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March 6, 1986.

R. G.
S. M.
A.
T. G.

Superintendent Roger Giddings,
Hot Springs National Park,
P. O. Box 1860,
Hot Springs, Arkansas. 71902

Dear Superintendent Giddings:

You will find enclosed the article I have written for the Garland County Historical Society's annual publication, the subject being the former Superintendent's residence on Reserve Avenue.

Before submitting the article to Mrs. Inez Cline for publication in the 1986 Record, I feel that you should have the opportunity of reading it. As a non-professional author, entirely untrained, it is quite possible that, unintentionally, my writing could contain glaring errors or mis-statements which would prove embarrassing to the Park Service. This I most certainly want to avoid.

I would greatly appreciate your corrections and comments prior to my considering the article complete and ready for submission. At present, I am struggling with an unfamiliar portable typewriter and the copy, to my regret, is not as neat as it should be,

Thank you for all you and your staff have done to make the preparation of this article possible.

I shall await a reply at your convenience.

Very truly yours,
~~Audrey Wenger McCully~~
Audrey Wenger McCully



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. Superintendent Roger Giddings, Hot Springs National Park, and his staff, including: Mr. Hugh Crenshaw, Acting-Superintendent, and Mr. Earl Adams, Chief, Division of Interpretation, Hot Springs National Park.
2. Department of Health & Human Services, U. S. Public Health Service Data Center, Lanham, Maryland.
3. Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Bolten, El Paso, Texas.
4. The late Dr. Francis Scully, M. D., author of "Hot Springs, Arkansas & Hot Springs National Park". (1966)
5. Inez E. Cline: "150 Years" (Hot Springs National Park) 1981 Record.
6. Mrs. Harry Tweed (nee Evelyn Parks)
7. Mrs. Jack Horner (nee Alice Clardy), Retired Executive Secty., Hot Springs National Park Service.
8. Frances A. Hunter Vaught (Mrs. L. A.), Retired Administrative Officer, Hot Springs National Park.
9. Mrs. Robert W. Harrison (nee Margaret Johnson)
10. C. S. McCully, my husband, whose unfailing and accurate memory for local names and places is invaluable to me.

DEDICATION

To Superintendent Roger Giddings of Hot Springs National Park, and his staff, whose many courtesies and gracious assistance made this article possible.

1986

A.W.M.

LOOKING BACKWARD THROUGH TATTERED CURTAINS

The History of a Landmark

By

Audrey Wenger McCully

Prior to the 1920's, what is now known as Hot Springs National Park was referred to as the "Hot Springs Reservation", and the ^{SUPERINTENDENT} Director carried out his duties from a combined residence and office located on Bath House Row. In 1895, a new residence was erected on Fountain Street and its first occupant was Superintendent William J. Little, a prominent Hot Springs native, who served from 1893 until 1900. In later years, and well within the memory of many of today's Hot Springs residents, this was the home of the late and beloved Mr. George C. Bolton and his family. He served with the Park Service in Hot Springs for 31 years, 28 of them in the capacity of Assistant-Superintendent, retiring August 1, 1958. The home has since been razed and the area made part of the public promenade by the Park Service.

In 1912, the U. S. Department of the Interior allocated funds with which to construct a suitable and permanent residence for the Medical Director (~~as he was then known~~) of the Park. The structure was completed in 1913. The site chosen lay at the east end of Reserve Avenue at the foot of ^{Hot Springs} North Mountain. The residence, set high above the street, was given the address of 607 Reserve Avenue. There it stands today—and many, as they pass by, are completely unaware of its history.

According to the records of the Hot Springs National Park ~~Source~~, the 19 room home was built under contract with Michael H. Jodd for the sum of \$22,601.00. Additional expenditures increased this amount to approximately \$40,000. Brick, stucco, and frame materials were used: the foundation is brick, the exterior walls are stucco, the interior walls are oil-painted plaster, the floors varnished hardwood, and the original roof was of tile. Over the years, the tile has been replaced with shingles. There is a total of 7,980 square feet of floor space: basement, 1,990 square feet, first floor, 2,437 square feet, second floor, 2,068 square feet, and attic, 1,485 square feet. The residence was steam-heated.

The imposing front entrance, facing Reserve Avenue, and reached by a long flight of concrete steps, opens into a large reception hall. Off this hall to the left are the dining room, a large butler's pantry, and the kitchen, the latter opening onto a back porch and service entrance. To the right of the reception hall are the large living room, a library, and an enclosed porch. A flight of stairs at the end of the hall leads to the second floor, where there are three bedrooms, two baths, and three porches (2 enclosed and 1 open). The third floor (attic), reached by a flight of stairs at the rear of the second floor, has an additional bedroom and bath, plus a large open area which was used for dancing and parties hosted by the Superintendents and their families.

