

City of Visitors
The Story of Hot Springs

Steam rising sequence	music-nats
building/steam	EVERY TOWN IS POPULATED BY THE GHOSTS OF IT'S HISTORY.
traffic/steam	USUALLY THEY ARE HIDDEN BENEATH LAYERS OF MODERN DEVELOPMENT,
old pics	OR FOLDED IN THE FILES OF THE LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY.
WS-town/steam	HERE IN HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS THE GHOSTS ARE EASY TO FIND, BUT SOMETIMES HARD TO BELIEVE.
WS-Arlington	STAND ON CENTRAL AVENUE AND FACE THE OLD ARLINGTON HOTEL. YOU'LL SENSE A FADING ELEGANCE THAT LINGERS FROM A MORE GLAMOROUS TIME.
interiors	A TIME WHEN THE HOTEL'S GUEST LIST INCLUDED PRESIDENTS AND PRIZEFIGHTERS, GAMBLERS AND GANGSTERS, AND ANYONE IN BETWEEN WHO WAS SOMEBODY.
View from Arlington window	YOU HAVE TO LOOK BEYOND THE SURFACE, AND LISTEN TO THE GHOSTS, TO UNDERSTAND JUST HOW "HOT" HOT SPRINGS REALLY WAS.
today dissolve to pic	THE WAX MUSEUM ACROSS THE STREET IS REALLY THE OLD SOUTHERN CLUB-- A GLITTERING HIGH-STAKES CASINO AND ENTERTAINMENT PALACE.

old pic
today

JUST ONE OF THE MANY ILLEGAL GAMBLING CLUBS, BARS, AND BROTHELS THAT LINE THE WESTERN SIDE OF CENTRAL AVENUE'S PAST, AND BLEND SILENTLY INTO THE ANTIQUE STORES, TOURIST SHOPS, AND ART GALLERIES OF TODAY.

bathhouse row

CROSS THE STREET AND YOU ENTER A TOTALLY DIFFERENT WORLD. A ROW OF STATELY BATHHOUSES STAND PROUD, ALTHOUGH NEGLECTED FOR YEARS...

interior baths

REMINDEERS OF A TIME WHEN A MILLION BATHS A YEAR WERE TAKEN BY PEOPLE HOPING FOR BETTER HEALTH...

old pic

BELIEVING THEY WOULD FIND IT HERE.

duck on Central Ave.

Nats: "Welcome to Hot Springs National Park, our nation's first resort...."

by empty buildings

IT'S OBVIOUS TO THE MOST CASUAL VISITOR'S EYE, THE SPA CITY IS NOT THE TOWN IT USED TO BE.

today shots

SOME SAY IT'S A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE TODAY.

old pic

OTHERS REMEMBER THE EXCITING PROSPERITY OF THE GAMBLING ERA AND LAMENT THE OPPORTUNITIES LOST.

town/steam

THIS IS THE STORY OF WHAT HAPPENED HERE, AND WHY THE TOWN CHANGED.

IT'S THE STORY OF THE PEOPLE, AND THE GHOSTS, OF HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS.... WHO'VE MADE THEIR HOME IN A CITY OF VISITORS...

w/title
fade to black

XWS from tower

THERE IS ONLY ONE REASON FOR A TOWN TO EXIST HERE IN THIS VALLEY OF THE OUACHITA MOUNTAINS.

Springs/crane shot
moving down
springs

FOR CENTURIES, PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DRAWN TO THIS WATER. MYSTERIOUSLY IT EMERGES FROM A MOUNTAIN SIDE AT AN AVERAGE TEMPERATURE OF 143 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT.

IT'S THE STUFF OF LEGENDS... POWERFUL ENOUGH TO BUILD A CITY.

NO ONE KNOWS WHERE THE STORIES BEGAN.

SOME SAY NATIVE PEOPLE CONSIDERED THIS A VALLEY OF PEACE--LAYING DOWN THEIR WEAPONS AND BATHING TOGETHER IN THE HEALING WATER....

statue/crane shot

A ROMANTIC NOTION, PROBABLY INVENTED AROUND THE SAME TIME THIS STATUE WAS PLACED IN THE MEN'S BATHING HALL OF THE FORDYCE BATHHOUSE.

IT DEPICTS A YOUNG INDIAN MAIDEN WELCOMING THE SPANISH EXPLORER HERNANDO DESOTO TO THE SPRINGS, ALTHOUGH THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST DESOTO WAS EVER HERE.

crane shot--water
going up

THE FIRST EUROPEAN TO SEE THIS WATER
WAS MORE LIKELY A FRENCH FUR-TRAPPER,
ONE OF MANY WHO CAME THROUGH HERE
BEFORE THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE.

THESE EARLY VISITORS TOLD STORIES
ABOUT THE WATER'S CURATIVE PROPERTIES.

Wendy Richter SOT
w/super

"One French resident of Louisiana wrote about
several somewhat miraculous cures that he had
heard about and had witnessed himself. And he
even told a tale about how the bears came down
out of the Ouachita Mountains to bathe in the
waters to cure themselves of the mange."

Jefferson pic

PRESIDENT THOMAS JEFFERSON HEARD
ABOUT THE HOT SPRINGS. IN 1804, ONE
YEAR AFTER CLOSING THE DEAL ON THE
LOUISIANA PURCHASE, JEFFERSON
AUTHORIZES A SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION
INTO THE NEW TERRITORY
TO FIND AND STUDY THE LEGENDARY
WATER.

THE EXPEDITION'S REPORT
TO CONGRESS IS PUBLISHED WIDELY
IN MANY EASTERN NEWSPAPERS.
AND THOUGH THEY MAKE NO CLAIM FOR
THE WATER'S HEALING PROPERTIES,
THIS ISOLATED VALLEY IN THE
OUACHITA MOUNTAINS BECOMES,
IN THE MINDS OF MANY AMERICANS,
A PLACE OF HOPE.

springs

Wendy SOT	(Wendy Richter) "People were looking for their miracle. They were willing to travel over any kind of obstacle in order to make it to the springs to get a cure."
Mark Blaeuer SOT	"Folks just finally came here gradually more and more until by 1820, the territorial assembly said, basically, 'Wait a minute, we are afraid that this potential boon for suffering mankind will be monopolized.' As had some of the medicinal springs further east. 'And we send this memorial, kind of a petition to Congress to request that it be set aside by the government."
Map/w animation	(actor's voice) "Four sections of land, with the Hot Springs as near the center as may be, are hereby reserved as set apart for future disposal by the U. S. Government."
Steam	(actor's voice) "The people begin to collect here to attend the springs and use the waters during the warm weather. We have some dreadful sights.... cripples from all parts of the world, and some of them are certainly natural curiosities..... Hiram Whittington Hot Springs, 1833
Orval Allbritton SOT w/super	"They were just bathing in the streams to begin with. And then they wanted to be a little more private and they would throw up a little shack, and maybe for a quarter you could go in there and undress, put on some light clothing, and lay in the creek bed.....And it looked like they had just thrown up a bunch of shacks along the creek."
old pic/drawing	

Mark Blaeuer SOT

"They really didn't put any signs up explaining who owned the place, and who was supposedly running it. So things developed willy-nilly."

town pics

QUESTIONABLE OWNERSHIP DOESN'T
STOP SOME ENTREPRENEURS FROM
BUILDING ON THE SPRINGS.

Hale pic

BY 1841, JOHN CYRUS HALE IS OPERATING
A HOTEL AND BATHHOUSE ON GOVERNMENT
LAND HE CLAIMS TO OWN.

Rector pic

HENRY RECTOR, A FUTURE GOVERNOR OF
THE STATE, CHALLENGES HALE'S CLAIM
WITH A LAND GRANT INHERITED FROM
HIS FATHER, AND BUILDS A TAVERN,
AND A BATHHOUSE NEARBY.

Mark Blaeuer SOT

"The very early bathhouses were sometimes
built directly over the springs, and steam would
come up through the floorboards."

stereograph cards

"If you look at some of the stereograph cards,
and you look at the bathhouse, what they were
calling bathhouses back then, and you see these
wooden troughs or flumes carrying the water down
from the springs and into the bathhouses. And this
was before Hot Springs creek was covered over.
There were piles of boards everywhere, and junk being
thrown into the creek. In fact, there were cattle and
pigs wandering around, making it into the photos...
and these photos were being used to really advertise
the spa."

Hale House ad

(actor's voice)

"Let each come here, for here alone
Exists the power to save;
Here tottering forms, but skin and bone,
Are rescued from the grave....."

pic-Springs/men

MORE AND MORE VISITORS COME.
THE HOTELS AND BOARDING HOUSES
ARE FULL, WITH GUESTS FROM AS FAR
AWAY AS NEW YORK, OHIO, AND
PENNSYLVANIA.

Stagecoach ad

THE LAST LEG OF THEIR JOURNEY HAS
PROBABLY BEEN BY STAGECOACH
FROM LITTLE ROCK.....A FIFTY MILE
RUMBLE THAT BY 1860 TAKES ONLY
TWELVE HOURS.

Town pic

THE TOWN'S POPULATION HAS REACHED
201 CITIZENS, AND THE FUTURE LOOKS
PROMISING, FUELED BY THE MIRACULOUS
WATER BUBBLING CONSTANTLY FROM THE
SIDE OF HOT SPRINGS MOUNTAIN.
THE ONLY QUESTION IS,
WHO OWNS IT?

Springs

cannon

Nats--cannon fire

THE CIVIL WAR INTERRUPTS
EVERYTHING.

flags dissolve

WHEN ARKANSAS SECEDES FROM THE
UNION, THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE
IS NONE OTHER THAT HENRY RECTOR
FROM HOT SPRINGS.

Little Rock pic

BY 1862, FEDERAL TROOPS HAVE
MOVED WITHIN A HUNDRED MILES
OF LITTLE ROCK AND ARE THREATENING
THE CAPITOL CITY.

Rector pic

GOVERNOR RECTOR PANICS
AND TAKES HIMSELF,
AND ALL THE STATE'S RECORDS,
TO HIS HOME
IN HOT SPRINGS.

town pic

FOR TWO MONTHS THE TOWN IS THE UNOFFICIAL CAPITOL OF ARKANSAS.

smoke/ruin

LIKE MOST OF THE STATE, HOT SPRINGS IS DECIMATED BY THE WAR. LOOTED, BURNED, AND RANSACKED BY BOTH ARMIES AND ROVING GANGS OF BUSHWHACKERS, THE TOWN IS ALMOST DESERTED.

Orval Allbritton SOT

"But after the Civil War there were so many soldiers on both sides that had been injured and they had been looking for something to help their suffering and that was when Hot Springs really started to grow."

Wendy Richter SOT

"Visitors just almost immediately started coming. The number of visitors started doubling each year right after the war....."

Water/steam

THE QUESTION OF WHO OWNS THE SPRINGS IS FINALLY ANSWERED ON APRIL 24, 1876.

