

THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF



SARATOGA'S SPRINGS

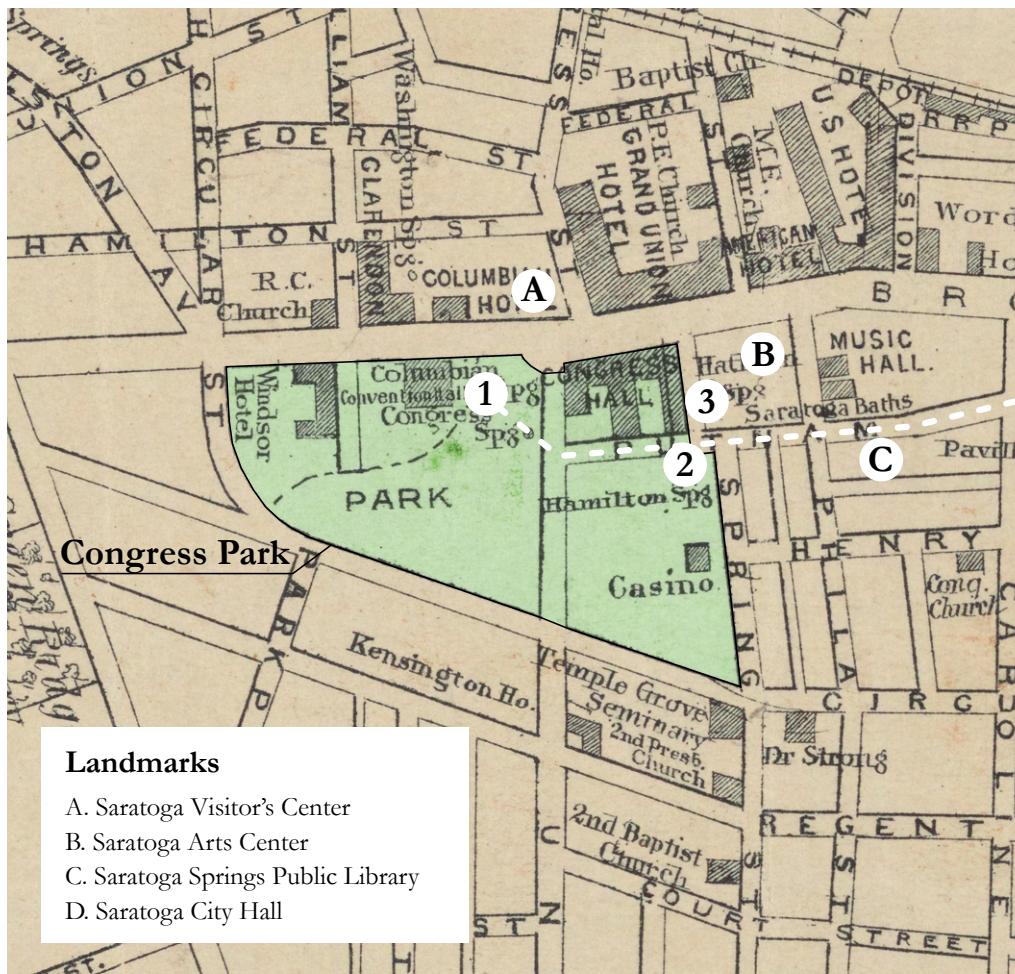
A Self-Guided Walking Tour
of the Historic Springs

Artwork and Writing by: Emily MacDougall
www.emilymacdougallart.com

Introduction

Saratoga Springs' namesake is its mineral waters, which bubble up from below the earth through a fault line running through the region – a line that we will follow on this walk today. Humans have long known of the powerful healing properties of spring water, from the Roman bathhouse to the native Mohawk population's worship of the High Rock Spring in what is today Saratoga.

As local legend goes, a group of Mohawk Native Americans brought Sir William Johnson, a British army officer, to this very spring in 1767, where he was healed of injuries he received in battle. Johnson then shared his newfound knowledge of the spring to others, with the likes of Philip Schuyler, George Washington, and Alexander Hamilton paying visits to the spring over the next few decades.



