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TURNING THE CORNER:
THE LANDSCAPE HISTORY OF THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK

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SUMMARY

SUMMARY

In December, 1989, controversy over the design proposed in the Landscape Plan, Phase I, brought about the need for additional research on this site. The Historic Structure Report for the Administration Building was underway at the same time. The authors of that document raised even more questions about the landscape. As a result, the park was requested to provide additional historical data on the landscape history of the site.

During the course of that research, several important points about the landscape emerged. They are summarized here. More in-depth explanations of them appear in the Chronology and Illustrations sections of this report.

First, the site has been an official government information node since 1898. In other words, people have been stopping there for nearly 100 years to inquire about the park. The Department of the Interior has used the site to orient people to the park since 1898.

Second, the same path from Central Avenue to the building on the site has been used for more than 100 years. Although the actual pavement and its width have changed and the alignments of the buildings have changed, pedestrians have been using that east-west path for more than one century.

Third, the designers of the Administration Building and its landscape wanted the building set back far enough from Reserve Avenue to create a plaza in front of the structure. By setting the building up against the Lamar Bathhouse and having its front elevation facing Reserve Avenue, they reasoned, the landscape turned the corner and helped to provide emphasis to the southern end of the promenade. In the small plaza in front of the building, they placed a display fountain. This fountain, the globed streetlights, and the Administration Building terminated the four-block vista from the train station up Valley Street to the southern end of the park. This southern end was the part of the park that visitors most often saw first. This small plaza provided the introduction to the nation's spa.

Fourth, the dominating landscape treatment from 1936 to the present has been a formal one. Although informal elements appeared from the mid-1950s to the present, the dominant treatment through the decades consisted of clean, geometric shapes and sharp edges. The

treatment of the vegetation and layout of the paths/pavement were the primary elements of that formality.

Fifth, the use of street furniture has been fairly flexible over the building's history. The park staff has moved fountains (except the display fountain), streetlights, trash receptacles, and signs. The flagpole has remained in its original 1936 location. Although the actual sign has changed, the location of the park's entrance sign on the site is also original.

In short, the site has undergone some change, but the dominant feeling of formal, geometric structure remains. The site and circulation around it possess integrity of function.

CHRONOLOGY AND COMMENTS

CHRONOLOGY
AND
COMMENTS

- 1895 The Noble Fountain, also known as Octagon Fountain, sat at the southwest corner of the Reservation. (see Rhodes, p. 48 and figure 75 in that document). Also a Stevens report of the same period of time noted the Reserve Ave. entrance was the "foreground level" of the mountain. Stevens stated "It is immediately adjacent to the main entrance to the Army and Navy General Hospital grounds, the two stairways forming a double entrance, separated only by a wall on the department line" (Rhodes p. 50).
- 1896 Cutters Guide (photo on p. 311 of Rhodes) showed pump house, Imperial Bathhouse, and no fountain.
- 1898 Pump house building "fitted up," to accommodate visitor information services (Rhodes, p. 78). That way, visitors didn't have to walk all the way to Fountain Street for Reservation info. So, by this time, the function of establishing visitor contact at the corner of Central and Reserve existed--the late nineteenth century. This need was to greet visitors coming up from the train station. The building was the official information node. The building faced Central Avenue on the corner of Reserve.
- 1914 Two ornamental electric light standards installed on Reserve Avenue to mark the beginning of Bathhouse Row for people arriving by train (Rhodes, 100).
- The usual path taken from the train station included a vista that was four city blocks long that looked north from the vicinity of the train station to this site (see Illustrations). An electric streetcar route from the train station (now the Sawmill Depot Restaurant) came up Valley Street (now Post Office parking lot), turned west on Reserve, and then north on Central. This was an important vista to introduce the visitors to the park.
- 1918 Pump house remodelled, and brick addition constructed. Outside walls painted white "to correspond with the office."
- 1921 New floor laid in the office of the Captain of Police in the pump house/administration building (Rhodes, 114).
- Early 1920s Pump house/administration building painted white with

black trim (Rhodes, 114).

- 1922 Stephen T. Mather understood the historic use of the park resource rather than its preservation. He also believed that the federal government's image should be better represented on Bathhouse Row. He wrote: "The Magnolia Promenade . . . is made up of a magnificent collection of buildings probably unsurpassed in their kind on the globe. The government . . . building should now be remodeled as its present appearance . . . is anything but a compliment to the government. Having forced the construct of a row of beautiful buildings, it should now place its own building in the same class" (Report of the Director for Fiscal Year 1922).
- 1923 Pump house/administration building re-roofed (Rhodes, 114).
- 1924 Pump house/administration building repaired; the interior of the pump house was whitewashed, the heating plant was overhauled, new floor were laid, rooms were partitioned to provide storage for office supplied, new screen doors and windows were installed (Rhodes, 114).
- 1925 Development Outline for park in 1925 called for the construction of a new office building to replace the painted brick former pump house. Superintendent Bolten wrote: "The present office building was erected twenty or more years ago for use as a pump house, and when the idea of using a central pumping station was abandoned, it was converted into an office building. It is a small painted brick building without architectural merit, located prominently at the head of Bath House Row and compares very unfavorably with the beautiful building the Government has complied (sic) the bath house companies to erect on the Reservation" (File D-18, 12/18/25, Bolten to the Director).
- 1927 Stuccoed brick archway built in the rear of the office; the exterior was repainted, and the floors got new rugs; roof tile repaired, pump house re-roofed; new doors and windows installed; false interior overhead woodwork taken out; pumps reset on new concrete bases (Rhodes, 114).
- 1927 Mann and Stern did design for remodeling and additions to Administration building. Plan included extensions to front and north sides of the building and a meeting room. Plans not implemented (Rhodes, 114).
- June 1927 Senator Joe Robinson of Little Rock telegraphed the

director of NPS requesting that no additional remodelling be done to the old administration building (Rhodes, 114).

The move began in earnest to replace the inadequate facility with a structure more compatible with its uses.

1929 Drawing 128/4939 showed land that the War Department requested be transferred to them adjacent to the Army Navy Hospital (Rhodes, 128).

1930 Charles Peterson noted the importance of the comprehensive development of the park. He saw the need for a formal development from Reserve Avenue to the foundation of the shop building on the north (Arlington Lawn vicinity) including his proposed promenade and everything west of it (Rhodes, 142).

1931 Drawings 128/30000 and 128/1100 showed the future of park development (Rhodes, 132).

1931 Old administration building was renovated again: new floor; heating plant repaired, etc. (Rhodes, 177).

1931 Tom Vint did a planting plan for grounds of old administration building, but Rhodes did not know if this was implemented (Rhodes, 177).

1931 Vint proposed in his plan to the Director to remove the Imperial Bathhouse and create a new entrance on the south end of the promenade. He wanted to combine the Army and Navy Hospital stairs and the Park Service stairs into "one wide stairway" (Rhodes, 146).

1932 Charles Peterson wrote a memorandum of agreement covering a number of development proposals. Included were retention of the land around the Imperial Bathhouse and the initiation of a promenade design to include the construction of monumental stairways, decorative fountains, and cascades, and construction of new park entrances (Rhodes, 133).

