

ROCKBRIDGE ALUM SPRINGS,  
A HISTORY OF THE SPA: 1790-1974

by

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## CHAPTER I

### FROM DEER LICK TO ANTEBELLUM RESORT

1790-1860

From typhoid-infested lowlands of the deep South they came. From unbearable summers of disease, cholera and yellow fever they fled. From boredom of uneventful summers on the plantation or from growing congestion and afflictions of city life, they escaped to the healthful, cool, uninfested mountain regions of Virginia. All professed to seek improved health or an opportunity to cure the body from infirmities inflicted by the winter's trials, or a miraculous cure, unknown and unavailable at home. If the truth had been told, however, most resorted thither in the simple hope of a socially amenable and more exciting change from long, hot summers at home. The mountain spas of Virginia offered them all a solution.

The eastern slopes of the Alleghenies possessed numerous natural springs of various mineral ingredients and temperatures. To tout their merits, there were, between 1830 and 1861, numerous books or pamphlets of more than fifty pages, mainly written by medical doctors. Presumably, some springs were better suited than others for the cure of particular diseases and infirmities which infested the human body and

mind.<sup>1</sup> The general lack of medical knowledge and the geometric increase of disease in the burgeoning cities led people to accept uncritically "medical" advice and even to undertake their own medical cures. Doctors of all countries and times have appreciated the genuine curative powers of many spring waters and have recommended that patients with stubborn or unidentified ailments seek either to drink of or bathe in them. The South's unhealthy climate provided a firm basis for and the major impetus to the growth of the Virginia Springs. However, the social attractions of many a spa quickly became apparent, and healthy pleasure-seekers soon outnumbered invalids seeking cures.

To Virginians, the cult of the spa was as much an American heirloom from Britain as was the Magna Carta. Such men of the Revolutionary generation as Lord Fairfax, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson had tested the water's powers and helped to found the tradition of "Spring-Going" which was to last into the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> After World War I, the extension of roads and the mass production of automobiles infected a disillusioned and restless generation.

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<sup>1</sup>E.g. William Burke, M.D., The Mineral Springs of Virginia: With Remarks of their Use, The Diseases to which they are Applicable, and in which they are Contra-Indicated (Richmond, 1851; hereinafter cited as Burke, Mineral Springs of Virginia), passim. Also John J. Moorman, The Virginia Springs (Philadelphia, 1859; hereinafter cited as Moorman, Virginia Springs), 264.

<sup>2</sup>Perceval Reniers, The Springs of Virginia (North Carolina, 1941; hereinafter cited as Reniers, Springs of Virginia), 33.

The growth of suburbs, together with that once glorious and liberating machine, the automobile, killed the spirit of the springs by turning visitors into bustling transients, too busy making money on the stock market and too busy playing golf at the suburban country club to enjoy the more leisurely routine of the mountain spa. Improved sanitation in the cities and increasing medical control of diseases also eliminated the basic element vital to the survival of the springs--that of offering a more healthful retreat to both the infirm and the hardy.

Beginning in the 1820's, the practice of visiting the dozen or so mountain springs of Virginia became an institution. Traditionally, families returned to the same watering places season after season. Each spa possessed its own atmosphere and personality arising from location, type of water, types of guests, and the combination of entertainment, cuisine and service provided by the management. Although the Virginia springs fulfilled real and imagined medical and social needs for the South, Westerners and Northerners also realized the values of the spas and frequented them in varying numbers. All were in substantial agreement, however, that the springs of Virginia represented as much a variation of traditional Southern life and culture as a variation on the national pattern of resorts.



The mountain spas of Virginia offered a retreat from the common world--a place to meet with like minds and souls. There, one could discuss illnesses, politics, literature and social mores with amiable companions. There, one might make a matrimonial match in a season or a friendship in several seasons. There, the dichotomies of social caste in classless America could be studied at first hand. The mixture of the marginally invalid, un-wed belles with hopeful parents, politicians, card-sharpers, social climbers, a sprinkling of Yankees and Westerners, scores of children and their mummies, gentle folk and nouveaux riches, expectant beaux and servants must have provided a varied social mosaic.

The trip to the Virginia springs excluded all but three general classes: the wealthy, those willing to accumulate debts in the hope of stabilizing or curing an infirmity, and those willing to chance financial risk in the pursuit of social diversion or advancement. If the trip was to be done with style, great pains must be taken to provide for a vacation of two week's to three month's duration. Mock instructions to visitors at the Rockbridge Alum Springs suggested that a would-be spring-goer should notify relations and friends of an impending trip to the spa, in case they might want to offer their company for the season. The family must be readied--baggage must be packed to include trunks-full of clothing appropriate for picnics, horse-back

riding, dancing and masquerade balls. For unexpected overnight jaunts, blankets must be packed too, as well as food delicacies for the journey. Vital servants must be included in order to continue or to give the appearance of a life of ease. An unknown reporter in 1837 described just such an entourage arriving at one of the springs. The baggage wagons were followed by young gentlemen on horseback. In turn, they were followed by the children and servants in their coach. The ladies' coach followed them, with the gents bringing up the last passenger coach. Alongside rode the servants, and the additional baggage brought up the rear. "The more important the person, the bigger the cloud of dust." He noted several Southern planters whose retinue was strung out on the narrow road for one-half of a mile!<sup>3</sup>

Although one ultimately arrived at the Virginia springs by private or public horse-drawn vehicle, there were a number of transportation options which were available at the commencement of a spring-goer's journey, which to a large degree governed the selection of which one, or of which sequence, of the springs one expected to visit. Most visitors from the Deep South and from the west entered Virginia at the confluence of the Ohio and Big Sandy rivers. A turnpike road from Lexington, Kentucky, brought thither

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<sup>3</sup>Unpublished M.S., n.a., n.d., Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, Rockbridge Historical Society, Lexington, Va. (Hereinafter cited as Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS).

overland visitors. River steamers discharged passengers at nearby Guyandotte, Virginia's most important western port after Wheeling. The James River and Kanawha Turnpike had been built in the late 1820's on MacAdam principles under the supervision of the celebrated Claudious Crozet, from Guyandotte to Charleston to Gauley's Bridge to Lewisburg and finally to Dunlop's Creek, where Covington grew up. Generally, persons coming by this route were drawn irresistibly to the White Sulphur, the Salt Sulphur, Sweet Springs and Blue Sulphur, and correspondingly less to the Hot Springs, Warm Springs, Bath Alum and Rockbridge Alum Springs.

On the other hand, visitors from Northern Virginia, Washington and points north had a natural propensity to stop first and longest at the Rockbridge Alum Springs, the easternmost of the mountain spas of the Old Dominion. To get there, such visitors did not have to rely on horse-drawn vehicles for the entire journey. They could come by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad to Winchester or by the Virginia Central Railroad to Charlottesville, and thence by stagecoach to Staunton and Lexington before turning westward to traverse the remaining seventeen miles to Rockbridge Alum Springs.

Spring-goers from Richmond, Lynchburg and points south could come most of the way on the James River & Kanawha Canal after 1851. A packet boat for Buchanan left Richmond every other day and negotiated the 196 miles upstream in

thirty-three hours. The one-way fare for adults was \$7.50, including meals; children and servants travelled at half-price. George W. Bagby, the one-time editor of the Southern Literary Messenger, described his first boyhood canal trip on the "Jeems and Kanawha Canell" from Richmond to Lynchburg in 1835. His delightful sketch offers a rare insight into the short-lived days of canal travel:

I took a peep at the cabin, wondering much how all the passengers were to be accommodated for the night, saw how nicely the baggage was stored away on deck, admired the smart waiters....At last we were off...with a lively jerk as the horses fell into a trot, away we went, the cut-water throwing up the spray....There was always a crowd in those days, but it was a crowd for the most part of our best people....Supper over, the men went on deck to smoke, while the ladies busied themselves with draughts or backgammon, with conversation or with books. But not for long....We all went to bed early....the way-passengers in case there was a crowd, were dumped upon mattresses, placed on the dining-tables....[During the night I] would listen to the trahn-ahn-ahn-ahn of the stage-horn, with its cheery, ringing notes!...In fine summer weather, the passengers, male and female, stayed most of the time on deck, where there was a great deal to interest, and naught to mar the happiness, except the oft-repeated warning "braidge!" "low braidge!"....For the men, this on-deck existence was especially delightful; it is such a comfort to spit plump into the water without the trouble of feeling around with your head, in the midst of a political discussion, for the spittoon.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>George W. Bagby, Old Virginia Gentleman and Other Sketches (Richmond, 1938; hereinafter cited as Bagby, Old Virginia Gentleman), 68-73.

Since the next unit of the canal to Covington was under construction, those who came by canal packet might choose to go to Fincastle, thirteen miles to the west, and get on the western springs loop at Sweet Springs, thirty-five miles further. The easier goal for the vacationer was to proceed to Natural Bridge, only twelve miles northeast of Buchanan to view the great limestone arch, a natural wonder of the world, well worth a trip across the Atlantic. The conventional thing to do next was to go sixteen miles more to Lexington and view Washington College. Once in Lexington, the route to the Virginia springs led first to Rockbridge Alum, only seventeen miles away, and thence to Warm Springs and Hot Springs.<sup>5</sup> Such a route was popular because the distances in question coincided with the practice of utilizing one pair of horses to draw a vehicle for about a fifteen mile interval.)

The most exciting and popular spa in Virginia was the White Sulphur Springs in Greenbriar County. No matter how stimulating were others or the circuit of all of them, the complete spring-goer did not consider his mountain sojourn a success unless he and his retinue passed some time at the Queen of the Springs. At White Sulphur there was presently, recently had been, or soon would be, everyone who was anyone.

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<sup>5</sup>Henry Howe, Historical Collections of Virginia (Charleston, 1845), 448-460, et passim. Wayland F. Dunaway, History of the James River and Kanawha Company (No. 2, Vol. CIV, Columbia Studies in History, Economics and Public Law; New York, 1922), 67, 81-84, 171-172, et passim. Reniers, Springs of Virginia, 25-32.

Only there was it believed that one could master the greater social dimensions of Richmond, Norfolk, Baltimore or Charleston.<sup>6</sup> By September, almost everyone was ready to return home, feeling healthy, revitalized, resocialized, and once again ready to attack the problems of reality.

If a new resort was not on the springs circuit, it was difficult for its developer to breach long standing habits and lure guests to bask the summers away at his little-known and more remote spa. Usually these more isolated springs rarely excelled in fame or popularity. The great exception to this general rule was the Rockbridge Alum Springs. That spa's location had favorable merits for all except those coming from the west. Although the Rockbridge Alum Springs did not open officially as a resort until 1834, it achieved a popularity second only to the White Sulphur. The unusually strong curative powers of its alum waters had acquired the local fame necessary to launch their medicinal repute. As the reputation of these particular waters increased and the growing popularity of mineral springs in general spread throughout the Union, the demand for increased accommodations at Rockbridge Alum Springs forced its growth.

The beginnings of Rockbridge Alum Springs are intertwined with the professional work of Alexander Campbell.

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<sup>6</sup>Reniers, Springs of Virginia, 25-32.

In 1783, Campbell received his commission as an official surveyor of Rockbridge County, which five years earlier had been separated from its parents Augusta and Botetourt and named in honor of its most noted feature, the Natural Bridge of Virginia. In surveying forest lands between Botetourt County's northern boundary and the North and Mill Mountains of Rockbridge County, Campbell discovered an abandoned or unclaimed tract, which he recognized as having great potential value. Presumably he followed a small branch of the Big Calf-pasture River known as Bratton's Run down into a small vale, whose center had a small spring with a salt lick. This place was known locally as the Alum Springs Deer Lick. Near the spring was a small, crude cabin used by local hunters who lay there in wait for deer to come to lick the salt. On sampling the waters, Campbell recognized the distinctive taste of alum. Realizing that this spring must be of medicinal value, he determined to purchase the land.<sup>7</sup>

State policy forbade surveyors to purchase lands for themselves which they discovered to be unoccupied or abandoned. Since Campbell could not legally lay claim to this land, he persuaded a friend, John Dunlap, to purchase the tract in the latter's name from the state, with Campbell

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<sup>7</sup>Unpublished M.S., n.d., collected by Dr. L. Lyle Campbell, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS (hereinafter cited as Campbell MS, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS).

as a silent partner who paid half the cost and who would share all expenses and future profits. In 1790, Dunlap bought the land for 500 pounds of Virginia money. For a generation the spring was known as Dunlap's Springs.<sup>8</sup>

Alexander Campbell made two surveys of the 2,008-acre springs tract. He began the first survey in 1794, but he did not complete it. Before completing his second survey in 1796, a man named John Barclay surveyed, purchased and filed with the County a plat of neighboring lands comprising 30,000 acres. In Campbell's second survey, he included some 130 acres of Barclay's lands on Dunlap's plat through accident, oversight or incompetence. Although this conflict of title was not noticed at the time, it became the basis for a land dispute fifty years later between the owners of the respective parcels, each of whom competed for the lucrative springs trade.

One of Campbell's descendents attributed the first popularity of the Alum waters to its reputation given by hunters who frequented the cabin by the salt lick. "Naturally among this vast number of hunters there were many suffering with diseases that were infectious in the south at that time. The cures were so pronounced and rapid that the fame of the Alum Spring Deer Lick began to spread and people came

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.



and camped in tents."<sup>9</sup> Before too long, people began to stay there for weeks at a time, either camping or residing in hastily-built, crude huts. Most sought cures of such external diseases of the skin as eczema or skin ulcers. The most spectacular cure seemed to be with scrofula, known for centuries as the King's Evil.<sup>10</sup> Invalids soon discovered that the waters also cured internal diseases in addition to external ones. Unlike many springs which gained popularity chiefly through visitors from a great distance who sought diversion more than medicinal cures, Dunlap's Springs grew because of its local reputation for curative waters.

When Alexander Campbell died in 1806, his widow and fourteen-year-old son, James Campbell, inherited his share in the 2,008 acres near Bratton's Run. During this time the property had remained undeveloped, even though the fame of the waters was growing. Invalids were accompanied to the spring by companions who sought more diverting entertainment than sipping the alum waters. As Spring Fever reached into the area and the fame of Dunlap's Springs spread, pleasure-seeking spring-goers began to outnumber the invalids and semi-invalids.

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<sup>9</sup>Campbell MS, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>10</sup>Tuberculosis of the lymphatic glands, especially of the neck, characterized by the enlargement and degeneration of the glands.

In 1820, James Campbell and John Dunlap built a simple hotel used as a "house of entertainment for the accommodation of those who might desire to use" the waters.<sup>11</sup> This first hotel stood in the middle of a glade which was later developed into a lawn. By the 1830's, when other springs were enjoying their hey-day, Dunlap's Spring was just beginning to win its place in the hearts of seasonal spring-goers. In 1834, Dunlap and Campbell officially opened their hotel to the resort trade.

There is a legend that Thomas Jefferson drank from these alum waters.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, traditional anecdotes about Thomas Jefferson and the medicinal springs of Virginia are most unreliable. In 1818 the sage of Monticello consented to accompany his friend James Breckinridge, the former Federalist congressman and fellow commissioner for the location of the University of Virginia, to the Warm Springs, where Jefferson sought relief for rheumatism. He took a side trip to the Hot Springs, too; but he did not leave any record of visiting Rockbridge Alum Springs. When he wrote his celebrated Notes on Virginia in the early 1780's, he had spoken en passant of the Sweet Springs and of the White Sulphur Springs, but he never visited them. At the time of

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<sup>11</sup>Moorman, Virginia Springs, 264.