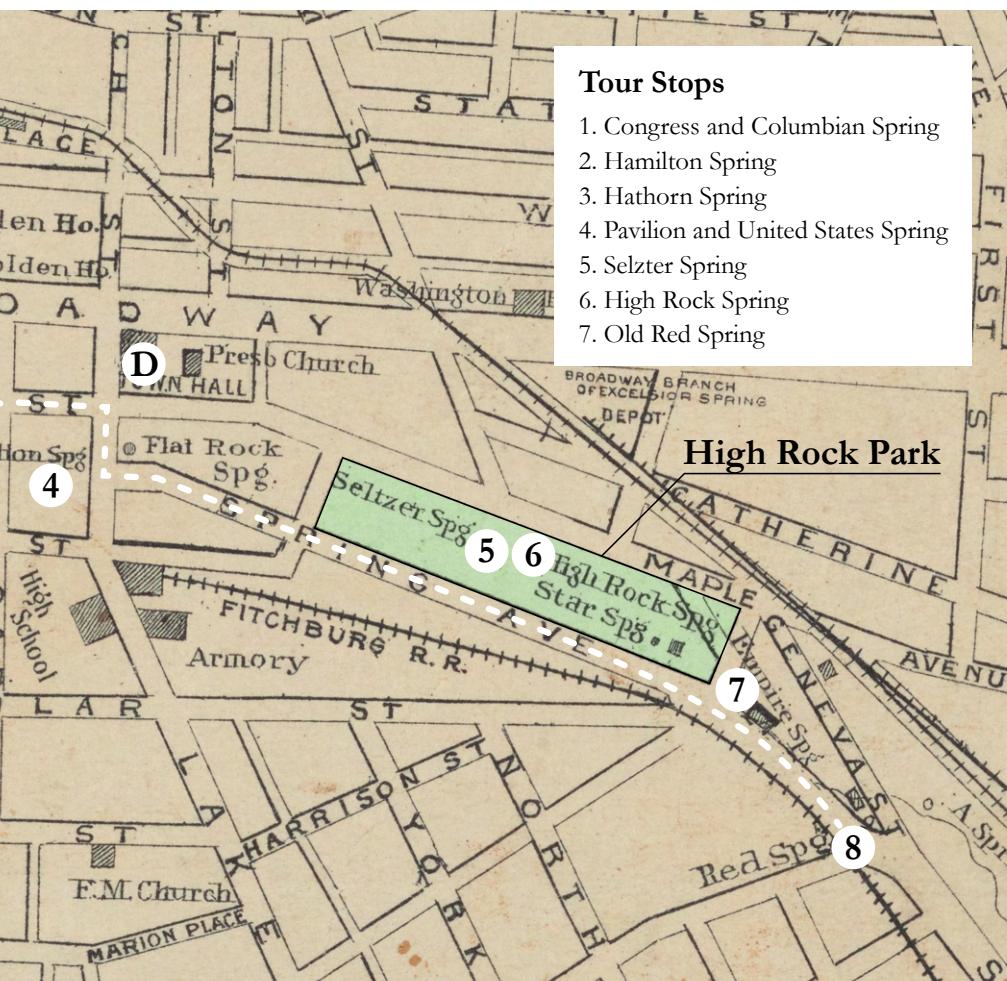
Tour Route Map

Word got out about the miraculous springs at Saratoga, and slowly, a village started to form around High Rock Spring. Through the efforts of pioneering individuals like Gideon Putnam and John Clarke, more springs were soon discovered, and the tiny settlement around High Rock blossomed into a bustling center for health, relaxation, and entertainment, hosting visitors seeking to drink and bathe in the

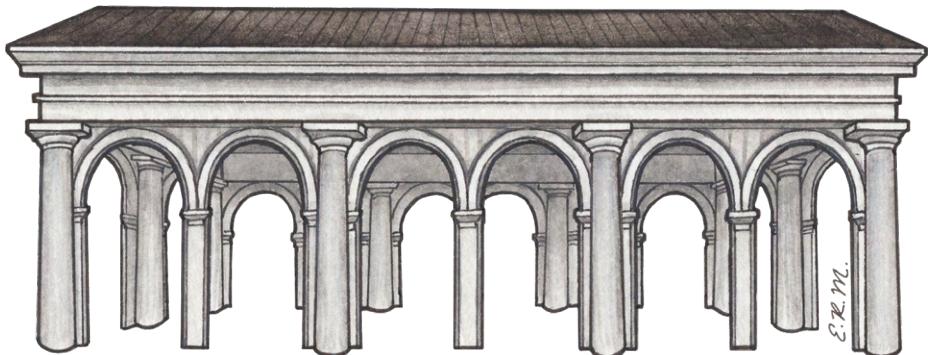
waters for leisure, medical treatment, and curiosity. The springs brought wealth and notoriety to Saratoga, and on this tour we will follow the course of that history from Saratoga's founding to today.

Follow the walking route on the map below. The first stop is the Congress Spring pavilion – from the Saratoga Arts Center, head south on Broadway and pass through the entry gates to Congress Park.

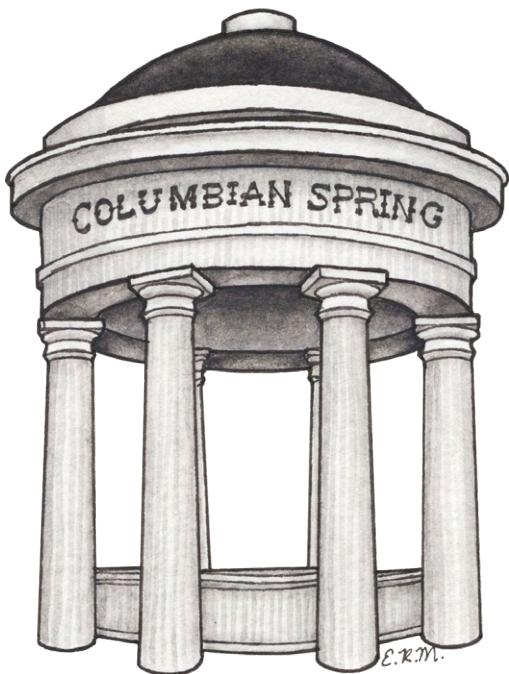
3



Congress and Columbian Spring



First Congress Spring Pavilion, ca. 1830s - 1875



First Columbian Spring Pavilion, ca. 1840 - 1875

In 1792, brothers Nicholas and John Taylor Gilman were exploring the hunting trails near High Rock when they discovered spring water flowing out of a rocky embankment. Saratoga's newest spring was named Congress Spring in John Taylor Gilman's honor, as he was a member of the Continental Congress.

A decade later, a settler named Gideon Putnam moved to the area and began exporting timber down the Hudson River. Within a few years he had raised enough funds to purchase Congress Spring and its surrounding

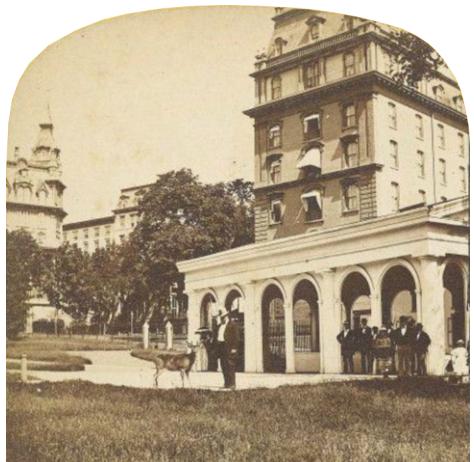
land. Putnam set about clearing land to establish Saratoga's earliest roads, including Broadway, and across the street from Congress Spring he built a tavern and boarding house. He also excavated and tubed the spring (installed pipework to secure the clean flow of water).

