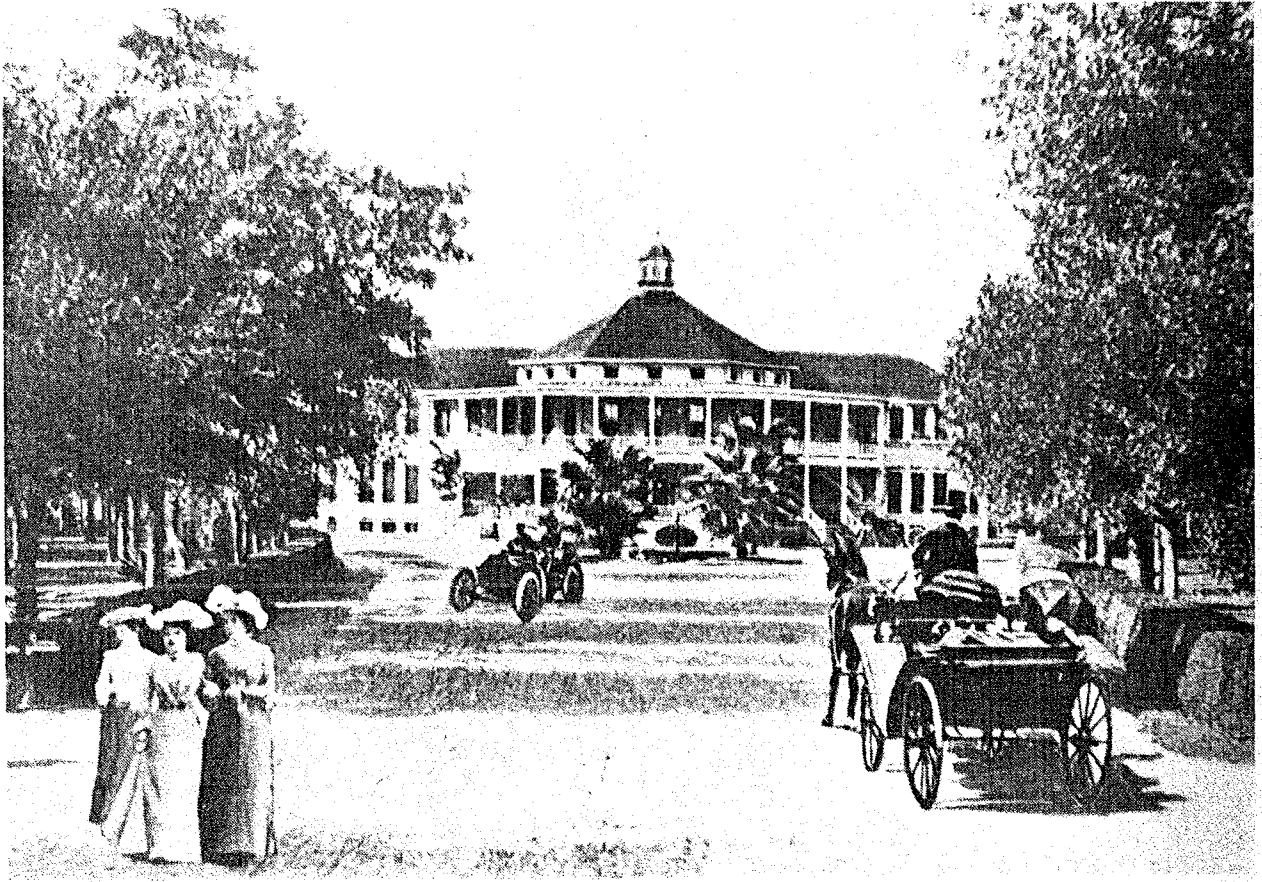


*History and Archaeology of the
Hot Wells Hotel Site, 41 BX 237*

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Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
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ABSTRACT

During the month of April 1984, archaeologists from the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, conducted a surface survey and test excavations at the Hot Wells Hotel site in south San Antonio. The purpose of the project was to locate and map the foundations of a large brick resort hotel, built in 1901 and burned in 1925, and to locate and test remains of any other structures on the Hot Wells site. One additional brick foundation that appears contemporary with the hotel was located and mapped. Artifacts recovered pertained primarily to the hotel, or to later residents in the area.

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INTRODUCTION

In March 1984, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), entered into a contract with The Preservation Technology Group, Ltd., of Galveston, Texas (PTG), to do an archaeological and historical assessment of the Hot Wells Hotel site, a National Register site on South Presa Street in south San Antonio (Fig. 1). In late June 1984, the City of San Antonio terminated the contractual obligations of The Preservation Technology Group, Ltd., and subsequently recontracted the Hot Wells study project to Laventhol and Horwath of Houston, Texas, under the proviso that original subcontractors be retained to complete the project. The site is located on the east bank of the San Antonio River, and bears the official state designation 41 BX 237. The church of Mission San José is visible across the river approximately 0.7 of a mile to the west, and the San Antonio State Hospital is directly across South Presa Street to the east. The tracks of the Southern Pacific Railroad lie between the hotel site and South Presa Street.

The San Antonio River in this area has been channelized by the Corps of Engineers (Fig. 2), eliminating the original meanders of the river except for one short section just south of the hotel site which was saved to be used as a conduit for the Mission San Juan acequia. The original San Juan dam was replaced by a modern concrete structure, which subsequently was washed out by a flood. The hotel originally sat on a gently sloping terrace next to the river but sufficiently elevated above the channel so as to avoid flooding.

Soil on the site is Venus Clay Loam (Taylor, Hailey, and Richmond 1966:33, sheet 63). Where undisturbed, the surface layer is about 14 inches thick and consists of dark brown clay loam with a moderate lime content. The sub-surface layer contains less clay but has the same texture and can vary in thickness from 20 to as much as 30 inches. Limestone bedrock was found during excavations at ca. 50 inches below the present ground surface.

The site contains a large brick building constructed in 1900 as the bathhouse for a health resort which used the waters of a hot sulphur spring. In addition to the bathhouse, there is a group of small, one-story cottages that were built in the 1930s over the site of a large hotel built in 1901 and burned in 1925. The grounds are currently occupied by a trailer park; the cottages and bathhouse are vacant and in uninhabitable condition.

The purpose of the assessment was to determine the history of construction on the site, to locate and map the foundations of the burned hotel, to survey the site for any further remains of structures which may have once stood there, and to determine if further archaeological work was warranted. The resulting report would become a part of the environmental impact assessment of any proposed development project on the historic property, in accordance with Section 106 of the National Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) and Executive Order 11593.

Principal investigator for the project was Dr. Thomas R. Hester, Director of the Center for Archaeological Research. Jack Eaton, Associate Director of the Center, was co-principal investigator. Anne A. Fox, Research Associate with the Center, directed the research and field work as co-principal

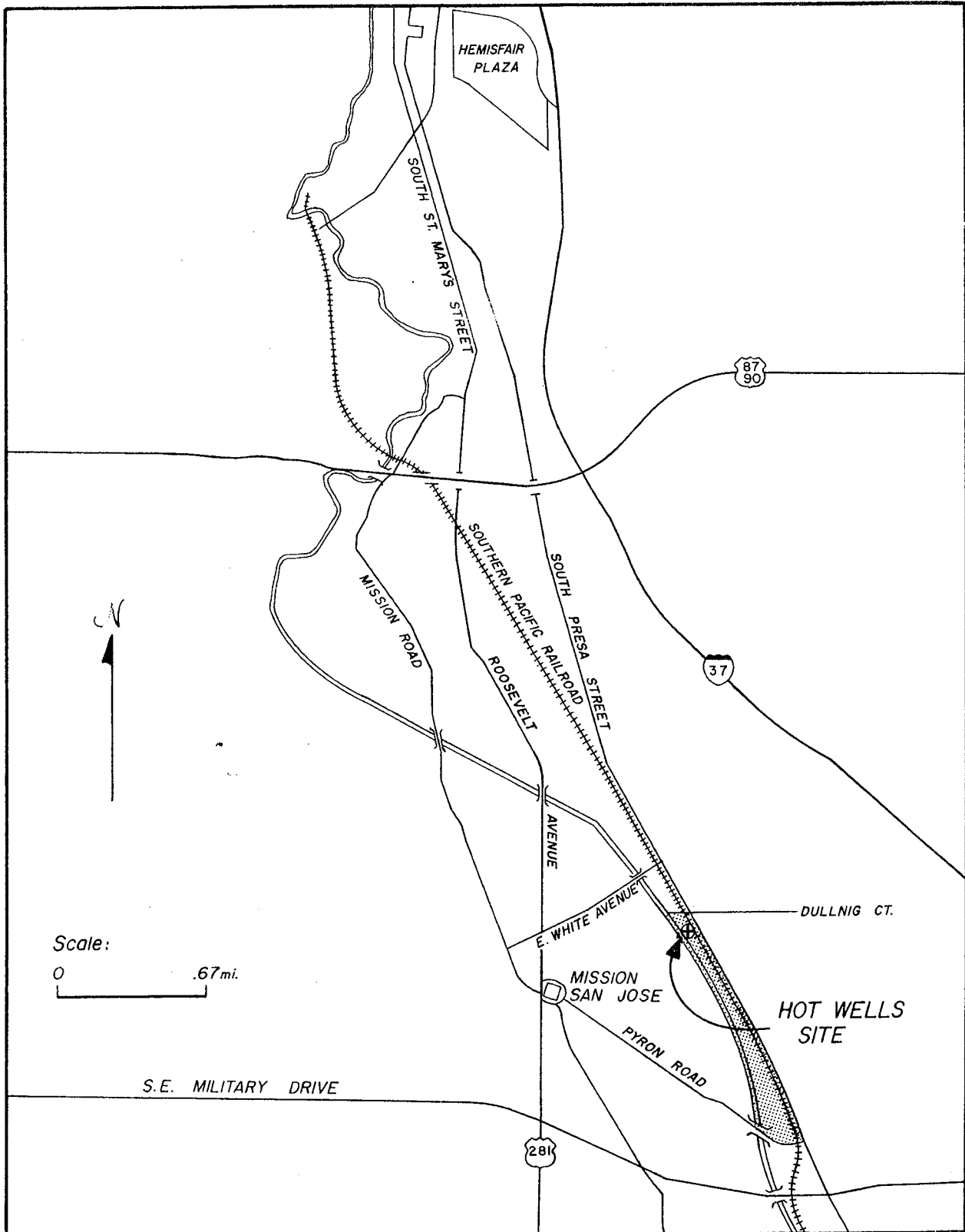
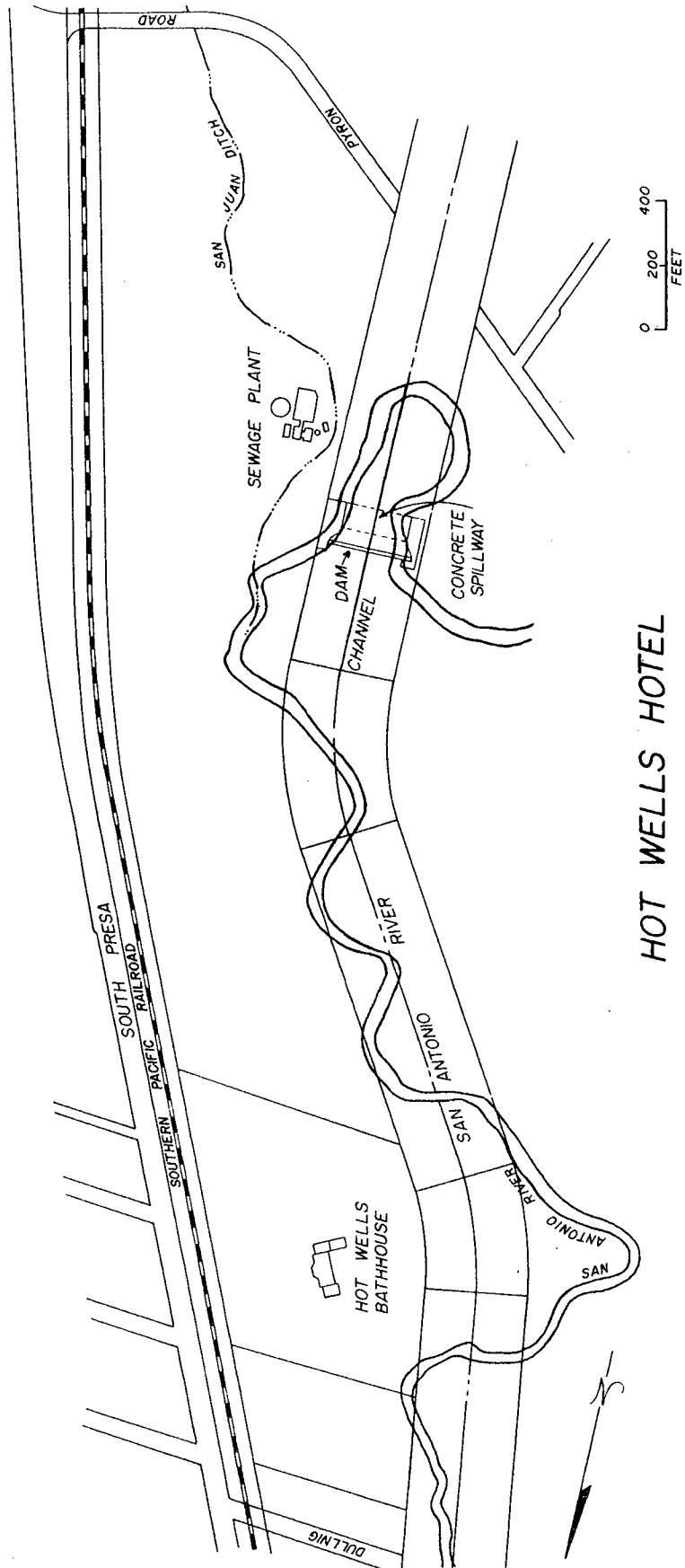


Figure 1. Location of the Hot Wells Site. San Antonio business district is at top center. Scale: 1 inch equals approximately 0.67 miles.



