

# Saratoga Springs

By Don Yates

## Early Visitors

During the 1700s, the public relied on a popular pharmacopoeia for their health. The wealthy had access to doctors but the doctors were not adequately trained. Medical practice was highly unrefined. The three main treatments were: opium-based pain killers, leaching or blood Letting, and finally drinking massive drafts of mineral waters.

It is now known that the effectiveness of these treatments was worthless. The social results of drinking mineral water are profound. To drink the waters at a spa became a simultaneous attempt to eliminate pain and to demonstrate one's wealth.

Bath was the predominant health resort of eighteenth century England. During the summer, the elderly annually congregated to heal their bodies from the ravages of the winter's sins in town, at least believing the waters would cure arthritis, gout, syphilis, dyspepsia, and a hundred other diseases.

The main spas in the U.S.A. were Saratoga Springs and Balston Spa. British invasions from the north had slowed commercial development of the mineral springs of Saratoga County, and it was not until after the War of 1812 that their full scale development began. Development in transportation included steamers on the Hudson with railroads to follow shortly. These made the springs more accessible to southerners escaping the summer heat and to the wealthy of the northern cities, where summer was the cholera season. Eventually, a regular string of resorts was established; and the greatest among them was Saratoga Springs, a heaven for some of the wealthy, several of the famous and large numbers of those who desired wealth and notoriety.

In 1838, Balston Spa had a local population of about 1,200 people. It had a county courthouse, three churches, and several large hotels. There are several mineral water springs: Balston Spa, The Washington Spring, The Sans Souci Spring, The Lewis Spring, and the Park Spring. All springs are similar in composition.

In 1820, Saratoga was still small. Life centered around huge wooden hotels each named for a spring – The Congress; The Pavilion; The Union; and the United States.

In 1830, The Saratoga waters were trusted to be medicinal, but of the huge crowds that flock there yearly, only a small

portion were invalids. The town was quite elegant, the main street being very wide and shaded by old trees. The hotels were very large and operated by professional staff.

Each of the hotels was constructed as a large three-sided rectangle – the fourth side being formed by a high wall. The three sides were shaded by a colonnade, to protect the guests from the hot sun.

The dinners served at the hotels were excellent. A bell was rung and the entry doors opened simultaneously. All of the tables were assigned by reservation. Waiters ran across the dining room to quickly serve the patrons – occasionally crashing into one another - spewing China and food helter skelter.

After dinner, people would relax in the inner colonnade for a quiet chat, or to smoke a pipe. About half of the men smoked at that time.

In 1840, people traveled from all over the country to visit Saratoga Springs in the summer. They even came from New Orleans to enjoy the coolness of the Adirondacks.

The taste of the spring water was very pleasant. Three or four pints were usually subscribed in the morning, before breakfast. It was drunk with each meal, but was deemed best right at the spring, before any gas could escape. The proprietors – Dr. John Clarke and Thomas Lynch – were the first to bottle Congress Spring Water.

There were four great hotels in Saratoga. Congress Hall was the largest and was two hundred feet long with two extensive wings. The United States Hotel was similar in size with public reading rooms, a library, ball rooms and a newspaper press.

Saratoga Lake was about five miles from the springs and considered fine for fishing.

Congress Spring Water, a favorite, was bottled which caused it to lose much of its briskness and virtue. At that time, one man and a boy could fill and cork each Congress bottle, dispatching a hundred dozen bottles each day. Congress Spring Water was considered one of the most popular and best tasting waters.

Saratoga Springs was also blessed in its wonderful location on the foot hills of the sunny southern slope of the most easterly of the five major mountain ranges of the Adirondack back woods. Great pride was

shown in her magnificent palatial beauty, the spring held the title for the world's most famous spa: "Queen of the Spas."

The Palmertown Mountain Range is in the most easterly of this mountain group. Beginning on Lake Champlain, near Ticonderoga, it runs along both sides of Lake George and crosses the Hudson River above Glen's Falls. After crossing the Hudson, this mountain chain runs down along the perimeter of the towns of Corinth and Moreau, through Wilton and Greenfield and ends up in downtown Saratoga Springs, under North Broadway Avenue!