Visiting Government dignitaries were often guests in the home, and ample space was needed to accommodate them in a gracious and comfortable manner. Household servants were regularly employed and a special rear staircase was provided for their use so that they could go about their duties on the various floors without being seen by family or visitors.

The first occupant of the residence was Major H. M. Hallock, ^{THE RESERVATION MEDICAL DIRECTOR} ^{SUPERINTENDENT OF HOT SPRINGS RESERVATION.} in 1913. He was followed by Capt. Charles R. Traubridge. Then, in 1914, Dr. William P. Parks began his tour of duty and it was during his tenure that the Hot Springs Reservation became known as "Hot Springs National Park." It is most fortunate that Dr. Parks' daughter, Evelyn (Mrs. Harry Tweed), is a resident of Hot Springs and it was a decided pleasure to interview her in preparation for this article. Mrs. Tweed has a vivid recollection of the 8 years she and her parents spent in the Superintendent's residence and she generously shared these memories as well as many early photographs.

Mrs. Tweed was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas on December 11, 1911, and was only three years of age when Dr. and Mrs. Parks (nee Grace Evelyn Knight) came to Hot Springs. Previously, they had been residents of Mena, Arkansas where Dr. Parks had been mayor for two years. A native Arkansan, Dr. Parks was an able administrator as well as a competent physician. His many contributions to the improvement of the Park included the establishment of an improved method of collecting and distributing the thermal waters. It was during this period that the U. S. Government Free Bath House and the U. S. Public Health Service Venereal Disease Clinic was erected and opened,

just one block west of the Superintendent's home. This structure now houses the Libbey Memorial Physical Medical Center.

Mrs. Tweed recalls that her nurse, Clotha McCartney, came with the Parks family to Hot Springs and that she later married Capt. Richard L. Gaffney, Chief of the National Park Police Force. Additional household staff included a cook named "Victrola" and a gardner, "Jim". Dr. and Mrs. Parks first used a horse and buggy for transportation and employed a driver named "Oliver". Later, the family owned a Haynes touring car in which they took drives over the then-unimproved roads on North Mountain (also known as 'Hot Springs Mountain' or 'Tower Mountain', since the well-known observation tower was located at its summit.). The car was used as well to transport visiting National Park dignitaries from Washington. When General John J. Pershing came to Hot Springs after World War One, he was entertained by Dr. and Mrs. Parks, their car being decorated with red crepe paper carnations in honor of the festive occasion.

When Mrs. Tweed reached school age, she began classes at the "St. Mary's Academy" on Whittington Avenue, but soon thereafter, the 'flu epidemic forced the school's closing. For a time, Mrs. Annie Neary, a war widow, came to the Superintendent's residence to give private instruction. Still later, Mrs. Tweed attended the "Eddy Sisters School" then located on Eddy Street between Magnolia and Holly, and also Mrs. Nellie C. Schultz' school on the corner of Hazel and Quapaw.

The "playroom" on the second floor of the Superintendent's home provided ample space for Mrs. Tweed and her young friends. The "Four Cotton Sisters" (one named Edna), lived directly across Reserve Avenue. They were the daughters of George E. Cotton who operated a collection agency at 503 Citizens National Bank Building (now the old First Federal Building at Central and Bridge Streets.). There were also Matilda Marsh, whose father was president of First National Bank, and Ethelee Hall, who lived on Malvern Road.

Dr. and Mrs. Parks were gracious hosts and many elaborate entertainments were held in the Superintendent's residence during their stay. Their distinguished guests included Senator Joe T. Robinson, who served twenty-four years as Senator from Arkansas, Mr. Cameron, Secretary of the Interior, from Washington, D. C., and U. S. Vice-President, Thomas Riley Marshall, who served under President Woodrow

Wilson. In addition, the lovely home was the scene of a debutante party for Del and Lucille deVampert. This family was from Wilmot, Arkansas and had cotton and other mercantile interests. Lucille deVampert later taught in the Hot Springs public school system. The L. A. ("Jack") Vilas family, prominent early local residents, and their two daughters, Ariel and Sue, were frequent guests in the Parks' home, as contemporaries of their daughter. The grandfather of Mr. Vilas was the inventor of the locomotive headlight.

