

# HOT SPRINGS

Big Bend National Park

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT



PART I  
Historical Data

November 15, 1968

RETURN TO MUSEUM BRANCH

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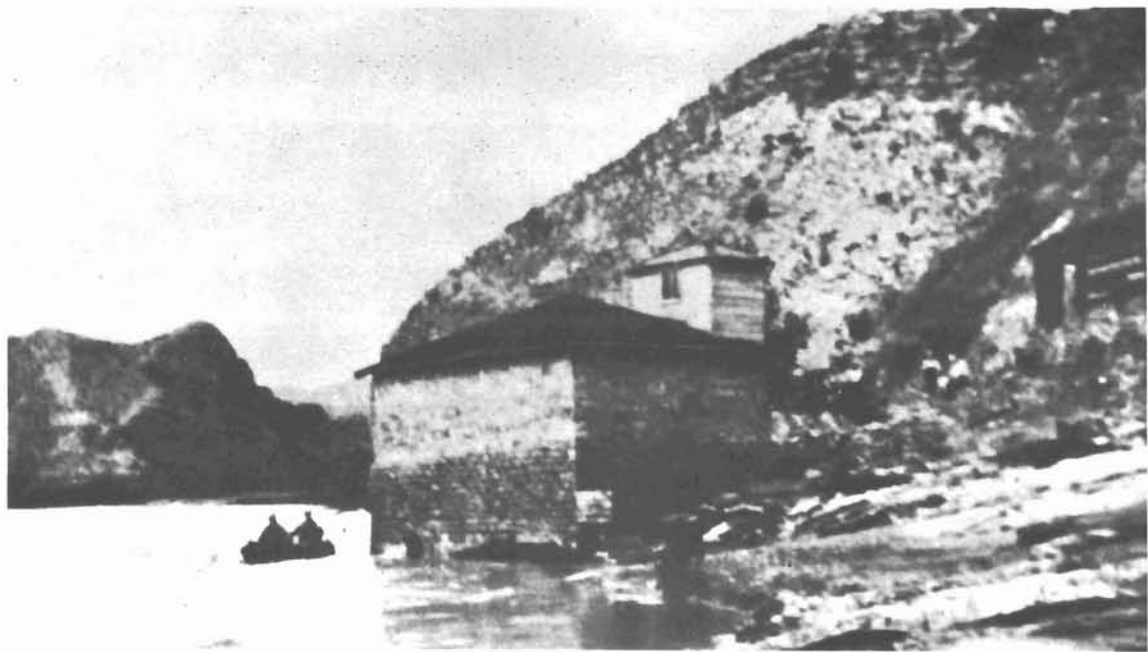
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## HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

PART I Historical Data

By  
Benjamin Levy



DIVISION OF HISTORY

Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

November 15, 1968

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The staff at Big Bend National Park made this investigation particularly gratifying by their personal interest in and assistance to the project. Their hospitality made the study enjoyable.

Ross A. Maxwell, former Superintendent of Big Bend National Park, supplied illustrations and clarified a number of historical problems; and LeRoy Langford of Sabin, Texas, son of the founder of Hot Springs, supplied valuable information. To all these people, and others not named, this report is dedicated.

## FOREWORD

This report is authorized by Resource Study Proposal (RSP) BIBE-H-7 which calls for compilation of historic data to support the requisite rehabilitation and stabilization of the Hot Springs Complex. The Hot Springs site is one of those to be preserved and interpreted as provided for in the Historical Resource Development Plan for the Park which is currently being prepared. The Hot Springs area is regarded by this plan as a prime historical site and is assigned to the highest management category.

### WATER OF LIFE

"They'll cure anything! Stomach trouble, rheumatism, all sorts of skin diseases," the old man vowed.

If that's so:

"I wonder why it is that I've never heard of those springs before. It looks like somebody would have tried to develop them like they've done at Hot Springs, Arkansas," the Mississippian replied.

"Nothing down there but rattlesnakes and bandit Mexicans. And it's too far away---that damned country promises more and gives less than any place I ever saw," the old man replied.

That conversation was whispered in the lobby of the Alpine Hotel in Alpine, Texas, on a late spring morning in 1909.<sup>1</sup> The men were talking about a forbidding section of land along the Rio Grande just below the mouth of Tornillo Creek. The area--remote, difficult, and endowed with noxious creatures--was, nevertheless, endowed with medicinal hot springs.

It was a spot repulsive to most but, perhaps, the salvation for the Mississippian who answered the call to go west, not for

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1. Unless otherwise noted, the story of the Langford family at Hot Springs is taken from J. O. Langford, Big Bend: A Homesteader's Story (Austin, 1952).

fame or fortune, but to regain his health. His constitution already ravaged from the recurring onslaught of malaria, J. O. Langford pushed west seeking a better climate, first to Dallas, then to Midland, and finally to the Big Bend.

The old man's story was confirmed by other townspeople that Langford queried on this expectant walk to the surveyor's office. He had to have that land--Section 50, Block G17, GCSF Railway.

It was a day of miracles for J. O. Langford. The surveyor almost filed ahead of him, but his wife would hear nothing of that "godforsaken place." He discovered that he needed a money order to accompany his bid for the land, but he only had a personal check. Who in Alpine would cash a check for a stranger?

A stranger did--a cowboy on the street whom Langford never saw again, peeled off the seventy-six dollars he needed for first payment. Next he discovered the post office closed, but was pleasantly surprised to find that the postmaster was happy to open for him.

Two weeks later, Section 50 was awarded to him. On a morning in May 1909, he and his expectant wife Bessie and 18-month-old daughter, Lovie, were on their way south out of Alpine, heading for the Big Bend.

They passed through the ruins of Camp Pena Colorado near Marathon, through Persimmon Gap, camping at Bone Springs, where

they choked from the stench of dead cattle which expired waiting their turn at the trickle of water. They reached Boquillas after a ten-day trip.

Storekeeper and postmaster, J. R. Landrum, spoke of the murder of his predecessor, a story that frightened Bessie and worried her husband that he was making a grievous error in subjecting his wife and daughter to the terrors of the Big Bend. All he wanted to do was to get out of Boquillas and move on to Hot Springs. Landrum cautioned him he could not make it by sundown. Langford set out anyway and found himself at sundown, bogged down on a sandbar near their destination. The following day they reached their new homestead and prepared to begin life anew as twentieth-century pioneers.

#### THE LANGFORDS ARRIVE

What did Langford own at this point? The land records are not clear. The Texas Land Office indicates that the section other than Section 50, Block 17, that Langford applied for was Section 4, Block 19.<sup>2</sup> He then turned around and quitclaimed Section 4 to J. W. Rutledge.<sup>3</sup> A warranty deed of 1909 indicates that Langford

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2. Texas Land Office, Abstracts of Title Lands of Texas, Comprising New Grants and Locations from September, 1907 to August, 1908, XXXI, 30th Supplement, p. 28.

3. Brewster County Deed Records, Vol. 21, p. 26.



was awarded Section 50, as he claimed, on May 5, 1909. Payment was to be \$5000 over five years.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that Langford on reaching the Rio Grande had ownership of only one section of land, Section 50, Block 17, the parcel on which the primary hot spring was situated. If he was awarded two other sections, the record does not indicate it.

#### THEIR FIRST LOOK AT THE SPRING

Langford relates how fervently he hoped that the spring would bring back his health and how he could hardly wait to see it:

Up through a hole some six inches in diameter and almost perfectly round, spurted the sparkling water with a force that lifted the column almost a foot above the ledge before it tumbled back in a wreath of white foam.

The apex of the stream looked very much like the crown of a cowboy's hat, and the water spread out around it in a solid sheet to form the brim. From there, it poured off a lip of rock and into the casket-like bathtub that the Indians had built sometime in the past by chipping out and enlarging a fissure in the flat layer of the sedimentary rock. Over the bathtub, some . . . man had erected a tent to give a bather privacy.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Brewster County Deed Records, Vol. 25, pp. 524-525.

5. Langford, p. 45. Also see Ross A. Maxwell, Big Bend of the Rio Grande, Guidebook 7, Bureau of Economic Geology (University of Texas, February 1968), p. 40. Maxwell relates how, in 1936, the spring flowed 250,000 gallons per day. The water temperature was 105° and, although mineralized, it did not have a highly objectionable taste or odor. The source of heat is not known but some believe the cause to be buried igneous rock still heated.

Langford began to change his mind from health to profits and contemplated the possibility of constructing a bathhouse and charging for the baths. Bessie suggested they build a house first. However, their first problem was one of diplomacy: How to deal with Senor Cleofas Natividad, his wife and their ten children, whom he discovered already residing on land awarded to Langford by a scrap of paper. Natividad asked only for permission to remain as a renter and his wife offered to work for the Langfords. Senora Natividad offered a quarter-slab of freshly butchered goat and a decorated basket of eggs as an offering of friendship, and a bargain was struck.<sup>6</sup>

In pioneer fashion, the Langfords moved into an abandoned dug-out they discovered. With its rock walls it was in fairly good repair. J. O. stretched a tent over the walls and erected another tent in front, creating a two-room dwelling, one room for sleeping and storing, and the other for dining.<sup>7</sup>

After constructing his new home, Langford rested for several days and began to "take the cure" for which he had so much hope. He was determined to complete a regimen of twenty-one baths, the number supposedly taken by the Indians. At first, Langford reported he was severely weakened by the hot baths but gradually was adjusted

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6. Langford, pp. 47-50.