HOT WELLS HOTEL
SURVEY PLAN

Figure 2. Hot Wells Hotel Survey Plan.

investigator. The historical research and compilation of information were done by Lynn Highley. Field investigations were done by a crew of five UTSA graduate students in Anthropology, over a period of 10 working days between April 2-13, 1984. All research notes, field records, photographs, and artifacts are stored at the laboratory of the Center for Archaeological Research.

THE HISTORY OF THE HOT WELLS PROPERTY

In 1892, an artesian well containing sulphur water was discovered on property owned by the Southwestern Lunatic Asylum (also known as the Southwestern Insane Asylum) located a few miles south of the city of San Antonio. The potential for this water, both recreationally and medicinally, was recognized immediately, and a succession of entrepreneurs established several different facilities to take advantage of the well and the surrounding parklike environment bordering the San Antonio River. As the names of the owners changed through the years, so did the names of the property--Natural Hot Sulphur Wells, Hot Sulphur Baths, Hot Wells Hotel and Bath House, Hotel Hot Sulphur Wells, the El Dorado School, Hot Wells Park, the Hot Wells Tourist Court, the Hot Wells Motel and Trailer Court, and finally, The Flame Room.

The following is a history of the resort property beginning with the discovery of the well. Although many early newspapers, books, and deed records were researched, time did not permit a thorough review of all pertinent resources. The bulk of the research material was provided by Jonathan Paul de Vierville's personal files on the Hot Wells property. Additional investigations were conducted at the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library, the John Peace UTSA Library, and the Trinity University Library. Deed records were examined at the Bexar County Courthouse.

The Well Discovered: Scheuermeyer's Lease

The Southwestern Lunatic Asylum (today known as the San Antonio State Hospital), located south of the city of San Antonio, was opened in the spring of 1892 (Webb 1952:545-546). In February of that year, members of the Board of Directors--George H. Judson, Dan Oppenheimer, Edward Dwyer, and Sam Maverick--officially inspected the new building (*San Antonio Daily Express* February 6, 1892:8). The main point of interest during the inspection was an artesian well which was to provide water for the facility. Dug to a depth of 1750 feet, the well was producing 180,000 gallons of water per day at the unusual temperature of 103°F. In spite of the strong odor of sulphur, it was the opinion of the Board that the quality of the water would improve, and the well was accepted from the contractor, Wellington Smith (*ibid.*).

The water, however, was soon found to be unfit for domestic use at the asylum (Barker 1892:3). To defray the costs of alternative means of supplying the asylum with potable water, the Board of Directors leased the sulphur water at \$100 per year. The first report issued by the superintendent of the asylum in November 1892 states that a better price for the water would be obtained when the current lease expired on June 22, 1893 (*ibid.*:6). The 1892 report indicates that \$75 was received for water rent, and it is presumed that

Charles Scheuermeyer was the leasee. The bookkeeper's report for the following year, 1893, indicates that C. Scheuermeyer paid \$25 for water rent on January 5, 1893, and again on April 1, 1893 (Barker 1893:17).

Scheuermeyer established a resort near the asylum but not on the property dealt with in this report. However, he was the first to stress the medicinal properties of the sulphur water and, thus, pioneered the effort for future development of the water resources. The 1892-1893 city directory for San Antonio carried a full-page advertisement for Scheuermeyer's Southwestern Park and Hot Sulphur Natatorium (Fig. 3; Appler 1892-1893:1). G. H. Wooten, a chemist at the State University in Austin, analyzed the mineral waters, and his results were published in the advertisement. The waters purportedly aided those suffering from rheumatism, kidney, liver and skin diseases, and blood poisoning.

McClellan Shacklett and The Hot Sulphur Baths

In their second annual report, the Board of Directors of the asylum declared that a special act of the Legislature passed in 1893 enabled them to lease the sulphur water for 10 years (Barker 1893:3, 5). On May 5, 1893, the bid of \$500 per year was won by McClellan Shacklett over Charles Scheuermeyer (**San Antonio Daily Express** May 6, 1893:6). Shacklett was also obligated under bond to erect both a first-class bathhouse to cost at least \$4500 and a large sanitarium at a cost of at least \$12,000. Shacklett's plans were for the sanitarium or hotel facility to eventually house 200 guests, and it was predicted that he would ultimately spend at least \$50,000 on improvements in order to make the establishment a first-class bathing resort (*ibid.*).

Using the resort at Hot Springs, Arkansas, as a model, Shacklett planned to provide various types of private baths with porcelain tubs (porcelain being the only material able to withstand the harsh effects of sulphur water), drawing rooms and parlors for the ladies, billiard rooms for the men, a free swimming pool for those who could not afford private baths, and private pools for families. A total of seven pools was planned. Construction was expected to be completed by mid-September of 1893 with Albert Beckmann serving as architect (**San Antonio Daily Express** May 6, 1893:6).

Shacklett purchased a 10-acre pecan grove on the San Antonio River from George Dullnig on June 10, 1893 (BCDR Vol. 128:59; **San Antonio Daily Express** June 11, 1893:6). The property was situated about 400 yards from the hot sulphur well. In a newspaper interview, the architect stated that construction would begin in mid-June and that the bathhouse would be larger than originally planned. The dimensions would be 96 feet x 135 feet, the building would be two stories high, and the baths would be in operation by mid-July (*ibid.*). Located 1-1/2 miles from the city, plans were also made to extend city streetcar lines to the bathhouse property.

When completed, Shacklett's resort was known as Natural Hot Sulphur Wells or Hot Sulphur Baths (Fig. 4). The pecan grove had been transformed into a landscaped park with splendid carriage drives leading to the main building (**San Antonio Daily Express** May 6, 1894:8). The first floor of the bathhouse consisted of an entrance hall which led into an office with parlors located



Figure 4. Scene of Hot Sulphur Wells, 1894. Original in Schuchard Collection. Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library, San Antonio, Texas.

NATURAL HOT SULPHUR NATATORIUM.

— AT THE —

SOUTHWESTERN PARK

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS.

The springs arise from an artesian well, 1,822 feet deep. The temperature is 104 degrees. The best scientific authorities are recommending its healing powers for

Rheumatism, Kidney, Liver and Skin Diseases

as well as in all cases of blood poisoning and diseases arising therof.

MINERAL WATER ANALYSIS.

Results estimated in grains per U. S. standard gallon, at the State University, Austin, Texas.

Sulphate of Magnesia	28.4592
Sulphate of Potassa	2.5279
Sulphate of Lime	126.3693
Sulphate of Strontia6417
Sulphate of Baryta.....trace	
Chloride of Sodium	64.7738
Chloride of Magnesium	13.9496
Carbonate of Magnesia.....	13.2440
Carbonate of Lythia..... trace.....	
Sesqui oxide of Iron1341
Aluminium Oxide.....	.0482
Silica Dioxide4723
Phosphate of Soda.....	.0246
Iodide of Sodium0164
Bromide of Sodium3612
Organic Matter.....	46.3628
Total solids per gallon,.....	297.3851
At 60-o F.—cubic inches of gas per gallon:	
Sulphurated hydrogen gas.....	1.5355
Carbonic acid gas.....	3.7919

Signed by G. H. WOOTEN, Chemist.

The public in general is invited to visit the springs. No use to go outside of the state to Topo Chico, Mexico, or Hot Springs, Arkansas, as these springs are not only equal, but superior to them.

Persons desiring can find excellent board and lodging at the premises, good attendance to all is guaranteed.

C. SCHEUERMAYER,

— PROPRIETOR OF —

Southwestern Park and Hot Sulphur Natatorium.

3 1-2 Miles from the City of San Antonio.

P. O. Box 1139.

Figure 3. Advertisement for Scheuermeyer's Southwestern Park and Hot Sulphur Natatorium. Taken from Appler (1892-1893:1). Copy of advertisement from microfilm.

on either side. These carpeted parlors, one for ladies and one for gentlemen, were furnished with sofas and easy chairs. A large pool, located behind the parlors, contained the hot sulphur water which rose from a depth of 2000 feet. Individual baths and private reclining rooms were available, and dressing rooms were arranged alongside the pool. A restaurant was located in the pavilion which was described as ". . . a pretty building embowered in trees" (*ibid.*).

During the summer of 1894, the sulphur water was being compared to other well-known spas. Both bathing in and drinking the water at Hot Sulphur Wells was considered to result in many therapeutic benefits:

. . . relieving diseases of the liver, kidneys, stomach and bowels
 . . . a certain cure for syphilitic and mercurial diseases peculiar to females, also rheumatism, whether it is inflammatory, sciatica, rheumatic gout or paralysis. For ulceration of the stomach, dyspepsia, indigestion, chronic diarrhea, malaria, biliousness, asthma, catarrh, sore or weak eyes, granulation and all inflammation of the eyelids, weak back, piles, tapeworms . . . will positively cure scrofula, or King's evil, all eruptions and skin diseases, such as eczema, erysipilas, blotches, boils, carbuncles, tetter, scaldhead, ringworm, herpes, chilbains, falling out of hair, itch, nettlerash, and old chronic sores that have resisted treatment (*San Antonio Daily Express* May 6, 1894:8).

Newspaper accounts for 1894 provide a glimpse of the social activities, promotional campaigns, and additional development of the property that took place at Shacklett's resort until a fire destroyed the wooden edifice on December 23, 1894. On February 28, 1894, the first ball was held at Hot Sulphur Wells with Mr. Shacklett and the managers, Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Hadley, presiding over the event (*San Antonio Daily Express* March 1, 1894:5). The festivities began with many of the visitors swimming in the warm waters while a string band entertained on the gallery. At 8:30 in the evening, dinner was served in the dining room with a dance following the meal.

During the summer of 1894, advertisements in the local newspapers touted the benefits of the water, and Mr. Shacklett announced that the recent crowds at the resort could be attributed to the hot weather and the increasing popularity of the institution (*San Antonio Daily Express* July 2, 1894:5). Electric streetcars ran to and from the city every 20 minutes (*ibid.*). An artificial lake and fountain were completed in July (Jonathan de Vierville personal file). Large crowds frequented the natatorium during the summer heat (*San Antonio Daily Express* July 15, 1894:8). At the end of the summer, the resort reported that 200,000 gallons of water were changed daily in the swimming pool with the flow of sulphur water being 1,200,000 gallons per day (*San Antonio Daily Express* August 31, 1894:5).

Shacklett was also acquiring the first of a variety of exotic animals that made up a menagerie at the park. Near the end of August 1894, Judge Roy Bean of Langtry, Texas, shipped by freight a black bear and a full-grown mountain lion to Hot Sulphur Wells (*San Antonio Daily Express* August 29, 1894:3, August 30, 1894:5). The episode with the bear is typical of many of the incidents that made Judge Roy Bean a legendary figure. Bean had previously

spent an afternoon with Shacklett in San Antonio and had bragged that he had killed seven bears near Langtry in one afternoon. Because Shacklett refused to believe his story, Bean, upon returning to Langtry, promptly shipped an alleged wild bear to Shacklett along with a letter describing the dangerous, but successful, capture of the bear (**San Antonio Daily Express** August 29, 1894:3). The following day, a letter from an anonymous traveling salesman appeared in the newspaper and stated that the bear was probably not wild at all but the pet, beer-drinking bear Bean had previously displayed at his saloon in Langtry (**San Antonio Daily Express** August 30, 1894:5). On August 31, the following appeared in the newspaper (**San Antonio Daily Express** August 31, 1894:5):

Bears
 Or
 Mexican Lions
 Or
 Hot sulphur water
 Something
 Draws the People
 to Hot Sulphur Wells
 Hot sulphur water
 Is better than medicine
 A plunge in the pool
 Is the best recreation.

In the early morning hours of December 23, 1894, a fire raged through the bathhouse (**San Antonio Daily Express** December 23, 1894:1, December 24, 1894:8). A neighbor awoke Mr. Shacklett who was sleeping in a building about 30 to 60 feet from the bathhouse. A large part of the building was engulfed in flames, the roof of the southern portion was beginning to collapse, and the tall cupola was burning from top to bottom. The part of the building surrounding the pool was aflame. Mr. Shacklett ran to the burning building to rescue the six guests. Entering through the front door, he found the front hall and stairway filled with smoke (**San Antonio Daily Express** December 24, 1894:8). In spite of the smoke, he ran up the stairway and guided five of the guests to safety. Another guest, Mr. Fitzpatrick, was trapped on the roof of the swimming pool. Mr. Shacklett grabbed a short ladder and climbed to the roof of the bathhouse. He then pulled the ladder up and placed it against the roof of the building over the swimming pool. As Mr. Fitzpatrick began his descent, the roof of the pool collapsed. Both men made their way to safety by using the ladder to climb down from the roof of the bathhouse. The building was totally destroyed in less than an hour after the fire was discovered (**San Antonio Daily Express** December 23, 1894:1). Newspaper accounts stated that the building was about a year old, and construction costs had been around \$17,000, and the furnishings were valued at \$3000 to \$4500. Mr. Shacklett vowed he would rebuild at once (**San Antonio Daily Express** December 24, 1894:8).