Following Dr. Parks' departure in 1922, Dr. Clarence H. Waring became Superintendent, the first one detailed from the U. S. Public Health Service. The Waring family resided in the home until 1924. My parents, Dr. and Mrs. O. C. Wenger, were close friends of the Warings and we often visited them, but I was, at that time, too young to remember the surroundings.

My own personal and happy recollections of the Superintendent's residence begin in 1924 when I was seven years of age. In that year, Dr. Joseph S. Bolten became Superintendent and the home immediately became a lively place. Dr. and Mrs. Bolten had two children--a daughter, Ruth Josephine, who was about my age, and an older son, Richard Sterling ("Dick"). Dr. Bolten and my father were both from the U. S. Public Health Service and since the U. S. Public Health Service Venereal Disease Clinic was under my father's direction at this time, he and Dr. Bolten worked closely with each other. During the five years of Dr. Bolten's tenure, Ruth and I spent many happy hours together playing in and around the beautiful home. I remember the sunny porches, the lovely play room, and, above all, the well-tended and attractive grounds. There was a tennis court in the rear of the home, and a fairly high concrete wall separating the yard from the mountain. By scrambling and pulling ourselves up, digging the toes of our little black high-topped buttoned shoes into the wall, Ruth and I learned to scale the wall to find ourselves at the foot of the mountain where the wild violets grew in the spring and the golden rod in the fall. We could enjoy all this and still be in sight of the house. Childhood--in those far-away times--was free from the hazards which confront today's children. The friendly mountain was a safe playground in the 1920's.

It has been my very good fortune to locate Dr. Bolten in El Paso, Texas. His first wife, Mrs. Rae Bolten, who was with him during his Hot Springs tenure, died in 1959. His present wife, Mrs. Doucette Bolten, writes that Dr. Bolten has reached the advanced age of 96 years and continues to enjoy excellent health, outside of failing eyesight. Dr. and Mrs. Bolten have kindly donated a large collection of early pictures and press clippings pertaining to his years as our National Park Superintendent. These provide an excellent source of accurate information concerning the Park between 1924 and 1929.

My pleasant memories of the late Mrs. Rae Bolten include the fact that she was a very kindly person and never seemed to tire of having Ruth and me underfoot. Although the Boltens employed a wonderful and capable German lady, Mrs. Paul Geywitz ("Anna") as cook and housekeeper, Mrs. Bolten herself was often in the kitchen. One of her specialties was "tamale pie" which Ruth and I enjoyed when I was invited for lunch. With reference to the above-mentioned Mrs. Geywitz, I recall that she had worked for Dr. and Mrs. Waring, predecessors of the Boltens, and that she stayed only a short time thereafter.

On one occasion, my mother was called to St. Louis to attend her father's funeral. This left my Father and me at home alone for about a week. Dr. and Mrs. Bolten invited us for a special dinner one evening--roast duck, deliciously prepared, with every possible accompaniment. We were served in the lovely dining room, and I can still recall my awe at seeing the two large ducks, displayed on a beautiful platter, brought into the dining room through the butler's pantry by "Anna" in her white cap and apron. The dining room, its hardwood floors, well-polished, the soft light from the ceiling fixture above the table, the china and silverware, and the imposing furniture quite took my seven-year-old breath away.

The surrounding grounds of the Superintendent's residence were, in these early years, kept to perfection. Dr. and Mrs. Bolten had a special fondness for flowers and landscaping, as did the earlier-mentioned Mrs. William P. Parks. There was, at one time, a rose garden on the east side of the lawn. During the administrations of Dr. Waring and Dr. Bolten, the grounds were overseen by the late Mr. Paul Geywitz, a local nurseryman and husband of Anna Geywitz, the housekeeper. Under Mr. Geywitz' expert care, the grounds

attained their most beautiful appearance and were a credit to the dignity of the Park Service and to the surrounding neighborhood. Should a visitor inquire of a neighboring resident who lived in the beautiful home, he or she was informed, with pride, "THAT is the residence of our National Park Superintendent."

The house, setting as it does, high above Reserve Avenue, has two steep terraces, one on either side of the front steps. I regret to say that Ruth Bolten and I were not above scooting down the terraces—sometimes rolling all the way down to sidewalk level—to the detriment of our clothing and to the dismay of our mothers, who did not approve! Nor did Mr. Geywitz approve, I am sure! He expended much time and energy keeping the terraces green and neatly mowed, despite the steep incline. These were pre-power mower days...something to consider in the heat of mid-July!

A square brick and stucco garage lies at the end of the driveway on the west side of the home. I can recall the sound of Dr. Bolten's car as he shifted gears to get up the steep drive and into the garage. On either side of the driveway entrance is a square rock and concrete post with a flat top. The left post bears the inscription, "June, 1915" and the right has the street address, "607 Reserve". From this we may assume that the posts, as well as the rock wall running west along Reserve, were erected some years after the residence itself.