Thus this village of Saratoga Springs, while she drinks her mineral waters in the full blaze of fashions highest splendor, sits at the very base of the historic Laurentian Adirondacks and breathes to fullness the cleanest and most refreshing air of these mountains.

Along the valley which runs through the village, the hard Laurentian rocks terminate and the gravel of the Trenton limestones and Hudson River slates begin. In the geologic fault which occurs here, between these two systems of rocks, the mineral springs of Saratoga bubble from the earth's strata, elavated by the clever hand of nature.

## Early Pioneer Settlers

Sir William Johnson, at the time of his celebrated visit with the Indians to the High Rock Spring of Saratoga in August, 1767, was living at the height of his Baronial power with the Indian Princess, Molly Brandt, as his wife and their eight dusky children in his manor house at Mount Johnson. He was His Britannic Majesty's Superintendent – General of Indian Affairs in North America.

Sir William acquired gout and was able to cure himself from drinking the waters from the High Rock Spring.

The next man of prominence to visit High Rock Spring was General Philip Schuyler. In the year 1783, General Schuyler cut a road from the mouth of Fish Creek in Saratoga, now called Schuylerville, to the High Rock Spring. He brought his family and built a home of rough cut timber on a bluff a little south of the spring. This street is now called Front Street. He used this home as a summer house for his family and friends.

General Schuyler had taken his commander – General George Washington – to the High Rock Spring in 1783. Washington returned to Saratoga by way of the trail which led to the springs at Ballston

Spa. There was no human habitation during that time. It was not until 1787 that Benajah Douglas, the pioneer of Ballston Spa, built the first rude log tavern and opened it up for guests. Douglas had built large frame hotels in Ballston Spa six years prior to Gideon Putnam's enterprise of building the Grand Union at Saratoga Springs.

Those six years came close to costing Saratoga its now proud position as the "World's Greatest Watering Place."

General George Washington was thrilled with the value of the mineral springs of Saratoga. Soon after peace was declared, he made the attempt to purchase the land near the High Rock Spring. In his published correspondence, there is a letter relating to this endeavor.

### **The First Settlers of Saratoga Springs**

In 1771, pioneer settler Dirck Schouten moved to the springs to cut away his small clearing, to plant some potatoes and build his log cabin home on the ridge, a little west of the High Rock Spring.

Alexander Bryan, in 1787, lived at the intersection of Front Street and Rock Street, near the site of what is now called the Empire House. These two crude cabins are located on opposite sides of Rock Street and were the first hotels until Benjamin Risley built the Yellow House in 1799. Gideon Putnam started building the Grand Union Hotel two years later, in 1801.

In 1790, a new era bloomed at Saratoga Springs. In that year, The Ballston Spa founders, Benajah Douglas and Nicholas Low, were making their first land purchases. Benjamin Risley and his two sons-in-law, Gideon Putnam and Dr. Clement Blakesley, came to settle in Saratoga Springs. Gideon Putnam was charmed to become the founder of modern Saratoga, which it became in 1878 in all of its fairy-like magnificence and beauty above the more humble scene of Putnam's early labors.

Benjamin Risley was a prominent, wealthy citizen from Hartford, Connecticut. When he moved to Saratoga in 1790, the capital he brought with him was the foundation for the wealth of Saratoga Springs, aside from the real estate interests of the Waltons and the Livingstons.

Upon settling at the springs, Benjamin Risley purchased several building lots from Catherine Van Dam on Rock Street between Catherine and Front Streets. He also built a popular tavern on that block.

The Putnam family traces its roots from John Putnam, who sailed from England

in 1684 and located at Danvers, Massachusetts. John had three sons, Thomas, Nathan, and John II. From son Thomas Putnam descended a long line of prominent people, including General Isreal Putnam. Isreal was a hero during the Revolutionary War. Gideon Putnam was the man of steel nerve, comprehensive powers of invention and the master creator of Saratoga Springs.

