

Illustration from *The Soldier in our Civil War*.

Gettysburg Katalysine Water

By Kevin A. Sives

Gettysburg. The name conjures up visions of war and suffering, even 157 years after the last shot was fired. But to us bottle collectors, it's not a name that we usually associate with great bottles. Unless, of course, you collect mineral water bottles.

The Town

The town of Gettysburg was founded in 1786, and named after an early settler and tavern owner, Samuel Gettys. As the area began to become more settled, a total of ten different roads converged in the town, positioning it to become a hub for travelers, and a strategic location should war break out. With the completion of the

Gettysburg Railroad in 1858, and a railroad station in 1859, Gettysburg began to shed some of its small-town image.

But despite the growth, by 1860 the town only had about 2,400 residents. They occupied around 450 buildings, including private homes, as well as several commercial enterprises, such as lumber yards and tanneries. In other words, Gettysburg was a typical mid-19th century town.

The Battle

All things changed in late June of 1863. After Confederate general Robert E. Lee's decisive victory over the Union army at Chancellorsville, Virginia in May, he

decided to take his army (and the war itself) north into Pennsylvania, followed at a distance by the Union Army.

On June 26, 1863, Confederate Major General Jubal Early and his division passed through Gettysburg. In town, rumors were rampant about what was happening, and the next few days were filled with worry and excitement. But nothing could prepare the citizens for what was about to be unleashed upon them a few days later, on July 1.

On the morning of Wednesday, July 1, advance units of the entire Confederate army began to arrive on the western side of town, led by Confederate Lieutenant

THE GETTYSBURG KATALYSINE SPRING.

THE KATALYSINE SPRING is situated about a mile and a half west of the town of Gettysburg, between the Millerstown Road and Chambersburg Turnpike, but nearer to the latter. It is

A COLD SPRING, TASTELESS AND ODORLESS.

A local tradition ascribed to it curative and restorative virtues, before the arrival of the armies which disputed the mastery of the continent on its surrounding fields. But the tradition was discredited by the residents, owing to its common water taste or sensible properties. Stories of the confirmatory experience of some of the soldiers with its waters, during their brief sojourn in its vicinity, caused it to be resorted to by invalids, after the battle, with, in many instances, THE MOST ASTONISHING RESULTS.

THE WONDERFUL HEALING PHENOMENON

Presented on this recent scene of sanguinary strife soon attracted general attention. It was proposed to erect near this Spring an Invalid Hotel, for the entertainment of the afflicted, and for the treatment, at the public expense, of discharged soldiers wounded or diseased in the public service.

ANDREW G. CURTIN, then Governor of Pennsylvania, thus referred to this project in a published communication:—

"The battle-field of Gettysburg is national property, bought with the best blood of thousands of our patriotic citizens; and whatever is calculated to increase the conveniences or add to its interest in public estimation concerns the whole American people.

"Of this character I cannot but regard the proposal to establish on it a place of entertainment, near its Medicinal Springs, for the accommodation of those who may resort thither to renew their patriotism and physical health at these respective fountains."

GENERAL MEADE also indorsed it in a published letter. He writes:—

"The plan of building a Hotel, where not only visitors to the field may be properly cared for, but also having the advantages of the Medicinal Spring, from which those diseased and wounded in battle may recover back the health and strength they lost in their country's service, seems to be an eminently proper one."

A majority of the members of the two Houses of Congress, including the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Vice-President, also united in an appeal to capitalists of the United States to carry out the philanthropic suggestion.

"TO THE PUBLIC.

"The undersigned, deeply impressed with the WONDERFUL CURATIVE PRODIGY which appears on the battle-grounds of Gettysburg, and learning that it is the design of public-spirited citizens to utilize it in the cause of medical science and in the interest of human-

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DR. JOHN BELL, a former professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine in the Medical College of Ohio, author of a treatise on "Baths and Mineral Waters," "Mineral and Thermal Springs in the United States and Canada," and other standard medical works, thus refers, in his published reports, to

THE NEW POWER IN MEDICINE DISCLOSED IN THIS FLUID,

As illustrated by its solvent effects upon those forms of calculus known as the chalk-stones, lumps, or nodosities of rheumatism and gout:—