<sup>12</sup>Robert L. Semes, "Two Hundred Years at Rockbridge Alum Springs," Proceedings of the Rockbridge Historical Society (hereinafter cited as Semes, "Rockbridge Alum Springs," Rockbridge Proceedings), II (1946), 46.

his visit to Warm Springs in 1818, he commented very favorably on "the delicious bath," and the cuisine of venison and vegetables. He acceded to the regimen of three baths a day for three weeks, but he complained of the company at Colonel Fry's hotel even though his fellow guests included, besides Breckinridge, Joseph Allston, once Aaron Burr's son-in-law, and a governor of South Carolina.<sup>13</sup> Seven years later, Jefferson wrote that he had been much disappointed in the cure he sought at Warm Springs. Declaring that when he went there he had been "well in health," he lamented that "I wished to be better, and tried them. They destroyed in great degree my internal organism, and I have never since had a moment of perfect health."<sup>14</sup>

In 1829, Campbell and Dunlap experimented in mining the iron deposits which were near their springs, although they did not persevere to the point of full-scale mining. Sensibly, they chose to expend their energies and money expanding their resort, rather than developing a mining project.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia (ed. by William Peden, Chapel Hill, 1955), 34-36; and Thomas Jefferson to Martha J. Randolph, The Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson (ed. by Edwin M. Betts and James A. Bear, Jr.; Missouri, 1966), 424-426. See also Katherine K. McNulty, "James Breckinridge," unpublished master's thesis, VPI&SU, 1970, 81-82.

<sup>14</sup>Thomas Jefferson to --, Monticello, Dec. 18, 1825; The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (ed. by Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert E. Bergh, Washington, 1904-1905), XVI, 139-140.

<sup>15</sup>Testimony of John McKeep to Rockbridge County Circuit Court, Sept. 11, 1849. Campbell vs. Jordan, Filing case 24, Bundle 104, Rockbridge County Records.

During the winter of 1840, a fire destroyed the hotel. Fortunately, the prominent Taylor family of Norfolk had adopted the Rockbridge Alum Springs as their watering place, and they lent James Campbell money to build new accommodations. Thus, the latter and his seventeen-year-old son, Alexander Doak Campbell, were able to build a three-story brick hotel, flanked by six one-story cottages. To begin with, the cottages had no porches, and their spartan appearance compared with those at other springs inspired their nickname--the "smoke houses."<sup>16</sup> These more commodious accommodations enabled the new Rockbridge Alum Springs to attain a greater popularity, attested by its designation as a federal post office in 1842 with Campbell as postmaster.

The real foundation for the popularity of the springs remained its medicinal values. Each spring boasted of its own superior cure, but Rockbridge Alum could stand with the best. Upon clearing out the spring, the Campbells discovered that there were five separate springs in all, of which only one remains open today.

Of the descending type of spring, they are fed by waters from rain and snow. When water percolates through the slate rock of the North and Mill Mountains, it produces

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<sup>16</sup>Campbell MS, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

various mineral compounds.<sup>17</sup> During wet seasons, the waters increase both in volume and strength, but unlike many springs, the alum waters retain their medicinal values through the dryer summer months. The waters are clear, cold and odorless; however, the taste is strongly astringent and acidulous. They have a generally purgative effect upon the majority of their users.

The first thorough chemical analysis of the waters was made by Dr. August A. Hayes of Boston, in 1852. Although each spring varied in potency and minerals, the compounds most prevalent in each spring were noted to be alumina, sulphuric acid, sulphate of lime, magnesia, protoxide of iron, ammonia and silica. Their combined effect certainly offered "unequivocal medicinal powers."<sup>18</sup> Dr. John A. Graham, later a resident physician at the springs, gave his endorsement to the effect that "the Rockbridge Alum Springs have been found to possess more remedial virtue, curing more obstinate and inveterate cases than the waters of any known mineral spring [not only in America, but also in Europe]."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>George E. Walton, Mineral Springs of the United States and Canada (New York, 1873; hereinafter cited as Walton, U.S. Mineral Springs), 20.

<sup>18</sup>Moorman, Virginia Springs, 224. cf. Burke, Mineral Springs of Virginia, 307.

<sup>19</sup>Analysis of the Rockbridge Alum Springs, n.a., (Richmond, 1860), Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS, 6.

Testimonials of the superior qualities of the alum waters and the list of diseases which they were supposed to cure accelerated the fame of the springs. Among the hundreds of diseases for which complete cure was claimed, the best-known were scrofula in even its most severe forms, dyspepsia in its varied and distressing states, cutaneous eruptive diseases, chronic diarrhoea, dysentery, hemorrhages from all bodily parts, chronic bronchitis, diabetes, chronic diseases of the digestive organs, secondary syphilis and ailments peculiar to the female constitution. A favorite catch-all designation for undefinable illnesses of the nineteenth century was "torpid liver," for which the waters of Rockbridge Alum were considered an efficacious remedy. The waters were also used as tonics which restored anemic conditions and "broken down states of the constitution, whether resulting from the imprudent use of medicine or the errors of youth."<sup>20</sup> Dr. McPheeters of Natchez doubtless satisfied many questioning users of the waters with his explanation that the waters "give a centrifugal tendency to the fluids, thereby filling the superficial veins and capillaries."<sup>21</sup>

The waters were supposed to be used with varying frequency depending upon the disease and its severity.

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<sup>20</sup>Moorman, Virginia Springs, 225.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 227.

Torpid liver and dyspepsia (indigestion) required only one or two glasses immediately after each meal. Hemorrhoidal patients required copious drinking--at least twelve glasses a day, while patients suffering from scrofula were prescribed all the waters they could consume in a day, commencing one hour after each meal for two to three months, which, incidentally, was the length of the typical season at the springs. Edmund Tompkins' book on Rockbridge County notes that antebellum slave owners sometimes sent their slaves with skin diseases to work gratis at the spa during the season, so that they might utilize the waters and return in the fall free from further skin problems.<sup>22</sup> Although the waters were offered to the guests at no cost, during the spa's most popular years, attendants at the wells encouraged tips for their services.

Soon after John Dunlap died, Alexander D. Campbell decided to buy his share and operate the Rockbridge Alum Springs in partnership with his father. Dunlap's heirs had emigrated westward and were so surprised to learn of inheriting lands in Virginia that all but one sold out quickly and upon moderate terms. Depressed times after the Mexican War encouraged them to turn this unexpected bequest into cash. John Dunlap, and John and Jane Musgrove of Illinois,

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<sup>22</sup>Edmund Tompkins, Rockbridge County, Virginia (Richmond, 1952).

Lewis and Phebe Hancock of Kentucky, and Rebecca Dunlap of Ohio sold their portions of their grandfather's land for between \$70.00 and \$75.00. Dunlap's grandson William Dunlap claimed that he had sold his share to John H. Young for \$200.00, but Campbell was able to purchase it from Young for only \$75.00. John Dunlap's daughter Ann, the widow of Robert Bratton, held out for \$300.00. Altogether, for \$670.00, Alexander D. Campbell purchased the remaining one-half of the original 2,008 acres.<sup>23</sup>

In 1848, litigation commenced between the Campbells and the Jordans, who had purchased the neighboring Barclay lands. This dispute lasted for six years and involved conflicting claims to 130 acres in the area of the springs. The Jordans wanted to develop the two natural chalybeate springs on the parcel which they claimed. These lay directly above the Campbell's Alum Springs and the proposed Jordan's spa would compete for the Alum's visitors. Shortly before the Jordans and Campbells commenced suing one another, the latter sold 1,000 acres of their land containing iron ore to a Pennsylvania iron-master named John Doyle. There, Doyle built his Mount Hope furnace, which he later resold to James Campbell for \$10,000.<sup>24</sup> In their litigation,

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<sup>23</sup>Rockbridge County Records, Deed Book Z, 1847, 414-415.

<sup>24</sup>Lexington Gazette, Jan. 4, 1940.



the Jordans also contested Campbell's claims on Doyle's tract. Trespassing complaints, accusations of illegal felling of timber and road construction were added to the original issues in dispute. The land surveys of both parties were examined, dates debated and obscure markings argued until the courts finally decided in 1855 in favor of most of the Jordan's claims.<sup>25</sup> Immediately they began to develop their new establishment--the Jordan Alum Springs, directly above the Rockbridge Alum Springs.

For years, however, there was no real competition between the two for the springs trade. By 1850, James and Alexander Campbell had added \$2,000 worth of buildings and had improved the older structures. Unfortunately, in that same year fire once again destroyed almost the entire establishment, leaving only a few cabins and stables untouched. Immediately after the fire, the Campbells poured at least \$16,064 into rebuilding the spa, raising the total land value to \$30,120.<sup>26</sup> Dr. William Burke had witnessed the results of the destructive blaze, and he marveled at the complete resurrection of the buildings, rising "like a Phoenix"<sup>27</sup> from the ashes. After an

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<sup>25</sup>Campbell vs. Jordan, Rockbridge County Records.

<sup>26</sup>Rockbridge County Records, Land Book, 1851.

<sup>27</sup>Burke, Mineral Springs of Virginia, 303.

exhilarating season in 1851, the Campbells decided to sell the Rockbridge Alum Springs. Perhaps the two major fires and the Campbell's sixty years of management and investments were sufficient for them both.

On August 20, 1852, James and Alexander Campbell sold to a syndicate the Alum Springs Tract of 1,150 acres, including the buildings, furniture in the hotels and cabins, and all the kitchen furnishings, for \$101,480.45. Only the slaves on the place and the hotel's supplies were excluded from the sale.<sup>28</sup> Moses G. Booth, Leonard W. Anderson, Patrick H. Christian and James W. Frazier were the new proprietors, and they immediately began an extensive building program.

They erected a new three-story brick hotel, including a reception room, a bar and a huge parlor downstairs; three large chambers on the second floor; and eight smaller chambers on the third floor. The old kitchen and dining hall remained at the rear of this new Central Hotel. On either side, they built two smaller similiar two-story structures, each of which was divided into four rooms on both floors. These three buildings formed the center of a large semicircle or horseshow-shaped establishment, with a row of six, four-room cabins with porches on each side which faced the central lawn. The Campbells then covered

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<sup>28</sup>Rockbridge County Records, Deed Book CC, (1852) 204.

the five springs with a long shed structure which rested on crude supporting posts. The new, larger accommodations encouraged a crowd of 300 to 400 guests and their servants during the following season.

The syndicate held the Springs for only one season. In 1852, James W. Frazier purchased the shares of all others for a total price of \$150,000. Having previously invested \$60,000 in building up the Bath Alum Springs, thirty miles north of Rockbridge Alum, Frazier believed that the springs trade was a lucrative business. Immediately, he sold to his brother William and his cousin John Randolph quarter interests in both establishments for \$105,000. At once the new owners initiated further construction. They opened a large bath house, added cabins, stables and almost doubled the size of the place. However, before James W. Frazier "had an opportunity to enjoy the annoyance of even one year as Landlord, he died of pneumonia,"<sup>29</sup> leaving as his heir his seven-year old son James A. Frazier. Responsibility for the management of the Springs devolved upon William Frazier, and his cousin John Randolph remained a silent partner. Although a family dispute developed after the Civil War over William's management of the Rockbridge Alum Springs, it was he who was responsible for its spectacular growth and popularity among the spring-goers until he sold the spa to his nephew James A. Frazier in 1868.

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<sup>29</sup>Unpublished memoirs of James A. Frazier, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

William Frazier's first season as manager was so huge a success that many of his guests had "to sleep on pallets on the floors of parlor, reception-room, and reading-room"<sup>30</sup> for a lack of more private accommodations. The visitors did not seem to mind, and during the season Nancy Sheldon of Richmond wrote to a friend, "I was agreeably disappointed in this place...much sweeter looking than I expected to find it and the accommodations are quite good."<sup>31</sup> Frazier continued the building plan and added a music pavillion in the center of the great elliptical lawn, where Dunlap's and Campbell's first hotel had been in the 1830's. Frazier also set about to correct a long-standing complaint that the lawn "was not touched by the hand of art,"<sup>32</sup> and he began to enhance the natural beauty of the lawn's four acres. Frazier then built several arcades about the lawn and built an ornamental columned structure over the springs, replacing the more primitive structure. His efforts gave the entire spa a new sense of elegance.

In 1853, the nationally popular essayist and illustrator, David Hunter Strother, visited Rockbridge Alum Springs with

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<sup>30</sup>William Frazier, The Rockbridge Alum Springs Case (Staunton, n.d.; hereinafter cited as Frazier, Alum Case), 8.

<sup>31</sup>Nancy Sheldon, From Rockbridge Alum Springs, to George Edward Pickett, Sept. 2, 1853; Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

<sup>32</sup>Burke, Mineral Springs of Virginia, 304.

a small band of friends who were touring Virginia. Although their exciting journey to the spa was marred by bad weather, by raging creeks which challenged the skill of their Negro driver, Little Mice, and finally by a broken fore-axle on their carriage; the troupe arrived on foot, early enough in the afternoon for a short game of ten-pins before dinner. In the Virginia Illustrated, published in 1857, under his nom-de-plume "Porte Crayon," Strother described the Rockbridge Alum: "To the eye it is one of the pleasantest places in the mountains."<sup>33</sup>

By this time the Rockbridge Alum Springs had reached a moderate degree of self-sufficiency. There were numerous slaves on the place to keep a large vegetable garden, feed the cattle used for a basic source of meat, and butcher between 50-100 hogs each fall for the following season. Milk products were supplied from a nearby dairy. Freestone water was employed in the hotel in preference to the spring water. One patron remembered that a large, brightly-clothed Negress carried three huge pitchers of water from the springs to the hotel each morning; she held one in each hand and perched a third squarely upon her bandana-ed head.<sup>34</sup> The mammies and colored servants who gathered on the lawn to

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<sup>33</sup>David H. Strother, Virginia Illustrated (New York, 1857), 175.

<sup>34</sup>Unpublished memoirs by Mrs. Tams, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

care for their young charges fascinated Northern visitors. These were languid days, fit for slaves; and as George W. Bagby said, "We had the slaves."<sup>35</sup>

In the 1850's, guests were not offered the wide variety of entertainment afforded by the spa towards the turn of the century. Physical exercise was not popular in those days, except for horseback riding, hiking and several light competitive games such as ten-pins. The hotel afforded livery service, providing riding horses or carriages so that its patrons could enjoy the glories of the surrounding mountains. Botanists were encouraged to examine mountain flora, and sportsmen could fish for trout or hunt for deer and pheasant. A fast running creek flowed behind the cottages, and a well-trodden path encouraged guests to stroll by its side into the surrounding forest. Of course, one could loll about the piazzas, indulging in chatter with friends, enjoy picnics on the lawn, stroll beneath archways or engage in light card games. Twice daily a small orchestra gave one-hour serenades from the new music pavillion. For all, the cardinal rule was to relax and enjoy the waters as prescribed by the resident physician. For those in good health, it was expedient to conserve one's strength for the nightly informal dances held in the ballroom.

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<sup>35</sup> Bagby, Old Virginia Gentlemen, 67.