Gideon Putnam was the son of Mary and Rufus Putnam. He was born in the town of Sutton, Mass. in the year 1764. Gideon Putnam married Doanda Risley, the daughter of Squire Benjamin Risley, a gentleman of great prominence at Hartford, Connecticut. After first arriving at Saratoga, Gideon was a carpenter and a cooper. He shipped his barrel staves to New York and finally began making a decent living.

In 1805, Gideon purchased over one hundred acres for the beginning of Saratoga Springs. In 1806, he drilled and tubed the Washington Spring; also the Columbian Spring, which was in Congress Park. He next drilled and tubed the Hamilton Spring in 1808.

Gideon Putnam discovered the famous Congress Spring and tubed it in 1809. He began the construction of Congress Hall in 1811. The scaffolding used by the masons collapsed, killing his top mason. Gideon also fell during this accident and sustained grave injuries. He died in December, 1812, at the age of forty-nine.

Squire Benjamin Risley had six daughters. One, Theodosia, married Dr. Clement Blakesley – the first physician at the springs, and another, Doanda, married Gideon Putnam.

In 1800 there were two serious rivals for the proud position of the "World's Greatest Watering Place," Saratoga Springs and Ballston Spa. Ballston Spa had been established ten years earlier, with major hotels and boarding houses constructed around 1790. Saratoga only had log cabins near the High Rock Spring at that time.

Gideon Putnam was the fortunate man to understand the situation. In 1800, Congress Spring was still surrounded by dense forest. That same year, Gideon purchased a lot of land next to Congress Spring, upon which now stands the Grand Union Hotel and Congress Hall. The clearing for the Union Hall Hotel was already started.

The Union Hall Hotel was the first large and commodious hotel erected for visitors at Saratoga Springs.

After building the Grand Union, Gideon established the new village, which sprang up around Congress Spring. In laying out this village, he exercised much liberality. The streets were quite wide, and everything else was established on a scale commensurate with the importance of this future spa. Gideon had a wonderful vision of the future of his springs.

On his map, Broad Street is in front of Union Hall, which is now called Broadway. There were three known springs near the Union Hall: The Congress, The Columbian, and The Hamilton. Gideon laid out Saratoga in such a way that each of these springs had access from public streets so that they could remain free to the public.

At the end of 1794, John and Ziba Taylor moved to Saratoga. They were the early pioneer merchants. They first operated a small store in the Old Schouten House, then owned by Benjamin Risley. John Taylor built a small log cabin on a hill, not far from the High Rock Spring; they also sold a stock of merchandise. John Taylor owned and developed The Ten Springs.

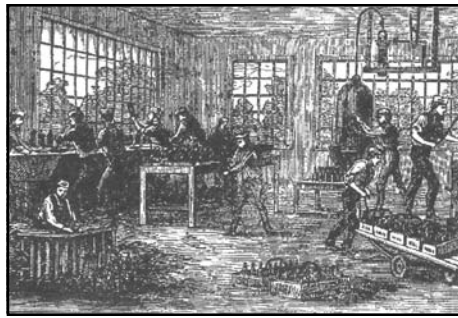
During the fall and winter of 1772, the doctors' S.S. & S.E. Strong Institute, had greatly increased its size to accommodate the requirements of the increasing patronage. It was now the largest health institute in Saratoga and was unsurpassed in the variety of remedial appliances by any in the U.S.A. The building was also steam heated to produce summer-like conditions year-round.

