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NATURAL BRIDGE OF VIRGINIA GATE HOUSE REGISTER

The collection consists of the Gate House register kept at Natural Bridge, Virginia, from 27 September 1895 until 30 October 1899. The signatures are those of visitors to the Natural Bridge.

NATURAL BRIDGE

John Peter SALLINGS explored the region surrounding Natural Bridge ca. 1730 and later established his home nearby. Since that early day, visitors have come to see this natural wonder. First known as Rock Bridge, the Bridge became well known early in the eighteenth century. With so many visitors traveling to the site, it was necessary to provide accommodations for them.

Thomas JEFFERSON received a grant of land in 1774 which included Natural Bridge, and had the first "hotel" on the property, actually a log cabin, constructed ca. 1803. Later hotels or lodges were constructed on or near the Bridge.

After a succession of land transfers, Col. Henry C. PARSONS obtained the property in a law suit in Augusta County. He transferred the property to the Natural Bridge Forest Company in 1884.

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.

The Natural Bridge Company, Inc., became Natural Bridge of Virginia, Inc., in 1925.

[J. Lee Davis, *Bits of History and Legends Around and About the Natural Bridge of Virginia from 1730 to 1950* (Lynchburg: Natural Bridge of Virginia, Inc., 1949), pp. 15, 30, 134.]