During the season there were two special well-attended balls. The first was a Full Dress Ball which offered even the homeliest belle an opportunity to entrance the available young bloods with fashionable gowns and jewelry. The grandest event of the season was an elegant Masquerade Ball. Tradition or recent origin admonished each guest to keep his or her costume a secret--hoping to out-do absolutely everyone with its Incredible Originality and Amazing Extravagance. On Sunday, of course, "the proprietors offered all facilities for the maintenance of the Divine Service on the Lord's day."<sup>36</sup>

A pleasing circumstance for the visiting young ladies was the propinquity of Virginia Military Institute. Its cadets may not have enjoyed their summer hiking exercise to the spa, but numerous beauties made them welcome when they finally reached the resort.<sup>37</sup> In their dashing uniforms, the cadets gave to the dance floor a spirited and romantic luster that melted many a feminine heart. The young heroes of the Confederacy-to-be whirled merrily to the polka and the waltz with Richmond debutantes and heiresses to plantations.

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<sup>36</sup>Pamphlet, n.a. [1860] Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS, 8.

<sup>37</sup>William Couper, One Hundred Years at V.M.I. (4 Vols., Richmond, 1939; hereinafter cited as Couper, V.M.I.) I, 182-187, 210, 275.

It was Mr. Frazier's calculated and well advertized plan to keep down his prices in order to accommodate persons of moderate circumstances. Since the White Sulphur and the Hot Springs had the reputation of being rather hoity-toitity and snobbish, Rockbridge Alum advertized its social fluidity and "the absence of exclusive combinations into certain circles." Frazier also passed the word that "stringent etiquette is not adhered to."<sup>38</sup> Virtually all spring-goers agreed that the manager of any watering place definitely set its tone. As in any gathering, the host either encouraged or discouraged an air of gaiety and excitement. When Frazier assured each guest of his inclusion into the whole group, he allayed apprehensions of those who were unsure of their social status and enlarged his share of the clientele of spring-goers. The prosperity of the 1850's in Virginia and the upper South contrasted sharply with the preceeding half-century, and Frazier was just the man to help planters and merchants spend their rewon prosperity.

A small army of summer employees thronged to the Rockbridge Alum Springs every June to assist Mr. Frazier during the season. One of these youths wrote:

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<sup>38</sup>Pamphlet, n.a. [1860] Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS, 8.



It's the finest place you ever saw, there is more fried chicken there than I ever saw before--great big dishes of it. You just reach and get a chicken leg, and pull it through your teeth and throw the bone over your shoulder with one hand and with the other you reach for another piece!<sup>39</sup>

Before the 1850's none of the mineral spas of Virginia bottled their waters for distant sale to individuals or commission merchants. It was at Rockbridge Alum Springs that William Frazier began this practice, marketing alum water in half gallon glass bottles, labeled as the King of Mineral Waters. He promoted his mineral waters primarily in the South. By the Civil War, gross sales were slightly less than \$9,000 per annum, of which 75% was net profit.<sup>40</sup> Using the 1852 analysis of the waters, Frazier was able to combat rumors that his waters contained "arsenious acid and copper." Denouncing such reports "by some wiseacre," he unctiously pointed out that these rumors would not only injure him, but they would also "mislead and deceive afflicted invalids." Such canard, said he, deserved "to be stamped with reprobation and infamy."<sup>41</sup>

The 1850's saw the railroad supplant the canal in Virginia as the most luxurious mode of overland transportation.

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<sup>39</sup>Unpublished memoirs by Mr. Harper, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>40</sup>Frazier, Alum Case, 29.

<sup>41</sup>Analysis and Description of Alum Water (n.a., Wynne Publishers, 1854) 16.

By 1860, the extension of the Virginia Central Railroad from Staunton to the nearby town of Goshen made the trip to Rockbridge Alum both more comfortable and speedy. Both Northern and Southern visitors who journeyed through Richmond could expect to eat breakfast in that fair city, and enjoy tea that evening on the piazza at Rockbridge Alum.

By 1860, the Alum Springs brought in a net profit of between \$20,000 and \$25,000 each season. In the last season before the Civil War, William Frazier sold on the premises over \$38,000 worth of goods and services, exclusive of \$9,000 worth of bottled alum water he sold elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> Frazier perfected his operation so well that, in slightly over twenty years, Rockbridge Alum Springs had become a rival of the older, traditional spas. Its growth had been miraculous and on the eve of the war, its future promised greater popularity.

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<sup>42</sup>Frazier, Alum Case, 26.

## CHAPTER II

### THE 1860'S: WAR DEFEAT AND RECONSTRUCTION AT THE SPRINGS

The 1859 summer season at the springs of Virginia reflected the growing unrest and fears in the South. William Frazier's profits at the Rockbridge Alum Springs for this last season before the war fell to a new low--\$15,000.<sup>1</sup> Because he made his home at the spa, when war finally broke out Frazier elected to keep his hostelry open to whatever trade might come. Remarkably, some did. The wartime resident population at the Alum was reduced to the handful of relatives and friends who helped the Fraziers attend to the various duties of providing for the guests during the season and to share the responsibilities for the off-season tasks. Important members of the little community were the twenty or so slaves in their separate quarters. They kept the garden up, made preserves, slaughtered hogs during the fall, and acted as maids, servants, attendants, drivers, waiters and cooks during the curtailed summer season.

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<sup>1</sup>Frazier, Alum Case, 26.

During the grim years of war, the South abandoned its interest in the gay frivolities of summering at the springs. Many spas closed; many became barracks or hospitals for Confederate soldiers. The few that remained open offered a brief escape to guests from the ruthless realities of war. During the war, however, materials vital to the continual up-keep of the springs were impossible to get. Plaster, roofing, paint, new bedding and white-wash were as rare as silks and ribbons for ball dresses. Both goods and money were available during the war, and the springs as well as individuals had to be content with a bare minimum.

During the war, Rockbridge County was not the scene of any serious military engagements, although there were several local skirmishes within its confines. Until the summer of 1864, life was tranquil, though increasingly austere. During five months of the fall and winter of 1861, the Confederate government requisitioned one of the smaller hotels at Rockbridge Alum Springs and used it as a hospital for several thousand soldiers.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the wounded soldiers might have been casualties from Lee's unsuccessful campaign at Cheat Mountain to reclaim Western Virginia from the Union Army. Since no official record of this hospital unit has survived, it is possible

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 22, 26.

to reconstruct only the broad outlines of its brief service. The creation of military hospitals overnight was a serious problem in both the North and South, but especially in the latter. The Confederate War Department was fortunate, therefore, in being able to press resort hotels into service.

At Rockbridge Alum Springs, the two-story frame building named the Virginia House became the hospital. The surgeon in charge was Dr. Nathaniel C. Calhoun of Augusta County, who was also an active Presbyterian minister.<sup>3</sup> In November of 1861, the quartermaster, Captain Thomas F. Roche, advertised in the Lexington Gazette for a supplier of wood for the Rockbridge Alum Hospital.<sup>4</sup> Miss Betty Clark visited there during this period and remembered the influx of wounded soldiers into the resort after the early fighting in West Virginia.<sup>5</sup> Forty-eight Confederate soldiers died at the hospital and were buried in unmarked graves in a small vale beyond the hotel's crop fields. Although no information remains concerning these soldiers, Douglas Southall Freeman suggested that they, like many other Confederate soldiers, might have died from measles. Southern

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<sup>3</sup>Campbell MS, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>4</sup>Lexington Gazette, Nov. 21, 1861.

<sup>5</sup>James D. Johnston, from Martinsville, Va., to Mr. Harold Bailey, June 5, 1950; Collection of Mrs. Harold Bailey, Lexington, Va. (hereinafter cited as Bailey Archives, RHS).

country boys were extremely susceptible to this disease and suffered an amazing mortality rate when they first were exposed to it during the war.<sup>6</sup> Other possible causes of their mortality were influenza and pulmonary complications resulting from residence in quarters intended for summer use.

The Confederate hospital service also purchased almost all of the spa's furniture from William Frazier. The price for this transaction was decided upon by mutual valuation, and Frazier was satisfied that the government paid quite liberally, even though he later found it was impossible to replace the goods. After the need for the hospital at Rockbridge Alum passed, some of the furniture was packed on government wagons and driven to the Goshen Railroad station to be sent to the hospital at Staunton. Several loads were placed on canal boats at Lexington and shipped to the large regional Confederate Hospital at Lynchburg. The moving process took about ten days and left the resort with decimated facilities for guests. The spa was reduced to bare necessities, but Frazier's establishment actually enjoyed two more successful seasons (under the circumstances) because visitors were willing to pay a "high nominal rate of board."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Douglas S. Freeman, to Miss Elizabeth Hotchkiss, Sept. 23, 1950, Bailey Archives, RHS.

<sup>7</sup>Frazier, Alum Case, 22, 26, 27.

In June, 1864, a unit of the Union Army ascended the Valley of Virginia as far as Lexington in order to destroy the cadet barracks of the Virginia Military Institute in revenge for the cadets' role in the battle of New Market. Fortunately for Rockbridge County, the Northerners did not go further, but retired toward Staunton. Because of its accessibility and accommodations, Rockbridge Alum Springs was suggested to the V.M.I. Superintendent, General Richardson, as temporary quarters for the cadets. Another solution was found, however, and the Alum continued as an almost-deserted watering place for the remainder of the war.<sup>8</sup>

Letters written during this period by William Frazier to his family offer an unusual aspect of the home front. They reflect a loving, affectionate and humorous father who felt it his duty to curb the excess of patriotism which his fifteen-year old son, James, displayed. When the lad wanted to exchange his schooling for a stint in the Confederate Navy, William Frazier exhorted him to consider the life-long importance of education to mental and moral growth. Since young James' plea to join the navy came in 1865, we must assume that the romance of blockade runners and of commerce raiders such as the CSS Alabama had brought

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<sup>8</sup>Couper, V.M.I., III, 54.

the boy's patriotism to a fever pitch. William Frazier begged James to re-consider and withdraw his request:

I might almost say with truth our Confederacy has as yet no Navy--nor can have till this war is over....I am told by reliable and well-informed gentlemen that with few exceptions the boys are of a rude and rather low order: that the associations and companionship to which you would be exposed are not desirable.<sup>9</sup>

Apparently the father's admonitions were effective and young James remained at school in Lexington, although through the tumultuous spring and summer of 1865 he could have done little studying. Like most parents, William Frazier wanted his children to associate with good companions. Considering factors other than simply its proximity, he chose Lexington for his eldest son's education. The town's advantages were described in 1899 by John Sergeant Wise, who had once been a cadet at V.M.I. The town had changed little since James Frazier attended school there and it had remained:

...an ideal spot for healthfulness, and the isolation of youth from the temptations and distracting influences of crowded communities. The boy who finds allurements to idleness and vice in that town would discover it anywhere."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>William Frazier, Richmond, Va., to James Frazier, Feb. 5, 1865; Irvin Frazier Collection, San Marion, Calif. (Hereinafter cited as Irvin Frazier Collection).

<sup>10</sup>John S. Wise, The End of an Era (Cambridge, 1901), 234-235.



Reorganization of the Rockbridge Alum spa after Appomattox to meet the new social and psychological needs of guests was a serious managerial problem. By 1866 so many of the former slaves had left the Alum that an employee remarked: "We are nearer out of Negroes now than I ever saw the place. Tyler, Paul the milker, a man cook, the boy 'Sap,' a man named Wesley, and old Nancy constitute the entire colored population at present."<sup>11</sup> In the depressed circumstances of the times, however, white residents of the locality were so eager for work that the spa was able easily to make the necessary transition from reliance on slave to employed workers.

After the war when materials were once again available, Frazier decided to renew, refurbish and revitalize Rockbridge Alum Springs after its four years of hard use and depletion. In March of 1865, he journeyed to Baltimore, where he obtained from southern sympathizers sufficient credit to buy for his spa a complete suite of cutlery and glassware, new furnishings--tables, chairs, linens, beds, floor mattings; in fact everything necessary to open for the 1866 summer season in grand style. When the hotel furniture and fixtures finally arrived at the tiny railroad station at Goshen, they filled the entire depot. In 1862 there had

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<sup>11</sup>William A. Lewis, Rockbridge Alum Springs to James Frazier, Oct. 12, 1866; Irvin Frazier Collection.

been only a corporal's guard to observe the removal of the pre-Civil War furniture. In 1866 there were many demobilized and unemployed Confederates, and a multitude of curious townspeople to watch the wagons being loaded with fascinating boxes and packages before the teams laboriously hauled them up the narrow road to the mountain spa. The moving and organizing process took several weeks and thousands of dollars. Frazier noted that many of his friends thought him insane, and one actually breached the realm of good conduct and called him crazy straight to his face! Because the buildings had fallen into disrepair, Frazier had to re-plaster, re-roof, re-white-wash and re-paint everything inside and out before he could again welcome guests to his hostelry. At length he did so, and with a prideful flourish he declared that "the whole place [is] fresh as a bridegroom and fair as a bride." His efforts had been unremitting and they were rewarded with such success that he was able to pay for the entire renovation out of that first season's profits.<sup>12</sup>

After the Civil War, the South desperately wanted to return to normal. The renewal of the popularity of the Virginia Springs illustrates the role the watering places played in curing both the social and psychological ills of the defeated South. Blooming belles were eager to enter

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<sup>12</sup>Frazier, Alum Case, 26.

society and to live the exciting summer days of their aunts and mothers at the vibrant Virginia Springs. Society was eager to reinstate genteel traditions and to forget the anxieties of war. Young and old maidens contrived make-shift gowns with high expectations for the first season. Guests came to the spas, eager for the first signs of the complete return of civility and gaiety. However, they found that they could not escape the consequences of war, one of which was the scarcity of eligible young men, vital to the social system of all watering places. Few survivors of Appomattox or Vicksburg could afford the \$3.50 daily rate, or the \$80 monthly rate on a frivolous season at the springs. The few young men who did return to the springs had been so affected by their wartime experiences that there was little gaiety left in them. War had seasoned them beyond their years. For more than a decade balls were not the thrilling competitive event that they once had been. Mint julips on the lawn lost much of their intrigue. Perforce, the social character of the Virginia Springs accommodated itself to the new circumstances of the Reconstruction era.

Instead of wealthy planters and the lovely belles and their beaux, the heroes of the Lost Cause became the central figures at the spas. Instead of the rainbow of colors which the ladies' dresses once had brought to the

watering places, all now was a mournful black. Instead of flirting with the bronzed scions of aristocratic families, the young belles made a cumspect circle about such elderly gentlemen as Joseph E. Johnston and Robert E. Lee to hear their war tales and to admire these living legends. The South might still be genteel, civil and brave, but it had lost its youth; it had lost its gaiety; and it was not to regain it for more than a decade.

