

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sulphur Springs Cemetery

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Slo Fork Road

not for publication

city or town Sulphur Springs

vicinity

state AR code AR county Yell code 149 zip code 72083

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Cedric Matthews

1/7/12

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

_____	buildings
_____	sites
_____	structures
_____	objects
_____	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other Marble, granite, concrete

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property

for National Register listing.)

[x] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

[x] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

[ ] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

[ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

SOCIAL HISTORY

POLITICIS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1844-1926

Significant Dates

1844, 1926

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Choate, Judge John F.

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Undefined

Architect/Builder

N/A

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

[ ] A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

[ ] removed from its original location.

[x] C birthplace or grave of a historical figure

[x] D a cemetery.

[ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

[ ] F a commemorative property

[ ] G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

[ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

[ ] previously listed in the National Register

[ ] Previously determined eligible by the National Register

[ ] designated a National Historic Landmark

[ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

#

[ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering

Primary location of additional data:

[x] State Historic Preservation Office

[ ] Other State Agency

[ ] Federal Agency

[ ] Local Government

[ ] University

[ ] Other

Name of repository:

Sulphur Springs Cemetery  
Name of Property

Yell County, AR  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Approximately 4.49 acres.

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>4703<sup>27</sup>87</u>	<u>389420<sup>79</sup>2</u>	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Beginning at a point on the south side of Slo Fork Road proceed east approximately 233.52 feet; thence proceed south approximately 260 feet; thence proceed west approximately 229.21 feet; thence proceed north approximately 275.75 feet to point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this resource that retains its integrity.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Holly Hope/ Special Projects Historian  
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date 12/19/11  
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone 501 324-9880  
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72834

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Sulphur Springs Cemetery Preservation Association, Willie Sides  
street & number 10474 McCray Ridge Road telephone 479 229-2057  
city or town Dardanelle state AR zip code 72834

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

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**SUMMARY**

Sulphur Springs Cemetery is located approximately 10 miles north of the dual county seat of Danville and 10 miles southwest of the county seat in Dardanelle in the community of Sulphur Springs, Yell County, Arkansas. The Cemetery is .11 of a mile south of Slo Fork Road (Yell County Road 39) and .19 southwest of the intersection with Yell County Road 38. There are 25 commercial markers, one unmarked cut stone cairn and two unmarked burials within coping of fieldstones. The total acreage of the land dedicated to the cemetery is approximately 4.49 acres and 1.07 acres of that total contain the interments within a barbed wire fence.

There are no buildings associated with the Sulphur Springs Cemetery. The monuments are a mixture of commercially produced examples of limestone and marble and vernacular concrete slabs. Typology includes minimal gothic, block, obelisks, cross-vault obelisks, tablet, pulpit and ground-level markers. There is one family plot containing historic burials enclosed in a wire fence, which was placed in the cemetery in the 1970s. Fieldstones are scattered through the cemetery but it is unclear whether they all denote a burial.

The community of Sulphur Springs grew up in 1841 after the discovery of a spring at the foot of Spring Mountain, leading to the growth of a spa culture offering medicinal waters for tourists and invalids. The Arkansas River to the north of Sulphur Springs brought visitors and commercial growth to the area but by the 1920s the spa industry and subsequent economy came to an end. The Sulphur Springs Cemetery is all that remains of that era of tourism and activity.

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**ELABORATION**

Sulphur Springs Cemetery is located south of Slo Fork Road (County Road 39) in the rural community of Sulphur Springs, Yell County, Arkansas. The cemetery is in the south portion of a 4.49-acre tract, which is surrounded by sparsely developed land. Spring Mountain is to the north of Slo Fork Road and the boundaries of the Ozark National Forest are to the northwest. Interments are situated in random groupings. A barbed wire fence surrounds the cemetery on all sides and it is accessed from the north through a cattle gate. A small wooden sign reading "SULPHUR SPRINGS CEMETERY," was placed to the north in 2003, as was the fence and gate, by the Sulphur Springs Cemetery Preservation Association. A few late twentieth-century homes and trailers are located along Slo Fork Road. There is no commercial development and the area is primarily used for farming. The only remnants from the active years of the community of Sulphur Springs besides the cemetery are the ruins of the Sulphur Springs Cumberland Presbyterian Church, a well on the site of the Sulphur Springs Hotel, the springs themselves and one late 19<sup>th</sup> century home in an advanced state of disrepair.