Dec 1932 Preliminary plans were completed for the Promenade (Rhodes 147).

Jan 1933 Blueprints of promenade sent to Superintendent in January 1933.

Jan 1933 Peterson recommended in a memo on the prom that the

promenade axis intersect the axis of the approach to the Army and Navy Hospital. Because of that, the site of the Imperial bathhouse, which occupied the site of the proposed promenade, "should be jointly studies the office of the Construction Quartermaster" (Rhodes, 148).

Jan
1933

Supt Allen commented on the plan that they should eliminate the flights of stairs at the far south ramp entrance, and substitute an inclined ramp instead (Rhodes 148).

Jan
1933

Allen wrote to Peterson that he wanted to have rural, rustic, naturalistic-looking landscaping, and that he protested the formality that Peterson and the others wanted. Allen wanted to concentrate on the outdoor features, rather than the formal landscape (Rhodes 148).

This was the same approach favored (and enforced) by Secretary of the Interior Ickes. He was in that position from 1933 to 1946, and he opposed the formal promenade from the time he was appointed to the office.

Feb
1933

Dir. Albright wrote back to Allen that the landscape division was proceeding correctly in using the formal approach to landscape. He stated "we are facing the fact, undesirable as it may be, that that part of the park bordering on Bathhouse Row is in effect a city park . . . (and that the supt. was) . . . overstressing the possibilities of damage to that park front; it has already been irretrievably damaged for naturalistic treatment by the bathhouse structures, and particularly their rear views" (Rhodes, 150).

March
1933

Peterson sent Allen a number of photographs of the Prado in Havana, Cuba, showing a promenade connecting with the mouth of the harbor. He noted that this was so successfully handled, and that the design problem was very similar to that of Hot Springs. The superintendent wasn't impressed (Rhodes, 150; the photographs and correspondence appear in the park files).

July
1933

Peterson wrote to Allen and said that the wanted an administration building that would line up with the Lamar and "finish off the corner in a suitable way." He wanted it to have an architectural connection to the future Promenade, and he believed that the building should be "very solid in appearance since it will occupy an

important position at the foot of the hill. Something in a modern style, of a light color in stone, terra cotta or brick, or any combination of them (File D-34, Peterson to Allen, 5/22/34).

August
1933

Peterson let onsite LA Zimmer do a lot of the decision-making on the design of the plan, but also he wanted him to use light-colored materials to harmonize with the Arlington and the Army-Navy hospital (Rhodes, 151).

Sept.
1933

LA R.W. Emerson in his Promenade Notes said that the south terminus of the promenade deserved a formal architectural treatment, probably with a combination of ramp and stair. He said that it also needed a "definite and substantial termination feature," and he went on to describe formal planting boxes, a small plaza and fountain, and encircling steps down to Reserve Avenue. He also stated that a public water supply must be incorporated into the motif (File D-30, Roads and Trails, Promenade, 1930-1945, Promenade Notes, September 12, 1933).

Note that the above memo laid out some of the basics of the design that was constructed in 1957 (plaza, fountain, ramp, stairs).

Dec
1933

Cammerer wrote to Sec. of Interior Ickes saying that NPS proposed to construct a 2-story administration building "of a type which will harmonize with its surroundings, and carry out the standard of architectural design which is required of the bathhouse operators at the ... Park, on a prominent site at the end of Bathhouse Row in the park (Park file d-34, Administration Building, 12/18/33).

May
1934

Deputy Chief Architect Charles Peterson to Supt. Tom Allen: "The design for this building I feel should be of such nature that it would line up with the Lamar and other bath houses and finish off the corner in a suitable way. I believe it very highly advantageous to have a connection to the Promenade as suggested in the plan" (File D-34, Administration Building, 5/22/34).

June
1934

Tom Allen wanted an additional entrance on Central Avenue, but decided not to push the point because he knew that insisting upon it would diminish the amount of office space in the plans (File D-34, Administration Building, Tom Allen to Charles Peterson, 6/1/34).

August
1934

Tom Vint, Chief Architect for the National Park Service wrote to Supt. Tom Allen about the building design: "I think it is important to get the building as close to the Lamar, or in other words as far back from Reserve Avenue as the lot will permit. I see the building as a terminal to Bath House Row and at the same time a part of the architectural scheme to the Reserve Avenue entrance to the Promenade. The space it has gained from placing the building as far back from Reserve Avenue as possible will help give an open effect to the Promenade entrance, rather than a right angle stairway from the Reserve Avenue sidewalk. The parallel sidewalk in front of the Administration Building has a definite architectural value, in fact I think that the points taken up in the paragraph, namely, the elimination of Central Avenue entrance to Administration Building, the placing of the Administration Building as far back as possible from Reserve Avenue, and the parallel sidewalk in front of the Administration Building, are all parts of one problem. There is a value in having some open space, or in a way a miniature plaza at the Reserve end of Bath House road [sic] and the Promenade. It also justifies the non provision of a Central Avenue entrance to the office building. This is a difficult point to express in a letter and I am not sure that the above statements will be entirely clear to you, but it is about the best I can do (Vint to Allen, File D-34, Administration Building, 8/7/34).

Sept.
1934

At the request of the Director to resolve the issue of appropriate design, Charles Peterson presented the design to the Fine Art Commission in Washington for its review and approval. In his presentation, Peterson stated: "The entrant features is designed to more or less center upon and terminate the axis of Valley Street. For a year or two the east end of the proposed Administration Building will be partly obscured by the Imperial Bath House - a structure which is to be removed when its owner's lease expires. In place of the Imperial Bath House will be the termination of a formal promenade running between "Bath House Row" and the new Army and Navy Hospital. It will therefore be noted that the building will occupy a position among more or less sophisticated architecture in contrast to most National Park administration buildings (File D-34, Administration Building, Sept. 8, 1934, Peterson to Fine Arts Commission).

Oct

1934

Drawings for the Admin/prom expanded the "inner walk" to "create and esplanade in order to avoid possible criticism of the parallel walks, as shown originally, and maintaining the direct access to the Promenade from the building as indicated. In this scheme emphasis is given the Central Avenue elevation of the building, by centering a monumental flagpole on that facade.

Oct
1934

R.W.Emerson wrote to Tom Vint saying that he had "made an effort to open the design, in a manner adaptable to extensive landscape treatment, by reducing the amount of exposed masonry to a minimum and still tie the separate units such as the Army and Navy Hospital approach and the New Administration Building, into a SINGLE COMPREHENSIVE DESIGN" (Rhodes, 160).

1935

Meinecke noted that both the north and south ends of Bathhouse Row "must be treated monumentally and lavishly, in keeping with the expectations of a highly sophisticated and splendor-loving public" (Rhodes, 134).

Feb
1935

Secretary of the Interior Ickes gave a speech stressing the need to keep park resources in their natural state to avoid overdevelopment (Rhodes, 163).

Feb 12
1935

Director Cammerer acknowledged receiving from Supt. Allen a copy of a letter stating that the Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes did not favor construction of the Promenade (File D-30, Roads and Trails, Promenade 1930-45).