Court

THE U. S. SUPREME COURT RULES THAT NONE OF THE CLAIMS BY INDIVIDUALS ARE VALID.

Pike pic

ALBERT PIKE, THE LAWYER WHO ARGUES HENRY RECTOR'S CASE, IS DISAPPOINTED BY THE DECISION.

Pike's pic

(actor's voice)

"I thought success was certain. I knew the law and facts were on my side. The court did not decide according to the law, but that the Hot Springs were too valuable for an individual to own."

Mark Blaeuer SOT	"It did result in a drastic shrinking of the boundaries.
map	They shrank it down from four square miles to basically just a piece of Hot Springs Mountain, and a couple of outlying areas."
Springs	THE SPRINGS REMAIN FEDERAL PROPERTY. PRIVATE BATHHOUSE OWNERS MAY USE THE WATER BY BUILDING ON LAND LEASED FROM THE GOVERNMENT.
New bathhouses	THE PERMANENCE OF THE DECISION MAKES INVESTING IN THE BATHING INDUSTRY A SAFER BET....
WS pic of town	AND HOT SPRINGS BECOMES A BOOM TOWN.
Bathhouse ad	(Wendy)
Wendy Richter SOT	"I think the bathing industry drove the growth of the city." "You have all these new bathhouses built following the Supreme Court decision, and you have these nice, wonderful hotels."
Arlington pic	BY 1875, THE LARGEST AND MOST ELEGANT HOTEL IN ARKANSAS IS IN HOT SPRINGS-- THE ARLINGTON.....
Fordyce pic	FINANCED BY COLONEL SAMUEL W. FORDYCE, A VETERAN OF THE UNION ARMY, AND SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN, WHO BELIEVES THE HOT SPRINGS SAVED HIS LIFE.
Arlington pic	THE ARLINGTON'S ROOMS ARE LIT BY GAS, AND EACH IS CONNECTED TO THE FRONT DESK BY AN ELECTRIC BELL.
Mark Blaeuer SOT	"The story was the Arlington Hotel, which Sam was part owner of, never had to buy firewood for its fireplaces because so many crutches were left behind by all the people that had been cured."

Reynolds pic

JOESEPH "DIAMOND JO" REYNOLDS IS ANOTHER PROSPEROUS YANKEE PUTTING HIS MARK ON THE SOUTHERN SPA. RACKED WITH RHEUMATISM AND FRUSTRATED BY A BONE-JARRING STAGECOACH JOURNEY TO THE TOWN, REYNOLDS DECIDES TO BUILD HIS OWN RAILROAD CONNECTING HOT SPRINGS TO THE IRON MOUNTAIN RAIL STATION IN MALVERN.

rail map

locomotive pic

KNOWN AFFECTIONATELY AS THE "DIAMOND JO," THE NARROW GAUGE LINE FEATURES LUXURY PASSENGER CARS, OUTFITTED WITH THE BEST FURNISHINGS OF THE DAY.

Malvern depot

CONNECTED NOW TO THE MODERN WORLD BY RAIL, HOT SPRINGS BECOMES MORE THAN A DESTINATION FOR THE DESPERATE.

Cutter pic

(actor's voice)

"The time will soon come when Hot Springs will not only be an invalid's retreat, but a fashionable watering place."

guides

CHARLES CUTTER'S VISION OF HOT SPRINGS IS SPREAD ACROSS AMERICA AND THE WORLD BY A SERIES OF TRAVEL GUIDES HE BEGINS PUBLISHING IN 1874.

CUTTER GUIDES A NEW CLIENTELE TO THE WATER--LADIES, LOOKING FOR THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH.

(actor's voice)

"Those who feel the heavy hand of time being placed upon them, and their looking glass reveals wrinkles and mole patches, can by bathing in and drinking of these waters, so improve their complexion as to appear several years younger than their actual age."

Steam/springs

IT'S BEEN TEN YEARS SINCE THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR. AND THANKS TO THIS WATER, THE WOUNDS INFLICTED ON HOT SPRINGS HAVE HEALED FASTER THAN ANYPLACE IN THE SOUTH.

town pics

THE TOWN IS THRIVING.

THE ECONOMY OF HOT SPRINGS IS GEARED TO SERVING THE NEEDS OF ITS VISITORS.

AND THEY HAVE MANY NEEDS....

Wendy Richter SOT

"When people come to take the baths, that's not very time-consuming or entertaining, so they naturally wanted something to do....and so various kinds of entertainment, including gambling, including other maybe illegal kinds of fun also developed with that."

ads/pics

Orval Allbritton SOT

"Hot Springs became known as a place to go if you gotta have medical treatment, you go there and have a good time....(laughs)."

springs/pics

(Wendy)

"The springs brought people to the area, and it brings a different kind of people, for different reasons...."

Wendy Richter SOT

"With all these different kinds of people visiting, partaking of the waters, that is a concern because with the good, sometimes you get the bad."

Town pics

(actor's voice)

"Our town is now being flooded with lewd and immoral characters who infest our streets day and night and by their obscene carriage and vulgar language, render it absolutely disagreeable for persons of respectability to be on the streets."

Petition to Incorporate
Hot Springs, 1875.

Orval Allbritton SOT

"So you've got eighteen saloons, a number of houses of prostitution, and they weren't trying to keep them closed on Sunday. People couldn't get out and go to church without seeing drunks laying out on the sidewalk. There were street walkers and things like this, so they finally had enough."

town pic

BY INCORPORATING THE CITY IN 1875
CITIZENS ARE HOPING THE NEW LAWS,
AND A POLICE FORCE, WILL BRING A
MEASURE OF CONTROL TO THE WILD
SIDE OF TOWN.

Springs

ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING AMERICA'S
MOST POPULAR RESORT, ONLY ONE THING
IS CERTAIN--THERE IS PLENTY OF HOT WATER
AHEAD FOR EVERYONE.

Steam
dissolve to
pics of town

(music/nats)
THE YEAR IS 1877.
IF YOU HAVE COME AS A VISITOR
TO HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS,
YOU ARE PROBABLY SICK, AND
DESPERATE FOR A CURE.

Mark Blaeuer SOT

"I think you could have sensed the hope
in the air as people got off at the train station.
No matter how much money you had, if you
were hurting, you wanted to do what you could
to get better. And if it involved coming down
to Arkansas....especially right after the Civil War,
just 20 or 30 years later,
I think that took a lot of faith. I think you would
have just had that in the atmosphere here."

town pic

pics springs

ON THE HILLSIDE ABOVE THE TOWN
MORE THAN FIFTY SPRINGS POUR FORTH
THE LEGENDARY HOT WATER.
EACH HAS BEEN NAMED TO REFLECT
THE PARTICULAR BENEFITS IT MAY
OFFER.

- springs pic THE MAGNESIA SPRINGS AND THE ARSENIC SPRINGS ARE REPORTEDLY RICH IN THESE MINERALS.
- pics THE KIDNEY AND THE LIVER SPRINGS ARE SAID TO BE GOOD FOR THOSE VITAL ORGANS.
- pic THE "CORN HOLE" IS POPULAR WITH FOLKS AFFLICTED WITH BUNIONS AND OTHER MALADIES OF THE FEET.
THE WOMEN SOAK IN THE MORNING, THE MEN IN THE AFTERNOON.
- bathhouses pic A ROW OF NEW VICTORIAN BATHHOUSES CATER TO THE NEEDS OF THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD TO BATHE INDOORS.
- "Ral City" pics WHILE ON THE HILLSIDE BEHIND BATHHOUSE ROW, A SCATTERING OF TENTS AND SHANTIES IS HOME FOR A GROWING NUMBER OF PEOPLE BATHING IN THE OPEN COMMUNAL SPRINGS.
- pics (actor's voice)
"Some with contracted or crooked legs or arms, enlarged or swollen joints, gout, scrofulous taint or skin diseases....
The white man and the colored man are often seen sitting together, bathing their feet and legs, as everyone has undisputed right to bathe in this pool."
- Mark Blaeuer SOT "Some of these folks might well have been Civil War veterans. They certainly weren't folks who had a great deal of money. They couldn't afford a bath ticket down on the row."
- "Ral City" pics (Mark B.)
"They intercepted the water and used water at the actual springs up on the hillside before it made it to the paying customers. That did not please the bathhouse owners."

Notice

14.

WHEN GENERAL BENJAMIN KELLEY ARRIVES AS THE FIRST SUPERINTENDENT OF THE HOT SPRINGS RESERVATION, HE ORDERS ALL SQUATTERS AND TRESPASSERS ON FEDERAL PROPERTY BE REMOVED.

Mark Blaeuer SOT

"There was something called an 'indignation meeting' these folks held, in which they threatened to come back and lynch General Kelly.

Gov. free pics

KELLEY PROVIDES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A GOVERNMENT 'FREE BATHHOUSE' OVER THE OLD 'MUD HOLE' SPRING, TO GUARANTEE EVERYONE ACCESS TO THE THERMAL WATER.

list of diseases

OF ALL THE AILMENTS TREATED BY THE SPRINGS, ONE OF THE MOST COMMON IS A DISEASE PEOPLE DON'T DISCUSS IN PUBLIC. THEY CALL IT "NEURALGIA."

Mark Blaeuer SOT

"That was sometimes a code word. The joke was when somebody said, "I've got neuralgia," the other person, suspecting what they meant would say, "Well, I've got the OLD 'ralgia." And obviously that meant venereal disease of some kind."

Steam/springs

pic of town

AS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TAKES OVER DIRECT SUPERVISION OF THE RESERVATION, THE GENERAL APPEARANCE OF HOT SPRINGS BEGINS TO IMPROVE DRAMATICALLY.

Archway pics

AN ARCHWAY IS BUILT TO COVER HOT SPRINGS CREEK, MAKING CENTRAL AVENUE WIDER AND MORE ATTRACTIVE, WITH NEW LANDSCAPING AROUND THE BATHHOUSES.

Opera House

JUST DOWN THE STREET,
THE HOT SPRINGS OPERA HOUSE
HAS JUST OPENED.
FINANCED BY SAM FORDYCE,
THE THEATER IS PACKED NIGHTLY
WITH PATRONS ENJOYING PLAYS
DIRECT FROM NEW YORK,
PERFORMED BY THE LEADING
ACTORS OF THE DAY.

Town pic

ACCORDING TO THE TOWN'S NEW
ORDINANCES, GAMBLING IS AGAINST
THE LAW IN HOT SPRINGS.
BUT BY 1883 THERE ARE SEVEN
GAMBLING HOUSES ON CENTRAL AVENUE,
ALL OF THEM CONTROLLED BY
ONE MAN--FRANK FLYNN.

Flynn pic

Orval Allbritton SOT

"Frank soon got the attention of politicians
by kicking back to them, letting him be the
boss to say whether anybody else got to come
in and open up a gambling establishment or not."

