



time to discuss his bottle.

by Ferdinand Meyer V



EVERY BOTTLE HAS A STORY

FOHBC Virtual Museum

Spring & Mineral Water Gallery

The pint emerald green Crystal Spring Water bottle in our FOHBC Virtual Museum Spring & Mineral Water Gallery certainly has a story behind it. It was produced and sold in the early 1870s when C. R. Brown used the spring to attract guests to his two magnificent hotels.

The C. R. Brown bottle is blown in a two-piece hinge mold and has a cylindrical body and short tapered neck, a hand-tooled finish with rounded shoulders, and an applied tapered mouth and ring. An arch formed by embossed 'CRYSTAL SPRING WATER' typography sets over and captures straight line embossed copy in three lines reading 'C. R. BROWN, SARATOGA SPRING', and 'N.Y.'. Quart examples also exist.

Charles R. Brown was a well-known and successful jeweler in Saratoga Springs, New York. No doubt his many affluent summer visitors afforded him a robust business selling Swiss and American watches, fine jewelry, clocks, diamonds, silverware, opera glasses, eyeglasses, and rings. He would go into the hotel business which was booming in this resort and therapeutic spa town which was only an hour and a half train ride from Albany. He also had his name embossed on a pretty rare Saratoga Springs bottle.

Above: Strolling in the Park circa 1874. Sketched by Albert Berghaus, Saratoga Room, Saratoga Springs Public Library

Right: Emerald green pint Crystal Spring Water - C. R. Brown Saratoga Spring N.Y. FOHBC Virtual Museum Spring & Mineral Water Gallery



Charles Robinson Brown was born in Unadilla Forks, New York in 1827 and married Mary Ursula Skidmore on August 4, 1854. He listed and advertised in the Saratoga Springs directories as a jeweler and optician until 1871 where we see he was also stating that he was now the proprietor of Park Place Hotel and Crystal Spring which is the name on his bottle. See ad below.

C. R. BROWN,
JEWELER AND OPTICIAN,
PARK PLACE, - BROADWAY,
Opposite Congress Park,
SARATOGA SPA, N. Y.

ALSO PROPRIETOR OF

PARK PLACE HOTEL
 AND
CRYSTAL SPRING.

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This HOTEL is located in the most central part of BROADWAY, commanding a most magnificent view of CONGRESS SPRING and PARK, and the most picturesque beautiful portion of SARATOGA, the southern extremity. It contains on the second floor a spacious, open, ARCADE PROMENADE GALLERY, and on the first floor, immediately below, rises, within an elegant COLONNADE, the limpid health-giving waters of CRYSTAL SPRING, accessible from the Hall of the Hotel.

Its internal arrangements are FIRST-CLASS, prepared exclusively for the reception of a select company through the entire season.

C. R. BROWN, Proprietor.

Above: Charles R. Brown was advertising that he was a Jeweler and Optician. He was also the proprietor of Park Place Hotel and Crystal Spring. Located at Park Place and Broadway, Opposite Congress Park, Saratoga Spa N.Y. — 1871 *Boyd's Saratoga Springs Directory*

Bottom Right: C.R. Brown, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. Optician and Dealer in Fine Jewelry, Swiss and American Watches, etc. Grand Central Hotel — 1872 *Boyd's Saratoga Springs Directory*

C. R. Brown was located at Park Place and Broadway which was opposite Congress Park. His hotel guests overlooked the picturesque Congress Spring with the Park set against a scenic backdrop of Saratoga. An elegant colonnade on the first floor of the hotel led guests to the health-giving and therapeutic waters of Crystal Spring. The proprietors named it Crystal Spring from the crystalline appearance of the water, which did not rise to the surface but was pumped up from a depth of several feet. It was discovered in 1870 by experimental excavation.


You can almost picture his jewelry shop prominently facing the street on the ground floor of the hotel. It would have had a second interior entrance facing the lobby of the hotel. A grand display of Crystal Spring Water bottles would have been set up on covered tables in the hotel lobby and gift shop. Maybe even a retail display of his jewels and pocket watches would have been set up in a glass case with a few bottles of his spring water.