On February 5, 1895, it was reported that carpenters, painters, and paper-hangers were busy at work on a temporary bathhouse which would be open to the public in a few days (**San Antonio Daily Express** February 5, 1895:5). The temporary building would be adequate until a new natatorium could be built. Fine porcelain bath tubs were being installed in the various rooms.

Shacklett stated that he planned to visit the spas at Hot Springs, Arkansas, and Mount Clemens, Michigan, to look at their natatorium buildings. By the end of February, Shacklett expected work to begin on a new natatorium which would be larger and more convenient than the previous building. Notices in the newspapers during late March stated that Hot Sulphur Wells was again open for business with streetcars running every 20 minutes (**San Antonio Daily Express** March 26, 1895:5).

Plans by Shacklett to rebuild on a larger scale apparently never materialized. In November 1899, local and Northern investors secured a lease on the water from the asylum for 25 years (**San Antonio Daily Express** November 22, 1899:6). The investors stated that the former establishment had burned and that the terms of Shacklett's unexpired lease were not sufficient to justify rebuilding on a proper scale and that there were not proper facilities on the property for utilizing the sulphur water. Apparently the temporary building (mentioned above) was a small structure. The new investors planned to build a "large and commodious hotel with attractive grounds and park in addition to the bath house and all other conveniences and ample capital with which to make improvements of the highest class in accordance with modern demands and of a permanent nature" (**San Antonio Daily Express** November 22, 1899:6). The 1899-1900 city directory was the last directory to list Shacklett as the owner of the Hot Sulphur Baths (Appler 1899-1900:503).

The Hot Wells Hotel and Bath House

On January 17, 1900, the Texas Hot Sulphur Water Sanitarium Company, with Otto Koehler as president, purchased two tracts of land from McClellan Shacklett (BCDR Vol. 168:266; BCDR Vol. 185:277). Construction quickly ensued, and by July 11, 1900, the natatorium building was almost completed (**San Antonio Daily Express** July 11, 1900:10). By mid-September, three swimming pools were available, one each for ladies, men, and families (**San Antonio Daily Express** September 13, 1900:10), and, by the end of September, a lighting plant had been completed which provided electricity for the buildings and grounds (**San Antonio Light** September 22, 1900:3).

On November 30, 1900, a contract was granted to Pat T. Shields to erect a hotel and two additions to the bathhouse (BCDR, Mechanic's Lien, November 30, 1900, Vol. K:335). The plans were prepared by local architects McAdoo and Phelps. Shields was given five months to complete the project (*ibid.*). The contract stated that the construction was to take place on 22 acres of land owned by the Texas Hot Sulphur Water Sanitarium Company and was located almost opposite the Southwestern Lunatic Asylum. In 1901, a third tract of land was purchased by Koehler's company (BCDR Vol. K195:406, May 28, 1901).

In March 1901, a newspaper article described the Hot Sulphur Baths as San Antonio's "famous" health resort and "the mecca of the health seekers and tourists this winter" (**San Antonio Daily Express** March 12, 1901:12). Remarkable cures for rheumatism, sciatica, chronic malaria, eczema, neuralgia, catarrh, and blood poisoning were also reported. It was predicted that within a few years the Hot Sulphur Baths would become the most famous resort on the continent (*ibid.*).

Around 1901, an ostrich farm was moved from San Pedro Springs and relocated just north of the Hot Wells Hotel (**San Antonio Express News** February 14, 1971:3-H; Beare 1975:1). The ostrich run extended from San Juan Road to the San Antonio River. Ostrich feathers, an integral part of ladies fashions in the early part of the 20th century, were used to decorate fans, capes, parasols, boas, and hats. Ladies from the city of San Antonio would travel by horse and buggy or trolley car to the farm and purchase the plumes for about \$.50.

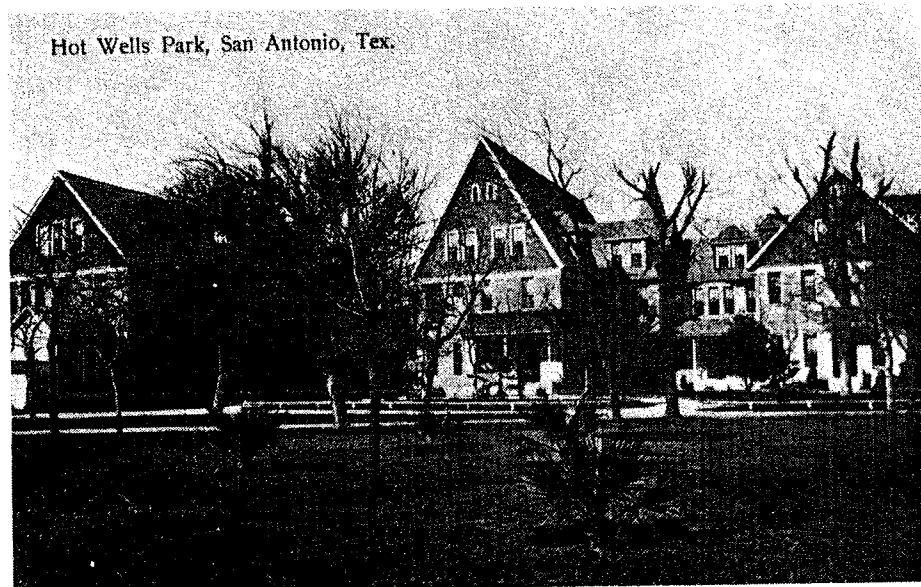
In 1902, the hotel was described as a handsome, three-story brick structure with a frontage of 200 feet (Figs. 5 and 6). The English architectural design included a tiled, gabled roof (Beare 1976:1). Three wings extended southward with open courtyards in between (**Souvenir of the City of San Antonio** 1902:9). A total of 80 rooms had such modern-day conveniences as hot and cold water, steam heat, electric and gas lights, individual telephones to the office, and first-class furnishings. The bathhouse, an octagonal building with a full basement, contained 45 private bathrooms with tile floors, marble partitions, and solid porcelain tubs. Separate facilities were provided for ladies and gentlemen for steam, Turkish, Russian, Roman, needle, and shower baths. Masseurs were also available. The sulphur water was 104°F, but the temperature could be raised or lowered to meet personal preferences. The three public pools were 64 feet x 90 feet and were lined with white enameled brick. The pleasant climate of San Antonio was also stressed as an essential part of this health resort (*ibid.*).

The hotel was a replica of shingle-style resort hotels and summer homes popular along the Atlantic coast (Davenport n.d.). Postcards exaggerated the height of the brick building by adding an extra story. Advertisements for the establishment appeared in New York and Chicago newspapers. A 1907 travel booklet, **Winter Wanderings in Tex-Arcadia**, stated that the qualities of the water at the spa were better than those at Hot Springs, Arkansas, and Carlsbad, Germany, two popular spas during this time period. Although the waters were reputed to cure many illnesses, signs posted in the bathhouse warned against bathing if one suffered with lung problems. The very warm waters reportedly would "close the lungs," resulting in suffocation (*ibid.*). Guests who had contracted syphilis were required to bathe in private.

Local newspapers frequently mentioned the social events such as domino parties, swimming parties, concerts, and lectures which took place during the first few years following the opening of the hotel. The Hot Wells Bowling Club opened in September 1902 and featured both ninepin and tenpin alleys (**San Antonio Light** November 22, 1902:4). A former bellboy at the hotel recalled that in 1902 the hotel guests often went to Friday night dances at the Southwestern Insane Asylum (**San Antonio Light** August 15, 1967:7). A reporter who visited the asylum in 1894 wrote that on Friday nights the inmates danced from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. (**San Antonio Daily Express** August 26, 1894:9). At 9:30 p.m. the inmates returned, and visitors were allowed to use the floor until 11:00 p.m. In 1906, the Cincinnati Reds held their baseball training camp at Hot Wells (**San Antonio Light** March 17, 1906:7). In addition, the International Fair and Exhibition was located across the street in Riverside Park from 1898 to 1904 (Erickson 1976:1). This long-running event would have provided additional amusement for the hotel guests.



a



b

Figure 5. Views of the Hot Wells Hotel in the Early 1900s. a, front of the hotel from the northeast; b, rear of the hotel from the south. From postcards in the J. P. de Vierville personal files.

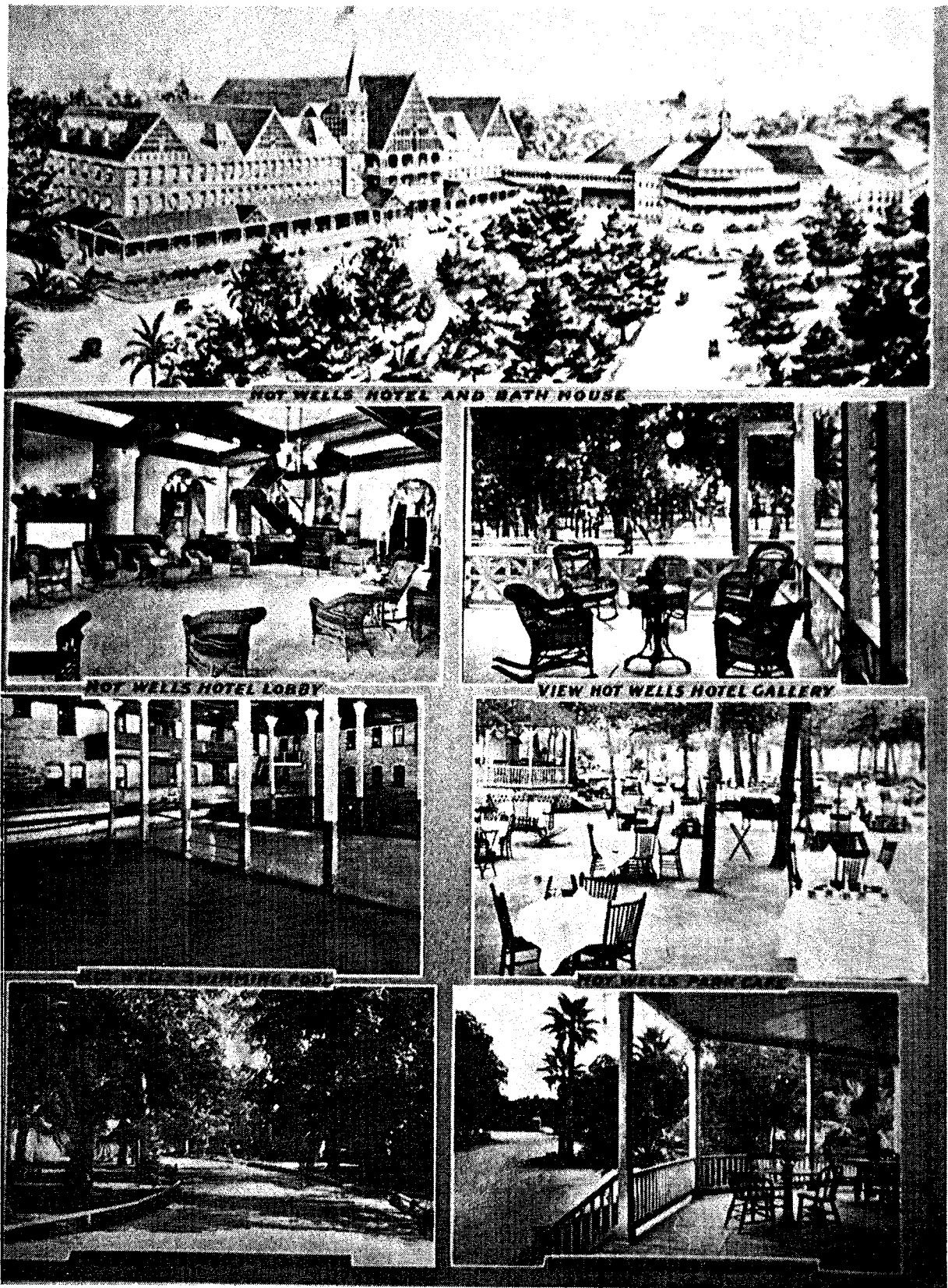


Figure 6. Views of the Grounds at the Hot Wells Hotel. Taken from Luke (1918).

On October 9, 1907, work began on a \$100,000 addition to the Hot Wells Hotel. I. M. Putnam, president of the Hot Wells Company, announced that an L-shaped extension containing 90 rooms would be added to the south end of the existing structure (**San Antonio Daily Express** October 9, 1907:6). A similar style of architecture, excluding the gabled roof, would be used. A new dining room with a palm garden effect was also planned. With the new addition due to be completed in mid-January of 1908, the Hot Wells Hotel would have a total of 190 rooms, making it one of the largest hotels in southwest Texas (*ibid.*). Other improvements included renovations of the bathhouse and additional landscaping of the grounds. F. M. Swearington had secured a five-year lease of the property (**San Antonio Daily Express** October 9, 1907:6). He reported that during 1906 approximately 2000 potential guests were turned away from the hotel because of inadequate accommodations (**San Antonio Light** October 8, 1907).