Town pic

A PROBLEM ARISES IN 1884 WHEN
MAJOR S. A. DORAN COMES TO TOWN
AND OPENS A NEW GAMBLING HALL....
WITHOUT THE BLESSING OF FRANK
FLYNN.
FOR WEEKS, HOT SPRINGS IS HELD
HOSTAGE BY A SIMMERING FEUD
BETWEEN THE TWO GAMBLERS.

cut to shot of
location today

(nats--gunshot)
IT FINALLY ERUPTS ON CENTRAL
AVENUE WHEN A HORSE-DRAWN CAB
CARRYING FLYNN AND HIS TWO
BROTHERS IS AMBUSHED BY
DORAN'S HIRED GUNMEN.

Headline
(or today shot)

THE SHOOTING LEAVES THREE
PEOPLE LYING MORTALLY WOUNDED
ON THE TOWN'S MAIN STREET--

old town pic
Orval Allbritton SOT

(nats--bell ringing)
"The community really got upset,
and they organized a committee of 13.
It was a committee instructed to run
all the gamblers out of town. And they
did it at bayonet point."

Wendy Richter SOT

"And it seemed to work in those early
years that they were able to get rid of
the folks they perceived to be causing
problems for their image. And they did
want this nice, squeaky-clean image, but
yet they wanted people to know they
could have a good time as well."

Springs/bathhouse pic

A "GOOD TIME" FOR MANY
VISITORS TO HOT SPRINGS
INCLUDES DRINKING, PROSTITUTION,
AND GAMBLING.....

ALL OF WHICH ARE ILLEGAL,
AND SOME SAY, IMMORAL.

town pics

WITH A GROWING ECONOMY BASED
MORE AND MORE ON ENTERTAINING
THE BATHERS, THERE IS A CONTINUAL
DEBATE IN TOWN ABOUT HOW OPENLY
TO ALLOW THESE ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES
TO OPERATE.

gambling shots

headline

"OPEN" OR "CLOSED" IS USUALLY
THE ONLY ISSUE ON ELECTION DAY.

Orval Allbritton SOT

"You had the church people voting for
morality, you had the other people, and some
of them were church people, voting for the
gambling because they had a business
downtown that relied on the visitors.

(Orval)

town pic

There for awhile the town was pretty balanced each way. And each election of the mayor would bring forth a change in attitude.

police pic

If you elected a liberal mayor--for the next two years you were going to have gambling. Because the mayor appointed the chief of police, and between the mayor and the chief of police, they pretty well control the attitude in downtown Hot Springs.

zoom to Toler

IN 1899 TOM TOLER IS CHIEF OF POLICE IN HOT SPRINGS.
BUT HE'S WORRIED ABOUT HIS JOB BECAUSE OF THE UPCOMING MAYOR'S ELECTION.

Williams's pic

HE'S HEARD THAT BOB WILLIAMS, THE POPULAR COUNTY SHERIFF, IS SUPPORTING A CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR WHO'S PROMISED TO MAKE HIS BROTHER THE NEW CITY POLICE CHIEF, GIVING CONTROL OF THE ENTIRE COUNTY TO ONE FAMILY.

Town pic

THE ELECTION BOILS DOWN TO A STRUGGLE BETWEEN CITY AND COUNTY POLICE OVER WHO WILL CONTROL, AND PROFIT FROM, THE ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES IN TOWN.

move into saloon

ON MARCH 16, 1899,
IN A BAR ON CENTRAL AVENUE,
THE ESCALATING FEUD EXPLODES
IN A BRUTAL SHOOT-OUT
BETWEEN CITY POLICE
AND COUNTY DEPUTIES.

THREE MEN ARE KILLED INSTANTLY,
INCLUDING CHIEF TOLER.
THE SON OF SHERIFF WILLIAMS
LIES DYING IN THE STREET.

Central Ave or Hart's pic	HEARING THE GUNSHOTS, CITY POLICE DETECTIVE JIM HART ARRIVES MINUTES AFTER THE CARNAGE IS OVER.
Orval Allbritton SOT	"He gets back just in time for Bob Williams to arrive. Williams sees his son lying there dying and he grabs this detective and sticks a gun under his chin and blows the top of his head off.
WS town pic	(gunshot-nats) "It emptied the town like nothin. Two gunfights in one day and five people killed.... It was unbelievable."
Newspapers	THE STORY HITS THE NEW YORK TIMES FRONT PAGE, AND AS FAR AWAY AS SACRAMENTO. THE ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT'S HEADLINE SCREAMS, "CITY DRENCHED IN BLOOD."
Springs/steam	(music...nats) TIME, AND THE WATER, HEALS EVERYTHING IN HOT SPRINGS.
town pic	STREAMS OF VISITORS FLOW IN FROM EVERYWHERE, UNDETERRED BY THE TOWN'S RISKY REPUTATION.
Wendy Richter SOT	"But I think that adds to the charm of spa that these things are going on, but yet, it's a great place to go. It's fun...."
Montage of scenes (Happy Hollow, Ostrich farm Alligator farm, tower, visitors)	(music)
Bathhouse Row pic	AMID ALL THE PLEASANT DIVERSIONS, HOT SPRINGS REMAINS A SERIOUS HEALTH TREATMENT CENTER.

Army/Navy hospital

AN ARMY NAVY HOSPITAL OPERATES
AT FULL-CAPACITY.

Inside bathhouse pics

THE RESERVATION NOW HAS A
MEDICAL DIRECTOR WHO SETS
STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES
FOR THE TREATMENT OF BATHERS.

MANY COME WITH A DOCTOR'S
PRESCRIPTION FOR A SERIES OF
BATHS, LASTING AS LONG AS
THREE WEEKS.

OTHERS ARE HERE JUST TO RELAX,
BECAUSE BATHING HAS BECOME
FASHIONABLE.

bathing pics

(actor's voice)

"Crowds swarm in these baths. The negro
attendants scramble at the bidding of the
bathers. A man becomes a creature of 3
conditions: He is about to take a bath--
he is taking a bath--he has taken a bath."

Stephen Crane,
Hot Springs

Exteriors
Bathhouses

BY THE EARLY NINETEEN
HUNDREDS THE MOST EXCLUSIVE
BATHHOUSES ARE EVOLVING
INTO PALACES OF LUXURY.
AND THE HOTELS
ARE EQUALLY OPULENT.

WS town pic

IN A POOR SOUTHERN STATE
STILL STRUGGLING TO EMERGE
FROM THE CIVIL WAR,
HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS IS A
THRIVING, COSMOPOLITAN
PLAYGROUND FOR AMERICA'S ELITE.

Wendy Richter SOT

"Oh, my goodness, anybody who was anybody came to Hot Springs. It was the place to be, because all the other celebrities were here."

Montage-celebrities

GLITTERING STARS OF FILM AND STAGE...

POLITICIANS, PRESIDENTS, PRIZEFIGHTERS...

THE GIANTS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY...

THEY'RE ALL HERE IN HOT SPRINGS.

Baseball pics

ONCE A YEAR THE HOTELS ARE INVADED BY PIRATES, AND INDIANS, AND RED SOX... IN TOWN FOR SPRING TRAINING.

Ruth pic

BABE RUTH USES THE BATHS TO "BOIL OFF" THE EXCESSES OF THE OFF-SEASON.

steam/springs

IT IS 1913.

pic Waters

THE MAYOR OF HOT SPRINGS IS THE APTLY-NAMED W. W. WATERS.

clubs pic

HE'S A LIBERAL, SO THE GAMBLING CLUBS ARE WIDE-OPEN AND GOING STRONG.

Orval Allbritton SOT

"Businesses were booming in 1913. It was a good year, until things began to happen."

Williams pic

BOB WILLIAMS IS STILL THE COUNTY SHERIFF. LIKE THE MAYOR, HE'S ALSO BEEN LENIENT TOWARD GAMBLING.

town pic

BUT HIS ATTITUDE CHANGES
WHEN HE REALIZES HOT SPRINGS
IS BEING INFESTED WITH VISITORS
WHO ARE NOT HERE FOR THE BATHS....
JUST THE MONEY--CON-MEN.

Orval Allbritton SOT

"They'd come in and they'd do their game
and get the money and take off. And they
hit wealthy people. They thought
the wealthy people would be so embarrassed
they wouldn't complain about it."

Frank Fox pic

THEY ARE WRONG ABOUT FRANK FOX,
AN INDIANA OILMAN AND RACE CAR DRIVER.

WHEN FOX IS SWINDLED
OUT OF TWENTY-THOUSAND DOLLARS
IN HOT SPRINGS, HE HIRES THE FAMOUS
BURNS DETECTIVE AGENCY TO GET HIS
MONEY BACK.

Orval Allbritton SOT

"Burns sends a bunch of private detectives down here,
and that was one thing that upset Bob Williams.
He finds out the Burns people are down here,
as he said, 'looking under all the rocks, no telling
what they're going to find.' "

club pics

SHERIFF WILLIAMS TELLS MAYOR WATERS
IT'S TIME TO CLOSE THE GAMBLING CLUBS
UNTIL THINGS COOL DOWN.
BUT THE GAMBLERS ARE GETTING
MIXED MESSAGES.

Waters/Williams pics

(Orval)
"Waters was telling the clubs it was okay
to stay open, and Williams was saying close
down, or we're going to close you down."

Clubs/headlines WILLIAMS GOES ON A RAMPAGE,
RAIDING THE CLUBS THAT REMAIN
OPEN, HAULING AWAY EXPENSIVE
EQUIPMENT, BUSTING IT UP AND
BURNING IT ON THE COURTHOUSE
LAWN.

club pics HE SHUTS DOWN EVERY GAMBLING
HOUSE IN TOWN--INCLUDING THE
OHIO CLUB, OWNED BY HIS BROTHER.

headlines A LOCAL NEWSPAPER DESCRIBES IT
AS "THE GLOOMIEST DAY OF THE YEAR."

FRANK FOX NEVER GETS HIS MONEY BACK,
BUT MORE VICTIMS COME
FORWARD CLAIMING THEY TOO WERE
SCAMMED IN HOT SPRINGS.

Orval Allbritton SOT "The businessmen are appalled
because the word is out all over the
country and in national newspapers
town pic that Hot Springs is a place where you
can go down there and con-artists are
out to get you as soon as you get off
the train."

street scene BY APRIL, W. W. WATERS HAS LOST
THE MAYOR'S ELECTION TO
McClendon/headlines DR. JACOB McCLENDON....
WHO RUNS ON A PLATFORM OF
STRICT LAW ENFORCEMENT.

Bar FOR NOW, ANY GAMBLING IN
HOT SPRINGS WILL BE HIDDEN
IN THE BACK ROOMS OF THE BARS....
Bar THAT IS, IN THE ONES STILL
STANDING AFTER SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1913.

Fire pics

ON THAT DAY,
AROUND 2 O'CLOCK IN THE
AFTERNOON, A SMALL FIRE
IS REPORTED IN A COTTAGE
ON CHURCH STREET.

IT SPREADS QUICKLY....
FED BY THE NEIGHBORING
FRAME HOUSES.

