

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED **SEP 9 1976**
DATE ENTERED **DEC 6 1978**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Grayson Springs Historic Site

AND/OR COMMON

Grayson Springs Inn and Resort

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

S of Clarkson

Intersection of Ky. Highways 88 and 1214

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Clarkson

VICINITY OF

02

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Kentucky

021

Grayson

085

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- __DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- __STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- __PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- __BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- __IN PROCESS
- __BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- __UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- __YES: UNRESTRICTED
- __NO

PRESENT USE

- __AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- __EDUCATIONAL
- __ENTERTAINMENT
- __GOVERNMENT
- __INDUSTRIAL
- __MILITARY
- __MUSEUM
- PARK
- __PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- __RELIGIOUS
- __SCIENTIFIC
- __TRANSPORTATION
- __OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mark E. Nevils

STREET & NUMBER

Grayson Springs Inn

CITY, TOWN

Clarkson

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Grayson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Leitchfield

STATE

Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)

DATE

1971

__FEDERAL STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Grayson Springs resort, the once famous sulphur springs spa established in 1832, originally consisted of a two-story hotel of logs located near what is the Inn's present entrance. Fire destroyed the complex in June 1930 with the exception of the two-story frame building once used to house the bowling alley. The location of the resort is an isolated area to the immediate east of the intersection of Kentucky highways 88 and 1214, and is $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Clarkson in Grayson County in western Kentucky.

Twenty major individual springs flow out of one-quarter acre, amphitheatre-like, tree-enclosed park (see photo 5 & 5a). According to a photograph of an early lithograph of Grayson Springs, the slopes containing the twenty wells were landscaped and the wells connected by tree-lined foot paths (see photo 1). The major two and three-story resort buildings erected in the mid and late 19th-century were apparently constructed one beside the other with galleries on each side, with one side fronting the wells and paths, and the other overlooking garden plots and hills beyond (see photos 1, 2, and 3). One source lists the resort at mid 19th-century as containing four large frame buildings: the "New Orleans Block," a three-story structure with wide galleries running the entire length, front and back; the "Louisville Block," another three-story building; the Main Building; and "Morality Hall," which contained the pool and billiard tables (Coleman, p. 94).

All that remains today are some of the well casings and the remodelled building formerly containing the bowling alley that was used in the early 1900s as a post office, general store, and residence (photo 6). It was drastically altered in 1940 when the owner dismantled approximately one-half the structure and rented the remaining half as a residence. The succeeding owner, Mark Nevils, sought to remodel the building for use as a restaurant. The two-story frame building was adorned by Mr. Nevils with a five columned portico, and a brick chimney on the northeast side (see photo 7).

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Health
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Grayson Springs is the site of one of the most popular and long-lived health and entertainment resorts in Kentucky. Although only a portion of one building--of pre-Civil War date but considerably altered--remains on the site, many of the actual springs, located in a small natural amphitheater surrounded by hills, still flow out of their carved stone basins and blocks. Around the sides of the hills above the springs are still the curved paths carefully laid out in the 19th century so that, between drinks at the fountains, patients at the spa could take walks of length and steepness specified by the attending physician. Thus, although little remains of the structures that once enclosed and dominated the springs themselves, their setting remains almost intact as shown in a late 19th-century lithograph (photo 1).

The minerals springs resorts in Kentucky, of which Grayson Springs was but one, were tremendously popular institutions during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The practice of hydropathy was then a well-established and highly regarded profession and physicians of that time strongly recommended the internal and external use of mineral springs. The "health-giving" qualities of the Kentucky mineral spring was widely advertised and dozens of watering places grew (Coleman, p. 2).

The resorts filled a social as well as medicinal need. During the first quarter of the 19th century, as J. Winston Coleman, Jr., has so well described, "the tempo of life on the frontier had changed: times became better; people had more opportunity for relaxation and pleasure, and the growing desire of many well-to-do families was to mix and mingle socially with the best society of the State." The health resorts modeled somewhat after the famous spas in Europe, or the nearer and more familiar famed "springs" of Old Virginia, filled this pent-up demand for social intercourse and entertainment (Coleman, p.1).

The decade immediately preceding the Civil War was the period of the greatest prosperity and popularity for the mineral springs or "watering places". Railroad and stagecoaches provided better transportation and reached numerous formerly out-of-the-way resorts. Although there followed a time of decline immediately after the Civil War, they soon regained their popularity and experienced a revival, and were particularly successful in the 1890s.

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 33

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,6	5,6,8,6,6,5	4,1,4,6,1,0,0	B	1,6	5,6,8,6,7,0	4,1,4,5,6,9,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,6	5,6,8,2,7,0	4,1,4,5,6,8,0	D	1,6	5,6,8,2,5,0	4,1,4,6,1,0,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mark E. Nevils

GM; FTW; WEL

ORGANIZATION

DATE

owner

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Grayson Springs Inn

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Clarkson

Kentucky

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Edward W. Veston

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

8/26/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Charles A. ...