April
1935

Fill and excavation completed on the promenade from the south end (called section 4) to beyond the Superior (Rhodes, 162). But funding stopped based on Ickes speech.

May
1935

Old Administration building demolished (Rhodes, 178).

July
1935

Supt. Allen continued with existing funds to concentrate some work on the south end of the prom by seeding and planting. They constructed temporary wooden steps and guard rails (Rhodes, 164).

Feb
1936

New administration building occupied, dedicated in March.

Feb

1936

Boxwoods and other plan materials bought for area around administration building (Rhodes, 179). Also, rough stone walkways were installed around structure by that time, but some had to wait until the Imperial was removed (Rhodes 180).

1936

An undated newspaper clipping from this time period quotes Superintendent Allen as stating that the landscaping of the Administration Building grounds will be started soon. He intended to turn the grounds into "a picture of beauty, to match the blooming magnolia trees that enhance the government walk along Bath House Row" (File D-34, Administration Building).

March

1936

Arno Cammerer dedicated the new administration building. In his speech, he noted the following about the building:

"The location of the structure has been an important factor in the attempt to seize its greatest opportunities of usefulness and public service, and to weld the various architectural and landscape elements into an eventually acceptable unit. It will fit in harmoniously with the proposed entrance to the future promenade to the east, and the main entrance to the great hospital building further east. The choice of Spanish architecture was made only after most careful consideration. It was felt that the traditional visit of De Soto was of sufficient human interest to be reflected in the architectural treatment. Moreover, the Spanish architecture was evolved to meet human needs in a warm, clean atmosphere similar to the climate of this region" (Cammerer speech, Garland County Historical Society File "National Park Dedication, 1936").

Cammerer also noted that "the chief purpose of this structure is to aid in rendering more available the benefits of the park -- in other words, to render the best service possible to the thousands of visitors that come here annually in increasing numbers, seeking benefit from the health giving waters that are under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service."

March

1936

Landscape architect R.W. Emerson noted in a letter to Supt. Allen that: they should use boxwood along the Reserve Avenue side of the grounds because they were planning on using it in generous amounts in the design of the Reserve Avenue terminus to the Promenade; the hedge along Central Avenue could be boxwood or privet;

and the design would suffer if the public (street) sidewalk were lined with either (File D-34, Administration Building, March 2, 1936).

In other words, the designs of the Administration Building site and the promenade terminus were meant to be tied together. Also, the vista looking toward the Administration Building had a hierarchy of plants: just grass as a groundcover in the immediate foreground with the main axis (sidewalk up to the building) lined with a hedge, and taller vegetation at the base of the structure and marking the main entrance.

March
1936

Ken McCarter (Acting Chief Architect) wrote to Supt. Allen that the walk's border was not supposed to be scrubbed, and that the main part of the walk was to be broken into squares as indicated on plan HS-1043A. The finish of the squares was to be a scrubbed aggregate surface, following the specifications. (File D-34, Administration Building, March 18, 1936). In other words, the border along the edges had a smoother finish.

May
1936

Boxwood hedges 25-28 years and large boxwoods (37 years) flanking doorway planted. Also, the Superintendent noted that he was pleased with the finish of the aggregate on the concrete court and walk. He was awaiting the granite for the curbing and steps, but reminded Vint that they had gone ahead and planted the boxwood hedges to get the established before the arrival of the hot weather (File D-34, Administration Building, Allen to Vint, May 5, 1936).

June
1936

Imperial Bathhouse removed by this time (Rhodes).

1936

Cast concrete fountain placed in front of administration building (Rhodes 189). The park staff constructed the fountain.

August
1936

Project 534-A, planting the ground of the Administration Building, also sidewalks, curbing, and fountain, completed under force account in late August, 1936 (File D-34, Administration Building, Asst. Supt Bolton to Deputy Chief. Architect, June 18, 1937).

August
1936

Drawings 1112 and 1113 showed the proposed treatment for Administration Building parking area and promenade

entrance. The temporary treatment shown in the drawings provided for a final concrete surface drive and parking area, a minimum of grading for the Promenade terminus, and the construction of temporary gravel walks and wooden stairways (File D-30, Roads and Trails, Promenade 1930-45, letter of transmittal, Vint to Supt., August 26, 1936).

1936

Project completion report stated that 1043-A plans and specifications followed. Grounds brought to grade, fertilized, seeded. Boxwood planted around the building. Sidewalks paved and curbs and ashlar put in, with the exception of those going in front of the Imperial Bathhouse -- they would have hindered the removal of the building that still encroached on the site of the Administration Building. Old lawn sprinkler system salvaged and reinstalled. Fountain constructed by the park staff with great results, following the design and specs of course. Someone put goldfish in the base of the fountain after the water had been turned on. The exterior of the fountain was supposed to be hand-rubbed -- an expensive finish. But: "since the fountain has been in operation an algae peculiar to these waters has formed over the bowl of the fountain hiding away any effect we had created by the special treatment" (File H-30, Narrative Report, Demolition of Old Building and Construction of New Administration Building, Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas, and Administration Building Grounds, Walks, Planting, Etc.).

March
1937

Specifications for the Completion of the Administration Building Grounds sent to the park, so they could follow them using force account method. Specifications also in this file. (File D-32, Grounds, Administration Building, 1936-37).

May
1937

Vint suggested to the Supt. that he put a chain across the old stone steps at the entrance because placing the wooden steps there would make the stairs useless, in his words. All of the work at the south end of the promenade was "of a purely temporary nature and we feel that the wooden steps will be quite adequate for the next few years to come (File D-32, Grounds, Administration Building, 1936-37, Vint to Libbey, May 18, 1937).

June
1937

Following the demolition of the Imperial, the designers discovered that the proposed parking lot could not be quite as large as called for in the plans. The rock bluff was considerably larger than they had anticipated

(File D-32, Grounds, Administration Building, 1936-37, Taylor to Vint, June 2, 1937).

June
1937

On June 7, work began to rehabilitate and landscape the site of the on Imperial Bathhouse. Work followed plan 1115 (File D-32, Grounds, Administration Building, 1936-37, Supt. Libbey to Director, June 15, 1937).

August
1937

Work at Reserve Avenue entrance to the Promenade neared completion under force account--meaning that the park staff did it (File D-32, Grounds, Administration Building, 1936-37, Vint to Libbey, August 10, 1937).

Oct
1937

Supt. requested that Vint consider putting in smaller trees at the south end of the prom design, because the two large magnolias on Reserve were getting old (Rhodes, 180). The magnolias to which the Supt. referred were extant in 1990. Also hedges outlined in Vint's plan planted at this time (Rhodes, 181).

Oct
1937

Drawing 1115 revised to include changes proposed by Supt. Libbey. This planting plan 1115 approved by the Director in Spring of 1936 (File D-32, Grounds, Administration Building, 1936-37, Carnes to Maier, Oct. 28, 1937).

1938

Street railway tracks removed along Central in front of Bathhouse Row (Scully, p. 261).

