

# SPRINGS AND SPAS OF OLD-TIME PHILADELPHIANS.

BY F. H. SHELTON.

There is nothing, probably, that is more closely associated with the history of mankind, the world over—in all past ages and that will equally be in all future ages—than springs. A brief rhyme tells us that while civilized man can do without many things, he cannot live without cooks. Yet, how helpless is even the most autocratic cook without water! And much as sundry civilized men—at the present time particularly—resent being limited to water, we know full well, that whether civilized or uncivilized, water is man's one great primal essential. Food, shelter, wives, companions, clothing, furs, grand opera, face powder, cigarettes, newspapers, silks or automobiles—all such supposed essentials are after all merely comforts and conveniences of varying degree or measure, each of which can be done without to a minimum degree, or even almost or quite altogether, in case of need. But not so with water. This is man's prime necessity, and so accepted is this fact that it requires but the simple reminder and no discussion.

And in what more convenient form comes water than from the spring? The gentle, cheerful, limpid, sparkling, bubbling spring that ever flows from the recesses of the earth. The first thing sought by the explorer; the *sine qua non* of the beleaguered garrison within the frontier fort; the chief quest of the first settlers; the backbone of the later farmers, with the resulting brooks and creeks, that make fertile the fields and water the stock; and a chief desideratum as well of the factory and commercial life. In old days, perhaps

to cool the worm of the perfectly genteel—as well as legal—distillery, or to turn the massive wheel of an old grist-mill; in modern days, equally sought, for perhaps water to serve for condensing in a power plant, or for scores of other utilitarian uses.

Having thus properly and briefly reminded ourselves of the virtues and importance of springs, it may be appropriate also to consider just what a spring is.

Dictionaries define it as water coming from underground sources. But what makes water come from out of the ground? Where does it come from? What keeps it up? Why does it not all run out? The answer to this could be expanded into an extensive dissertation upon rainfall, air currents, the clouds, oceans, the sun, etc., but as to all that one had best consult extended treatises, captioned “Water Supply,” “Geology,” etc., in various cyclopedias and other sage volumes, as full of lore as they are devoid of levity.

It is enough to here say that the streams of the earth, the sun, the clouds, the oceans, etc., comprise a working and well-established syndicate, incorporated for our well-being, and unlimited in operation, and form a vast circulating system, being one thing at any rate, in which we do have perpetual motion. The sun’s rays draw water from the oceans on the surface of the globe and this moisture forms what we term clouds; these clouds, in turn, condense and precipitate, in what we call rainfall. Of this rainfall, that in excess of the amount absorbed by the earth, runs off and back to the ocean as surface water, in brooks, creeks and rivers. But a great proportion of the rainfall sinks into the earth according to its permeability, as deeply and extensively—and over broad areas—as the local geologic formations happen to permit. This part of the rainfall, ultimately, fetches up against underground areas of clay or rock or other structures, impermeable to the water, that form great sub-surface

basins, that catch and hold it. As further rains occur, these subterranean basins become fuller and fuller—up to the saturation point—and then the water flows out at the surface of the earth—here, there, wherever a fissure in the rock or a passageway exists—in what we call springs.

Many of these underground water channels are of great length. They are of all sizes; and the labyrinthian tortuous waterways, beneath the earth's surface, in extent, number, form and ramifications, can but be conjectured and not at all—even mentally—be adequately visualized. In the region of the Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, we find the subterranean limestone so water-worn as to disclose visible and accessible underground river. In Florida, that largest State east of the Mississippi, yet where the highest elevation is but three hundred feet, in this sand-bar peninsula of palmettoes, Palm Beach and open palms, vast quantities of water flow out of Silver Spring, Wakulla Spring and others, and the soil seems to be but a limestone shell for a great system of underground waters, coming from it is known not where. The same unknown origin attaches to great fresh-water springs that emerge out in the Gulf of Mexico and in other places in the salt seas. In Montana, near Great Falls, is a huge bubbling spring the size of a pond, that is supposed to be fed in some way from the mountains on the distant skyline. Mountain sources—or at least some difference in elevation—is what form bubbling or spouting springs, or geysers. It is the pressure or head of some elevated basin that has caught the rainfall, that makes the water gush out, when finally emerging in some spring, lower down, and no matter how far away. An elevated reservoir of any water company, and a squirting hydrant is illustration of this—as well as the homely fountain syringe outfit of any bathroom.