"Recourse to all known therapeutical agents and modes of treatment are ineffectual beyond, sometimes, a reduction of the size of the nodules of gouty or rheumatic nature, by absorption of a part of the outer and investing structure. But the entire removal of the inorganic body, without surgical intervention, has not, we believe, hitherto been brought about, by either internal remedies or external applications, or by both united. In the case now under notice we cannot believe that the absorbent would be equal to the task of sucking up, as it were, the deposited inorganic matter, unless this deposit had been subjected to the solvent action of the blood brought to the part of the delicate capillaries. Whence comes this solvent property?" He further adds that "the Gettysburg Water has produced signally curative and restorative effects in different forms of

DYSPEPSIA, SICKNESS OF THE STOMACH, HEART-BURNS, WATERBRASH, ACUTE NEURALGIC PAIN, LOSS OF APPETITE, CHRONIC DIARRHEEA, TORPID LIVER, GOUT, CHRONIC RHEUMATISM, NODOSITIES OF THE JOINTS, APPROACHING AND ACTUAL PARALYSIS, DIABETES, KIDNEY DISEASE, GRAVEL, ALBUMINURIA, IRRITABLE BLADDER, CALCULOUS DISORDERS OF THE LITHIC ACID DIATHESIS, NEURALGIC DISEASES, COLONIC DYSPEPSIA, HEMATURIA, ANOMINAL DROPSY, CHOLERA INFANTUM, ETC."

The *New York Medical Record* says, editorially, —

"From experiments made on our own person, as well as others, we can state that the Gettysburg Water is a regulator of all the secretions and excretions. Under its influence the kidneys and liver, the glands of the intestinal canal, and the skin all perform their normal functions; the bowels, if constipated, become regular; the skin, if dry, becomes moist; the torpid liver is excited to healthy action, and the kidneys perform their functions with perfect regularity. There is a total absence of any disagreeable things whatever; the *vis medicatrix* seems roused to increased activity, and all morbid causes of bodily or even mental disorder seem readily to pass away. The result is, increased appetite and digestion, a freer circulation, a stronger pulse, a calmer mind, and a more tranquil sleep, a clearer complexion, and an increasing nervous and muscular power."

The *United States Dispensary*, the acknowledged record of our Materia Medica, and the highest authority among physicians, classes the analysis of this American Spring of some nine years of age with those of the Vichy and Pyrmont, two of the most renowned medical sources of the Old World, and of as many centuries of age. (See revised thirteenth edition of this work, page 139.)

