

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name CAPON SPRINGS

other names/site number Capon Springs Baths; Capon Springs and Farms; Frye's Springs; Watson Town

2. Location

street & number [REDACTED] ☒ not for publication

city or town [REDACTED] N/A vicinity

state West Virginia code WV county Hampshire code 027 zip code [REDACTED]

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

William G. Luman
Signature of certifying official/Title

10/5/93
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Capon Springs
Name of Property

Hampshire Co., WV
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>15</u> | <u>15</u> | buildings |
| <u>2</u> | <u>1</u> | sites |
| <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | structures |
| <u>7</u> | <u>5</u> | objects |
| <u>24</u> | <u>22</u> | Total |

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Hotel

RECREATION & CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

HEALTH CARE: Resort

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Hotel

RECREATION & CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

HEALTH CARE: Resort

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY; Greek Revival

LATE VICTORIAN: Victorian Vernacular

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone; concrete block

walls Wood/Weatherboard; Brick; Concrete Block;
Stone

roof Metal; Asphalt Shingle

other _____

Narrative Description

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

Capon Springs

Name of Property

Hampshire Co., WV

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☒ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☒ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☒ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☒ previously listed in the National Register
- ☒ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☒ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☒ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

RECREATION

Period of Significance

C1850-1943

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other **ARCHIVES, Capon Springs and Farms, Inc.**
- Name of repository:
P.O. Box 0, Capon Springs, WV 26823

Hampshire Co., WV
County and State

Acreage of Property Approx. 30 acres

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| 1 | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 2 | | | |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| 3 | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 4 | | | |

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

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

name/title Maral Kalbian/Julie Vosmik

organization 1-11 date July 1993

Kalbman: Rt. 1, Box 86 (703) 837-2081

street & number Vosmik: 505 N. Blvd. #17 telephone (804) 358-5838

Kalbman: Boyce 22620

city or town Vosmik: Richmond state VA zip code 23220

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Maps

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

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

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

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

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

name Capon Springs and Farms, Inc. c/o Pete Budnyk

street & number P.O. Box 0 telephone (304) 874-3695

city or town Capon Springs state WV zip code 25623

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation SheetCAPON SPRINGS HISTORIC DISTRICT
Hampshire County, West VirginiaSection number 7 Page 17. SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:Located at the [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The district, which runs along approximately a [REDACTED] is dominated by several mid-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century buildings including the Main House, the Pavilions and President's Cottage, Fairfax Cottage, Hampshire Cottage, the Recreation Center, and the Spring House, to name a few. A large expanse of lawn lies in front of the buildings to the east, whereas the buildings to the west sit almost directly off of the road. Recreation-related resources are also found along this main artery of the district, including the swimming pool, campfire ring, shuffle boards, and tennis court. The remainder of the resources in the district are tucked into the hillside on either side of the road. These include some of the modern living quarters, as well as the utilitarian buildings related to the day-to-day services of the resort. The noncontributing elements in the district include several living quarters, game fields, a pond, and the Meeting House. In general these resources are relatively inconspicuous and conform well to the historic elements in the district.

The resort of Capon Springs and Farms grew up around the mineral spring of Capon Spring. First discovered by Henry Frye in the late 1760s, it has long been believed that the spring contained medicinal qualities. The reputation of its healing qualities grew quickly, and in 1787, the spring and about twenty acres of land around it were laid off into lots and streets known as the "Town of Watson". During the nineteenth century, the fame of the springs continued to grow. In 1850 the Mountain House hotel building was constructed. An imposing structure rising four stories high, it was destroyed by fire in 1911. Also in 1850, the State of Virginia built the Greek Revival-style Pavilions and President's Cottage to house the baths. During the period from the mid-nineteenth century until the 1910s, Capon Springs continued to prosper and grow. Many buildings were constructed in the 1880s when the property was under the ownership of William H. Sale. After the tragic fire of the Mountain House in 1911, the resort began to deteriorate. It was not until the 1930s, under the ownership of Louis Austin, that Capon Springs recaptured its fame and grandeur as a summer resort. Still under Austin family ownership, Capon Springs and Farms is one of the best-preserved nineteenth-century spring resorts in the state.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2Capon Springs Historic District
Hampshire County, WVGENERAL DESCRIPTION AND ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS:

Capon Springs Historic District encompasses roughly thirty acres of land that includes most of the 1787 Watson Town plat. Nestled at the base of [REDACTED] is the famous Capon Spring, the natural feature that has attracted visitors for at least two centuries. At the northern entrance are two stone gateposts inscribed with "Capon Springs". (Photo 1) These were constructed in the early 1930s when the resort was rehabilitated by Louis Austin. The entrance from the south is much more dramatic. After driving down the mountain along the one-lane, winding, dirt-road section of [REDACTED] one all of a sudden comes upon Capon Springs. The first building encountered when approaching from the north is the Spring House, built in the 1920s of native sandstone on the site of the famous Capon Spring. (Photo 2) This octagonal-shaped stone building shelters the spring and blends in well with the dramatic cliffs of rock towering above it. The Capon Springs Historic District includes an area generally along [REDACTED] between these two entrances. (Photo 3)

According to local history, the earliest discovery of Capon Springs by a white settler was in 1765. Henry Frye apparently came upon the spring while hunting and came back several times. The springs were at one time called Frye's Springs although Frye did not own the land. Joseph Watson acquired the land which included the spring around this period. He died leaving no heirs and the land reverted to the Commonwealth of Virginia. In 1787, by an Act of the General Assembly, the Spring and about twenty acres of land were platted as the Town of Watson. The town was laid off into streets which included thirty-eight lots. These lots were to be sold at auction by a ten-member, state-appointed Board of Trustees.