It is this elevated source of supply that causes springs to appear in unlooked-for places, as on mountainsides or tops, far above the general surrounding level. The lake at Eaglesmere, Pennsylvania, or elevated ponds in the Catskills, or the Adirondacks, are all necessarily fed by water from some still higher source, even though of unknown location, flowing through some long underground passageway, connecting.

In such passage through the earth, the rainfall is usually so well filtered that it emerges, as we style it, as pure spring water. Sometimes of such extreme purity, such as Poland water, that the only ingredient to be detected in it is a high percentage of advertising. Again, the contrary happens. For if the water passes through or over certain of various mineral deposits, characterized by iron, soda, chlorides, salt, sulphur, etc., it absorbs more or less of such, becomes charged therewith, and emerges as we call it, as a mineral spring, which we call iron or chalybeate, sulphur, salt, magnesia, or other form of mineral springs. An illustration of this absorbing power of water is shown in one form of commercial salt manufacture where water is forced by pumps down one hole, into and through certain salt rocks, and comes up another hole, so charged with salt that it can then be extracted in commercial quantities. Again, this underground water sometimes reaches such depths in the earth's surface as to become warm from the heat of the earth, and when it emerges from this terrestrial and internally fired boiler, not dependent upon coal or other fuels of the surface mortals, we call such springs, warm or hot or thermal springs. In Jamaica there is a spring from which the water issues at a temperature of 126°; and in the same hillside, another with cold water flowing from it.

Having thus refreshed our multi-laden modern

minds as to spring construction, let us see how Philadelphia and this vicinity has fared in regard to them.

The earliest travellers noted the abundance of springs in this neighborhood, and the evidences of the district being abundantly watered. Long before the time of Penn, the first settlers wrote to the old folks at home, and made reference to the excellence of the springs. Thomas Makin in a Latin poem of 1729, descriptive of Philadelphia, includes these lines:

"Yet often from the spring the draught is sought,  
Which here to all doth freely flow, unbought."

Gabriel Thomas in 1698 refers to them. Peter Kalm, the observant Swedish traveller, here in 1746, when Philadelphia had a population of about ten thousand, speaks of the numerous spring houses on the farms, and of the fact that in the city "there is a well in every house." Watson, in his "Annals of Philadelphia" 1842, describes a number of early springs; in Dock Street, at Bathsheba's Bower, Lemon Hill, Spring Garden, etc. Most of those described by him have since been eliminated by the walling over and foundations of the great city since here built. There are several dozen springs in Fairmount Park—as yet undisturbed. There is a fine one in the gorge of Valley Forge; and it is relatively a poor farm in this district that does not have one or more springs emerging within its bounds. The water company at Ambler gets its supply from a group of springs, one of which flows at the rate of five barrellfuls a minute. Springfield Township, Delaware County, was named from an exceptional spring on the old Maris homestead. Jacob's Well in Upper Chichester township, the same county, was of early note, and today the Springfield Water Company, through its collection and distribution of the waters of Crum and other creeks hereabouts, is but vending to thousands of householders,

the limpid flow in large part, of thousands of springs in this district.

While the springs local to Philadelphia are of excellent potable water, it cannot be said that they are unusual in character outside of a few that are notable because of size. But as size always attracts, as the collector is apt to esteem the egg of an eagle beyond that of an even rarer humming-bird, as the world makes obeisance to size—whether it be of an ocean liner, an income tax, human audacity or a country fair pig—let us note, at least, three of our neighboring springs that warrant attention on this score.