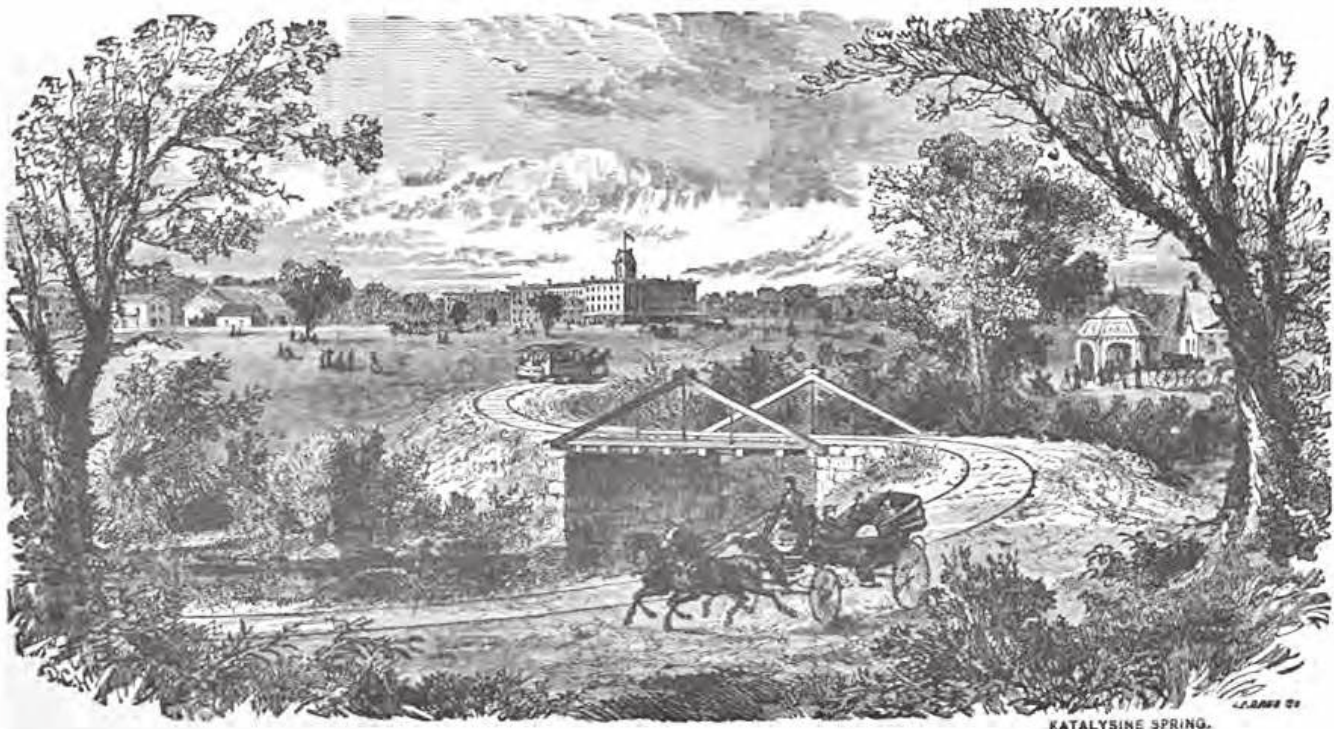
This Medicinal Water is bottled and demijohned, and sent to all parts of the country and of the world, by the

GETTYSBURG SPRING COMPANY,

And by their General Agents,

WHITNEY BROTHERS, PHILADELPHIA.

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KATALYSINE SPRING.

The Gettysburg Springs Hotel

General A. P. Hill's Corps. The lead brigades encountered Union Major General John Buford's Cavalry Corps and fighting broke out. As more and more Confederate troops began to converge from the west and north, Union infantry corps arrived from the south, forcing an all-out battle on the north and west side of town.

By the end of the first day of fighting, Union troops had been pushed back through the town, and took up defensive positions on Cemetery Hill, just south of downtown Gettysburg, while Confederate troops occupied the town itself. To quote Brian Mockenhaupt, in his Atlantic article, "The Battle of Gettysburg: A Time When American Civilians Saw War Firsthand":

"Residents cowered in cellars as artillery shells screamed overhead. The southern end of town became a no-man's land as Confederate snipers hidden in houses traded fire with Union snipers around Cemetery Hill. Out in the fields and forests – within view of Gettysburg streets and homes – the two armies slaughtered each other in places that would soon be known across America: Little Round Top and the Wheatfield, Culp's Hill and the Devil's Den."

After two more days of intense fighting, the battle ended with what has become known as Pickett's Charge, late in the afternoon of July 3.

Realizing that he couldn't continue to fight where he was, Confederate General Robert E. Lee ordered his army to begin to withdraw back toward Maryland on July 4, with the Union Army in pursuit.

The Aftermath

Now that both armies were gone, what faced the citizens of Gettysburg? The simple answer was unspeakable horror.

PREVIOUS PAGE:

TOP: Pages from the Gettysburg Spring Company 24-page booklet "The Gettysburg Katalysine Water."

BOTTOM: The Gettysburg Springs Hotel circa 1886.

It is estimated that the two armies suffered about 50,000 combined casualties, approximately one third of the total number of troops engaged. Of this number, approximately 8,000 were killed outright, and somewhere around 30,000 were wounded to some degree. So, when the armies withdrew, they left behind nearly all of those killed, and somewhere between a third and a half of those who were wounded.

The town of 2,400 citizens was faced with the unsurmountable challenge of caring for over ten thousand wounded soldiers, and burying the bodies, many of whom had been lying out in the blazing July sun for days, and sometimes weeks.

The wounded filled every conceivable space in town, private homes, churches, businesses, the college, courthouse, and even the train station. Make-shift operating rooms were set up wherever there was available space.