### **The Mineral Springs of Saratoga**

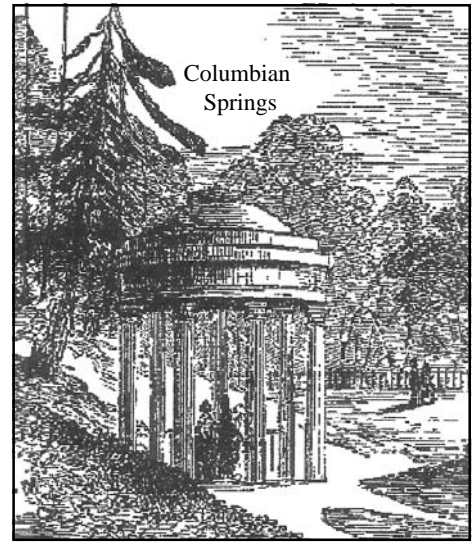
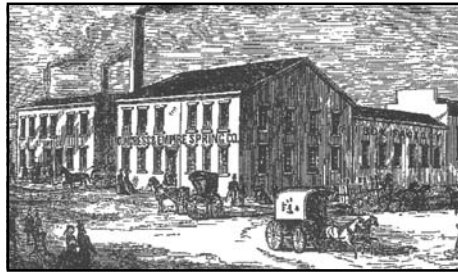
The region of mineral springs in eastern New York consisted of a long, shallow and half-moon shaped valley, extending northeast from Ballston Spa, its westerly point, to Quaker Springs, its eastern edge. This whole valley was full of mineral fountains of more or less merit and in the central region bubbled up the famous "Waters of Healing," which has given to Saratoga its world wide fame.

It was probable that spring water could be obtained anywhere in the southern region of the county by tapping the underlying Potsdam Sandstone where the water usually rose above the surface. As the water was forced to the surface, this caused the pressure to drop and a portion of the gas to escape with effervescence. The spouting wells delivered enormous volumes of gas along with the water: a perfect suds of water, carbonic acid, and carbureted hydrogen.

Spring water is good for the stomach, good for the skin, good for the ladies of all possible ages, and for all sorts of conditions of men.



Above: Congress Hall filling in process. Below: Congress Bottling House.



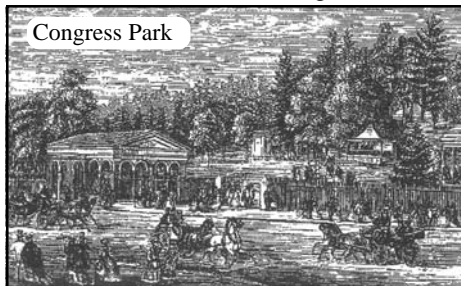
chalybeate, or iron water, with excellent tonic properties. It also had diuretic benefits and was used extensively for that purpose.

**CONGRESS SPRING**

Congress Spring was located in Congress Park, opposite the Grand Central Hotel. Congress & Empire Co. were the proprietors.

Congress Spring was discovered in 1792, by a group of three gentlemen who were on a hunting trip. John Gilman, one of those gentlemen, was an ex-member of Congress and the spring was named The Congress in his honor.

From the date of its discovery to the present day, this famous spring has been the center of attraction in Saratoga.



Gideon and Doanda Risley had nine children. Several of Gideon's sons were town trustees, including Rockwell Putnam, who was trustee in 1826 and later President of the Trustees.



Doanda Risley

Rockwell Risley

During 1820, Dr. John Clarke, the proprietor of the first soda fountain, purchased Congress Spring. He was also the first one to bottle Congress Water.

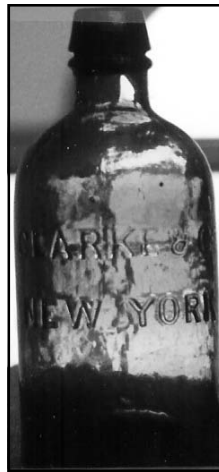
It was Clark who constructed the beautiful Greek columns around Congress Spring and also the Grecian Dome over the Columbian Spring.

After John died in 1846, the new proprietors were Clark and White. Partner John White was also later president of the town trustees.

In 1865, this partnership was incorporated under the name: "Congress & Empire Spring Co."

**COLUMBIAN SPRING**

Opened in 1806 by Gideon Putnam and one of the most popular springs among the Saratoga residents, the Columbian Spring was located in Congress Park and was also owned by the Congress & Empire Co., proprietors. The spring was a fine



**CRYSTAL SPRING**

The Crystal Spring was discovered in 1870 and was located on the south side of the Grand Union Hotel. The proprietors named it the Crystal Spring because of the crystalline appearance of the water (because it has a little too much sulphur). This spring is alterative in its therapeutic properties.