Unfortunately, on September 14, 1871, two very disastrous fires occurred early in the morning, around 2:00 am, destroying the Park Place Hotel, the Columbian Hotel and a large part of the Crescent. All but two buildings were left standing on the block. Charles R. Brown suffered major losses to his jewelry business

and hotel. A second fire started at Hamilton alley just east of Broadway. A thick cluster of wooden buildings, one dwelling, half a dozen barns, and one tannery were destroyed. There was a suspicion as to both fire's origins as they both seemed to start at approximately the same time.



Undaunted by the previous fire that destroyed his hotel, Charles R. Brown went into partnership with Dr. Robert Hamilton, one of the village's most-respected medical men, to build a new hotel at approximately the same location left bare by the immense conflagration which consumed the Crescent, Park Place and other hotels the previous September. They would build The Grand Central Hotel in record time. It could handle up to 1,000 guests at a time and have access to the same Crystal Spring. Charles, of course, would set up his jewelry shop within the hotel.



C. R. BROWN,
 OPTICIAN,
 And Dealer in

Fine Jewelry, Swiss and American Watches,
 Clocks, Diamonds, Coin Silver Ware, Opera
 Glasses, Eye Glasses, Diamond, Plain
 and Seal Rings,

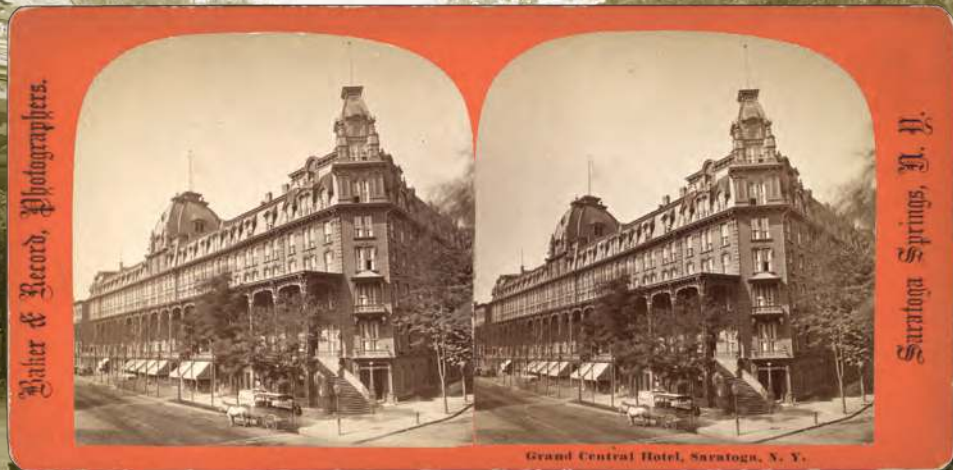
GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL,
 OPPOSITE CONGRESS SPRING PARK,
 Saratoga Springs, N. Y.

+145→

Right:
1876 Painting of Broadway in
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.
- Library of Congress

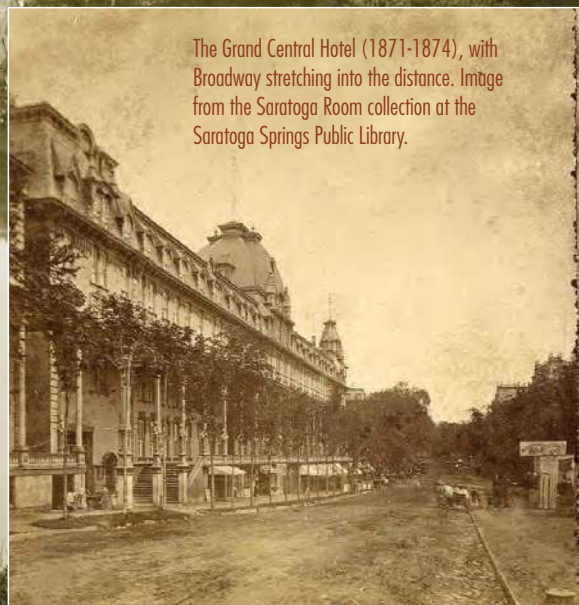


Below:
Grand Central
Hotel, Saratoga,
N.Y., from
Robert N. Dennis
collection of
stereoscopic
views.



Grand Central Hotel, Saratoga, N. Y.

The Grand Central Hotel (1871-1874), with
Broadway stretching into the distance. Image
from the Saratoga Room collection at the
Saratoga Springs Public Library.



071550, CONGRESS SPRING PARK, SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y.

