



Getting Fit at the Fordyce

Physical Culture in the Bathhouse, 1915

Historic Exercise Routines Demonstrated

When the Fordyce Bathhouse opened in 1915, Bathhouse Row was already a hub of activity with a steady stream of patrons coming to “take the cure.” The focus was on the baths, but exercise was also an important therapy. As “the most complete, practical and luxurious bathhouse in the world,” the Fordyce offered state-of-the-art Zander exercise machines and what was considered at the time to be the largest gymnasium in Arkansas.

Physical Culture in the Gymnasium

From the late 19th century into the 1920s, a popular fitness movement known as physical culture promoted ideals of health and exercise. At times the Fordyce was able to provide a physical culture instructor for patrons utilizing the gym.

Spalding Exercise Equipment

During this period, A.G. Spalding & Bros. was the premiere manufacturer of athletic goods and exercise equipment in the United States. The company even published a “library” of athletic handbooks. Much of the equipment in the Fordyce gym carried the Spalding trademark.

Ranger Demonstrations

A park ranger dressed in period attire will demonstrate Indian club, dumb bell, wand, and pulley weight exercises in the gym on 3rd floor.