The markers in Sulphur Springs Cemetery primarily represent the post-Victorian era. Two cross-vault obelisks, a small obelisk with a rounded apex and one heart-shaped monument are represented. One stone is a columnar pulpit type. The remainder of the stones are block and tablet-style with rounded, slanted and graduated shoulders or slight gothic influence. Two vernacular concrete slabs and one concrete square tablet-type are also present. Other vernacular examples include a stacked cut-rock cairn and two unmarked graves bounded by coping of thin sandstones.

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Iconography includes ferns for humility and sincerity, rosebuds for the passing of time, an open book atop a veil with Freemason symbol, oak leaves to represent the power of the Christian faith, a lamb for the innocence of a child and vines for the relationship between God and man. There are no maker's marks on any of the gravestones.

**Breakdown of Burials**

1844	1
1900-1910	9
1911-1920	8
1921-1930	4
1931-1940	3

**Total** 25

**Unmarked Burials**

Unmarked burials include one cut stone cairn, two graves outlined with sandstone coping and approximately 42 fieldstones.

**Undated Burials**

There are three burials with commercial headstones that are not marked with death dates.

**Non-historic Objects**

A wooden sign reading "SULPHUR SPRINGS CEMETERY," and a barbed wire fence with a metal cattle gate were erected in 2003. Six concrete headstones stamped with crosses reading "Rest in Peace," were added to the cemetery on burials marked with fieldstones in that year. All were placed in the cemetery by the Sulphur Springs Cemetery Preservation Association. There is also a hog-wire enclosure for the Hancock family burials, which was erected in the 1970s.

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**Landscape**

Sulphur Springs Cemetery contains little historic landscaping. There are large hardwood trees throughout and one small plot of iris around a vernacular concrete ground-level marker (Frank Christy, b. May 21, 1873, d. August 17, 1926). Daffodils bloom in the spring.

Burials are scattered throughout the cemetery in small groupings or individually with large amounts of space between the headstones. The only delineated family plot contains five markers for the Hancock family. The plot was enclosed in a hog-wire fence in the 1970s for protection from cows and includes one cross-obelisk, one unmarked fieldstone and three vernacular concrete ground-level stones. Other surnames found in small groupings of two and three burials are Choate, Shaffer, Lusby, Smith and Bradley. Fieldstones are placed throughout the cemetery.

**INTEGRITY**

Sulphur Springs Cemetery was the community burying ground for the residents of the spa town of Sulphur Springs, Yell County. The earliest known burial dates from 1844 and the last from 1940. The cemetery contains the interment of Yell County judge, John F. Choate, (b. July 13, 1841, d. December 20, 1903) who was instrumental in the economic and political life of the county and Sulphur Springs.

The historic fabric of Sulphur Springs is limited to one late 19<sup>th</sup> century house in an advanced state of disrepair, the ruins of the Sulphur Springs Cumberland Presbyterian Church, a pipe marking the location of the Sulphur Springs Hotel's well and the sulphur springs, which were covered by a pole shelter and enclosed in brick boxes in the 1970s. The springs are inaccessible by road and are overgrown. A early 19<sup>th</sup> century plat map of Sulphur Springs shows that the main road where the cemetery is situated was called Front Street (now Slo Fork Road). The remnants of Hotel Street leading north from Slo Fork Road are evident but all other roads are gone. There are a few mid-20<sup>th</sup> and early



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21<sup>st</sup> century homes and three mobile homes on Slo Fork Road. All are separated by extensive tracts of undeveloped land.