During the early to mid- nineteenth century, many of the lots at Watson Town were sold and developed. The spring's reputation of its medicinal qualities fueled this growth and the area soon became a popular nineteenth-century summer resort. The well-known Virginia historian, Samuel Kercheval, wrote about the springs in 1833 and described the area in the following manner, "This place is too publicly known to require a minute description in this work; suffice it to say, that it is located in a deep narrow glen, on the west side of the Great North Mountain....The trustees for several years past have imposed a pretty heavy tax upon visitors for the use of the waters. This tax is intended to raise funds for keeping the bath, &c., in repair. There are seventeen or eighteen houses erected without much regard to regularity, and a

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boarding establishment capable of accommodating some fifty or sixty visitors, which is kept in excellent style". (Kercheval, pp.324, 325)

The "boarding establishment" Kercheval mentions is no longer standing. In 1849, the firm of Ricard, Buck and Blakemore from Baltimore purchased twelve lots in Watson Town. They built the impressive Mountain House, a four-story building that could accommodate 500 people. According to Stan Cohen in his book, Historic Springs of the Virginias, when completed in 1851, this hotel was one of the largest structures in the South. (Cohen, p.145) It is possible that some buildings may have been lost during the Civil War; the Mountain House was destroyed by fire in 1911. At about the same time of the construction of the Mountain House, the Board of Trustees had the Baths (now the Pavilion and President's Cottage) and the Reservoir (now the Recreation Hall) built. The State of Virginia paid for the construction (\$20,000 for the Baths) and the Board of Trustees were charged with the buildings' maintenance.

The Pavilion and President's Cottage have undergone fairly little exterior alteration during their 143-year history. (Photo 5) Located directly across a vast expanse of lawn from the Mountain House, the Baths were supplied water from the reservoir. Entirely constructed of brick, the baths contained thirty-two private bath rooms; twelve for women on the northwest end, and twenty for men on the southeast end. Each bath had its own dressing room and was supplied with hot and cold plunges and shower baths. (Comments, p.13) Although the buildings have been converted into guest residences, and the entrances changed, the frames of the brick baths and the old entrances are still visible. (Comments, p.13) During the 1920s the southeast pavilion wing was used as a bottling plant for the Capon Water Company. The two bath pavilions are fronted by a long portico.

The central portion of the Baths, then called the Bath House Cottage and now called the President's Cottage, housed parlors and retiring rooms used by the guests. (Photo 6) During the early twentieth century, it became the residence of the Nelsons, who acquired and ran Capon Springs. It later housed the offices for the Capon Water Company. Today, there are five guest rooms on the first floor, which has a central hall plan, and the second floor is used as a private residence. It was named the President's Cottage in the late 1910s, in honor of the United States Presidents who visited Capon Springs. Only one confirmed Presidential visit is documented in the Capon Springs records; that of Franklin Pierce in 1854. (Comments, p.13)

The Pavilions and President's Cottage complex are constructed entirely of brick (5-course American bond) in the Greek Revival style. All have flat roofs with front parapets that are

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decorated with an applied laurel wreath motif. The Greek Revival details are generally subdued and are most obvious in the entrance to the central block and on the interior of the central hall. The double-paneled front door has a six-light transom above and three-light sidelights with wooden panels. The door surround has fluted trim and plain corner blocks. The one-bay portico features Tuscan columns, a plain entablature, a dentiled cornice, and urn-like balusters. The interior decoration around the doorway also uses fluted trim with corner blocks, and the staircase has a plain newel and balusters, typical of many Greek-Revival style ones from this period. Although the buildings were remodeled in the 1930s and 1940s, they still retain much of their architectural integrity.

The massive building campaign of the 1850s resulted in the attraction of many guests from the North and South. But the debt load was so great that the resort was forced to close at the beginning of the Civil War. (Comments, p.7) In 1875 William H. Sale, a Confederate Captain, bought the Mountain House and reopened it as a resort. He continued to purchase surrounding property, and by the turn of the century owned all of the Town of Watson, (except for the state-owned Baths and Spring) and thousands of acres of adjacent mountain land.

The resort enjoyed remarkable popularity during the period of ownership under Sale. Not only did Sale renovate and enlarge existing buildings, he also constructed many new ones. Some of these include the Hampshire Cottage (#18), the Austin Cottage (#24), and the Main House (#1). The Hampshire Cottage (#18) was constructed around 1892 in the vernacular Victorian style. (Photo 7). A two-story, three-bay, symmetrical frame building clad in weatherboard, it features a hipped roof with a wooden cupola and fine two-story, two-level, integral front porches with Victorian detailing. It has had very few modern additions and is one of the finest surviving Sale-era buildings in the district.

The Main House (#1), was called the Annex when it was constructed by Sale in 1887 to accommodate the overflow of guests from the Mountain House. (Photo 8) Used primarily as guest quarters, Louis Austin added the dining room and kitchen wing in the 1930s. The largest, most impressive of the surviving historic buildings in the district, the Main House still retains much of its original Victorian-style appearance. (Photo 9). It is a three-story, seven-bay, frame structure surrounded by three-story wrap-around porches with square columns and sawn balustrades.

Sale was also responsible for beautifying the grounds at Capon Springs and building several recreation-related resources. He constructed a large frame bowling alley at the south end of the

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resort, which was later converted into guest rooms (West Virginia Cottage #22). He was also responsible for the construction of the swimming pool in 1879 (#15). (Photo 10) This oval pool, which measures ninety by forty-eight feet, is continuously pipe-fed with Capon Spring water. It is in original condition except for the bottom which was replaced with concrete in the 1930s. The original dressing rooms were quite large and were fronted by a magnificent arched loggia. They were replaced in the late 1940s by the current, much smaller, dressing rooms which are constructed of concrete block and use brick and glass block for detailing.

William H. Sale died in 1900 and his son-in-law, Charles F. Nelson, took over the business. From 1900-1910, Nelson continued in the footsteps of his father-in-law by expanding his land holdings and improving the resort. In 1905, he purchased the spring, the reservoir, and the Bath House from the State of West Virginia, thus being the first proprietor to own the entire Capon Springs complex. The tragic fire of the Mountain House in 1911 virtually ended the "golden-age" of the Sale-Nelson era. Nelson sold the entire Capon Springs property (approximately 320 acres) to Will Atkinson in 1917. (Comments, p.9)

Atkinson kept the resort open using the buildings that had survived the fire. He also made several improvements to the property, including the construction of the existing stone springhouse. A wooden building was constructed around the stone-lined reservoir that had fed the baths (#20). (Photo 11) In the 1930s, the building was given a floor and converted into a recreation hall. It is still used for recreational purposes, and the reservoir, which is still beneath the building, now supplies the sprinkler system in the Main House.