DATE

12/6/78

ATTEST

Ann H. Gilmore

KEEPER OF

DATE

12/5/78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Grayson Springs

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The history of Grayson Springs resort can be said to date to around 1825 with the arrival to the area of James Fielding Clarkson (b. 1784) and his wife Elizabeth from Campbell County, Virginia. They settled at Grayson Springs, then referred to as Sulphur Springs. This natural complex consisted of approximately one hundred white sulphur springs, all located on one-quarter of an acre (Collins, p. 293). At the time of the Clarksons' arrival, there was also a small log cabin on the east side of the springs occupied by Isaac Green and family. By 1832 a few additional log houses were constructed there, all completely surrounded by virgin forest (Nevils).

In 1836 Clarkson purchased 500 acres of land including the mineral springs from W. R. Mines for \$2,000 and erected a two-story hotel of logs at the Springs' present entrance. Dr. William Barrett, named "hydropathic physician" for the resort, advertised that the entire establishment at Grayson Springs "shall be in perfect order for the reception of visitors, with good stewards, meat and pastry cooks and polite servants," and that the bar would be supplied "with the best Old Kentucky as well as foreign liquors, cigars, and an agreeable barkeeper" (Coleman, p.59). The resort was opened for a longer season than most of the other springs, from May 1 until October 1, and in the late 1850s his rates of board and lodging were:

- Boarding per day \$1.50
 - Boarding per week..... 9.00
 - Boarding per month.....30.00
 - Children and servants, half price
 - Boarding horses, per day.....50
 - Boarding horses, per week.....3.00
 - Boarding horses, per month10.00
- (Coleman, p. 59)

It would appear to have been an opportune time for the appearance of such a resort. The decade of 1830-1840 brought development to Kentucky which included construction of paved roads, improved water navigation, and industrial growth. The South also experienced at this time outbreaks of cholera and numerous epidemics of yellow fever. The improved communications, therefore, in addition to the desire for rest, recreation, and most importantly, good health, brought large numbers of people to the Grayson Springs resort (Nevils).

(continued)

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The atmosphere at the Grayson Springs Resort was one of overall relaxation, pursuit of health, and often romance. Group singings of "My Old Kentucky Home" and other Stephen Foster favorites were common, as was the consumption of planter's punch and mint juleps. Gambling was not unknown among the visiting guests either. As advertised "the waters of these springs are too highly appreciated by those who have visited them to need one word from us in regard to their efficacy..." (Nevils).

The resort applied for incorporation, and qualified on February 18, 1860, with a capital of \$150,000.00, announcing plans to erect additional hotels, bowling facilities, shooting galleries, and a "water-curl" establishment, and also to employ more physicians (Nevils).

Visitation had been heavy at the beginning of the 1861 season. When the Civil War broke out Governor Magoffin proclaimed that Kentucky would maintain an armed neutrality, owing to its position as a border state. The majority of health resorts and spas within the state closed, but Grayson Springs remained open for the enjoyment and treatment of the public. Wounded and sick Union soldiers were placed in the resort's bowling alley building (now the Grayson Springs Inn). There are also the remains of a Civil War fortification in the woods at the top of a hill overlooking the springs. Following the war, the complex regained its popularity; heavy visitation, which had slacked during the conflict, returned (Nevils).

In 1868, Noah Clarkson sold the Grayson Springs Resort for a reported \$60,000 to Captain William S. Vanmeter and Captain Charles J. Vanmeter, brother-in-law to Clarkson from Bowling Green, Kentucky.

The new Vanmeter owners immediately set forth on a development expansion program which would make the Grayson Springs Resort one of the most celebrated spas in the South. They saw the progress of the Elizabethtown and Paducah Railroad construction within the county and its gradual replacement of the stage coach operations. This line of five-foot gauge, opened the ninety-three mile stretch between Elizabethtown and Greenville on June 1, 1871. The entire system was completed and operating on September 6, 1872, including service to the Grayson Springs depot. Although the following year brought a financial panic, business increased at the mineral springs resort.

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Captain "Billy" Vanmeter died in January of 1884, but operation of the resort continued under the direction of his brother "Uncle Charlie" and his wife Kate.

By the late 1890s the resort, still prospering, boasted of a new dining room accommodating 200 patrons, new swimming pool with mineral waters, golf course, electric lights, telegraph and long distance telephone service, and steamboat. Service was provided largely by black employees who lived in nearby cabins or houses and were summoned to the hotels by individual bell signals.