By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the cemetery had become overgrown and stones were being damaged by cattle and falling trees. In 2003 the Sulphur Springs Cemetery Preservation Association was formed and cleanup began. Further work on the cemetery was postponed until 2005, when the association purchased the burial ground and adjacent land north of the cemetery. Several stones had been toppled, which were restored to their pedestals during the cleanup. The cemetery has been maintained well since then. A 2011 storm uprooted trees resulting in Judge John F. Choate's obelisk being knocked off its pedestal but the fall did not inflict any damage and it can easily be re-situated. A second tree slightly disturbed an unmarked burial with sandstone coping, which can also be repaired. Any future graves will be placed to the north of the historic cemetery but at this point there have been no arrangements for the sale of plots in that area.

Headstone styles found in the cemetery include cross-obelisks, obelisk, tablet-style, block, ground-level and minimal gothic style stone. There is one heart-shaped stone for the burial of a child and one unusual form not yet recorded in other Arkansas cemeteries. The grave of Lawrence Bradley is a tablet stone with rounded shoulders. The apex of the monument has a small point, rather like an inverted acorn. The stone is thicker at the base tapering to a thin point.

The stones in the Sulphur Springs Cemetery are simple but they do display well-known symbols of mourning and some are constructed using marble and limestone in restrained post-Victorian forms. It is not known if there were any stone carvers in Sulphur Springs but it is possible that nearby towns like Dardanelle and Danville had some. If local artisans did not provide the stones the Arkansas River would have been a likely conduit for transport of commercially produced monuments, which then made their way by wagon to the burial ground.

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Sulphur Springs Cemetery is small, which reflects the historic character of the community. Although there were large numbers of visitors from across the nation that came to partake in the medicinal benefits of the springs, the population of year-round residents was small. Sulphur Springs was not located on the Arkansas River; there was no railroad to the area and no main highway so it took some effort to get there. The discovery of the springs in the 1840s formed the character of the community and facilitated its growth from an undeveloped valley to a cosmopolitan destination for tourists.

The understated funerary architecture and unmarked fieldstones of Sulphur Springs Cemetery reveal the rural makeup of the community while the headstone of Yell County Judge John F. Choate with its draped veil, open Bible on a pulpit-obelisk, Masonic sign and elaborate carving tell the story of his social standing in the county. These elements are all that remain of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century spa community of Sulphur Springs.

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**SUMMARY**

The Sulphur Springs Cemetery, Sulphur Springs, Yell County, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with local significance under Criterion A, Criteria Consideration C and D as a representation of the spa-era of Sulphur Springs. It is also being nominated under Criterion B, Criteria Consideration C and D as the burial site of prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century Sulphur Springs community member Judge John F. Choate who served as Yell County circuit clerk and Yell County judge for two terms.

**ELABORATION**

***Town and county history***

Yell County, Arkansas, was formed from Scott and Pope counties in 1840. The first county seat was established that year in Monrovia Settlement and moved to Danville in 1844. By 1875 Dardanelle, to the northeast of Sulphur Springs became the second county seat and both towns remain centers of government in Yell County today. Three rivers; the Arkansas, Petit Jean and Fourche LaFave flow through Yell County. Sulphur Springs is located in Harkey's Valley between Spring Mountain and Mt. Nebo (known as Magazine Mountain in 1891) to the north and Chickalah Mountain to the south. Despite the broken landscape of much of the county the soil was conducive to raising crops like cotton and grains. Fruit crops could be produced there but the lack of railroads and roads in the interior delayed shipment to market so they were mostly raised for sustenance. Timber harvesting of yellow pine and hardwoods provided income to the county.<sup>1</sup>

The non-native population of Yell County in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was sparse as the area was in Indian Territory. Prior to 1809 Osage Indians ranged the Arkansas River Valley on the north bank of the river, executing occasional raids on trappers and river travelers, which made it dangerous to travel or

<sup>1</sup> Mildred Diane Gleason, "Yell County," 09/12/2011, information from The Encyclopedia of Arkansas Culture and History website at <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=816>; *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Western Arkansas*, (The Southern Publishing Company: Nashville and Chicago, 1891), p.114.