The street railway had been the most common method for visitors to get to Bathhouse Row from the train station. By this time the automobile had become the preferred transport.

1938

Ventilating chamber and automatic fan installed on north side of the admin building to cool the pumping chamber. Also parking area landscaped and plants and shrubs set out "in accordance with the approved plan" (Rhodes, 181).

1942

Promenade was a 20' wide graded, gravel-covered path behind the bathhouses (Rhodes, 169).

Sept
1942

Brick surfacing of promenade completed from just north of the south entrance to main entrance (Rhodes, 224).

1946

The chairman of the park safety committee complained that the wooden steps at the south end of the Promenade were beginning to deteriorate. He noted: "As these were

built as a temporary structure only, it is believed that something must be done soon toward replacing them. Constant and heavy use is given these steps and it is necessary to watch them very closely to prevent conditions hazardous to visitors (File A7619, Safety Meeting Minutes, 1943-53, Sept. 18, 1946)."

- ca.1946 Administration Building repaired and repainted (Rhodes, 207).
- 1951 The following quote appeared in the files: "A potential hazard caused by the settling of the long, concrete slab, which forms the top of the steps leading to the display fountain in front of the administration building, was removed by repair work done by the maintenance crew on April 13" (File A7619, Safety Meeting, 1943-53, April 23, 1951).
- 1953 The park safety committee recommended that the light pole adjacent to the jug fountain "be moved back onto the walk approximately one foot or that a guard rail be put around it. This pole is always being hit by a car and one or more of the large light globes knocked off" (File A7619, Safety Meeting Minutes, 1943-53, January 9, 1953).
- 1955 Supt. requested that the parking lot at the rear of the Admin building be enlarged (Rhodes, 236).
- 1955 Wooden steps replaced at south end of promenade (Rhodes, 237).
- 1957 South entrance to the promenade constructed -- formal entrance -- with wrought-iron rail, masonry, brick work, etc (Rhodes, 238). The Noble fountain was moved to new location at the south entrance to the promenade. The construction of the promenade also included an expansion of the parking lot. This slightly changed the grade at the rear of the Administration Building.
- 1958 Two magnolias on Reserve Avenue sidewalk were old and the Supt. predicted that they would only last a few more years. Also, he suggested that they use smaller trees in that area so that there would be less shade and fewer loiterers (Rhodes, 240).
- 1960 Old air-conditioning system replaced in the Administration Building (Rhodes, 248).
- 1965 Steps on Administration Building enlarged. Also see the photograph in the Illustrations section.
- 1966 Downstairs remodeled in lobby/a.v. area (Rhodes, 248).

circa
1980

As an aftermath of a drought, the redbud east of the display fountain died. The park had planted the redbud during the 1950s (author's interview with Engineering Technician Tim Jarrell).

1981

The steps of the Administration Building started to sag, and the park staff discovered a huge leak in a 2.5-inch water line under the steps. The leak had eroded a crater approximately four feet deep under the west end of the steps. As part of the rehabilitation of the plaza/step area, the park filled the hole with concrete and capped the water line on the west side of the steps. The park contracted out the replacement of the plaza pavement at that time. The entire section of new pavement had an exposed-aggregate finish (author's interview with Utilities Foreman Jay Meredith and DSC Engineer John McLeod).

This contrasted with the original pavement in the plaza. The original pavement was exposed aggregate except for the outside edges, which had a smoother concrete finish with no exposed aggregate (see photographs in Illustrations section).

1985

The park staff created planting beds along the edges of the main walkway up to the building and at its foundation. Treated timbers bordered the beds (author's interview with Engineering Technician Tim Jarrell).

1986

The park had two transformers constructed adjacent to the parking lot and the Lamar Bathhouse. The construction also involved the removal of several trees along that northern edge of the Administration Building parking lot (author's interviews with Facility Manager Ron Jordan and Engineering Technician Tim Jarrell).

1987

Several steel and concrete guard posts were constructed at the edge of the parking lot to protect the transformers (author's interview with Engineering Technician Tim Jarrell).

1988

The park removed vegetation (former "bushes that had turned into trees") on the southeast corner of the Administration Building. During that summer the park also removed a cedar tree on the west side of the building (author's interview with Engineer Technician Tim Jarrell).

1989

Landscape Management Plan recognized the primarily formal quality of the Administration Building lawn, and it

recognized the informal changes that have occurred to this site over time. Formal elements included the hedges and shrubs marking the front entrance and the sidewalks with its scored pattern. Informal elements included the ivy groundcover at the corner and the more recent informal plantings. The document stated: "Preservation of these consistent elements and relationships is critical to maintaining the area's historic integrity. This area is included in management class I and is visually accessible and sensitive to alteration" (LMP, 37-38).