At the height of Grayson Springs resort's popularity in 1900, "Uncle Charlie" Vanmeter sold the spa with its 1,00 acres to Clarence C. and Robert L. Mercke, of Louisville, reportedly for \$100,000.00. The Mercke Brothers advertised their establishment as the best place in Kentucky for "those who contemplate rebuilding their shattered constitutions and their worn-out nerve cells" (Coleman, pp. 93-94). Under their ownership the resort then consisted of a large complex of buildings which included the "New Orleans Block," a three-story dormitory with wide galleries running the entire length, front, and back; the "Louisville Block" which housed the Kentucky guests and another three-story structure; the Main Building; and "Morality Hall," containing the pool and billiard tables as well as the private gambling rooms. In all, the proprietors boasted of "over 28,000 square feet of broad balconies" (Coleman, p. 94). As old photographs show, these balconies were supported by elegantly bracketed posts between decorative railings, creating an attractive and impressive effect.

Disaster struck in September 1909, when fire destroyed the four hotels. R.J. Bassett, president of the then Grayson County State Bank, of Leitchfield, then reportedly acquired the property, dividing its approximately 1,000 acres into ten tracts, and sold off nine of these for their timber, according to the late Proctor Terry. Around 1909, Albert A. Plock, of Louisville purchased the springs area and, with others, erected a two-story hotel, operated it for two years, then leased it to J. South Clarke, of Lexington.

The hotel changed hands several times until June 7, 1930, when it burned, Grayson Springs then ceased to operate for a number of years.

In 1935 Mark E. Nevils of Louisville acquired a 100-acre tract including the springs and golf course. In 1947 he bought additional acreage, which included the resort's last remaining structure, the old bowling building of pre-Civil War construction. This structure had been shortened by a previous owner. Mr. Nevils added a portico

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71 feet in length with six columns and also a fireplace with chimney at the northern end of the building (see photo 6).

The dusty, often muddy, winding old Grayson Springs-Leitchfield road was replaced in 1951 with a blacktopped highway designated Kentucky 1214. Nevils rebuilt the bowling building that had been reduced slightly in size by a previous owner, adding a 71-foot pergola supported by six columns.

Opened in 1955, the Grayson Springs Inn specialized in quality food and limited guest accommodations; and operated successfully for a number of years. It is presently closed. Meanwhile the approximately twenty mineral water springs and the two limestone springs continue to flow as casual visitors sample their favorite waters.

Within the confines of the Grayson Springs complex is to be found a very interesting historical archaeological resource. Most unusual is the fact that these below-ground remains have been virtually undisturbed. For the most part, the resource mentioned above consists of the fire destruction debris deposits which were created when the row of large hotels burned in September of 1909. These included the three-story "New Orleans Block" and the "Louisville Block," the Main Building and also "Morality Hall" which housed the billiard and pool tables. These archaeological remains are currently covered, and actually protected by a thin spread of gravel which has been used to improve the existing driveway entrance. (See photo 9.) A general surface examination of this area resulted in the observation of numerous artifacts which were imbedded in the drive, yet partially exposed. These included a variety of types which predominantly dated from the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century. A few of the more interesting artifacts included an exterior-mount case lock common in the latter part of the century, sherds of ironstone china with various decorations, blue-on-white heavy stoneware, fragments of jar and bottle glass, and various ferrous pieces including the anticipated machine-cut square nails. Approximately one half of the artifacts seen had been subjected to intense heat, thus precluding for the most part the possibility that they may have been deposited later. Immediately to the north of the point where the driveway enters Highway #1214, scattered limestone foundation blocks of the burned structures were observed. The owner reported that these few had been struck and pulled up during brush-clearing activities conducted recently with a "bush-hog" type apparatus. (See photo 10.) The remaining foundation would appear to still be in situ. As the hotels burned with all contents, and the site has not been

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altered to great extent, it is felt that the site which contains these historical archaeological resources should be protected and preserved.

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PAGE 2

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ADDENDUM

The nominated area is drawn to include the remaining building associated with the Grayson Springs resort, the mineral springs, the trails, and the site of the earlier hotel buildings.

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ADDENDUM

Health resorts, or springs as they were once called, were extremely popular in Kentucky during the course of the 19th century, with over one hundred being established during this period. Of the early springs, perhaps the most famous were the Olympian Springs in Montgomery County, located 47 miles east of Lexington, and Graham Springs in Harrodsburg some 32 miles southwest of Lexington. (Winston Coleman, Springs of Kentucky, Lexington, Winburn Press, 1953, pp. 13, 41). Unfortunately no building associated with these two resorts survive.

By the mid-19th century, Grayson Springs was one of eleven resorts considered to be "the largest and best-known of the Kentucky watering places" (Ibid., p. 67). Of these eleven, it is known that six are no longer extant. The state of the other four has not yet been determined.¹

It is not likely that many, if any, original complexes remain. States J. Winston Coleman, a noted authority on buildings in Kentucky:

"There is little left of the once spacious pleasure-grounds and extensive buildings of the Kentucky watering-places, where gallant beaux and beautiful belles rendezvoused, where broad-clothed gentlemen and hoop-skirted ladies came with their families and a retinue of servants to spend a period of relaxation and pleasure, to take the waters and to enjoy the unceasing round of gaieties. The glory of the old springs is gone forever and their grandeur is of another day" (Ibid., p. 99).