UNUSUALLY HIGH WINDS
PUSH THE FLAMES ACROSS
FIFTY BLOCKS OF THE CITY.

IT IS THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE
FIRE IN ARKANSAS HISTORY.

NO ONE IS KILLED, BUT NEARLY
ONE THOUSAND BUILDINGS
ARE LOST, AND MORE THAN
TWO THOUSAND PEOPLE ARE
HOMELESS.

Wendy Richter SOT

"Many of the folks didn't have insurance
on their businesses or their homes.
Huge areas of the town were destroyed....
But people were always quick to rebuild.
And interestingly, it had little impact on
people coming to visit. They still came in.
They heard about the fire--'Well, let's go anyway'.....

Water/Steam

nats/music

old film
 people/car
 swimming
 downtown
 dog

THE IMAGES OF HOT SPRINGS CAPTURED IN THESE HOME MOVIES FROM THE NINETEEN TWENTIES SUGGEST A MODERN, URBAN COMMUNITY WHERE FAMILIES HAVE PLENTY OF PLACES TO GO, AND THINGS TO DO.

IT LOOKS COSMOPOLITAN AND COMFORTABLE.

lynching pic

BUT THE LYNCHING OF A BLACK MAN ON CENTRAL AVENUE IN 1922, REMINDS EVERYONE THAT HOT SPRINGS IS STILL A SMALL, SEGREGATED SOUTHERN TOWN.

black couple pic

AND YET, HUNDREDS OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS ARE COMING HERE, BECAUSE HOT SPRINGS IS DIFFERENT.

Cheryl Batts SOT
 w/ super

photos

“It was a place where you could educate your children, you could build your houses. By being a tourist town, there was a different kind of attitude between the blacks and the whites here that you would not necessarily find anyplace else. There was an attitude of openness, and then all the money was coming from tourists. No one wants to visit and be part of your tourist town if there is conflict going on any level. They come to rest and relax, and you know, everyone quote/unquote, knew their place. Because as long as they kept their place the money would come in and everybody would profit from that.”

Junius Stevenson SOT
 w/super

“One of the things we always enjoyed doing as kids was walking down Central Avenue, looking at the license plates on all the cars. Here's one from New Hampshire. Here's one from Iowa. Far away places, with strange-sounding names, you know.”

photos	(Junius) “The people in Hot Springs were very lucky because in other small Arkansas towns, the people left in order to receive their culture. The culture came to Hot Springs.”
bathhouse row pics	AFRICAN AMERICANS ARE NOT WELCOME AS CUSTOMERS ON BATHHOUSE ROW, BUT MOST OF THE BATH ATTENDANTS ARE BLACK, EXCEPT AT THE "BUCKSTAFF"-- WHICH SPECIALIZES IN ALL-WHITE ATTENDANTS.
attendant pic	
buckstaff ad	
government free bathhouse	THERE ARE PLACES A BLACK VISITOR CAN GO TO BATHE IN THE THERMAL WATER. IF YOU'RE POOR, THERE'S THE GOVERNMENT FREE BATHHOUSE. IF YOU HAVE MONEY, YOU MIGHT VISIT THE "PYTHIAN", IN THE HEART OF THE TOWN'S THRIVING BLACK COMMERCIAL DISTRICT.
Cheryl Batts SOT pics	"It was almost this secret that for African-Americans Hot Springs was a resort place, where African-Americans could go and do exactly what white people were doing. They did horseback riding, they played tennis, they swam, they gambled, they bought clothes. If there was a need for something, somebody started a business."
Malvern Avenue pic	MOST OF THE BUSINESSES LINE BOTH SIDES OF MALVERN AVENUE, A STREET OFTEN REFERRED TO AS, "BLACK BROADWAY."
Junius Stevenson SOT Malvern Avenue pics	"Well, it was real nice because the street would be full of people, standing around, talking, lookin... and there was always a lot of activity because that was where people went. And people who came from all over talked about the quality of the hotels. They all were owned and operated by blacks."

springs/crane shot

THE PROMISE OF THE WATER CONTINUES TO DRAW PEOPLE FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO HOT SPRINGS. RECENTLY NAMED BY CONGRESS AS AMERICA'S EIGHTEENTH NATIONAL PARK, THE TOWN EXPERIENCES A STEADY GROWTH IN THE NUMBERS OF VISITORS FUELING THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

town pic

photo town

BUT THE CITY GOVERNMENT IS STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY. ALREADY STRAPPED BY THE COSTS OF REBUILDING THE TOWN AFTER THE DEVASTATING FIRE OF 1913, HOT SPRINGS IS HIT BY A COMBINATION OF FIRES AND FLOOD IN 1923.

headlines/photo

Arlington fire pic
construction pics

THE ARLINGTON HOTEL HAS BURNED BUT IS RISING ON AN EVEN GRANDER SCALE AT A NEW LOCATION ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE SPRINGS.

Central Ave. pic

bootlegger pic

PROHIBITION HAS CLOSED THE BARS IN TOWN, AND MADE THE HILLS OF GARLAND COUNTY THE MOST ACTIVE BOOTLEGGING REGION IN THE STATE.

central ave. pic

MANY MISS THE DAYS WHEN THE ILLEGAL GAMBLING CLUBS WERE WIDE-OPEN AND THE MONEY FLOWED MORE FREELY DOWN CENTRAL AVENUE.

SOME SAY THE TOWN IS STAGNANT, AND NEEDS THE ENERGY OF OPEN GAMBLING TO THRIVE.

headlines/town pic

THUS, THE MAYOR'S ELECTION OF 1927 PRESENTS THE VOTERS OF HOT SPRINGS WITH A FAMILIAR CHOICE-- AN "OPEN" OR A "CLOSED" TOWN?

young Leo pic

IN THE SPRING OF 1927,
LEO P. MCLAUGHLIN IS A YOUNG
CITY ATTORNEY IN HOT SPRINGS,
WHEN HE IS CONVINCED TO RUN
FOR MAYOR BY VERN LEDGERWOOD,
THE CITY'S MUNICIPAL JUDGE.

Ledgerwood pic

Leo pic

MCLAUGHLIN IS A GOOD CAMPAIGNER,
AND HE AND JUDGE LEGDGERWOOD
HAVE A PLAN FOR THE TOWN.

Orval Allbritton SOT

“He would tell the people, ‘The other night up at the Arlington Hotel, I walked out on the veranda, looked down the street,’ and he said, ‘I could have fired a Winchester rifle down the street and not hit a soul. Everything was closed up.’ And he says, ‘If I’m elected, we’re going to open it up.’ He never did come out and say we’re going to have gambling here, but everybody understood what he was talking about.”

Headline/pic

IT IS A HEATED AND BITTER CAMPAIGN.
ONE LOCAL BANK AGREES TO HOLD OVER
FIFTY-THOUSAND DOLLARS IN BETS MADE
ON THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION.

McLaughlin pic

THOSE WHO BET ON LEO ARE THE WINNERS,
AS MCLAUGHLIN NARROWLY BECOMES THE
NEW MAYOR OF HOT SPRINGS.

Orval Allbritton SOT

Ledgerwood pic

“Now Leo had a failing all the way through his life— Anyone opposed him, he was an enemy from then on. Ledgerwood wasn’t quite that way. He says, ‘I think we’ve got an opportunity here to meet with these fellas, and if we tell them, we’ll support them if they support us— we can capture the entire county.’”

Orval Allbritton SOT

“All the people that are under me,
I’m going to encourage them to support you,
if you’ll encourage all your people to support us. Now
we can take it a step further—they need their jobs.”

Pics of city employees	“And each employee came to understand that his job was dependent on it. And they knew that if you didn’t vote for the right candidate, that they’d know it. There was no secret ballot in Garland County.”
Gambling club pics	WITH THE UNSPOKEN BLESSING OF BOTH COUNTY AND CITY OFFICIALS, “OPEN” GAMBLING RETURNS TO HOT SPRINGS. THIS TIME ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF CLUBS WILL BE ALLOWED TO OPERATE.
Jacobs pic	ALL GAMBLING WILL BE CONTROLLED BY ONE MAN—W. S. “BILL” JACOBS, WHO HAS AN AGREEMENT WITH MCLAUGHLIN AND LEDGERWOOD.
Orval Allbritton SOT	“Let’s keep it on a local basis. Do not let foreign money come in here and get control of it, and then first thing you know, we’ll be out of it.”
Gambling cover	ALTHOUGH GAMBLING IS NOW OPEN—IT IS STILL ILLEGAL.
gavel/courtroom cover	TWICE A MONTH, THE GAMBLERS VOLUNTARILY COME BEFORE JUDGE LEDGERWOOD’S COURT, PLEAD GUILTY, AND PAY THEIR FINES FOR GAMBLING.
Court records	THE FIRST TWO CHARGES ARE MISDEMEANORS, BUT THE THIRD CONVICTION IS A FELONY. TO AVOID THIS, THEY SIMPLY CHANGE THEIR LAST NAMES IN THE COURT RECORD.
Names	ONE MONTH EVERYONE’S NAMED AFTER A COLOR; THE NEXT MONTH, A TYPE OF AUTOMOBILE, OR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT.

Town pics

MONEY FROM THE GAMBLING FINES BEGINS TO HELP THE CITY'S FINANCES, GIVING MAYOR MCLAUGHLIN THE MEANS TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE TOWN, WITHOUT RAISING TAXES. WHEN THE PEOPLE SUGGEST GIVING THE MAYOR A RAISE.....

Orval Allbritton SOT

“He would tell them, ‘No, don’t worry about giving Leo a raise. Leo will get his one of these days.’ People knew he was being taken care of by the gambling community.”

Leo pic

FROM ALL APPEARANCES, LEO P. MCLAUGHLIN IS THE PERFECT MAYOR FOR HOT SPRINGS.

Bobbie McLane SOT
w/super

“Well, he was a very nice-looking man. He was tall, fairly thin, always impeccably dressed. He wore his hat cocked on the side, with this side down, and this side up. He always wore a boutonniere. He loved publicity. Loved having his picture in the paper.”

Leo pic

Leo pic

LEO IS BECOMING ONE OF THE TOWN'S MOST POPULAR TOURIST ATTRACTIONS WITH HIS DAILY CARRIAGE RIDES DOWNTOWN, PULLED BY HIS HORSES—
“SCOTCH” AND “SODA.”

Orval Allbritton SOT

carriage pic

“And the word would go down Central Avenue, ‘The mayor’s on his way up.’ And by the time he’d get to the Arlington Hotel people would boil out on the street, and he’d pull his buggy over...shake hands with everybody and they loved him. And he was Mr. Hot Springs.”

Oaklawn track pic

LIKE ALL FORMS OF GAMBLING,
BETTING ON HORSE RACES IS AGAINST
THE LAW IN ARKANSAS.

