

The Bethesda Spring Story

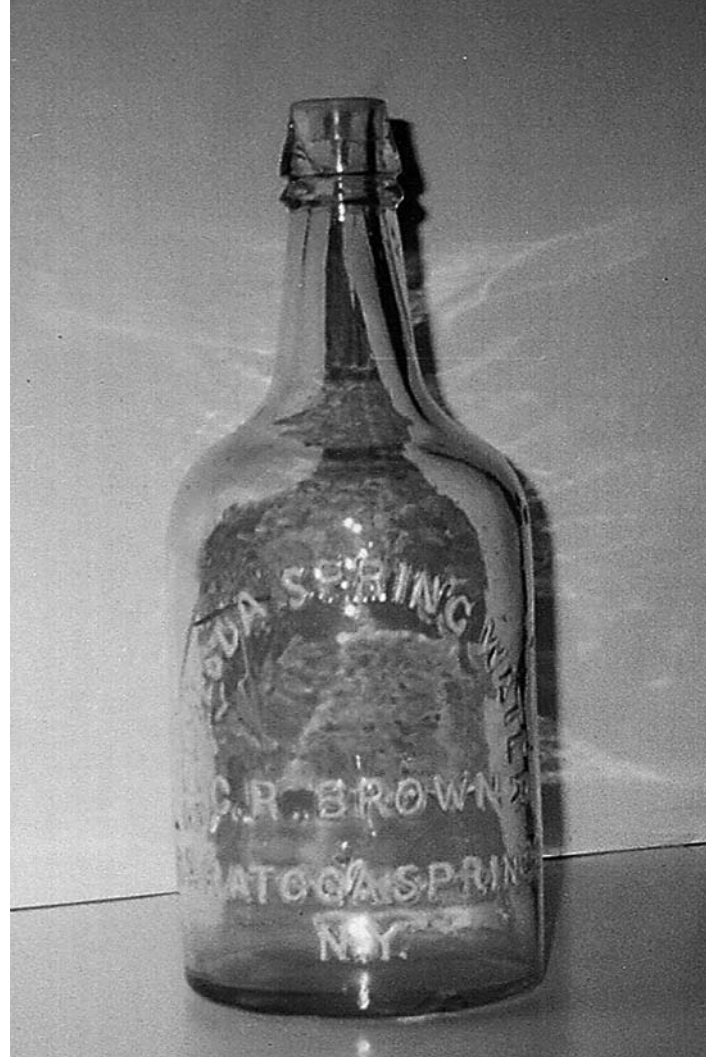
By Howard Dean

The Saratoga County Business Directory in about 1870 shows that C.R. Brown was a jeweler and optician in Saratoga Springs. He was also proprietor of the Park Place Hotel and the Crystal Spring. This spring had a very disagreeable odor and taste so the owner called it the Crystal Spring because of the crystalline appearance of the water. In 1871 the hotel burned and a new Grand Central Hotel replaced it in 1872. The water of Crystal Spring (Tucker S-17) were bottled by C.R. Brown and his name appeared on the bottles. Later the spring company was re-organized and the embossing was changed by dropping the C.R. Brown.

When C.R. Brown sold out to the Crystal Spring Co. he apparently retained some of the molds for his bottles. He had at least one mold retooled so that the word "Crystal" was peened out and replaced by "Bethesda." The Bethesda Spring was in Wisconsin and a dealer (C.H. Boswart) in Troy, N.Y. was selling water on draught and one was the Bethesda Water (ca. 1888). The theory is that Brown bought the water and bottled it for resale. I have a stoneware jug with "Bethesda Water" in blue on it.

Apparently there isn't much else known about this, but I can add what little more I know. In 1984 or 1985 Gerry Strubel heard of this bottle from the owner in Troy, N.Y. and I'm sure Gerry lost no time in getting down to see it and he was able to buy it. It was stained and quite a mess so he had it professionally cleaned by Wilbur Brill of West Virginia. So far as we know this is the only one of this bottle known, up till now anyway.

How did I become its owner? Well, at our 2003 meeting of the Saratoga Type Bottle Collectors Society in Ballston Spa, N.Y. Gerry showed me the bottle and said it was for sale. He asked if I would like to buy it. What a shot that was, so I asked if I could think about it and let him know at the show the next day. After a sleepless night and a long discussion with my wife Lillian I decided to go for it. The next morning at the show I told Gerry I wanted to buy it. He replied, "Oh no, I didn't this you wanted it so I gave it to Jim Hagenbuch to put in his auction."



**BETHESDA SPRING WATER
C.R. BROWN
SARATOGA SPRINGS
N.Y.**

Well really that was a relief. I had tried and missed! A few minutes along came Gerry with the bottle and said, "Jim said if you want it, it's fine by him." So the bottle was mine. Simple as that. I finally finished paying for it and it now rests proudly on my shelf. My very best and rarest bottle. I now need the Crystal Spring Water, green quart to go with it. Some collectors are never satisfied!