Despite people's doubts about his investment, dubbed "Putnam's Folly," many began to flock to the new spring and expanding village. Putnam would spend the next decade continuing to build the early foundations of Saratoga until his untimely death in 1813. Though he did not live to see his work completed, his visions for the town were carried on by other entrepreneurs to follow.

One such businessman was John Clarke, the wealthy owner of America's first soda fountain. In 1822, Clarke moved from New York City to Saratoga and bought



4



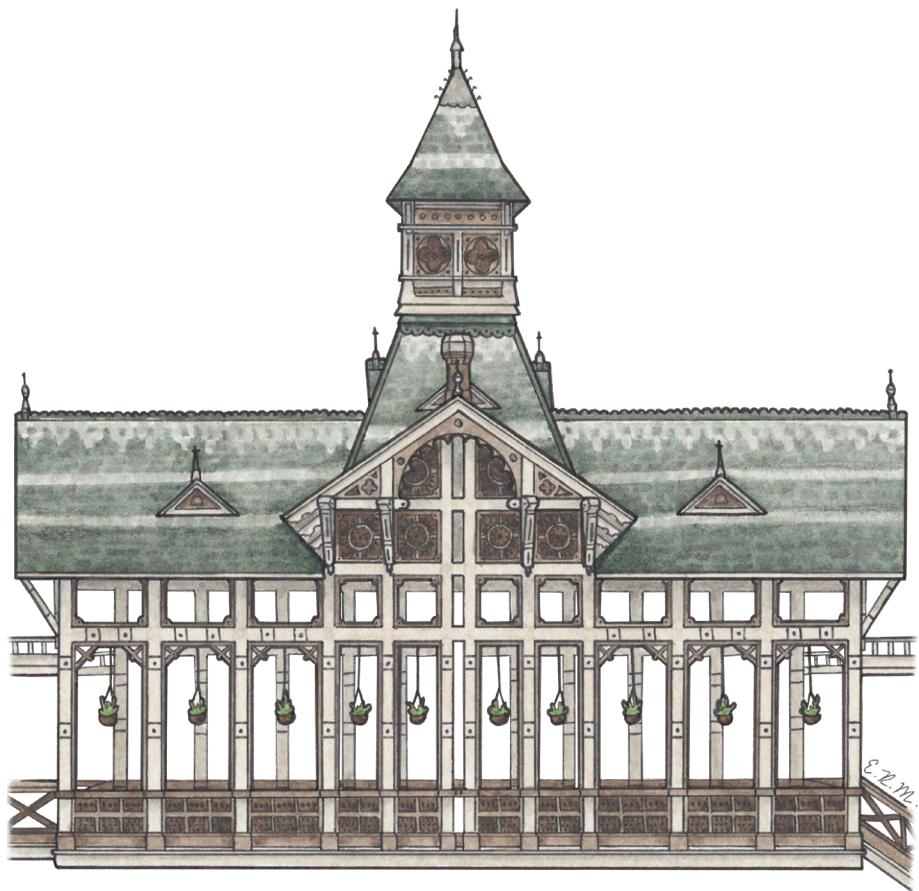
4



4

Congress Spring, and began bottling and distributing the water across the nation. He also understood how to attract visitors to the spring. He built a Doric-style pavilion over Congress Spring, a circular Grecian temple over the nearby Columbian Spring, and a bandstand. Patrons could come and have a glass filled, with the only charge an optional tip for the "dipper boy" who would retrieve the water by dipping a long pole into the spring.

Congress Spring



Second Congress Spring Pavilion, 1875 - ca. 1907

Through the middle of the 19th century, tourism to Saratoga only continued to grow. Early on, a trip to Saratoga was a long and difficult journey accomplished by river boat and then horse-drawn carriage. As access to steamboats and the railroad expanded, it became increasingly easier and more convenient to come to Saratoga.

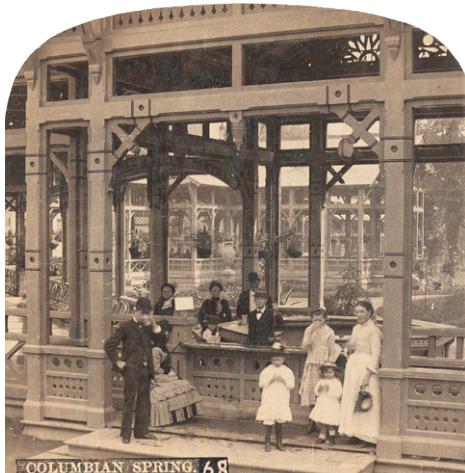
Even throughout the Civil War, tourists arrived to Saratoga to experience the mineral waters. Each morning, patrons lined up at the springs to drink their morning glass of water, with such volume that the dipper boys could hardly meet the demand. Later in the day, locals could amuse themselves witnessing less serious visitors reacting to the water's unusual taste.



2

Already luxurious hotels and venues to entertain visitors were being built all over town, and in the post-Civil War economic boom, Saratoga reached new heights of wealth and prosperity. To bring Congress Park up to the new Victorian character of the town, plans were created in 1875 to enclose the park within a grand arcade entrance. Frederick Law Olmstead, the designer of New York's Central

Park, was hired to design the grounds, and his associated architects Vaux and Withers drafted plans for the new High Victorian arcade. Within the year, Clarke's pavilions were deconstructed and new spring pavilions, an entry, and café were built, and the grounds of the park were filled, a lake was excavated, and new plantings and paths added.