THE OAKLAWN RACETRACK IN
HOT SPRINGS HAS BEEN CLOSED FOR
OVER FIFTEEN YEARS.

ads—new season

NEVERTHELESS, IN 1933,
MAYOR MCLAUGHLIN ENCOURAGES
A GROUP OF BUSINESSMEN TO STAGE
A SHORT, QUIET, RACING SEASON
AT OAKLAWN PARK....WITH NO
WAGERING, OF COURSE.

old film—Oaklawn

IT IS ENORMOUSLY SUCCESSFUL.

THE TRACK SENDS A PERCENTAGE OF
THE ILLEGAL PROFITS TO THE STATE
OF ARKANSAS, AS A VOLUNTARY
INCOME TAX.

state capitol pic

IT'S ENOUGH TO PERSUADE THE
STATE LEGISLATURE TO ALLOW
BETTING ON THE THOROUGHBREDS
TO CONTINUE LEGALLY AT OAKLAWN,
FOR A LIMITED TIME EACH YEAR.

town pic

AND HOT SPRINGS BECOMES A CITY
THAT MOVES TO THE RHYTHMS OF
THE RACING "SEASON,"
WHEN THE NUMBERS OF
VISITORS MULTIPLY.

town pic move
to Army/Navy hospital

DURING MCLAUGHLIN'S FIRST
THREE TERMS IN OFFICE,
THE HOT SPRINGS SKYLINE HAS
BEEN TRANSFORMED BY A NEW
ARMY/NAVY HOSPITAL,
AND THE 16--STORY MEDICAL
ARTS BUILDING—
ARKANSAS' FIRST SKYSCRAPER.

Medical Arts building

Wendy Richter SOT

“And this is all in the midst of the depression. Whether we agree with McLaughlin and his machine’s tactics, whether we like him and what he stood for—we can’t argue with how many improvements took place in the city itself during his time in office. Because things changed greatly.”

Night time pic
of Central Avenue

DOWNTOWN HOT SPRINGS
BUZZES TWENTY-FOUR HOURS
A DAY DURING THE RACING
SEASON.

Belvedere film

AND EVERY NIGHT THERE’S A
FULL HOUSE AT THE BELVEDERE—
A GLITTERING NEW CABARET AND
CASINO BOSS GAMBLER W. S. JACOBS
HAS OPENED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF
TOWN.

FEATURING GOURMET FOOD AND
BIG-NAME ENTERTAINMENT,
CLUB BELVEDERE CATERS STRICTLY
TO THE HIGH-ROLLERS.

club exteriors

(nats-race results)

ON WARM DAYS, A CHORUS OF
UNUSUAL SOUNDS CAN BE HEARD
DRIFTING FROM THE OPEN WINDOWS
OF THE GAMBLING CLUBS ON
CENTRAL AVENUE....

AS THE RESULTS FROM HORSE
RACES ACROSS THE COUNTRY
ARE ANNOUNCED TO THE
GAMBLERS INSIDE.

Southern Club pic

(nats—race results)

ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS
OF THE HORSE BOOKS IS
OPERATED ACROSS THE STREET
FROM THE ARLINGTON HOTEL,
UPSTAIRS IN THE SOUTHERN CLUB.

today-Southern club

(Shirley Abbott)

Shirley A. walking

“I can never be there in front of the
Arlington, and close to Arlington Park
and the Southern, without immense
nostalgia, a feeling that I have come
home.”

SHIRLEY ABBOTT IS A WRITER
FROM NEW YORK, WHO GREW UP
IN HOT SPRINGS.

walk into Southern

SHE RETURNS, OCCASIONALLY,
TO VISIT WITH FAMILY,
AND TO REMEMBER HER FATHER,
WHO WORKED AT THE SOUTHERN
CLUB HANDLING BETS AS
THE CASHIER.

pic of father

(Shirley Abbott)

“He always was so well turned out. I mean
he dressed like a banker to go downtown and
work in this illegal business..”

Shirley Abbott SOT

“And it was such an exotic world that my father
worked in, and I knew it was illegal. I knew he
could be arrested any day. When I said goodbye
to him on a summer morning, and he went off
uptown in his ice-cream suit, my mother and I both
knew that he might be in jail by the end of the day,
but we were proud of him anyway.”

pics-Shirley/Dad

dad uptown pic

mom/Shirley pic

Southern club pic	“Everybody in town knew what was going on. There was no illusion about that. I mean, you couldn’t not know. And we knew we were thriving off something that was completely against the law.”
Shirley/dad pic	
Shirley Abbott SOT	“And a lot of people really loved that and would say, ‘Well, this is what keeps the town prosperous. Where would we be without it? We have to have this. We have to have it.’”
steam/or pic of town	(McMath) “Hot Springs was a new world for a country boy from Columbia County.”
pic- McMath boy	WHEN SID MCMATH’S FAMILY MOVES TO HOT SPRINGS ON HIS TENTH BIRTHDAY, HE FINDS A JOB SELLING NEWSPAPERS ON BATHHOUSE ROW.
bathhouse row pic	(McMath) “Central Avenue was very busy. That was downtown.”
Sid McMath SOT w/super	“and that’s where a lot of the bookies and the gambling houses were, and they were good places to sell papers because so many times you would go in there, sell a guy a paper, the paper is a nickel, he’ll give you a quarter and he’ll hit you on the head and say, ‘Boy, keep the change, see.’”
McMath youth pic	AS A YOUNG MAN GROWING UP IN HOT SPRINGS, MCMATH IS EXPOSED, AT AN EARLY AGE, TO THE DARK SIDE OF POLITICS IN HIS HOMETOWN.

Sid McMath SOT

“This young girl that I was going with, whose father was a contractor, and whose brother was a partner of his—the brother ran for sheriff against McLaughlin’s candidate. He lost. It was a hotly contested sheriff’s race, and he was a powerful campaigner, and a popular individual. But within a few weeks after the election was over, he was lured into a back alley and assassinated

Leo pic

and then I had another friend, I was in high school still, whose father ran for mayor against McLaughlin. And his mortgage was due, and they took over his mortgage and foreclosed on his house.

McMath SOT

So if you opposed the McLaughlin administration and you were vulnerable in any respect, you could be punished.”

McMath college pic

SOMEHOW MCMATH AVOIDS BECOMING CYNICAL ABOUT POLITICS—JUST MORE INTERESTED.

AFTER GRADUATING WITH A LAW DEGREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, AND SERVING A YEAR IN THE MARINE CORP, MCMATH COMES HOME TO HOT SPRINGS TO PRACTICE LAW.

McMath young lawyer

MOST OF HIS FIRST CASES ARE TRIED IN COURTROOMS CONTROLLED BY THE MCLAUGHLIN ADMINISTRATION.

Leo pic

“And I saw how it worked. He was their boss. He called the shots. They did what they were supposed to do.”

McMath SOT	“The thing that concerned me was, why they could get away with this, why this could happen in what we call a ‘free society.’”
McMath pic	“I resolved then that I, for one, would endeavor to do something about it.”
steam/water	
visitors pic	VISITORS TO HOT SPRINGS AREN'T TOO CONCERNED ABOUT THE TOWN'S POLITICS. MANY ARE HERE BECAUSE OF ILLNESS, HOPING THE HOT WATER WILL CURE THEM.
bathers pic	
	THE NUMBER OF BATHS GIVEN ON BATHHOUSE ROW IS APPROACHING ONE MILLION A YEAR.
slogan pic	THE TOWN'S NEW SLOGAN IS, “WE BATHE THE WORLD.”
Roosevelt visit pics	IN 1936 HOT SPRINGS SWELLS WITH PRIDE AND PEOPLE AS PRESIDENT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT COMES TO TOWN TO CELEBRATE ARKANSAS'S ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY.
town pics	AS THE NATION'S MOST POPULAR HEALTH RESORT, THE CITY IS ACCUSTOMED TO ENTERTAINING THE RICH, AND THE FAMOUS,

- mug shots AS WELL AS THE RICH, AND THE INFAMOUS—
A ROLL-CALL OF AMERICA’S MOST
NOTORIOUS GANGSTERS.
- Mark Palmer SOT And they thought, ‘Wow, if it’s that hot, we
we better be going, too.’ All the rich people
in America go there....And they bring their
private railroad cars down to Hot Springs,
And they’ve got gambling and liquor down
thereand they can go to
Hot Springs and no one knows who they are.”
- Leo pic MAYOR MCLAUGHLIN WELCOMES
THE SHADY VISITORS, WITH SOME
CONDITIONS.
- Orval Allbritton SOT “Fellows, come on down and have a good
time. Do not hassle the local people. Spend
your money. Get out on the lakes and fish,
use our golf courses. Have a good time, but
don’t create any problems.”
- Al Capone pic at AL CAPONE IS ONE OF THE FIRST
Happy Hollow GANGSTERS TO DISCOVER THE
RELAXING PLEASURES OF HOT SPRINGS,
Arlington interior RESERVING THE ENTIRE FOURTH FLOOR
OF THE ARLINGTON HOTEL FOR HIS
ENTOURAGE.
- Capone pic CAPONE GAMBLES AT THE SOUTHERN
CLUB, PARTIES WITH THE PROSTITUTES,
AND TAKES THE BATHS, POSSIBLY TO
EASE HIS SUFFERING FROM SYPHYLIS.
- Madden pic ONE OF HOT SPRINGS NEWEST RESIDENTS
IS “OWNIE” MADDEN, A GANGLEADER
FROM NEW YORK CITY, FORMER OWNER
OF THE “COTTON CLUB,”
AND CONVICTED MURDERER.

Madden pic

AFTER BEING EXILED FROM NEW YORK,
MADDEN RETIRES TO HOT SPRINGS,
MARRIES THE POSTMASTER'S DAUGHTER,
AND BECOMES A MODEL CITIZEN.

Leo/Vern

MAYOR MCLAUGHLIN AND JUDGE
LEDGERWOOD ARE QUICK TO VISIT
MADDEN TO EXPLAIN THAT HE'S
WELCOME HERE, AS LONG AS HE
STAYS OUT OF THE LOCAL GAMBLING
BUSINESS.

Shirley Abbott SOT

“My father spoke of Ownie Madden in a way
that let me know that Ownie Madden was a
man to be feared, and that Ownie Madden was
a man with lots of power.”

Madden pic

“He said, ‘You know, they say that Ownie
Madden just lives here. That he's happily
married to a nice Hot Springs girl, and he's
just another citizen—but that's not so’”

Southern club pic

MADDEN CAN USUALLY BE FOUND
IN THE AFTERNOON, SITTING AT HIS
FAVORITE TABLE IN THE
SOUTHERN CLUB.

town pic

EVERY GANGSTER WHO COMES TO
TOWN MAKES A POINT TO CHECK IN
WITH “OWNIE.”

police pic

MOST COME JUST TO RELAX,
BUT SOME ARE WANTED FUGITIVES—
HIDING FROM THE LAW.
AND THEY'VE HEARD THE
HOT SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT
IS WILLING TO HELP—FOR A PRICE.