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settle nearby. After the Osage had been removed by treaty, Cherokees took their place on a reservation set aside for them in 1818. The Choctaws were given land between the Arkansas and Red rivers in 1820 but no tribesmen settled there. By 1824 the Choctaw land reverted to the United States and in 1825 immigrants gained the right to purchase land in Arkansas Territory on the south bank of the Arkansas River. White immigration increased in the late 1820s near the Petit Jean and Arkansas rivers and by 1830 the Cherokees and Choctaws in the county had been removed to the west. Permanent settlements became more frequent in the interior and river valleys because of Removal and the fertility of the soil.<sup>2</sup>

Yell County had more than the soil to draw people to the area. Springs of fresh water containing sulphuretted hydrogen and chalybeate could be found flowing from the mountains. The use of spring water for bathing and healing dates back to the prehistoric era. The discovery of springs on land occupied by Native Americans in Arkansas and subsequently obtained by white immigrants led to the development of towns and tourist facilities such as Hot Springs, Sulphur Springs (Benton County and Yell County) and Eureka Springs. Medical benefits of spring water had been touted by doctors on the East Coast since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Scientific classification systems devised by early advocates of the medical use of spring waters such as Simon Baruch, John Harvey Kellogg and Guy Hinsdale, were developed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Clinical hydrotherapeutic experiments conducted in America by these men based on training they received in European spas resulted in the popularity of bath and climate therapies received at resorts like Sulphur Springs.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Goodspeed*, 119; Kara Oosterhaus, "Dardanelle Commercial Historic District," National Register Nomination, on file at Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Little Rock, AR, Section 8, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> John C. Branner, *Annual Report of the Geological Survey of Arkansas for 1891*, (Little Rock Press Printing Company: Little Rock, AR, 1892), 115-116; Dr. Jonathan Paul de Vierville, "Taking the Waters," information obtained from [www.massagetherapy.com/articles/index.php?article\\_id/323/Taking-the-Waters](http://www.massagetherapy.com/articles/index.php?article_id/323/Taking-the-Waters), Accessed 10/11/2011.

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Saratoga Springs in New York was the most popular spa in the country in 1815 and by the 1850s hot and cold spa resorts had opened in 20 states. These concerns eventually evolved away from the primary purpose of improving health to ostensibly providing a conduit for exciting activities like gambling, fishing, hunting, mingling with upper classes and marrying daughters to eligible bachelors. Advertising methods of spa owners utilized the scenery to draw customers. Romance and sophistication gained from an appreciation of idealized surroundings was an equalizer that allowed tourists to experience what the elite enjoyed every day. Escaping the stress of the city and the stale air to embrace nature allowed people to scrub away the "sordid tendencies of modern civilization." The proprietors of Sulphur Springs Hotel were aware of the proper hook and despite its remote location the community became a well-known destination.<sup>4</sup>

The sulphur springs of Yell County were reported in 1841 to have been recently discovered and it was noted that a resort in the area had been established by 1839. V. T. Rogers purchased the land containing the springs from R.M. Roberts in 1841 and had obtained the learned opinion of "a number of gentlemen" who had experience with mineral waters that the springs were of a superior quality. Alternately, the number of springs reported at Sulphur Springs (also known as White Sulphur Springs, Dardanelle Sulphur Springs and Dardanelle Springs), ranges from 3 to 7. The *Arkansas Gazette* noted that there were 4 in 1841 consisting of white and black sulphur, soda and chalybeate. Rogers advertised the medical benefits of the water and maintained that diseases such as dropsy, scrofula, rheumatism and dyspepsia could be eradicated by the springs.