¹Those resorts not surviving include Olympian Springs, Graham Springs, Bluelick Springs, E.S. Culapia Springs, Drennon Springs and Crab Orchard Springs.

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ADDENDUM

UTM REFERENCES:

- A. 16/568655/4146065
- B. 16/568660/4145790
- C. 16/568415/4145770
- D. 16/568390/4146030

ACREAGE:

Approximately 13 acres

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The eastern boundary is marked by Bear Creek and Lizard Branch, turning westward approximately 500 feet north of the confluence of Bear Creek with Lizard Branch. The boundary extends westward approximately 500 feet, then turns southward until it intersects with Bear Creek.

NORTH ←

Then and now, heavily timbered

Bear Creek

Ky. Hwy. 1211

To Clarkson, Ky.

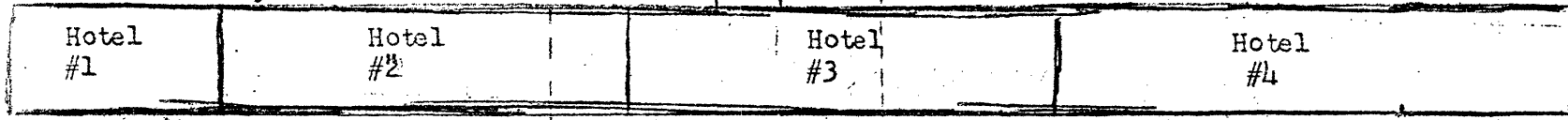
Ky. Hwy. 88 - Built in 1929

Lizard Branch

Hotels: New Orleans Block (French spoken)
Louisville Block (Kentucky guests)
Main Building
Morality Hall

Kitchens

These 4 Hotels burned in 1909
Another hotel (outlined) built
about 1909; it burned in 1930



Road leading past Hotels

Band stand

Old Bowling Alley Bldg.
Built pre-Civil War -
Now only remaining Bldg.
used as Inn.

Trails led to this Hill.

Grayson Springs Resort (est. 1825)
built around a circular, 1/4 acre park
out of which 25-50 white sulphur water
springs flowed. About 20 of these springs
were prominently known by name. Park situat-
in amphitheater-like, tree-covered area.
Creeks (Bear and Lizard) and ditches into
which mineral springs flowed, shown in
green.