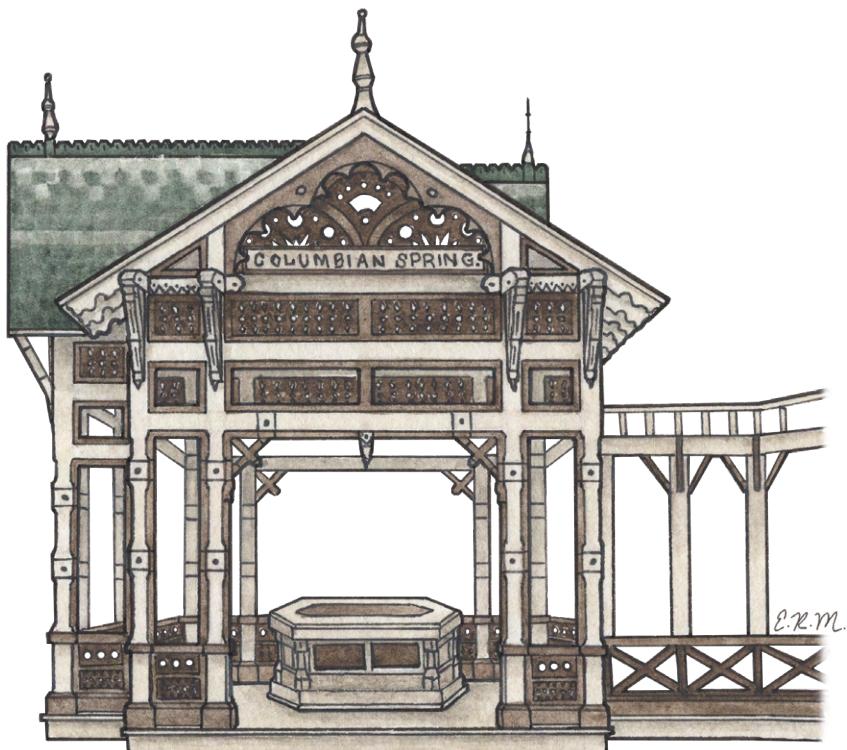
COLUMBIAN SPRING 68

4



4

Columbian Spring



Second Columbian Spring Pavilion, 1875 - ca. 1924

For the small price of 10 cents, visitors could experience all of the delights the new Congress Park had to offer. In the grand arcade, one could sample the waters of the now famous Congress Spring, or the iron-rich Columbian Spring nicknamed the “headache spring.” Within the tasting rooms under both pavilions, one enjoyed ornate decorative timberwork, slate flooring and stained glass paneling while seated at fine walnut tables. Down another set of steps was the café, where coffee and other refreshments were served. After, one could wander

the winding pathways that you still see today, sit in a chair along the park’s “ramble,” and listen to music from the bandstand, a fixture of the park since John Clarke’s time. All the while, one could marvel at the lush plantings, water features, and the nearby architecture of Broadway’s grand hotels.

The exuberant wealth and status of Saratoga’s Victorian era would not last forever, though. With the rising popularity of the soda fountain and soft beverages, mineral waters began to decline in popularity.

Saratoga's spring water tourism industry began to wane, and by the beginning of the 20th century, the lavish but also delicate structure of the arcade had deteriorated significantly in New York's harsher climate. The flamboyant Victorian style was also falling out of fashion, in favor of more traditional styles of architecture.

In 1911, the village of Saratoga Springs officially bought Congress Park, making it a public park once again, as well as the property that once held the Congress Hall hotel (located at today's Saratoga Arts Center) and the property surrounding the Canfield Casino. With the Victorian entrance now in the center of the expanded park, efforts began in the 1920s to slowly

start demolishing the arcade. First the entrance, then Congress Spring, and then Columbian Spring were dismantled, and by the late 1930s, Congress Spring was nothing but a pile of rubble, the spring no longer flowing.

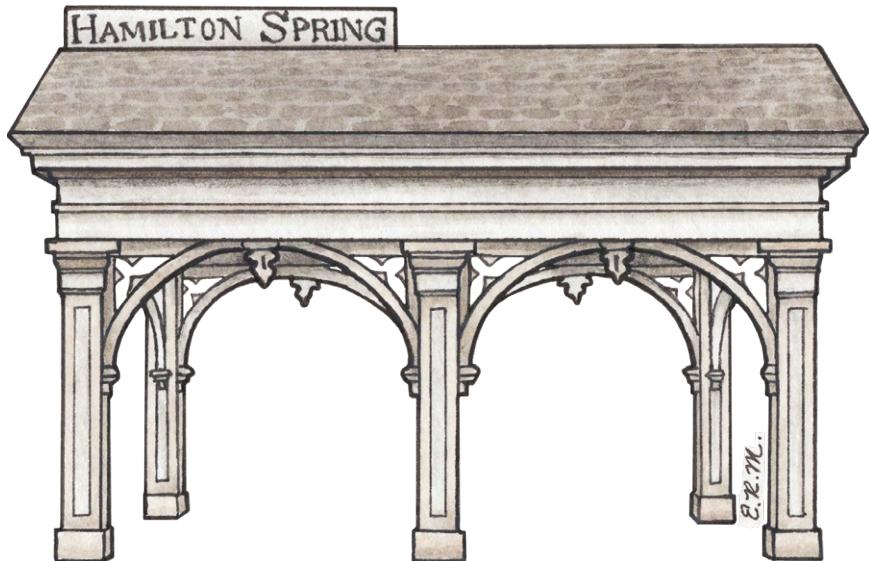
Only in the 1970s was there renewed interest in restoring the flow of Congress and Columbian Spring, and by 1976 Congress Spring was successfully retubed, and new pavilions were built over the site of each spring in the style of John Clarke's original pavilions. Columbian Spring no longer flows, but municipal water feeds the fountain under the pavilion today.

Follow the winding paths of Congress Park north to the Carousel, once the site of Hamilton Spring.