The first is the “Big Spring” on the farm of that name, about three and a half miles from Malvern, on the old Conestoga road, in East Whiteland township, Chester County. Known by that name and so appearing on atlases of fifty years back, it has for an unknown period, poured forth through bubbling sand, a great stream of fine water that forms a principal supply to Valley Creek, that empties into the Schuylkill, at Valley Forge. While the volume of flow has not, as far as I know, been measured, the flow was sufficient in past days at any rate to run an old-time “bark mill” for pulverizing bark for leather tanning purposes. The old dam, the foundations and other evidences of the mill, are still visible.

A much better known instance, however, of a spring large enough to run a mill is that of “Spring Mill” on the east side of the Schuylkill in Montgomery County, about two miles below Conshohocken. Here in a pleasant two-acre grove of oaks, about a quarter of a mile back from the river, five or six springs are grouped in perhaps half an acre, the united flow from which, is perhaps a hundred and twenty square inches, or enough to fill a twelve-inch pipe. The water is finely clear and the bottom of the chief spring is visible all over, as is characteristic of these large springs.

It is a rarely fine and a rarely great spring. By usual mill race, the water is led to a gambrel-roofed low-eaved, venerable grist-mill, built at least a hundred and twenty-five years ago and apparently still in occasional use. A plan of this property, titled in French and dated 1802, in the files of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, clearly shows the location of the spring, the raceway and the mill, the road to Philadelphia, and the sixty-five-acre tract at "Mount Joy." The story of this old plantation of French association, and of the mill and the spring, would make a good subject for the Montgomery County Historical Society to work up. The waters of the spring do not now seem to be especially used, and the premises are but a place for local picnics.

Largest of all the springs hereabouts—indeed asserted as the "largest on the Atlantic coast between Maine and Florida" is the great spring of Aquatone or Aquatong, up the old York Road above Buckingham, about 32 miles from Philadelphia, and three miles this side of New Hope on the Delaware in Solebury township, Bucks County. This spring by one is stated as having a flow of six million glasses of water a day; by another of three million gallons. This latter figure is at the rate of forty barreelfuls a minute! Many of the records of Bucks County—the Huffnagle papers for instance—refer to it. Situated on the hilltops, its descending little valley to the Delaware was easily dammed and its tumbling waters readily impounded for the operation of several colonial mills, the earliest of which was as far back as 1707—but none of which now remain. The property was acquired about thirty-five years ago by Dr. R. V. Mattison of Ambler, who still owns it and who at one time bottled and sold its waters.

There are many springs in the State, some of marked size, but the super-one of all—it may be worth noting

in passing—is that monster spring at Bellefonte, Center County, that flows at the rate of twenty million gallons a day, a rate seven times greater than Aquatong, and that means four barrellfuls of water every second. It is said that the waters of this spring have been traced to the central lake region of New York State, some hundred and fifty miles away. As to this I do not know, but if it is so, there arises a juvenile desire to test the assertion by emptying, for instance, a ton of peppermint into the Cayuga, Seneca, Geneva and other lakes, and see if peppermint water appears at Bellefonte! Or a still more interesting experiment in the realm of investigation and discovery—and adult rather than juvenile—would be to empty some of the thousands of cases or barrels of liquor that we read of in these days as from time to time destroyed by the minions of Volstead, into these central lakes in the State of New York, and see whether what are technically known as “highballs” would in due course emerge at Bellefonte, to the amazement—though not consternation—of the respected citizens there. The resulting probable fatalities, however, from local super-excitement, probably makes such experiment inadvisable.

The abundance of water in Philadelphia, whether spring or other kind, the esteem in which baths and the free use of water for sundry ills was held in the early days, coupled perhaps with the traditional tubbing habit of the English—who predominated in the New World metropolis—led, at an early day, to the establishment of numerous bath houses in Philadelphia—a phase of water use in a measure allied with springs. At the time of the Revolution, we find bath houses thus advertised:

For showers and plunging kept in Race Street, No. 119, between Third and Fourth Streets.



