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## Review - *City of Many Facets*

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# REVIEWS...REVIEWS...REVIEWS.

— by Arrell Morgan Gibson

**CITY OF MANY FACETS** by Opal Hartsell Brown and Richard Garrity. Western Heritage Books, Oklahoma City, 1981. Index, Illustrations, 155 pp.

**CITY OF MANY FACETS** is the biography of a charming Oklahoma town with a "shifty" past. Opal Hartsell Brown and Richard Garrity have combined descriptive text with engaging photographs to document Sulphur's origin, its evolution as a popular regional spa, and its maturation to a bustling south-central Oklahoma community situated on the eastern rim of the colorful Arbuckle Mountains.

The authors include a historical sketch of the area embracing Sulphur, casting it in the Indian removal drama when Oklahoma served the United States as the Indian Territory, a resettlement zone for colonizing Indian tribes from other parts of the nation. The land from which Sulphur evolved was assigned to the Choctaws of Mississippi by the Treaty of Doaks Stand, 1820; it was a vast domain extending from the western boundary of Arkansas to the 100th meridian, Oklahoma's present western boundary, flanked on the north by the Canadian and Arkansas rivers, on the south by Red River. Brown and Garrity's historical sketch points out that because of the threat from fierce neighbors on the west — Comanches and Kiowas — the Choctaws settled in the eastern portion of their new nation. In 1837 by the Treaty of Doaksville the Chickasaws, also from Mississippi, joined the Choctaws in Indian Territory. The newcomers were assigned a district in the central portion of the Choctaw nation embracing present Sulphur, but because the Comanche and Kiowa threat continued, they settled near the Choctaw settlements.

**CITY OF MANY FACETS** explains that federal officials directed the construction of Fort Washita in 1842 and Fort Arbuckle in 1851 in the Chickasaw District. When United States cavalry and infantry units garrisoned these posts Chickasaws began moving to their district. By a treaty with the Choctaws in 1855 they received title to this central portion of the Choctaw territory, which included the site of Sulphur, and formed a government under a constitution with their capital at Tishomingo.

The authors relate that the environs of the future Sulphur came in for continuing notice. Its mineral springs quite early were used for bathing to cure certain skin, circulatory, and joint diseases. Several roads, including the Tishomingo, Fort Arbuckle, and Fort Washita highway connecting with Boggy Depot, a leading town in the Choctaw nation, passed near present Sulphur. After the Civil War troops moving from Fort Smith and Fort Gibson to Fort Sill and other western

posts for campaigns against the Comanches and Kiowas camped at the springs.

Brown and Garrity have discovered that after the Civil War the mountain grasslands around present Sulphur became a popular ranching area as Texas cattlemen began to move their herds north of Red River. Also permit holders settled in the creek and river valleys of the Arbuckle Mountains near Sulphur. The mineral springs became increasingly popular with persons seeking the cure as well as a place for church conventions, Confederate veterans' reunions, and picnics. Visitors camped in tents about the springs. By 1890 the infant community consisted of a blacksmith shop and general store, and during certain seasons over thirty tents coveyed about the springs. The pioneer developer of the town of Sulphur was General R. A. Sneed, a native Virginian and former Confederate officer. In 1891 he organized the "Sulphur Springs Indian Territory Resort," and platted a townsite. Four years later the community was assigned a post-office.

Developers constructed several hotels, two railroads connected Sulphur, Indian Territory, with the rest of the United States, and before 1900 it had become probably the most popular spa-type resort in the Southwest. The term "shifty" applies to early-day Sulphur because of the required moves inflicted on the young town. Around 1900 as Choctaw and Chickasaw leaders submitted to allotment in severalty and the liquidation of their tribal estates and governments, they signed an agreement with federal officials ceding 640 acres to the United States embracing all local natural springs at Sulphur. Congress changed the name from Sulphur Springs Reservation to Platt National Park for Senator Orville Platt of Connecticut, a member of the Indian Affairs Committee (now designated Chickasaw Recreation Area.) This required relocation of town buildings and residences. Civic leaders persevered, however, and through their energy and investment, Sulphur continued as one of the most popular resorts in the Southwest. The authors point out that it served as the summer capital for the state of Oklahoma during Governor Charles N. Haskell's administration — 1907-1911.

**CITY OF MANY FACETS** is an Oklahoma Diamond Jubilee Project, produced by the authors in cooperation with the Arbuckle Historical Society of Sulphur. It is a provocatively rendered study, of one of the state's most attractive towns, and can well serve as a model for studies of other Oklahoma communities. Published by Western Heritage Books of Oklahoma City in 1981, **CITY OF MANY FACETS** contains an index and illustrations and is comprised of 155 pages.