1



Hamilton and Hathorn Spring



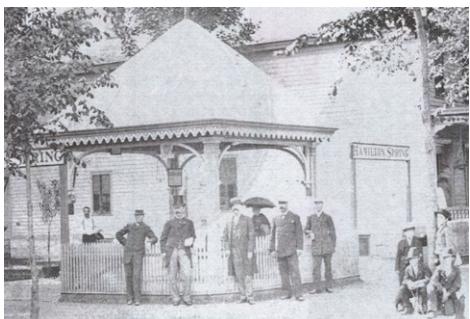
Second Hamilton Spring Pavilion, 1868 - 1879

Near the location of the modern-day Carousel once stood this simple Doric pavilion for Hamilton Spring. Tubed in 1809 by Gideon Putnam and named for the American founding father who visited Saratoga, this spring was most notable for its bathhouse.

Aside from consuming spring water, bathing in the mineral waters was another common pastime of visitors to Saratoga. Throughout the village, one could find bathhouses adjoining several spring pavilions whose water was deemed good for bathing. At the bathhouse, one might pay only for a quick dip in a selection of various mineral waters. But many stayed for longer, taking advantage



1



1

of the spa-like amenities and medical treatments offered, often undergoing health regimens in order to alleviate or cure different ailments.

Cross the sidewalk to the modern Hathorn Spring pavilion, once the site of Hathorn Drinking Hall.

Another type of space revolving around spring water was the drinking hall. The Hathorn Drinking Hall was a massive gathering space was built

by Henry Hathorn, the owner of the next-door Congress Hall. After a fire in 1868 destroyed the neighboring hotel, Hathorn purchased the property to create an addition to his hotel. During construction, a stone mason discovered spring water in the excavations.

Hathorn's addition became Hathorn Drinking Hall, where one could fill up a glass of water from a



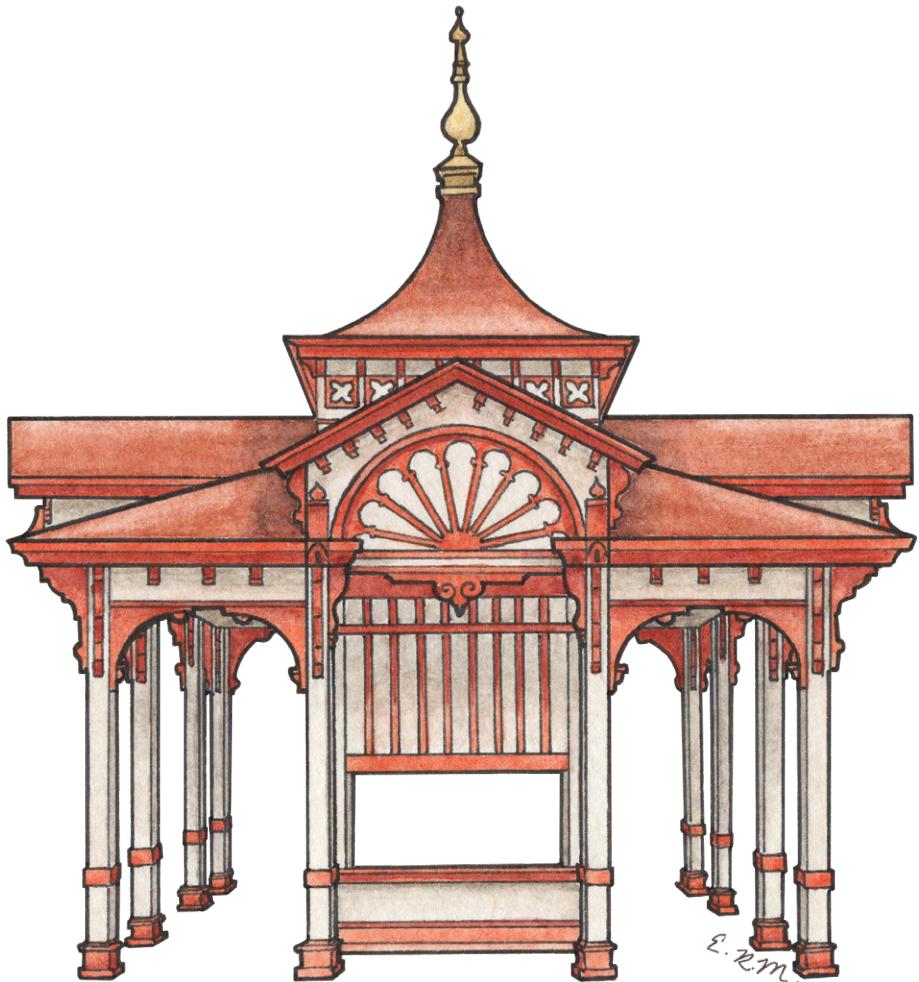
multi-spout fountain and relax in one of the many seating selections in the finely decorated space. At its peak in the late 1800s, Hathorn Spring was one of Saratoga's most famous and profitable springs, and was bottled on site and shipped across the country.

In 1937, a fire partially destroyed both Hathorn Drinking Hall and the Hamilton Spring pavilion, and by the

1940s, both structures were razed. The pavilion today over Hathorn Spring is somewhat reminiscent of the grand Victorian pavilions that once adorned nearby Congress Park.

Follow Putnam Street northward and pass the Public Library. Cross Caroline Street and follow Maple Avenue to the next stop, by Whitman Brewing Company.

Pavilion and United States Spring



Pavilion and United States Spring Pavilion, 1865 - unknown

As you walk up Maple Avenue, you will pass a parking lot and brewery on your right. In the early 1800s, this block and the block beyond was mostly swampland. In 1816, a spring was discovered within this morass, however plant growth and sand and sediment deposits made it very difficult to locate the

source of the spring at first.

Over 30 years later, in 1839, after many attempts to access the spring, Daniel McLaren, owner of the nearby Pavilion Hotel (located where City Hall stands today) succeeded at last in tubing the spring. It was called Pavilion Spring, and an additional spring, the United States Spring,

was tubed yards away, though was said to have a unique flavor from its neighbor.