In addition to the soldiers, around 5,000 horse and mule carcasses lay scattered over the battlefield as well. The stench hung over the town for weeks.

The area was soon flooded with the arrival of doctors, nurses, and anyone else who thought they could help. Soon too, family members of the soldiers began arriving, in search of husbands, sons, or fathers. At best they hoped to find their loved one in hospital. But more than likely, their search was fruitless. Or, even worse, they wound up leaving with a body to take home for burial.

Finally, as summer became fall and headed toward winter, Gettysburg climbed out of the darkness, and slowly began to return to normal. On November 19, 1863, the town turned out for the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery. The keynote speaker that day was statesman and orator Edward Everett who spoke for over two hours. He was followed by President Abraham Lincoln, whose speech lasted barely two minutes. Even though

the content of Everett's speech has faded into history, Lincoln's 272 word "Gettysburg Address" lives on.

The Profit Seekers

Along with the volunteers and devastated families, soon the profit seekers came to town as well. Souvenir sellers popped up, selling everything from swords and guns recovered from the battlefield, to manufactured mementoes. Tour guides began to appear, to take the curious out into the battlefield.

But for us bottle collectors, the profit seeker of most importance was Emanuel Harmon (or Harman). Harmon owned a 95-acre farm on the west side of Gettysburg, where much of the first day's fighting took place, although he was not in Gettysburg at the time of the battle. Probably hoping to recoup some of the losses he suffered to his property and buildings, he began touting the medicinal properties of a spring located on his farm.

The Katalysine Springs

The spring on Harmon's property was known to residents as far back as the 1830s. The Reverend Charles G. McLean purchased the property in 1817 and was convinced of the spring's medicinal properties. So it was already locally well known by the time Emanuel Harmon purchased the land in 1857.

However, soon after the firing of the final gun of the Civil War, the spring took on almost mystical properties, and people began believing that the waters from the spring didn't just relieve the symptoms of disease, but actually cured or prevented disease. Rumors spread that even during the battle, Confederates who washed their wounds with the spring water achieved miraculous cures.

To give the water a greater audience, the springs was leased in 1867 by the Gettysburg Spring Company from New York City. They began to bottle the water,

which was called “Gettysburg Katalysine Water,” eventually employing 30 workers, and shipping over 200 cases of a dozen bottles each day.

What does “Katalysine” mean? According to Jim Weeks in his book *Gettysburg: Memory, Market, and an American Town*, he attributes the name Katalysine to a Greek word that means to literally “loosening below,” a subtle reference to the water’s laxative effects.

In 1868, the Gettysburg Spring Company printed a 24-page booklet, entitled “The Gettysburg Katalysine Water. The Reports of Physicians and the People of its Wonderful Cures. History of the Spring.” Here’s how it described the Spring and its curative powers:

“The Spring from which the medicinal fluid known as the Gettysburg Water is taken, is situated in a miniature valley on the McClean farm, about one mile west of the town of Gettysburg, Adams county, Pennsylvania. It presents the singular phenomenon of a mineral spring having a number of outlets through the rocks, within a distance of several yards, and even rods, of each other. The identity of the water thus discharged from apparently several sources, is fully established by chemical and medical tests. The Spring enjoyed a local traditional reputation for curative and sanitary virtues before the arrival of the armies which contended for the mastery on its surrounding fields (for the first struggle commenced immediately around the spring), but these virtues were first practically demonstrated by some of the wounded who had fallen in its vicinity — so at least says one of the legends of the great battle. This story caused the water to be practically tried as a medicine by some of the local citizens.”

It goes on further to describe how amazing the water was:

“The medicinal virtues of the Gettysburg Water are so various, so extraordinary, even in comparison with those of the great

springs of the Old and New Worlds, that we have deemed it due to ourselves, and to the medical public, to have the facts which prove them verified, not only by the statements of invalids and their medical advisers, but by the corroborative testimony of physicians of high reputation, some of whom have made the study and application of medicinal waters a specialty.”