The bottling and selling of Capon Springs water was another use of the property by Atkinson. This ambitious enterprise used existing buildings on the property (the bathing pavilions) and also necessitated the construction of new ones, such as the old Bottling Plant (#4) and the current Ping-Pong House (#13). (Photo 12)

The multi-million dollar plan of Atkinson to revitalize the resort into the "Capon Springs Club" was never realized, despite his vision of the property's potential. Atkinson fell into debt and in 1932 the property was auctioned off and purchased by Louis Austin, who had been a distributor for Capon Springs Water in Philadelphia. (Comments, p.10)

Austin had plans to continue selling the water and perhaps expand the operation. However, he ran into numerous obstacles during the 1930s, including slumping Depression-era sales, and government crackdowns on mineral water health claims. (Comments, p.10) He abandoned the

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water bottling business and concentrated instead on revitalizing the resort. Remarkably, Austin was able to turn the resort back into a very profitable business with help of friends, family, and God (whom he called "our Senior Partner"). He modernized Capon Springs by bringing electricity and plumbing to the cottages, building new residences, and generally beautifying the grounds.

A "Report on Repairs Needed and Improvements Recommended for Capon Springs", dated 1932, is a valuable resource that documents the broad scope of Austin's work on the facility during this period. His revitalization efforts are still highly visible and in use today. They range from large-scale ventures such as the addition of the dining room and kitchen to the Main Building, to small details like the five stone spring-fed water fountains. (Photo 13)

Capon Springs enjoyed great popularity during Austin's lifetime. He continued to make improvements to the property during the 1940s and 1950s. For example, the complex of utilitarian buildings located behind the Main House including a work shop, boiler room, and linen and wood shop were constructed around 1943 and are still in use today.

The largest building constructed by Austin was the Meeting House (#33). It was constructed during the late 1950s on the site of the old Mountain House, and houses the auditorium and other meeting rooms. (Photo 14) This thirteen-bay, one-story brick building is fronted by a one-story, thirteen-bay, full-length portico reminiscent of the one on the Pavilions. Although considered a noncontributing element in the historic district because of its age, it is a fine example of how the modern intrusions are relatively subtle and blend in well with the other historic elements of the district.

The landscape features in the Capon Springs Historic District range in variety from the natural backdrop of the mountains to the man-made elements of small gardens. As one passes through the district along Route 16, this sense of variety is further heightened by the vast expanse of lawn in front of the buildings to the east. (Photo 3). Man-made recreational features such as shuffle boards, a campfire ring, a children's playground, and a horseshoe ring blend well with the landscape elements and help make Capon Springs and Farms a unique resort area.

The Capon Springs Historic District is one of the best-preserved mid-nineteenth century resorts in the state. Among its greatest assets are its range of historic resources and its traditional rural character related to its use as a health resort. Although not as grand as some of the other spas in the state, the buildings at Capon Springs have retained their integrity. The historical

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associations of the district are reflected both in its cultural and natural resources. It provides a fairly full representation of the evolution of a unique community from its first settlement in the late eighteenth-century to its continued use as a summer resort today.

INVENTORY:**MAIN HOUSE (#1):**

Frame (weatherboard); 3 stories; 7 bays (symmetrical); gable roof (standing seam metal); 8/8 double-hung windows; 3-story wrap-around porches with square columns and a sawn balustrade; 2 exterior front brick chimneys; 2 interior flues; split-level basement; 3-light transom over some doors; gable-roofed cupola; Victorian; 1887; 1930s additions include the side dining room and kitchen wing, and the front porch terrace; later additions include the food storage wing. Contributing building.

APPLE BUTTER HOUSE (#2):

Frame (vinyl siding); 2 stories; 7 bays; raised concrete block walk-out basement; gable roof (asphalt shingle); 1/1 double-hung windows; vernacular; ca.1983-1985. Noncontributing building.

WARE ROOM (#3):

Frame (weatherboard); 1 story; 1 bay (asymmetrical); gable-end building; gable roof (corrugated metal); exposed rafter ends, 1/1 double-hung windows; sits on posts; attic window; vernacular; early 1950s. Noncontributing building.

BOTTLING PLANT (#4):

Concrete block; 1/2 stories; 5 bays (symmetrical); weatherboard in gable ends; gable roof (corrugated metal); paired 6/6 double-hung windows; wooden lintels; 3 interior flues; 5-paneled vertical doors; double garage doors on SW end; was used as a bottling plant, now used for water pick up; vernacular; ca.1943. Contributing building.

PUMP STATION (#5):

Modern pump station as part of sewage treatment plant; also a 15' x 15' concrete pool that is the irrigation pond for the golf course; 1980s. Noncontributing structure.

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Capon Springs Historic District
Hampshire County, WV

CAPON SPRINGS AND FARMS BENCHES (#6):

Molded concrete bench with "Capon Springs and Farms" inscribed on the side; 3 benches; early 1980s. 3 noncontributing objects.

GATEPOSTS (#7):

2 stone gateposts with concrete caps; "Capon Springs" inscribed and painted on front sides of caps; topped with a concrete urn; early ca.1932. 2 contributing objects.

FISH POND (#8):

Pond with two concrete benches 2 wooden boat docks and a wooden arched bridge over the spillway which has a stone retaining wall; ca.1950. Noncontributing site.

WEBSTER COTTAGE (#9):

Frame (weatherboard); 1 story; 4 bays (symmetrical); 2 doors; gable roof (corrugated metal); pedimented, 2-bay portico with square supports; 1/1 double-hung windows; vernacular; 1942. Contributing building.

EDDIE AND GINNY BRILL COTTAGE (#10):

Concrete block; 1 story; 3 bays (asymmetrical); cross-gable roof (corrugated metal); semi-exterior end brick chimney; side wing; wood siding in gable ends; 1-bay integral porch; 1/1 double-hung windows; vernacular; mid- to late 1950s. Noncontributing building.

VIRGINIA COTTAGE (#11):

Frame (weatherboard); 1 story; 5 bays; gable roof (asphalt shingle); 5 bay porch with square columns and sawn balustrade; central bay consists of double french doors flanked by single doors; 6/6 double-hung windows; wooden shutters; concrete block foundation; vernacular; rebuilt 1990; small, concrete block boiler room building behind cottage. 2 noncontributing buildings.