Extensive "Marble Baths" are advertised around 1805 and 1810 and another bathing-place refers to having "a good hand-organ to amuse the visitor." These baths were for hygienic purposes and extensively patronized. But while Charlemagne at Aix-la-Chapelle, a watering-place of the Romans, is said at times to have held his court and met his council in the bath, and some French perfect ladies of greater personal beauty than modesty are traditioned as having held levees in the bath, there is nothing to indicate that our Philadelphia notables went quite that far, even in the pretentious "Marble Baths." Treatises on bathing were popular. We find John Morton, the Signer, buying at auction and autographing a curious volume (that I now possess), a London printed book of 1702 of no less than 412 pages upon the antiquity of bathing and the merits of cold water, in which the author shows to his own satisfaction at least, and in language of Chaucerian bluntness—some of it quite unquotable in these times—that cold water will cure about every ill of the flesh.

The advocates of hot water, however, were equally diligent, and we find budding doctors—one H. W. Lockett, for instance, in the University of Pennsylvania, in 1801, writing graduation theses upon "The Merits of the Warm Bath," etc., wherein we comfortably read:

"The warm bath, in old age, acts like a fresh supply of oxygen to a glimmering taper. The agreeable impression it produces may supply the place of many of the natural stimuli, that by frequency of repetition have become incapable of exciting the system to the performance of its various functions. Dr. Franklin received great benefit from it. It prevented the too speedy approach of old age and enabled him to support the infirmities of his last days with less perceptible decay. It must be continued regularly and

for a long time in this period of life to obtain its salutary effects. The degree of temperature should never be below 100° and as much higher as agreeable."

Of much greater interest, however, than the plain springs—that is of pure water, simply—were those of a medicinal character; the mineral springs of the early metropolis, for as these were developed came with them, the personal and social elements and in some cases, local history. These were the spas, spaas or spaws of our Philadelphia forefathers.

That such mineral springs were locally to be found is disclosed in the earliest records. Penn wrote:

"There are mineral waters which operate like Barnet and North Hall, that are not two miles from Philadelphia."

To those unfamiliar with Barnet and North Hall, this means nothing. Gabriel Thomas, however, quite illuminates the understanding, when he, in his account of the city, in "The Province and Country of Pensilvania" 1698 (a copy of which, incidentally, is priced at about a thousand dollars now) doubtless refers to the same springs, and says:

"Not two Miles from the *Metropolis* are also *Purging Mineral Waters*, that pass both by *Siege* and *Urine* all out as *Epsom*."

A two dollar reprint of this book, however, is just as—and very—readable, in the writer's quaintness of language and description. He speaks for instance of the "Salamander Stone" found on the Brandywine, "with cotton in its veins, which will not consume in the fire," meaning asbestos rock. Again of the young women, usually married by twenty, and "when once in that noose, seldom a one but hath a child in her belly or one upon her lap." And the origin of the slang work "boozy"—by some attributed to a tavern keeper of later days by the name of Booz, is shown to be probably of old London origin (where Gabriel Thomas wrote his book) as he says in 1698, mind you, that the

Indians, usually sober, become "boozy" after "having learned to drink a little too much Rum of the Christians, to their shame" but "pardon it, alleging the liquor is Criminal, not the Man."

A Dr. Bond, locating in Philadelphia in 1734, found fine chalybeate waters that excited his admiration; and even by that date, several mineral springs that I shall shortly describe were in repute. Philadelphia was founded and steadily grew in the period in which the English spas—Bath, Bristol, Tunbridge Wells, Sadlers Wells, Leamington, Harrowgate, etc., and numerous continental spas in France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, etc., were rising and becoming notable. The fame of these was brought to the New World in due course by sundry travellers and it was but natural that around Philadelphia, the new metropolis, a small edition of the life of the continental spas should develop, or at least be essayed.