7. Examination of the grounds October 9, 1968, failed to reveal the location or remains of this structure.

to the routine. In a short time, he was convinced that he had discovered a road to health. He attributed his improvement to the relaxed temperament of life in the Big Bend, but mostly to the healing powers of his spa. So improved was he that he related how he could now eat beans, tortillas, and chili and still sleep like a baby.<sup>8</sup>

#### BUSINESS BOOMS

The very first year at Hot Springs was a good one for Langford. He was pleasantly surprised by the number of visitors who came to take the baths. The income derived from the spa helped to meet living expenses. Langford even began to worry about potential competition from a second spring downstream which was not on his property. It issued from mud and was not so accessible as his, but some entrepreneur could enclose it in concrete and pipe it to the baths. He discovered that the property belonged to G. D. Gordon of Marion, Iowa, and Langford wrote to him inquiring if he was willing to lease his land. Time passed and he received no answer.<sup>9</sup>

By September, Langford began considering more substantial

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8. Langford, pp. 51-56. The curanderos, or Mexican healers, are said to have prescribed the waters of the spring for certain afflictions. One report has it that "after unsuccessfully trying a variety of treatments, he . . . bathed his patient in the mineralized hot water of Hot Springs, which gave the desired cure." See Maxwell p. 113.

9. Langford, pp. 56-57.

living quarters for his family. Another child was on the way and the improvised dug-out would never do. His first thought was to construct a substantial stone structure, but settled for adobe. His tenant, Cleofas Natividad, worked off his lease arrangement by assisting Langford in the construction project. The most strenuous job was carrying the water for the adobe brick to the construction site, which lay on a bench of land 150 feet high overlooking the meandering Rio Grande. The location offers a truly impressive vista of the great river valley and Langford was determined to beautify his household with the panoramic view afforded from that height. By means of an improvised hoist, the workers were able to simplify the strenuous task of hauling water up the steep slopes.

Burros belonging to Cleofas hauled long slabs of flagstone, which were used for doors and window sills and headers. The men wrecked an abandoned adobe hut and used its timbers, selecting one large and straight pole as a center beam. Smaller poles were used as rafters. They cut cane along the river with which to roof the rafters, tying the cane down with strips of yucca leaf. On top of the caned roof they piled a six-inch layer of damp clay, which dried and hardened and afforded a relatively waterproof covering that helped to keep the house cool in the summer. A few finished articles, such as nails, hinges, and one window, were purchased at

Marathon. By November 25, the house was completed--a one-room cabin, twelve by fourteen feet and nine feet high. The home was nearly ready for the new baby, born three days later.<sup>10</sup>

The new home was furnished with two iron bedsteads with coil springs and mattresses, one rocking chair, four split-bottom straight chairs, a large oak dining table, an antique walnut chest, a goods-box wardrobe, and a Hoover kitchen cabinet. With this, all the space was used up. There was no room for the cookstove. To solve the problem, Langford devised a potrack for the fireplace and secured a dutch oven for baking bread, pies, and cakes. A skillet and frying pan that could be used over the coals were added. This was roughing it indeed. Langford recorded how tight a fit it was, but warm and snug. And, as he related, "nobody with a new house and a new baby has anything to complain about."<sup>11</sup> One wonders if his wife, Bessie, would have agreed with that reflection!

It was not long afterward that financial worries began to burden J. O. Langford. That first winter he collected only \$150 from bathers and immediately began to look for additional sources of income. He baled and sold chino grass, learned how to braid leather and sold quirts and cow whips to the local cowboys for a few dollars. He even turned to fur trapping, and by a fortunate coincidence, received an extraordinary price for his first lot sold in nearby

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10. Ibid., pp. 62-67.

11. Ibid., p. 67.

Marathon. Unfortunately, he turned around and gave almost all of it back to the local blacksmith for repairs to his buckboard, which was damaged by the grueling trip from the Rio Grande.<sup>12</sup>

The hard winter left Langford without sufficient cash to make the second annual payment on his land. However, fortune again turned its way to him. He owned a section of land near Boquillas and the local customs officer, J. W. Rutledge, had bid on the land just after Langford had. Rutledge offered Langford \$750 for the property and he accepted provided Rutledge advanced sufficient funds to cover Langford's second payment on the Hot Springs property. The arrangement was agreed upon and even afforded Langford the opportunity to lease the spring on the Gordon property just downstream for thirty dollars a year.<sup>13</sup>

During that first winter, Langford constructed a reed-and-cane windbreak for his home. During the spring his improvements proliferated. In front of his house he erected a fence after witnessing the near-castrophe of his younger daughter, Lucille, rolling almost over the precipice above the Rio Grande. With the help of a local homesteader and stone mason, Herman Jacobs, he constructed a substantial bathhouse over the mineral springs. Using local stone, Langford erected a 3-foot thick wall facing upstream to take the full force of frequent flood waters. The remaining walls were 20

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12. Ibid., p. 68.

13. Ibid., pp. 75-76.

inches thick and the full dimensions of the structure were 20 by 20 feet. (Illustration No. 2). The spring was capped and water was led by channels to tubs of rock plastered with cement. Each tub had two 2-inch gate valves and both bottom and overflow drains. The roof was constructed of 1 by 8-inch lumber with 2 by 6-inch rafters. It was set on a slant that tended to hold the roof down during flood stage.<sup>14</sup>

There is a discrepancy in the testimony over the size of the bathhouse. Dr. Ross A. Maxwell, first Superintendent of Big Bend National Park, reports the dimensions as 12 by 20 feet as Langford recalled.<sup>15</sup> The conflict, however, tends to support the view, reinforced by Illustration No. 8, that when Langford returned to the area in 1927, he may have found the original structure in ruins and built a new but smaller bathhouse on its site.

Langford always worried that the remoteness of the Big Bend would work an intolerable hardship upon Bessie, his wife. Fortunately, the stillness was broken by the stream of visitors during peak seasons, and on the off seasons the river voyagers and serious explorers would brighten the scene. All together, Hot Springs served a heterogeneous group--the sick and the cantankerous; quarrelsome cowpokes; the elderly who couldn't sleep for the commotion and the young who wouldn't sleep without it.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Ibid., pp. 77-79.

15. Letter, Ross A. Maxwell to Benjamin Levy, Oct. 16, 1968.

16. Langford, pp. 79-86.

The family's greatest satisfaction, however, was the impressive view they cherished of the Rio Grande valley stretching in a panoramic sweep before their home high on the hill. Langford recalled how, after a full day's work, he and his family would sit outside and watch the drama of the sunset upon the landscape:

As the sun set, its last rays would penetrate the purplish haze that usually shrouded the Carmens, setting fire to the range, making it glow with various hues till long after the sun had disappeared in the west. . . . Far below us would be the Rio Grande, its waters a shining silver in the fading light, and all around were the golden hills, with their countless broken draws and canyons filled with strange bluish shadows.<sup>17</sup>

#### THE SPA EXPANDES

During Langford's second year of occupation he enlarged his house by adding two more rooms of stone. The roofs of the addition were framed with willow poles and covered with river cane and corrugated sheet metal. The door and windows were framed with stone and the floor was of poured cement.<sup>18</sup>

Stories of the curative properties of the mineral springs began to spread and the popularity of the spa began to increase. To accommodate the growing numbers of visitors, Langford began expanding his

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17. Ibid., p. 97. Langford also referred to the presence of several Indian sites, several of which are decorated with pictographs.

18. Ibid., p. 106.



facilities in 1912. He built a number of brush and cane shelters, and he cleaned out the lower spring, which he had leased, and built a concrete tub and shelter for it. At this point, Langford realized that his residence on the land was approaching three years and having improved the property he would shortly be entitled to a deed. His title was indeed perfected that year and he could say with certainty that the land was his.<sup>19</sup> But it could not have been at a less opportune time.

By the fall of 1912 news spread along the border of bandit and revolutionary activity emanating from Mexico. It was reported that the "banderos colorados" were operating very close to Hot Springs and word was sent out to Marathon requesting military assistance for the Big Bend. A Lieutenant Collins was ordered out with twenty-five men of Troop C, 14th Cavalry, to patrol the Rio Grande between Boquillas and San Vicente, an area in which Hot Springs is located. The contingent was stationed at La Noria.<sup>20</sup>

While the cavalry patrolled, the Langfords, and other residents as well, could feel relatively safe. But that same year, they learned

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19. Brewster County Deed Records, Vol. 27, p. 625, records a certificate of occupancy granted by State Land Commissioner August 16, 1912, stating that Langford had proved three consecutive years of occupancy and residence on Section 50, Block G 17, Certificate 4668. Also Langford, pp. 136-139.

20. Langford, p. 140-150.

that the cavalry was to be pulled out for service elsewhere and that it would be safer for them if they evacuated the region. Just when Hot Springs began to be a paying proposition, Langford was compelled to abandon it.<sup>21</sup>

Giving up his idea to build a store and trading post, Langford moved his family to El Paso, where they remained for fourteen years. During that time, two sons were born--LeRoy and Joe. It was at that time that Langford transferred the Hot Springs property to his wife and together they tried to turn a profit on the land from oil leases.<sup>22</sup> The property was not without its burden, however. Apparently, Langford still owed money to the State of Texas for the property and on a few occasions nearly lost it because of delinquencies in payment.<sup>23</sup>

#### THE LANGFORDS RETURN

It was not until 1927 that the Langfords returned to Hot Springs. They had come to Alpine two or three years earlier and resided there while Joe and LeRoy attended high school.<sup>24</sup> J. O. was determined to

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21. Ibid., p. 150.