ARBOR (#12):

3-bay grape arbor with tree trunks as posts; 1970s. Noncontributing object.

PING PONG HOUSE (#13):

Frame (vinyl siding); 1/2 stories; 3 bays (symmetrical); gable roof (standing seam metal); 6/6 double-hung windows; louvered wooden shutters; gable end returns; 6-light attic windows; double doors in back of building; interior walls and ceiling are clad in pressed tin that simulates

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brick; concrete floor and foundation; was originally a bottling plant but now houses the ping-pong tables; vernacular; ca.1920s. Contributing building.

SHUFFLE BOARD COURT (#14):

4 concrete shuffle boards surrounded by asphalt; 1980s. Noncontributing object.

SWIMMING POOL (#15A):

Stone and concrete; oval-shaped; 90' x 48'; fed by spring water; 1879; in the 1930s the bottom was replaced with concrete; also 2 small wading pools; surrounded by an American wire fence. Contributing structure.

POOLHOUSE (#15B):

Concrete block; 6 bays (symmetrical); 4 central bays are doors; glass brick used in the windows; shed roof (corrugated metal); brick cornice and brick sills; rectangular vents above brick cornice; late 1940s. Noncontributing building.

HONEYMOON COTTAGE (#16):

Concrete block; 1 story; 3 bays (symmetrical); exterior end brick chimney; gable roof (corrugated metal); concrete block foundation; 6/1 windows double-hung; 10-light windows on either side of chimney; weatherboard in gable ends; pedimented 1-bay portico with square supports; vernacular; ca.1947. Noncontributing building.

PAVILION AND PRESIDENT'S COTTAGE (#17):

This building consists of 3 sections- a central 2-story core and side, 1-story wings. All are constructed of brick (5-course American bond) in the Greek Revival style. The central section is a 2-story, 5-bay (symmetrical) building with 10-light casement windows on first floor, 6/6 double-hung windows on the second floor, louvered wooden shutters, wooden lintels and sills, and a brick panel in the front parapet with applied wreath motifs. The entrance is central and has a 6-light transom, 3-light sidelights with wooden panels, a double-paneled front door, and a 1-bay Greek Revival-style portico with Tuscan columns and urn-like balusters. The President's Cottage sits on a low stone foundation, and has an interior end brick chimney and an exterior end brick flue. It is flanked by 2, 1-story, brick wings. The wing to the north is divided into 20 bays. There are seven doors (2-panel), with three-light transoms above, and 1/1 double-hung windows. The wing is fronted by a 10-bay portico with Tuscan columns, and laurel wreaths in the front parapet. The south wing is almost identical to the west one except it is divided into 25 bays, has 6/6 double-hung windows, and is fronted by a 12-bay porch.

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These buildings were constructed in 1850 by the State of Virginia for \$20,000, to house the baths at Capon Springs. The baths were located in the pavilion wings and the central block contained parlors and retiring rooms. In the 1920s and 1930s the southern pavilion was used as a bottling plant for the Capon Water Company. Although the buildings were remodeled in the 1930s and 1940s, they still retain their architectural integrity. Contributing building.

HAMPSHIRE COTTAGE (#18):

Frame (weatherboard); 2 stories; 3 bays (symmetrical); split-level basement; 2/2 double-hung windows; louvered shutters; 2-story, 2-level, 5-bay integral front porches with square supports and sawn balustrades; 5-light transom and 4-light sidelights; side and rear wings; fire escape on side; hipped roof with hipped/pyramidal cupola with wooden vents (standing seam metal); vernacular Victorian; ca.1892. Contributing building.

FAIRFAX COTTAGE (#19):

Frame (weatherboard); 3 stories; 6 bays (asymmetrical); built in two sections with third floor added; 3 doors on first floor; gable roof (standing seam metal); stone foundation; 1/1 double-hung windows; 3-story, 3-level, 10-bay wrap around porch with square supports and sawn balustrade; louvered wooden shutters; 3 gable-roofed cupolas with 6/6 windows; gable-end returns; appears that 4 right bays were constructed first and the left 2 bays and third floor added later; rear wing with cupola and wooden balconies; vernacular Victorian; mid-19th century with additions and alterations in late 19th century. Contributing building.

RECREATION HALL (#20):

Frame (weatherboard); 1 story; 10 bays (asymmetrical); 6/6 double-hung windows with screened transom; pyramidal roof (asphalt shingle); square cupola with wooden vents; stone foundation; boxed cornice; 10 bays on side elevation; wing off of corner. This building was constructed in the 1920s and 1930s above the rock-lined, mid-19th-century reservoir that supplied the baths. The reservoir has been reinforced with concrete and is still in use today, supplying the sprinkler system in the main house. Contributing building.

SPRING HOUSE (#21):

Native sandstone (random rubble); octagonal; 1/2 stories; 2, 6-light windows; central 2-panel wooden door; 1/2 story is frame construction clad in asphalt shingle; flat roof (tar paper); rectangular single-pane windows with wire-reinforced safety glass. This building was constructed on the site of the original spring in the 1920s. Contributing building.

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WEST VIRGINIA COTTAGE (#22):

Frame (weatherboard); 1 story; 12 bays; gable roof (corrugated metal); gable end returns; plain friezeboard rear 1-story, 3-bay ell; split-level; sits on stone piers; fronted by a modern pressure-treated wooden deck with trellis below; each room has 1 door and 1 window. This building was originally a bowling alley but during the 1940s was converted into guest cottages. Vernacular; ca. late 19th century. Contributing building.

Small, frame, shed-roofed boiler room with coal-fired hot water heater located directly behind cottage. Noncontributing building.

WARD HOUSE (#23):

Log (v-notched); 1 story; 3 bays (symmetrical); batten door; 6/6 windows; gable roof (wooden shingle); exterior end stone chimney; low stone foundation; exposed poplar-pole rafter ends; weatherboard in gable ends; rear, 1-story, shed-roofed log wing; earliest surviving building in district; vernacular; 1981-1985 reconstruction. Noncontributing building.