Grayson Springs Historic Site

Grayson County

Mark Nevils

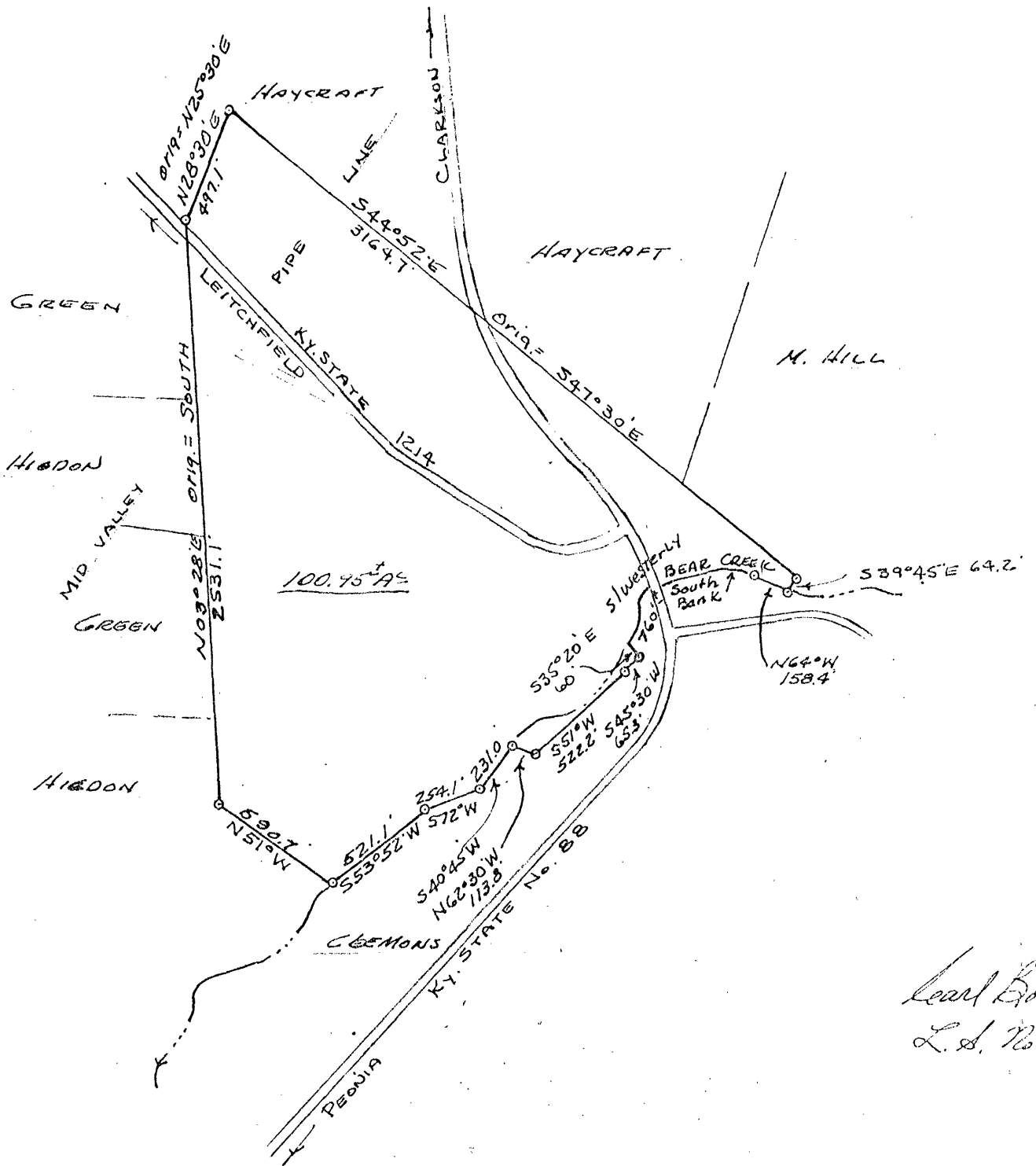
DEC 6 1978

1978

**Rough sketch map of location of trails
and former building (see photo I).**

**Remaining building is outlined in
red.**

NOV 20 1978



Carl Boswell
L.S. No. 590

NOTE: All corners marked with steel

SURVEY & PLAT OF TRACT OWNED BY MR. MARK NEVILS	
DATE	JUNE 4, 1975
SCALE	1" = 660'
LOCATION	GRAYSON Co. KY.
SURVEYED BY	CARL BOSWELL

REF:
 To NEVILS: Deed Bk. 39, Page 298
 To NEVILS: " " 39 Page 339-340

Grayson Springs, near Clarkson, Ky.