**ELLIS SPRING**

The Ellis Spring was located near the Railroad and was between the Geyser and the Glacier Springs.



**EMPIRE SPRING**

The Empire Spring was located on Spring Avenue at the start of Circular Street and below a high limestone cliff. It was in the northern part of the village about a quarter of a mile from the Star Spring and was owned by The Congress & Empire Spring Co. after 1865.

The first proprietor of the Empire Spring was George W. Weston - 1846 to 1861. They made





many improvements to their grounds and building and located their bottling house near shade trees. The next owner was D.A. Knowlton from 1861 to 1865.

Empire Water was very similar to Congress Water. It was considered very valuable in treating many diseases, including bilious fevers, and dysentery.

**EUREKA SPRING**

Eureka Mineral Spring was discovered in 1865 and was located at the corner of Spring Avenue and Lake Avenue in a beautiful location within its own park of twenty-five acres. The water was declared suitable to cure dyspepsia and all other diseases of the liver and kidneys.

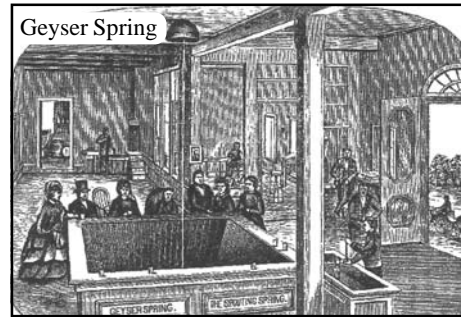


**EXCELSIOR SPRING**

The Excelsior Spring was discovered in 1859 by Henry Lawrence. It was also located on Spring Avenue near the Loughberry Water Works, which supplied the village of Saratoga Springs with water from Excelsior Lake. The spring water was a pleasant cathartic with alterative and tonic



attributes. Henry also built a beautiful brick bottling house.



**GEYSER SPRING**

Located on Ballston Road near the railroad, this mineral fountain was discovered in 1870. The orifice bored in the rock was 5 1/2 inches in diameter and 140 feet deep. The water was thrown up by the action of its own carbonic acid gas, under great pressure, producing a fountain jet, very attractive to the public. The height of the Geyser was twenty-five feet. A side stream was used for bottling under pressure with the bottling house located close to the spring.



**GLACIER SPRING**

The Glacier Spouting Spring was discovered in 1871 by Jesse Button. Located near Geyser Spring at the east end of the railroad, it shot up to a height of forty feet. The water was very concentrated and claimed exceptional medicinal attributes.

**HAMILTON SPRING**

Hamilton Spring was located on Spring Avenue in the rear of Congress Hall and on the corner of Putnam Avenue. Its principal benefits were diuretic, and in large doses, cathartic. It also claimed to be effective for kidney ailments.

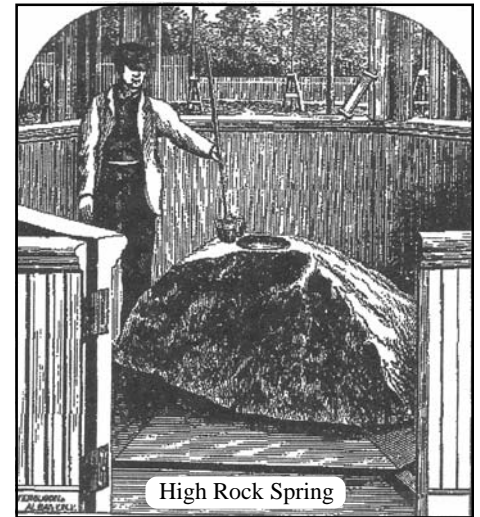
**HATHORN SPRING**

Discovered in 1868 during the construction of Congress Hall ball room, Hathorn Spring was located on Spring Street, immediately north of Congress Park. Congress Hall, one of the largest hotels in Saratoga



Springs, was also built and owned by Henry H. Hathorn.

This spring water was very popular and contained more Lithia than the other springs.



