

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT  
memorandum

DATE: May 8, 1989

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: Superintendent

SUBJECT: Fordyce Bathhouse Visitor Center

TO: All Employees

Everyone that works in the park needs to have basic information about the Fordyce Bathhouse Visitor Center so that they will feel comfortable and knowledgeable about this exciting new facility.

A tour for employees is slated for Tuesday, May 9 at 3:00 p.m. so that you may get first-hand acquaintance with the building and its contents.

Over a period of time there has been extensive newspaper coverage and there will be some for the Grand Opening events which most of you will have seen. Please make a point to get informed from these sources.

It is important that everyone working that day be well-informed about the schedule of events. Many important guests and an expected large number of visitors will be in attendance. Much of what they will experience on the Grand Opening day will be informal and come as a result of talking with other people. You may be the only person to be able to assist them.

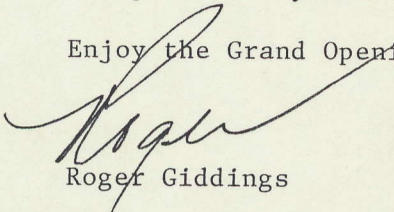
The Fordyce booklet sold at the Visitor Center is an excellent source of information which most of you already have read. Each division has a copy in case you need a refresher or have only scanned it.

Two items are attached to this memo: one is a copy of the stamp cachet insert, which is a new item. The cachet, which includes the designed envelope, will be sold at a kiosk in front of the Quapaw Bathhouse on the Grand Opening day. It is brief.

Another item attached is a vintage advertisement. It is also a sales item but commonly deeply hidden in the bathhouse packet. We hope these items will be of interest.

After the Grand Opening day each of you are invited to spend some time in the building where the exhibits and the formal tours will reveal things about the park that you have always wondered about.

Enjoy the Grand Opening and the fantastic new Visitor Center.

  
Roger Giddings

Enclosures

*Thanks for all you are  
doing to make this a success full.*



**"...commemorating Events, Places, and People."**

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PUBLISHED BY EASTERN NATIONAL PARK & MONUMENT ASSOCIATION    May, 1989

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*Grand Opening  
of the  
Fordyce Bathhouse  
Visitor Center*

Shortly after the Fordyce Bathhouse opened in 1915 a premier publication proclaimed:

*The FORDYCE is the  
MOST PRACTICAL,  
COMPLETE and  
LUXURIOUS BATH  
HOUSE in the WORLD*

A bronze plaque in the lobby exemplified its purpose and intent:

**Dedicated to  
Health and Happiness**

**Built by Samuel W. Fordyce as a grateful  
acknowledgement of restored health and  
dedicated to all who are weary and suffering.  
May health and happiness accompany you  
all the days of your life.**

Col. Samuel Fordyce came to Hot Springs from Alabama by train and then by stagecoach shortly after the War Between the States. Very ill, he recovered and prospered, living to a vigorous old age. Prominent in the railroad business, he owned hotels and bathhouses, the waterworks and street car company in Hot Springs, as well as other enterprises. With funds from these sources he built a magnificent bathhouse far out of proportion to its income generating capacity.

In addition to excellent equipment and superb services, this bathhouse, designed to serve the well-to-do, bathed the senses with splendid furnishings and distinctive art which played on water themes.

Even before entering the door the imposing exterior of patterned brick and terra cotta beckoned prospective bathers. The window surrounds featured classic faces, water containers and sea creatures viewed from above by Neptune, god of the Sea. Shields, scrolls and garlands connect separate elements. A copper clad marquee ornamented with glass, which identifies in lights the name of the bathhouse, protects those lounging on the porch. Entering the lobby the opulent image is fortified by banks of bronze lockboxes back of the service desk, and transom windows aglow in a stained glass pond of lotus blossoms. These windows in turn cast a warm tone to the light on the marble walls. At each end the cherub fountains reflect the fondness of children for water and a desire to emulate appearances of Spas of Europe.



The central Men's Bathhall sports a stained glass skylight complete with Neptune's daughter, accompanied by a man and a woman, and a host of fish, frogs and other aquatic life. The fountain below commemorates the European discovery of the Hot Springs and contact with the Indians. Massive marble benches, suggestive of those of ancient Rome, offers an overview of the scene.

The marble bench in the Ladies' Bathhall is variegated tan and white marble and the stained glass windows on the entire side suggests a sweep of peaceful country views.