22. Brewster County Deed Records, Vol. 33, p. 403, records a school land deed, Sept. 11, 1915, covering Sec. 50. Also, Brewster County Oil Lease Record, Vol. 2, p. 517, records a lease to John Young, Jan. 16, 1920.

23. Brewster County Redemption Record, Book 1, p. 247, records that Langford owed \$10.82 on Sec. 50 for the year 1917.

24. Langford, p. 154. Also, telephone interview with LeRoy Langford, Oct. 10, 1968. Mr. Langford now lives in Sabinal, Texas, and stated that his family came to Alpine about 1924 or 1925.

rebuild his operation and enlarge it. He aggressively pursued his expansion plans and immediately reconstructed the bathhouse, and erected both a motor court and general store. (Illustrations Nos. 6-8). His optimism, probably stimulated by the economic ebullience of the nation during the 1920's, involved him in land speculation as well as the management of the spa. Several times he purchased land in the vicinity of Alpine, and in 1927 he purchased neighboring Section 48, turning around the following year and selling it to John and Marrie Ogle. In 1929 he sold a 2/3 interest in Section 50 for \$2000<sup>25</sup> and payment of his debt of almost \$700 to the State of Texas. This arrangement was part of a partnership agreement with several men from New Mexico. Whether this was a scheme to raise capital for expansion of the resort or simply to pay off past debts is not clear.<sup>26</sup>

The depression years dealt a blow to Langford's expectations. The deed records indicate that he had great difficulty in paying

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25. Section 48 contains yet another hot spring along the bank of the Rio Grande. The new owners gave their name to the area and old timers refer to it as Ogle Springs. Interview with James "Steve" Bennett of Fort Davis, former Texas Ranger.

26. Brewster County Deed Records, Vol. 58, p. 589, records a quit claim deed, Nov. 28, 1927, from J. N. Beach and Maggie R. Beach to J. O. Langford for Sec. 48, Block G-17, Certificate 4667. Also, Vol. 62, p. 28, records quit claim deed to John D. and Marrie E. Ogle for Sec. 48, Block G-17. Also Vol. 61, p. 315 and Vol. 62, p. 547, records land purchased in Alpine. See Vol. 63, p. 506, which records special warranty deed and alludes to the partnership with Otto Goetz and Frank H. Winston of New Mexico.

his debts and several times liens were placed against his property. One way or another, he satisfied these claims and judgments and even managed to pay for a 60-day option on neighboring Section 47.<sup>27</sup>

The lower spring on the Gordon property continued to intrigue Langford. In 1939 he leased the entire section for \$1,000 to be paid over 10 years and agreed to expend \$300 to build a frame structure of four rooms in 1940 and \$300 for a reinforced concrete bathhouse. The agreement permitted Langford to maintain a domicile on the property.<sup>28</sup> Apparently, Langford made none of these improvements. The only structure remembered by one local resident was a simple and crude enclosure.<sup>29</sup> This structure was probably the one pictured in Illustration No. 14.

Ordinarily, Hot Springs was a picture of heat and stillness, but at times a relative bustle of activity would lend vitality to the isolated spot. Monday was a special day on which life would stir. The weekly mail delivery arrived on Monday and was welcomed by Americans and Mexicans alike. Mexican customs officials and immigration officers received their paychecks by U. S. mail via Marathon and Hot Springs. Monday became the trading day for the Mexican population, and some used to come from as far away as 100 miles.<sup>30</sup>

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27. Brewster County Deed Records, Vol. 70, p. 281; Vol. 86, p. 149; Vol. 100, p. 1; Vol. 99, p. 64, and others. Option found in Vol. 74, p. 27.

28. Brewster County Deed Records, Vol. 94, pp. 238-9.

29. Interview with Hallie Stillwell, Justice of the Peace, Brewster County, Oct. 15, 1968. Mrs. Stillwell recalls visiting Hot Springs quite often during the 1930's and 1940's.

30. Maxwell, p. 41.

It is even claimed that into the 1930's, Kickapoo Indians from Mexico periodically arrived at Hot Springs sporting good horses and new rifles.<sup>31</sup>

#### HOT SPRINGS ABANDONED

The family continued to operate the springs until 1942 when Big Bend National Park was created and they sold their property to the State of Texas for eventual donation to the Park.<sup>32</sup> The springs continued to be operated as a concession initially managed by one of the many colorful personalities of the Big Bend, namely, Maggy Smith. Maggy's generosity toward the border poor is well known. A decade ago, several observers who knew Maggy recorded that she "makes her living off the Mexican people of the lower Big Bend country and then turns around and gives all she makes back to them . . . ." <sup>33</sup> Ross Maxwell reports that "a Mexican never left Maggy's store hungry or cold and in time he would return with a chicken, pig, or produce to pay for the merchandise."<sup>34</sup> Following

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31. Interview with Barry Scobee, Fort Davis, Oct. 6, 1968. Mr. Scobee, local historian, explained that this story was told to him by J. O. Langford when he (Scobee) visited Hot Springs on one occasion.

32. Brewster County Deed Records, Vol. 85, p. 388. In 1936, most of the property was conveyed to the Langford children who, on May 27, 1942, conveyed the property, for park purposes only, for \$10 to the State of Texas.

33. Virginia Madison and Hallie Stillwell, How Come It's Called That (Albuquerque, 1958), p. 49. Also, Mary Lasswell, I'll Take Texas (Boston, 1958), pp. 132-34.

34. Maxwell, p. 41.

Maggy's stay of ten years, Pete and Etta Koch of Alpine operated the store until the early 1950's when no new concessioner could be found and the operation was shut down.<sup>35</sup>

#### DISPOSITION OF THE STRUCTURES

The Dug-out: This was the Langfords' first home. Nothing of it seems to remain in the vicinity of Hot Springs, its location is not known and interviews with local residents and one telephone conversation with LeRoy Langford failed to pin-point its site.

The Langford Home: This was the house into which the family moved from the dug-out. It was located on a high bench directly above the Rio Grande. It was initially constructed of adobe bricks, but Langford made an early stone addition to it. (Illustration No. 1). Unfortunately, this structure entirely disintegrated. The only elements that can be seen today are the remains of the poured concrete floor of the stone addition.

The Bathhouse: This was a central structure of the Hot Springs complex. (Illustration Nos. 2 and 8). Located downstream from the mouth of Tornillo Creek, it was constructed to withstand the force of frequent floods. Not built to resist the destructive effects of dynamite, it was exploded and obliterated, apparently in

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35. Historical files, Big Bend National Park. For negotiations surrounding the attempt to secure a manager for the area, see file entitled "Chata." Chata was a long time resident of Boquillas who moved away from the Big Bend and considered returning to the Park to manage the Hot Springs operation after the Kochs moved out.

the early 1950's. This regrettable action was taken ostensibly to eliminate a sanitary hazard posed by the continued use of the spa. All that remains are some concrete slabs cemented to the rock slope of the river.

Shacks: Langford constructed a number of brush and cane shelters to accommodate his guests. Again, nothing remains of these buildings, but evidence of them can be seen in a historic photograph of the bathhouse. (Illustration No. 2).

The Lower Springs: The shelter and concrete tub installed at the springs on the Gordon property cannot be seen today. The site is thickly overgrown with river reeds.

These structures mentioned above were installed by Langford during his early occupation of the Hot Spring area, 1909-13. After returning to the site in 1927 he added the following structures:

Store: This building was a trading post and post office as well. It was the center of activity in the later period--a place for community gathering, the communication of the latest news, and, of course, the transaction of business. A series of photographs available from the historical files of Big Bend National Park and from former Superintendent Ross A. Maxwell shows the evolution of the Hot Springs complex through the 1930's and 1940's. (Illustrations Nos. 4-14). The store is still standing.

Motor Court: Like the store, this structure was erected in the late 1920's. Built of stone with a concrete floor, each room is

decorated with moldering, yet still colorful, paintings of horsemen, burros, Mexican natives, and other scenes done by Mrs. Guy Lee of Marathon.<sup>36</sup>

Water Well: It is reported that the well at the site was originally equipped with a pitcher pump atop a wooden box. This arrangement existed in 1926 and some time later the well was cased with about 24-inch clay tile and water drawn with a bucket, rope, and pulley. Later the present concrete was poured and a cylinder hand pump installed.<sup>37</sup>

There are several other structures in the vicinity of Hot Springs which, while not constructed by Langford, are necessarily related to the area.

Postman's Shack: Across Tornillo Creek, a postman constructed a frame shack as a temporary quarters. The mail run through Hot Springs was once a week. The postman would remain two nights at this hut and return the third day to Marathon. (Illustration No. 13).

Stone Residence: Near the postman's shack, Charles Livingston, a resident of Alpine, constructed the most nearly permanent living quarters in the area. (Illustration No. 13).

Miscellaneous Structures: Photographs reveal other structures

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36. Letter, Ross A. Maxwell to Benjamin Levy, Oct. 16, 1968.

