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Yellow Sulphur Springs (DHR ID# 060-0013) originally was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register on September 20, 1977, and in the National Register of Historic Places on September 20, 1979. This additional documentation adds Criterion A and Ethnic Heritage (African American) to the property's identified areas of significance. At the time the property was listed in the National Register, the period of significance was listed as 1800-1899 and 1900-. This additional documentation establishes that the period of significance extends through at least 1929.

Statement of Significance Summary:

Yellow Sulphur Springs is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage (African American). Between 1926 and 1929, an African American company operated the hot springs as a resort during the era of segregation. The springs property is eligible at the state-level, as it served as a vacation destination for African Americans across the state and was possibly the largest African American-owned resort in the nation at the time. The extant buildings of the era at the springs stand as examples of resort accommodations that African Americans in Virginia built for themselves during the time of Jim Crow.

Significance Statement:

Three years after Yellow Sulphur Springs resort closed in 1923, a group of African-American businessmen from Roanoke formed a company to purchase the resort. In doing so, they exemplified larger trends in Virginia. Segregated public spaces, beyond setting African Americans apart from whites, often denied African Americans from enjoying the time they had for recreation and relaxation. With the growth of black-owned businesses and a widening middle-class, they sought to create beaches and resorts where they could enjoy their leisure time. In the words of historian Andrew Kahrl, these venues "responded to and sought to satisfy black Southerners' dire need for safe and enjoyable outdoor space, while absorbing and radiating their aspirations for mobility and affluence."[1]

The formation of Yellow Sulphur Springs, Inc., in 1926 owed to the success of Roanoke, Virginia's "Magic City." Formerly a sleepy hamlet known as Big Lick, the growth of the coal industry in Virginia and West Virginia brought railroad service and massive economic expansion. With prosperity, leaders changed the town name to the more dignified Roanoke. As the town grew, so did the black population. Despite the general segregation of the city, with the railroad tracks of the Norfolk & Southern dividing white from black, African Americans also shared in the advance of the city. As one article in an African-American newspaper put it, "for years the Negro

[1] Andrew William Kahrl, "On the Beach: Race and Leisure in the Jim Crow South," (PhD. Diss., Indiana University, 2008), 6. See also Andrew W. Kahrl, *The Land Was Ours: African American Beaches from Jim Crow to the Sunbelt South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

unit of Roanoke's population has matched this swift and sure progress stride for stride." Economic success led to the growth of a robust black middle-class, resulting in "business, social, professional, religious, educational, and recreational life impregnated with civic pride and feverish activity."[2]

Accordingly, a group of ten African-American business men with deep ties to Roanoke purchased the defunct resort. Among the group were Oscar Micheaux, a prominent black filmmaker, and B.F. Crowell, the leader of the local chapter of the fraternal organization the Knights of Pythias.[3] Upon the opening of the resort on 1 June 1926, an African-American newspaper proudly reported that a visitor from Suffolk declared "the acquisition of this enterprise…a new epoch in the history of the colored people," and with its 53 acres of land, a three-story hotel, and more than 71 cottages, it was "the largest hotel owned and operated by them anywhere in the United States."[4] The resort capitalized upon the rail-lines that had led to the creation of Roanoke. Yellow Sulphur Springs advertised heavily in Tidewater Virginia, offering package deals that combined special rates on the Virginian Railway and the Norfolk & Southern Railway. The ads touted the "health[,] comfort[,] pleasure" of America's Greatest Colored Mountain Resort" during the oppressively hot summer months.[5]

Despite the promise of success in 1926, the resort closed in 1929 and the property was sold at auction.[6] Although it had only been open for three years, the African-American ownership of Yellow Sulphur Springs is significant for its association with African American history in Virginia, particularly as it exemplifies African Americans' means and ability to cope with Jim Crow-era segregation, to express their financial strength, and to participate in the types of leisure activities that had become the norm throughout the early twentieth century United States.

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[2] P. Bernard Young, Jr., "Roanoke, Va., The Magic City, Pulsates with Progress," *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), 3 July 1926, 7. See also Rand Dotson, *Roanoke, Virginia 1888-1912: Magic City of the New South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007).
[3] Brian Katen and C.L. Bohannon, "Yellow Sulphur Springs (Taylor's Springs): Written and Descriptive Data," Historic American Landscapes Survey Report HALS VA-55, 4.
[4] "Yellow Sulphur Springs Finest Summer Resort," *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), 14 August 1926, 5.
[5] "Yellow Sulphur Springs," *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), 5 June 1926, 9; "Yellow Sulphur Springs," *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), 12 June 1926, 9; "America's Greatest Colored Mountain Resort: Yellow Sulphur Springs," *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), 19 June 1926, 9; "America's Greatest Colored Resort," *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), 26 June 196, 6; "Yellow Sulphur Springs," *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), 26 June 1926, 9; and "America's Greatest Colored Mountain Resort," *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), 3 July 1926.
[6] Katen and Bohannon, 4.

Dotson, Rand. *Roanoke, Virginia 1888-1912: Magic City of the New South*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007.

Kahrl, Andrew William. "On the Beach: Race and Leisure in the Jim Crow South." PhD. Diss. Indiana University, 2008.

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Katen, Brian and C.L. Bohannon, "Yellow Sulphur Springs (Taylor's Springs): Written and Descriptive Data," Historic American Landscapes Survey Report HALS VA-55.

New Journal and Guide (Norfolk).