On the 3rd floor, the Music Room adds more distinction. This lounge, open to all bathhouse guests, also has stained glass panels in an arch in a building full of arches. As a place richly furnished for leisure pursuits, the grand piano and billiard table appealed to differing interests. The tile floors in this room are more colorful and intricately patterned than those throughout the rest of the building. The area offered space to talk with friends and associates, read, write letters and postcards, and enjoy the surroundings. Private rooms in a bustling bathhouse offered quiet and extra service, as well as a spacious place to dress for the gym.

The highest degree of specialization is represented by the Hubbard Tub, the Scotch Douche and various gadgets in the Electromechano Room. The complete needs of the patrons were satisfied in the Chiropody Room where feet were pampered, in the gym where reflexes and muscles were trained, in the beauty parlor where improved perceptions of hairdo and skin were wrought. The bathhouse overflowed with the latest contrivances available in its day.

The usual fixtures of the bathhouse, needle showers, large tubs, Sitz tubs, vapor cabinets, pack tables and massage tables dominated large portions of the building.

In a competitive climate in the overbuilt bathing industry, such a grand facility could not be sustained and it became the first of the bathhouses to close on Bathhouse Row. It did so in 1962.

Today, rehabilitation and conversion of the 28,000 square foot structure into the park's Visitor Center, at a cost of \$5,000,000, is many times its original construction cost of \$142,000. The essence of the original bathhouse is retained in its architecture and furnishings.

As a Visitor Center, the building contains exhibits and audiovisual aids which tell the story of the American Spa and inform visitors about the park.

Today the building is renewed as the finest bathhouse on Bathhouse Row and takes up its new role as the park's Visitor Center.





# *The* FORDYCE BATHS

H O T   S P R I N G S   N A T I O N A L   P A R K ,   A R K A N S A S

Thank you for your request for information about Hot Springs National Park and these famous curative baths.

In this folder we have space only to "highlight" the extensive facilities for sport and recreation of Hot Springs and vicinity, to sketch the curative and reconditioning properties of the waters of this world-famous resort and to present a few pictures taken in the Fordyce Baths. This information is thoroughly reliable, because it comes to you by permission of the United States Government which owns and controls the springs.

Please give particular attention to that part dealing with the action and effect of the waters upon the human system, either as a curative or as a medium for reconditioning....for it is these which have made this resort world-famous.

If, however, there is still more you would like to know before making your plans to come to Hot Springs National Park, write us fully and we'll respond at once.

Hot Springs' accommodations offer a choice of hotels, apartments, boarding and rooming houses in every class and price.

Looking forward to the possibility of having you with us, and thanking you for this opportunity to tell you about Hot Springs, we remain, with best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

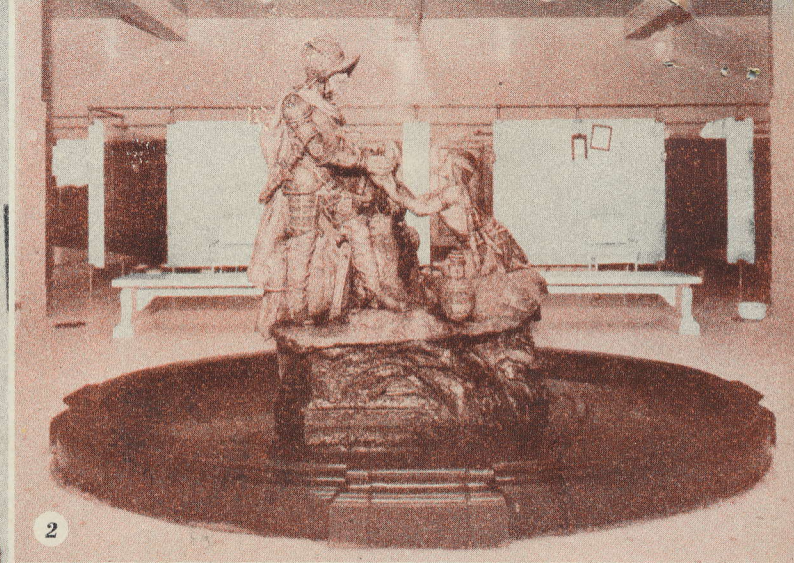
THE FORDYCE BATHS

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1. Registration Desk in the Lobby.