37. Ibid.



scattered about the Hot Springs area. They have all disintegrated and their precise use has not been identified. Undoubtedly, most of them were temporary shelters and seasonal quarters for the visitors to the mineral springs. Several of them could be permanent residences inhabited by Mexican-American families.

ILLUSTRATION NO. 1: The Langford's Home at Hot Springs. This was the two-room stone addition to the original adobe structure which can barely be seen through the doorway. The adobe section was constructed in 1909 and the stone addition was built the following year. This was the residence that overlooked the Rio Grande from a bench and succeeded the canvas-covered stone dug-out used by the family during their first months at Hot Springs.

The date and origin of this photograph are unknown. The fact that the structure is deteriorated suggests that it was photographed after 1942 when the property was abandoned by the family.

This photograph was copied from the plate opposite page 104 in Big Bend: A Homesteader's Story, by J. O. Langford.

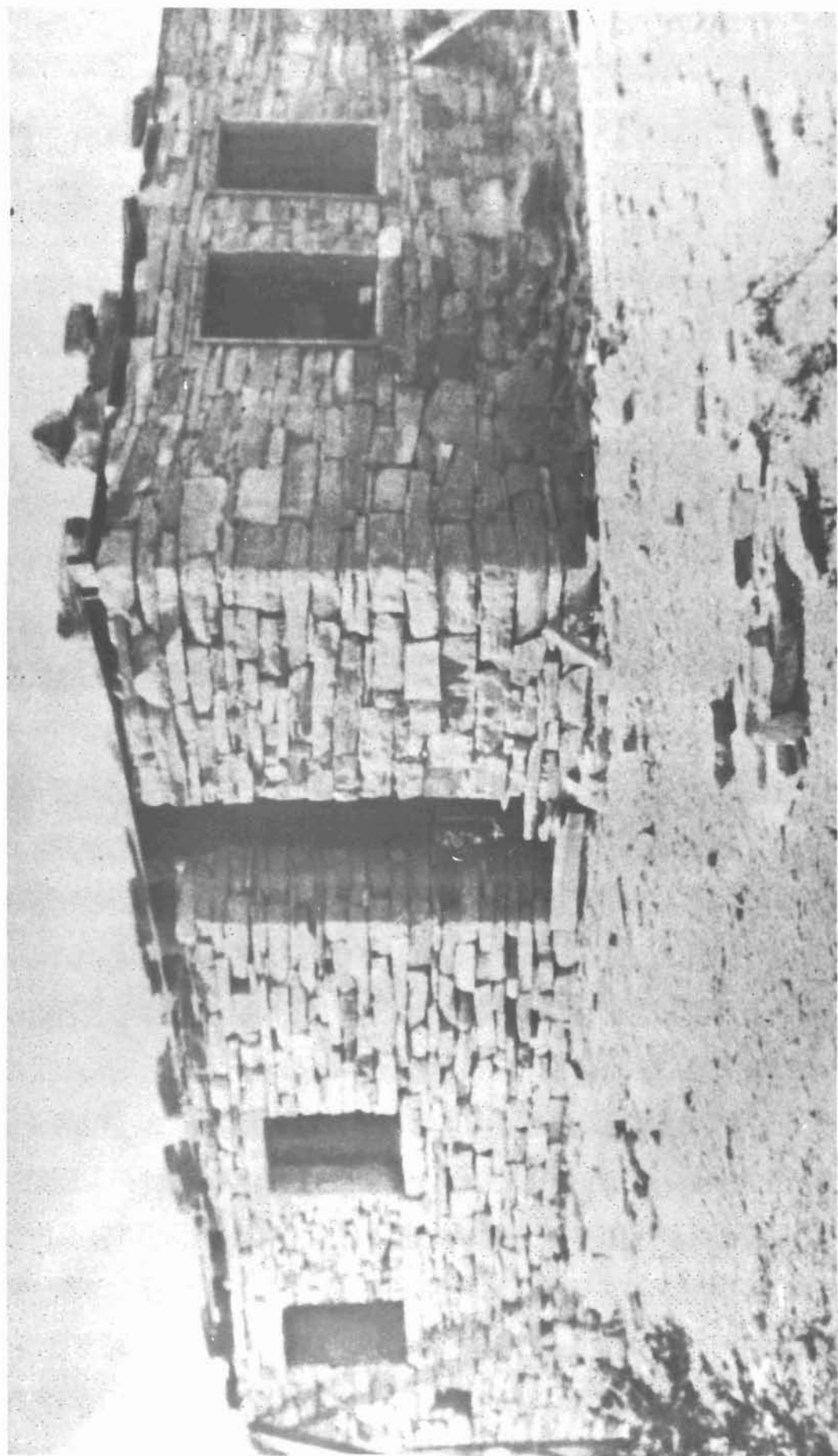


ILLUSTRATION NO. 2: The Bathhouse at Hot Springs. This is the only known photograph of this structure showing the sloped roof. The bathhouse was constructed of stone during the winter 1909-10. What use the turret had is unknown. Notice the shelter at the right edge.

The precise date and origin of this photograph are unknown. It is likely an old photo taken between 1910 and 1913 before the Langfords left for El Paso. During their second occupation of the property after 1927, the structure is remembered without the roof and covered only by canvas paulins.

This photograph was copied from the plate opposite page 104 in Big Bend: A Homesteader's Story, by J. O. Langford.

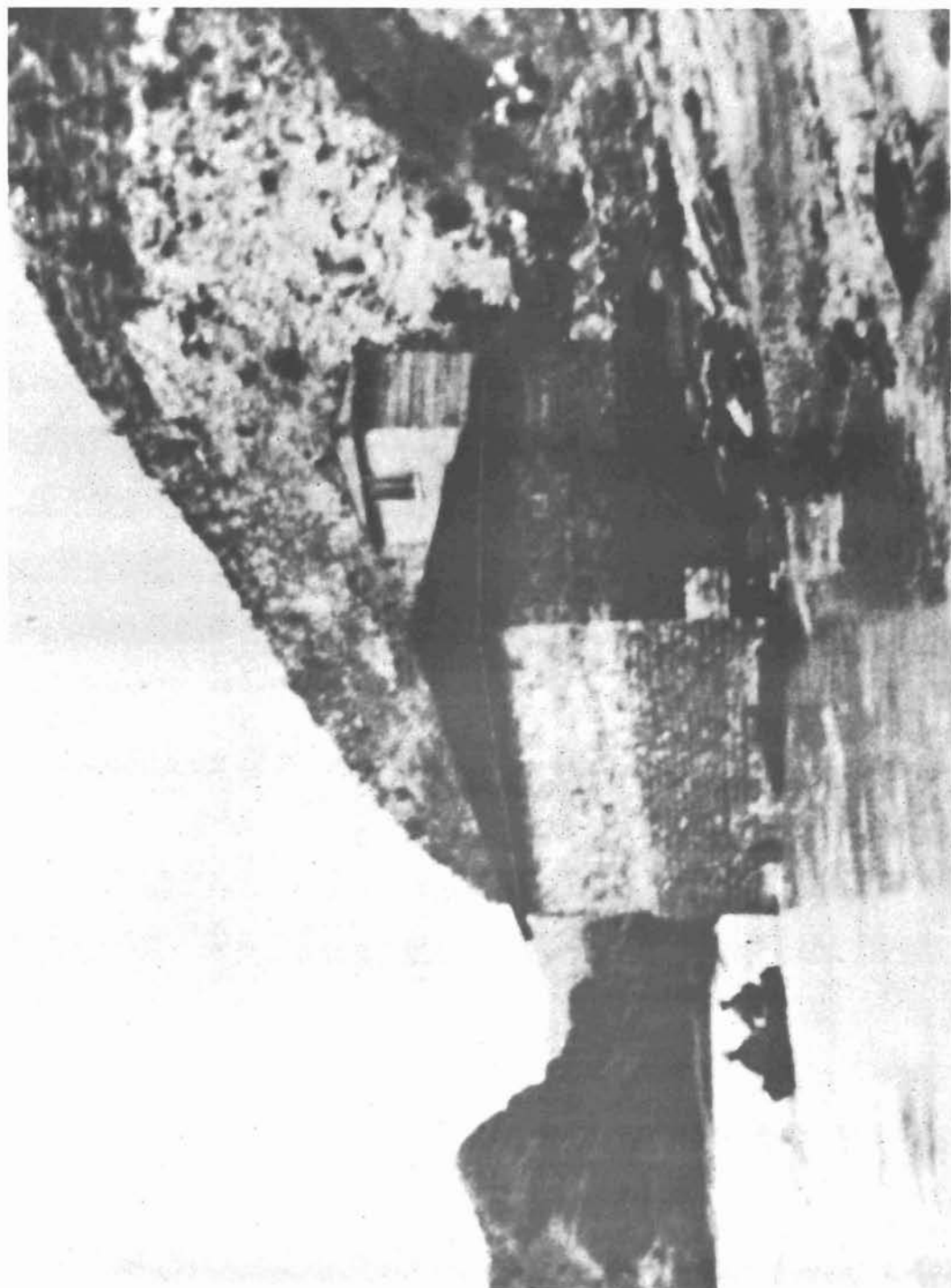


ILLUSTRATION NO. 3: Hot Springs. This aerial photograph shows the store and motor court. Notice the shelters or residences among the trees. The motor court is rimmed by a cane-covered ramada. The store does not yet have the frame shelter addition that shows in later photographs and still survives. The shelter is said to have been used by Maggy Smith, manager, as a residence. The mineral springs were located downstream from this complex off the right edge of the photograph.