Before describing our colonial spas hereabouts let us glance at the definition of the word itself.

The work "spa," meaning a place of medicinal springs, is said to be derived from an old Walloon word "Espa," meaning fountain and from which was named the Belgian town of Spa, reputed as the oldest of its kind in Europe, its waters having been discovered in 1326. It was the most fashionable resort in Europe in the seventeen hundreds, when the custom of visiting such places for the medicinal use of the waters became well established. The fame of this first continental cure, was augmented not a little by the Sauveniere waters, but half a mile distant, supposed to be effective against sterility.

The heart of all these spas was and is "the pump room," which is defined as "a room connected with a mineral spring, in which the waters are drunk"; and here indeed, at a popular spa, is where fashion

gathers and gossip flows with fluidity not surpassed by the waters!

I have referred to the fact that spring waters becoming charged with the flavor, so to speak, of the rocks or soil through which they pass or filter, emerge as mineral springs. In character, therefore, the water of spas of course varies, according to the geologic formation over which they happen to be, or from which the water comes. Those impregnated with some salts of iron are known as iron or chalybeate springs; and so according to the mineral that is picked up by the water, and its effects on the human system, we have saline alterative aperient, emetic, diuretic, cathartic, purging, thermal springs, etc. There are in fact, as shown by modern analysis, some twenty different mineral substances and about six gases, found in various natural mineral waters, which are therefore simply weaker or stronger solutions of salts and gases in water of higher or lower temperature. The variety of such and the therapeutic effect or value of various mineral waters is a subject in itself, which I here discreetly avoid entering thereupon, referring the interested one to numerous treatises thereon in the cyclopedias and to the various volumes upon the subject, that have been published for a thousand years or more back, a certain Savonarola for instance in 1485 having written thereon as well as the Greeks and Romans long before.

In Philadelphia, the custom of going to the springs, in Colonial and in Revolutionary times, became well fixed. Sometimes the journey was for reasons of health; sometimes it was not even ostensibly so, for the seeker of relaxation or a change and who never touched the waters, was equally a patron of the resorts, same as in the present day. And in this pleasure travel, therefore, came the competition of the springs, with the seashore resorts or other watering-places.

The springs and spas, however, clearly antedated the ocean resorts. The springs were nearer and more easily reached, opening not less than two hundred years ago, they were three generations ahead of the old-time ocean beaches. Long Branch, for instance, began about 1790—and was then graced with a two-story barnlike hotel, one of the earliest of the architectural vacuums that have jolted the eye on the New Jersey coast. The milestones along the way, as Horace Binney once remarked, were not so much to show the tossed and tumbled passenger how far he had gone, as how little yet remained and “nine insides” and several “outsides” was scarcely traveling in comfort. One writer speaking of such and the poor accommodations said that before the Revolution “the concomittants of sea bathing were rough as its own surges.” At Tuckerton, then one of the few places in vogue, some houses “were painted,” and at Cape May, reached relatively easily, by boat down the Delaware, there were but three boarding-houses as late as 1842. Watson, speaking of Cape May, remarks:

“The ladies at appointed hours go into the surf, at which time gentlemen do not walk on the banks. The ladies wear flannel and other woolen dresses. None go out above half their depth.”

It is readily understood that with the ladies wearing the horrible woolen and flannel dresses of past times, gentlemen of discernment and taste, quite abstained from letting themselves walk on the bank or near at that time! If that logic or line of thought be correct the converse quite explains the practice of gentlemen of these days, who now particularly do walk at the hour at which the ladies bathe, in view of the present pleasing absence of flannels, woolens, skirts and other impedimenta. While the worthy Philadelphian, possibly desperate from too much domesticity (if we may judge from some dispiriting pictures of earlier days), may have sought a change, it was rather inland that

he turned than to the shore. His thrilling choice, aside from springs and spas, has been indicated eighty years ago thus:

“Round about, we have the wonders of Mauch Chunk, Carbondale, the Morris Canal, Catskill mountains and the everlasting battlements of the North River. The Grand Canal (Erie?) and Niagara are sought; westward we have the line of new canals; New England and northern tours occur.”

