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“Hot Springs”

Some Points About [sic] a Famous Resort for Ball Players by One Who Has Been There Many Times

Chicago, Ill., April 2 –Editor, *Sporting Life*: Hot Springs, Ark., is a favorite resort for ball players to get into condition in [sic] and there is never a spring but what at least fifty professionals can be found there. This spring the Hot Springs have been unusually well patronize by ball tossers, nearly a hundred recuperating there. Under the circumstances it would perhaps interest your readers to know what sort of place this much discussed resort is.

It is claimed that the Indians first discovered the curative qualities of these waters. Diseases that the medicine men were unable to control were cured by bathing in the waters.

It was not until the year 1810 that any improvement was made there, but it has steadily grown, until now the Hot Springs of Arkansas are known all over the world.

The permanent population is about 12,000 but there are always 2,000 to 6,000 visitors. During the winter and the spring it is difficult to accommodate the many visitors.

I understand that a new hotel has been completed since I was there, which will accommodate 700 guests. To [sic] many of the rooms baths are attached, so that the visitors are not compelled to even leave their rooms to bathe.

Most of the springs are located on the side of the mountain. The water is conveyed to the government tanks and bath houses of the city by the aid of iron pipes. The hot springs number seventy-one. They have a temperature of 93 degrees to 157 degrees Fahrenheit and make natural

discharge of about 463,000 gallons every day. The bath houses, about eleven in number, are built of brick and wood and stand in a row at the base of the mountain. They form one side of the principal street in the city.

For those who have never had the pleasure of visiting this noted place, I will give a brief description of the bath houses and the manner of bathing.

Your first consult a physician who, after an examination, will tell you if it is best for you to bathe. You then purchase bath tickets, the prices of which range from fifteen to forty cents for single baths, or for a full course (twenty-one baths) from \$3.50 to \$8. In addition to the above, you are compelled by the Government to pay an attendant at least a dollar a week.

The attendants are big, strapping colored fellows. As a rule, they are so attentive that unless you cannot really spare the money, you would be ashamed to offer so small an amount.

After purchasing your bath-ticket, you next find yourself in a room, the temperature of which is seldom less than 98 degrees. Here you take off your outer garments and wait until the attendant has prepared your bath. You are then led to a larger room, divided into about a dozen compartments, each of which contains an ordinary bath tub. The baths are taken at a temperature of from 90 degrees to 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

You remain in the water about nine minutes; you time yourself by a three[-]minute sand[-]glass. During that time you drink several glasses of real hot water. While in the water you are thoroughly rubbed with a stiff brush by the attendant. After leaving the tub you are again rubbed and dried. Then you place a large Turkish towel around the waist and look for the warmest spot in the room, sit there and perspire for about twenty minutes. During that time you are apt to see some sights that you'll remember to your dying day.

You next return to the room that you first entered, remain there until you are thoroughly cooled, when there is little danger of taking cold. This is continued for twenty-one days, and, even though you have never had a day's sickness in your life, you will feel like a new man. If you place yourself on a strict diet, you can reduce considerably without any vast amount of exercise.

For years scarcely any other classes of diseases visited the Springs besides specific and rheumatic cases.

A visit to the place was secretly made by those who went. So much afraid were they, that in many cases the visitors had their letters either addressed anonymously or mailed to a neighboring post office.

All this delicacy of feeling and fear of being thought the victims of a specific trouble has passed. It is said that when one of the leading physicians there was asked, 'How the water acts to effect more rapid and certain cures,' replied that 'the patient is enabled to take, if necessary, ten[-] fold more medicines than he could possibly take without its aid, more than he could with the help of any artificially heated bath.'

In addition to all this [,] one sees so many invalids that he is constantly reminded that he is there for his health. It is very seldom that a single dose of medicine is neglected. You are compelled to keep good hours. After 8 o'clock at night there are scarcely a dozen persons to be seen upon the streets.

During the summer there is little to find in the way of amusement; but during the winter and spring months you can pass the time quite pleasantly.

They have a very nice opera house. Many theatrical companies show there. If the performance is in any way worth of patronage, they are always rewarded with a full house.

They have one or more dances at the different hotels every week, so do not fail to take your full dress suits. You can always find a poker or heart game in any of the many hotels. You can also make a play at faro. They have three or four houses running wide open.

You will find a baseball ground there, and you will also find that you are just as apt to stop the ball with your face as with your hands.

It is said that when filling the diamond they ran out of dirt. The next best thing was broken bricks, so they finished up the diamond in that style.

I don't know but what it is better so, as an umpire before giving a decision never fails to notice these bricks.

They have a half-mile race track. They had a meeting when I was there last June [1889]. They had no Racelands, Spokanes or El Rio Reys, but they had racing just the same. A friend and I went out to the track; the Hot Spring's [sic] Derby was to be run that day. But as the attendance was not as large as expected the Derby was postponed until the Fourth of July. In place of the Derby we had a Stake Race, all ages, distance half mile. The entries were Old Allen, Pretty Bird, Whiskers, Sleepy Dick, Wide-a-Wake, and imported Woolloomooloo. My friend had a strong tip on Woolloomooloo, but there were too many naughts there for me. I bought a 'mutual' on Whiskers.

Sleepy Dick and Wide-a-Wake ran a dead heat. Time 1:04 (track fast). Woolloomooloo got tangled with Whiskers. They were both left at the post. A big fellow, his hair filled with hay

seed, his whiskers full of knots, a two-dollar pool ticket on Woolloomooloo in one hand, his cart whip in the other, a bull dog at his heels, ran up to the Judge's stand and entered a protest, made a regular Ansonian kick. The judge was not looking for trouble, so declared all bets off.

I had what you might call a 'mutual' admiration for Mr. Hayseed. One can spend a month there and not only be greatly benefitted by the water, but also have a pleasant time, that is, if the cards break even.

Ed N. Williamson

Transcribed by Roy Kerr