The precise date and origin of this photograph are unknown. It probably dates from the early or mid 1930's.

This photograph was copied from one in the historical files of Big Bend National Park.



ILLUSTRATION NO. 4: Hot Springs, looking down Tornillo Creek at its confluence with the Rio Grande. The store and motor court are shown from a different angle than the preceding photo and show a greater abundance of temporary shelters and residences. The structure indicated in the extreme upper left on the ridge overlooking the Rio Grande may be the Langford residence. The Livingston House and Postman's Shack were erected across the creek just below the ridge of Boquillas flagstone at right center on the photograph.

The precise date and origin of this photograph are unknown. It is the mate to that one used for illustration no. 3 and, like it, probably dates from the early or mid 1930's.

This photograph was copied from one in the historical files of Big Bend National Park.





ILLUSTRATION NO. 5: Hot Springs showing the sheltered addition to the store and windmill and water tank. Taken looking downstream on the Rio Grande.

Again the date and origin of this photograph are unknown. Undoubtedly it was taken later than the preceding illustrations nos. 3 and 4 judging by the model years of the vehicles, the addition of the windmill and the frame extension on the store. It was probably taken in the mid 1940's.

This photograph was copied from one in the historical files of Big Bend National Park.

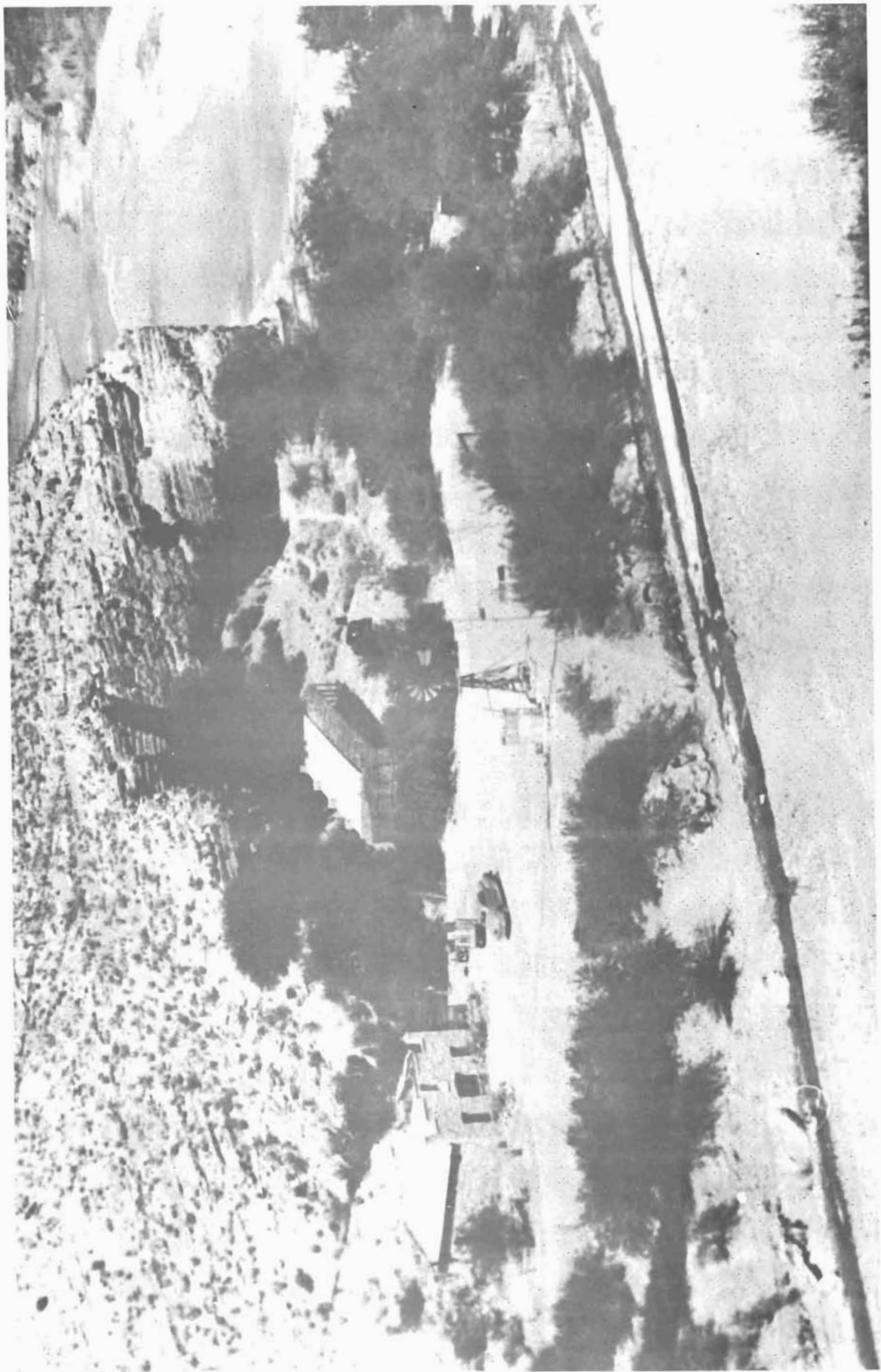


ILLUSTRATION NO. 6: Store at Hot Springs. It served as trading post and post office. It appears here virtually as its remains appear today including the sheltered extension, although today it is a mere shell.

The date and origin of this photograph are unknown. Probably it was taken in the mid 1940's.

This photograph was copied from one in the historical files of Big Bend National Park.

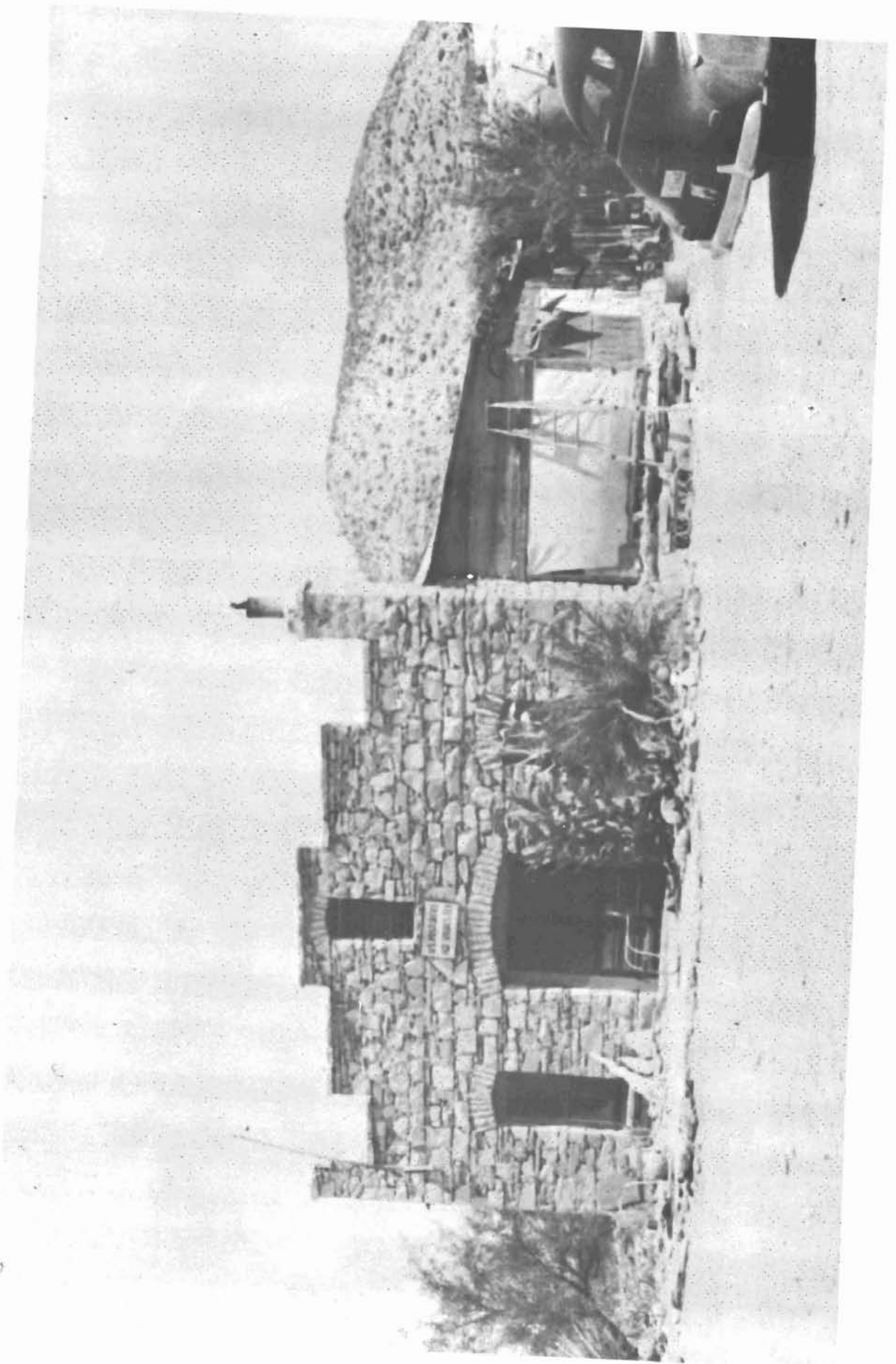


ILLUSTRATION NO. 7: Motor Court at Hot Springs.  
Along with the store, it was constructed during the Langfords' occupation of the area between 1927 and 1942. This structure still survives without the cane-covered ramada and less its window and door frames.