Board at the hotels of the early spring and resorts could be had for \$8.00 or \$10.00 or \$15.00 a week. What a change, to our modern times, when complex, concrete, and costly, yet most inviting caravansaries of colossal capacity mark our tourist range; with palatial trains speeding thousands of miles, with every comfort aboard; from Alaska to the Caribbean with resorts of both summer and of winter on every hand; and world cruises in majestic leviathan steamers that but complicate one's choice, if one has the price!

More than a hundred years ago, the high livers of Philadelphia, annoyed by bile or gout or other complaints, could buy bottled spring waters around the corner. Messrs. Cohen and Hawkins, for instance, advertised as early as 1807, water of various brands, to be had at their warehouse; and as early as 1820 the “celebrated waters of Ballston and Saratoga Springs were also on sale in the city. But these high livers preferred to take the waters in the pump rooms at the springs as a rule. Was not this natural, and did not Dr. Rush say that they were much more efficacious when taken fresh? There was but little trouble even then to find abundant places or destinatinos. The greater trouble, forsooth, was the getting there. Aside from the purely local springs, there were, to the north, Ballston and Saratoga—rising in fame—the latter, all things considered, probably the best-known springs in America.

An early view of Saratoga, however, suggests devas-

tated France, and there was Richfield, or Lebanon. To the south were the warm springs of Virginia, already in high repute. At one of these—now as famous as it is expensive (as related to me by an old-time Virginia patron), the first accommodations were so limited and furnishings so scant that there was but one bureau—and it was the landlord's custom to size up the stage load of arriving guests and then have the bureau trundled into the room of the most important one. Patrick Henry may have been so honored.

As early as 1773, Perth Amboy, N. J.—that present dismal centre of terra cotta and oil works, and with a cunning worthy of a modern Board of Trade, had a combination of both sea bathing and a mineral spring advertised:

#### PERTH AMBOY

"The Convenient BATH, advertised last Year, is put into every good Order, for the Reception of such as incline to bathe in Sea Water; several Persons last Season received great Benefit from it. The Mineral Spring (Similar to the German Spaw) is also in good Order, which with the Bath has proved efficacious in Scorbutic and other Disorders. N. B. Genteel lodgings to be had in private Families."

(Pa. Gazette 6/16/1773)

In our own State, Bedford Springs, was one of the earliest to acquire popular vogue. It began about 1805. Its pictures appear in the early magazines in Massachusetts, to which its fame had extended, and in the Portfolio of Philadelphia also, and its standing was therefore assured. Some of its buildings yet standing, would seem to date from the earlier days, approximating the flood. My theme being purely local to Philadelphia, however, precludes me from entering upon the interesting history of this old State resort. York Springs, in Adams County, was another early State resort, patronized largely by Baltimoreans. But its fame and repute it seems had an early decline, for a writer as far back as 1831 says of York:

"But as in matters of even more importance, fashion, ever fickle, has pointed the way to other hygienic founts; and the crowd, the many, of course follow."

To enumerate all the springs even of the East—and quite aside from the many of the Middle West and the far West—is unnecessary and fruitless. In Pennsylvania alone there are 38 varieties of mineral water, and in the Library of Congress there is a collection of catalogues or pamphlets descriptive of Atlantic Seaboard ones only that occupies seven bound volumes.

Whatever the destination to drink the spaw water it is possible that the reason for going to the springs, on the part of our worthy ancestors in this locality—at least in some instances, was too much good food or drink.

We find such advertisements as these:

Turtle Soup and Pepper-pot

11 A. M.                      5 P. M.

*The Leopard*

or in the ship arrivals advertisements, as just received from overseas:

"34 pipes of Spanish Brandy"

or;

"Particular Madeira, Wine"

or;

"70 puncheons St. Kitts Rum"

or;

"Choice cargo of Port Wine;  
39 pipes; 2 hogshead and 50  
quarter casks."