Perhaps because of the great difficulty and expense McLaren underwent to tube the Pavilion Spring, he decided to place a fee for patrons seeking to drink the water from the fountain. Individuals would pay 50 cents, and families \$1 to drink the water – today, that would be \$16 or \$32.

Since John Clarke's time, spring owners could make a profit by bottling and selling their water, but visitors to the spring could always drink the water for free, apart from a small tip for the dipper boys. When residents heard of McLaren's plans to charge for the water at his spring, there was immediate outrage. Protests were planned, with local leaders, citizens, and visitors alike gathering in Congress Park to plan a boycott of the water. They dubbed



4

McClaren's tax "The Saratoga Stamp Act." After the public backlash, McLaren relented and the water remained free for all to drink.

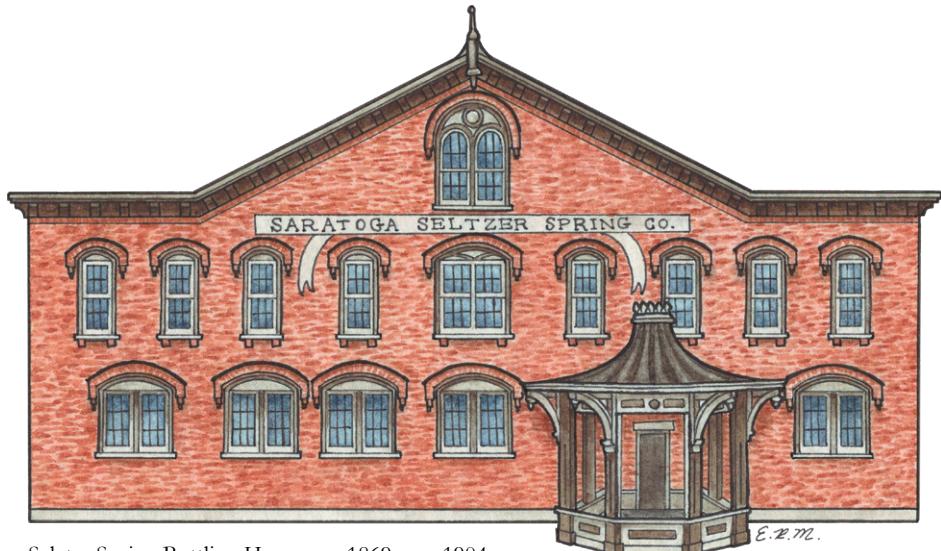
Continue along Maple Avenue until you cross Lave Avenue, then turn right and walk down the hill. At High Rock Avenue, turn left. You will pass a parking garage and farmer's market pavilions. Stop near the green and yellow pavilion for Governor and Peerless Springs.



PAVILION SPRING SARATOGA

6

Seltzer Spring



E.R.M.

Seltzer Spring Bottling House, ca. 1869 - ca. 1904

As we walk through High Rock Park, we are entering the oldest part of Saratoga, once called the “upper town.” In Saratoga’s early years, settlement was concentrated in two separate areas: around High Rock Spring (the upper town) and Congress Spring (the lower town).

Even during the height of spring water tourism, this original area of the town was never as highly trafficked as the “lower town,” near all of the lodging and entertainment Broadway had to offer. However, several springs were still located and visited in this area.

5



One such spring was the Seltzer Spring, which was believed to be the only naturally occurring seltzer water in the United States. It was discovered in 1792 by Jacob Walton, an early settler to Saratoga. Walton built a path to the spring and placed a barrel in the marshy ground to collect water for drinking and bathing – thus earning it the name “Barrel Spring” at the time.

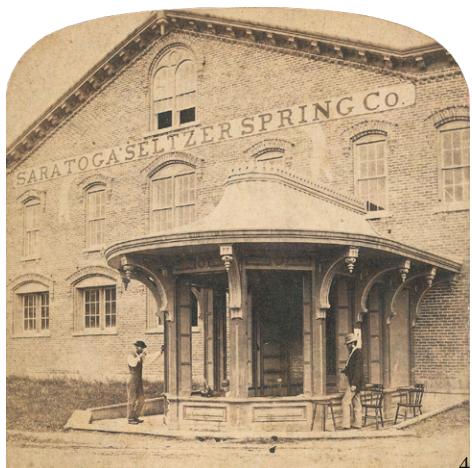
Around 1860, the spring was tubed by Dr. J. P. Haskins who later built a bottling house with an attached pavilion for visitors to



4

sample the water. In the pavilion, a 3-foot-tall glass device allowed visitors to observe the bubbling water as they were served.

Bottling houses were a standard feature of many of Saratoga’s springs, which allowed property owners to make a good business of selling the bottled water around the United States and internationally. At first, glass bottles were brought in from other areas of the state, but soon glass production began in the region to supply bottles for the large variety of spring waters exported