2. De Soto Fountain in Bath Hall.

3. Beauty Shop in Ladies Department.

4. Fountain in Lobby.

5. Sun Room and Historical Exhibits.

6. The Fordyce Hubbard Tub.

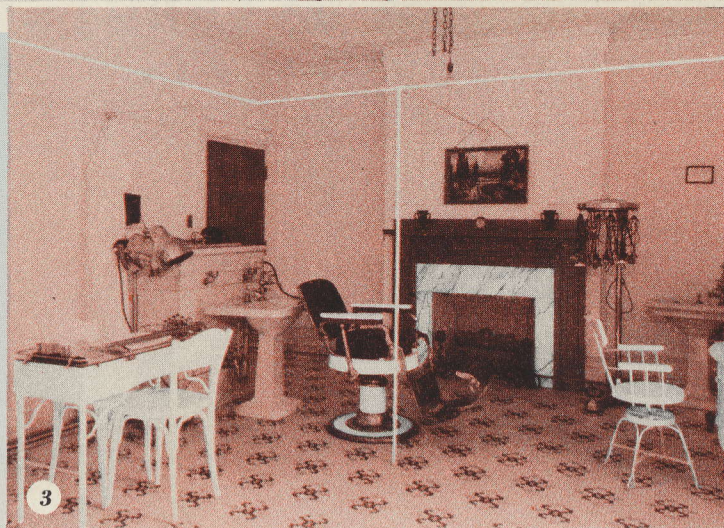
7. Action in the "Gym."

8. Where Hot Packs Are Applied.

9. Skilled Massage by Licensed Attendants.

10. Seitz Bath Equipment.

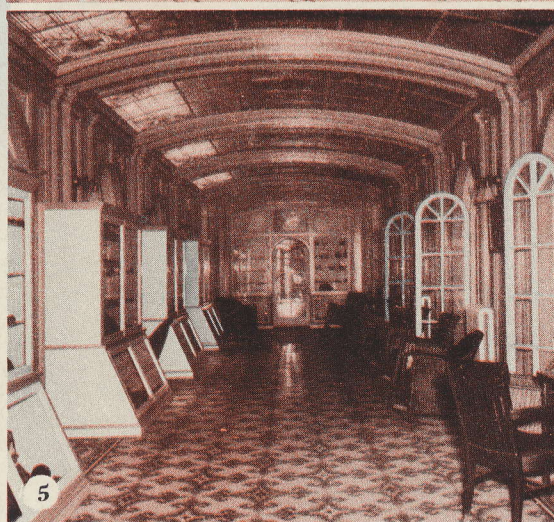
11. Cooling Room.



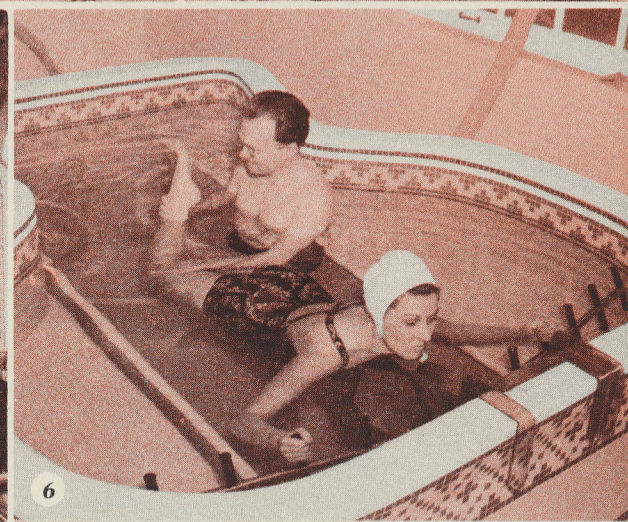
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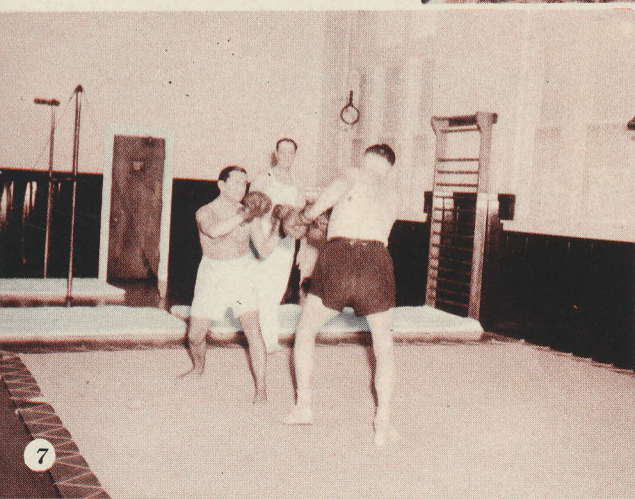
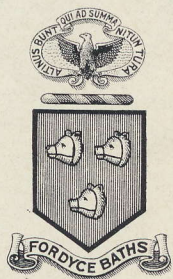
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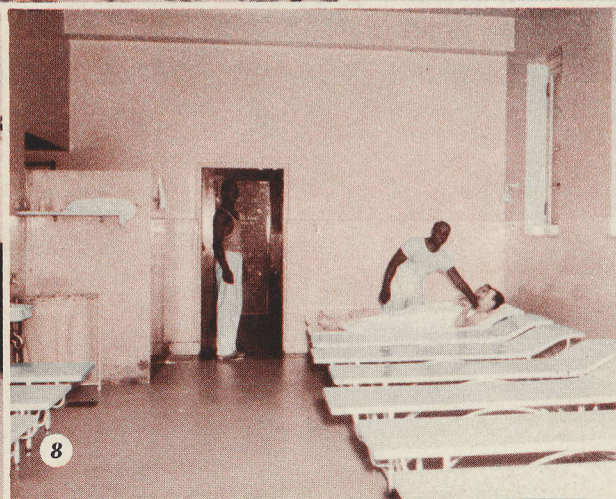
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# The FORDYCE BATHS...a Complete Institution

