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NATURAL BRIDGE HOTEL GUEST REGISTER

The collection consists of the guest register for the Natural Bridge Hotel, Natural Bridge, Virginia, from 1 May 1894 until 30 April 1899. The signatures are those of guests staying at the hotel and include such notables as Charles DICKENS, Jr., of London, England, Grover CLEVELAND, of the White House, Mr. and Mrs. Fitzhugh LEE of Virginia, F. T. GREENHALGE, Governor of Massachusetts, Dr. Walter REED, of the U.S. Army, C. B. FLEET and E. C. GLASS, of Lynchburg, and Theodore ROOSEVELT, Jr.

Also included are business receipts (1894) for Charles P. NAIR, manager of the Natural Bridge.

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NATURAL BRIDGE HOTEL

The Natural Bridge Hotel during the period 1894-1899 was probably the Appledore Cottage, a "three-story hotel...with a ballroom," constructed ca. 1881 by Col. Henry C. PARSONS, who had purchased the Natural Bridge property.

An earlier hotel, the Forest Inn, "was destroyed by fire in 1892."

On 2 August 1890, the Natural Bridge Park Association purchased 1060 acres from the Natural Bridge Forest Company for \$160,000. The property included "the PARSONS home and other property including the Bridge and Gatehouse." In December of that year, the Natural Bridge Development Company, later the Natural Bridge Company, took over the holdings of the Natural Bridge Park Association.

[J. Lee Davis, *Bits of History and Legends Around and About the Natural Bridge of Virginia from 1730-1950* (Lynchburg: Natural Bridge of Virginia, Inc., 1949), pp. 30, 79, 83, 135; Edmund Pendleton Tompkins, *Rockbridge County, Virginia: An Informal History* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1952), p. 115.]

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CHARLES PERRY NAIR (1856- 1938)

Charles Perry NAIR, son of George W. NAIR and Margaret Jane TARDY, was born 27 September 1856 in Rockbridge County, Virginia. In 1880, he was a miller, living in the Natural Bridge district of the county. He was manager of the Natural Bridge Hotel ca. 1894. On 9 March 1898, he became postmaster at Clifton Forge, Alleghany County, Virginia, succeeding Lee T. SAVIN. While living in Clifton Forge, he also owned the Coca-Cola Bottling Company.

Charles P. NAIR married Frances Susan BURGER, daughter of Joel BURGER and Mary PETERS on 18 May 1886 in Botetourt County. They were the parents of five children.

In 1899, President William McKINLEY visited Natural Bridge with Charles P. NAIR, who "came down with the President and party from Clifton Forge and showed them around."

Charles Perry NAIR died 12 July 1938 and was buried at Crown Hill Cemetery, Clifton Forge.

[Dorthie and Edwin Kirkpatrick, *Rockbridge County Births 1853-1877*, Vol. 2 (Athens, GA: Iberian, 1988), p. 466; "Marriage of George W. Nair and Margaret Jane Tardy," Louise M. Perkins, *Rockbridge County Marriages 1851-1885* (Signal Mountain, TN: Mountain Press, 1989), p. 283; 1880 Census, Rockbridge County, VA, National Archives and Records Service, T-9, Roll 1387, p. 53, Dwelling 113, Family 114; 1900 Census, Alleghany County, VA, National Archives and Records Service, T-623, Roll 1698, p. 124, Dwelling 455, Family 497; J. Lee Davis, *Bits of History and Legends Around and About the Natural Bridge of Virginia from 1730-1950* (Lynchburg: Natural Bridge of Virginia, Inc., 1949), p. 93; J. William and Rebecca H. R. Austin, *Related Families of Botetourt County, Virginia* (Roanoke, VA: Authors, 1977) pp. 94, 99.]