Small wonder in such times that we also find advertised:

"Twelve barrels Cloves just arrived and for sale by David Sutter No. 5 North 4th St."

A clove, it may be said, to explain the connection, was a variety of spice used for decorative purposes on the tops of mahogany bars in resorts where the demon rum was sold.



It was alleged that the eating of two or three cloves by anyone who, homeward bound, had perchance stopped at the Leopard or other tavern and imbibed too much Jamaica or other form of rum, would disguise the breath sufficiently to avoid detection under the family roof. I am informed, however, that this belief was fallacious. The ancient custom of eating cloves is now obsolete, both from the present rarity of the occasions wherein such might be useful, and from the discovery of the fact that the most efficacious way to have one's breath taken away in modern times, is simply to eat in a fashionable hotel or restaurant and then look at the check.

With the good eating, referred to, indeed, even by Gabriel Thomas, in his little book of 1698, and with the abundance of liquors of every kind and at the prices that even the mere reading of today brings tears to the eyes of strong men, it is not to be wondered at that we also find advertisements of books, such as these, occupying four inches space in a column:

"A Treatise on the Structure, Economy and Diseases of the LIVER; together with an Enquiry into the properties and component parts of the Bile and Biliary concretions."

U. S. Gaz. 9/13/'01.

Or that a poet describing the good fashionables of the day, seeking relief at the springs, established the stomach as the seat of the troubles:

"The stomach, crammed with every dish,  
A tomb of roast and boiled, and flesh and fish,  
Where bile and wind, and phlegm, and acid jar,  
And all the man is one intestine war."

The above Æsculapian reflections, it may be argued, are mostly directed to the gentlemen of the community. But the ladies were not entirely overlooked, and the solicitous landlord of one of our State mineral springs to catch the feminine trade in the hope that such would in turn straightway catch a train for his resort would make such advertising appeals as this:

## *Springs and Spas of Old-Time Philadelphians.* 213

"If the female, enervated by the parched and foul air of the city or town, wishes to regain her healthful glow and pulse, let her visit the spring," etc., etc.

The "parched and foul air of the town" eighty or one hundred years ago, would indeed seem pure as spring water, compared to the Hungraian goulash of smoke, burnt gasoline, street dust, ashes, plaster, sewage, oil works, chemical stinks and other odors that we now are favored with and yet fairly amiably accept as part of the price of living in modern times in a great metropolis!

Let us, however, look particularly at the mineral springs that may be rated as local to Philadelphia, conveniently reached by our grand to great-great-great grandfathers. There are seven of them that I have found, of more or less prominence and repute, over a period of a century and a half, or from 1720 to say 1870; from two to thirty odd miles distant, and each advertised for patronage in the Philadelphia public prints of the day.

The first of these in point of time, so advertising, was a resort known as "Bath-town" on the north side of Cohocksink Creek, later known as Pegg's Run, the course of which is now occupied by Willow Street. It is fortunate that the resort was of greater charm than the pallid and uninteresting picture of Pegg's Run, that Watson has handed down to posterity. The bath spring there, was between Second and Third Streets, near St. John Street. It was on a farm, agreeably located, with grass and shade and was sponsored by a Dr. John Kearsley, through whom its medicinal waters received considerable prominence. Watson considers this spring to be one of the two to which Penn referred, "Not two miles from the town," the other being at Lemon Hill, he makes a brief reference to it in his Annals, states that the town of Bath was but a speculation that thrived on paper only, and that

the spring was since obliterated. The most specific reference to the spring and baths that we have is in the following advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of August 22, 1765:

"Town of BATH in the Northern Liberties in the City of Philadelphia. JOHN WHITE, living in the NEW BATH, humbly proposes, by the Assistance of his Wife, to Accommodate Ladies and Gentlemen with Breakfasting, on the best of Tea, Coffee, and Chocolate, with plenty of GOOD CREAM, &c., which Articles may also be had in an Afternoon. He likewise hopes to give Satisfaction to any Persons whose Health may require their going to the Bath, by his Attendance and by furnishing them with Brushes and proper Towels; and as Order and Decency is naturally required in such an Undertaking, he further hopes to approve himself capable of conducting and salutary Purposes, which the Founder originally intended, and now hopes to see effected. He takes the Liberty and subscribes himself the Publick's most obedient humble Servant.