Not surprisingly, General Robert E. Lee was a favorite at all the springs he visited. The Lees were well acquainted with most of the managers of the various springs and had visited several of them often, including Rockbridge Alum Springs. From almost the beginning of the Civil War, Mrs. Lee became so crippled by arthritis that she was confined to a wheelchair. Her family often traveled with her as she sought relief from her continual pain both by bathing in and drinking the various waters of the mountain springs. In 1863 General Lee had written to their daughter Agnès, "I was glad to hear...that you accompanied your mother...to Alum Springs."<sup>13</sup>

When, in 1865, General Lee accepted the presidency of Washington College at Lexington, the school was in a ruinous state. It is well-known that Lee refused highly remunerative

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<sup>13</sup>J. William Jones, Personal Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and Letters of General Robert E. Lee (New York, 1875), 399.

positions in the North so that he could devote his remaining years to the education of southern youths with the purpose of rebuilding a better country. Without meaning to detract from the regenerative grandeur of Lee's vision, one must, however, take note of the imperatives of Mrs. Lee's health. Northern winters would have been cruel for the invalid. Travel would have brought excruciating pain. At Lexington, however, she could enjoy a mild climate and utilize the numerous nearby spas, including Rockbridge Alum Springs, whose waters had been attested to by many respected physicians for the relief of arthritis.

In 1866, B. A. Braur of Lexington was an eighteen year old employee at Rockbridge Alum Springs. He later described one of General Lee's first visits to the spa after the war. Braur was amazed that so many of the guests were northerners, and estimated that southerners comprised little more than 10% of the guest roster. Furthermore, he was astonished to find that rumors of Lee's impending visit caused such excitement and anticipation among the guests. On the appointed day, several guests were stationed at various lookout points along the road to speed news of the General's approach. When at last the word came, the guests swarmed to the gate to be among the first to see and greet him. At length the Confederate hero rode through the gates on his celebrated war-horse, Traveler, wearing his "country clothes"

(his old Confederate uniform) and carrying a knapsack. Overcome by emotion, the guests immediately surrounded Lee, applauded and cheered him, hoisted him to their shoulders, and carried him proudly into the lobby of the spa's Central Hotel.<sup>14</sup>

Many other former Confederates and their families followed "Marse Robert" to the Rockbridge Alum Springs and enhanced its social eminence. Among these were: General James Gavin Field of Gordonsville, the Populist candidate for the vice-presidency of the United States in 1892; General Francis H. Smith, who served as Virginia Military Institute's first president; General Wade Hampton, South Carolina's leading political figure from 1876 until 1890; and John Letcher, the war-time governor of Virginia.<sup>15</sup>

Prominent families from all parts of the South also began to summer at this spa. The Benjamin Hill, Jr., family of Atlanta, the Wise family of Richmond, and the Montgomery Blair family from Baltimore were several of the Alum's most prestigious visitors. Many northerners, and especially those with southern ties, discovered that Frazier's hostelry and clientele were well-suited to their notions of good taste and society, and southern hospitality.

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<sup>14</sup>Rockbridge County News, Sept. 23, 1926.

<sup>15</sup>Semes, "Rockbridge Alum Springs," Rockbridge Proceedings, 47-48. See also F. N. Boney, John Letcher of Virginia (University of Alabama, 1966), 236.

Cyrus McCormick of Chicago and his family spent many summers at Rockbridge Alum Springs. The great industrialist had been born at "Walnut Grove" in Rockbridge County, and he maintained a large estate there. His visits to his native heath were made more comfortable and diverting by resorting to Frazier's spa, instead of rustivating at "Walnut Grove." Not only was the fare good and varied, but his wife and lovely daughters found new friends with whom to share innocent amusements. McCormick, like so many other wealthy non-combattents of the Civil War, delighted in any association with General Lee, as if the latter's noble character might rub off on him. Furthermore, the McCormicks were honored by having the most spacious, elegant cottage at the spa named for them.<sup>16</sup>

After the war, advertising expanded as did new ideas for the promotion of the spa. The alum water trade had slackened during the war. Noting the growing demands for family patent remedies, Frazier decided that "it was time to quit selling...[alum water] like groceries, and to begin putting it up like a family medicine."<sup>17</sup> By this time, he already had expanded his alum trade by commencing to market bottled powdered alum, or alum mass, as the evaporated alum

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<sup>16</sup>Semes, "Rockbridge Alum Springs," Rockbridge Proceedings, 47-48.

<sup>17</sup>William Frazier, Rockbridge Alum Springs, to James Frazier, March 22, 1867; Irvin Frazier Collection.

water was called. When mixed with tap water, the chemical compound which resulted had almost the same medicinal value as the spring's original alum water. Although Frazier had initiated and continually developed and advertised the water trade, he also began to benefit from a growing national trend. "Alum was the new craze, sulphur was having to hustle."<sup>18</sup>

The summer season of 1867 was even more successful for William Frazier. Competition grew between the fashionable beauties for the few eligible males. Fashions tended to become more extreme and extravagant as the South slowly began to recoup some of its material losses. Newer trends in games to entertain the guests stressed the traditional chivalry attributed to the South. Tournaments became quite popular at the spas, offering opportunities to enjoy costumes, a sporting chance to win, and the victory prize of crowning the Queen for the evening's festivities.<sup>19</sup> By 1869, both the ladies and gentlemen could enjoy separate bowling facilities.

Ever since 1853, William Frazier had fought legal suits condemning his management of the spa. Litigation came to a standstill during the war, but it was renewed almost as soon as peace returned. His brother's widow, Mrs. Elizabeth

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<sup>18</sup>Reniers, Springs of Virginia, 184.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 227.



Frazier, was joined by a large shareholder, Mr. S. A. Porter, in suits which contended that William Frazier not only had mismanaged the spa, but was also guilty of fraud and robbery of their interests in the resort. After protracted litigation, Judge Sheffey of Staunton in 1866 not only pronounced that Frazier's handling of the property was legal and extremely efficient, but he also declared that the resort's increasing revenue was due solely to Frazier's efforts. Indeed, through his sixteen years of skillful management, the facilities of Rockbridge Alum Springs had almost tripled in size, and the spa had achieved a reputation second only to the Queen of the Springs, White Sulphur Springs of Greenbriar County.<sup>20</sup>

Sheffey's decision notwithstanding, James A. Frazier decided to enter suit challenging his uncle's position as manager of the spa when the young man attained his majority in 1868. The court led the two parties to a fairly amicable division, to be effected by putting the entire property up for sale, but a sale limited to the two Fraziers. After William Frazier bid \$234,000 for the property on September 1, 1868, James A. Frazier raised the bid to \$235,000. William dropped out of the bidding because he felt this his age of fifty-six years made greater financial entanglements unwise.

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<sup>20</sup>William Frazier, Rockbridge Alum Springs, to his children, Feb. 5, 1868; Irvin Frazier Collection., See also Frazier, Alum Case, passim.

Furthermore, he knew his family of ten children was "remote from schools and absolutely out of reach of church," and he was therefore "most anxious to return within the pale of civilization." In October of 1868, he sold the live-stock, wines and liquors, farming implements, etc. to James A. Frazier for about \$4,000, making the total purchase price for the Alum about \$240,000.<sup>21</sup>

After James A. Frazier took control of the spa, William Frazier moved his family to Staunton. Although he no longer had any material interest in the resort, having received his original quarter interest in the spa at the time of its sale, he followed closely and attributed the spa's diminishing prestige to his nephew's negligence. In 1883 he wrote of his nephew James A. Frazier's management with disgust:

In six years he made havoc of its good name; and in the twelve years that, by hook and by crook, he managed to cling to it, he made shipwreck of its buildings almost as completely as he had ruined its fair fame and reputation.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Frazier, Alum Case, 27-28.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 28.

## CHAPTER III

### FROM PROSPERITY TO DECAY: 1868-1880

At the age of twenty-one, James A. Frazier entered the highly competitive springs trade. He brought with him neither managerial experience nor any concept of what was involved in maintaining a resort on the magnitude of Rockbridge Alum Springs.

When his father John Frazier died, his uncle William Frazier became his legal guardian, but the seven-year-old boy continued to live with his mother even after she remarried. Because his mother had little faith in the values of formal education, he received little schooling. Since James had few contacts with his uncle William, and because his mother lodged several law suits against his uncle, it is not surprising that the youth absorbed and radiated animosity towards and distrust of William Frazier. This feeling certainly was not justifiable, considering his uncle's generous and prompt response to James' numerous letters requesting funds after the Civil War. Indeed, William occasionally paid to his nephew more than James had requested. Such gestures in no way deterred James A. Frazier from not only commencing suit to gain control of the spa for himself, but also resorting to questionable

and destructive methods in the process. Even after his own management of the spa resulted in its collapse, James A. Frazier continued publicly to hold his uncle accountable for much of its decay and forced William Frazier to clear his name through the long, tedious legal processes of the courts.<sup>1</sup> Having gained little refinement either by education or experience, James A. Frazier was in a large part responsible for the changing clientele which began to frequent the spa.

When the young bachelor took over the management and ownership of Rockbridge Alum Springs in 1868, it was second in popularity only to the White Sulphur Springs. The alum water trade had been revitalized after the war and annual sales were up to \$6,000. The South was struggling to return to normal and the various springs served as a vehicle towards this normalcy. The V.M.I. cadets resumed their summer hikes to the Alum, both as an exercise and as a psychological break from the long summer sessions required of the cadets.<sup>2</sup> James Frazier tried to encourage new visitors to try his spa by offering a tri-weekly stage coach from Lexington to Goshen. The \$4.00 fare included supper, overnight lodging and breakfast at the Alum.<sup>3</sup> By

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<sup>1</sup>Frazier, Alum Case, 18-19.

<sup>2</sup>Couper, V.M.I., III, 216, 231, 232.

<sup>3</sup>Lexington Gazette, Oct. 11, 1872. See also The Rockbridge Citizen, Aug. 7, 1872.

this period, the resort's rate was \$3.00 a day or \$75.00 a month. Negro servants were given accommodations for half-price, and white servants were charged according to their accommodations at the spa. For the guests there was a wider assortment of entertainment than in the ante-bellum days before competitive sports had become popular. The spa offered separate bowling alleys for ladies and gentlemen to enjoy. Ten-pins, croquet and other lawn games offered pleasant diversions for the active guests. Horseback riding, fishing, hunting and card-playing remained favorite occupations for the men, but the nightly dances and special Masquerade and Fancy Dress Balls were still the major attraction for everyone's evening.<sup>4</sup> The Cyrus McCormick entourage provided such a pinnacle of elegance with their private cottage, fine riding horses and splendid ball gowns, that few could really compete with them.<sup>5</sup>

Already handicapped by lack of experience, the young manager in 1873 met with an obstacle which eventually proved to be unsurmountable. When the litigation between the Jordans and the Campbells had ended in 1848 in favor of the Jordans, the latter immediately had begun to build next door to the Rockbridge Alum a resort to capitalize upon

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<sup>4</sup>Pamphlet, n.a., [1873], Historical Society of Virginia, Richmond.

<sup>5</sup>Unpublished MS, n.a., n.d., Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

their chalybeate springs and to enter the lucrative springs trade. After the Civil War, construction on the Jordan's new establishment began in earnest.

The John W. Jordan property was adjacent to the northern lawn behind the Rockbridge Alum's Central Hotel and ran along that resort's northeastern border. In 1872 the Grand Hotel of the new Jordan Alum Springs resort was almost completed. Not unlike the hostellries of Saratoga during this period, it was a flamboyant Victorian building of brick with four stories and topped by an elaborate mansard roof. Boasting 150 rooms, it could accommodate 350 guests. Its huge 110 x 36 foot dining room could seat 300 people, and the ballroom above could contain almost as many dancers. The hotel's guests enjoyed the luxury of running water on every floor, piped in from a mountain reservoir. The view from the Grand Hotel commanded a splendid panorama of the mountains, lovely terraced lawns in the front, and special architectural delights such as the graceful bandstand on the lawn whose design tradition has attributed to Stanford White, one of the most successful designer/architects of the day. The mountain stream which flowed through both properties was dammed up to form a small lake below the Grand Hotel. On its banks was the lovely Lake Cottage. Several other cottages and a smaller hotel called the Brooke were also constructed so that the entire establishment could

accommodate about 500 people. The well-cultivated grounds and all of the buildings were quite modern and had permanent fixtures for gas which luxuriously lit both the buildings and the spacious grounds. Another convenience was the large ice house which was kept well stocked with choice ice, often running to fifteen inches thick.<sup>6</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Jordans capitalized upon their proximity to the well-known and long-established Rockbridge Alum Springs. In fact, however, the Jordan Alum Springs was quite inappropriately named, since its springs consisted of chalybeate rather than alum waters. The six springs were faced with a splendid stone wall and covered with a pavillion. Each spring had a small counter over which guests could partake of the healthful mineral waters. Elsewhere on the property was a good lithia spring, housed in a delicate gazebo.

In 1872, John W. Jordan sold his establishment to the newly formed Jordan Alum Springs Company. Fred Effinger of Staunton was the principal stockholder of the new syndicate, and he began preparations to open the first season of 1873 in grand style. One "guest" in 1872 enjoyed a preview of the Jordan Alum and wrote to The Rockbridge Enterprise, a weekly Lexington paper, comparing the two resorts:

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<sup>6</sup>The Rockbridge Citizen, Aug. 7, 1872.

The old Alum...is as quiet as a cemetery. Its recent entanglement in the tedious processes of the law has settled the dullness of winter upon it with a spell that not the opening leaflets nor the song of the spring bird can break.... In a few steps we reach the Jordan Alum Springs. Here all is changed. Everything is teeming with life.<sup>7</sup>

In 1873 the Jordan Alum opened its doors for the first season of visitors. It was a great success. Immediately conflicts arose between the two establishments, caused by their proximity. When Frazier refused to allow Jordan Alum guests use of his road, immediately Effinger built a new road across North Mountain to the Jordan Alum resort.<sup>8</sup> A more serious conflict arose when the remaining guests at Rockbridge Alum wandered off to the Jordan Alum for dinner or for dances. Both dining and dancing arrangements were soon subject only to the whims of the guests from each resort. Without result, each establishment forbade its guests to frequent any events at "that other" resort. Abandoning less effective means of keeping his own guests at Rockbridge Alum, Frazier finally constructed a high fence along his property line. Covering the many well-trodden paths by which guests had sampled the pleasures of both spas

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<sup>7</sup>The Rockbridge Citizen, Aug. 7, 1872.

<sup>8</sup>Unpublished MS., collected by E. P. Tompkins, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS (hereinafter cited as Tompkins MS., Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.)



this barrier must have inhibited the enjoyment of all guests and sundry visitors. One visitor to Rockbridge Alum left a record of its effects upon the employees of both places. Late at night after daily duties had been completed, servants of both resorts collected beside the fence to prove in vocal strength or combat, their loyalties to their own resorts, much to the annoyance of the paying guests. So, while the "owners fought in the courts, the respective employees fought fist and skull to carry out the tradition of enmity."<sup>9</sup>

By 1876 the entire character of the old Rockbridge Alum had changed. Mismanagement, legal battles, competition and personalities had taken their toll in its unfortunate metamorphosis. One frequent guest had finally found the conditions so intolerable that he reluctantly moved his family's summer business elsewhere. With regret, he explained the resort's deplorable state to William Frazier:

...the old Alum had come to be "run" entirely by [N]egroes, and some of them drunken [N]egroes at that; the proprietor amusing himself at card-playing, at croquet and other lawn games, and giving no sort of attention to his guests; that in point of fact the place had become disreputable.<sup>10</sup>

Enough guests became disenchanted with the Rockbridge Alum Springs that James A. Frazier soon found his seasons

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<sup>9</sup>Tompkins MS., Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>10</sup>Frazier, Alum Case, 28.

costing more than they earned. When in 1880 James Frazier could no longer pay the taxes on the property, his bank and creditors forced him to sell the springs at a public auction. In June, C. R. Mason bid \$134,000 for the property for the newly formed Rockbridge Alum Springs Company, made up of many stockholders from the Jordan Alum. On January 12, 1881, the two companies merged to become the new Rockbridge Alum Springs Company. Both establishments were combined under one management; James Frazier departed, and Fred Effinger became president of the whole establishment.<sup>11</sup>

The new company immediately engaged William Frazier's services as a consultant to assess the damages caused by his nephew's neglect and to offer recommendations as to its complete restoration. When William arrived at the spa, he found it in a state of pitiable decay. The buildings were in a shambles. Window glass was almost totally destroyed; most doors hung loosely on their hinges; and the dining room doors were lying on the floor. The roofs leaked badly and the interior plaster was crumbling. In describing the Central Hotel, Frazier wrathfully exclaimed: "the condition of its floors show the hogs of the place had made it their resort."<sup>12</sup> Even the alum springs themselves, the very source of the spa's renown, had fallen into ruin. Through

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<sup>11</sup>Rockbridge County Records, Deed Book SS, 111, 228-231.