AUSTIN COTTAGE (#24):

Frame (weatherboard); 2 stories; 3 bays (symmetrical); 6/6, and 8-light double casement windows; shallow-pitched hipped roof (standing seam metal); split-level stone foundation; 2-story, 2-level, 3-bay front porch on concrete block foundation with square supports and plain balusters; louvered wooden shutters; 2-light transom over door; rear, 2-story porches with shed roof; side staircase; vernacular; mid-1880s. Contributing building.

POE COTTAGE (#25):

Frame (weatherboard); 2 stories; 3 bays (asymmetrical); gable roof (standing seam metal); 2-story, shed-roofed, full-height portico with square columns and square balusters; concrete block pier foundation; 3 doors on first floor; windows on second floor are 3-light casements; modern side porch connected to c. 1990 wooden walkway; rear, 2-story, 2-level porches (1/2 enclosed); early to mid-1880s with later renovations; vernacular. Contributing building.

Small, modern, concrete block boiler-room building in rear. Noncontributing building

HARRY AND VIRGINIA LOU MCKEOWN COTTAGE (#26):

Concrete block; 1 story; 5 bays (symmetrical); gable roof (corrugated metal); 6/1 double-hung windows with batten shutters; 3-bay, 1-story gable-roofed front porch; exterior end brick chimney; vernacular; ca. 1950. Noncontributing building.

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Concrete block; 1/2 stories; 5 bays; originally 4 bays asymmetrical; gable roof (corrugated metal); 6/1 double hung windows with batten shutters; 3-bay, pedimented, off-center front porch; 1-bay end addition with shed roof; vernacular, ca.1949. Noncontributing building.

WORK SHOP (#28):

Concrete block; 1 story; 3 bays; (asymmetrical); 6/6 double-hung windows; on front elevation there is 1 large and 1 small garage doors; gable roof (corrugated metal); boxed cornice; side gable-roofed wing; wood siding and a 6/6 window in gable ends; one interior wall is of terracotta tile; vernacular utilitarian building; ca.1943. Contributing building.

LINEN/WOOD SHOP (#29):

Concrete block; 1 story; 1 bay (symmetrical); gable roof (corrugated metal); 6/6 double-hung windows; weatherboard and 6/6 double-hung window in gable ends; entrance is in gable end with 10-light double doors; vernacular utilitarian building; ca.1943. Contributing building.

BOILER ROOM (#30):

Concrete block; 1 story; 1 bay; gable roof (corrugated metal) wood siding in gable ends; single-door entrance; interior metal flues; houses gas-fired boiler; vernacular utilitarian building; ca.1943. Contributing building.

PETE AND CAROLYN BUDNYK COTTAGE (#31):

Frame (weatherboard); 1 story; 3 bays; gable roof (corrugated metal); 3-bay, shed-roofed front porch with square posts, 3-board railing, and exposed rafter ends; 1/1 windows; gable-roofed 1-story side addition; vernacular; ca.1949. Noncontributing building.

PLAYHOUSE (#32):

Frame (weatherboard); 1 story; 5 bays (symmetrical); may have been constructed in 2 sections (?); gable roof (corrugated metal); exposed rafter ends; 6/6 double-hung windows; some with louvered wooden shutters; shed-roofed side addition with 2 windows; wooden piers; entrances on three sides; vernacular; ca.1951. Noncontributing building.

MEETING HOUSE (#33):

Built in 2 sections during the late 1950s; front, 13-bay, 1-story brick section on a concrete block foundation, and rear, 2-story concrete block section. The building has 8/8 double-hung windows; 2 interior brick chimney and a metal flue. The central entrance has a 1-light transom and 5-light

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sidelights. The building is fronted by a 1-story, 13-bay, full-length front portico with Tuscan columns; paired columns at the central entrance, exposed rafter ends, and applied laurel-wreath motifs in the front parapet. The exterior detailing in this building imitates that of the Pavilion and President's Cottage. Noncontributing building.

5 DRINKING FOUNTAINS (#34):

5 stone drinking fountains with continuously-running spring-fed water; located in front of Main House, Hampshire Cottage, Fairfax Cottage, Poe Cottage, and Meeting House; ca.1932. 5 contributing objects.

TENNIS COURT (#35):

Tennis court surrounded by a tall chain-link fence; was originally clay but was covered in "har-tru" in the late 1970s; mid-1930s. Contributing structure.

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Capon Springs in Hampshire County is one of eight known warm springs in West Virginia. Located within Virginia until 1863 when the state of West Virginia was created, it was one of the most popular springs in the Valley of Virginia and was believed to have curative powers. Capon Springs achieved a national reputation as one of the state's premier spring resorts. Since its discovery in 1765 to the present, visitors have flocked to the springs, both for its healing qualities and the recreational aspects of the resort.

The development, success, and periodic decline of Capon mirror the history of American springs resorts. Proclaimed for their healing powers at a time when medicine was far from being a perfected science, the natural hot and cold springs were popular meeting places from approximately 1830 to the 1880s when their popularity peaked. The interest in the spring waters was not just a local phenomenon, but part of a national movement. The periods of greatest growth--the 1830s, '50s and '70s--coincided with massive epidemics of infectious diseases such as cholera, typhoid, yellow fever, smallpox, and malaria. Doctors believed that bad air was to blame and recommended fleeing the city during the summer. Thus springs such as Capon were visited to avoid and prevent illness as well as to improve and cure an existing malady. People afflicted with arthritis, gout, skin disorders, syphilis, infertility, menopause, and many other ailments sought remedies, either from bathing in the waters or drinking from the mineral-rich springs.

Though health benefits were the primary motivation for many, the rural gentry flocked to the resorts for the recreation and social opportunities they offered. Many guests spent the entire summer at Capon or stopped there enroute to other springs, thereby spending the better part of the summer away from their typically more-isolated and less-populated places of residence. Spring resorts were often the destinations of those seeking prospective spouses, and Capon was no exception.

Capon followed a typical pattern of development, initially consisting of an impermanent settlement of cabins and tents. Influential in its growth were the tenures of a Board of Trustees, the Ricard firm, William Sale, Charles Nelson, Will Atkinson, and Louis Austin, all of whom made substantial contributions to the promotion of the springs.