<sup>4</sup> John C. Paige and Laura Soulliere Harrison, *Out of the Vapors: A Social and Architectural History of Bathhouse Row*, (US Department of the Interior, National Park Service: Washington, DC, 1987), 11-12; Thomas A. Chambers, *Creating An American Leisure Class at Nineteenth-Century Mineral Springs*, (Smithsonian Institution Press: Washington and London, 2002), 28-29, 32.

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Rogers knew that the medical qualities of the water were not enough to attract the types of tourists who spend money freely. In the vein of James Calwell and Gideon Putnam who established White Sulphur Springs in West Virginia and Saratoga Springs in New York, Rogers utilized verbiage to excite the senses. He offered that the resort was located on a "beautiful and very extensive plain of gradually rolling country." The surrounding mountains of Magazine (now Mt. Nebo), and Petit Jean offered "one of the most beautiful views in the western world; the surrounding scenery is romantic and grand beyond conception." The abundance of game and the variety and superior flavor of the local fruits was also touted by Rogers.<sup>5</sup>

True or not, such embellishments were likely needed as the springs were not exactly easy to get to. Visitors usually traveled by steamboat on the Arkansas River, debarked at Dardanelle Rock in Dardanelle and then took a hack for twelve miles to the resort. Once there, they encountered a log structure but Rogers reported in 1841 that he was making improvements and due to the increasing number of customers the original building "reared amid the pines," was going through renovations. Mean accommodations were tempered by a supply of wine from New Orleans, new furniture and the services of a Dr. Tudor. To make sure that the good times went on unabated the most diseased patrons were put up in cabins far back on the ridge of Spring Mountain.<sup>6</sup>

The *Arkansas Gazette* reported in 1847 that the resort had a new owner. John H. Strong stated that the buildings had been repaired and improved to cater to the diseased as well as the average gentleman. The same attributes that had drawn tourists to the waters across the nation were still being

<sup>5</sup> "Dardenelle Springs," *Arkansas Gazette*, (April 28, 1841); Suzy Carter, "Sulphur Springs: Wilderness Resort – 1839-1926," Information obtained from Michael Hall, Superintendent Mt. Nebo State Park, Dardanelle, AR, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> "Dardenelle Springs"; Wayne Banks, *History of Yell County, Arkansas*, (Press-Argus: Van Buren, AR: 1959), 55; "The Dardanelle Springs of Arkansas," *Arkansas Gazette*, (April 3, 1847), online article obtained from <http://www.arkansasties.com/Social/viewtopic.php?f=97&t=20087>, accessed October 24, 2011.

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extolled as he promised that, "The inhabitant of cities may thus seclude himself, for a season, among the wilds of nature...and yet not be deprived... of his usual luxuries or comforts." The next year he reported that he was offering cold and warm baths and a hack would be available through Mr. G. Williams of Dardanelle or customers could hop the United States Mail Line with Mr. Snapp in Norristown.<sup>7</sup>

By 1854 the resort was managed by John R. Harris. His advertising reached out to neighboring states of Tennessee, Mississippi and Louisiana. At this point the hotel offered twenty rooms on the ground floor and seventeen upstairs while a wraparound porch offered fresh air lodging. The heyday of Sulphur Springs was interrupted by the Civil War when Union Cavalry burned the hotel and all outbuildings except a stone stable in 1862. Interest was renewed in the area when a new hotel was constructed in 1867 and stockholders from Little Rock, Memphis, New Orleans and Brooklyn invested in the new resort. The *Dardanelle Post Dispatch* reported in 1926 that the numbers of guests during the 19<sup>th</sup> century reached four-hundred in a season and described the hotel lawn as possessing landscaped gardens and a racetrack.<sup>8</sup>

The New York Trust Company took over the springs in 1872 and New York railroad mogul, Colonel William P. Denckla had the hotel and other buildings rebuilt. That same year Denckla purchased the block of land in Little Rock on which the Capital Hotel was built. This is revealing that the spa area was still considered a moneymaker to a savvy businessman like Denckla. Local newspapers reported that his plans included constructing a 300-foot summer house with an 80-foot wing and several cottages; some as large as sixty feet. A bathing house, 100-foot long hotel and other outbuildings were to be built and landscaping of trees and shrubs would be added to the lawn. It was noted at that time that a village

<sup>7</sup> "The Dardanelle Springs of Arkansas," *The Arkansas Gazette*, (June 01, 1848).