While the precise date and origin of this photo are unknown, it was probably taken in the mid 1940's.

This photograph was copied from one in the historical files of Big Bend National Park.

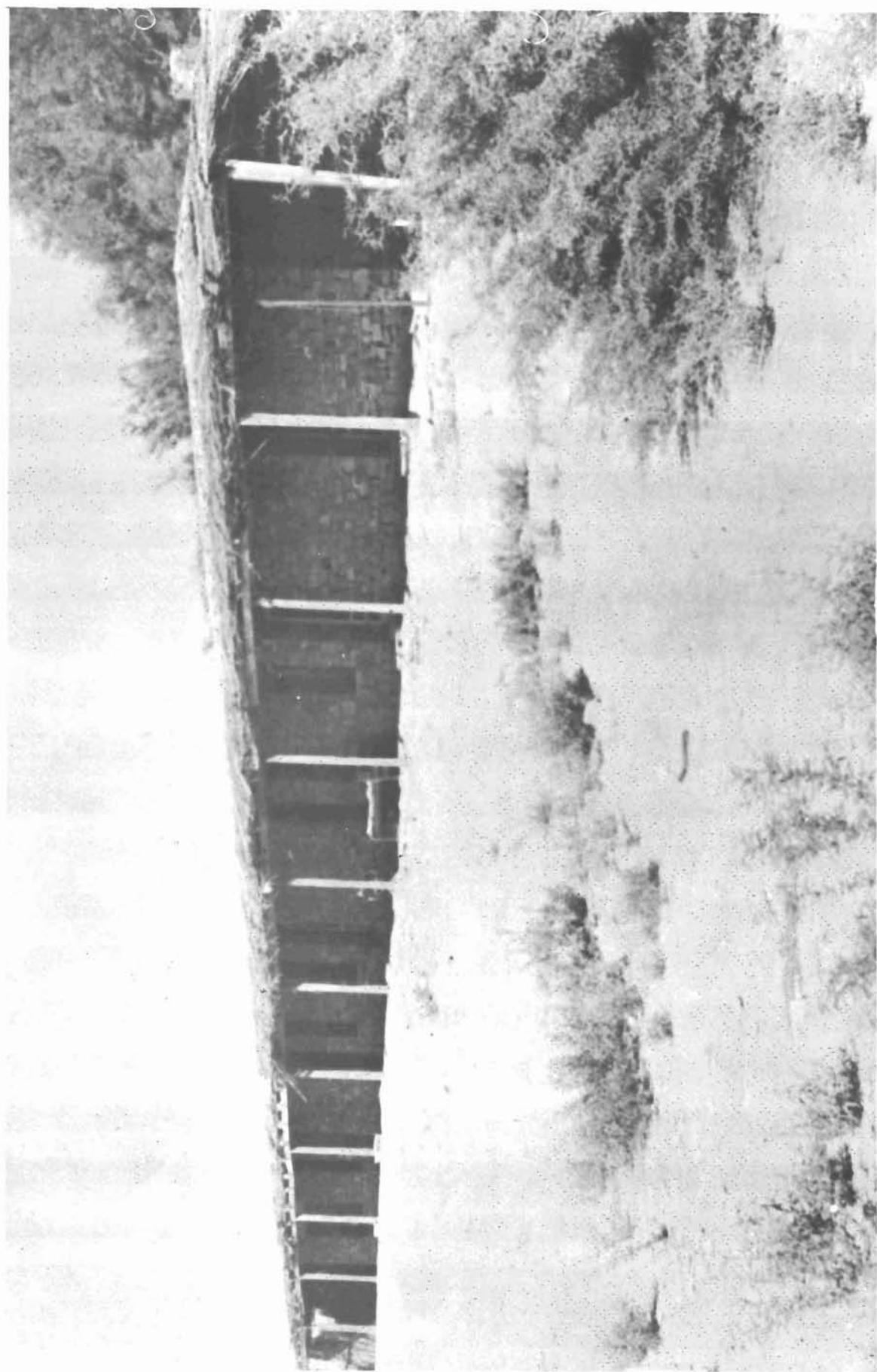


ILLUSTRATION NO. 8: Bathhouse at Hot Springs.  
During the 1927-1942 occupation of the area by the Langford family, the bathhouse was covered only by canvas. This photograph indicates that Langford abandoned the original bathhouse outlined by the remaining wall, and built a new but smaller enclosure during the later occupancy.

The precise date of the photograph is unknown but was probably taken in the mid 1940's.

While this illustration was copied from a photo in the historical files of Big Bend National Park, the original seems to have been by Ross-Pix, New York, numbered 1,802.



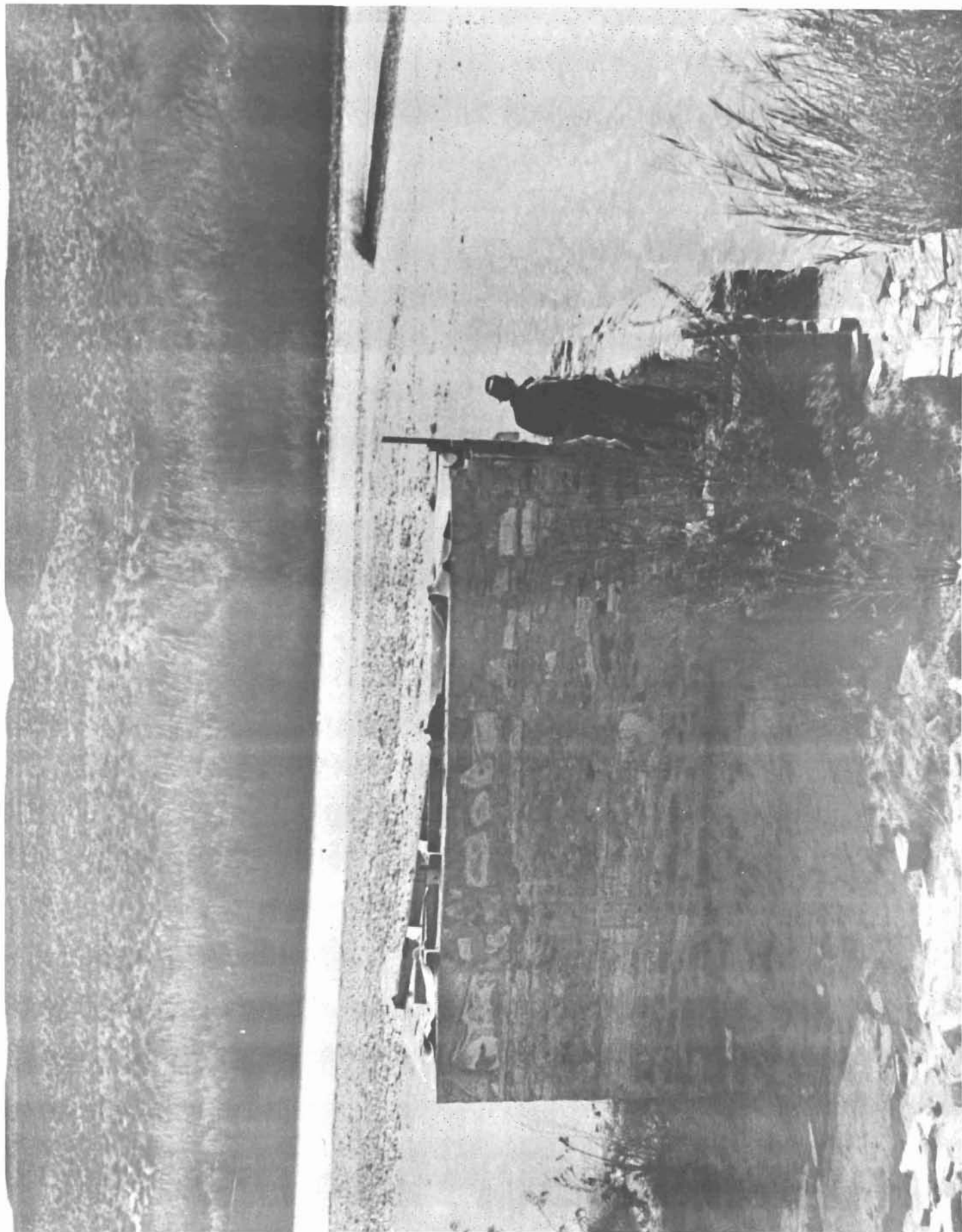
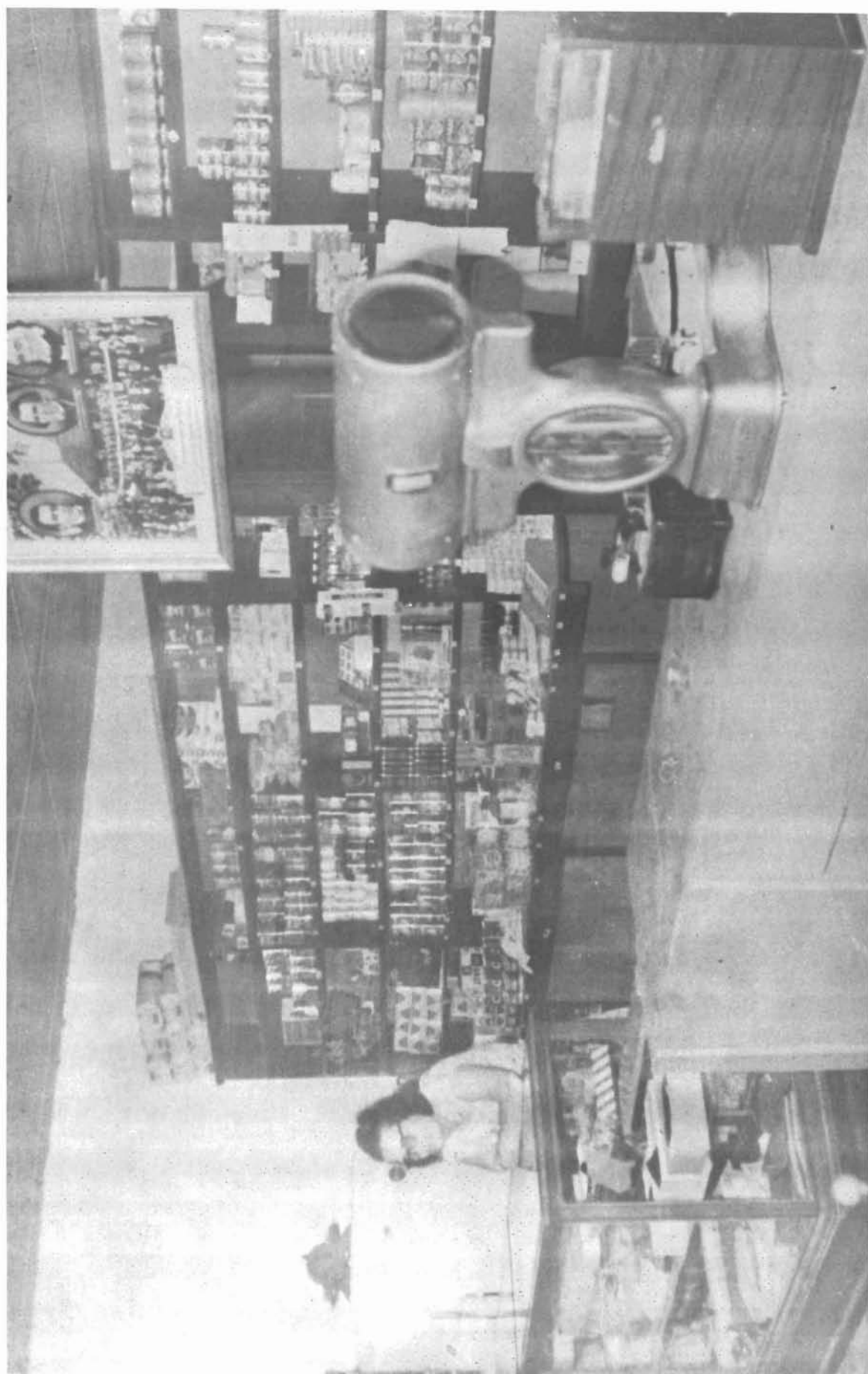