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The surviving buildings and landscape at Capon Springs meet criteria A and C. They constitute a rare and significant remnant of a historic way of life that profoundly influenced American society. The complex possesses significance both for its architecture and its contributions to the evolution of health resorts. Considered a premier spring during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, Capon retains buildings and a landscape that possess a remarkable degree of integrity and retain their ability to convey the appearance, arrangement and components of a once-thriving health resort.

As did most resorts of this type and period, Capon experienced a destructive fire and suffered from a decline in business as a result of advanced understanding of diseases and their treatment and prevention, as well as the increasing popularity of other kinds of recreation destination, especially seaside resorts. Improvements in public health and sanitation reduced the number of sick and doctors came to dismiss the benefits of mineral waters as they became infatuated with pharmaceutical chemistry. While those spring resorts that survived maintained a small and dedicated following, most Americans dismissed the benefits of mineral waters. Today there is a revival of interest in bottled spring waters and holistic medicine.

The period of significance for the Capon Springs district begins in 1850 and extends to 1943. Though established prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the complex does not retain any resources built prior to the President's Cottage and Pavilion.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The origins of mineral spring resorts and their use for medicinal purposes can be traced as far back as ancient Egypt and Rome, and more recently to European predecessors, particularly those in England, Germany, and Switzerland. It was the English prototype that most strongly influenced the American spas, but Wiesbaden, Baden-Baden, Spa, and Sainte Moritz were known to Americans as well. By the 1740s there were American spas claiming several thousand visitors a year, for when colonists discovered springs, they quickly began to emulate the yearly migrations that were fashionable in England. The typical mid-eighteenth-century English spring resort was described by William Addison as consisting of a "collection of hotels, boardinghouses, music pavilions, gaming rooms, tea rooms, bathing and drinking houses, tree-lined promenades and formal gardens with dense shrubbery suitable for private encounters." (Bridenbaugh) This description would adequately describe American resorts a century later.

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Mineral springs represent the earliest type of American resort. The allure of spring resorts or spas was at first based on their supposed health benefits, as it was commonly accepted that a wide variety of ailments were improved by bathing in and/or drinking mineral waters. In the absence of sophisticated health care and effective medicines and cures, the afflicted sought relief from the curative powers of water. Virginia, which had countless springs resorts, was a participator in a national movement and the growth of spring resorts in this state closely parallels the typical pattern of resort development.

By the time of the Revolutionary War, there were approximately a dozen spa resorts in America. Many late eighteenth-century physicians wrote books extolling the virtues of particular springs and mineral water in general, but improved health was not the only lure. In the south, the spring resorts were important meeting places for the rural gentry who vacationed at these isolated springs in search of healing waters, fresh air, recreation, and socialization. "The southern springs were the summer social centers, but unlike northern society, southern society was mainly rural during most of the year. The summer season thus became an important meeting time for social, business and political purposes." (Lawrence, p.4) Eventually Capon established a reputation for having among its guests of marriageable age "a bevy of Richmond's best" (Reniers, p. 262)

Virginia was famous for its springs and by the mid-eighteenth century, several were well-established. Typically settlement occurred in close proximity to the springs and at first was limited to shacks and tents. George Washington first visited the springs of Morgan County in 1748. By 1761, Washington visited to find more than two hundred people camping in tents and crude cabins.

Visitors sometimes traveled considerable distances to Capon and other Virginia springs. "Part of the allure of the Virginia springs lay in their relative inaccessibility, especially for upper-class guests from other states. The guests equated greater distance from home with higher social standing, so elites from Mississippi, Georgia, and Kentucky often preferred to summer at White Sulphur Springs or Capon Springs rather than at the more accessible Ocean Springs, Indian Springs or Olympian Springs in their own states." (Lawrence, p.8)

As resorts expanded, rural cottages, boardinghouses, and finally hotels were customary and expected by guests. Early Virginia hotels usually consisted of a modest-two or three-story hotel flanked by lower wings and rows of cabins that enclosed a park-like open area with spring houses, bathhouses, and music and gaming pavilions.

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The development of Capon Springs closely parallels the evolution of water sources thought to have medicinal powers. The focus historically has been the spring located four miles up the mountain from Capon River and two miles from the summit of North Mountain. The origin of the name "capon" is uncertain, though it may be a derivative of the Shawnee word "cape-cape-hon" meaning "medicinal water" or the Algonquin word "Cacapon" meaning "to be found again." The latter possibility refers to the nearby Lost River which for a distance south of Wardensville runs below ground.

The spring appears to have had a steady flow of sixty-three gallons per minute and a constant temperature of 64 to 66 degrees Fahrenheit. Analysis of the water reveals it to be high in calcium and magnesium, low in sodium, with a trace of lithium. It is located in a gap of Oriskany sandstone where the rock is steeply inclined and appears to be standing on edge. Calculations by the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey suggest that the water originates at least one thousand feet below the surface.

The spring was first discovered around 1765 by Henry Frye while hunting. Though Hampshire County was surveyed by George Washington in 1750, the spring was presumably unknown to him as no mention of it is contained in his journal. Local legend explains that Frye was in the area hunting bear and accidentally came upon the spring. The following summer he and his ailing wife Fanny revisited the spring and attributed the favorable change in her health to the curative powers of the spring water. Frye is said to have built a cabin near the spring, though the land was owned by John Arnold of Frederick County, who had received the property through a grant from Lord Fairfax. Frye, who settled near Winchester, continued for many years to frequent the springs, which came to be known as "Frye's Springs."

In October 1787, the town of Watson was established, named for Joseph Watson, who had purchased the spring. During his ownership, the fame of the water became more widely known and visitors camped around the spring. There was no "resort" at this time; instead, guests lived in tents and rough cabins and spontaneously and haphazardly congregated in the area. Like most southern resorts, Capon Springs was isolated, rural, and relatively inaccessible. Before the advent of the railroad, the tendency of guests was to stay for a couple of months rather than a couple of weeks, for all the trouble over the bad roads to be worthwhile.