Wakelin pic

IN JUNE OF 1933, HOT SPRINGS POLICE CHIEF JOE WAKELIN IS ALARMED TO HEAR THAT F.B.I. AGENTS HAVE ARRESTED

Nash pic

FRANK "JELLY" NASH ON CENTRAL AVENUE, AND ARE TAKING HIM TO KANSAS CITY.

Nash pic

WANTED FOR BANK ROBBERY, NASH HAS BEEN PAYING WAKELIN AND HIS CHIEF OF DETECTIVES, DUTCH AKERS, PROTECTION MONEY.

KC massacre shots

IN KANSAS CITY, AS THE AGENTS ARE TAKING NASH FROM THE CAR, THEY ARE GUNNED DOWN BY MOBSTERS, TIPPED OFF BY SOMEONE IN HOT SPRINGS.

Hoover pic

AFTER THE KANSAS CITY MASSACRE F. B. I. DIRECTOR J. EDGAR HOOVER DOES NOT TRUST THE HOT SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

town pic

HIS SUSPICIONS ARE CONFIRMED THREE YEARS LATER WHEN ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST WANTED CRIMINALS IS ARRESTED HERE, DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF LOCAL POLICE TO PROTECT HIM.

Luciano pic

INDICTED FOR RUNNING A PROSTITUTION RING BY THE STATE OF NEW YORK, CHARLES "LUCKY" LUCIANO HEADS FOR HOT SPRINGS....

Central Ave. pic

WHERE A VACATIONING NEW YORK CITY POLICEMAN ACCIDENTLY SPOTS HIM, STROLLING DOWN CENTRAL AVENUE WITH NONE OTHER THAN DETECTIVE "DUTCH" AKERS.

Luciano pic

LUCIANO IS ARRESTED BY THE COUNTY SHERIFF, AND HIS BOND IS SET AT TWENTY-FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS. HE REACHES IN HIS POCKET, PAYS IT OFF, AND IS RELEASED.

Thomas Dewey pic

NEW YORK ATTORNEY GENERAL THOMAS DEWEY CAN NOT BELIEVE WHAT IS HAPPENING IN HOT SPRINGS.

Futrell pic

HE CALLS ARKANSAS GOVERNOR MARION FUTRELL AND DEMANDS THAT LUCIANO BE EXTRADITED TO NEW YORK.

GOVERNOR FUTRELL IS AN OLD FISHING BUDDY OF JUDGE LEDGERWOOD'S AND A FRIEND TO HOT SPRINGS.

Orval Allbritton SOT

"But the Governor does not want any problems coming out of the state of New York, especially over "Lucky" Luciano, and so he calls the sheriff and says, "Take that man back in custody and hold him.""

Carl Bailey pic

EVENTUALLY IT TAKES ARKANSAS'S ATTORNEY GENERAL, CARL BAILEY, AND A SQUADRON OF HEAVILY-ARMED ARKANSAS STATE RANGERS TO PRY "LUCKY" LUCIANO FROM THE GRASP OF THE GARLAND COUNTY AUTHORITIES AND RETURN HIM TO NEW YORK.

Karpis pic

IN THE MEANTIME, THE F. B. I. HAS BEEN CLOSING IN ON ALVIN "CREEPY" KARPIS, IDENTIFIED BY J. EDGAR HOOVER AS "PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE."

Headline

THEY KNOW HE'S SOMEWHERE IN HOT SPRINGS, BUT HE ALWAYS SEEMS TO BE ONE STEP AHEAD OF THEM.

Karpis arrest pics

WHEN KARPIS IS FINALLY ARRESTED IN NEW ORLEANS, THERE IS ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONVICT POLICE CHIEF JOE WAKELIN AND DETECTIVE "DUTCH" AKERS OF HARBORING CRIMINALS IN HOT SPRINGS.

Magazine articles

THE NEGATIVE PUBLICITY TARNISHES THE CITY'S IMAGE.

Capitol

THE STATE LEGISLATURE CONDUCTS AN INQUIRY INTO CORRUPTION IN THE SPA CITY.

Headlines/pics

NEWLY-ELECTED GOVERNOR CARL BAILEY BEGINS SENDING STATE POLICE FROM LITTLE ROCK TO RAID THE GAMBLING CLUBS.

Crowe's station

BUT THE GAMBLERS PLACE A "LOOK-OUT"
AT CROWE'S STATION TWENTY MILES
OUTSIDE OF TOWN.

Orval Allbritton SOT

"If he saw carloads of State Police headed
this way, he immediately got on the phone,
and everything would be dark by the time
they got here. They'd be shut down. And they
could shut down in a hurry."

WW II shots

THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR TWO
SEEMS TO TURN PEOPLE'S ATTENTION
AWAY FROM THE PROBLEMS OF
HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS.

springs/steam

IT WILL BE AFTER THE WAR IS OVER,
BEFORE THE REAL FIGHT BEGINS HERE.....

(music/nats)

City/film

IN 1945, AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II,
HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS DOES NOT
APPEAR TO BE A TOWN ON THE BRINK
OF CHANGE.

bathing footage

THE BATHHOUSES, THE CITY'S LIFEBLOOD,
ARE OPERATING AT FULL CAPACITY.
BATHING IN THE THERMAL WATER IS
STILL THE PRIMARY TREATMENT FOR
MANY DISEASES.

Soldier pics
Arlington Hotel
Central Ave pic
John Miles SOT
w/super
Gambling cover

pic of Shirley Abbott
and father

Shirley/dad pic

THE TOWN IS FULL OF SOLDIERS,
BUNKING IN BIG, LUXURY HOTELS
LIKE THE ARLINGTON, TRANSFORMED
TEMPORARILY BY THE MILITARY
INTO DISCHARGE CENTERS.

AND CENTRAL AVENUE IS HOPPIN.’

“There was life on Central Avenue.
People were winning and losing and
making noise.”

ALTHOUGH ILLEGAL,
GAMBLING IS THE CITY’S MOST
LUCRATIVE BUSINESS.
AND DESPITE THE OCCASIONAL
RAID BY THE STATE POLICE,
THE CASINOS AND HORSE BOOKS
OPERATE OPENLY—
WITH THE BLESSING OF THE
LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

“Well, the enemy for my father was
anyone who wanted to put him out
of work.”

SHIRLEY ABBOTT’S FATHER,
“HAT” ABBOTT, IS ONE OF THE
HUNDREDS OF HOT SPRINGS
RESIDENTS WORKING IN THE
ILLEGAL GAMBLING BUSINESS.

pics of dad	(Shirley) “He was always selling me the idea that things weren’t what they seemed. ‘That civics book you are studying there says that things work in such and such a way. That’s not how they work. Let me tell you how they work.’ And then he would explain how things worked in Hot Springs.”
Shirley SOT	
town pic	HOW THINGS WORK IN HOT SPRINGS IS IN THE HANDS OF THREE MEN—
Leo pic	MAYOR LEO P. MCLAUGHLIN,
Vern pic	MUNICIPAL JUDGE, VERN LEDGERWOOD,
Witt pic	AND CIRCUIT JUDGE, EARL WITT.
Pat Ramsey SOT w/super	“So, they controlled the court system, they controlled the police system, and they controlled the economy of Hot Springs, because you did not operate a business there without their say-so.”
John Miles SOT w/super	“The town catered to wealth and tourists, and that was it. The gambling, the number one thing, and they were corrupt as hell. You know, just—they were corrupt. You wanted to get something, you paid for it.
Steam/spring	(John Miles voice) “And once they sold out, they were bought. And that sucked good and honest people in, who never thought they would go that way.”

Hurst/soldier pic	Q. BYRUM HURST IS ONE OF THE
father pic	G. I.s RETURNING HOME TO HOT SPRINGS. HIS FATHER IS A LOCAL MINISTER, AND AN OUTSPOKEN CRITIC OF MCLAUGHLIN AND ILLEGAL GAMBLING.
young lawyer pic	BUT THE YOUNGER HURST IS MORE DISMAYED BY THE LACK OF OPPORTUNITY IN HIS HOMETOWN FOR A YOUNG LAWYER INTERESTED IN POLITICS.
Hurst SOT w/super	“When we all got home, we were so independent...that we didn’t know what to do before, but this time we had seen so much during the war, and we had determined to turn Hot Springs over to the people. Sid McMath was the leader.”
McMath pic	
McMath pic	“Sid McMath was a crusader. Sid McMath wanted the change. He is the one who brought the others into it. He is the one who convinced them that they could make a change.”
move to group shot	
G. I.s planning pic or campaign material	THE “G.I.s,” AS THEY CALL THEMSELVES, DECIDE TO FIELD A SLATE OF CANDIDATES TO RUN AGAINST THE MCLAUGHLIN MACHINE IN THE 1946 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY ELECTION.
cartoons/pics	THIS WILL BE THE FIRST TIME IN TEN YEARS FOR MANY OF THE INCUMBANTS TO FACE OPPOSITION. BUT NO ONE IN THE MCLAUGHLIN CAMP IS VERY WORRIED, BECAUSE THEY ALSO CONTROL THE ELECTIONS.

Sid McMath SOT

“They were afraid to vote against McLaughlin’s people because they knew that he would know how they voted, if he wanted to find out.

town pic

Of course, we had good people in Hot Springs, but they were intimidated.”

town pics

INTIMIDATION WORKS PRETTY WELL IN A TOWN LIKE HOT SPRINGS, WHERE THE LIVELIHOOD OF SO MANY PEOPLE DEPENDS ON ILLEGAL ACTIVITY.

Poll tax receipt

BUT FEAR IS NOT ENOUGH TO COMPLETELY CONTROL AN ELECTION. FOR THAT, THE MCLAUGHLIN MACHINE USES THE POLL TAX—AN ARKANSAS STATE LAW THAT REQUIRES A PERSON TO PAY FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF VOTING.

Pat Ramsey SOT
w/super

“It was legal in Arkansas for a person to go to the courthouse, buy a block of poll tax receipts, and give them to whomever.

Poll tax receipts

The problem was, if you could do this for legitimate voters, you could also do it for those who are not legitimate voters.”

G.I. pic

MCMATH AND THE G.I.s KNOW THEIR ONLY HOPE OF WINNING THE ELECTION IS TO EXPOSE THE BLOCKS OF PHONEY POLL TAX RECEIPTS FORGED BY MCLAUGHLIN SUPPORTERS.

Pat Ramsey SOT

“They got a list of names. They started going from door to door, asking people if they actually signed these poll tax receipts, and found people who said, ‘No, not me.’”

News headline
WHEN TWO OF THEIR CAMPAIGN
WORKERS ARE ROBBED AT GUNPOINT
OF A BRIEFCASE CONTAINING
EVIDENCE OF POLL TAX FRAUD,
THE G.I.s KNOW EXACTLY WHERE
TO GO.

Sid McMath SOT
“Went to call on the Mayor, and had a
good visit with him in the Mayor’s office.”

Orval Allbritton SOT
“They went to Leo’s office and told him,
‘Look, if you folks want to play rough—
we can play rough. And these guys weren’t
kidding.’”