In 1908, **The Visitor's Guide and History of San Antonio** listed the Hot Sulphur Wells as an attraction but stated that the water smelled strongly of sulphur (Ryder-Taylor 1908:13). According to this publication, the water also had all of the advantages of Hot Springs, Arkansas, and had "far less of its defects" (*ibid.*:14). This guide also contained a streetcar directory which listed the Hot Wells line. The streetcars were labelled "Hot Wells" on an elevation of the roof or on the right side of the front of the car. The trip to and from the city was \$.05 (Ryder-Taylor 1908:107).

In mid-February 1909, E. H. Harriman, a railroad tycoon and president of the Southern Pacific Railroad, planned a visit to the Hot Wells resort to recover from ill health (**San Antonio Daily Express** February 15, 1909:10; **San Antonio Express** December 31, 1935:12-A). To accommodate his private railroad cars, a side track or spur was extended from the nearby SA&AP tracks to the grounds of the Hot Wells property. Telegraph and telephone lines were installed in one of the private cars so that Harriman could conduct railroad business during his stay in San Antonio. To fully benefit from the climate, Harriman insisted that four large tents with wooden floors be set up near the river for himself and the clerks and secretaries who would accompany him. Each tent was furnished with two white enameled iron bedsteads, two oak dressers, four rocking chairs, a reading table, and electric lights and heaters (**San Antonio Express** December 31, 1935:12-A). During his stay in San Antonio, Harriman passed the time bathing in the hot sulphur waters, walking, shooting mud turtles in the San Antonio River with a six-shooter, golfing, hosting luncheons, and attending banquets and plays (**San Antonio Daily Express** February 19, 1909:3; **San Antonio Daily Express** February 20, 1909:14; **San Antonio Daily Express** February 24, 1909:14; **San Antonio Daily Express** February 27, 1909:1, 3). Harriman's health improved, and he attributed this to the sulphur baths and the dry San Antonio climate (**San Antonio Daily Express** February 20, 1909:14). A 1910 promotional booklet contained a letter supposedly written by Harriman on March 1, 1910, extolling the virtues of the climate and sulphur baths at Hot Sulphur Wells (**San Antonio, The Mecca of the Tourist, Hot Wells Hotel, The Haven of Rest** 1910). The letter, however, either represents a fabrication or the date was misprinted since Harriman had died several months earlier in September 1909 (**San Antonio Daily Express** September 10, 1909:1).

The aforementioned promotional booklet described San Antonio as "the mecca of the tourist" with Hot Wells deemed "a haven of rest" or "rest garden" (**San Antonio, The Mecca of the Tourist, Hot Wells Hotel, The Haven of Rest** 1910). According to this booklet, the hotel was modern in every respect. The dining room's large windows provided a view of a pretty wooded area and stream on one side and a palmed courtyard with a fountain on the other side. An outdoor cafe was also open in the afternoons and evenings during the summer months. Tennis, croquet, boating, swimming, bowling, horseback riding, and other sports were available as were evening concerts, dances, and other forms of entertainment. A swinging bridge spanned the San Antonio River and provided access to the ruins of Mission San José. A free garage was available to guests with automobiles. All in all, the lengthy booklet with accompanying photographs stressed the conveniences and luxuries of the health and pleasure resort.

During 1911, the Star Film Company maintained field headquarters at the Hot Wells Bath House (Ashford 1971a:3, 1971b:8). Gaston Melies, as manager of the company, also erected a studio on the other side of the San Antonio River. During his stay at the Hot Wells Hotel, Meleis was joined by his wife who was Sarah Bernhardt's cousin, performers Edith and Francis Storey, directors Francis Ford and William Haddock, and cameraman William Paley. Other guests included Sarah Bernhardt who arrived in her private railroad car for a brief, two-week visit, and Cecil B. DeMille who visited the company and stayed at the hotel when he was first learning the movie-making business. The Star Film Company filmed "The Fall of the Alamo," believed to be the first movie about the Alamo.

In 1911, Jessie Gullledge was secretary-treasurer of the Hot Wells Hotel. In an interview in 1971 (Ashford 1971b), she recalled how she, with Francis Ford's help, wrote the script for an early film, "Lasca, or the Girl of the Alamo." Several other film companies apparently filmed early westerns in and around the Hot Wells area and used the Hot Wells Hotel and Bath House for their studios. Jack Hoxie, one of the top western film stars of this era, worked for a studio based at the hotel in the early 1920s (*ibid.*).

In 1912, the **International Blue Book Publication** printed the following: "The Hot Wells is the prettiest place in Texas. There is no more beautiful place anywhere in the winter tourist sections. Nature has done for it what man and money cannot do for any place" (Sullivan 1912:16). The publication also reported that the "Hot Wells cars" ran through the business district of San Antonio and provided a 15-minute ride on double-track line to the gates of Hot Wells Park. The hotel was described as first class with a select tourist trade. Nearby boarding houses and private homes were available to travelers who wanted to enjoy the baths but preferred less expensive accommodations. The recently remodeled \$100,000 bathhouse was connected to the hotel by a covered passageway. Besides the three swimming pools, Swedish massage, salt rubs, blanket packs, vapor baths, and Turkish baths were available. Shampoos and manicures were also provided for both men and women. The article also states that Hot Wells "established San Antonio as a modern, high-class resort center" (*ibid.*).

To add to the growing menagerie at Hot Wells, I. M. Putnam, president of the Hot Wells Development Company, announced in 1914 that he was planning to

establish an alligator farm near Hot Wells (*San Antonio Light* May 23, 1914:1). Although the farm was planned as a commercial venture to raise alligators for their hides, the presence of the alligators would also be a tourist attraction. The alligator farm was to be located on a tract next to the ostrich farm. Putnam also stated that the ostrich farm was flourishing so well that the tract had become too small to support the growing numbers of birds and that the majority of them would be transferred to a 1000-acre track in Gillespie County (*ibid.*). In that same year, F. W. Anderson, a Houston zoo keeper, was hired by the resort to stage weekly ostrich races on Sunday afternoons (Beare 1975:1). In 1916, the farm was known as Slinkard's Ostrich Farm and, in 1918, W. Fern was its manager (*ibid.*). Ostrich eggs could be purchased for a dollar. As fashions changed, ostrich plumes were no longer used in women's clothing and accessories and, by 1920, the ostrich farm was closed. The ostriches were apparently donated to the zoo at Brackenridge Park (Beare 1975:1).

Charlie Carr's Baseball School and fields were located near the hotel around 1913 or 1914. The three baseball diamonds were used every Sunday by six to ten teams (Beare 1976:1). An advertisement in a 1914-1915 travel booklet stated that "The Carr Baseball School and National Training Grounds here will focus the eyes of the baseball world to Hot Wells. The only institution of its kind in the world" (D. E. Culp and Auxiliary Publishing Co. 1914-1915).

During the years that the hotel trade flourished, the rich and the famous, including Rudolph Valentino, Sarah Bernhardt, Will Rogers, Douglas Fairbanks, Hoot Gibson, Tom Mix, Teddy Roosevelt, Mrs. J. P. Morgan, and Porfirio Diaz, were reportedly guests at the resort (*San Antonio Light* July 17, 1938:7; Drudge 1975:8). Gambling appears to have been one of the major attractions at the resort. Bets were placed on the ostrich races, and the Hot Wells Jockey Club had a full-time bookey (Sisk 1975:2-A). The gambling rooms and bar were located on the first floor of the bathhouse (*San Antonio Light* July 17, 1938:7). A soda fountain was also available (Spencer 1979:6). Sometime during the height of the hotel's popularity, a sulphur well was dug on the Hot Wells property, and water was no longer piped from the asylum (*San Antonio Light* July 17, 1938:7).

The variety of amusements and activities continued to draw visitors until the effects of World War I, Prohibition, and the Depression brought about the demise of the resort's popularity (*ibid.*; Wu 1980:1-B). As the popularity of the resort waned, the management began serving formal dinners in the garden during the summer months to draw in crowds from San Antonio (Davenport n.d.:4). Popular orchestras played from a white wooden bandstand. This ploy worked for a while, but by 1915 or so the hotel was no longer drawing large, elite crowds (*ibid.*). During World War I, the Hot Wells Hotel was used to house several officers with their families from Brooks Field (Beare 1976:1).

El Dorado School

In September 1923, the Hot Wells Hotel and property were purchased by the Christian Scientist denomination and converted into a parochial school known as the El Dorado School (*San Antonio Express* January 18, 1925:1). The 100-room hotel, serving as a dormitory, was destroyed by fire on January 17, 1925

(*ibid.*). The building was valued at \$100,000 with furnishings valued at \$35,000. The building burned in less than half an hour due to lack of water pressure. Only the outside brick walls were left standing. The Hot Wells Bath House, used as the school facility, was not harmed by the fire. The Fire Department, pumping water from the San Antonio River, had concentrated its efforts on the covered passageway between the hotel and the bathhouse and had thus saved the bathhouse from the flames. Local newspapers reported that about 10,000 San Antonio residents gathered to watch the old resort hotel burn (*San Antonio Express* January 18, 1925:1).

The Hot Wells Tourist Court

Following the fire, the ownership and history of the property becomes sketchy. In December 1927, Charles Dubose, John C. Kirkwood, and M. H. Braden formed the Hot Wells Tourist Park Company (BCDR Vol. 1103:423, December 2, 1927). They planned to operate and maintain a tourist camp and park, construct tourist cottages, and operate a tourist park hotel on the Hot Wells property. In 1929, the Hot Wells Tourist Park Company was sold to W. W. McAllister (BCDR Vol. 1112:358, April 30, 1929). On December 5, 1930, Dr. T. M. Leyland and S. M. Biddison leased the bathhouse for three years for the purpose of operating a bathhouse and sanitarium business (BCDR Vol. 1233:197, December 5, 1930). The tourist park continued to operate, and guests were allowed to use the swimming pool free of charge according to the lease signed by Biddison and Leyland. A 1938 newspaper account stated that the bathhouse was in need of repair, the once elegant hotel had been replaced by tourist cabins, and the ostrich farm had disappeared (*San Antonio Light* July 17, 1938:7).

The Hot Wells Motel and Trailer Park and The Flame Room

In 1942, the Hot Wells property, consisting of 21 acres, was purchased by Mrs. Cleo S. Jones from McAllister (BCDR Vol. 1953:152, December 1, 1942). She and her husband, Ralph Jones, converted the property into a trailer park and motel (Fig. 7). The lobby of the bathhouse was reopened two years later as The Flame Room, a combination bar and grill (Finklea 1973; Stanley 1974). After Mrs. Jones' death in 1961, Mr. Jones inherited the property. He and his second wife, Hattie, operated The Flame Room until 1977.

In 1974, the porcelain bathtubs with sculptured feet were still in place in the abandoned private bathrooms (Stanley 1974). A charred section of the burned hotel was still visible. One swimming pool remained in use--admission was \$1. The Jones' claimed, as their predecessors had, that the sulphur waters brought about therapeutic results for many illnesses (*ibid.*; Erickson 1976:1). On the wall near the pool was the faintly visible warning from earlier times--"HIGH DIVING STRICTLY PROHIBITED" (Drudge 1975:8). In the mid-1970s, a few permanent residents lived in trailers at the park while most of the tourist cabins went unrented (*ibid.*).

In a 1974 interview, Mr. Jones stated that he would be willing to sell the property to anyone interested in restoring the bathhouse and returning the grounds to their former beauty (Stanley 1974). By 1975, conservationists



Figure 7. **View of the Bathhouse before Channelization of the River.** Trailer park in right foreground, cottages in upper left. Note woodland setting that was removed when river was channelized. Photograph dated post-1942. From Jonathan Paul de Vierville personal files.

were considering restoring the resort and including it in the Mission Parkway project (Sisk 1975:2-A). At that time supporters of the program were hoping to find an investor with \$1.5 million. The mayor of San Antonio at that time, Lila Cockrell, and city councilwoman Helen Dutmer, supported the preservation and renovation of the grounds and the early San Antonio structure. By mid-1977, The Flame Room was closed, and in August of that year, the contents of the old bathhouse were auctioned off (Weser 1977:1-A; **The News** November 15, 1977:5-B). In an article about the auction, reference was made to the recent movie, "Rolling Thunder," portions of which were reportedly filmed at Hot Wells (**The News** November 15, 1977:5-B). At that time, the Jones' were asking \$500,000 for the property.