*Hot Springs National Park's Healing Waters are Owned and Controlled by the U. S. Government*

Persons who take these baths, the means by which the healing waters are applied to the human system, are offered two-fold assurance of the benefits which may be obtained. First, the Federal Government recognized the presence of the healing properties inherent in their steaming hot waters, because long prior to acquiring ownership of these springs for the welfare of its citizens, Indians and pioneer whites had resorted to the Hot Springs of the Ouachita as the place to cure their ills. Second, because the Government's recommendations were given only after the beneficial effects of the baths had been demonstrated. A large and representative number of patients with different ailments have been treated during a long period of years. Scientific methods of study and observation by eminent medical men have been made and results recorded.

**47 Health-Building Springs** Federal ownership of the springs . . . 47 in number, and all alike as to mineral properties . . . dates from 1832, when they were set aside by Act of Congress, together with 4 sections of pine-clad mountain terrain, as our first National Reservation. The original Army and Navy Hospital was erected here in 1884. Today that institution, with its countless achievements in rehabilitation and recorded treatment methods, has been succeeded by a magnificent new hospital, built and equipped at a cost of over \$1,500,000, and affording service and ex-service men the last word in hydro-therapeutic treatment. To more clearly define its sponsorship of this famous Spa, the Government re-dedicated the Reservation in 1921 as Hot Springs National Park by which name the resort now is known the world over as a mecca for those seeking health, recuperation and relaxation.

## **The Fordyce Baths . . . A Complete Institution**

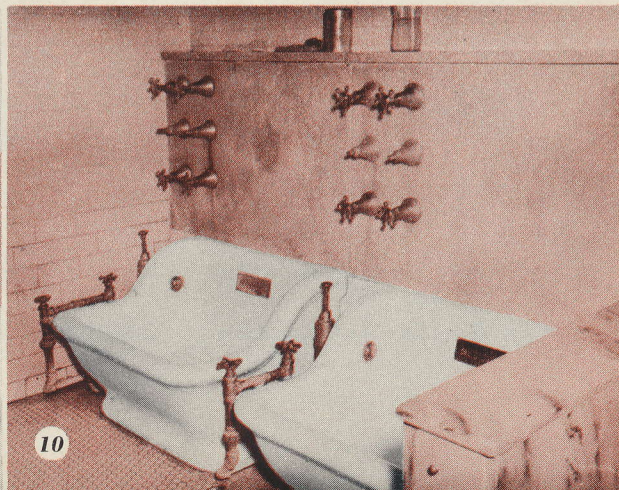
Here, in addition to the Government facilities just outlined, are a group of Bath Houses and Sanitariums which, although privately owned and operated, are conducted

under Government supervision. Notable among these is the FORDYCE BATHS, perhaps the most complete institution of its kind, offering various types of hydro-therapeutic treatments in accordance with approved practices. The unusual scope of its facilities is illustrated in part on these pages. Housed in the handsome structure shown on Page One, this inviting establishment is indeed a model institution in which to escape the penalties of circulatory and elimination ills, as well as restore bodily strength and mental activity.