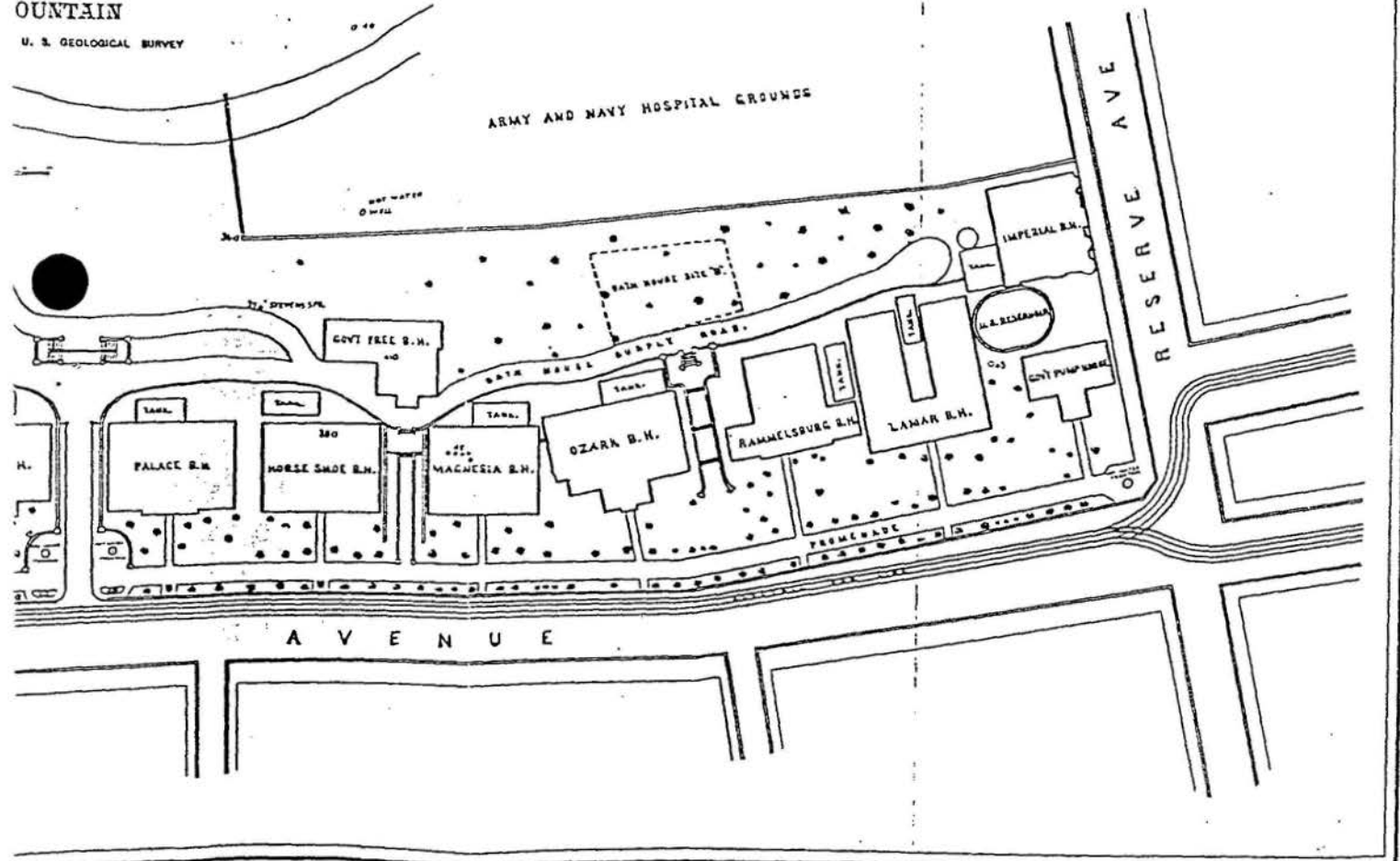
ILLUSTRATIONS

SPRINGS RESERVATION

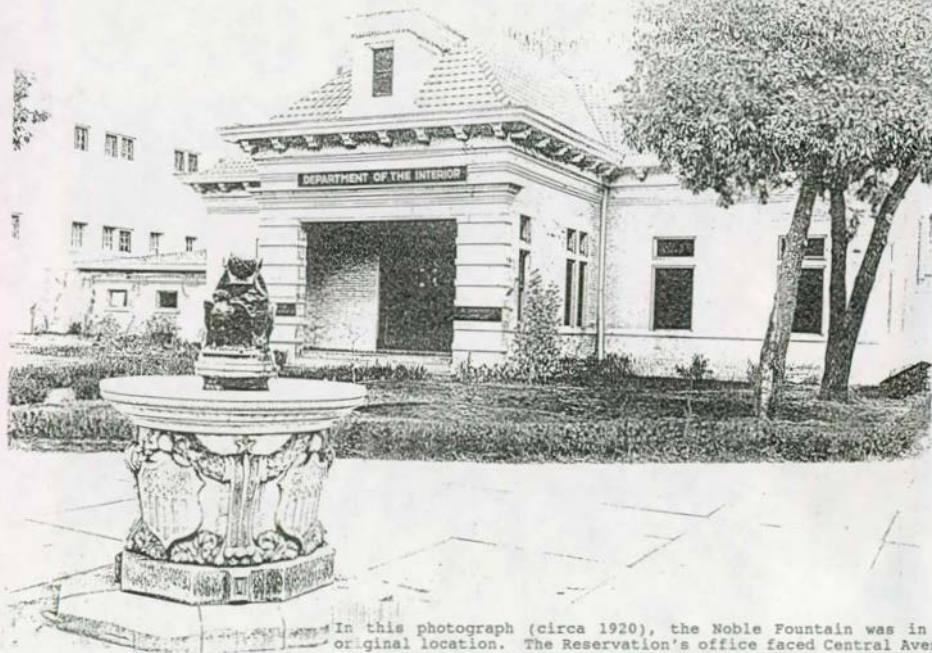
THE
HOT SPRINGS

MOUNTAIN

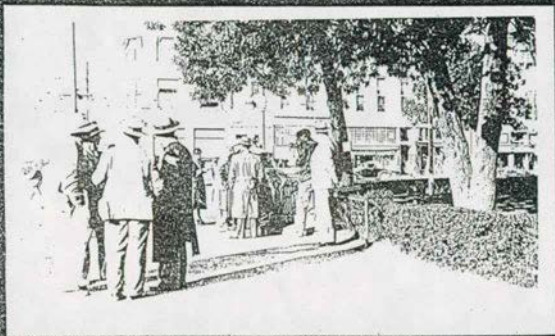
U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



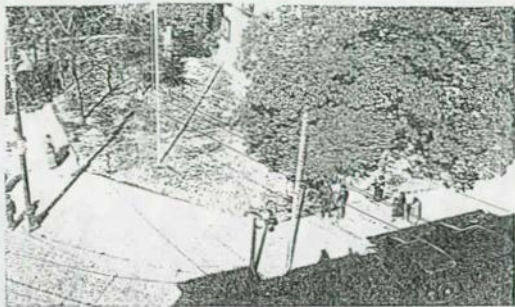
In this 1902 map, the government pump house occupied the corner of Central and Reserve Avenues close to the sidewalk on Reserve. The Noble Fountain, at its original location, occupied the polygonal site at the corner. The streetcar railway serving the train station to the south of the Reservation turned the corner at the site. Beginning in 1989, the federal government used this corner for visitor information.



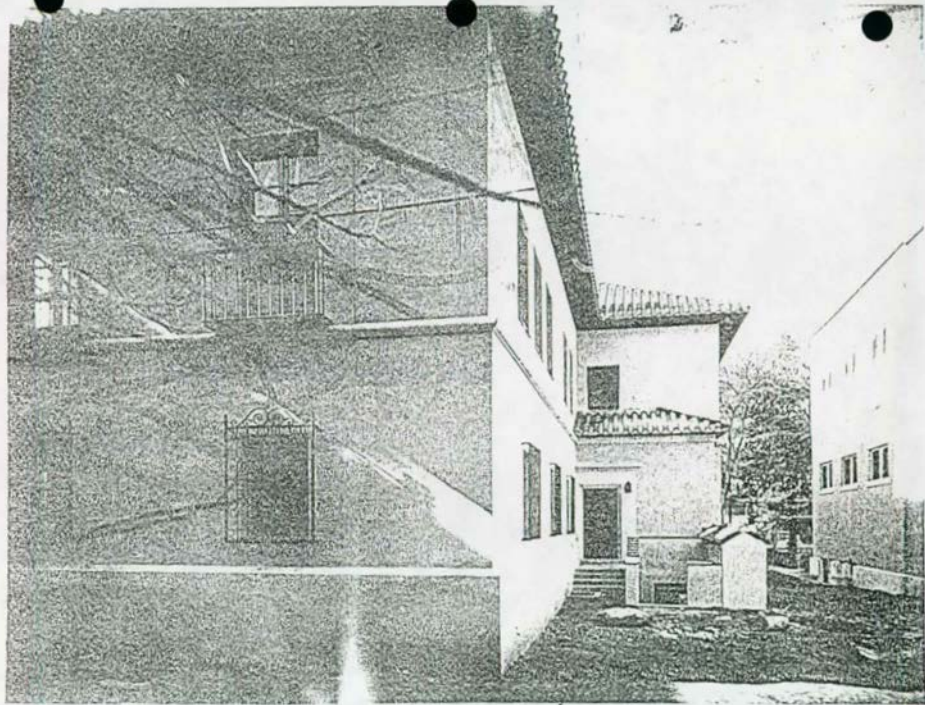
In this photograph (circa 1920), the Noble Fountain was in its original location. The Reservation's office faced Central Avenue. A paved walkway provided access to the building. A low hedge bordered the sidewalk. Two magnolias (extant in 1990) occupied the southwest corner of the building site. The magnolias grew approximately four feet from the edge of the sidewalk.