<sup>8</sup> Banks, 56-57; *Dardanelle Post Dispatch*, (December 16, 1926), Information obtained from Edna Shaw, Benton, AR, 2011.

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was being surveyed and lots were being laid off. It is unclear whether the lots were for year-round residents or for new buildings on the grounds of the resort. A post office was also established in the community by 1879.

Various blurbs in Yell County newspapers made note through the 1870s that Sulphur Springs was still a destination for picnickers and those seeking relief from the heat. During the yellow fever epidemic of 1878 the resort was full to the point where incoming guests were required to pitch a tent. The crowds had been swelled by those seeking to escape the disease. Two companies of U.S. soldiers from Memphis and Little Rock were also camped at the hotel at this time to avoid contamination. It was reported that they took part in the "social whirl," which indicates the hotel was still a lively destination.<sup>9</sup>

Guests of a different sort were proposed for the springs in 1878. A medical committee consisting of four doctors submitted a report to the Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Representatives indicating that they felt the properties of the springs at Sulphur Springs would be medically therapeutic to the insane. The Special Joint Committee on Insane Asylum concluded in 1879 that it was appropriate for such a use because of the availability of multiple large buildings and the surrounding fertile cropland. The abundance of springs in the area would be healthful to the patients and the remote location would secure the rest of the county from "contagious and epidemic diseases." Furthermore, the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad Company had offered to bring patients to Dardanelle for free and their companions for half price.

<sup>9</sup> *Dardanelle Post Dispatch*, (December 16, 1926); Sharolyn Jones-Taylor, "Capital Hotel," *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, (January 08, 2010), online article at [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID+2436](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID+2436), accessed October 24, 2011; Banks, 57; Faye Greenwood Sandy, *Yell County Newspaper Abstracts, 1875-1879*, (Arkansas Research: Conway, AR, 1997), information obtained from Edna Shaw; "State News, Yell," Undated newspaper article from Edna Shaw; Wayne Banks, *History of Yell County, Arkansas, Vol. II*, (Dardanelle Printers, Inc.: Dardanelle, AR, 1992), 69.



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It is not known how these plans played out but judging from newspaper articles of the remainder of the 1870s and early 1880s, the resort did not become an institution and it continued taking guests for leisure and entertainment. However, competition from larger resort destinations and the continuing difficulty of transporting guests to Sulphur Springs sent the resort concern into a tailspin. By 1883 the hotel had been foreclosed on, placing investors upside down. The New York Trust Company repurchased it in 1885 intending to introduce a wooden track to bring in guests and goods via horse and also to hook up electricity. These plans never came to fruition and the resort continued on its downward trajectory as a commercial concern.<sup>10</sup>

**Judge John F. Choate**

After foundering for a few years, the hotel was purchased by Judge John F. Choate in 1901. Choate was a resident of Sulphur Springs and had played a large part in the economic and political life of Yell County for several years. Choate was born in Tennessee and moved to Chickalah, Arkansas, east of Sulphur Springs with his family in 1850. He was elected circuit clerk in 1865 when he was in his early twenties, a position he held for 8 years. Choate was then elected Yell County judge in 1876 and he served two terms until 1880.