The Capon Springs property was acquired by the Commonwealth of Virginia after Watson died intestate. In December 1787, by an Act of the General Assembly, twenty acres were laid off into thirty-eight lots, "10 perches long and 8 wide," and streets (Water, Bath, Hill, High and

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Mountain) and placed under the authority of a Board of Trustees, consisting of ten members, included Frye. (plat, 1799) Lots were one-half acre and were offered for sale by auction with the condition the purchaser erect a house sixteen feet square with a brick or stone chimney. The Trustees retained ownership of Lot 1, thereby controlling access to, and use of, the spring. Due to land disputes, the area was resurveyed in 1803 by John Mitchell, county surveyor, and the plat for "Watsonstown" was subsequently approved by the Board and an auction held in August of that year.

An 1830 Act of the General Assembly authorized the securing of funds to construct a road from springs to the east side of Big Mountain and from there to connect with the Wardensville Road, which was the main route between Winchester and the springs. Such a dramatic improvement paved the way for Capon to realize its potential as a thriving resort by mid-century.

By 1833, a small settlement had been established. The historian Samuel Kercheval wrote that "there are seventeen or eighteen houses erected without regard to regularity and a boarding establishment capable of accommodating fifty to sixty visitors which is kept in excellent style." (Kercheval) This description is similar to those recorded for the many other spring resorts developing at this time. The boarding house was likely operated by Major William Herin, who upon his death, passed the property to his stepson, Julius C. Waddle. In his description, Kercheval also mentions a lottery to raise funds for road improvements.

From the revenues realized from the sale of lots and taxes on visitors to the springs, the Board of Trustees made improvements to the grounds and constructed the Spring Pavilion and the Bathing Establishment (now the Pavilion--Building #17). The bath house is 280 feet long and until its adaptation to a bottling plant, had forty bath rooms with hot and cold plunges and shower baths.

A major turning point in the history of Capon Springs occurred in 1849 when the firm of Ricard, Buck, and Blakemore from Baltimore purchased twelve lots from the Board of Trustees for the purpose of constructing a hotel. This purchase coincided with a return of prosperity throughout the country that followed the lean years of the 1840s.

Consisting of four stories and 168 guest rooms, the frame Mountain House was built in 1850. Measuring 262 feet by 190 feet, it was reputed to be the largest spa hotel in the country and advertised a dining room that accommodated six hundred seated guests. The cost of construction was \$75,000. An advertisement announcing its completion stated that "the Mountain House at

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this fashionable watering place, one of the most magnificent structures in this country, will be opened June 27th, by a gentleman of New York of high reputation, skill, and experience. These Springs are situated in a beautiful and romantic gorge of the North Mountain, twenty-three miles from Winchester. The water contains silicic acid, magnesia, soda, carbonic acid gas, bromine, and iodine. There are also fine Sulphur and Chalybeate Springs in the immediate vicinity. The baths erected by the State, at a cost of \$20,000, have no parallel in this country nor Europe. These, together with the pure mountain air and mountain sports, afford unsurpassed attractions to the seeker of health and pleasure." (Capon Springs, Virginia) The following year the hotel was dedicated by Daniel Webster, then Secretary of State under Millard Fillmore, who chose that occasion to announce his candidacy for the 1852 Democratic Presidential nomination. Other famous visitors included President Pierce and Robert E. Lee.

Despite improved transportation and accommodations, the Ricard firm struggled to make a success of their venture. Though well known, Capon Springs was not located on the main Valley route for travelers to many of Virginia's springs, such as Berkeley Springs and Warm Springs. An advertisement from 1850 referred to the resort as not firmly established but growing. Regarding its accessibility, the ad stated that "its convenience of access renders it an available point for invalids, or persons who are not disposed to undergo the fatigues of a long journey, over rough and dusty roads, in the heat of summer. Being near the route to the White Sulphur, in Greenbrier, it will be a delightful resting place for persons visiting those celebrated springs." (Cowan, p. 58) The ad goes on to extol the virtues of the mountain environment, amusements and attractions, and claims Capon to be one of the most pleasant and accessible summer resorts in the country.

In 1855 Capon was promoted by Dr. John Bell, M.D., in his book on the mineral and thermal springs of the United States and Canada. In his description he stated that Capon Springs "have come greatly into vogue of late years, and, as it would seem, not without good reason. The water is beneficial in certain forms of dyspepsia and renal affections, especially, as we are told, in the lithic acid diathesis. The arrangements for cold bathing are on a large scale, and the baths of a superior kind. Warm bathing can also be enjoyed by those who claim it, either as a hygienic agent or a remedy in disease. Mountain air largely inhaled gives a keener relish for the mountain mutton, of which the lovers of good cheer speak so highly in this place. A hotel of first class has been erected, and furnishes good quarters to a large number of visitors. Not a few have their own houses and cabins." (Bell, p. 186)

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The Ricard firm leased the hotel property to a series of proprietors and closed at the beginning of the Civil War. Capon Springs became part of the debt owed by Virginia to West Virginia when the new state was formed in 1863. Dependent on the wealthy planter class, many southern spring resorts failed to reestablish themselves after the conflict. However, a great many of the popular Virginia resorts, including Capon Springs, experienced a rebirth, with visitors coming from both the north and south.

Under the supervision of William Frazier and William H. Sale, the hotel reopened after the conclusion of the war. Their efforts were successful and in 1875, Sale, a Confederate captain, purchased the Mountain House. By 1900, Sale owned all of Watsontown and thousands of surrounding acres. The state of West Virginia maintained its ownership of the baths and spring.

African-American cooks and waiters from the Valley of Virginia were employed by Sale. Local residents were hired for maintenance, laundry and the cultivation of produce. In 1875 the rates were \$15. or \$18. a week for a room with 3/5 rates for "children between 2 and 10 years and colored servants, 3/4 rates for white servants." (Comments of Capon Springs...)

Sale's ownership and the coming of the railroad were pivotal to the renewed success of the springs. Capon was located within fifteen miles of the Harper's Ferry and Valley Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The rail company's promotional brochures advertised the resort as accessible by carriage from the Capon Road railroad station, with accommodations for six hundred guests and rates of \$2.50 per day or \$42 to \$56 dollars per week. (Tourist's Guide...) Sale was responsible for the construction and renovation of a number of important structures, among them the Annex, which today functions as the main hotel building. A bowling alley and additional cottages and other support buildings also date from this period, as do many improvements to the grounds.