**HIGH ROCK SPRING**

The first Saratoga Spring to be discovered, High Rock Spring was located on Willow Walk Road between the Seltzer and the Star Springs. Today Willow Walk has been changed to High Rock Avenue.

William Johnson was shown this spring by a group of his Indian friends. Johnson said that it looked like a miniature volcano containing a pool of crystal clear water.



Around 1848, the owners bored two orifices in the adjacent land. These new High Rock springs were called the Peerless and the Governor. In 1866, a new company was formed and called the High Rock Congress Spring Company.

**PAVILION SPRING**

Drilled in 1869, the Pavilion Spring was located between Henry and Putnam Streets, a location called "Pavilion Spring and Park" with a beautiful colonnade over the spring. The United States Spring is within the colonnade, just a few steps south of the Pavilion. Both of these springs were owned by the same proprietor.

The Pavilion Spring was tubed by its owner – Daniel McLauren. McLauren built an underground pile crib around his spring



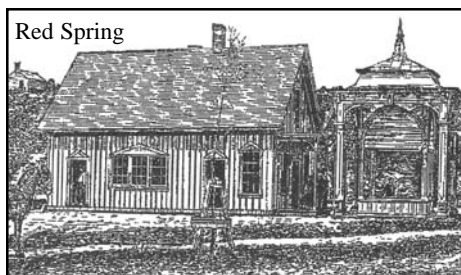
to keep the area dry. After tubing, he built a bottling house and started to fill glass bottles with spring water.

In 1868, it was drilled to a depth of ten feet further down, into solid sand stone. This achieved a purer flavor and had cathartic attributes. At that time, the springs were called: The Pavilion and U.S. Spring Company.

It had been accepted as a cure for many diseases, including dyspepsia, biliousness, and rheumatism. This favorite spring water was bottled at their bottling house and was shipped by rail and steamer all across the country.

### PUTNAM SPRING

Discovered and bored in 1865, Putnam Spring was located on Phila Street near Putnam Street. There was also a nice pool used mainly for bathing. The water was a tonic and chaly-beate (iron). The owner, Lewis Putnam, was the son of Gideon Putnam and in 1872 was the oldest native resident of Saratoga Springs.



### THE OLD RED SPRING

Discovered by Samuel North around 1784, the Red Spring was located on Spring Avenue just beyond the Empire Spring at the intersection of Geneva and Warren Streets. The first bathhouse was constructed at the Red Spring. This spring was named Red Spring because of the rusty deposits left by the water. Naturally a chalybeate spring with its high iron content, it was re-tubed in 1870 and it remained a strong alterative for curing blood diseases and skin diseases.

### SARATOGA "A" SPRING

Saratoga "A" Spring was located on Spring Avenue, just beyond the Empire Spring. Bored and tubed, it was purchased in 1865 by The Western Company.

A new bottling house was built in 1866, and their bottles were shipped by railroad, all over the U.S.A. The wooden bottling house was destroyed by fire in 1868. Jay Gould was the original president. The water was pleasant, quite similar to that of the Congress Spring.

### THE SELTZER SPRING

Located about 150 feet from the High Rock Spring, Seltzer Spring was discovered in 1868. Its water was entirely different, demonstrating the vast differences of the subterranean activity. The owners tubed the spring with an upper section of glass pipe to demonstrate the flow of their fountain.

This is a real seltzer spring because the attributes of the water are nearly identical to the famous Nassau Spring of Germany. For that reason, it was also highly prized by the German citizens. Nearly two million stoneware quart jugs were imported from Germany annually.



### THE STAR SPRING

Located on Spring Avenue at Circular Street, Star Spring was discovered in 1835. Melvin Wright was the superintendent. It was first called the President Spring and later, the Iodine Spring. In 1865, the Star Spring Company was formed and in 1868, they built the finest bottling house in Saratoga constructed of brick and brown stone. They maintained their spring to keep the water as pure as possible.

Star Spring Water was bottled in green pints and quarts, and was sold by the case. It was also put into oak casks and tightly sealed in order to hold the carbonation. Star water was mildly cathartic, and slightly acidic, quite pleasant to taste. Their principal customers included taverns, apothecaries, and drug stores.