During his tenure as county judge he was responsible for the construction of two iron bridges on the Petit Jean River. Judge Choate contracted with the King Iron Bridge Company of Cleveland, Ohio to construct a 100 foot iron bridge at Danville in 1880. The Mickles Bridge (NR listed 08/18/2007) was known as the Old Danville Bridge and it stood in its original location until 1920. At that time the county

<sup>10</sup> "Report of Medical Committee on the Medical Properties of Dardanelle Springs," *Independent Arkansian*, Dardanelle, AR, (September 27, 1878); "Locating the Insane Asylum," *The Independent Arkansian*, (March 15, 1879); Banks, *History of Yell County*, Vol. I, 57.

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judge, Robert Thomas contracted for a new span to be laid on top of the original stone piers and the old span was mothballed. In 1922 the original bowstring trusses would be moved to Mickles to replace a wooden bridge. The second bridge contracted by Judge Choate was located at Rocky Crossing at the present intersection of the Petit Jean River and Arkansas Highway 7. This bridge is no longer extant.<sup>11</sup>

Besides his political activities, Judge Choate was a planter, owning 1,000 acres in Yell County, and a businessman. In 1878 he established the first general store in Belleville, Yell County and was a member of the firm of Choate, Fowler and Martin. He was reported to own several commercial properties, whether in Belleville or Sulphur Springs is not clear. Choate's philanthropic ventures included the establishment of Belleville Academy in 1873 and his affiliation with the Freemasons. The population of Sulphur Springs was expanding by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and some guests of the resort had built private cottages. Year-round residences were being constructed in greater numbers and Judge Choate was working to establish town lots and a Presbyterian church. Earlier efforts to lay off lots had been reported under the ownership of the New York Trust Company but it is not known if Choate's map followed those plans or if this was a fresh attempt. Before his death in 1903 Judge Choate deeded the springs to the public.<sup>12</sup>

Judge John F. Choate was buried at Sulphur Springs Cemetery. His columnar pulpit monument topped with an open Bible is not elaborate but the iconography of a draped veil and Masonic symbol tell the story of his place in Sulphur Springs' society. Among the other burials in the cemetery, his is the most prominent.

<sup>11</sup> *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Western Arkansas*, 134-135; Randall J. Houpp, "The Danville-Mickles Bowstring Bridge," circa 2006, information obtained from Edna Shaw.

<sup>12</sup> *Goodspeed*, 127, 134-135; Mary Vinson Humphrey and Doyle Traxler, "Bits and Pieces:" *Links that Bind Yell County, Arkansas*, (Self-published, 1980).

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***The 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Sulphur Springs***

After Choate's death James Adney, who owned cottages at the resort became the owner of the Sulphur Springs Hotel. He retained the property until his death in 1908 when his daughter, Pearl Hayden and his wife took over. They sold the hotel to J.J. Tucker in 1925. The hotel had become a private residence for Tucker's family and had undergone renovations. It was described at that time as a frame building of two stories. In 1926 the hotel caught fire, possibly from a stove and was destroyed. With that and the trials of the Great Depression, Sulphur Springs had ended its days as a spa destination.<sup>13</sup>

The activities of the spa dominated the culture of Sulphur Springs through the years but there was another aspect of the community thriving alongside. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church had been organized and a school was established, likely before 1903. By 1908 successful commercial activity was also being noted in the *Dardanelle Post Dispatch*. Merchants like Tucker Brothers, Joe McMullin and Fount Gravelly provided general mercantiles while T.B. Kirkwood maintained a sawmill and a gin. Two milliners, two blacksmiths, a doctor and a barber had businesses in Sulphur Springs before 1920.

Telephone service was provided by 1917. Judge Choate's widow, Alice continued to sell town lots and there was discussion of the need for enlarging the school. The springs were also receiving needed attention in 1920. They had historically been covered by a trellised shelter and a rock wall had been built at the base of Spring Mountain to prevent contamination of the waters. The shelter needed repairs and money was raised at planning meetings to concrete new pipes and clean up.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Dardanelle Post Dispatch*, (December 16, 1926), information obtained from Edna Shaw.