<sup>12</sup>Frazier, Alum Case, 29.

years of neglect, debris from the alum cliff above the spring's pavillion collected on its roof until its weight crushed the entire elliptic colonade and blocked the entrances to the wells. The wastrel James had even disregarded the necessity of maintaining vitally important sanitation. His irate uncle William was so horrified that he declared that:

...the drainage of the place..was so gone to decay and so completely clogged, that escape from typhoid fever seemed little less than a marvel.<sup>13</sup>

As for the once-thriving alum water trade, William Frazier noted that his nephew was no negligent that he had not bothered to fill orders for alum water even from the large distributors, much less the small orders from individuals. Consequently, by 1880 the spring's alum water trade had dried up.<sup>14</sup>

Acting upon William Frazier's recommendations, the new Rockbridge Alum Springs Company immediately began a complete restoration of the ruined spa, beginning with the drainage. They quickly dismantled the high fence and put in its place a covered walkway to connect the two establishments. They next reroofed, replastered and refurbished the entire resort, much as William Frazier himself had done fifteen years

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Frazier, Alum Case, 29.

earlier.<sup>15</sup> After a busy winter of restoration the newly refurbished old Alum and the Jordan Alum opened their combined doors in 1881 as the Rockbridge Alum Springs. This first season was the inauguration of a new epoch for the spa as it entered its golden era.

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GOLDEN AGE, 1881-1900

During the season of 1881 the reorganized Rockbridge Alum Springs attracted a greater number and wider variety of visitors than for many years. The management had planned and executed an effective advertising campaign to tout its hotels and grounds. New spring-goers were eager to discover newer, more exciting spas; and the old clients, which had forsaken the Alum during its recent desolate summers, returned to satisfy their curiosity. Prosperous times after the discouragements of reconstruction seemed assured. Both the management and the habituées of the spa were eager to create a new era of elegance, an American golden age which would combine the civilities of the Old South with the red plush comforts of the New North.

In his first season as manager of the large consolidated establishment, Mr. E. G. Peyton had the advice and aid of the experienced William Frazier. Together, they greeted guests and set the tone of the spa. The center of all activity was the Grand Hotel, which had been built as the Jordans' main hotel. By July almost 500 guests were registered and lodged in the various hotels and cottages of the sprawling establishment. The usual assortment of lawn games,

deer- and pheasant-hunts, fox-chases by the light of the full moon, horse-back riding, dances and card-playing still led the list of amusements available to the guests. Of course, the arrival of each stagecoach was greeted with great enthusiasm and anticipation, and the daily postal delivery caused a flurry of activity around the Central Hotel as guests flocked to the post office to learn news of those not fortunate enough to be among their charmed circle at the springs. Meanwhile, the bar offered, for the diversion of the guests all sorts of fermented and distilled spirits. Wagon loads of mint juleps added an air of gaiety as the summer guests strolled through the lawns and piazzas, lounged on shady porches, or played at card games while a nimble-fingered adversary continued winning the bets with unaccountable ease.

On July 20, 1881, both the guests and employees dashed about in an unusual flurry, readying themselves, their daughters, sons, nephews, uncles and husbands for the biggest event of the month--the season's major tournament. Since the Civil War, various tournaments had become quite popular at all the spas. They seemed to offer the guests a glimpse of another era--one which represented an ante-bellum legend of the Old South. Beauty, chastity, chivalry, skill, honor, loyalty and the victor's glory of winning--the tournament combined them all and provided an afternoon of nostalgic

excitement for mere spectators. The tournament was hardly one in which armored knights sought to dislodge one another from their war-horses by striking with a lance or battle-axe. The Victorians had restored a pacified, mock medieval tourney, limiting it to events in which competitors sought to pick with their lance metal rings either from a single stationary "arm" or from one "arm" of a guntain, or pivot post, whose other "arm" would swing round and strike the unskillful tilter.

Early in the afternoon, the rocking-chair brigade began to form its ranks, while younger guests spread quilts on the lawn. The early sightseers claimed the best vantage points, and before long there was on the greensward a throng of eager guests together with negligent employees who had managed to escape from their various duties. Meanwhile be-plumed "knights" maneuvered their gaily caparisoned steeds into the assembly area adjacent to the lower corner of the groomed lawn. Black nurses and other servants filled the windows of the Grand Hotel, straining to absorb all the action and beauty of the afternoon. The belles of the summer wore their finest afternoon dresses, freshly ironed and perfumed; and they eagerly anticipated the conclusion of the games when one of them would be chosen by the winning Knight to reign over that night's Fancy Dress ball as the Queen of Love and Beauty. When the Marshal of

the tournament gave the signal to begin, the trumpet sounded; and the knights and their horses proudly strode onto the field of combat. On the afternoon of July 20, 1881, the first of these knights was Walter Fort of Texas, who wore a costume and carried a banner suitable for the "Knight of the Lone Star." As the "Knight of the West," V.M.I. cadet Carlisle sought to bring glory to his native state of California. Another competing knight was P. Batzell of Maryland who was greeted as the "Knight of the Forest." Each participant's mount was brushed to a fine sheen and adorned in its best harness and saddle. The rules were familiar to the competitors and spectators alike: he who picked off the most rings with his makeshift lance in three "tilts" or rounds would win the honor of selecting and crowning his Queen of Love and Beauty for that evening's festivities.

At last, the knights mounted their eager steeds, assembled in the center of the lawn, and turned to hear Major Dormal of Lexington offer the charge:

'Tis the world-wide, world-old story,  
 reproduced here to-day, of man's  
 effort to win woman's smiles. From  
 Paradise down through all sacred and  
 profane annals, there is one continuous  
 record of beauty and tenderness bending  
 to the homage of manly devotion. Thus,  
 beyond the hilarity and enjoyment of  
 such an occasion, it is not devoid of  
 some nobler meaning and higher purpose....  
 Strive earnestly and manfully, and  
 from this galaxy of grace and beauty



where New York and Chicago vie with  
 Baltimore and Louisville and New  
 Orleans, and our own Virginia, gain  
 your reward--the greatest that heaven  
 can vouchsafe to man--the gracious  
 and approving smile of gentle,  
 cultured, lovely woman!<sup>1</sup>

Amid great fanfare, the games commenced. The lively crowd cheered on favorite friends, sons, nephews and uncles. Non-participating lads doubtless heckled their mounted friends. Juleps and glasses of shrub, sangria, tea or lemonade cushioned all spectators, according to their age, sex or disposition, against the rigors of the long, hot afternoon and added mounting enthusiasm to the game's climax. At long last, when both knights and their horses were exhausted, Major Dormal proclaimed the games concluded. An expectant hush fell over the multitude until the Marshal identified the victor. The audience applauded vigorously, as the winning knight strode victoriously by them to halt in front of Miss Sutton of Richmond and majestically claim her as his Queen of Love and Beauty. Miss Mary Ella Field of Culpeper and the lovely Miss Lucy McCormick of Chicago were selected as Maids of Honor.

For days, the hotel's staff had made great preparations in both the ballroom and kitchen for the Grand Ball. That evening, the guests first were treated to a coronation of the Queen and her Court. Each belle was crowned with a

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<sup>1</sup>The Rockbridge Enterprise, July 20, 1881.

wreath of flowers. When the orchestra began, each of the lovely maidens selected her "knight" to open the ball with a quadrille. After five stately figures prescribed for each group of four couples, the popular "Cuban" dance followed and other dancers poured onto the crowded dance floor. The "Cuban" was followed by a round dance by couples. At midnight, after an exhausting evening on the dance floor, the guests were summoned to repair to the dining room for an elaborate dinner.

Perhaps the guests enjoyed a menu similar to a dinner served several seasons later. The meal might have opened with an appetizer of Chicken Gumbo or Beef bouillon. The soup might have been followed by an entrée of spring lamb with mint sauce, or spring chicken with English dressing. The main course was perhaps beefsteak pie Norfolk style, or mutton à la jardinière. For those who could endure further delights, there might have been apricot pudding à la Créole or wine sherbert with marble cake.<sup>2</sup> After savoring the last flavors of apricot or the final sip of wine or coffee, the guests--reinforced by the feast--returned to the ballroom to dance away the remaining few hours of night with the elaborate promenades and crossings of the "new" dance, the German.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Menu [1880's], Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>3</sup>The Rockbridge Enterprise, July 20, 1881.

When the ball finally concluded, the exhausted guests made their way to their various hotel rooms and cottages, beneath the flickering gas lights at the Grand Hotel and throughout the grounds. Jim West was the lamplighter for many years during this period, and he made his rounds to light his lamps at sunset and to extinguish them at dawn through the long summer seasons.<sup>4</sup>

Each season was filled with new adventures and new faces. Mercifully, the Civil War had slipped into the legendary past, leaving only images and myths. Reconstruction itself was over. The New South's emphasis on material revitalization on Northern models contributed to a continuing scarcity of young men and eligible bachelors, though not so great a shortage as for the previous fifteen years. During these golden days of the Rockbridge Alum, the management had a continual problem of providing enough gentlemen for would-be belles and their anxious parents. Most guests counted upon the springs for providing a socially acceptable meeting place, offering sultry sunny days and long summer evenings with light amusements and numerous opportunities for the development of maturing relationships. Throughout the 1880's and 1890's, the various managers of the spa often extended special invitations to professors at V.M.I. and Washington and Lee with the understanding

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<sup>4</sup>The old Alum was lit by coal oil lamps until acetylene lamps were installed in the late 1880's. Tompkins MS, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

that they might bring with them several students in order to encourage a greater number of dancing feet on the dance floor. Young men were also usually offered a special, lower rate of \$30.00 a month. Ben Huger of Lexington took notice of the offer:

Well, I estimated that was cheaper than staying home, so I at once hied me over to the Alum and spent a month there.<sup>5</sup>

Contagious diseases, overexposure to the sun and weather, overindulgence in both the waters of the Alum wells and those mixed at the bar, sprained ankles and bruises, snakebites and the usual assortments of hazards of summer living were compounded at most watering places. The fear of communicable diseases had been the basis of the popularity of the Virginia springs during the highly infectious summer months, so most spas took extra precautions to keep their hostel free from conditions which bred infectious diseases. After the careful renovation of the sanitary facilities at the old Alum in 1880, Rockbridge Alum Springs was confident of its healthfulness. However, during one season in the 1880's, when approximately 800 guests were in attendance, the spa experienced its first serious health threat.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Few guests noticed the absence of one little girl from her playmates. Who could count one child, more or less, in the rambunctious batallion of children racing through the arcades and across the lawns, shouting and laughing in their own world of summer play? Those few who knew of the child's indisposition believed that it was inconsequential. Prudently, the management called in several physicians to confer about her symptoms. Their verdict was diptheria! The bartender at the Alum, Mr. Blackwell, several years later recalled the panic and the exodus which ensued:

So in a day or so she died--died right there at the hotel, and the hotel plumb full of guests. But I'm tellin' you, it wasn't full long--the way the people cleared out of there was something to see! They packed up, and they skedaddled! In about one day's time there wasn't more than a corporal's guard of them left. The pantry and store-room was all stocked up....It left the management in a hole... I'm tellin ye!<sup>6</sup>

Fortunately, this was the only serious illness at the Rockbridge Alum Springs during its Golden Age.

Since no hostelry is better than its servants, Mr. Peyton and his lieutenants were careful in recruiting capable persons, but they were not infallible. Over-enthusiastic employees bent on an exciting summer were an occasional hazard. Sam Entsminger, hired as a night-patrolman and a part-time well-tender for the Alum during

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<sup>6</sup>Tompkins MS, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

this period, recalled one particularly nasty trick by a sadistic scamp. This scoundrely employee had found a large hornet's nest in the woods, and had stuffed leaves into its opening to trap the hornets inside. He wrapped the nest in his shirt and dashed into the servants quarters. Promising an excellent laugh, he charged all interested onlookers one dime, and he gave the details of time and place to those who paid up. At the appointed minute, he dashed into the crowded lobby of the Grant Hotel, broke the hornet's nest in twain, and in record time cleared the lobby of a throng of agitated visitors, not less angry than the hornets. Screaming and frantically slapping at the hornets, the guests crushed through the main door. The culprit's uproarious laugh was stilled quickly when the irate manager discharged him on the spot.<sup>7</sup>

In 1885, travel to the Rockbridge Alum was greatly facilitated by the construction of a narrow gauge railroad to the very doors of the Grand Hotel. Guests could disembark from the regular line at Goshen and board the daily Alum train which traversed the forest in thirty minutes. In return for a guaranteed annual fee, the nearby Victoria Iron Mines Company built this line as a spur of its main line to the mines. The Alum's guests were enthusiastic

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

about this new convenience and affectionately named the two steam engines which served the Alum the Old Huldy and the Old Star.<sup>8</sup>

In 1886, the spa once again changed hands. R. G. Campbell bought the entire establishment for \$50,000, quite a drop from the \$134,000 price paid only six years previously. Although no records exist as to this rather unexpected decline in value, one must conclude that the spa was not so lucrative a venture, although it was still the second most popular resort in Virginia. R. G. Campbell had formed a small corporation, of which James A. Frazier was a stockholder. Campbell reinstated his co-owner Frazier as the spa's manager, even though only six years had passed since the latter's mismanagement had led to the resort's bankruptcy. In 1882, two years after he had left the Alum, Frazier had secured appointment as treasurer of Virginia Military Institute. When other V.M.I. officials noticed that debts were accumulating, they conducted an audit which revealed that \$1,836.30 was missing from the treasury. The school first fired and then sued Frazier to recover this amount. In two years of litigation Frazier refused to produce books or vouchers. Reluctantly, the court dismissed the case for

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<sup>8</sup>The spa also guaranteed its payment of any increased taxes resulting from the extension of the railroad. Scrapbook, Bailey Archives, RHS.