4

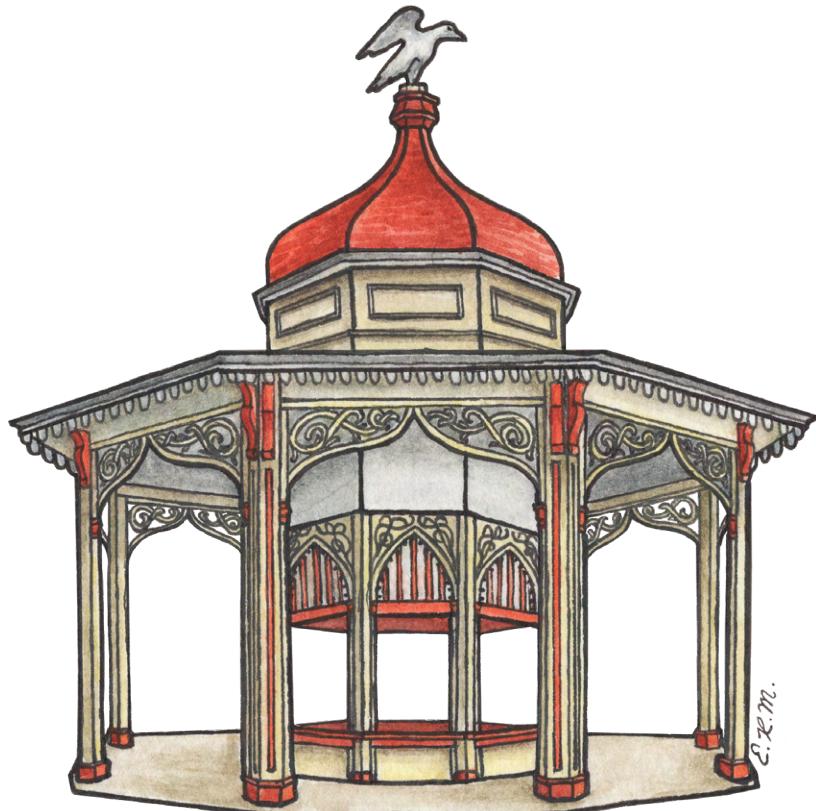
from Saratoga. At some of Saratoga’s more popular springs, such as Congress Spring, bottling operations were conducted in the off-season only, from October to May, to ensure there would be enough water in the summer months to serve the crowds of visitors.

In the 1880s, Dr. Haskins opened a natural history museum in part of

the Selzter Spring bottling house. By the time the city purchased the property in the early 20th century, the building was being used as a warehouse and was demolished in order to develop High Rock Park.

Next, head north to the end of High Rock Park, where the modern pavilion for High Rock Spring sits.

High Rock Spring



Second High Rock Spring Pavilion, 1866 - ca. 1904

Here at the end of the tour, we return to the beginning of Saratoga Springs' story – the High Rock Spring. Called the medicine spring of the Great Spirit Manitou by the Iroquois, both the indigenous people and the local fauna that gathered around the spring understood it had special properties. The High Rock is unique for its conical structure of built-up mineral deposits.

Sir William Johnson is known as one of the first European visitors to the spring, and many were to follow

him. At first, a collection of crude cabins and bathhouses around the spring accommodated visitors, but slowly, a settlement began to develop around the spring, then around Congress Spring, until the two halves of Saratoga grew into one.

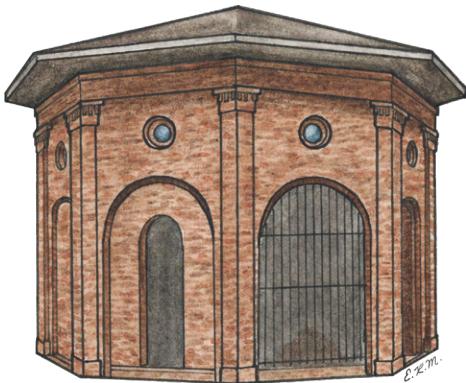
The Clarke and White Company, owned by the children of John Clarke and Eliza White, built the first simple pavilion over the spring in 1858. In 1866, new owners Ainsworth and McCaffrey started construction on a new pavilion

and bottling house. The cone was carefully excavated, revealing ancient logs and campfires beneath, then replaced in a new High Gothic pavilion.

Though High Rock Spring never received the commercial success of other springs, it was an honored piece of the town's history. However, the turn of the century brought troubling times to many of the springs with declining tourism. Additionally, several companies



5



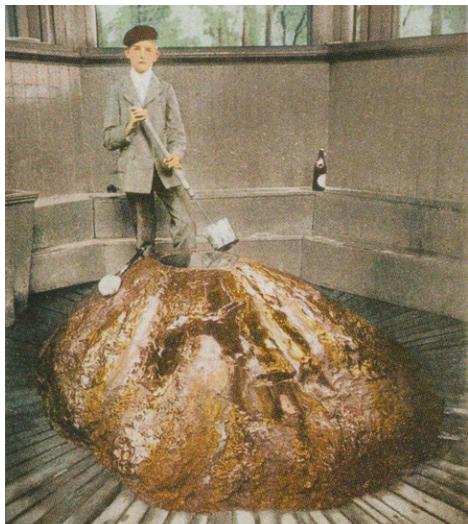
First High Rock Spring Pavilion, 1858 - 1866

A few years later, the city purchased the land to create High Rock Park in an effort to control all of the springs. The Victorian pavilion was demolished and the swampy land was filled, leaving the cone now below ground level. In the 1970s, water was piped in from another spring to restore water to the historic cone.

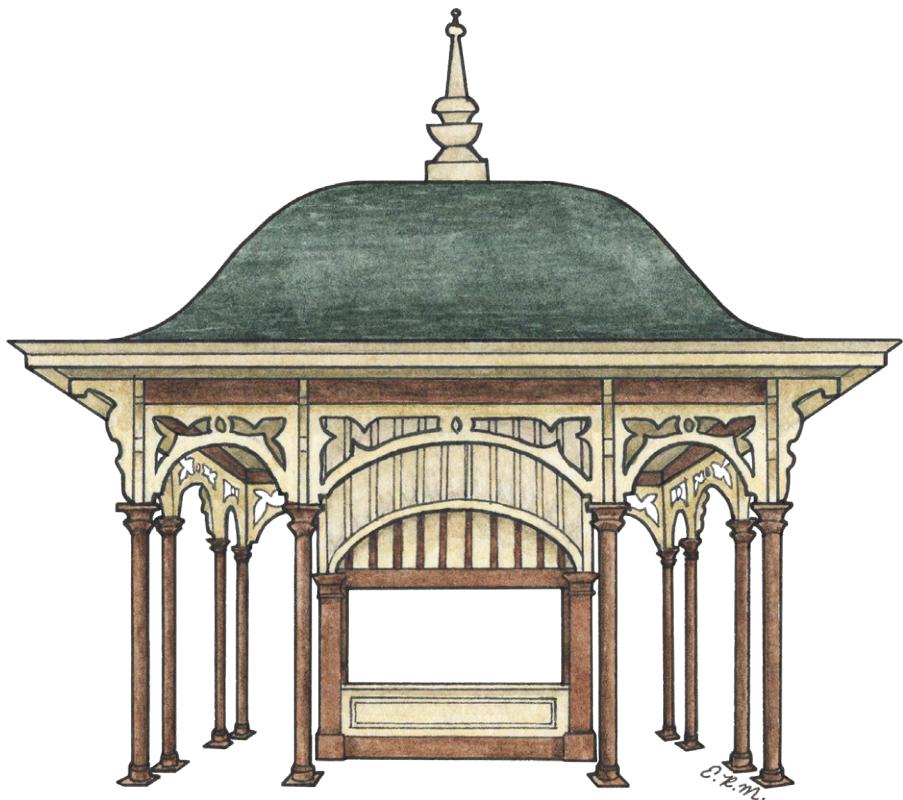
For two “bonus” stops, walk past the north end of High Rock Park to the spring in front of 125 High Rock Avenue.