<sup>14</sup> Catherine Eikleberry Rogers, *Readin', 'Ritin,' and 'Rithmetic*, (Self published, 1981), 46; Banks, *History of Yell County*, Vol. 2, 78; *Dardanelle Post Dispatch*, (June 25, 1908), (January 20, 1910), (March 10, 1910), (March 17, 1910), (March 31, 1910), (October 27, 1910), (December 05, 1912), (January 25, 1917), (April 29, 1920); Russell Baker, *Arkansas Township Atlas: A History of the Minor Civil Divisions in Each Arkansas County*, (Arkansas Genealogical Society: Hot Springs, AR, 1984), 212.

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Through the 1920s Sulphur Springs maintained its commerce and the population remained stable into the 1930s, but by 1939 the *Dispatch* lamented the destruction of buildings and the loss of residents. The Sulphur Springs School had been consolidated with Dardanelle in 1930 and elementary students were sent to Chickalah. The school building was destroyed at an unknown date. In 1940 there was a slight renaissance with the construction of two sawmills and a grist mill.<sup>15</sup>

Few clues to Sulphur Springs' frenetic past are left today. The springs themselves are hidden in overgrowth on former Spring Avenue. In 1972 the Arkansas Green Thumb constructed a brick spring box around one of the springs and erected a metal roofed pole shed over it and the pipes leading to the other springs. The rock wall built to stave off contamination of the waters is still present but it is in disrepair. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church lies in a pile on Hotel Street and the terra cotta pipe leading to the hotel's well is barely discernible in the tall weeds. Slo Fork Road dusts the remaining homes and trailers as cars pass by.

**Funerary Architecture**

The earliest burial in Sulphur Springs Cemetery is that of a patient at the resort who died in 1844. The fieldstones in the cemetery may hold earlier burials, but as they are unmarked, the interment of Joseph Waite (d. August 06, 1844), symbolizes the beginning of the spa-era heyday of the community. The funerary architecture is simple and many are vernacular adaptations from the post-Victorian era. Four of the burials are marked with ground-level concrete monuments, the dates and names stamped in with no embellishments. Despite the remote location of Sulphur Springs some families erected limestone and marble monuments with well-known

<sup>15</sup> *Dardanelle Post Dispatch*, (March 23, 1939), (March 2, 1940), (November 28, 1940); Rogers, 47.

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symbols of mourning. The most elaborate, and even that is moderately high-style, is the stone of Judge John F. Choate.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Sulphur Springs Cemetery is a representation of the families that called Sulphur Springs home and is a reminder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century spa era character of the community. Residents threw themselves into support of the resort with their commercial ventures and farming concerns. The Sulphur Springs Cemetery is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, Criteria Consideration C and D with local significance as the best representation of spa-era Sulphur Springs.

The cemetery is also being nominated under Criterion B, Criteria Consideration C and D with local significance as the resting place of Judge John F. Choate. He and his wife Alice Choate, who is buried beside him, were supporters of the resort and the community and they both contributed to the growth and the culture of the area. Choate was also responsible for the construction of two bridges across the Petit Jean River, which allowed for the transport of goods in Yell County. No buildings associated with Choate remain in Sulphur Springs or Belleville. The two bridges he had constructed were destroyed and altered, the hotel was burned in 1926, Belleville Academy and the mercantile he instituted there are no longer extant. Therefore, his grave in Sulphur Springs Cemetery is the best representation of his importance to the community and the county.

The Sulphur Springs Cemetery in Harkey's Valley contains the best representation of the defunct community of Sulphur Springs. The monuments are revealing in that the character of the burial ground tells us about the rural families who lived alongside the resort that was known as an attraction to the wealthy elite. The sources of the springs, Spring Mountain and Mt. Nebo tower over the cemetery and the main road, which is lined with a few modern homes and trailers rather than cottages and a two-

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story hotel, racetrack and landscaped lawns. The names found within the cemetery are all that remain to tell the story of the ups and downs of the resort town.

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