Restoration Center

In December 1979, Kathryn Scheer, owner of Restoration, Inc., purchased the Hot Wells property (Burkett 1979:1). She planned to renovate the property as Restoration Center, a holistic health center. Additional partners would be sought for the \$3.5 million project. The architectural firm of Ford, Powell, and Carson, Inc., was hired to help plan the restoration. Mrs. Scheer stated that a hotel would be built, and the bathhouse with three pools would be renovated to accommodate exercise rooms, beauty rooms, and a dining room. Mrs. Scheer planned to lease the restored property to an international operator in the health care and beauty field. A variety of nutrition, exercise, and beauty programs would be available as well as a cosmetic surgery unit. Scheer hoped the Hot Wells property would be incorporated into the Mission Parkway System as a stop on the Mission Parkway tour.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Research Design

The archaeological assessment consisted of two parts, a survey of the site and testing to locate and map subsurface structures. In order to efficiently accomplish these objectives, a search was made for all known maps, descriptions, photographs, and drawings of the site, which were then studied and compared. With this information, plans were made for test excavations to locate the hotel foundations. Although there were vague references in the descriptions to other structures, we could find no plans or photographs that indicated their location on the site. A photograph of a combined hotel and bathhouse which preceded the post-1900 structures (Fig. 4) was unfortunately of little help in determining its exact location. The plan, therefore, was to locate the known structure first by trenching across the wall lines, searching meanwhile for any surface indications of other buildings which may have once stood in its immediate area. A map would then be prepared of the exact locations of the wall foundations in respect to the buildings currently standing on the site, and markers would be installed at key corners of the foundation to aid in relocating them when necessary at a later time.

Field Work

Auxiliary Building: The crew first walked over the general area east of the bathhouse to search for surface indications of water pipes and hydrants for use as points of reference in locating hotel foundations. The outline of a brick foundation wall was noted just at and under the surface of the grass in the area immediately to the east of the supposed location of the hotel (Fig. 8). When traced out and recorded, this proved to be a structure 48 feet x 76 feet with one corner truncated. The foundations were 14 inches thick with slightly wider sections at intervals, as indicated on the drawing in Figure 8. A 2 x 3-foot test pit excavated near the west corner of the structure revealed the bottom of the wall footing at approximately 45 inches below the present ground surface. The top of the foundation was nearly intact and at approximately the same level, as if the walls had been carefully removed to this point. There was no evidence of burning in the vicinity of this structure.

The brick and tile found during the wall clearing and test excavation proved to be identical to those later found in direct association with the hotel foundations. From this we infer that this building was directly related to the hotel, and was probably built at the same time. The purpose and use of this building are not known at present, and no specific mention of it was found in the documents. The building's location between the hotel and the railroad track suggests it served some sort of introductory function for the complex, such as a railroad station. Unfortunately it stands too far away from the hotel to have been included in any of the photographs we have found, nor does it appear on the Sanborn insurance maps.

The 1901 Hotel: Careful examination of the area where the west wall of the 1901 hotel was estimated to lie, revealed a short section of brick foundation at the grass roots level. A test trench was excavated across the wall at a point where a cross wall intersected the main foundation wall (W1 in Fig. 9) in order to examine the method of construction. It was found that the main west wall foundation was 18 inches wide, while the cross wall was 13 inches wide. The fill on either side of the cross wall consisted of three inches of dark gray brown topsoil, then four inches of tan gravel, below which was a layer of soft dark brown soil containing charcoal and brick fragments. At 14 inches below the present surface, this dark brown soil became sterile and hard packed.

A string line was next established perpendicular to the west wall at the cross wall. The line extended across the entire estimated width of the structure, west to east. The string was marked at intervals where the main walls of the hotel should lie, and was used as a baseline for laying out further test units to locate wall foundations.

In all, five units were excavated on the west wing (W1 to W5, Figs. 9-11), seven units on the central wing (C1 to C7, Figs. 9 and 10), and four units on the east wing (E1 to E4, see Fig. 9). In each case, the soil was removed only to sufficient depth to reveal the dimensions and configuration of the architectural feature, and artifacts in direct association were collected.

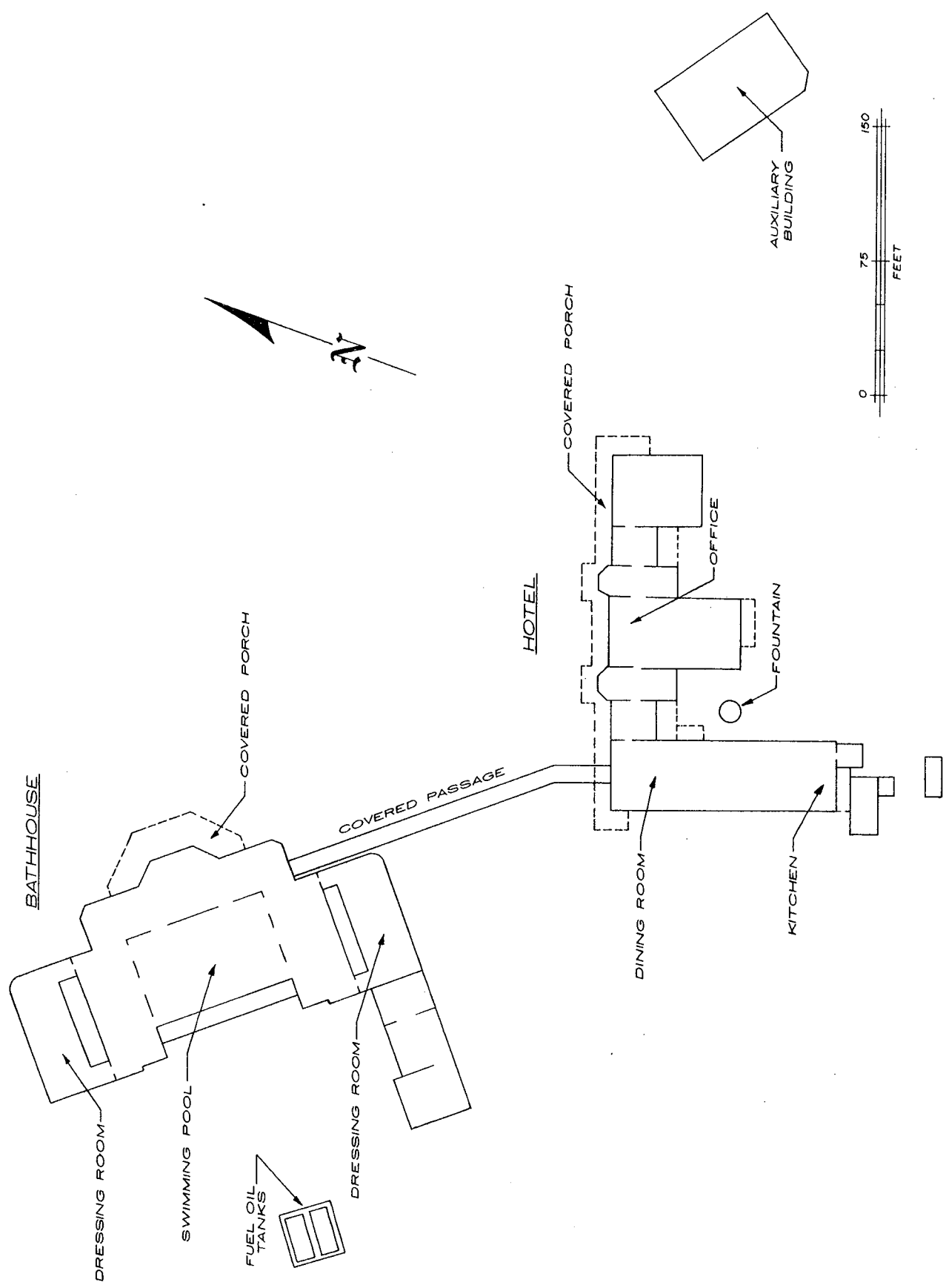
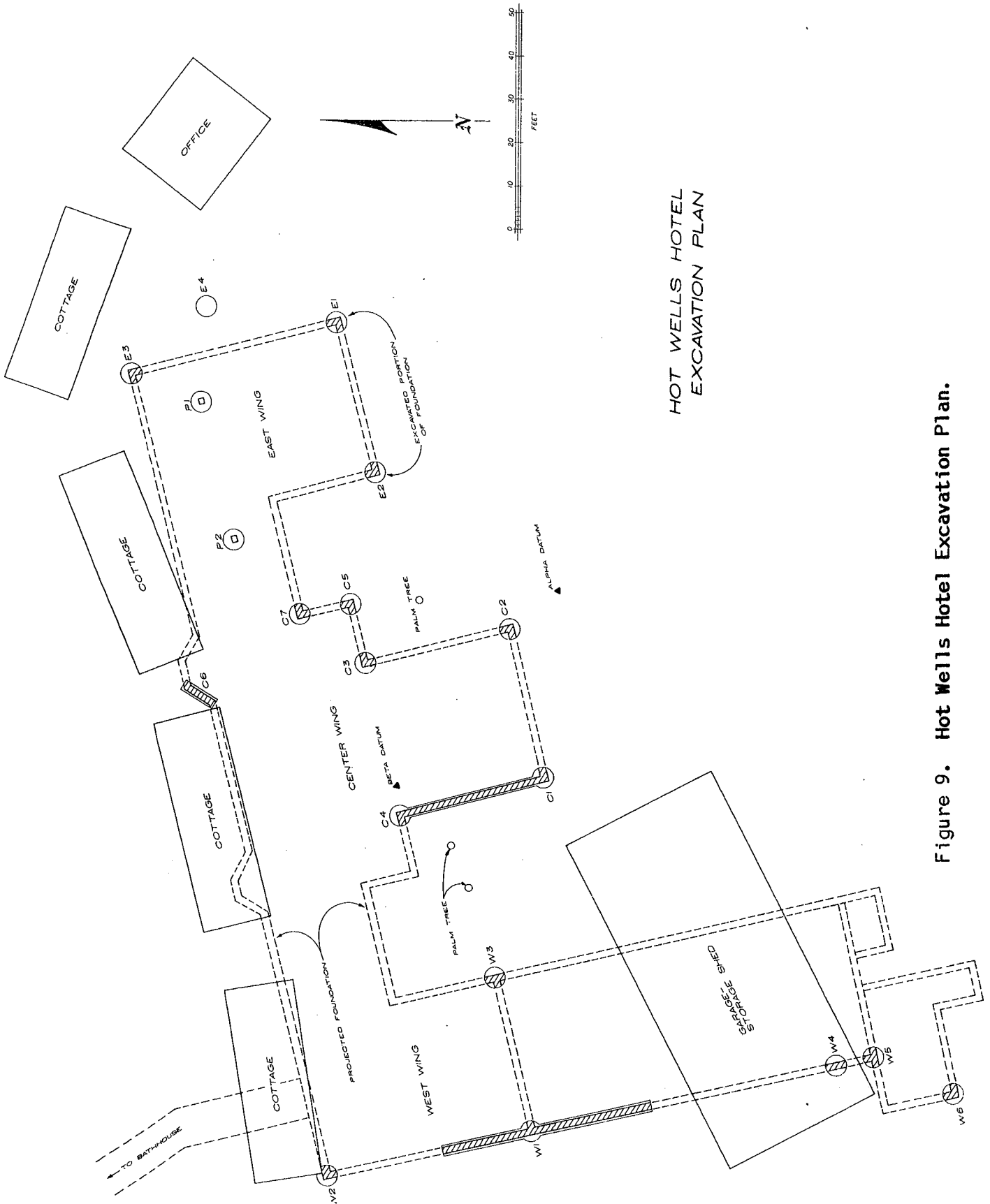
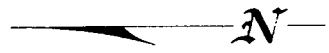


Figure 8. Hot Wells Hotel Site Plan.

