt National Parks, Sully Hill Park, Casa Grande Ruin, Muir Woods, Petrified Forest, and other National Monuments* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1910), 558.

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¹⁵ J. B. Wright, "Ranching in the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 37 no. 3 (Fall 1959): 294-300; John R. Lovett, "Major Cattle Trails, 1866-1889," in *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 4th ed., Charles Robert Goins and Danny Goble, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 116-17; H. D. Fraley, interview by John F. Daughtery, October 19, 1937 Mill Creek, OK, vol. 32, Indian Pioneer History Collections, online at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK, <http://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/pioneer/paper.asp?PID=2372&VID=32>, (hereafter cited as IPHC).

¹⁶ Initially, cattle could be driven on the roads through the park.

¹⁷ H. D. Fraley interview, IPHC.

¹⁸ Grant Foremen, "A Century of Prohibition," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 12, no. 2 (June 1934): 133-35; Peter J. Hudson, "Temperance Meetings among the Choctaws," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 12, no. 2 (June 1934), 130.

¹⁹ *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Prohibition," by Jimmie L. Franklin, accessed February 10, 2011, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/P/PR018.html>.

²⁰ Joseph F. Swords to G. A. Porter, US marshal, March 22, 1906, Sulphur, IT to Ardmore, IT file unit 3, CNRAA.

²¹ For examples see Joseph F. Swords to M. Reynolds, December 9, 1903, Sulphur, IT file unit 1, CNRAA, Joseph F. Swords to Thomas Cook, January 27 1904, Sulphur, IT file unit 1, CNRAA.

²² A. R. Greene to the Secretary of the Interior, December 30, 1907 Sulphur, OK to Washington, DC, file unit 5, CNRAA.

²³ For Swords's and Greene's service in the Civil War see Joseph F. Swords to J. R. Garfield, March 22, 1907 Sulphur, IT to Washington, DC, file unit 3, CNRAA, Albert Rowland Greene, "From Bridgeport to Ringold by way of Look Out Mountain, by Albert R. Greene, late First-Lieutenant Seventy-Eighth New York," in *Personal Narratives of Events in the War of the Rebellion. Being Papers Read Before the Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society*, vol. 6 (Providence, RI. Published by the Society, 1889-90), 269-312.

²⁴ Thomas R. Cook to the Secretary of Interior, December 30, 1907 Sulphur, OK, to Washington, DC, record group 79-252-01, NASWR.

²⁵ Hoke Smith, *Pensions to Soldiers and Sailors who are Incapacitated for Manual Labor: Letter from the Secretary of the Interior* 53rd Cong, sess. 1, October 16, 1893, 2; William H. Glasson, "The National Pension System as Applied to the Civil War and the War with Spain," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 19 (March 1902): 50-51.

²⁶ Glasson, "The National Pension System," 52-60; Donald L. McMurray, "The Political Significance of the Pension Question, 1885-1897" *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 9, no. 1 (June 1922): 19-36.

²⁷ McMurray, "The Political Significance of the Pension Question," 19-36; "Grover Cleveland, 1893-1897" the White House website, accessed February 11, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/grovercleveland24>; For more on Cleveland's policies see Henry F. Graff, *Grover Cleveland* (New York: Times Books, 2002); Richard E. Welch, Jr., *The Presidencies of Grover Cleveland* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988).

²⁸ "Grover Cleveland, 1885-1889," the White House website, accessed February 18, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/grovercleveland22>.

²⁹ Trevor K. Plante, "The National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers," *Prologue Magazine* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2004), accessed February 15, 2011, <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2004/spring/soldiers-home.html>.

³⁰ Muncrief, *A History of Platt National Park*, 36.

³¹ For information on Old Soldiers Homes see Patrick J. Kelley, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans' Welfare State, 1860-1900* (Cambridge, MA. Harvard

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University Press, 1997); Suzanne Julin, "National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers: Assessment of Significance and National Historic Landmark Recommendations," accessed February 11, 2011, <http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/Downloads/NHDVS/NHDVS%20Draft%20Two.pdf>.

³² Sulphur Chamber of Commerce, "Platt National Park, Sulphur, Oklahoma," (Sulphur, OK: Sulphur Chamber of Commerce, c. 1920), 2, Historic Oklahoma Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division, Oklahoma City, OK (hereafter cited as OHS).

³³ Oleta Littleheart, *Indian Country and a Romance of Its Great Resort* (Sulphur, OK: A. Abbott, Publisher, 1908), 14, Oklahoma Historical Book Collection, OHS.

³⁴ "Instructions and orders," January 5, 1906, record group 79-203 "Complaints," NASWR; Secretary of the Interior to Joseph F Swords, December 11, 1905, Washington DC, to Sulphur, IT record group 79-203 "Complaints," NASWR.

³⁵ Commercial Club to Joseph F Swords, April 10, 1906, Sulphur, IT file unit 3, CNRAA.

³⁶ Quoted in Hohmann and Grala, *Cultural Landscape Report, Platt Historical District*, 23; Muncrief, *A History of Platt National Park*, 14.

³⁷ Quoted in Hohmann and Grala, *Cultural Landscape Report, Platt Historical District*, 23.

³⁸ Muncrief, *A History of Platt National Park*, 15.

³⁹ Hohmann and Grala, *Cultural Landscape Report, Platt Historical District*, 23-24.

⁴⁰ Joseph F Swords to Thomas Cook, January 27 1904, Sulphur, IT file unit 1, CNRAA.

⁴¹ Although Swords achieved many positive and impressive accomplishments for the park, numerous citizens accused him of graft and favoritism. His intimate dealings with the Townsley family, among others, do appear to present a conflict of interest at times.

