



Photo provided

From left are Mark Motsinger, Williamson County Historical Society President Sam Lattuca, Creal Springs Mayor Micah Morrow and co-sponsor of the marker and descendant of Dr. Curtis Brown James Hulett.

## Historical Marker Commemorates Creal Springs' Wonder Water Resort

Mark Motsinger

Williamson County Historical Society and the descendants of Dr. Curtis Brown have sponsored a new historical marker at the site of the numerous springs and once flourishing resorts in Creal Springs, Illinois.

The new historical marker is located at Dippy Motsinger Memorial Park in Creal Springs and is the second officially sanctioned Illinois State Historical Society marker in the county.

More than a hundred years ago, those in need of some rest and relaxation would often travel to Creal Springs. As early as 1720 the French and Native American's were utilizing the mineral-rich spring waters located in the area. The springs eventually led to a community growing around them and by the late 1800s a resort.

According to the Williamson County Historical So-

ciety, the mineral springs were once a favorite of Civil War Veterans who looked for relief in the mineral-rich water. In the late 1800s multiple buildings once stood near the springs where guests could bathe in their natural healing powers.

One of those buildings, the Ozark Hotel, was a three-story building made of brick with 75 rooms. The once opulent Ozark Hotel burned in 1928 and was never rebuilt. The fire, along with the Volsted Act of 1919 ended the heyday of the resort community.

Today numerous covered springs can still be seen in what is now the Dippy Motsinger Memorial Park located in the center of Creal Springs. Picnic tables, play ground equipment and a basketball court now stand on the spot that was once home to grand hotels and a resort of the Gilded Age.





Summer Moss, Ozark Resort, Creal Springs, Ill.



## CREAL SPRINGS

"Home of the Wonder Waters of the World"

MINERAL RICH SPRING WATERS WERE DISCOVERED ALONG THE FRENCH TRAIL CALLED THE "GRAND TRAIL," SOUTH OF THIS LOCATION AROUND 1720. A TRADING POST CALLED EAU MINERAL, LATER SULFUR SPRINGS, WAS ESTABLISHED THERE AND BY 1845, SULFUR SPRINGS BOASTED A POST OFFICE, A BLACKSMITH, SEVERAL MERCHANTS, AND THREE DOCTORS WHO DOSED THEIR PATIENTS WITH THE MINERAL WATER.

AFTER EDWARD CREAL NOTICED THE CURATIVE PROPERTIES OF THE WATER ON HIS PROPERTY, HE PLOTTED A TOWN SITE AND SOLD LOTS. IN FEBRUARY 1883, THE SULFUR SPRINGS POST OFFICE WAS RELOCATED AND NAMED CREAL SPRINGS AND THE CITY WAS INCORPORATED AUGUST 10, 1883. THAT SAME YEAR, DR. CURTIS BROWN ESTABLISHED THE FIRST RESORT HOTEL CALLED BROWN'S CREAL SPRINGS HOTEL. IN 1884, SIX ORIGINAL SPRINGS WERE TESTED AND SHOWN TO HAVE POTENTIAL CURATIVE POWERS. MORE RESORT HOTELS FOLLOWED INCLUDING GEORGE B. CHAMNESS' EAST SIDE HOTEL IN 1885, THE OZARK HOTEL IN 1891, THE PARK HOTEL IN 1892, AND THE AVENUE HOUSE.

AFTER THE RAILROAD ARRIVED IN 1889, FIVE TRAINS A DAY BROUGHT VISITORS TO CREAL BUT PATRONS WERE THIRSTY FOR MORE THAN MINERAL WATER, WHICH BROUGHT ITS OWN PROBLEMS. IN 1903 THE COMMUNITY VOTED THE CITY DRY, SPELLING THE DECLINE OF THE RESORT BUSINESS. A BOTTLING PLANT IN THE BASEMENT OF THE OZARK HOTEL CONTINUED TO SHIP MINERAL WATER BY MAIL UNTIL THE MARKET DRIED UP. FIRE CLAIMED THE CREAL SPRINGS HOTEL, FOLLOWED IN 1915 BY THE OZARK HOTEL. AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE IN 1919 TO REBUILD THE RESORT BUSINESS, BUT THE NEW OZARK HOTEL CLOSED IN 1928 AND WAS DEMOLISHED IN 1938.

SPONSORED BY:  
THE WILLIAMSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, FAMILY OF MARY CELIAH MURRAH MULETT,  
AND THE ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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Photos provided

Top left are resort guests at the Ozark Hotel. Top right is an exterior view of the Ozark Hotel. Center is the text on the new historical marker. At bottom is the Creal Springs Ozark Bathhouse and surrounding park.