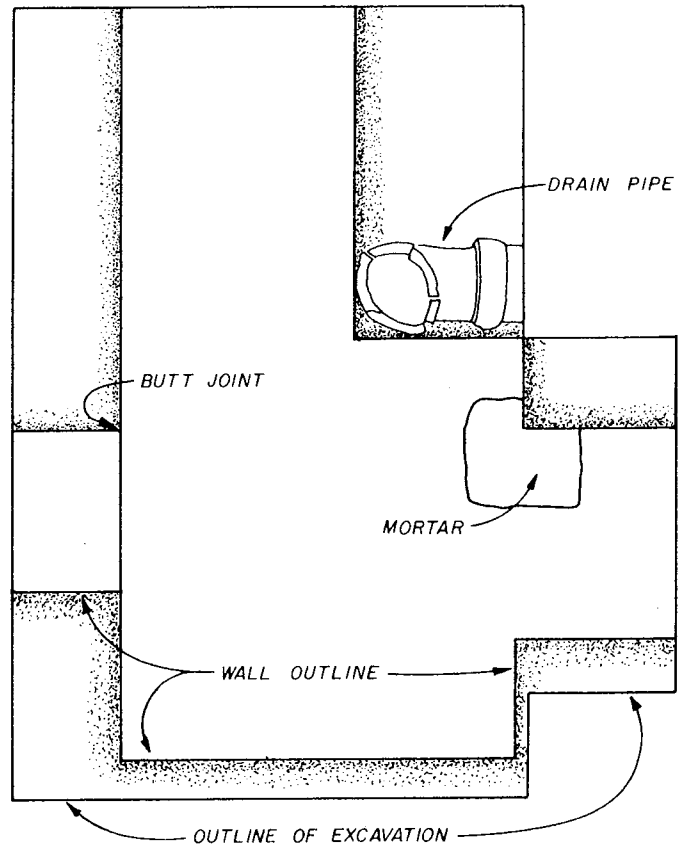


HOT WELLS HOTEL
EXCAVATION PLAN

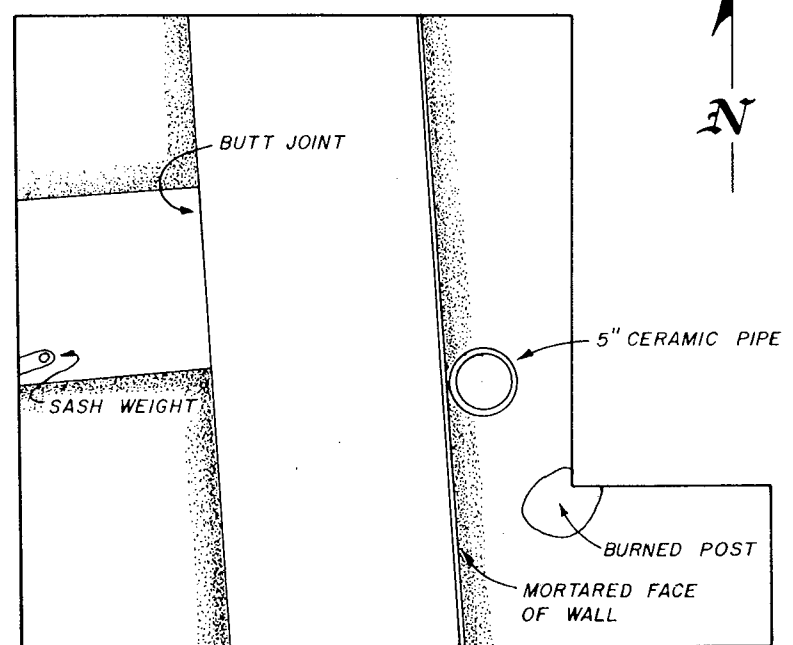
Figure 9. Hot Wells Hotel Excavation Plan.



HOT WELLS
HOTEL
PLAN OF
UNIT C3



HOT-WELLS
HOTEL
PLAN OF
UNIT W3



NOTE: ALL BRICKS ARE OF SAME TYPE,
AND ARE 4x8 INCHES IN SIZE.

Figure 10. Plans of Units on West and Central Wings.

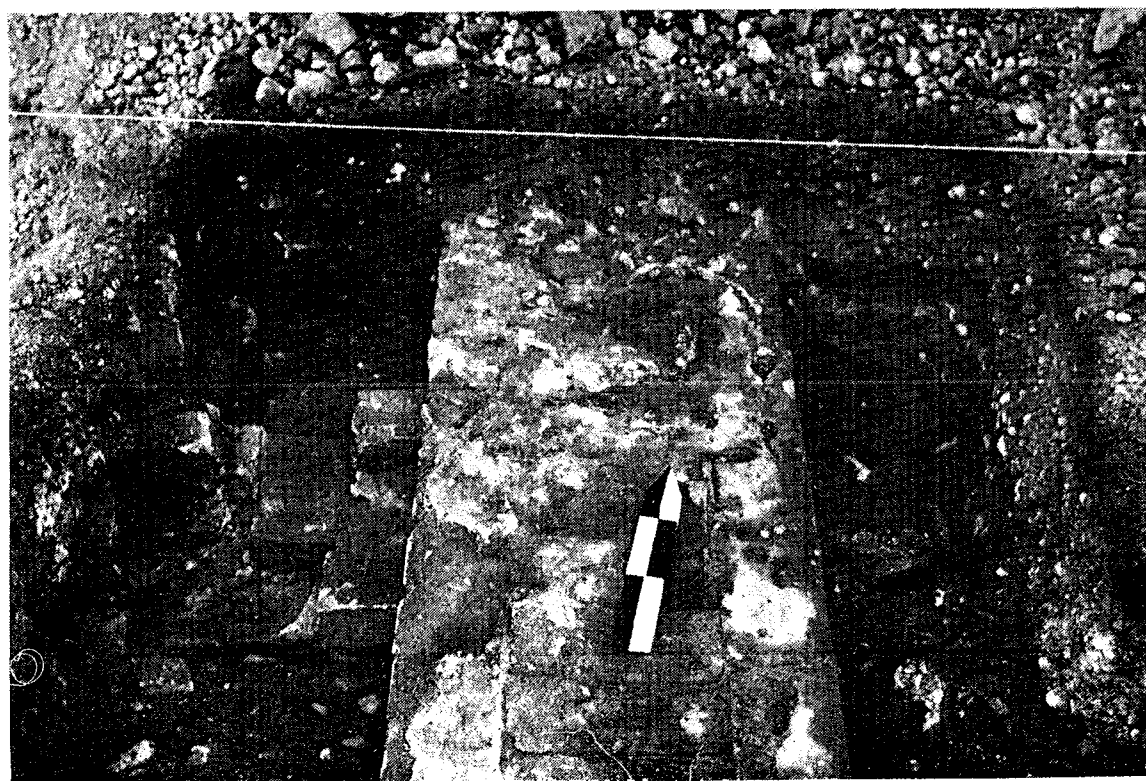
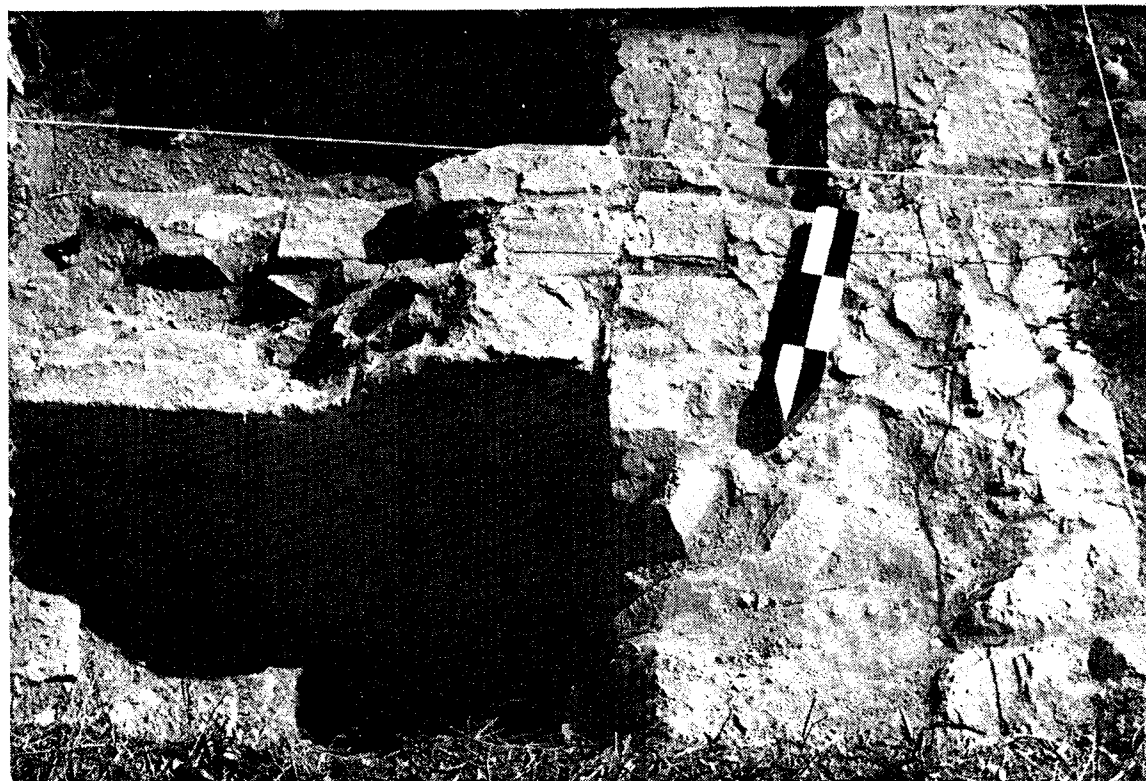


Figure 11. Excavation Units on West Wing. a, Unit W1; b, Unit W2.

No screening was done, except for Unit W4 where there was a concentration of sherds of hotelware, apparently from the kitchen or pantry.

The footings were found to be uniformly and very strongly constructed of what appears to be Texas-made brick (see Artifacts section) and cement mortar. A test unit excavated to the bottom of the footing on the central wing (Fig. 12) showed that the footing extended to bedrock at 4.5 feet below the surface.

In the area enclosed by the front portion of the east wing, a brick pier was found protruding from the surface (Fig. 13,b). Upon closer examination, on a line with this pier and to the west, another pier was found. Additional investigation to the east and west failed to locate any other piers. It may be that the same pattern of piers exists within the west wing, but we found no such indications on the surface.

All excavations were mapped with a level and plane table and located in reference to standing structures. Wall lines and dimensions, combining information obtained during excavations and data from Sanborn insurance maps, were used to project the actual outline of the building on the final plan (Fig. 9). The excavations were recorded in field notes, drawings, black and white photographs, and color slides.

Survey: As stipulated in our proposal to PTG (Eaton 1984) and confirmed upon transfer of the contract to the firm of Laventhol and Horwath (Gant 1984), the archaeological crew conducted a thorough surface survey of the grounds upon which the Hot Wells Hotel and Bathhouse were built (Area A of Fig. 2). It was hoped that traces of the original Hot Sulphur Wells Hotel would be found. Despite careful examination of all open areas north, east, and west of the bathhouse, no trace was found of earlier construction, either in the form of foundation stones exposed at the surface or of charcoal and scattered nails which would have indicated the remains of a burned structure.

Area B to the north of the hotel site, which was probably the site of the ostrich farm, was then surveyed. This area was found to be covered with up to five feet of gravel fill, evidently hauled in from a demolition site. Large pieces of reinforced concrete and chain link fencing protrude from the surface. This deposit covers the entire area, sloping downward abruptly to the original ground level at a fence line between Areas B and C. Area C contains a row of small frame houses facing onto Dullnig Court to the north.

Area D to the south of the hotel site was given a perfunctory walk-over by the crew at the request of de Vierville. Basic observations were made of the route of the acequia and the location of a small house foundation and an abandoned sewage treatment plant in this area. However, this could not under any circumstances be considered an archaeological survey. Such a survey would require an Antiquities Permit, several days of archival research, and a thorough surface examination, none of which were provided for in the Center's contract.

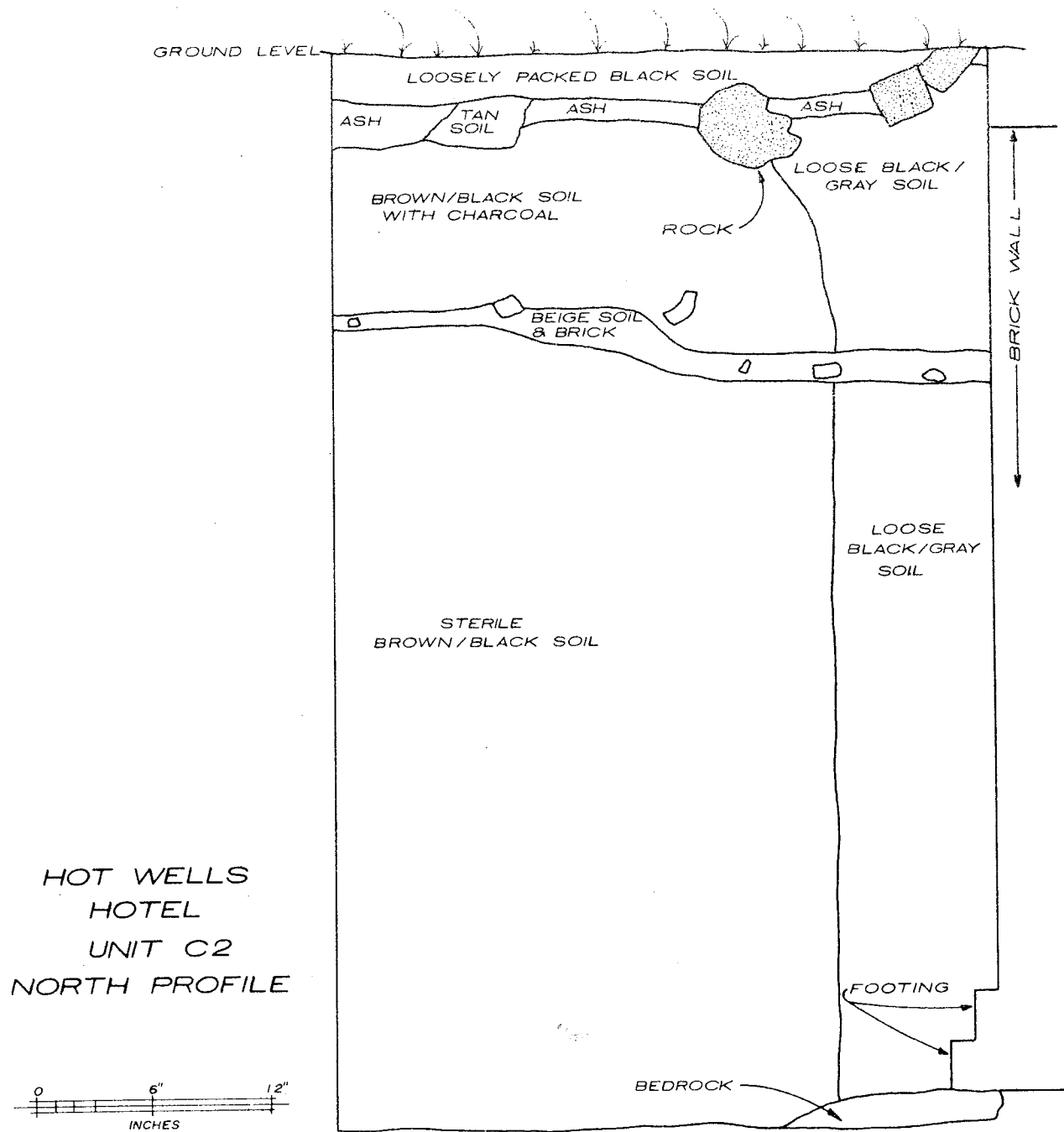


Figure 12. Profile of Unit C2 Showing Depth of Footing.