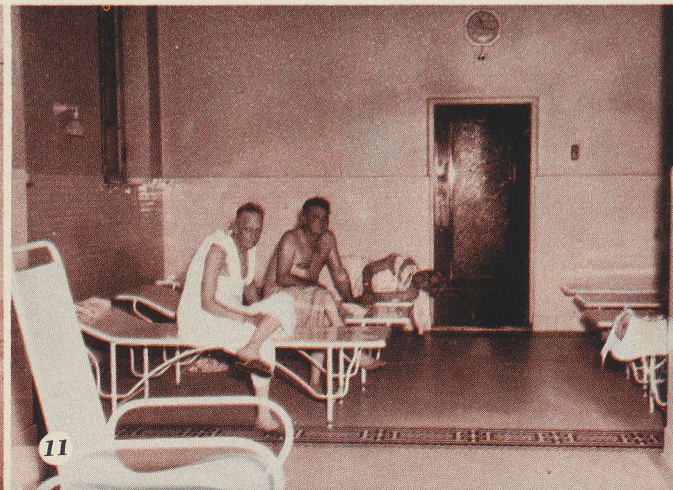
For the accommodation of its patrons, there are thirty bath rooms in all, divided among the men's and women's department, and served by courteous, U. S. Government licensed attendants. These baths comprise immersion tubs, sprays, douches, Seitz baths, Turkish hot room, pack and cooling rooms and special equipment for massage. The whole house is air conditioned and forced ventilation changes the atmosphere, throughout, every three minutes, affording complete control of temperature and humidity. Unique among establishments of this kind is a complete gymnasium including devices for many special forms of exercise which may be prescribed as an adjunct to the bath treatments. In addition to the Bath departments, are sun-bath roof lounge and outdoor esplanade for the enjoyment of complete relaxation and leisure.

**Arthritis Relieved** Conditions in which these waters give notable relief and frequently outright cure, include arthritis, neuritis, neuralgia, gout, acute inflammatory rheumatism, diabetes, Bright's disease and high blood pressure. Nicotine poisoning, malaria, anemia, blood and skin diseases show marked improvement after application of the Baths.

With the spread of arthritis as a common ailment, the curative effect of the Hot Springs' Baths upon this trouble is of vital interest. Arthritis is the medical term for what is often called rheumatism. Similarly, there are many



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rheumatoid conditions which fall under the same heading, but which respond to the same general form of therapeutic treatment, the only difference being in the nature of the tissues involved. Arthritis is a curable disease, depending upon the promptness with which treatment is begun and intelligent application of the existing medical knowledge of its treatment.

Hot Springs' waters also are beneficial in states of chronic nervous exhaustion due to worry or over work. Heart disorders, too, such as those accompanied by high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis and those dependent upon infection, may be greatly relieved.

**Medical Specialists** While the Baths may be taken without medical advice, results are less certain, and the U. S. Government itself recommends the services of a registered physician. The only medical men allowed to prescribe the Baths at Hot Springs National Park are those who have passed an examination by the Federal Board and who have been licensed by the State of Arkansas. Obviously then, the wide experience of this medical group in treating arthritic conditions, and operating under such Federal safeguards, can be of the utmost benefit to all who suffer from these and kindred ills.

### **Hot Springs National Park Within Easy Reach**

Hot Springs National Park is within one night's ride in air conditioned trains, from Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, New Orleans, Dallas, Kansas City and Omaha. Through sleepers are operated from gateway points by the Missouri Pacific and Rock Island Railways which offer reduced round trip fares all year. Paved motor highways, including the famous "Broadway of America," bring Hot Springs within comfortable reach of the motorist from any point in the United States. The Fordyce Baths are centrally located and easily accessible from the hotels and living accommodations which Hot Springs provides in abundance, and to suit each visitor's taste and pocketbook. The resort offers almost every form of outdoor recreation, including walking, golf, horseback, fishing and water sports on two beautiful lakes. A mild winter climate and an altitude of approximately 1,000 feet, permit the enjoyment of open air diversion the year 'round.

The Fordyce Baths extends a cordial invitation to every one seeking health, rest and change, and will upon request gladly furnish more detailed information regarding the methods and charges for treatment.

# FORDYCE Baths

HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK  
A R K A N S A S

12. Lake Hamilton Near Hot Springs.

14. Hot Springs Country Club.

13. Many Miles of Trails Like This.

15. Along Bath House Row.