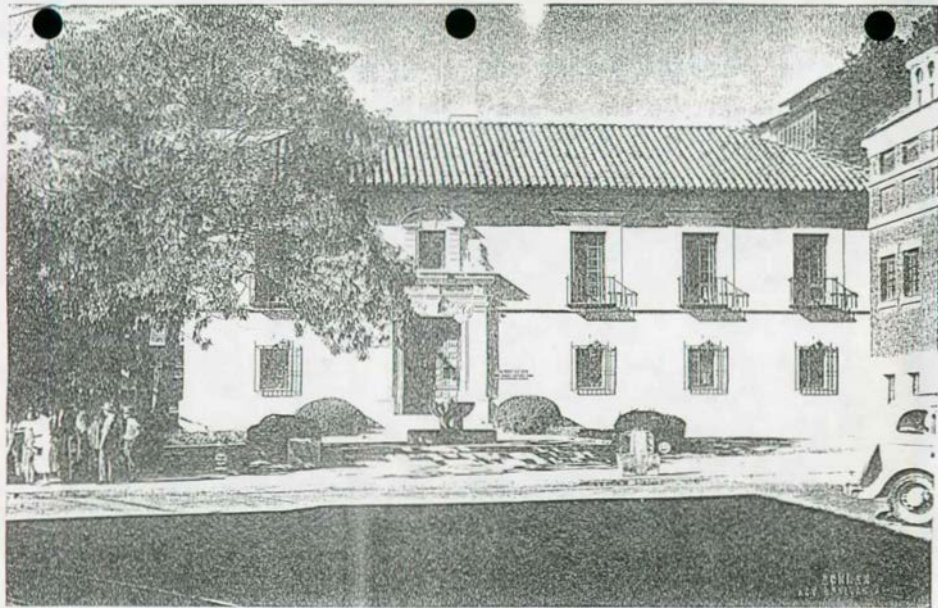
In this photograph taken prior to the construction of the new Administration Building in 1935-36, the edge of the planted landscape wrapped around the north side of the Noble Fountain. Following construction of the Administration Building, the sidewalk expanded toward the base of the magnolia trees.



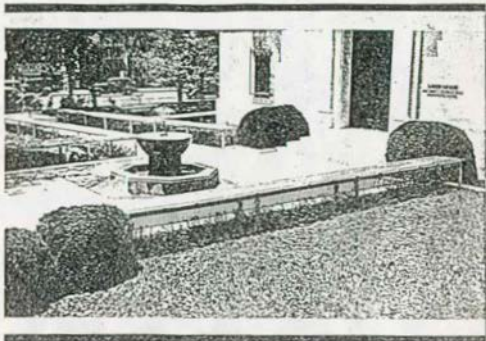
The National Park Service moved into its new Administration Building in the spring of 1936. These photographs accompanied construction completion reports. When they were taken, the landscaping work at the site had not begun. The flagpole was in place, and the grassy boundary extended partially around the base of the Noble Fountain. The scar of the former sidewalk leading from Central Avenue to the former building remained visible. The new sidewalk that provided access to the Administration Building followed the same path as the old. In other words, people had been walking down that short path to an information mode since 1898 -- the time that the Department of the Interior first began providing onsite information.



The rear of the new Administration Building historically had a lower grade. Four steps provided access to the back door of the building.



In this 1936 photograph, the designer's use of foreground, middleground, and background in the landscaping is evident. The low foreground includes the jug fountain at the street, the Noble Fountain, the paved sidewalk, and the curb. The middleground includes the fountain plaza, hedges, and round shrubs marking key edges. The background is the building. The Imperial Bathhouse is on the right side of the photograph.



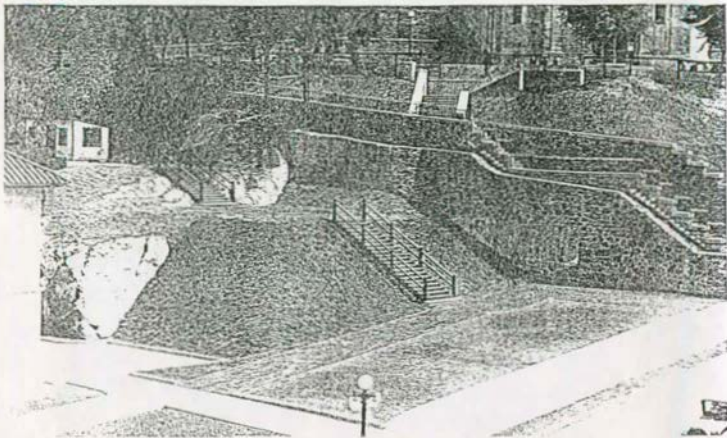
The preliminary landscaping for the site in 1936 included small boxwood hedges and larger, older boxwood shrubs. The park staff protected the smaller shrubs from summer heat by shading them.

The clarity of purpose in the landscape design was evident in 1936.
The formal lines and strict geometry dominated the landscape.





The removal of the Imperial Bathhouse during the summer of 1936 brought about problems for the contractor hire to do the job. When removing the foundations, the company encountered bedrock much sooner than anticipated. The contractor removed the old Department of the Interior stairway at the same time. The stairway originally ran parallel to the hospital stairway in the photograph.



During the summer of 1937, the park staff neared completion of the temporary landscaping at the Reserve Avenue entrance to the Promenade. A concrete path lead from the vicinity of the front steps of the Administration Building to the driveway (lower left). A gravel path formed an "L" at the base of the wooden steps that led up to the Promenade. Two street lamps on Reserve Avenue marked the south boundary of the park. Curbs edged the driveway.



In this photograph, circa 1939, the landscaping for the temporary design solution for the south end of the Promenade was completed. The opposition of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes to the construction of a formal promenade delayed work on it for two decades.



The corner of Central and Reserve looked like this in 1940. Two lights marked this south edge of the park. The Army and Navy Hospital loomed above Bathhouse Row.



In this 1947 photograph, the length of the vista looking from the Administration Building south to the railroad station was evident. The length of this vista meant that the entrance to the Administration Building was visible for four blocks. This put increased importance on the appearance of the Administration Building and its grounds. The building was the terminal feature of this city vista. Although the plaza that the National Park Service constructed was smaller than originally proposed, it added an impressive aesthetic element to this portion of the city. The Eastman Hotel on the left and the bank of commercial blocks lining the right framed this vista.

PARK HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK
ARKANSAS

CLASSIFICATION NO.
Springs & Fountains
(Therma, Drinking, etc.)

NEGATIVE NO.

F 871

NATIONAL ARCHIVES NO.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NO.