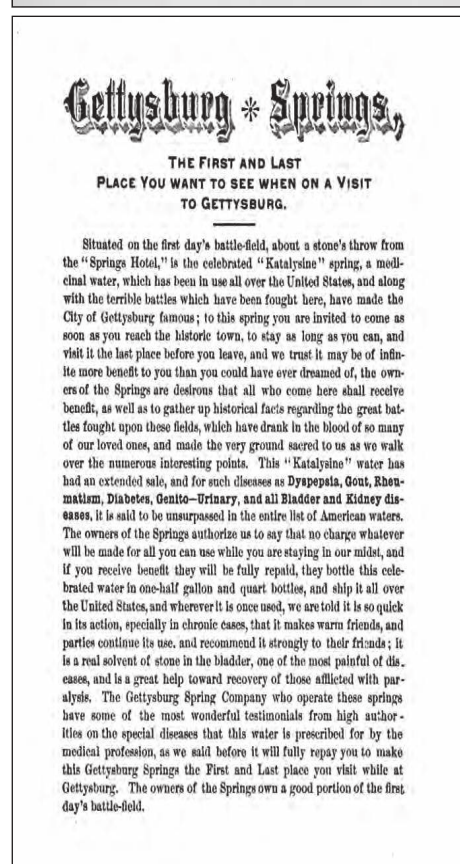
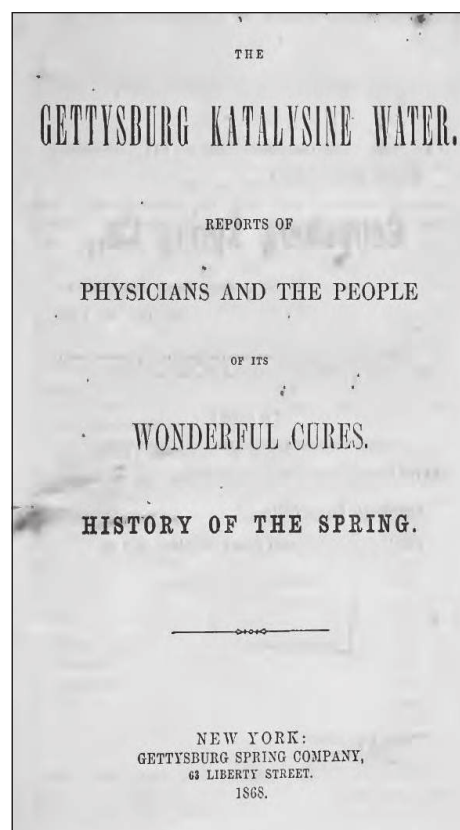
The Gettysburg Springs Hotel

Obviously owning a spring and bottling the water was only half of the earnings potential, as we saw repeated throughout the country where mineral springs were prevalent. Soon after the springs were established, some more profit seekers decided to build a hotel, to offer visitors a place to stay, enjoy the springs, tour the battlefield, and relax.

David Wills, a prominent lawyer in Gettysburg, was instrumental in building what was officially called the “Watering Place Hotel.” The result was a four-story hotel adjacent to the springs, which could accommodate three hundred guests. The hotel building included a cupola, which allowed guests to get an excellent view of the battlefield, a bowling alley, billiard room, dining room, men’s and women’s parlors, and rooms set up to “take the waters.” In addition, the grounds included an artificial lake, acres of beautiful landscaping, and even a telegraph line.

It opened on June 28, 1869, to much fanfare. Over its existence, the hotel hosted several veteran’s reunions, and a number of notable guests stayed there, including generals George Meade, Daniel Sickles, and James Longstreet.

Although initially successful, the hotel went bankrupt in 1901, with much of its land eventually being transferred to the National Park Service. On Monday, December 17, 1917, at 11:30 a.m., a fire originated in the flue of the fireplace, between the second and third floors.



TOP: Cover of the Gettysburg Spring Company 1868 booklet.

BOTTOM: Handbill promoting the Gettysburg Springs healing powers.

GETTYSBURG Katalysine Spring Water.

SITUATED ON FIRST DAYS' BATTLE-FIELD.

Nature's Great Remedy, and GUARANTEED to do
Wonders for

**Dyspepsia, Gout, Rheumatism, Stone in the Bladder,
Diabetes, Genito-Urinary Troubles, Paralysis,
and all Bladder and Kidney Diseases.**

This Water Acts Quickest on CHRONIC Cases.