ILLUSTRATION NO. 9: Interior of the store at Hot Springs. The lady behind the counter is identified as "Maggie" Smith.

The photograph from which this was copied is located in the historical files of Big Bend National Park and bears the pencilled date, 1951, on its reverse side.



ILLUSTRATIONS NOS. 10 and 11: Miniature folder distributed by J. O. Langford heralding the values of his resort. The folder indicates that the store was also a local museum and reveals the mineral analysis of the spring. Prices are given and services and facilities reviewed.

The folder is located in the historical files of Big Bend National Park. Its date of publication is probably about 1935 or 1936 judging by the reference to the local CCC camp and the proposed international park.

# THE FOUR PAIN OF YOUTH

THAT PONCE DE LEON  
FAILED TO FIND

HOT SPRINGS TEXAS

*The Mecca of the Health Seeker*



Flows 250,000 Gallons a Day

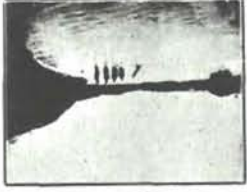
105 Ft.

Located on the banks of the Rio Grande in the  
proposed International Park of  
one million acres.

**MARATHON SUPPLIES**  
WINDMILL, BURNING  
AND WATER SUPPLY MATERIALS  
Marathon, Texas

**CHAMBERS APPLIANCE CO.**  
Alpine, Texas

ELECTRIC GAS AND KEROSENE REFRIGERATORS  
LIGHT PLANTS  
Sales and Service



**FINE SWIMMING AT HOT SPRINGS**

**CHISOS MOTOR CO.**

Oil and Auto Accessories  
GENERAL REPAIR SHOP

**SPORTS SWEET SHOP**  
HOME-MADE ICE CREAM  
AND COLD DRINKS

Alpine Texas

**ALPINE DRUG STORE**

The **REXALL** Store

Opposite the Bank

Phone 118



**BAJA DEL SOL.**

Chief of the Apache Indians who was killed by  
his tribesmen in the Chisos Mountains.  
Later his subjects claimed that they heard  
his footsteps, and saw his ghost, hence the  
name Chisos, meaning ghost.  
This famous chief and his tribe found re-  
fuge from their ill by bathing in and drinking  
of this remarkable water.

Why not do as he did?

For Further Information or Reservation

Write

**J. O. LANGFORD COMPANY**

**HOT-SPRINGS, TEXAS**

**RITCHIEY BROS.**

GENERAL MERCHANDISE

Marathon Texas



I do my drinking at the fountain of youth, and my  
relaxing in the Hot Springs. Mine's something of  
1,000 health, 2,000 Indian arrowheads, skinning and  
including knives; scores of needles, hammers, mauls, etc.  
I do my shopping at the hardware of the Basketweaver.

**GAGE HOTEL**

Modern Rooms, \$1.00 up

Short Orders and Regular Meals

HOME COOKING Served Family Style.

Marathon, Texas

**B.F. COOPER, JR.**

CHOICE HONEY

Midway between Marathon and Hot Springs

Marathon, Texas



**45-POUND CATFISH,**

18 inches high, caught at Hot Springs.

**COOPERS STORE  
FILLING STATION & CAFE**

47 Miles South of Marathon

POPULAR PRICES

**STOREY-WHITESIDE  
LUMBER CO.**

Alpine, Texas

*In the Morning Side of the Street,  
In the Evening a very Day and Night;*

**POPS CHUCK WAGON**

Alpine Texas

**HEALTH AT HOT SPRINGS**

Handicaps have regained their health by  
drinking and bathing in this wonderful water.

Why not you?

Sufferers from asthma, kidney diseases,  
dropsy, jaundice, psoriasis, eczema, pneumonia

of all forms, stomach troubles including ulcers,  
tobacco poisoning, rheumatism, boils, skin dis-

ease, influenza, neuritis, gonorrhea, primary dis-

ease, have left their troubles here and gone  
home rejoicing.

Hot Springs is located on the bank of the  
Rio Grande 115 miles south of Alpine in  
Brewster County, 25 miles south of Marathon

Texas.

It is easily accessible over graded State  
Highway No. 227 via Marathon.

An ideal winter resort, warm sunny days,  
Very seldom freezing temperatures.

Splendid fishing the year around. Catfish  
range from ten to fifty pounds.

Good hunting grounds and magnificent  
scenery. Headquarters for hunting parties.

Good Food

**BLUE BONNETT CAFE**

H. L. SCHMIDT, Prop.

Marathon Texas

**W. R. GREY**

MARKET AND GROCERY

Phone 50

Marathon Texas

The cold clear waters of Tornillo Creek  
flow through the camp grounds.

Purified light housekeeping rooms for  
one family are 75 cents per day and \$8.25 per  
week. Parloring do not include linen.

Bathes are 25 cents each. Courses of 21  
baths are \$8.00. Children between 5 and 10  
years, half price; under 5, free.

Camping arbors rent at 15 and 25 cents  
per day. Free camping under trees, and free  
fishing.

One-day scenic trips can be made to many  
points of interest. The Chisos (Ghost) Moun-

tains with elevation of 9,960 ft. are 20 miles  
from Hot Springs. A CCC camp has been  
established there and tourists are especially  
invited to visit the camp.

Saddle horses may be obtained for trips  
to the highest peaks where one may see more  
than 100 miles every direction.

**MOTOR INN SERVICE STATION**

Texas Products - Greasing and Washing

Price Information.

DAD WILSON, Prop.

Marathon Texas

**BIG BEND GULF STATION**

All Gulf Products - Modern Repair Shop

TOM YARRERO, Mgr.

Marathon Texas

**ANALYSIS OF HOT SPRINGS WATER**

From a Mountain Spring (1920)

Total Mineral Matter (at 100° C) 122.50

Sulfates (SO4) 71.20

Calcium Carbonate (CaCO3) 22.50

Magnesium Sulphate (MgSO4) 17.50

Sodium Chloride (NaCl) 11.20

The percentage of this water is listed and the  
amount analyzed shows it to be the best composition I  
have ever seen for both drinking and bathing purposes.