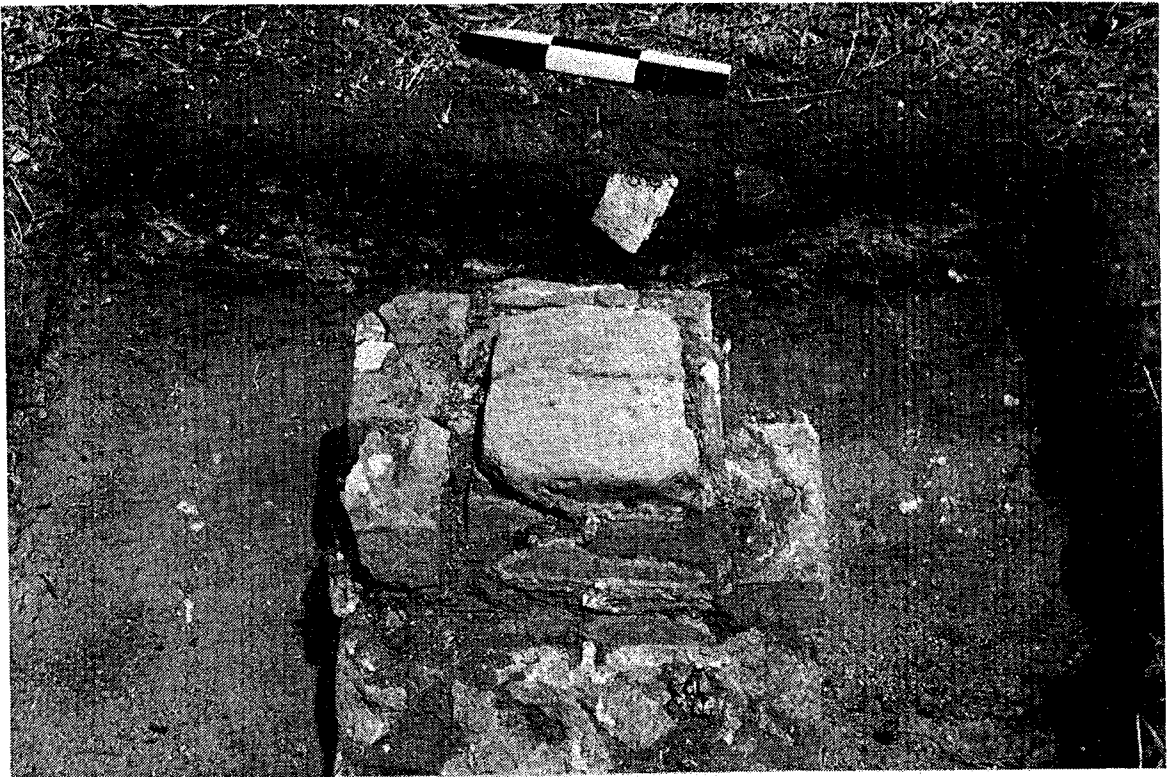


Figure 13. Excavation Units on Central and East Wings. a, Unit C3. Note Laredo Brick Co. stamp; b, Pier 1.

In October 1984 the decision was made to extend the scope of the project to include the area from Dullnig Court north to East White Avenue. This area was not surveyed, for the same reason that Area D was not done.

Artifacts

The artifacts recovered were found in direct association with the excavation units (Table 1) and can be useful only when considered as a small, select sample of the artifacts present on the site. Evidence of intense burning was found throughout the hotel site, and a large percentage of the glass is deformed or melted into unrecognizable blobs. Burning also affected the internal structure of much of the metal, causing rapid decay and disintegration in some cases. The nails are all so badly deformed by fire and rust that no differentiation was possible according to size or shape.

Artifacts were chosen for illustration which are representative of the total collection, or have special interest to anyone considering restoration of a hotel of the 1900 to 1930 era.

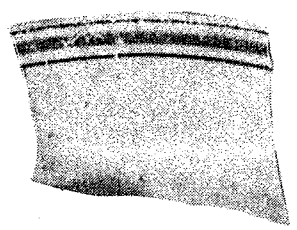
Ceramics: The earthenware sherds have been arbitrarily divided into those which were obviously purchased for hotel use and those which were probably used by later residents. Hotelwares (Fig. 14,a-g) were relatively heavy, ironstone-type ceramics made especially for restaurant and hotel use. Four distinct patterns were in use at the Hot Wells Hotel, along with plain white ironstone. Vessels with two different combinations of three thin red and green stripes just inside the rim were in use. Sherds alternating green, red, and green are from six-inch saucers, while those with red, green, and red are from eight and one half-inch plates (Fig. 14,a) and six-inch bowls. Both patterns were apparently made by the Carr China Company. No information has been found on a company by that name operating in the early 20th century. A pattern of olive green garlands and bows bears the name, "Hot Wells Hotel" (Fig. 14,e). The mark "O.P. Co./ Syracuse/ China" has been used by the Onandaga Pottery Company of Syracuse, New York, from 1871 to the present day (Barber n.d.:81). Represented are eight- and twelve-inch plates, six-inch saucers, three-inch diameter cups, and a five-inch diameter sugar bowl lid. A blue floral design appears on several sizes of oval platters (Fig. 14,c) made by John Maddock & Sons, Ltd, of Burslem, Staffordshire, England. This company was founded in 1855 and continues to export chinawares to the United States today (Godden 1964:406). A hotelware saucer with green geometric design is represented by one sherd (Fig. 14,f).

Sherds with the olive green Hot Wells Hotel design (Fig. 14,d,e) and the blue floral design described above were also found during excavation of the northwest corner rooms at Mission San Juan Capistrano (Schuetz 1969:20). This could indicate that a San Juan resident was employed at the hotel, or perhaps that chinaware from the hotel was salvaged after the time of the fire by local residents.

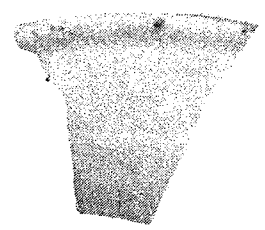
Plain white ironstone sherds marked "Buffalo China/ 1923" are from five-inch bowls (Fig. 14,b). A mark reading "Derby/ George Bros" could not be tied to any particular vessel shape. Half of a white spittoon found next to Pier 1

Figure 14. **Hotelwares and Furniture Hardware.**

- a, hotelware, red, green, and red bands, plate;
- b, hotelware, undecorated bowl;
- c, hotelware, blue floral design, platter;
- d, hotelware, olive design, cup;
- e, hotelware, olive design, saucer;
- f, hotelware, green design, saucer;
- g, hotelware, undecorated, cup;
- h, drawer pull;
- i, lamp part;
- j, brass hinge;
- k, lamp part;
- l, claw foot from furniture leg.



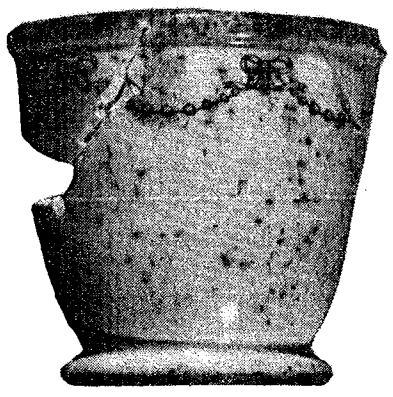
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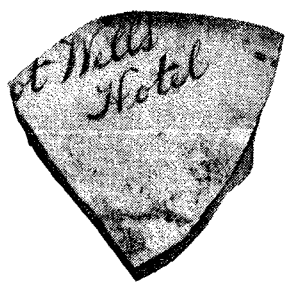
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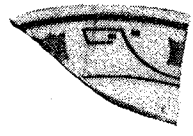
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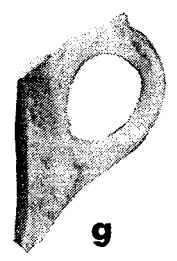
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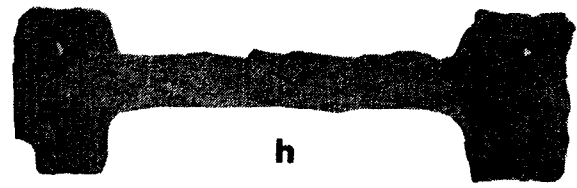
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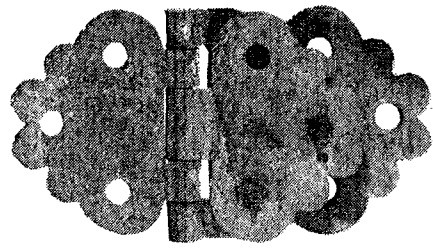
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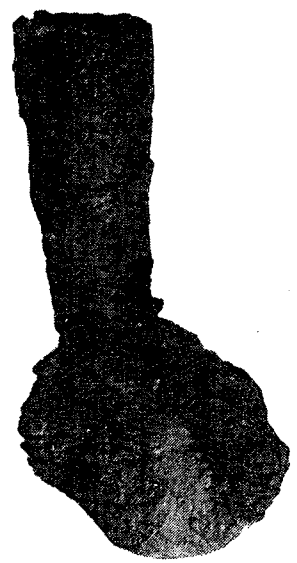
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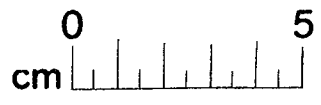
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may have been from the same factory, since it bears a partial mark, "Hotel/...George." Neither of these marks could be identified as to origin.

Another group of undecorated ironware sherds bore no identifying marks. Vessels represented by this group include eight- and twelve-inch plates, cups, saucers, bowls, pitchers, and serving dishes of various sizes (Fig. 14,g).

Included in the category of whitewares other than hotelwares were one sherd of red-decorated, feather-edged earthenware, probably the earliest ceramic represented on the site (Fig. 15,a), and sherds with decoration typical of the 1930s or later. Several of these bear a simple blue painted line at the rim, one has a floral decal design, several have bright floral designs painted under the glaze (Fig. 15,c), and one is red-glazed inside and out (Fig. 15,d). These all probably relate to individual households at the site after the hotel burned. Two sherds are from a heavy porcelain cup or mug painted blue on the outside, which could be found duplicated in stores today. Three thin porcelain sherds represent the finest ware found on the site, and may also have been privately owned (Fig. 15,b,e).

Stoneware sherds were few and probably come from vessels used at the hotel. A sherd of what is probably a European mug or stein with gray tan body had blue incised bands (Fig. 15,f). A crock or churn lid fragment with yellow tan paste and Bristol glaze was found behind the kitchen wing in Unit W6 (Fig. 15,g). A fragment of a large cylindrical vessel with Albany slip on both surfaces was found in the test excavation at the auxiliary building east of the hotel.

Glass: By far the largest proportion of the glass found was from clear, screw-top food, beverage, and cosmetic containers and milk bottles, as would be expected in a post-1900 site (Fig. 15,h). The larger concentrations in the center wing area (Table 1) suggest that post-hotel residents may have discarded broken bottles in their back yard. Brown glass found represents alcoholic beverage and medicine bottles, including a few fragments of contemporary beer bottles (Fig. 15,i,j). One glass bottle stopper was also made of brown glass (Fig. 15,k). Pieces of aqua and green glass are from Coke and soda bottles primarily. The top of a Lea and Perrins stopper was also found. Several bright blue fragments are from a screw-top medicine bottle. Milk glass ointment jars with screw tops were also present.

Also represented in the clear glass category are a number of fragments of drinking glasses probably used at the hotel (Fig. 15,l). Two designs have been isolated, one a plain form with the body curving into the base, which is nearly one-half inch thick. The other has a body divided by deeply impressed lines into 10 vertical panels. A great deal more decorative, this version was not as bottom-heavy as the first glass, but the weight of the whole tumbler may have been much the same.

Metal: Metal having to do with furnishings of the hotel, and possibly in some cases with the later cottages, included crown bottle caps and screw caps from the above-mentioned containers. We also found a number of metal objects

which once were a part of furniture and/or lamps that would have been in the hotel at the time of the fire (Fig. 14,i,k). Two pieces of ornate metal typical of the turn of the century may have come from a lamp or other light fixture. A metal drawer pull (Fig. 14,h), a corner brace, and a castor represent furniture hardware. A tripart, brass hinge of interesting design could not be identified as to use (Fig. 14,j). A claw foot clasping a badly burned glass ball once probably graced the leg of a parlor table (Fig. 14,l). A number of other badly rusted objects were too disintegrated or deformed to identify.