In 1929, Dr. Bolten was re-assigned to the United States Public Health Service Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky. That he was a particularly capable administrator is shown by various newspaper accounts of his accomplishments. These included better conservation of the thermal waters, the improvement and paving of the mountain roads and beautification of all areas of the Park, especially along Bath House Row. In addition, new hiking trails were built, one of the better-known being "Dead Chief Trail", which begins at the east end of Reserve Avenue near the Superintendent's residence and continues to the iron spring in the Gorge. The electrical system of the Park was modernized and the construction of a 2,009 feet of 14" cast iron sewer line along Bath House Row was achieved. A Government Tourist Camp became a popular resting place for motorists traveling through the Park. This was located in the Gorge area and received much favorable advertising by "word of mouth" from visitor to visitor.

A clipping from one of the local hotel bulletins, dated August 3, 1925, just a year after Dr. Bolten arrived, pays him the following tribute:

DR. JOSEPH S. BOLTEN—ALWAYS ON THE JOB

"Some day some brilliant government historian is going to write the history of men who have been in charge of the local government reservation, and when he does we want to add just a word of praise in behalf of the present official, Dr. Joseph S. Bolten. Doc found this a big job when he first came here. Then he started in to make it still bigger. He saw there was much to do to add to the Government facilities and help Hot Springs. A man with great vision, adequate appreciation of the importance of Hot Springs National Park, and a willingness to serve that has not been equalled and therefore not surpassed by his predecessors—well, in our opinion, Doc gets the blue ribbon on any other award offered. He is always on the job and if the people of Hot Springs had their way about it they would tell Doc to remain here always."

With the departure of the Bolten family, my personal contact with the Superintendent's residence ended, as subsequent Superintendents had no children of my age, although they made the home their official residence until 1978 when Superintendent Richard H. Maeder moved to private quarters.

During the summer of 1985, Superintendent Roger Giddings arranged for my husband and me to be taken on a personally-conducted tour of the former Superintendent's residence by Mr. Earl Adams, Director of Interpretation, Hot Springs National Park. The home, unoccupied for some years, is presently used for the storage of curatorial items relative to the history of Hot Springs National Park. Returning to the residence after an interval of 56 years was, for me, a sobering and nostalgic experience. My memory of the arrangement of the interior was accurate—but all else has changed. Time, weather, and disuse have taken their toll, not through any fault of the National Park Service, but simply because the expensive maintenance of the 74 year old structure has gone beyond budget limitations which now require that priorities be candidly considered and many hard choices made. The once-stately home is now in such disrepair and so obsolete

that renovation would doubtless be economically impossible at today's costs. There being no longer any electricity in the building, Mr. Adams conducted portions of our tour with the aid of a flashlight.

When we ascended to the top floor (attic), we noted exposed wooden beams still in good condition, indicating the excellent quality of lumber and workmanship available in 1912. One could picture the gay dances and parties held on this floor in times long gone. Original bath room fixtures, ceiling lights, door knobs, kitchen pantries, and flooring remain in place throughout the house. Although air-conditioning was a luxury far in the future, the residence was kept comfortably cool in summer by a unique system of ceiling ducts which circulated available breeze from the adjacent mountain throughout the home. Even in its present state, it seemed to me that glimpses of a happier past could be seen in the shadowy corners. One could "feel" the presences of the long succession of families who have lived portions of their lives within these walls, each contributing something to the atmosphere.

As we were preparing to descend to the first floor at the end of our tour, I walked once more to the row of attic windows at the rear of the house—windows facing ^{North} Mountain. The grimy panes were covered with lace curtains, once crisp and clean, no doubt, but now dusty, torn and sagging on their rusty rods. This was, indeed, "Looking Backward Through Tattered Curtains"!

And what of the future of this landmark, which, for nearly three-quarters of a century has stood as a sentinel—indeed, an embodiment of the dignity of those Superintendents and their families who have served so loyally in this National Park? Recent consultations with Superintendent Giddings and his staff indicate that the future of the residence is, at this writing, undecided. The artifacts now stored there will be moved to the Fordyce Bath House when its renovation is completed. Since the home will then no longer serve any practical purpose for the Park Service, it will likely become surplus property, the disposition of which must be later determined.

One can always hope that, by some miracle, this stately home may once again find a place in our present-day community, serving as a reminder of its earlier years when life proceeded at a more leisurely and gracious pace.