### THE TEN SPRINGS

Can you name them? They were located

in the vicinity of Eureka Park. Others were Excelsior, Minnehaha, and The Union Spring. The name "Ten Springs" had been forgotten.

### UNITED STATES SPRING

Located between Henry and Putnam Streets, and under the same colonade as the Pavilion Spring, the United States Spring was discovered in 1868. It seemed to have tonic properties, with only a mild cathartic effect.

The United States Spring water was considered a good mixer by adding both flavor and sparkle to wine.

### WASHINGTON SPRING

First used for bathing purposed, the Washington Spring was discovered in 1828 and was located on the property of the Clarendon Hotel on South Broadway. While drilling the Washington Spring, a tremendous flow of water gushed up and had to be drilled again, within a coffer dam to control the flooding.

The Washington Spring, a chalybeate spring with both tonic and diuretic attributes, was also called the "Champagne Spring." Many residents regarded this spring as the most pleasant beverage in Saratoga.

### WHITE SULPHUR SPRING

Located on the corner of Spring and Lake streets, the White Sulphur Spring was owned by the Eureka Spring Company. This was the only sulphur spring of Saratoga and was highly prized for curing most diseases.

### *Instructions for Drinking the Waters:*

Cathartic waters should be taken in the morning, before breakfast, because in the morning, the body is refreshed by sleep and the stomach is empty. Two or three glasses are generally sufficient within a short time and only a few minutes before eating.

The spring waters, taken as an alterative, should be sipped in small quantities throughout the day. The success is based on the absorption of the water into the tissues.

The chalybeate or tonic waters should be taken after dinner. One half glass should be sipped at a time.

The diuretic waters should be drunk before meals and at night. Walking and other exercise increases the benefits.

### CONGRESS HALL



Congress Hall was a mammoth building extending from Spring Street to Congress Street. Its frontage along Broadway was 416 feet long with two large wings extending back 300 feet.

Congress Hall was advertised as an architecturally perfect gem, each room described as elegant and large. The corridors were ten feet wide and broad, commodious stairways, with the finest elevators, in the State, render every portion accessible.

Congress Hall was constructed in 1868 by Henry H. Hathorn, the proprietor of the Old Congress Hall and also the owner of Hathorn Spring.

**GRAND UNION HOTEL**

Located on the west side of Broadway, the next hotel worthy of notice is the Grand Union Hotel. Its mammoth structure occupied seven acres and was constructed of brick with a impressive frontage of 1365 feet. It incorporated a series of colonnades, with white and colored marble columns. The largest hotel in the world at the time, the dining room could accommodate 1200 guests with an orchestra to present music every morning after breakfast and again in the afternoon during tea time.

**Routine for an 1872 Saratoga lady:**

Look out the window at the wonderful scenery, quickly get up and get dressed. Take a walk down to the Congress or Washington Spring. Drink water to the music of the orchestra. Walk around the Park with her gentleman. Chat a little, have another drink. Enjoy a great breakfast. See who comes in on the morning train. Take a

siesta.

At noon time – walk to the parlor; bow to the gentlemen; have some small talk with them; have some gossip with the other ladies. Dress for dinner; have dinner – one and a half hours. Sit in the Park and hear the orchestra. Ride to Lake Saratoga. See who gets off the evening train.

At tea time – Dress for tea; enjoy tea and cakes. Dress for the hop; go to the hop; chat awhile in the parlors. Listen to the spunky music. Go to bed. (Balls were held on Saturday night at the main hotels).

**HALL OF SPRINGS**

The ceremony in which the cornerstone of the Hall of Springs was laid on July 12, 1933, marked the beginning of the “New Spa Development.” Waters from the Geysers, Hathorn and Coesa Springs were piped into the Hall of Springs for patrons to drink while they strolled or listened to live orchestral music. This building, which included a concert hall, a promenade, writing rooms, lounges and a restaurant, became the jewel of the entire spa complex.