G.I. pic

Sid McMath SOT
“And we settled that at that time, and
probably prevented further confrontations
that might have led to trouble.”

Leo pic
(Orval Allbritton voice)
“The administration had blinked.”

Courtroom cover
JUST THREE WEEKS BEFORE
THE PRIMARY ELECTION, A
FEDERAL JUDGE RULES THAT
MORE THAN SIXTEEN HUNDRED
POLL TAX RECEIPTS FROM
GARLAND COUNTY ARE
FRAUDULENT.

Headline/pics
DESPITE THEIR EFFORTS
WHEN THE VOTES ARE COUNTED,
ALL OF THE G. I. CANDIDATES ARE
DEFEATED—EXCEPT ONE.
SID MCMATH NARROWLY WINS
THE RACE FOR PROSECUTING
ATTORNEY.

Headline	(Shirley Abbott voice) “We knew there was a real crack in the foundation.
Shirley Abbott SOT	It seemed unbelievable with the system being what it was, that someone could actually overturn it.”
GI pics	ENCOURAGED BY MCMATH’S SUCCESS, THE G.I.s DECIDE TO RUN AGAIN IN THE GENERAL ELECTION—THIS TIME AS INDEPENDENTS.
town pic	THE ADMINISTRATION’S SUPPORTERS RESPOND WITH A CAMPAIGN OF FEAR.
Pat Ramsey SOT	“There were people whose jobs were threatened. I mean little people— waitresses, gas station attendants. Little people who were threatened that if they supported the GIs, they lost their job.”
Byrum Hurst SOT	“They would call us and threaten us, ‘Just remember, you have a young daughter, you know.’ and things like that.”
GI pics	“I really don’t see how in the world we ever got all through it, because at that particular time, it was so important to us, you know. We were just going to go ahead anyway.”

pic move into McMath

THE G.I.s MOUNT A DETERMINED
AND ENERGETIC CAMPAIGN,
LED BY THE CHARISMATIC MCMATH.

McMath SOT

exterior moving
shot of houses

“As I was walking along one evening, I walked
I know for several blocks, and every house
it seemed, had its radio on, and it was loud
enough that I could hear who was speaking,
and it was me.”

(radio speech fades up full)

*“The question now before you is whether you
are going to govern yourselves in this community,
or if you are to be ruled and regulated by
McLaughlin.....”*

McMath SOT

“and I said, ‘Well now, that’s encouraging.
They’ve got their radios on, and they don’t
mind if the neighbors hear it....and so I think
we’ve got a chance to win this thing.’”

headline—victory

MCMATH’S INSTINCTS ARE TRUE—
THE G.I.s CAPTURE SIX OF THE
COUNTY’S MOST POWERFUL
POLITICAL POSITIONS,
LEAVING MAYOR MCLAUGHLIN
AND JUDGE LEDGERWOOD STILL
HOLDING THEIR CITY OFFICES,
BUT NO LONGER IN CONTROL.

Gambling clubs

UNPROTECTED AND UNCERTAIN
ABOUT HOW THE G.I.s WILL HANDLE
ILLEGAL GAMBLING, THE CASINOS
QUIETLY CLOSE DOWN.

Ledgerwood pic

VERN LEDGERWOOD DECIDES THAT
AFTER SERVING 34 YEARS,
HE WILL RETIRE AS MUNICIPAL JUDGE.

McLaughlin pic

BUT LEO P. MCLAUGHLIN ANNOUNCES
HE WILL RUN AGAIN FOR HIS ELEVENTH
CONSECUTIVE TERM AS MAYOR.

McMath pic

IN ONE OF HIS FIRST ACTS AS PROSECUTING ATTORNEY, SID MCMATH CALLS FOR A GRAND JURY INVESTIGATION OF CORRUPTION IN THE MCLAUGHLIN ADMINISTRATION.

Headline/pic

INDICTED ON THIRTY-TWO COUNTS, MCLAUGHLIN IS ARRESTED WHILE SITTING IN HIS FAVORITE BOX SEAT AT OAKLAWN RACETRACK.

McLaughlin pic

HE DECIDES TO DROP OUT OF THE MAYOR'S RACE, ENDING A REIGN OF TWENTY YEARS, TO CONCENTRATE ON HIS DEFENSE.

Mt. Ida Courtroom

THE TRIAL IS MOVED TO MOUNT IDA, THE NEIGHBORING COUNTY SEAT, IN THE HOPE OF FINDING A JURY WHOSE JUDGEMENT WILL BE UNCLOUDED BY CONNECTIONS TO HOT SPRINGS.

THE COURTROOM IS PACKED AS THE TESTIMONY REVEALS A DEPTH OF CORRUPTION IN THE MCLAUGHLIN ADMINISTRATION THAT SHOCKS THE AVERAGE CITIZENS OF HOT SPRINGS, AND ARKANSAS.

AND EVERY SORDID DETAIL IS REPORTED BY THE NATIONAL PRESS.

Shirley Abbott SOT

“One of the most embarrassing things was that Life magazine covered it, and my father had been an avid reader of Life, and here we were being laid out in Life magazine, and it was almost more than he could bear.”

Life pics

Life pics

DESPITE THE OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE
PRESENTED BY PROSECUTOR MCMATH,
THE JURY RETURNS A VERDICT OF
NOT GUILTY.

Ledgerwood pic

IN AN INTERVIEW RECORDED LATE
IN HIS LIFE, VERN LEDGERWOOD
REMEMBERS HOW HE AND EARL WITT
DID EVERYTHING THEY COULD TO
INFLUENCE THE JURY NOT TO CONVICT.

(Ledgerwood voice)

“McLaughlin could have gone to the
penitentiary if we hadn’t all helped him
out there. And he wasn’t anymore guilty
than anybody else that had been in office—
circuit judge, sheriff, and everybody else.”

McLaughlin pic
gravesite

WHEN LEO P. MCLAUGHLIN DIES
IN HIS HOMETOWN TEN YEARS LATER,
HIS HOUSE IS RANSACKED AND HIS
GRAVE IS OPENED BY SCAVENGERS
SEARCHING FOR HIS FORTUNE.

(music/nats)

Steam/water

BY THE EARLY NINETEEN FIFTIES
THE MYSTERIOUS THERMAL WATER
THAT HAS NOURISHED THE GROWTH
OF HOT SPRINGS IS BEGINNING TO
LOSE ITS MAGIC.

bathhouse film

THE NUMBER OF BATHERS ON BATHHOUSE ROW IS DROPPING NOTICEABLY EVERY YEAR. WITH THE DISCOVERY OF ANTIBIOTICS AND OTHER MODERN MEDICINE, DOCTORS ARE NO LONGER PRESCRIBING THE BATHS.

Sid McMath pic

SID MCMATH'S POLITICAL STAR RISES QUICKLY. HE SERVES ONLY ONE TERM AS PROSECUTING ATTORNEY BEFORE BEING ELECTED GOVERNOR OF ARKANSAS....

GIs pic
move into Hurst

LEAVING BEHIND THE REST OF THE G.I.s TO DEAL WITH THE PERSISTENT DEMAND FOR THE RETURN OF ILLEGAL GAMBLING TO HOT SPRINGS.

Hurst pic

SOME OF THE G.I.s ARE FOR IT.

Byrum Hurst SOT

"I really thought that for the benefit of the county, gambling would..... we were so used to it that we had to put up with some of it anyway."

McMath pic
as governor

DURING MCMATH'S TENURE AS GOVERNOR, GAMBLING BEGINS TO REAPPEAR IN HOT SPRINGS, BUT MOST OF IT IS HIDDEN AND OUT OF SIGHT.

town pic

Faubus pic/film

THAT ALL CHANGES IN 1954
WITH THE ELECTION OF A NEW
GOVERNOR—ORVAL EUGENE
FAUBUS.

HE SENDS A DIFFERENT
MESSAGE TO HOT SPRINGS.

Roy Reed SOT

“As he put it, gambling was a local
issue, and he was not going to have
any part in it. Meaning, ‘Okay, boys,
you can open up again.

Faubus cover

(Roy Reed voice)

“He wasn’t too worried about the
political fall-out because he knew
that in the State generally, people
just didn’t care.”

Gambling cover

GIVEN THE GREEN LIGHT FROM
GOVERNOR FAUBUS, GAMBLING
RETURNS LIKE NEVER BEFORE
IN HOT SPRINGS.

OLD CLUBS REOPEN,
AND NEW ONES ARE BUILT.

SLOT MACHINES ARE EVERYWHERE.

THERE ARE RUMORS OF A WEEKLY
CASH PAY-OFF FROM THE GAMBLERS
DELIVERED DIRECTLY TO THE
GOVERNOR’S OFFICE IN LITTLE ROCK,
BUT NO ONE CAN PROVE IT.

Gambling cover

ONE THING IS CERTAIN—
GAMBLING IS BACK,
AND THE SPA CITY HAS COME
UP WITH A WAY TO
CASH IN.

Mark Palmer SOT

“The city passed a tax on illegal business.
You were paying an amusement tax for running
an illegal bar, a house of prostitution, a gambling casino.
And that went to the city and they used that
to pave the streets, public works, pay salaries,
everything. So that made it not so
much of a crime.....”

Gambling cover

BY 1960 THE GAMBLING INDUSTRY IN
HOT SPRINGS IS RAKING IN MORE THAN
ONE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR.

club pics

THE OWNERS OF THE ILLEGAL GAMBLING
CLUBS ARE CONSIDERED LEGITIMATE
BUSINESSMEN IN TOWN. THEY BELONG TO
CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS AND CONTRIBUTE
GENEROUSLY TO LOCAL CHARITIES.

Montage of entertainers

THEY BUILD GLITTERING NEW
NIGHTCLUBS, LIKE THE VAPORS, AND
BRING IN A VARIETY OF BIG-NAME
ENTERTAINERS.

MANY VISITORS
COME JUST FOR THE SHOWS
STAGED IN THE ILLEGAL CASINOS.

Roy Reed SOT

“Alta Faubus, Orval’s wife, like to go to Hot Springs, but she knew she wasn’t supposed to and she did not want to be seen there.

Alta Faubus pic

She was sitting there with her friend and kind of bodyguard, when somebody got the microphone and said, ‘We have a very distinguished visitor here tonight, Mrs. Faubus, would you stand up Mrs. Faubus?’ And blew her cover.”

Steam/springs

THE WATER IS NOT THE ONLY THING HEATING UP THE SPA CITY. WITH GAMBLING OPEN AGAIN, HOT SPRINGS BECOMES A MECCA FOR SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN ORGANIZED CRIME.

Clay White SOT
w/super

“When I transferred with the FBI to Hot Springs, some of the old agents said, ‘Clay, don’t buy a home down there.’ And I said, ‘Why?’ And they said, ‘Well, you won’t be there long,’ said, ‘it’s too hot, too much of a hot spot.’

Bob Hickam SOT

"It was a 15 to 18 hour a day job. I remember one night getting up, and I just threw a suit over my pajamas and I stayed that way for 2 days. Picking up fugitives and going from here to there. It was a madhouse.”