T. Richard Baily, M.D., V.A.C.S., Senior Hospital, Texas  
Amen, Texas.

**MARATHON GARAGE**

Marathon Texas

Alpine Texas

ILLUSTRATION NO. 12: Store at Hot Springs showing a five-gallon hand powered gasoline pump and a string of catfish heads as they appeared in July of 1936.

The photograph, and its identification and date supplied by Ross A. Maxwell, former Superintendent of Big Bend National Park, by letter, Oct. 16, 1968.

Note the absence of the shelter extension and pipe smokestack that appear in later photographs. This fact reinforces the position that the extension was added as a manager's residence when the property was added to the National Park.

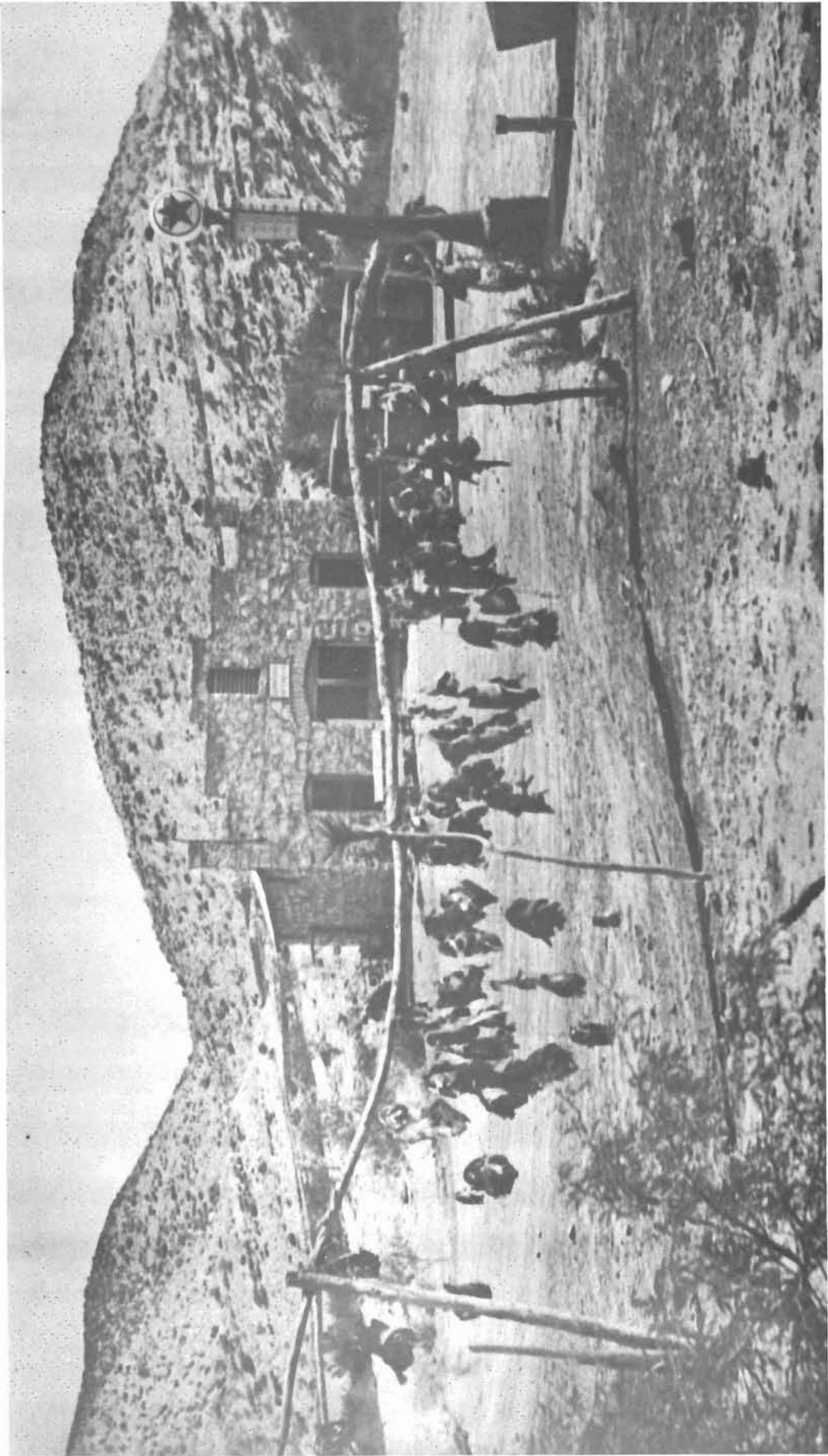


ILLUSTRATION NO. 13. Postman's Shack and Livingston Residence. The small frame structure to the left was built and owned by Ed Hancock, who was Star Route postman from Marathon to Hot Springs for 40 years. The larger stone structure to the right was built and owned by Charles Livingston, formerly of Alpine, Texas.

Photograph and identification supplied by Ross A. Maxwell by letter, October 16, 1968.

Date unknown.



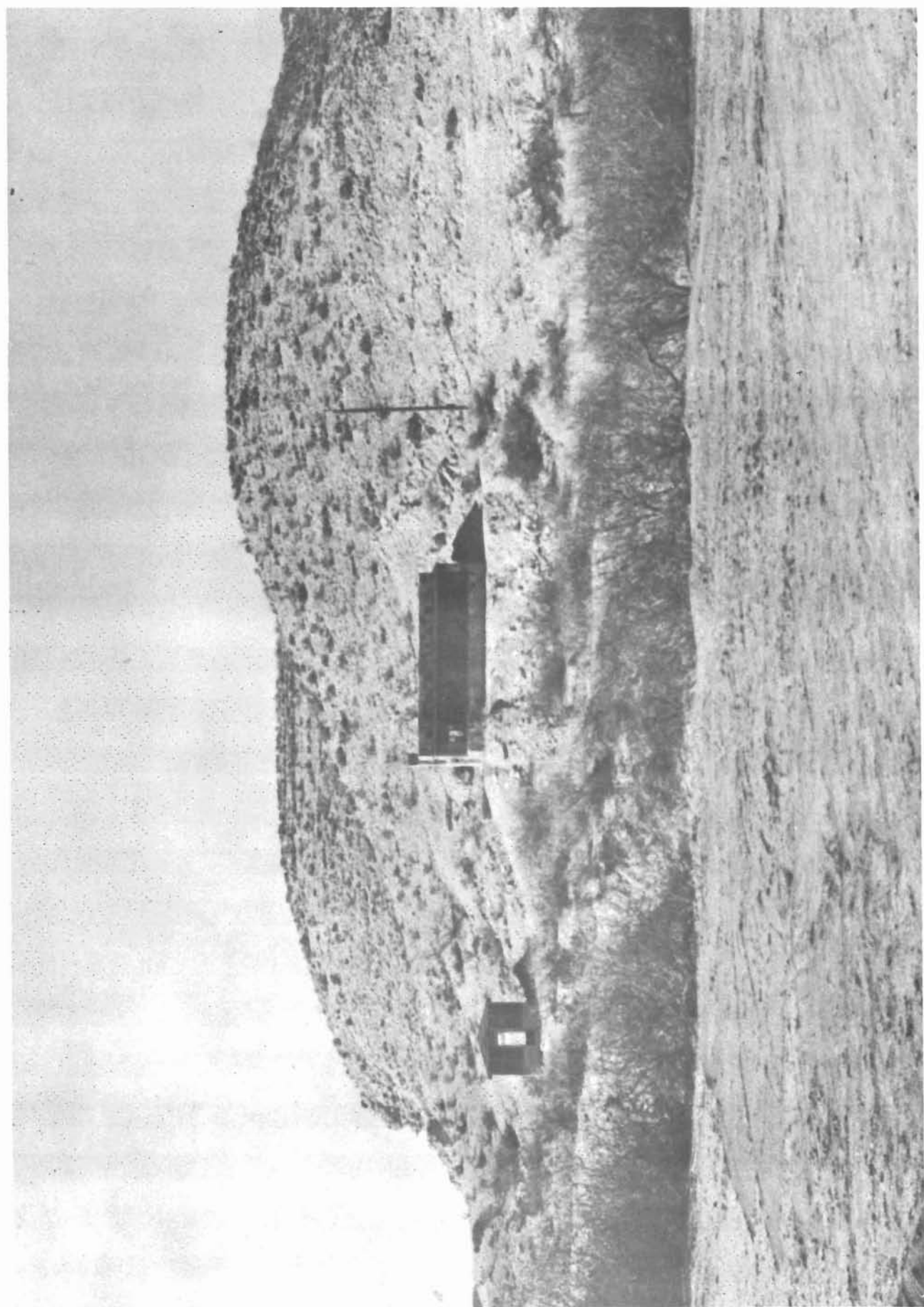


ILLUSTRATION NO. 14: Cane Bathhouse at the lower spring. This would be the one on the Gordon property leased by Langford. It is reported that during the 1930's and 1940's it was regarded as only a "midhole" but Langford required those he suspected of having "social diseases" to bathe there.

Information and photograph supplied by Ross A. Maxwell.

Date unknown.



R3-268-T