Survey and Plat of Tract owned by

Mark Nevils

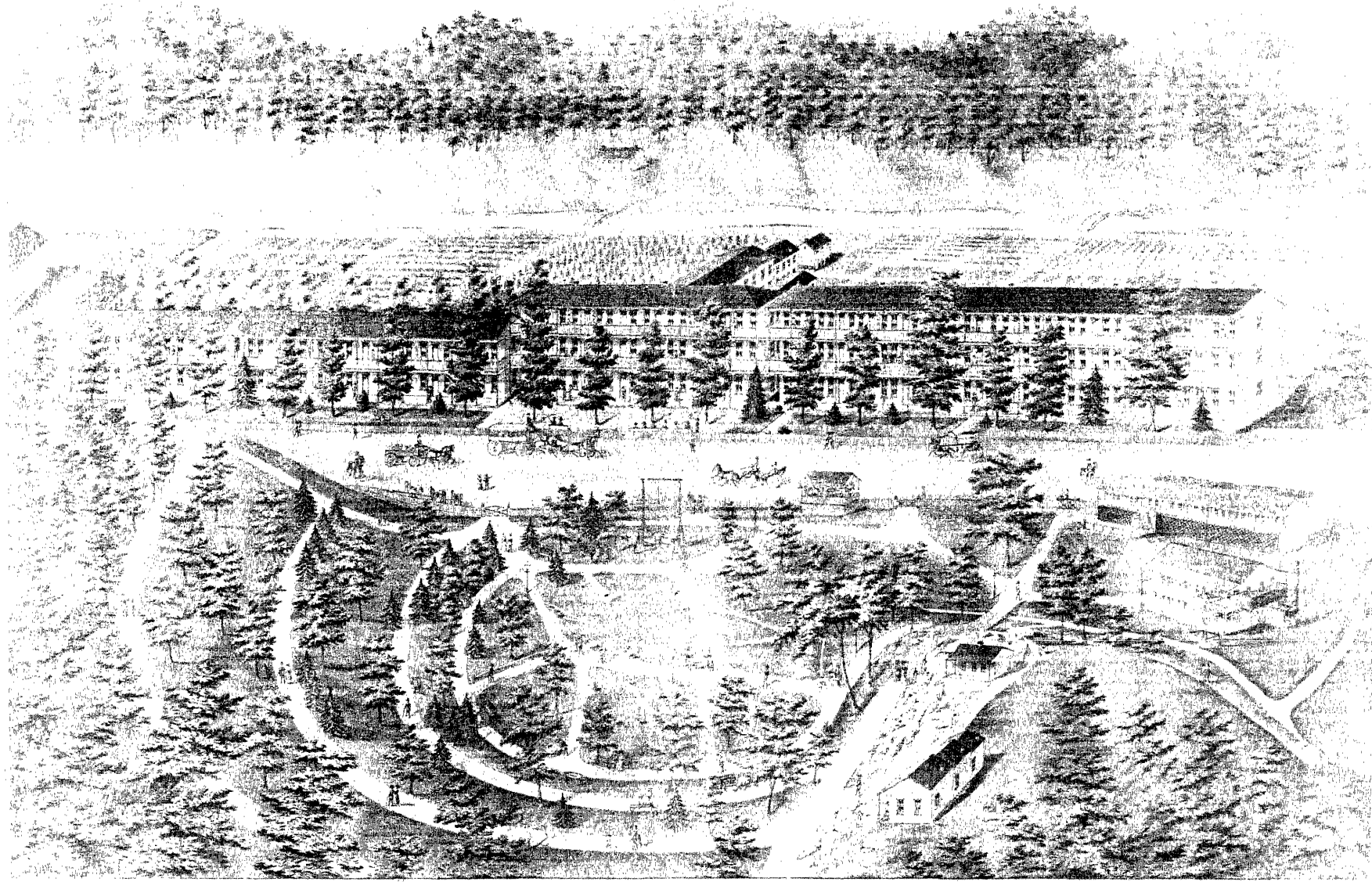
Date: 1975

Scale: 1" = 660 feet

DEC 8 1978

Map 2.

SEP 9 1976



Grayson Springs cure Dyspepsia, Liver and Kidney Troubles, Female Diseases,



GRAYSON SPRINGS.



and all diseases arising from impure blood. Sold every

where Dr. J. C. Grayson's
Bottle & Syringe, N. C.

Grayson Springs, near Clarkson, Ky.

Photo 1. *Grayson County*

Photograph of late 19th-century
lithograph of Grayson Springs,
looking east from hillside.

Extant building that once served
as a bowling alley is at far right
between three-story complex with
gallery and small two-story building
with gallery.

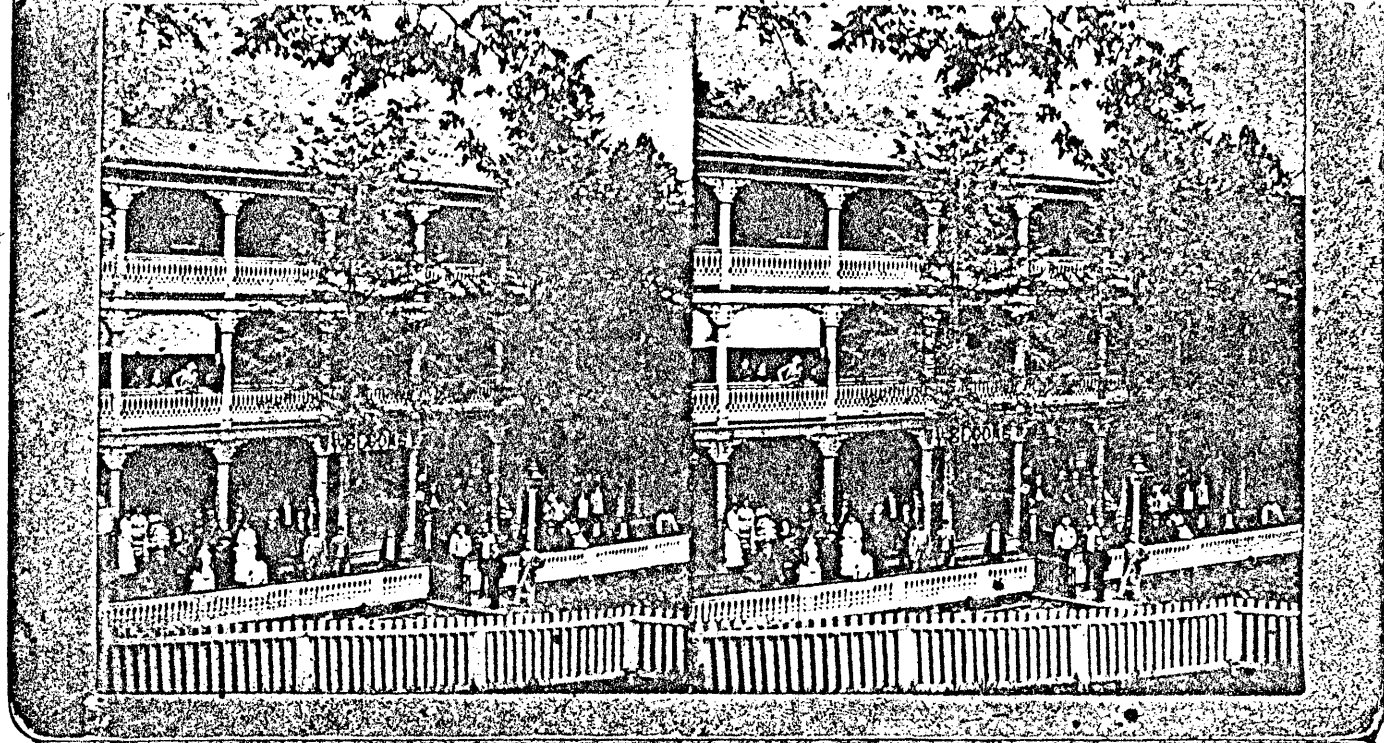
SEP 9 1976

Brayson Springs
Ky.