SUBJECT

OTHER

Fountain in Front of
Administration Bldg.

LOCATION

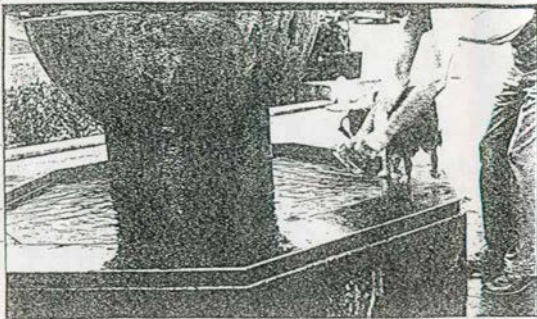
Reserve Ave.

PHOTOGRAPHER & COMPANIONS

DATE TAKEN

March 13, 1947

REMARKS



NPS 10-30 (8-68) NATIONAL VISUAL INVENTORY CARD

In 1947, the border hedge along the walkway from Reserve Avenue to the Administration Building existed. By 1952, it had been removed. The original photograph of this image also showed the distinction between the exposed aggregate concrete in most of the plaza and the smoother, brushed concrete at the outside edges adjacent to the granite curbs.



In 1952, people using the Noble Fountain often rested on the bench between the two magnolias. The pipe railing had spikes to discourage fence-sitters and to control access to the grass behind the bench. At this time no ivy had been planted.

HOI SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK
ARKANSAS

SUBJECT

Administration Bldg and
Visitor Center

LOCATION

Reserve Avenue

PHOTOGRAPHER & COMPANIONS

F. Benson

DATE TAKEN

Sept. 23, 1952

REMARKS

CLASSIFICATION NO.
Buildings, Building Sites,
Shelters, etc.

OTHER

NEGATIVE NO.

136
NATIONAL ARCHIVES NO.

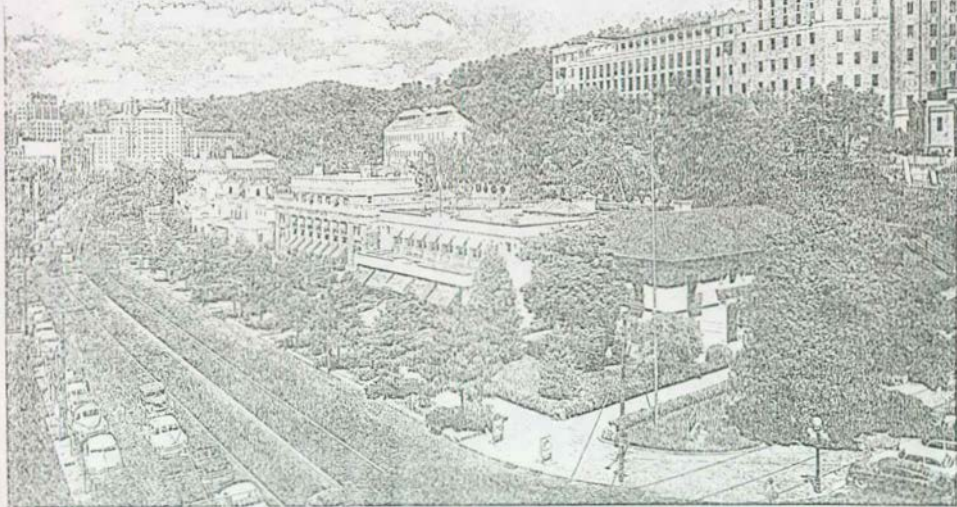
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NO.



NPS 10-30 (8/68) NATIONAL VISUAL INVENTORY CARD

In 1952, the jug fountain (not visible in the photograph) sat at the edge of the curb. The walkways had no hedges bordering them. All of the walkways were paved. The tufa boulders were in evidence by this time. Some vegetation grew at the southeast corner of the building where none had been planted earlier.

In this photograph taken during the early 1950s, some of the broader ideals of the 1930s designs remained strong. The siting of the Administration Building continued the consistent setback of the Central Avenue/Bathhouse Row landscape. The placement of the Administration Building so close to the Lamar Bathhouse (center) created the open space along Reserve Avenue that turned the corner and emphasized the southern end of the promenade. Although not all of the designers' dreams were realized, the overall concept was successful. The design turned the corner and accentuated the promenade with a formal, geometric landscape treatment.





In 1952, the parking lot was quite small. The light pole adjacent to the curb was a target for cars, so the park safety committee had it moved. Vegetation between the parking lot and the Lamar Bathhouse had taken hold. The landscape design along the front elevation was simple and formal.

PARK

HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK,
ARKANSAS

CLASSIFICATION NO.

Springs and Fountains
(Thermal, Drinking, etc.)

NEGATIVE NO.

F 831

NATIONAL ARCHIVES NO.

SUBJECT

OTHER

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NO.

Jug Fountain in Front
of Visitor Center

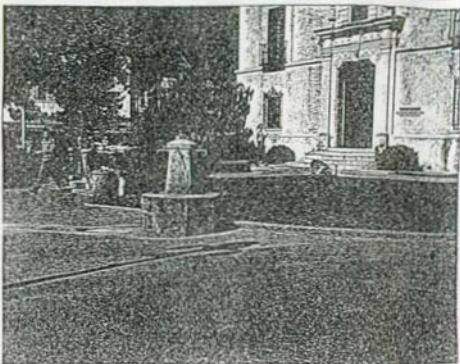
LOCATION

Reserve Avenue

PHOTOGRAPHER & COMPANIONS

DATE TAKEN

REMARKS



NPS 10-30 (8/68) NATIONAL VISUAL INVENTORY CARD

In this photograph, taken between 1952 and 1957, the jug fountain has been moved back toward the curb bordering the Administration Building lawn. A tufa boulder marks the corner of the sidewalks adjacent to the display fountain. Hedges along those sidewalks no longer exist. A small redbud tree has been planted near the curb adjacent to the display fountain.

SUBJECT

OTHER

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NO.

Enlarging Steps in Front
of Headquarters

LOCATION

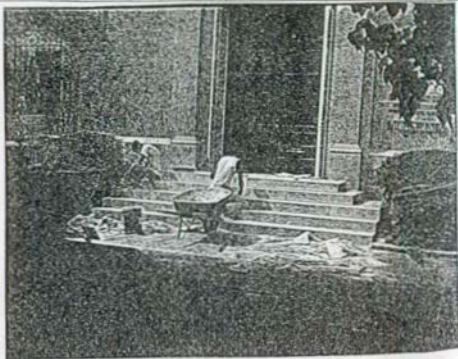
Visitor Center
Reserve Avenue

PHOTOGRAPHER & COMPANIONS

DATE TAKEN

August, 1965

REMARKS



NP 10-30 (8/68) NATIONAL VISUAL INVENTORY CARD

During 1965, the park let a contract to enlarge the steps of the Administration Building. Originally the top step was flush with the inside portion of the base of the pilaster. When the steps were expanded, the top step hit the middle of the pilaster base. Despite this change, the east-west width of the bottom step remained the same. Shortly thereafter, the iron railing appeared on the steps.