Gambling cover

pics of Clay

ALTHOUGH GAMBLING IS AGAINST THE LAW IN ARKANSAS, THE FBI AGENTS HAVE NO JURISDICTION HERE, BECAUSE THERE’S NO FEDERAL LAW AGAINST GAMBLING.

gambling cover

"Yes, we walked in all the gambling establishments every night, practically. 'Hey, how come this isn't being enforced?' Anyone could have closed them—the chief of police, the sheriff, the prosecutor, the judges, the governor."

McClellan crime hearings

IN WASHINGTON D. C., HOT SPRINGS BECOMES A HOT TOPIC AT THE SENATE HEARINGS ON ORGANIZED CRIME CHAIRED BY THE SENATOR FROM ARKANSAS—JOHN MCLELLAN.

IN 1964 THE HEARINGS RESULT IN THE PASSAGE OF NEW FEDERAL GAMBLING STATUES, AIMED DIRECTLY AT HOT SPRINGS.

Clay White SOT

"I got a call from FBI in Washington. They said 2 individuals, assistant attorney generals, were leaving that day to come to Hot Springs. That night I took them to some of the casinos, mainly, the Southern Club, the Vapors, and the Belvedere.

gambling pics

Clay SOT

The last place we went to they said, 'We've seen enough. We don't need to see anymore. Let's go to the motel. So on the way to the motel they asked me if I could call a press conference the next morning."

Headline

AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE THE F.B.I. DESCRIBES HOT SPRINGS AS THE LARGEST ILLEGAL GAMBLING OPERATION IN THE COUNTRY.

press conference

A WARNING IS ISSUED TO ALL ELECTED PUBLIC OFFICIALS— FAILURE TO ENFORCE THE LOCAL LAWS AGAINST GAMBLING IS NOW A FEDERAL OFFENSE.

AND A GRAND JURY WILL SOON BE INVESTIGATING THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR HOT SPRINGS.

legislature cover

THE ARKANSAS STATE LEGISLATURE RESPONDS QUICKLY WITH A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR ALL ILLEGAL GAMBLING IN HOT SPRINGS TO BE SHUT DOWN IMMEDIATELY.

Faubus

GOVERNOR FAUBUS AGREES, AND ON MARCH 28, 1964, BY ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR, ALL THE CASINOS IN HOT SPRINGS CLOSE DOWN.....

clubs/headlines

FOR A WHILE....

Faubus film

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS TEN YEARS AS GOVERNOR, ORVAL FAUBUS FACES A VIABLE OPPONENT IN THE UPCOMING GENERAL ELECTION— REPUBLICAN WINTHROP ROCKEFELLER, WHO HAS ADOPTED ARKANSAS AS HIS HOME STATE, AND MADE GAMBLING AN ISSUE IN THE CAMPAIGN.

Rockefeller

John Ward SOT
w/super

“The basis for talking about illegal gambling in Hot Springs was the hypocrisy that it represented. He knew, we all knew, that what was happening is the State Police, when they were going to make a raid on Hot Springs, the gamblers would be tipped off. They would hide all their stuff. The raid would take place. Nothing would be found. The State Police would come back to Little Rock, and the gamblers would get all their slots out, get going again, business as usual.”

Faubus cover

FAUBUS DEFEATS ROCKEFELLER
IN THE 1964 ELECTION, AND FOR
THE NEXT TWO YEARS, THE GAMBLERS
CONTINUE THEIR ELUSIVE DANCE
AROUND THE OCCASIONAL VISIT
FROM THE STATE POLICE.

Article

ILLEGAL GAMBLING IN HOT SPRINGS
BECOMES A NATIONAL NEWS STORY.

WHEN A REPORTER FROM THE
WASHINGTON POST RUNS
INTO GOVERNOR FAUBUS AT
THE ARLINGTON HOTEL,
HE ASKS HIM ABOUT THE
ILLEGAL GAMBLING IN TOWN.

Roy Reed SOT

"And the governor said he didn't know of any illegal gambling in Hot Springs himself. As far as he knew, it was all shut down. The reporter walked out of the Arlington Hotel, across Central Avenue and went into the Southern Club where the gambling was just wide open that day...middle of the day. But it got to be almost laughable.”

Rockefeller film
 NOT EVERYONE IN ARKANSAS IS LAUGHING.
 WINTHROP ROCKEFELLER DECIDES TO RUN
 AGAIN FOR GOVERNOR IN 1966, PROMISING
 TO PERMANENTLY CLOSE THE ILLEGAL
 GAMBLING IN HOT SPRINGS.

Faubus cover
 ORVAL FAUBUS ANNOUNCES HE
 WILL NOT SEEK REELECTION

Rockefeller pic
 AND IN 1966 WINTHROP ROCKEFELLER
 BECOMES THE FIRST REPUBLICAN
 TO BE ELECTED GOVERNOR OF
 ARKANSAS IN OVER NINETY YEARS.

Press conf. film
 (nats sound)
 “I’ve read in the paper that yes, gambling has
 reopened in Hot Springs....”

film continues
 THE SINCERITY OF HIS CAMPAIGN
 PROMISE IS IMMEDIATELY TESTED
 BY THE GAMBLERS IN HOT SPRINGS.

Rockefeller
 (nats sound-reporter)
 “If this is brought to your attention, will you
 use the State Police investigative agency to
 go and look the situation over?”

Raid pics
 “Yes, I’ve always taken the attitude, and
 I certainly proved it by taking the oath of
 office that I will enforce the law—the law
 does not permit open gambling.”

THIS TIME THE STATE POLICE RAIDS
 WILL BE DIFFERENT.

destroying slots

(John Ward voice)

“No tip-offs. We’re going to go in there and get the machines and beat them up, make a big deal out of it, show people in Hot Springs that we’re serious, and that’s what he did. It was quick, and dirty and clear that this era is over. It’s over.”

John Ward SOT

“And people that weren’t gamblers themselves, well-meaning people, business people you know, in effect, prevailed on him to ‘take it easy, governor. I mean, my goodness, you’re killing us.’ But he was not dissuaded by any of that. He was determined and he stayed with it.”

Town 60s

(Wendy Richter voice)

Wendy Richter SOT

“Some people said the town will die. Hot Springs had to find a new identity. The gambling was gone. Its entertainment was gone. Bathing was in decline. Where do we go from here?”

Amendment 55 cover

**MANY IN HOT SPRINGS BELIEVE
THE ONLY HOPE FOR THE CITY’S
ECONOMIC FUTURE IS
FOR THE STATE TO LEGALIZE
GAMBLING.**

Rep. John Miller speaking

(nats sound)

“The people of this state, I mean all the people of this state, said we do not, absolutely do not, unequivocally do not want gambling in Hot Springs and in Garland County.”

Legislature/Hurst

**SOMEHOW, DESPITE VOCAL OPPOSITION,
STATE SENATOR Q. BYRUM HURST
MANAGES TO GET A GAMBLING BILL
PASSED BY BOTH HOUSES OF THE
STATE LEGISLATURE.**

Rockefeller
 WHEN THE BILL GOES TO GOVERNOR
 ROCKEFELLER, IT SITS ON
 HIS DESK UNTIL THE DAY BEFORE
 IT WILL BECOME LAW WITHOUT HIS
 SIGNATURE.

ROCKEFELLER VETOS IT...
 ENDING ALL HOPE OF LEGALIZING
 GAMBLING IN HOT SPRINGS.

Racetrack montage
 (music/nats...)

track/church
 HOT SPRINGS HAS ALWAYS BEEN
 A TOWN WITH A SPLIT PERSONALITY.

race shots
 (nats)
 TODAY, THE HORSES ARE STILL
 RUNNING AT OAKLAWN PARK....

betting
 (nats)
 AND LIKE THE OLD HORSE BOOKS,
 YOU CAN BET ON RACES FROM ALL
 OVER THE COUNTRY.

Central Ave.
 BUT THERE'S NO MORE GAMBLING
 ON CENTRAL AVENUE.

Southern Club
 THE OLD SOUTHERN CLUB IS
 A WAX MUSEUM....

Vapors
 AND THE VAPORS IS A CHURCH.

National Baptist building
 ON MALVERN AVENUE,
 THE NATIONAL BAPTIST BUILDING,
 WHERE ONCE UPON A TIME
 DUKE ELLINGTON'S BAND
 PLAYED LATE INTO THE NIGHT,
 IS BOARDED UP.....
 AND BLACK BROADWAY IS
 JUST A MEMORY.

to old pic

today

People at fountain

PEOPLE STILL BELIEVE THERE'S
SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT THIS WATER....
AND VISITORS LINE UP TO
BOTTLE IT AND TAKE IT HOME.

Buckstaff

BUT ONLY ONE BATHHOUSE
IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS,
Fordyce
ANOTHER IS A MUSEUM....

interior tubs

THE REST ARE EMPTY AND
CRUMBLING IN THE STEAM,
PATIENTLY WAITING FOR
RENOVATION.

ws Central Ave.

IF YOU STAND ON CENTRAL
AVENUE, AND FACE THE OLD
ARLINGTON HOTEL, AND LISTEN....
YOU CAN HEAR THE GHOSTS
OF HOT SPRINGS,
ARGUING ABOUT WHAT
MIGHT HAVE BEEN.....

(w/music)

Byrum Hurst SOT

“I think it would be the first competition
that Las Vegas has had because we have
everything that they don’t have.....everything.
But, that’s the way it is. And it makes you
feel bad too because
we had a chance to really make a city out
of this place, and it was really going to be
something, but anyway, that’s it....”

Mark Palmer SOT

“All the money people, and the big tippers,
and big spenders quit coming to town. It was
over. Before that you could ride down Central
Avenue, ‘Look over here, there’s a movie star
walking down the sidewalk like anybody else.’
It was kind of like we were the center of the
world.”

Wendy Richter SOT

"The aura surrounding Hot Springs has somewhat disappeared....the kind of feeling people have when they hear the name, Hot Springs. A lot of the excitement has been lost."

John Miles SOT

"We remember that fondly--but we've forgotten the control, we've forgotten the corruption. We've forgotten the really open immorality. Everybody is immoral sometimes, I guess, but when it's institutionalized, what does it say to people?"

Sid McMath SOT

"They say, 'Oh, boy, things aren't like they used to be.' Well, I've got news for you--and they never were. I tell you, when they want the 'good old days' they don't know what they're talking about.

I think the people are looking forward and not backward. I don't think they spend too much time worrying about the past, except they don't want to repeat it."

Orval Allbritton SOT

"Hot Springs has never had much industry, so we've had to rely on the visitors. And we still rely on them. They come by the droves. They're coming in greater numbers every year. If you go downtown during the months of June, July, early part of August, you'll notice how crowded the streets are. They're not vacant. If Leo McLaughlin walked out on the Arlington Hotel and fired a Winchester down Central Avenue he'd hit somebody....."

This is a good time. This is a good time....."

crane shot water...w/ credits

(music/nats)