Congress Spring Park, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. [between 1900 and 1910]
Retrieved from the Library of Congress

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Somehow the partners got the new hotel built and had it opened by the end of July 1872. Unfortunately, they had stretched their finances to the breaking point. It was reported that Brown and Hamilton ran into money trouble and the property was sold, taken by creditors, and sold again. Some of those owed money placed liens on the furniture and aspects of construction. Still, the Grand Central operated in the summers of 1873 and 1874, closing for what turned out to be the last time in early September 1874.

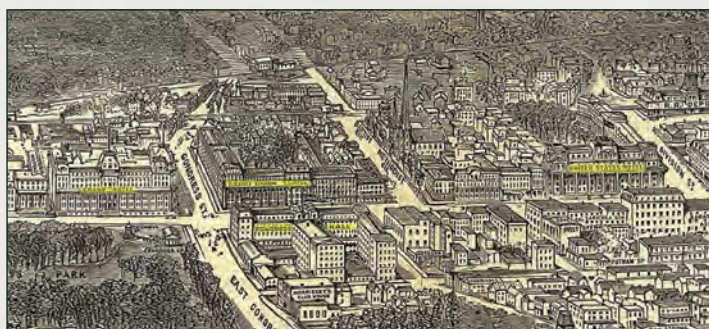
Grand Central Hotel,
Opposite Congress Spring and Park.
The Most Delightful Location in Saratoga.

This spacious building is entirely new, being constructed in the most modern style of architecture, with large and well ventilated apartments, elegantly furnished and especially adapted to the wants and comforts of all pleasure and health seeking people. Crystal Spring, so justly celebrated for its medicinal properties, is situated at the south end of the Hotel, is accessible at all times from the interior of the building, as well as to the public from the outside.

HAMILTON & BROWN, Proprietors.

Above Advertisement: Grand Central Hotel, Opposite Congress Spring and Park. Crystal Spring situated at the south end of the Hotel, Hamilton & Brown, Proprietors – 1872 *Boyd's Saratoga Springs Directory*

1874 was the year that all four of the grand resort hotels on Broadway were open – Congress Hall, the Grand Central Hotel, the Grand Union Hotel, and the United States Hotel. In addition to the usual crowds in town for the springs, the races, and casino, that year thousands would be visiting to attend the first inter-collegiate regatta on Saratoga Lake. It was an exciting year in Saratoga Springs.



Above: Image clipping depicts all four grand hotels - the Grand Central Hotel, Congress Hall, the Grand Union Hotel, and the United States Hotel. From a July 25, 1874 bird's eye view map featured in *Harper's Weekly*. - Library of Congress

On October 1st, 1874, disaster would strike again in the form of wood combustion, and by all accounts, it struck in broad daylight this time. "About 11 o'clock yesterday morning, a man on Hamilton Street, passing the Grand [Central] hotel, discovered smoke issuing from the roof of the south wing, containing the dining room."

The fire's story was well-accounted for in local newspapers. There were the alerts for more firefighting help telegraphed to Troy, Fort Edward and Glens Falls, only to be countermanded when it was thought the flames would be controlled. The countermand was premature, as it turned out since fire erupted again under the steep Mansard roof, and some observers thought it erupted in more than one place at once. There were strong wind gusts that day as the fire roared and spread. After the fire, furnishings from the Grand Central Hotel were hauled into the street and stacked up in the Park. The eventual owners' loss was estimated at \$400,000, or about 8 million of today's dollars.

Blame for the blaze was put on "some malicious person," and they may have had their motives. It was rumored that many people who worked on the building when it was built had not received their pay and that some unknown person may have burned the building for revenge, one account states. It's unclear whether anyone was ever arrested.

We don't hear from C. R. Brown much after this second fire event though he became an agent for Bethesda Spring Water, which was located in Waukesha, Wisconsin. He had sold the Crystal Spring but apparently kept his bottle mold and had it peened out to make the Bethesda Spring Water bottle. He sold the water through a merchant in Troy, New York. This aqua quart example pictured on the right was the late Howard Dean's. It is rumored to be one of only two or three known examples.

C. R. Brown died on February 24, 1882, in Saratoga Springs.



Emerald green Crystal Spring Water quart, an older Crystal Spring Water photograph of both the pint and quart together.

Join The Saratoga Type Bottle Collectors Society. Request information at jullman@nycap.rr.com