PANMUI SPRINGS NATIONAL MON. ARKANSAS

CLASSIFICATION NO.

Promenade

NEGATIVE NO.

B 1 203

SUBJECT

OTHER

Entrance to Grande
Promenade

LOCATION

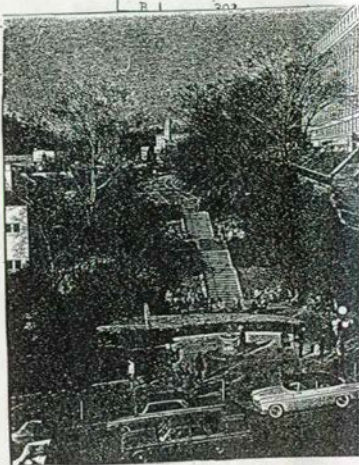
Back of Bathhouse Row

PHOTOGRAPHER & COMPANIONS

DATE TAKEN

REMARKS

NPS 10-30 (8/68) NATIONAL VISUAL INVENTORY CARD



The completion of the south entrance to the promenade in 1957 finally provided a design solution to the long-unfinished project. Although this design varied from the 1930s proposals, some of the elements in the 1957 promenade had been carried over from earlier proposals. Among those are the combination of ramp and stairs, the use of a fountain as a focal terminating feature, and the use of a relatively formal paving surface.

SUBJECT

OTHER

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS NO.

Steam Issuing from Fountain
in Front of Administration
Bldg 30° above Zero

LOCATION

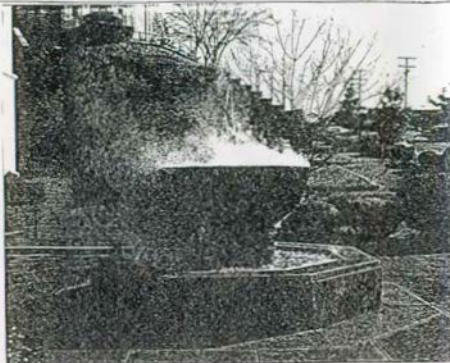
Reserve Avenue

PHOTOGRAPHER & COMPANIONS

DATE TAKEN

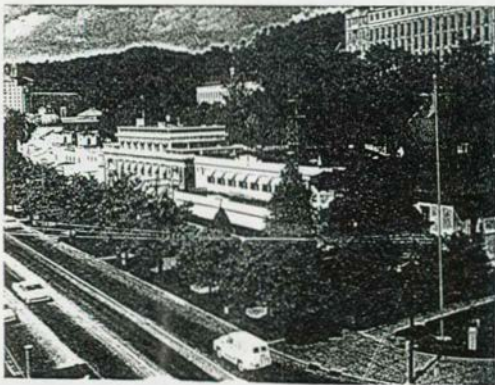
Jan. 24, 1963

REMARKS



NPS 12-30 (E/58) NATIONAL VISITOR INVENTORY FORM

In this 1963 photograph, the hedge along the building foundation is visible. Also of note is the varied concrete pattern: exposed aggregate squares and brushed concrete borders along the curbs.

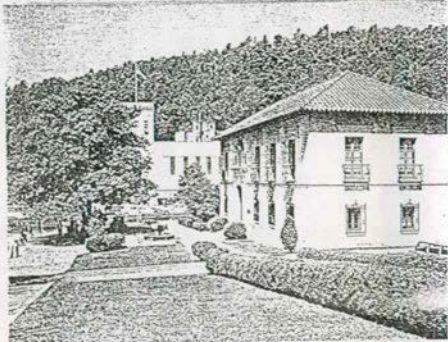


By 1963, the park had a new entrance sign marking the corner adjacent to the flagpole.

In 1939, the walkway from the entrance to the edge of the driveway was paved. Hedges gave strict borders to the walks. Larger shrubs marked key points. The landscape had formal, straight lines. The only groundcover other than pavement was grass.

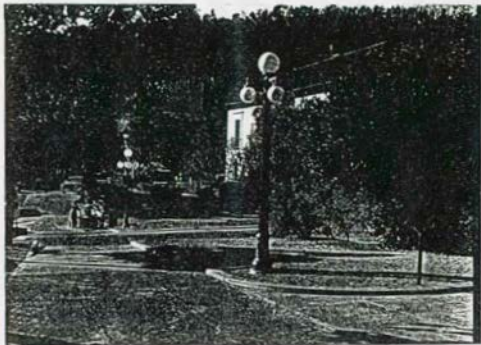


Circa 1952. By this time no change had occurred in paved and gravel walkways. Two of the walkways directly in front of the building no longer had hedges. A bench remained north of the Noble Fountain under the magnolias. The area retained a manicured appearance.



The construction of the promenade in 1957 also brought about distinct changes in the approach to landscape. The bushy shrubs and low trees that were planted started to make the landscape appear less formal.



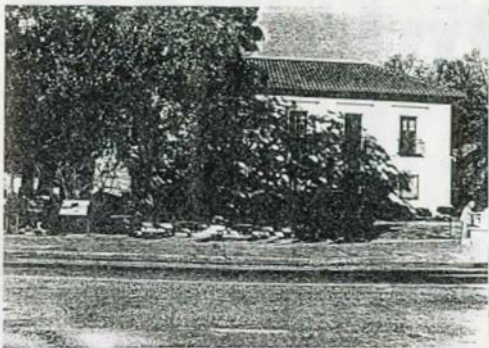


In January, 1990, the bushy vegetation overwhelmed the view of the Administration Building from the east.

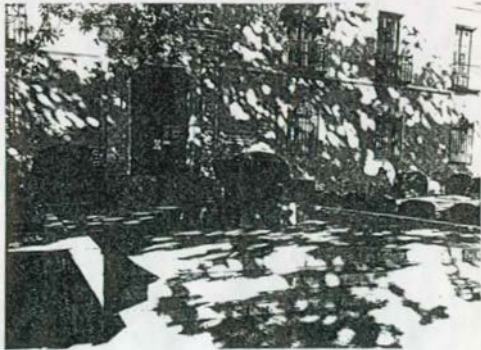




In 1990, the vista down Valley Street is not as well-framed as it had been before the demolition of the Eastman Hotel (formerly on the left) and the block of commercial buildings (formerly on the right). Nevertheless, the long axis still exists between the Administration Building and the new Arkansas Bank and Trust building.



Although temporary signs clutter the site, the formal character of the building and the site remains the dominant element.



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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- . Landscape Management Plan, Bathhouse Row, Hot Springs National Park. Denver: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1989.

Special Collections

- Hot Springs National Park, Hot Springs, Arkansas. Historic Park Files.
- . Park Photo Collection.
- Garland County Historical Society, Hot Springs, Arkansas. Archives and Photo Collection.

Interviews

The author conducted all of the interviews informally with park and Denver Service Center staff. The author interviewed Mechanical Engineer John McLeod of the Denver Service Center; and Utilities Foreman James Meredith, Engineering Technician Tim Jarrell, and Facility Manager Ronald Jordan of Hot Springs National Park.