<sup>9</sup>Semes, "Rockbridge Alum Springs," Rockbridge Proceedings, 49.

lack of evidence and in 1900, V.M.I. wrote off the balance due as an unrecoverable loss.<sup>10</sup>

Although Frazier might have been involved in several shady dealings, the Alum's guests were generally unaware of his difficulties, and seemed to enjoy his years as manager. As one guest stated, "He was a great one fer gittin' up sumpin' to amuse the guests."<sup>11</sup> One of Frazier's most original and successful ventures during his tenure as manager was the purchase of a bear cub for the entertainment of the guests. He was kept on the lawn of the Alum, and he would playfully box with interested participants. As he grew, he pretty well had the run of the entire establishment, much to the amusement and occasional annoyance of both the employees and guests. Although he would often scatter the garbage and steal milk bottles, he was generally considered a member of the small summer community. Such was his freedom that he occasionally climbed the porch columns, paced the rooftree and entered an open window to the astonishment of the room's occupants.<sup>12</sup>

Challenges of all sorts entertained visiting gentlemen throughout the long summers. The fields of competition were

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<sup>10</sup>Couper, V.M.I., III, 381-382.

<sup>11</sup>Tompkins MS, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>12</sup>Jake Chittum Memory, Tompkins MS., Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.



usually shooting, riding, boxing or card-playing. However, occasionally an unusual challenge sometimes caught the interest of the entire resort. One such event was inspired by a guest named Petty, who was undoubtedly the largest man at the spa--weighing 400 pounds. When Petty began to boast about his stomach's enormous capacity, Jim Frazier decided to give him an opportunity to prove his claims and challenged him to consume 10 pounds of meat in one sitting. Petty accepted. When the day of the feat arrived, the guests anxiously assembled about the table, amazed at the immense amount of meat stacked before the huge man. They watched incredulously as Petty consumed the entire ten pounds of meat and finally polished off the last few scraps. One can only surmise the reaction of the spectators when Petty finally finished his feast, turned to Frazier and declared: "The sample is good enough; bring on the regular meal!"<sup>13</sup>

The guests were always eager for a change of pace and welcomed new diversions. During one long summer day, Professor Ronale Alberdie and his strolling show appeared unexpectedly at the resort. This practitioner of the ancient comedia del arte traveled throughout the countryside from town to town, from tavern to tavern and from resort to resort in order to demonstrate his Amazing Feats. Among

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<sup>13</sup>W. VanKnick Memory, Ibid.

his other accomplishments, the spectators were equally amazed at his feat of swallowing melted lead and red-hot iron, and at his excellent sleight-of-hand tricks.<sup>14</sup>

Aside from their usual amusements, the children sometimes were treated to a pony-cart ride, and their parents might join them in a surrey or talley-ho rented from the spa's livery. Occasionally all the guests were treated to a hay-ride or a special excursion to Jym Springs, which was five miles down the mountain road. Once there, the musicians who had come along might have been persuaded to strike up a number and the couples could dance the afternoon away on the small, out-door platform. Except for such extraordinary events, the summer days were generally peaceful, and the guests often passed the tranquil early summer evenings by listening to the small group of Negro servants clearing the dining room after dinner, singing softly in harmony, reminiscent of earlier days and times when singing seemed to be more common. During these days a local farmer, Mr. W. VanKnick, would load his wagon with peaches and drive about the Alum grounds, selling them. He was always astonished that the guests were willing to pay 50¢ a dozen: "The prices I would get!...Them people didn't care nothin' 'bout money!"<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Tompkins MS., ibid.

<sup>15</sup>W. VanKnick Memory, Tompkins MS., Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

In 1888, Campbell re-organized his small company and re-arranged the stockholders. Col. Peyton became the major stockholder and the company changed its name to the Peyton-Campbell Company. Peyton replaced James A. Frazier as manager, although Frazier continued to work in a lesser capacity. Many of the staff and servants remained on with the resort, including Tate Sterrett who continued to run his daily coach from Lexington to the Alum as well as manage both the livery and the tobacco, cigar and news stand at the Alum. In the first season of 1888, the advertising pamphlets stressed the new proprietors and the new manager--emphasizing Peyton's earlier position as sixteen-year manager to the White Sulphur Springs.<sup>16</sup>

The changing times and the country's worsening financial conditions were obviously influencing the Alum's visitors, and their complaints led Col. Peyton to grumble that he had never seen "such a desire for cheaper rates."<sup>17</sup> For several years, the company re-arranged itself as financial conditions worsened for the Alum and as the managerial problems grew more complex. In 1889, signs of discord and continuing problems show up in a letter of

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<sup>16</sup>Advertising Pamphlet, 1888, n.a., n.p., Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>17</sup>Col. Peyton to W. G. Johnston, Oak Dale, Va., July 5, 1889, Bound business files, 1903, Rockbridge Alum Archives, RHS.

correspondence from Peyton to one of the Alum's creditors-- the subject of the letter was James A. Frazier:

I am compelled to report that our business at this office is undertaken in a very unsatisfactory and unbusiness-like manner. He is often away from his duties...his excuse for absence is delivering messages.<sup>18</sup>

A clipping from the Lynchburg Virginian newspaper also demonstrates another difficulty which faced all spas and was responsible for the continuing changing social character of the springs. Even twenty years after the war, the country had still not recovered its equal distribution of eligible bachelors to available belles:

There is the usual scarcity of young men at the summer resorts this season, much to the regret of those who naturally place a high value on their society....What is the matter, boys, this should not be so, for if you do not go where the girls congregate, you may be doomed to a life of single-blessedness.<sup>19</sup>

As both financial and social conditions tightened for the resort, tensions mounted. When the Victoria Iron Mines requested an increase in rent for the use of their locomotives, cars and tracks, Frazier balked. The disagreement turned into a lively law suit which was not settled for

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<sup>18</sup>Col. Peyton to I. B. West, Richmond, Aug. 9, 1889, Bound business files, 1889, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>19</sup>Misc. newspaper clippings, n.d., Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

several years. The immediate result was that the railroad refused to haul any more of the Alum's visitors or freight until the suit was settled.

By 1892, the Peyton-Campbell Company was heavily indebted. Out of the 28-35 servants who were usually hired to serve the Alum's many guests, only 17 remained on the payroll. As to the alum water trade, Peyton attributed its failure not to management, but to the Democratic president: "As for the sales of the water, under your Cleveland administration, it has fallen off almost to zero."<sup>20</sup> The two preceding years had been very poorly managed, and the company was no longer able to meet its debts. In an effort to encourage further visitors, the owners lowered their general rates to half-price. In another move, and hoping for a two-fold solution, they also decided to offer another new change in prices, and advertised an incredibly low daily rate of \$1.00 for any young dancing man. In a reply to one response from a young Savannah bachelor, attracted by this new rate, Peyton gleefully wrote:

We are glad to hear of the young men coming as the girls are very much in need of them now. A few sticks with breeches on them at this time would create a great flutter among the many single and married belles that

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<sup>20</sup> Col. Peyton to W. F. Johnston, Oak Dale, Virginia, n.d., 1894, Bound business files, 1903, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

are here. So you can imagine what a sensation five or six young, healthy, full grown men in store clothes would make!<sup>21</sup>

Although the Alum's Golden Era was fading fast, it still enjoyed visits from many well-known figures and groups. In 1896 the Medical Society of Virginia met at the resort. By 1897 the law suit between the Alum and the Victoria Mines had been settled and the resumption of rail service led to the hopes that the summer trade might take a turn for the better. A glance at the few surviving ledgers from this period illustrate the management's lessening efficiency. Earlier ledgers which recorded the daily arrivals and departures of the guests were inscribed in a delicate, elaborate Victorian script, with great attention given to the lettering of each month, week and day. Great care was taken with the crisp pages as each guest carefully inscribed his well-practiced signature. By the late 1890's, the ledger's dates were often out of sequence, and the dates themselves had often been clipped out of various calendars or account books and hastily glued to the various pages. Even the 1896 signatures of J. R. McCormick of Chicago and Granville E. Valentine of Richmond were all but lost in a jumble of names on pages scarred by ink blots and stained with various liquids. Indeed, all

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<sup>21</sup>Col. Peyton to J. Ferris Cann, Savannah, Ga., July 17, 1894, Ibid.

the business records during these last years of the nineteenth century reflected the proprietors' poor management. It is no wonder that the popularity of the Rockbridge Alum Springs diminished under these conditions.

It was little comfort that all the Virginia Springs were suffering under similar conditions. One of the primary functions of the mountain watering places no longer fitted the needs of its visitors, as new medical discoveries brought under control the contagious diseases which had once threatened the summers of the south. The changing social structure of the spas still afforded a meeting place for the young couples, but the Age of the Belle was drawing to a close and with it waned the popularity of the Virginia Springs. Although seaside resorts had increased in popularity, the invention of the country clubs beginning in 1887 at Tuxedo Park, New York,<sup>22</sup> gave to such spas as Rockbridge Alum Springs, competition they could not meet: health, diversion and sport close by the offices of the wealthy. It remained to be seen whether the Rockbridge Alum Springs could find a new, different role for itself in the twentieth century.

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<sup>22</sup>Jack Irby Hayes, "The Social and Cultural Milieu of Westmoreland Davis," unpublished MA thesis, VPI&SU, Blacksburg, Va., 1968, 39-43.

## CHAPTER V

### THE END OF AN ERA AND MEMORIES:

JAMES BRANCH CABELL 1900-1928

The turn of the century signaled a decline of the popularity of the Rockbridge Alum Springs. As automobiles drastically changed the entire pace of the country, transients replaced the long-term visitor. In response, the proprietors sought new advertising gimmicks to impress potential guests with the seemingly luxurious and miraculous conditions at the spa. Their pamphlets combined in a shameless manner the melodramatic expressions of the nineteenth century with the scientific hallmarks of the twentieth. One description of the Alum's central lawn attempted to transform that grassy plot into a mythical realm: "Nature had spread a carpet fit to be pressed by the footsteps of the descending Gods." In a campaign of renewed emphasis on the alum water's medicinal qualities, the promotional literature abandoned such dated phrases as "torpid liver" in favor of new, impressive pseudo-medical terms which hinted at the discovery of radium by Cure and the treatment of nervous breakdowns by Freud. Now the waters were touted as sure cures for chlorosis or green



sickness, and for "neurasthenia or nervous exhaustion consequent upon mental worry and excessive brain work." New medical "discoveries" replaced old-fashioned fear of various minerals, and William Frazier's anti-arsenic campaign of the 1850's was reversed by the proprietors in accordance with a new medical fad. Strong minerals made strong medicine was the watchword:

Besides other valuable ingredients, the various blendings of Alum Iron, and Arsenic to be found in these waters, cannot fail to be of benefit to invalids needing tonic and alternative treatment.<sup>1</sup>

In keeping with the new inventions and emphasis upon medical values, the Alum purchased a new mechanical dishwasher which washed and sterilized 7,000 dishes an hour. This practical innovation lent itself to still another quasi-scientific plug in the pamphlets: "At this age, when microbes are so much discussed, the doctors can appreciate what this means to a watering place!"<sup>2</sup> Ironically, the second season of the mechanical dishwasher's use was one of the least healthful summers that the spa ever experienced. Col. Peyton discussed the general health of the guests with a previous resident physician, Dr. W. R. Jones:

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<sup>1</sup>Advertising pamphlet, [1900], n.a., Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>2</sup>Advertising pamphlet, [1902], n.a., ibid.

This is the season you ought to have been here. It has been the greatest season for sick people that I have ever seen since I have been at the springs, in fact, everybody who has been here has been sick and had to call the doctor.<sup>3</sup>

Despite a sustained promotional campaign and improvement of facilities, the number of visitors at the Alum decreased. In 1902 the owners decided to close the Grand Hotel unit because the spa attracted too few guests to pay for its upkeep. Once again, the facilities of the old Alum became the center of activity for the resort because its smaller hotels--the Brooke, Vale, Gothic and Virginia House--were not so expensive to operate. The proprietors continued to make improvements about the spa, principally remodeling the Central Hotel's dining room and adding a new steam laundry.

A major innovation for the diversion of the guests was the construction of a new golf course. While golf had been played in colonial Savannah,<sup>4</sup> the ancient Scottish sport did not command anywhere an impressive number of practitioners until Edwardian times, which in America was contemporaneous with the development of the country club.

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<sup>3</sup>Col. Peyton to Dr. W. R. Jones, Richmond, Aug. 10, 1903. Bound business ledger, 1903, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas P. Abernethy, The South in the New Nation (Vol. IV in History of the South series, Baton Rouge, 1961) 11.

If the habitués of Rockbridge Alum had not already succumbed to the golfing mania they would hardly have admitted it. Golf then was so unsystematized and so amateur that anybody could play--fat men, half-blind men, and ladies in tight corsets! The golf course was quite crude and it was little more than a lawn strewn with obstacles on the way to a grass, or as was more usual, a sand "green." At least two holes of the Rockbridge Alum golf course bore cute, descriptive names: the Lovers Lookout Link and the Hades Link. In 1903, Mr. I. J. Hofmayer had the honor of winning the first golf tournament held at the Rockbridge Alum Springs, and he received a splendid silver loving cup as his prize.<sup>5</sup> Col. Peyton described the Alum's course to one of the many curious inquiring correspondents:

They are in first-class condition; a nine hole course; no trees nor swamps, and it is one that gives a great deal of pleasure to play on. There is just enough natural hazard-- a ravine and railroad track, to make some of the links very sporty....The whole course is covered with a green swarth that is mowed with a lawn mower.<sup>6</sup>

The nightly dances had lost their popularity as the number of men decreased, and by the turn of the century they were poorly attended. Slowly, they were replaced by

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<sup>5</sup>Col. Peyton to Ms. Ryland & Co., Sept. 7, 1903, Bound business ledger, 1903, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>6</sup>Col. Peyton to R. E. Yellot, Washington, n.d., ibid.

other social events, two of which were organized by and for the profit of the employees. The ballroom of the Grand Hotel reopened for these special occasions. This change from management-run to employee-run events was a subtle indication of both the changing social climate of the spa and of the calibre of its managerial leadership. The first of these events was a special Annual Dance for the guests, the profits from which were divided among the participating employees. The latter also held a Benefit Sale towards the end of the summer. Waiters, waitresses and others who had daily contact with the guests, prepared for an auction sale foodstuffs and handicrafts, the receipts from which were paid to the makers of the items. The guests were not only invited to bid for the items, but the employees usually considered it an insult if the guests whom they served during the day did not honor their items with handsome bids.<sup>7</sup>

The most notable of the resort's own special occasions was its Fourth of July celebration. The 1903 menu for that day illustrates that the Alum was still prepared to offer the guests occasional epicurian delights. The soup choice for that day were *consomé Pretinère* and *chicken à la créole*, with Little Neck clams as appetizers. The *entrée* was boiled

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<sup>7</sup>Tompkins MS., Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

Kennebec salmon with anchovy sauce and one could choose as the main course roast ribs of prime beef, roast mallard duck with orange sauce, or sweet breads braised à la St. Clair. Liquid refreshments were either lemonade or Virginia claret punch; and choices of lemon meringue pie, peach pie, lemon ice cream or watermelon completed the feast.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the owners' efforts, the spa continued to decline in popularity. Most of the stockholders of the Peyton-Campbell Company decided to withdraw their investment and managerial participation in the resort, leaving its determined major stockholder, James A. Frazier, to keep the resort functioning. He formed a small, new company known as Rockbridge Alum Springs, Incorporated, which purchased the Rockbridge Alum Springs in 1909 at public auction for the meager bid of \$18,000 cash.<sup>9</sup> The new company was composed of Frazier as the controlling stockholder, and Trice Patton and Greenfield Letcher as the two other principal owners. Fred Effinger reappeared in the corporate history of the spa as the second largest stockholder. Frazier decided to retire from his position as manager, but kept his honorary, but meaningless, titles of President of the Rockbridge Alum and Goshen Railway and

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<sup>8</sup>Menu, July 4, 1903, Bound business ledger, 1903, ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Deed Book 105, Rockbridge County Records, 494.