The statues located in front of the Hall of Springs were originally part of a representation of the four basic elements – earth, wind, water, and fire. The female figure represented earth and the male figure represented water. Today the Hall of Springs retains much of its former elegance and charm and serves as a fine restaurant.

Governor Franklin Roosevelt believed that the mineral springs of Saratoga were an under-utilized natural resource. During the winter of 1929, he proposed a study for the development of the Springs along the lines of the European Spas, where good

health and water treatment had been linked for centuries.

By July, 1935, construction of the new Spa was complete. Among the seven buildings was the Simon Baruch Research Lab, which housed research facilities, medical and administration offices, a museum, meeting rooms and a theater. Today it serves as the headquarters for the Saratoga Capital District Park Region, and the Saratoga Spa State Park.

**Saratoga State Seal Water:**

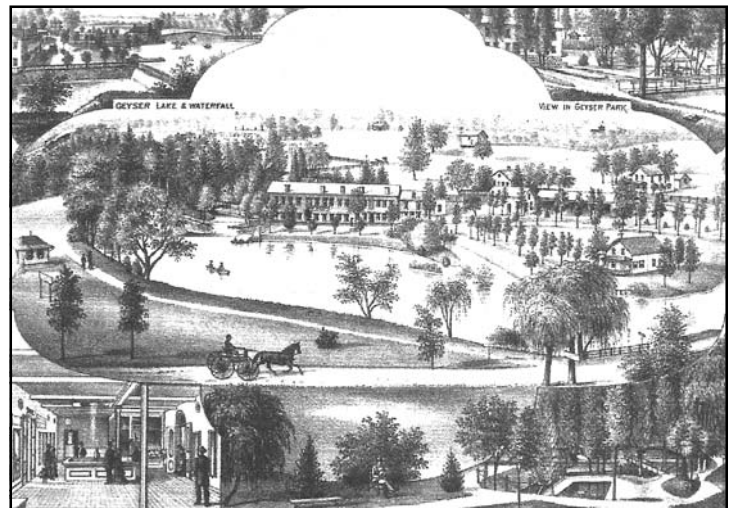
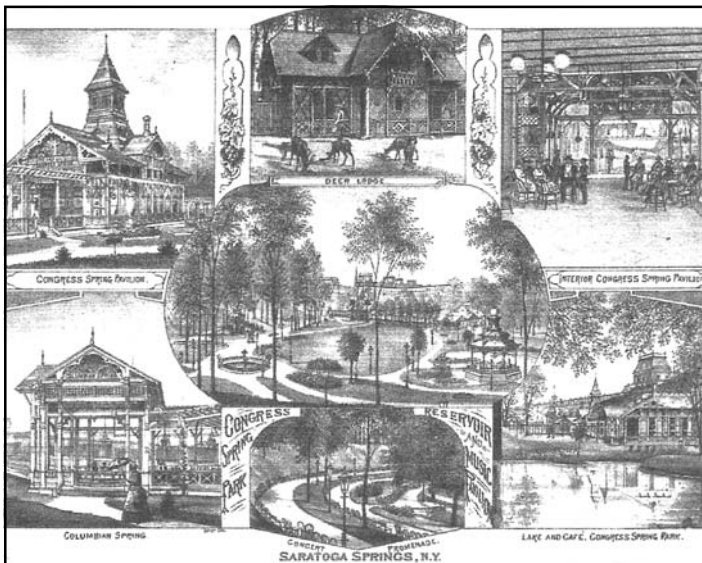
By the twentieth century, Saratogas’ waters and spas were celebrated throughout the nation. Tourists to Saratoga, and the public at large, were purchasing a healthy lifestyle that included a proper diet and exercise. Even Theodore Roosevelt was an ardent promoter of exercise and it was in this atmosphere that health enthusiasts began to seek waters that would promote health, both internally and externally.

The search for a drinking water that was pure and ideal for salt free diets, and healthy diets in general, led to the discovery of State Seal Water in the State Reservation at Saratoga Springs. State Seal Water is available in the Joseph I. Bruno Pavilion.

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Left: Congress Spring Park

Above: Geyser Spring Park