The future of Capon was in jeopardy, for the popularity of spring resorts began to dramatically decline in the late 1880s. From 1886 to 1927, the number of spring resorts in America fell from 634 to 271. Improved transportation, though at first an asset, increased the competition as new resorts and recreation became popular, such as national and state parks, amusement parks and automobile tours. The increased understanding of diseases, advances in cures and a lack of confidence in the medicinal benefits of springs, and economic depression collaborated to challenge the continued existence of spring resorts.

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Sale was succeeded by Charles F. Nelson, his son-in-law, in 1900. Nelson had joined Sale four years earlier in the management of the resort and it was natural that he would become the proprietor of Capon following Sale's death. Nelson followed in the footsteps of his father-in-law by acquiring additional property. His most significant purchase was Lot 1, part of Lot 3 and Lots 24, 27, and 36, on which were located the springs and bath house. Not until this purchase in 1905 at public auction were the springs, bathing facilities, and hotel under single ownership.

As did so many spring resort buildings throughout the country, the Mountain House, in a state of disrepair, burned in 1911. Business had declined by this time and Nelson seemed to have lost interest in promoting the resort. Nelson sold tracts of land to individuals and the United States government and attempted to sell the resort complex as well. Records show that twice, in 1913 and 1916, he concluded agreements to sell the resort, only to have them fall through within months. (Comments... p. 9)

In September 1917, Capon Springs, consisting of approximately 320 acres, was sold to Will Atkinson, who revived the resort and initiated the marketing of bottled Capon water. A bottling plant was located in a portion of the bath house and distributors throughout the country marketed the product. The bottling facility was capable of producing two hundred and forty bottles per house and employed ten people. The company letterhead included positive statements by physicians and challenged "any man or woman, well or ill, to drink 5 gallons of Capon Water and not confess a definite and distinct all round improvement physically." (Atkinson, June 4, 1929) For the enjoyment of guests to the resort, a newsletter, "Healing Waters - Devoted to the Promotion of Health and the Prolonging of Life," was published. Water samples tested by a chemist in 1929 found the water to be "as close to perfection in purity as natural water could be." (Schaut)

Atkinson had big plans for developing the "Capon Springs Club." These were never realized and by 1932 he was in debt. In July of that year, the property, except Lots 1 and 3, was sold at auction to Louis L. Austin, who since 1923, had distributed Capon Springs Water in Philadelphia. Austin believed in the medicinal qualities of the water and as a distributor had aggressively promoted its benefits, continuing the common practice of utilizing testimonials. Promotional literature made claims that "From the day you start drinking this delicious and health-giving water, you grow younger physically." (Austin, Letter, November 11, 1929).

In August 1932, Austin acquired Lots 1 and 3. His efforts to re-establish a popular resort were aided by family and friends and a loan from former West Virginia Governor John Cornwell.

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Electricity and plumbing were installed, and a golf course, designed by an architect free of charge, was added. Austin and his family repaired the remaining buildings and entered the hotel business, at the same time struggling to keep the bottled water business profitable. The construction of the bottling plant, entrance pillars, drinking fountains, and landscape improvements were undertaken, and trucks and equipment purchased. Later ginger ale was introduced, made with spring water and promoted with testimonials. Plans for beer, toothpaste, and "frosted nectar" were conceived but never realized.

Austin's plan to continue the promotion of bottled water was challenged by financial losses due only in part to the Depression. In You Are Greater Than You Know, Austin recounts his financial difficulties shortly after acquiring Capon. "I had brought friends together and organized a company; got a little over \$100,000 capital, and promptly paid \$50,000 for a 50 year contract to distribute water. . . . Shortly thereafter I learned that the company . . . had neither the right to make the contract or to take the money, since it was in receivership at the time and its entire property was about to be foreclosed. Thus the contract for which I gave out \$50,000 of my own and friends' money was not worth the paper it was written on." (Austin, p. 3)

Austin's situation became more desperate when the Food and Drug Administration stated that Capon waters were polluted and had no health benefits. This blow resulted from efforts by the federal government to halt unsubstantiated advertising claims regarding the health benefits of spring waters. American doctors had gradually become skeptical of mineral waters as they became enthusiastic about advances in pharmaceutical chemistry. The American Medical Association criticized the overblown claims of resort owners and mineral water bottlers, and in the early decades of the twentieth century joined the Federal Trade Commission in a campaign to stop misleading advertising." (Lawrence, p.12) To compound the problem, the company was charged with fraud in connection with the sale of securities. Stockholders were dismayed and at least one argued in favor of liquidation. Instead Austin personally acquired the stock of the disgruntled investor, communicated with the Food and Drug Administration regarding the new bottling and sterilization equipment, agreed to restrict claims to those offered by reputable physicians, and found a new investor.

During the following years, Austin repeatedly found it necessary to defend the purity of the water and to dispute claims of its pollution. West Virginia health authorities, as well as federal, continuously threatened the survival of the bottling operation. Austin's worries were compounded by the demands of investors and disputes over the amount of water being bottled.

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By World War II, with no other advertising than word of mouth, Capon Springs experienced another boom. Austin returned to the resort business with the assistance of his capable wife, Virginia, an accomplished cook and organizer. The Austin's four children were active in the operation of the resort. Looking back on his near-bankruptcy and the resurrection of Capon, Austin realized that he had worked hard but miraculously survived many of his own mistakes. He attributed Capon's success to the power of the Creative Spirit. In his book, You Are Greater Than You Know, he refers to God as "our Senior Partner" and credits him with the survival of Capon Springs. (Comments... p. 11)

Capon Springs is one of the few American spa resorts remaining in operation. The property remains in the Austin family, which continues to manage the resort. Many of Lou Austin's traditions have been continued, such as no advertising, making your own change at the front counter, music prior to meals, and a morning flag ceremony. Outdoor activities have been expanded and the informal quality of the resort has been preserved. Capon currently can accommodate 250 guests, all of whom must be, or be recommended by, former guests. Unlike many other springs, Capon's water has not been polluted and continues to draw visitors to the resort.

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