Vice-President and Superintendent of the Rockbridge Alum, Lexington and Longdale Telephone Company which serviced the spa. Trice Patton replaced Frazier as manager. Although Patton was never the personable, entertaining figure which Frazier had been, he was thought to be more methodical and reliable.

That first season saw the inauguration of a mutually profitable enterprise between the Alum and two instructors from the nearby Virginia Military Institute. Major R. B. Poague and Captain Reuben Ragland began a private summer school at the spa for V.M.I. students with academic difficulties. The students lodged in the old frame Virginia Building, which once had been the Confederate Hospital. The building required little change, other than the addition of a few blackboards and benches. The summer school remained in use by V.M.I. students until 1916, when it was discontinued for the duration of World War I. In 1918 Major Poague reopened the summer school, but in 1921 V.M.I. took over the responsibilities for it and installed Colonel Mayo as its director. He served as head of the summer school until 1928, nine years after Rockbridge Alum Springs ceased to be a summer resort.<sup>10</sup> From its inception, the summer school was an excellent social asset for the resort, and the new owners made a shrewd comment on the school's relation to the spa:

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<sup>10</sup>Couper, V.M.I., 256, ff.

These young men are kept very busy by their instructors during the mornings and early afternoons, but after the day's work is over, they are very much in evidence, particularly in the ball room at night....Because of the large proportion of young men, the ball room in the evening resembled more the ball room of a college town than that of a summer resort.<sup>11</sup>

In 1910 another "attraction" was added in the effort to win a clientele: the owners built a concrete swimming pool into which they piped mountain waters of the Alum's stream. But this effort to keep up with the times failed to halt the steady diminution of guests. The baseball field and the once-popular golf course began to grow up in weeds and scrub trees. In 1912 Trice Patton complained that the golf course was totally unusable due to the "laziness of our guests."<sup>12</sup> By 1911 railway service to the Alum was discontinued and the tracks abandoned, because the high rental rates made service unfeasible.

The spirit of the old Rockbridge Alum Springs was broken. The manager complicated an already difficult financial situation by being increasingly caustic with his guests. In an amazingly blunt letter to one of the Alum's most prominent visitors, Mrs. Annie Branch Cabell of Richmond,

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<sup>11</sup>Advertising Pamphlet, [1902], Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>12</sup>T. Patton to Mr. C. L. Williams, Bluefield, W. Va., n.d., Bound business folder, 1912, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

Patton made no excuse for the disrepair which one visitor disliked during her short visit at the Alum:

Tell Mrs. Spohn that the cottages are still unpainted and the nails still undriven, and that we have no idea of changing our indolent, easy-going southern ways for those thrifty, precise northern ones, regardless of how much we admire the same, and to come back and endure, while we admire the contrast.<sup>13</sup>

Trice Patton earned himself the fatal reputation of being unconcerned about his guests' welfare and comfort, much less their enjoyment and pleasure. Naturally, the Alum's reputation suffered along with Patton's as the resort began to slip into obscurity.

Rockbridge Alum continued to struggle for nine more seasons, before the reduced number of guests and meager rates could no longer cover the cost of keeping the resort open, or pay for its upkeep. Even the summer school had dwindled to thirty or so students. At long last, realizing the irreversable state of affairs, the small company made the difficult decision to close the spa in 1919. Patton continued to reside at the deserted Alum, until his death in 1928, leaving James A. Frazier as the resort's sole proprietor. During this period of decay, a few of the Alum's former habitués returned to the now desolate land

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<sup>13</sup>T. Patton to Mrs. A. B. Cabell, Richmond, July 3, 1916, Bound business folder, 1916, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.



of their summer happiness and remembered it as it once had been during those long golden days from another era.

One of the Alum's most prestigious visitors after the resort had fallen into ruin had grown to manhood at the Alum in the course of some twenty youthful summers. He was James Branch Cabell of Richmond, one of Virginia's most famous writers, to whom the death of the Alum was a particularly tragic event:

Here was a dead place, not ever again to be vivified. I saw that the shingled roofs of the red brick cottages had decayed and collapsed inward. The two upper porches of the Central Hotel sagged infirmly; they swayed in a very moderate west wind as I stood there looking up at the theatre of innumerable old escapades....Meanwhile it seemed strangely pitiable that each one of those rooms was as yet existent, high above me in the air, stripped of all furnishings, littered with the fallen plaster of its ceiling, and not ever again to be visited a little after midnight in slippered feet which trod very cautiously, through the dim hallways, over the red and brown matting, and past many closed dove-colored doors, that had each a number painted on it in fat black figures, until you had reached the appointed door, which was ajar...<sup>14</sup>

Since 1880, when he was one-year-old, Cabell had journeyed to the Rockbridge Alum Springs with his mother and two brothers. Mrs. Annie Branch Cabell had always

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<sup>14</sup>James B. Cabell, These Restless Heads (New York, 1932; hereinafter cited as Cabell, These Restless Heads), 62-63.

considered the Alum her favorite resort and was one of the Alum's most delightful guests, livening the days with her charm and humor. James Branch Cabell was so influenced by the setting and mores of the spa that it became a recognizable force in his major work, the eighteen-volume Biography of the Life of Manuel.<sup>15</sup> Cabell had observed the life of the spa and its guests through the eyes of a particularly sensitive child:

Youth had seen everything with eyes to which common matters were not yet grown commonplace, and then memory had refined upon every ecstatic vision, year after year, until my entire past as I had lived it in this place, and as that past yet figured in my mind, had become sheer illusion.<sup>16</sup>

Cabell's entire background had bred into him insights and fascinations with the contradictory worlds of the Old and New South, offering him perspectives unavailable to most other American writers. He had been born into a prominent family of Richmond. His family had genuine claims to aristocracy, but even before the Civil War its leaders were at least partly "in trade." The city of Richmond had served the South as the bastion of Southern tradition against a world of changing morals and values. But Richmond was also a center of the New South, albeit a less strident one than Henry Grady's Atlanta.

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<sup>15</sup>James B. Cabell, Preface to the Past (New York, 1927), 44.

<sup>16</sup>Cabell, These Restless Heads, 67.

One of James Branch Cabell's elder cousins was John Kerr Branch, an affluent stockbroker whose directorship of the Southern Railway System was proof of his abilities and acceptance of and by the great J. Pierpont Morgan.<sup>17</sup> As a young man, Cabell might have embraced a sugared concept of antebellum virtues such as was exemplified by Thomas Nelson Page. He might have thrown himself into the frenzied world of industrial finance as did John Kerr Branch. But he did neither. His great-grandfather had been a founder of Phi Beta Kappa, a friend of Jefferson, and a Governor of Virginia; his grandfather was both a friend and personal physician to the illustrious General Lee; and his father had been the hero of the famous Battle of New Market. At the knees of such men, the youth absorbed the lore of many generations, the diversity of whose Zeitgeist must have puzzled him. His imagination had been kindled, too, by Stories of the Days of King Arthur, and Stories of Old Rome.<sup>18</sup> Slowly, images began to fill his mind--images which began to blur, and overlap and which finally combined into a general thread of consistency in the youth's mind. Cabell's summers were spent in the observation of the Alum's guests, most of whom professed to be dedicated to the

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<sup>17</sup>New York Times, July 3, 1930, and personal interview with Mrs. John Kerr Branch Reynolds, 1968.

<sup>18</sup>Joe Lee Davis, James Branch Cabell (New York, 1962; hereinafter cited as Davis, Cabell), 24.

struggle to keep the images and myths of the Old South alive against the forces and pressures of a changing society. His youth at the Alum was during its golden days of the 1880's and the early 1890's, when mock medieval tournaments and contests, coronations and stately balls were among the favorite entertainments. Each event was dedicated to the preservation of those solid but challenged ideals of chivalry, loyalty, skill and beauty.

Cabell's life as a sensitive Richmonder of the old genteel class would alone have inspired him to seek and preserve a great sense of privacy, but the influence of scandals peripheral to this rather prim and proper man heightened his desire for privacy into a strong compulsion.<sup>19</sup> Cabell's books are filled with heroic, daring exploits of his heroes who combined characteristics of both Don Juan and Faustus, and with accounts of their illicit passions and amorous adventures. Readers often mistakenly interpret these episodes as incidents from the author's own life. Even Cabell's memoirs are filled with illusions to such

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<sup>19</sup>This refers to the "homosexual episode" which did not involve him but which did color his senior year at William and Mary, the "murder scandal" of his mother's lover in his residential section of Richmond and his "poronographic trials" in N.Y. over his book Jurgen. See Edgar E. MacDonald, "Cabell's Richmond Trial," The Southern Literary Journal (Chapel Hill, 1970), III, No. 1.

episodes, particularly concerning his youthful years at the Alum. "My youth...lay burried under every bush."<sup>20</sup> However, in reality Cabell was a shy, retiring person who retained his Victorian moral codes throughout his life. Guests at the Alum remembered that after each meal in the dining room, he would retire to his cottage on Kentucky Row, to remain in seclusion until the next meal. Even when he brought his wife thither during the last years of the resort's life, he would only attend his wife's special parties as her escort in the receiving line, then he would quietly slip away to the privacy of their cottage. The manager of the spa even wrote to his mother, requesting that, if a choice was to be made as to which son to bring to the Alum, James was to be left at home in preference to his dashing brother John, who not only played a fine round of golf, but also played the gallant with the ladies.<sup>21</sup> To some, even Cabell's painfully dimunitive handwriting reflects a sensitive person who withdrew from the realities of public life as often as possible.

More than anything else, Cabell was a weaver of allegorical tales fashioned by a "fusion of assimilated

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<sup>20</sup>James Branch Cabell, These Restless Heads 65, see also As I Remember It, (New York, 1955), Quiet, Please (Gainesville, 1952).

<sup>21</sup>J. A. Frazier to Mrs. Annie B. Cabell, Richmond, July 8, 1903, Bound business folder, 1903, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

art and philosophical observation."<sup>22</sup> Each tale was an observation of how life serves only to make mankind strive for some unattainable goal. He examined the processes by which men create myths and heroes to represent or illumine their ideal and by which men strive for values which they themselves create, such as chivalry and loyalty. His general theme is that the Ideal truth or beauty should always remain just out of reach, tantalizing but stimulating man to struggle for the unattainable. Man's inability to attain truth or to unveil the myth Cabell saw as no curse, because the possession or complete comprehension of the truth would destroy its value to mankind since it must necessarily be less in reality than it was in unreality. Cabell thought this realization would destroy man's vital and ceaseless seeking after the ideal.

Cabell's tales are woven about an imaginary, medieval, mythical realm called Poictesme. He drew heavily upon his memories of the Alum as his books began to pour forth from his pen after the turn of the century. Many of his books incorporated a small portion of the magic realm of Rockbridge Alum:

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<sup>22</sup>Edgar E. MacDonald, "Cabell's Hero: Cosmic Rebel," The Southern Literary Journal (Chapel Hill, 1969), Vol. III, No. 1, 22.

The Central Hotel after nightfall would become like the Hall of Judgement wherein Jurgen conversed with young Guenevere, for my heart remembered all the ways of the moonlight in that many-windowed, hushed hall. Here was the lawn upon which Jurgen had won back to his never-aging dream of Dorothy la Desirée: It was under these great maples that Manuel first encountered Grandfather Death, and through this field of iron week had blustered the black Serpent of the East. Here, when there curved a graveled walkway beneath these locust-trees, King Alfgar had died happily under the benefaction of the amused gods of Rorn.<sup>23</sup>

Cabell also preserved many insights into both the physical and psychological characteristics of the Alum, of which neither managers nor guests were always aware. His several descriptions of the physical Alum help to create a dim vision of the spa during its glorious days-- the lovely skimmed-milk blue bandstand with its crimson touches on the central lawn where brass bands delighted the scattered spectators with Sousa marches; the fashionable color scheme of the spa, with its yellow furniture with black stripes covering the chairs, bureaus and beds in each room. His social observations were far more subtle. The Alum, according to Cabell, operated under three basic rules. The first was that the "well-bred remained deaf and blind to the conduct of other couples." The second was that "whatever happened at the Alum did not count elsewhere."

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<sup>23</sup>Cabell, These Restless Heads, 66.

And the final rule was that with September, it would all end.<sup>24</sup> Under these basic agreements, the guests of the Alum during the golden days of the 1880's and 1890's flocked to the resort:

...seven or eight hundred strangers all in temporary detachment from the responsibilities of workaday life, all living together for a month or so upon terms of light-hearted promiscuity, in a social ordering such as now may hardly survive anywhere upon earth.<sup>25</sup>

Cabell's life was also greatly affected by his visit of 1912, when he met Mrs. Priscilla Bradley Shepherd, a charming widow with five small children. The following year they married, and their life together resulted in a pleasant, loving relationship. Until the spa closed in 1919, the Cabells, with their enlarged family of six children summered at the Rockbridge Alum. The summer months were productive ones for Cabell, who then formulated episodes of courtly love and impossible guests, themes which he polished during the winter months. Upon his back porch on Kentucky Row, where his signature can still be seen on the front door, he conceived the idea of his book of Manuel,<sup>26</sup> and conjured up his most controversial character, Jurgen.

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<sup>24</sup>Cabell, These Restless Heads, 60-61.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>26</sup>James Branch Cabell, Preface to the Past (New York, 1927), 44.



It is in many ways remarkable that Cabell, an embroiderer of literary tapestries of the quattrocento was friendly with the realists who were his contemporaries. Among these were such luminaries as Eugene O'Neill, Theodore Dreiser, H. L. Menken, Steven Vincent Benét and Sinclair Lewis. Cabell had an especially close relationship with his neighbor Ellen Glasgow, both a leading realist and feminist who was an undisputed leader in the South's literary renaissance.

During the 1918 summer season, Sinclair Lewis and his wife Gracie visited the Cabells summer home on Kentucky Row. Lewis brought his new manuscript of Main Street for Cabell's literary criticism, and the two writers spent many hours under the lawn's old maples, discussing the book in depth. Meanwhile, Gracie Lewis noted impressions of the Alum which she included in her memoirs entitled With Love From Gracie. She observed the attitude of Trice Patton towards the guests, and offered an insight into the spa during its final fall from respectability:

...the manager was obviously bored by the advent of these two new guests [Gracie and Sinclair Lewis], who when they registered were warned that all they need expect in the way of service were the air and the waters....When I asked for some firewood against the chilly evening, I could have sworn I saw a colored man removing pieces of the porch to make kindling for the fire....[There was an] air of

fantasy about mealtimes in the decrepit dining room...pretty Richmond debutantes, whose mothers wore the smartest of sports clothes and with bediamonded fingers drank from handleless cups and never resented the lack of cream in their coffee because the manager preferred to give the whole milk to his calves and chickens.<sup>27</sup>

However decrepit, the Lewises enjoyed the spa. Sinclair Lewis referred to the sad romance of the Alum's cornfields and lovely hills, and to the pleasant times on Cabell's back porch in numerous letters during later years.<sup>28</sup> As he left the Alum from his first and only visit, he gave Cabell a poem as a memento of his visit at the Alum and of their friendship. Cabell delighted in the verse and stated that although it was "perhaps not one of the world's greater poems, but I value it more than I do most of them!"<sup>29</sup>

Just beneath the misty range,  
Always smiling off to sleep,  
Musing of the far-off strange  
Era of dead psaltery,  
Slumberous the Alum lies,

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<sup>27</sup> Grace Hegger Lewis, With Love From Gracie, Sinclair Lewis: 1912-1925 (New York, 1951; hereinafter cited as Grace Lewis, With Love From Gracie), 128.