Personal Objects: A small brass buckle marked on the reverse at one end with an "S" and at the other end with "M873," and a white metal object set with rhinestones which could be a brooch or a button (Fig. 15,m,n), are the only clothing-related objects found other than a composition shoe heel. Children's toys include a black glass marble, two fragments of plastic toy gun handles, and a plastic horse, all of which are still available in stores today. A large fish hook was also found, certainly too large for any fish present in that part of the San Antonio River today (Fig. 15,o).

Construction Materials: The construction materials recovered relate to the construction of the hotel, for the most part. A few objects in the electrical and plumbing categories could have come from the later cottages, since much of the plumbing and wiring in those buildings has been vandalized and spread over the area.

Three distinctly different types of brick were found on the site. The majority of the foundations are constructed of an unmarked, yellow tan brick measuring 8-3/4 x 4 x 2-1/2 inches. These resemble bricks that were made at the Elmendorf Kiln, located about 15 miles southeast of the Hot Wells site. The Elmendorf Kiln began producing bricks about 1916 or 1917, according to Schuetz (1969:23). Apparently, however, a brick maker was in operation at Elmendorf from 1890 to 1900 (Georgeanna Greer, personal communication). Since that operation folded in 1900, bricks could have still been available, perhaps at a very economical price, in 1901 when the hotel was built. Mixed in with these bricks in places are other bricks stamped "Laredo/Brick Co." These were noted particularly at the northeast corner of the structure and in the center wing (see Fig. 13,a). They measure 8-1/4 x 3-7/8 x 2-1/2 inches and are a yellow tan color. A third type stamped "V.N. Ortiz/Laredo" is yellower but measures the same as the Laredo Brick Company samples. These bricks were noted near Pier 2. Examples of both of the Laredo-made bricks were also found by archaeologists of the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation in excavations at Laredo in 1980 (John Clark, personal communication).

A fragment of a flat, marble slab was found near Pier 1. This undoubtedly was connected in some way with the interior decor of the hotel.

Numerous crumbling fragments of terrazzo found during excavations suggest that at least some of the floors were made of that material. Although the pieces were scattered throughout the central and eastern parts of the site, they appeared to be more frequent in the northeast corner.

Figure 15. **Ceramics, Personal Items, and Glass.**
All items are full scale.

- a, red-painted, feather-edged earthenware;
- b, polychrome decal on porcelain;
- c, polychrome painted earthenware;
- d, red-glazed earthenware;
- e, undecorated porcelain;
- f, blue banded stoneware;
- g, crock or churn lid fragment;
- h, perfume bottle with threaded lip;
- i, brown glass beverage bottle neck;
- j, brown glass medicine bottle neck;
- k, brown glass bottle stopper;
- l, clear glass base to drinking glass;
- m, metal button or brooch with glass insets;
- n, brass buckle;
- o, fish hook.



a



b



c



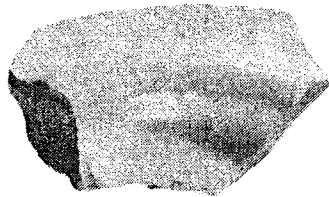
d



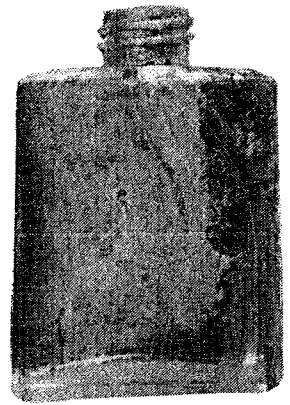
e



f



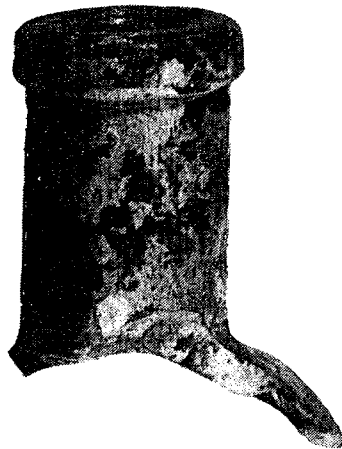
g



h



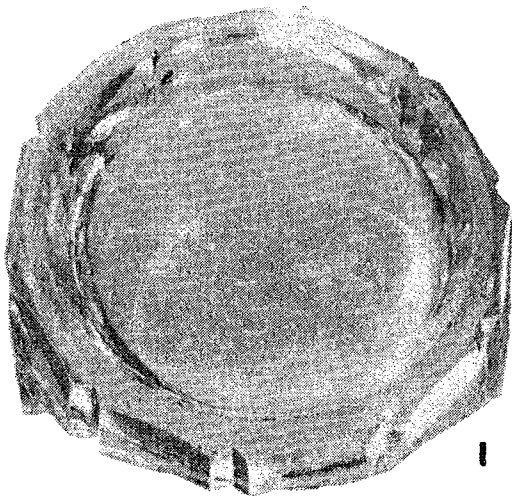
i



j



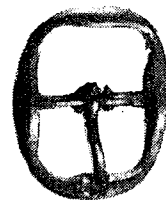
k



l



m



n



o

A large number of 3/4-inch square, unglazed, blue and white porcelain tiles were found throughout the center and east wing areas. From surviving segments still set in mortar, these appear to have been laid in a checker-board pattern. White-glazed tile, three inches wide and of undetermined length, was found in the excavations in Unit 2 on the east wing. Fragments of brown-glazed tile measuring 1-1/2 x 6 inches were found in a number of locations at the hotel and also at the auxiliary building. This tile bears the following mark: "C.E. TILE CO. ANDERSON IND. U.S.A./ PATENTED JUNE 20, 1899."

Fragments of electrical wire and porcelain objects used in early electrical installations were found mostly in the center and east wing excavations. Two sizes of 3-1/2-inch long ceramic tubes used to run wire through wooden walls bear a dark brown glaze. The larger, with an outside diameter of one inch, bears the indistinct mark, "A & P CO" (Fig. 16,a); the smaller, with an outside diameter of one-half inch, is marked "A. I. & CO" (Fig. 16,b). Two sizes of insulators used to carry wires along the face of walls have a white glaze. They are both 1-5/8 inches in length; one type is 1-1/2 inches in diameter, the other has a diameter of one inch (Fig. 16,c,d).

Fragments of dark red brown-glazed sewer tile were found throughout the site. Some are undoubtedly from the drainage system apparently installed to carry off rainwater from the roof. Surface indications of this system were found near many of the corners excavated, in the form of sewer tiles set in the ground to receive downspouts.

Window glass fragments were by far the most numerous artifacts on the site. Most of the glass had been badly burned in the fire. All appeared to be 1/16 of an inch thick. There were also a few fragments of heavier plate glass.

Nails recovered from the hotel site were badly rusted and fragmented. Only wire nails appear to have been used, which is consistent with the date of construction.

Building hardware recovered include numerous pulleys from double hung windows (Fig. 16,h). A window shade bracket came from the wall area north of Unit 1 on the west wing. A badly rusted door latch fragment came from Unit 2 on the center wing (Fig. 16,e). A large, heavy door hinge was found in the excavation of Unit 5, and a fragment of a strap hinge in Unit 4, both on the west wing (Fig. 16,f,g). A number of other badly rusted objects were not identifiable.

Food Items: A small number of animal bone fragments were found during excavation. Where identifiable, these seem to be cow bones. One oyster shell recovered would represent a delicacy served to hotel guests. Fragments of mussel shell found in relation to the piers under the northeast section could be related to either the cottages or the hotel.

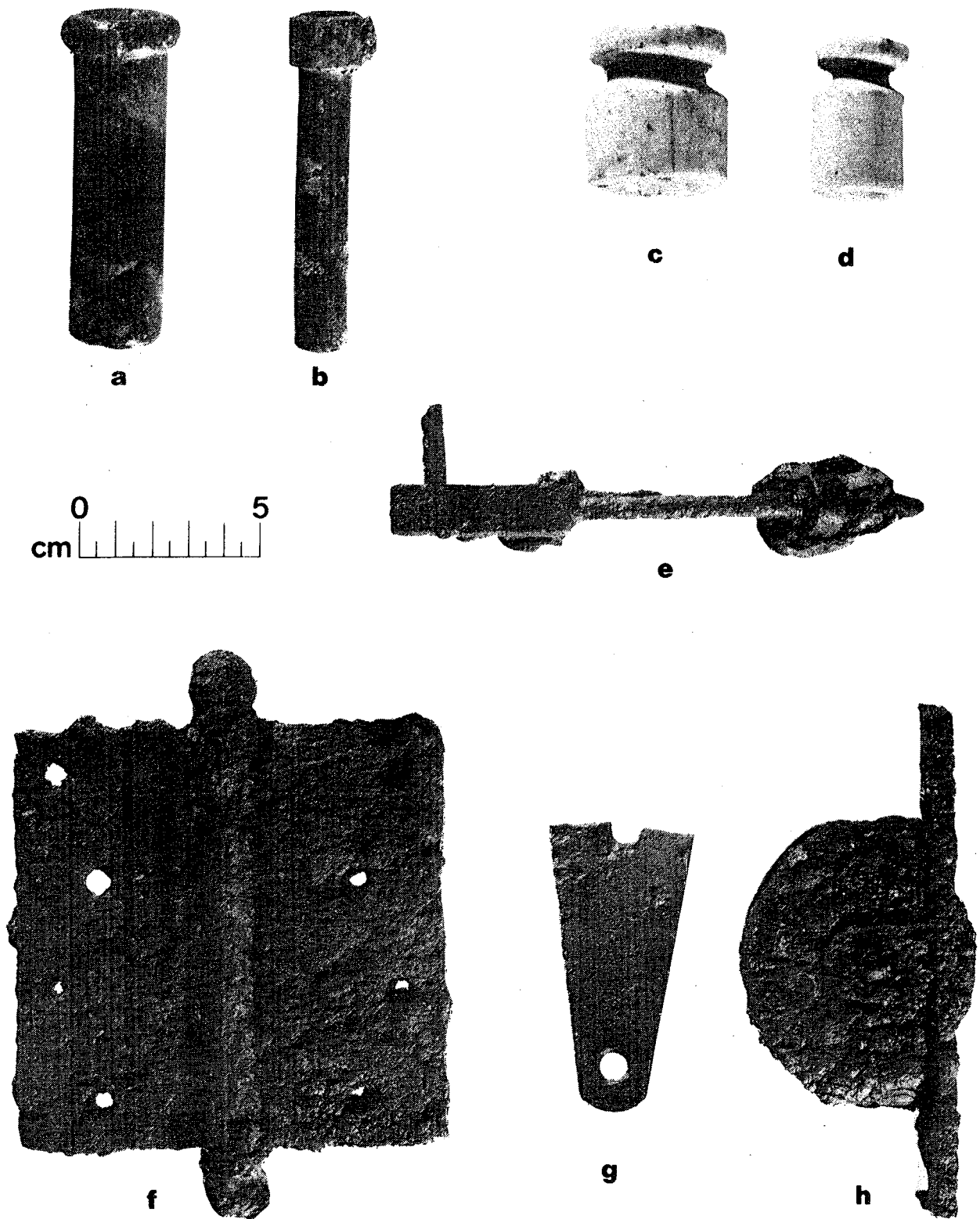


Figure 16. **Electrical and Building Hardware.** a, porcelain insulator marked "A & P CO"; b, porcelain insulator marked "A. I. & CO"; c, porcelain insulator, 1-1/2 inches in diameter; d, porcelain insulator, 1-inch diameter; e, door latch fragment; f, door hinge; g, strap hinge; h, pulley for double hung window.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Although an earlier hotel/bathhouse was built on the site, a surface survey of the Hot Wells Hotel site revealed only one foundation in addition to that of the 1901 hotel. Excavation of corners and wall intersections allowed the reconstruction of the plan of the hotel and the compilation of a map of the hotel and bathhouse complex in the early 20th-century. Artifacts recovered revealed details about the design, shapes, and sizes of china and glassware used in the hotel, and hardware and possible floor and wall finishes. A few furniture fragments suggest the appearance of the early 20th-century decor of the interior, borne out and expanded by photographs of the hotel in its prime.

It seems probable that the earlier Shacklett building probably stood on the same site as the present bathhouse, since no surface indications were found for such a structure elsewhere on the property.

Apparently the only buildings related to the Hot Wells complex for which evidence remains beneath the surface are the hotel itself and one small building to the east. Evidence of the burning and subsequent dismantling of the hotel is everywhere present just beneath the ground surface. The brick walls left standing after the fire were apparently demolished, usable brick was salvaged, and the remaining rubble was spread over the entire site to level and clean up the area. The footings for the hotel extend to a considerable depth and, at least in one instance, rest on bedrock. This is understandable considering the size of the structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that any plans for future building on the Hot Wells site to avoid the entire hotel area if possible. If this is not feasible, close coordination should be maintained with the State Historic Preservation Officer throughout the planning stage.

If the areas to the north and south of the Hot Wells Hotel site are to be developed, additional archaeological surveys and mapping will be required. This is particularly important due to the present lack of accurate maps of the area, as was discovered during our research for this project.

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