⁴² A. R. Greene to Secretary of the Interior, January 11, 1908, Sulphur, OK, to Washington, DC, file unit 5, CNRAA.

⁴³ A. R. Greene to Secretary of the Interior, January 18, 1908, Sulphur, OK, to Washington, DC, file unit 5, CNRAA.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Swords, for example, was born in Connecticut, a "son of the American Revolution," and related to Senator Orville Platt, who argued for the creation of the reservation at the request of Swords and whose name the park acquired. See Thomas Hamilton Murray, "Swords, Joseph F.," *Journal of the American-Irish Historical Society* 159 (Boston, MA: American-Irish Historical Society, 1907): 159. A carpetbagger referred to northerners who moved to the South following the Civil War to profit from the reconstruction of the region. Although the term was more common to the 1860s and 1870s, similar beliefs about Swords existed in the early 1900s.

⁴⁶ J. B. Outler to Secretary of the Interior, January 23, 1908, Davis, OK, to Washington, DC, record group 79-252-01, NASWR. In addition to displaying the group's top leadership, Outler's original letter also includes the names of all the Oklahoma Republican State Central Committee "committeemen."

⁴⁷ C. E. Hunter to James Rudolph Garfield, January 27 1908, Guthrie, OK, to Washington, DC, record group 79-252-01, NASWR.

⁴⁸ Frank Pierce to the Superintendent of the Platt National Park, January 31, 1908, Washington, DC, to Sulphur, OK, record group 79-252-01, NASWR.

⁴⁹ James Dooley to Colonel A. R. Greene, January 4, 1910, Lexington, SC, to Sulphur, OK, record group 79-252-01, NASWR.

⁵⁰ Wray and Roberts, *An Ethnohistory*, 215; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History & Culture*, s.v "Sulphur" by Dennis Muncrief, accessed December 28, 2010, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/S/SU005.html>.

⁵¹ Muncrief, "Sulphur," Joseph B. Thoburn, *A Standard History of Oklahoma* (Chicago and New York: American Historical Society, 1916), 1013-15.

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⁵² D. Martin to A. R. Green, February 14, 1908, Cushing, OK, to Sulphur, OK, record group 79-252-01, NASWR.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Joseph F Swords to Secretary of the Interior, November 21, 1903, Sulphur, IT to Washington, DC, file unit 1, CNRAA, also see Muncrief, *A History of Platt National Park*, 80-81.

⁵⁵ Joseph F Swords to E. A. Hitchcock, May 12, 1905, Sulphur Springs, IT to Washington, DC, file unit 2, CNRAA, Joseph F Swords and W L. Townsley to E. A. Hitchcock, May 12, 1905, Sulphur, IT to Washington, DC, file unit 2, CNRAA.

⁵⁶ Muncrief, *A History of Platt National Park*, 36.

⁵⁷ A. R. Greene to Secretary of the Interior, November 6, 1907 Sulphur, IT to Washington, DC, file unit 3, CNRAA.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Joseph F Swords to E. A. Hitchcock, December 23, 1905, Sulphur, IT to Washington DC, file unit 2, CNRAA.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Joseph F Swords to E. A. Hitchcock, January 12, 1906, Sulphur, IT to Washington DC, file unit 3, CNRAA.

⁶³ Joseph F Swords to J. R. Garfield, March 22, 1907 Sulphur, IT to Washington, DC, file unit 3, CNRAA, Joseph F Swords to Secretary of Interior, December 5, 1906, Sulphur Springs, IT to Washington, DC, file unit 3, CNRAA.

⁶⁴ Muncrief, *A History of Platt National Park*, 72-73

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Joseph F Swords to E. A. Hitchcock, April 11, 1906, Sulphur, IT to Washington, DC, file unit 3, CNRAA.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Roberts's Dallas residence, high pay, and association with members of Sulphur and Ardmore's elite society suggests a strong personal connection to Swords; however, we failed to find direct evidence about the exact nature of the relationship or how they met.

⁷⁰ Joseph F Swords to J. R. Garfield, March 22, 1907 Sulphur, IT to Washington, DC, file unit 3, CNRAA.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² William Ballard Lenoir, *History of Sweetwater Valley* (Baltimore, MD: Regional Publishing Co., 1976), 338.

⁷³ Joseph F Swords to Secretary of the Interior, December 5, 1906, Sulphur, IT to Washington, DC, file unit 3, CNRAA.

⁷⁴ "Sulphur," *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City, OK), June 7 1914, 27. "Worry at Potash and Perlmutter Mess Around in World Politics at the Peace Con The Topic for Sunday Dessert," *Daily Oklahoman*, April 6, 1919, 11, Miss Myrtle Masters, "Sulphur," *Daily Ardmoreite* (Ardmore, OK), October 12, 1918, Murray County Archives website, accessed February 24, 2011, <http://files.usgwarchives.org/ok/murray/newspapers/murray13.txt>; Miss Myrtle Masters, "Sulphur," *Daily Ardmoreite*, December 24, 1918, Murray County Archives website, accessed February 24, 2011, <http://files.usgwarchives.org/ok/murray/newspapers/murray13.txt>; Miss Myrtle Masters, "Sulphur," *Daily Ardmoreite*, October 24, 1918, Murray County Archives website, accessed February 24, 2011, <http://files.usgwarchives.org/ok/murray/newspapers/murray13.txt>.

⁷⁵ Dennis Muncrief, "Platt National Park," Ancestry.com, accessed February 20, 2011, www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~okmurray/PLATT/superintendents.html.