<sup>28</sup> Padraic Colum, ed., Between Friends, Letters of James Branch Cabell and Others (New York, 1962), 130, 131, 188, 190, 250.

<sup>29</sup> Grace Lewis, With Love From Gracie, 129.

Bowered by the dappled skies  
 Round it corn-fields billow deep  
 And the fine-drawn, quivering  
 Nocturnes of the crickets rise,  
 Calming my "Efficiency."  
 Here, with winsome Nicolette

Cabell mocks my northern fret.  
 Alum-filled, with foulded wing,  
 Beautifully indolent,  
 Even my ego's rage is spent,  
 Lulled to something smiling sweet,  
 Lo! the acrostic is complete!<sup>30</sup>

When the Rockbridge Alum Spring's gates finally swung closed as a hostelry in 1919, Cabell sadly transferred his summer residence to Mountain Lake, Virginia. He also mused that the Alum's fate had been similiar to her sister resorts:

In this outcome the doom of the once magic-haunted place is not, I concede, unique; for all those century-old Virginia mountain resorts which as yet thrived in my youth, howsoever long they were spared by the ruthless wheels of Time's winged chariot, were at last crushed by the rubber tires of the automobile.<sup>31</sup>

Greater places than the Rockbridge Alum Springs have been abandoned without a literary epitaph. Standing between the supposed chivalries of the antebellum South and the hurried and graceless exigencies of the materialistic New South, it was especially fitting that James Branch Cabell sang the spa's swan song. The desolate spa quickly slipped into a limbo from which it would never truly recover.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 130-131.

<sup>31</sup> Cabell, These Restless Heads, 56-57.

## CHAPTER VI

### AN END AND A BEGINNING,

1928-1974

In 1928, Greenlee Letcher made one final desperate effort to save the resort from its impending decay. With courageous optimism, he wrote to President Calvin Coolidge to offer the Rockbridge Alum Springs as a summer retreat for the president, his family and aides. Emphasizing the privacy that the presidential entourage would enjoy and the splendid fishing conditions in the Cow Pasture River, he included as advantages of the spa's location its proximity to the libraries of both Washington and Lee and V.M.I., to the Natural Bridge and to the two great surviving mountain spas of Virginia, the Hot Springs and the White Sulphur Springs. The President's Secretary, Everett Sanders, replied to Letcher's suggestion with appreciative thanks; however, he said that the President had not yet decided where to spend his vacation in the summer of 1928.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, Coolidge spent several weeks in Wisconsin on the Brule River. Letcher's offer was premature, but it was

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<sup>1</sup>Everett Sanders to Greenlee Letcher, April 24, 1928. Bailey Archives, RHS.

neither grandiose or impractical. Within the next two years, President Hoover established his fishing camp on the Rapidan in the mountainous woods of Madison County. Two decades later, President Eisenhower was to establish Camp David in the mountains of central Maryland. However, Coolidge's adverse decision extinguished the last flicker of hope for revitalization of the Rockbridge Alum Springs, and the abandoned spa continued to deteriorate.

Trice Patton lived at the deserted resort of which he once had been the manager for ten years. Almost immediately after his death in 1928, the former spa became a target for vagrants and vandals. Within several years anything that was worth looting had been carried off; anything breakable had been broken; and the earth began to reclaim even the bricks and timbers. Trees and underbrush began to encompass the meadows, golf course, walkways and lawns. Remarkably, the statue of Hygeia remained to keep her silent vigil above the alum water springhouse. But even she became a victim of vandalism, when wandering hunters used her for target practice. Finally, in 1932, the government officially closed the defunct post office and Rockbridge Alum Springs was no longer even a place-name.

The Grand Hotel, once one of the most glamorous resort hotels in Virginia, whose rooms were vied for by the most elite, prominent visitors to the spa, was sold for scrap

brick to Mr. W. W. Coffey of Lexington. Within weeks, the entire hotel unit, including the kitchen, ice house and out-buildings had been dismantled, brick by brick, and carted down the winding mountain road to Lexington, where they now exist as a veneer of a new apartment complex on Main Street--the Coffey Apartments.<sup>2</sup>

In 1941, the Rockbridge Alum Springs Corporation was finally liquidated and the entire property was sold on January 4, at a public auction. Its 1,516 acres, few remaining pieces of furniture which had been rejected by looters and several dusty boxes of mildewed ledgers, pamphlets and records of the spa were purchased for \$7,000 by James P. Alexander of Fairfield, Virginia. His family had been one of the principal stockholders during the later years of the spa, and he sold a small portion to Mrs. Bessie A. Patton, a descendent of the Patton family. They only held the property for four months when they found another buyer. Mrs. Matilda Paul of Wheeling, West Virginia, purchased the property, although she had no immediate plans for its future.<sup>3</sup> The property was left to continue the slow process of deteriorating and becoming indistinguishable from the George Washington National Forest which surrounded the springs property on three sides.

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<sup>2</sup>Paxton MS., Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

<sup>3</sup>Bailey Archives, Rockbridge Alum Springs Archives, RHS.

In June of 1942 a retired naval architect and his wife "discovered" the old resort. Harold Bailey and his second wife, Mrs. Laura Law, had been searching for several years to locate an ideal retreat for a biological laboratory which could also serve as a research center for scientists involved in horticulture, agriculture, wildlife, and ecology. A noted ornithologist, Mr. Bailey was the author of The Birds of Virginia (Lynchburg, Va.: J. P. Bell Co., Inc., 1913), and The Birds of Florida (Baltimore, Va.: Williams and Wilkins Co., 1925).

The men of the Bailey family were unusual in that they were not college-trained, but belonged to an older tradition of dedicated, self-taught naturalists. Around the turn of the century, Harry B. Bailey moved his family from New Jersey, to Newport News, Virginia, where he developed so successful a shipping brokerage that he later was a principal benefactor of the city's library, which is named for him. As a naturalist, Harry Bailey was primarily interested in insects, but he taught his son, Harold, the foundations and lore of natural science.

Harold Bailey was born in East Orange, New Jersey, on October 13, 1878. He attended the East Orange public schools until the family's removal to Virginia, when he entered the shipbuilding apprentice school at Newport News, then one of the most remarkable communities of the United States, planned by the Collis P. Huntington interests.

Harold became a naval architect, working for Huntington's Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Corporation, celebrated for its efficiency and quality work in peacetime and in two world wars. In 1913, he wrote his first book, The Birds of Virginia. It was not the slowdown in ship construction, but Harold Bailey's passionate interest in ornithology that caused him to resign his position and move to Florida in 1920. He wrote his second great work, The Birds of Florida, in 1925. Ida Margaret Eschenburg, until her death in 1937, shared in his career by helping edit and proofread his books, as well as by making a happy home for him and their three children at Miami Beach. Mr. Bailey was one of the first to launch the successful campaign to create the Everglades National Park.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to a research center, Bailey also wanted a permanent home for his extensive collection of bird-skins, consisting of 35,000 specimens, and bird eggs, with 875,000 specimens, and for his valuable ornithological library. Mr. and Mrs. Bailey (she was also an able ornithologist) bought the old resort property with keen anticipation, not unreasonably hoping to make it both a wild life reserve as well as an educational retreat for scientists and students in natural history and biology.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Mrs. Ralph Carlson, personal interview. March 1, May 15, 1974, Blacksburg, Va.

<sup>5</sup>Roanoke World News, Jan. 8, 1953.



The Baileys immediately began the extensive and expensive task of reversing the process of deterioration at the former spa. Out of the thirty-nine ramshackle buildings remaining, fifteen were totally beyond preservation or restoration. Many had been lost by fire through the years, including the spacious McCormick cottage. Due to wet-rot, all of the roofs and floors had collapsed. No architectural detail had remained untouched by decay. Although the Baileys continued to have their permanent headquarters in Florida, for three years they spent the five spring, summer and early fall months at the Rockbridge Alum Springs. Much like the first visitors to the springs, the Baileys first camped out, since no one building was weatherworthy; and they devoted long days to supervising and helping workers in the hard labor of restoration. Those buildings beyond repair were torn down and salvagable parts were utilized in the restoration of the remaining structures. In 1945, the Baileys made their permanent move to the Springs, selecting one of the restored cottages as a temporary home until the Vale building, one of the smaller hotels directly across the lawn from the old Alum's Central Hotel, was habitable. At first the Central Hotel seemed salvagable. Upon further examination, the Baileys discovered that crumbling foundations rendered the building beyond repair. To destroy it must have been a difficult decision,

but Harold Bailey honored the old site by locating on it their new museum, primarily to accommodate his collections and secondarily to house offices for the complex. By 1962, Mr. and Mrs. Bailey had preserved or restored fourteen structures, most of which were habitable. Major renovation of all the elements of the central springhouse had been accomplished, and its statue of Hygeia had been patched, welded, recoated and re-established in her place as the venerable overseer of the Alum's central lawn. To outward appearances, the Rockbridge Alum Springs appeared much as it had in its days of glory.<sup>6</sup>

Harold Bailey's project was nearing completion when, in July, 1962, this brilliant man died unexpectedly. He left his entire estate, valued at about \$400,000 to the Bailey Research Trust for the purpose of governing and preserving both the property and the collections. As officers of the Trust, he had named his three children and his surviving wife. Mrs. Bailey continued to live the year round at the springs until 1973, and she continues to pass the summer months there. After experiencing difficulties of various sorts in attempting to both maintain the ornithological collection and to sponsor associated research, the Trust decided that the safety and accessibility of the

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<sup>6</sup>Mrs. Harold Bailey, personal interview, March 11, 13, 1974, Rockbridge Alum Springs, Va.

collection could not be realized at the old spa. In 1973 the collection and research activities of the Trust were transferred to the biology department of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.<sup>7</sup>

Today the Rockbridge Alum Springs is a quiet glade in the forest, redolent with memories of another spa. Enough of its cottages stand about the lawn to give the illusion of having just been made ready to welcome another joyful season of guests--indeed, the old spa has about it a hush of expectancy, as if the trumpet were soon to call to the lists the Knights of the tournament, as if some convalescent confederates were about to emerge from around the corner of a mellow brick cottage, as if a Gibson girl were about to stroll across the greensward, as if James Branch Cabell and Sinclair Lewis were to look up from their proof-reading amid small clouds of tobacco smoke. In fact, however, only Mrs. Bailey, the care-takers and occasional visitors share this pastoral resort with the wildlife and the spirits of another age. They have replaced the dandies of the 1850's, the broken heroes of the Confederacy, the noisy children and their doting mammies and the belles and their beaux promanading across the lawn. Silence reigns where there once was music and laughter.

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<sup>7</sup>Mrs. Ralph Carlson, March 1, May 15, 1974, Blacksburg, Va.

Hygeia still gazes musingly from her perch across the deserted central lawn, offering her one remaining bubbling alum spring to anyone who wishes to partake of its healthful minerals. A thick, new forest now surrounds Rockbridge Alum Springs and the many walks, paths and trails of yesteryear have disappeared through disuse. Only a pile of rubble marks the spot where the spacious, elegant Grand Hotel once stood, and its graceful lawns have become a forest floor. The bandstand, once open to view for the enjoyment of all the guests, is now almost hidden by underbrush and dense growth. There are few springhouses, hidden throughout the property which, though spared by vandals, have suffered from the clutching tenacles of vines and the rot of their long years of abandonment. Scattered portions remain of the arcade which sheltered the guests from rain or sun as they strolled between the two establishments, but they, too, are rapidly dissolving into the dense underbrush. Amid the encroaching forest, the overgrown golf course, the cracked swimming pool and the empty buildings remain--all sentinels, whispering to the occasional visitor testimonials of their glories of other times.

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APPENDIX I

BILL OF FARE - 1889

A typical bill from 1889 has been selected to offer interesting speculations on a summer at Rockbridge Alum Springs.

Bill of Fare for the William Byrd Warwick Family  
[of Richmond, Virginia]

Board, from June 21, 1889 including  
supper, to September 2,  
including breakfast . . . . . \$259.85

June	19	Express	\$2.90
July	1	Freight	.43
	1	5 Bath Tickets	1.25
	4	Laundry	1.00
	6	"	.25
	12	"	.65
	29	"	1.60
	30	Sugar and Chocolate	.50
Aug.	10	Laundry	2.30
	17	2 Bath Tickets	.50
	19	Laundry	3.50
	25	"	1.35
	31	Telegram	.29
Sept.	2	Wife received Cash	7.00
	2	Express	.50
	2	Telegram	.25
			<hr/>
		Extras	\$24.27
		Total Bill	\$284.12

## APPENDIX II

## PAY SCALE - 1897

Position	Monthly Rate
Baker	\$60.00
Head Cook	50.00
Butcher	40.00
Assistant Cook	30.00
Negro Cook	7.00
Bartender	30.00
Baggage Porter	20.00
Carpenter	20.00
Room Clerk	20.00
Stenographer	15.00
Watchman	15.00
Head Waiter	15.00
Coffee Man	15.00
White Dishwasher	15.00
Negro Dishwasher	10.00
Gardener	14.00
Wagoneer	12.00
Chicken Picker	12.00
Bell Boy	12.00
Musician	10.00
Floorman	10.00
Vegetable Bearer	8.50
Waiter	8.00
Waitress	7.00
Laundry Woman	7.00
Chambermaid	7.00

For Railroad service to the Alum:

Engineer	33.00
Fireman	24.00

One position served only as occasional help and was paid accordingly:

Whitewasher	.50 per day
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ROCKBRIDGE ALUM SPRINGS  
A HISTORY OF THE SPA: 1790-1974

Charlotte Lou Atkins

(ABSTRACT)

This history of the Rockbridge Alum Springs near Lexington, Virginia, covers the entire development of the spa from 1790 through its rapid growth and popularity in the nineteenth century, its final death in 1919, its restoration in the 1940's, and its present state in the 1970's.

The Cult of the Spa was an important social element in the South during the nineteenth century, and the Springs of Virginia served the nation with their various health-giving waters and their social opportunities. Rockbridge Alum Springs developed from a small, one-hotel enterprise, into a sprawling establishment with two major hotels, several smaller hotels and numerous cabins, serving at its height almost 1,000 people. In the 1850's, and again in the 1880's, it was second in popularity only to the White Sulphur Springs, however, its fame has generally long been forgotten. The effects of the Civil War, the death of the Age of Belledom and the coming of the automobile so changed southern society that, along with ninety percent of the spas, the Rockbridge Alum Springs met its death after the turn of the

century. The Alum, however, was partially restored in 1940 as the owners hoped to turn it into a wild life refuge and a retreat for scientists. Although its nature had changed, the Alum has been fortunate enough to survive, while many other watering places have long since been absorbed into the earth.