Hotel

No date

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Brayson
Springs, Ky.

No date

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Brayson Springs
Kentucky

"Rock Spring"

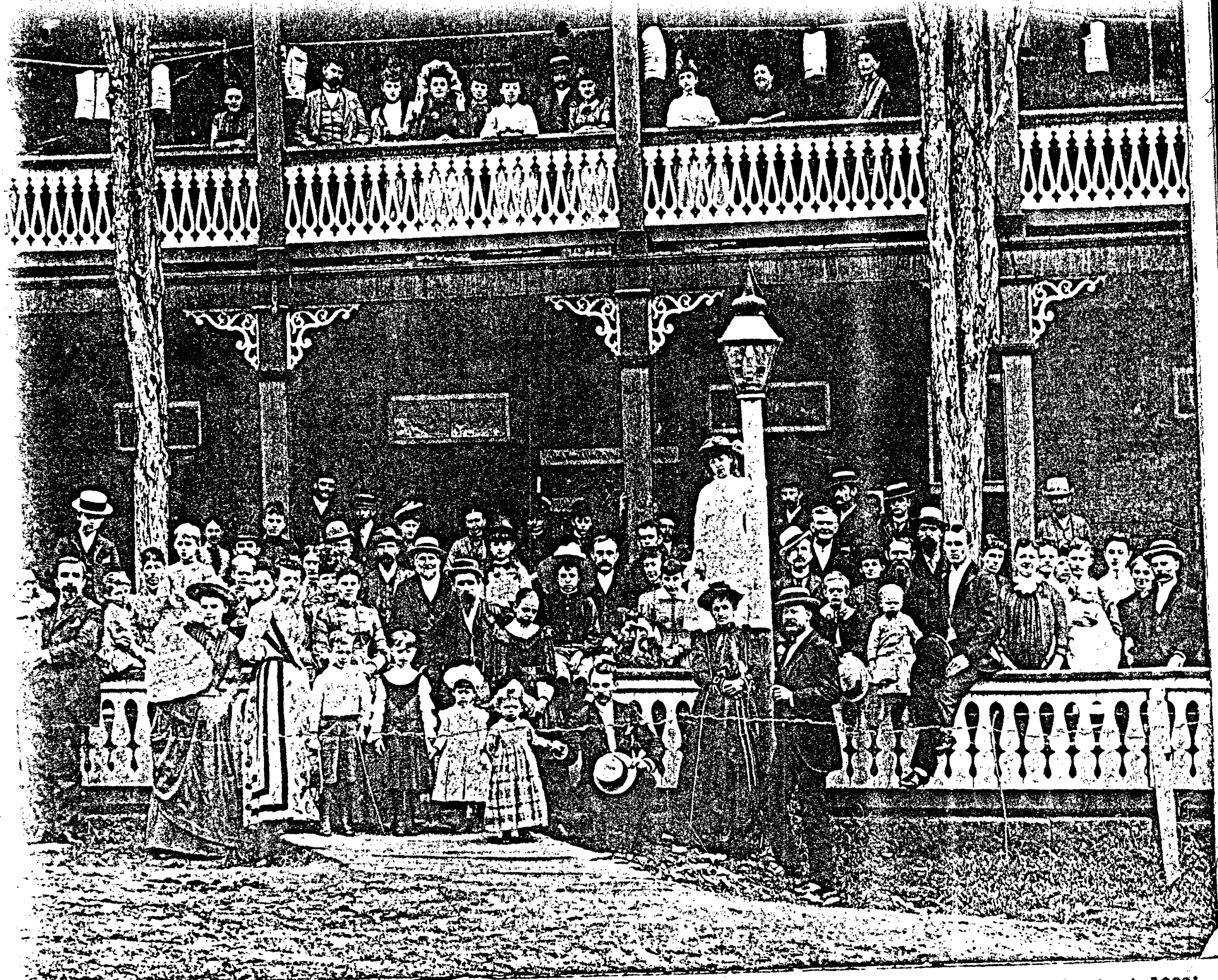
No date



Grayson Springs, near Clarkson, Ky.
Photo 2. **Grayson County**
Photograph of an unknown date on
file at Western Kentucky University,

Murray, Kentucky, showing one of
the three-story galleried buildings.