SEND FOR OUR 66 PAGE PAMPHLET AND TESTIMONIALS.

PRICE:

Case 1 doz. $\frac{1}{2}$ Gallon Bottles,	- -	\$4.50
" 2 " Quart "	- -	5.00

If Shipped from the Spring, 50 cents case less.

Any member of the G. A. R. who is a sufferer,
can obtain this water at a SPECIAL Price, by
communicating to the Springs company.

Agents: W. H. SCHIEFFELIN & Co., New York. WEEKS & POTTER,
Boston. RICHARDSON DRUG Co., St. Louis, Mo. VAN SCHAAK
& Co., Chicago, Ill. GETTYSBURG SPRING Co., Philadelphia and
Gettysburg, Pa.

Katalysine Spring Water flyer with price list.

The fire spread quickly throughout the wooden building, and soon it was just a memory.

The Bottles

Over the years, Gettysburg Katalysine Water was sold in primarily three different embossed bottles (with some variations). In addition, the water was sold in bulk in unembossed three-gallon and six-gallon demijohns. Most of the following infor-

mation about the bottles comes from the "sodasandbeers.com" website, maintained by Tod von Mechow.

The oldest embossed bottles are in the typical "Saratoga mineral water bottle shape." There are three variations, numbered 55680AB, T-M-18:A and T-M-18:A1.

55680AB, is a quart sized bottle, which is vertically embossed "GETTYSBURG

/ WATER // c //." This bottle is smooth based, with a double tapered collar, and is found in green and olive-green glass.

The other two Saratoga-shaped bottles are T-M-18:A and T-M-18:A1. These two bottles have the embossing in a circle on the front, rather than in two vertical arcs. They are virtually identical to each other, except for the embossing on T-M-18:A1 being in a smaller font than on T-M-18:A. Both are embossed " GETTYSBURG KATALYSINE / WATER // c //."

T-M-18:A1 is found in green, whereas T-M-18:A can be found in a number of wonderful colors, including greens, amber, olive yellow, and teal. All these bottles probably date to the 1865 to 1875 period.

The next group of bottles, which probably date after 1875 to 1890 or so, are listed as numbers T-M-19:A and T-M-19:B. These two bottles are narrow cylinders, rather than Saratoga-shaped, with a long tapering neck and double tapered collar. The difference between the two is that "A" is quart sized, and "B" is a pint. Both are embossed with a large monogram "GKW", for Gettysburg Katalysine Water on the front, and are embossed around the base with "WHITNEY GLASSWORKS / GLASSBORO, N. J."

All these bottles are found in various shades of green — from light green, to teal, to deep green.

The final bottle is 55680AA. The water was marketed into the 1930s, when the spring closed, so it's possible these bottles were used in the early 20th century. The embossing uses the word REMEDY rather than CURE, so it's possible that it was made after the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, but that's just a guess on my part.

This smooth based, aqua cylindrical bottle, with a square collar, stands at over ten inches tall. And when the owners had this bottle made, no expense was spared cutting the embossing on the mold. It's

embossed: "TRADE MARK / GETTYSBURG KATALYSINE WATER / NATURE'S / GREAT REMEDY / FOR / GOUT RHEUMATISM & ALL / KIDNEY & BLADDER TROUBLES // GKW (monogram) //"

Summary

All the Gettysburg Katalysine Water bottles are highly collectible. Some are seen regularly at shows and auctions, while others are much more difficult to find. But with a little work, and some disposable cash, it's possible to create a very colorful and historic display that won't fill up too many shelves.

Gettysburg will never compete with Saratoga, New York, when it comes to the quality and quantity of mineral water produced. But at least for a while after the Civil War, Gettysburg took its place amongst mineral water producers. And if nothing else, the mineral water industry in Gettysburg did yield a nice grouping of bottles, with a tie-in to the deadliest battle ever fought on American soil.

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*With a little work,
and some disposable
cash, it's possible to
create a very colorful
and historic display.*



Beautiful blue green Gettysburg Katalysine mineral water bottle.