began pumping large amounts of spring water in the area to extract carbonic acid gas for the production of sodas. This activity was depleting the underground source of all of Saratoga's spring water, and many springs across town began to experience decreased flow or dry up entirely. High Rock Spring closed for this reason in 1904.

2



Bonus Stop: Empire Spring



Empire Spring was discovered in 1793 and was known first as Walton Spring, named for the lot owner Jacob Walton. The spring was not tubed until the 1840s, when George W. Weston and Company purchased the land and made extensive improvements, landscaping and constructing a simple pavilion flanked by two cast iron lions.

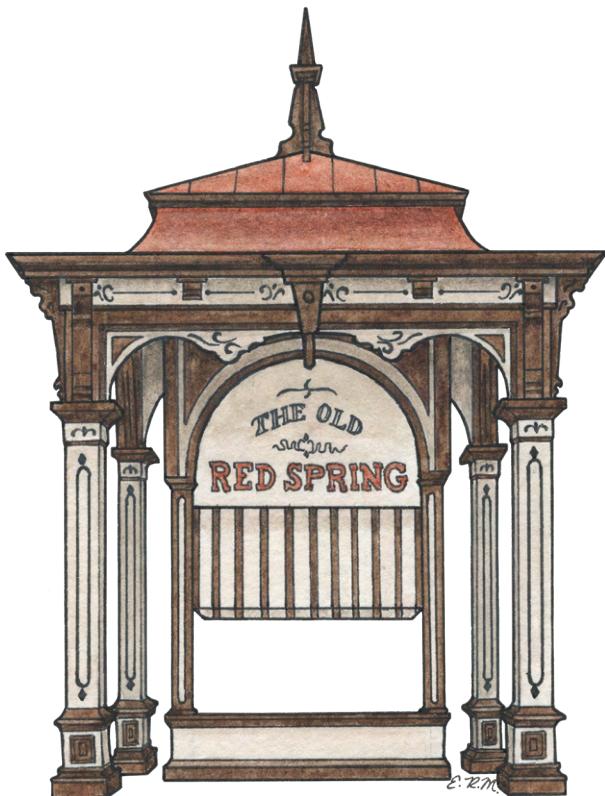
Bottling production at Empire Spring rivaled Saratoga's most popular spring, Congress Spring, and in the late 1860s the two springs were united as a single company. A

more elaborate pavilion was built and the original structure converted into a private home nearby, which was destroyed in 1871.

The bottling house was later sold and turned into a textile factory. The spring still flowed, and factory workers reportedly continued to drink the water. The second textile factory built, the Van Raalte building – which today houses offices – is still guarded by the two cast iron lions.

Walk north to the end of High Rock Avenue.

Bonus Stop: Old Red Spring



As the name implies, Old Red Spring is one of Saratoga's oldest continuously flowing springs. It was discovered around 1770 by Samuel Norton, an early settler near High Rock Spring. In 1784, the first bathhouse in Saratoga was built at Old Red Spring, called Bryan's Bathhouse - you might recognize the name from the Olde Bryan Inn.

The spring was called the “bathing spring” and the “beauty spring” because its high concentration of calcium salt, or calcium bicarbonate, was known

to be an effective treatment for skin conditions. The bathhouse registry at the Old Red Spring documented visitors throughout the year, recording 45 visitors on one day in 1876 who left their names, hometowns, and feedback on the water in the book.

While the spring was being retubed in 1870, another spring, “Red Spring,” was found, and was bottled nearby for a number of years.

Resources

Joki, Robert, *Saratoga Lost: Images of Victorian America* (Black Dome Press, 1998).

Martin, Mary L. and Nathaniel Wolfgang-Price *Saratoga Springs: A Brief History in Postcards* (Schiffer Publishing, 2007).

Saratoga Room, Saratoga Springs Public Library, The Robert Joki Stereoscopic Collection

Swanner, Grace Maguire, *Saratoga: Queen of Spas* (North Country Books, 1988).

Images

1. Joki, Robert, *Saratoga Lost: Images of Victorian America* (Black Dome Press, 1998).

2. Martin, Mary L. and Nathaniel Wolfgang-Price *Saratoga Springs: A Brief History in Postcards* (Schiffer Publishing, 2007).

3. Pincus, Lionel and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. "Map of Saratoga Springs and Excelsior Park" *New York Public Library Digital Collections*.

4. Saratoga Room, Saratoga Springs Public Library, The Robert Joki Stereoscopic Collection

5. Swanner, Grace Maguire, *Saratoga: Queen of Spas* (North Country Books, 1988).

6. Wilkie, Robert D., and L. Prang & Co. "Pavilion Spring, Saratoga." Print. (c) 1875. *Digital Commonwealth*.



Saratoga Arts made this program possible through the Community Arts Regrant Program, funded by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



@emilymacdougallart - Take a picture on the tour and tag me!
www.emilymacdougallart.com