DEC 6 1978 SEP 9 1976



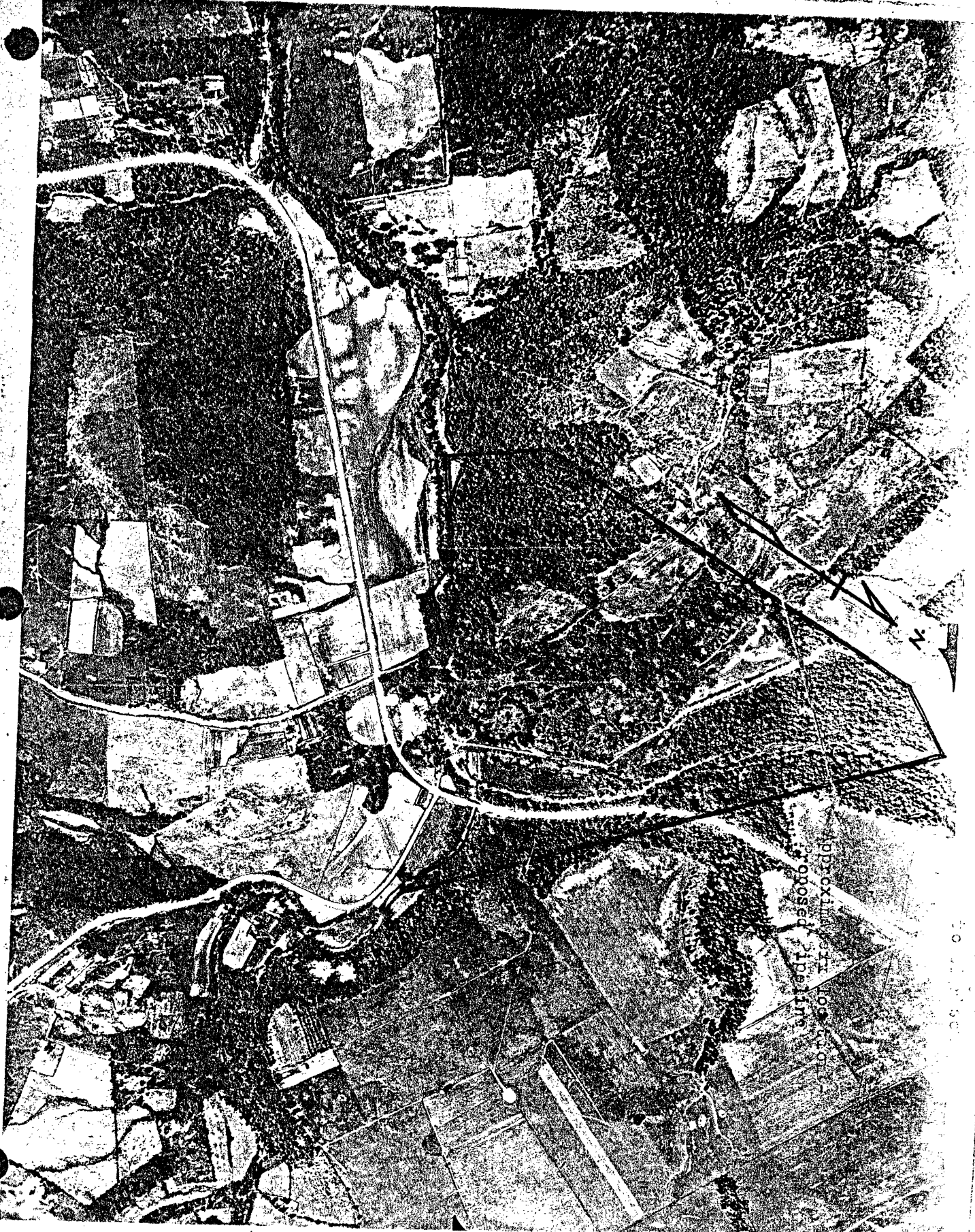
Guests pose for a picture before one of Grayson Springs Resort's four large hotels! This photo made about 1900!

Grayson Springs, near Clarkson, Ky.
Photo 3. **Grayson County**
Copy of c. 1900 photograph showing
close-up of one of the early resort
buildings.

SEP 9 1976

DEC 5 1978

Grayson Springs Resort in its heyday about 1900 comprised more than 1,000 acres. This aerial view (made by its current owner early in the 1940's), shows the heavily-timbered, triangular tract of slightly more than 100 acres, complete with park containing the mineral springs, golf course and ante-bellum building now an Inn.



APR 19 1940
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
U.S. AIR FORCE
PHOTOGRAPHIC CENTER
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Grayson Spring, near Clarkson, Ky.
Photo 8. **Grayson County**
Aerial view of site of Grayson
Springs in 1940s. SEP 9 1976

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