JOHN WHITE.

N. B. The Bath being now opened, Tickets for the Bathing Season may be had of him."

The site of this resort is now covered with the warehouses and factories of the Third and Willow Streets district.

The next mineral spring in nearness, easily accessible and one that reached quite a high degree of popularity, was Harrowgate. Near Frankford, and about four miles' drive only, it was a great resort for quite a while, but one suspects that it was more of a road house than a health resort, and that able management, good food and good liquor, and the attractions of a public garden, had more to do with its success than the mineral ingredients of its waters! It was in July 1784 that George Esterly first announced the discovery of Harrowgate spring, and long advertisements such as this, by Esterly a dozen years later, indicate that he was vigorously running the place and was going after business: (*Aurora and General Advertiser*: July 7, 1795)

**"MEDICINAL WATER"**

For Drinking and Bathing  
At Harrowgate, within four  
miles of Philadelphia, near  
the Frankford Road.

The Author of Nature, having provided the above mentioned Spot with two different kinds of mineral water, the Subscriber has at considerable expense erected such buildings over as will render them fit to be used either internally or externally according to the diseases of persons who require them.

This water has been examined by Doctors Rush and Moyes.

The first spring contains a quantity of sulphurous or what these gentlemen call hepatic air, and a small quantity of iron. It is remarkably light and resembles both in composition and medicinal qualities, the famous Harrowgate of England. The second spring is a common Chalybeate water and resembles the Bristol in this State.

The subscriber submits to the judgment of the Physicians of Philadelphia, whether the Harrowgate waters have not rendered essential service to persons afflicted with diseases and obstructions of the irregular gout and chronic rheumatism, externally applied these waters have in many instances cured ulcers and the eruptions of the skin.

In the house erected over the Harrowgate waters are two shower baths and two dressing rooms and at the Chalybeate spring, is a convenient bath for plunging and swimming.

The subscriber returns his sincere thanks to the public for the generous encouragement he has received, since his residence at Harrowgate, and hopes his future conduct will be such as to merit a continuance of their favors, as it shall be his study ever to give satisfaction to those who may honor him with their commands.

The garden is in excellent order, and additional improvements made to render it agreeable and pleasant.

He is determined to keep the best of liquors of all kinds. Breakfasts, dinners, teas, coffee and fruits of all kinds may be had at the shortest notice, and also excellent accommodation for boardings and lodgings.

GEORGE ESTERLY.

N. B. The light wagon for Harrowgate runs the 12th day of May from Mr. Moore's at the sign of the White Swan in Race Street at 9 o'clock in the morning and returns the same forenoon, and again sets out precisely at 3 P. M. and returns in the evening. Price three shillings going and coming, for each person."

Scharf & Westcott, in their History of Philadelphia, remark that evidently the brandy and rum did not destroy the virtue of the waters and further say: (page 943 Vol. II)

"It was a famous place for concerts and exhibitions and some times was called Vauxhall. In the summer of 1792, Monsieur Rolong, a

## 216 *Springs and Spas of Old-Time Philadelphians.*

famous harpist appeared there. Messrs. Phill, Schulz, Tremner, Roth, Christhiff, Spangerberg, etc., assisted in an instrumental concert. Transparencies were exhibited, illuminated in Chinese style. Kenna, of the Northern Liberty Theater, gave a grand concert at Harrowgate, July 4th, 1793."

The notable Dr. Benjamin Rush, signer, comprehensive in his interests, prolific in his writings and active as a surgeon in the Revolution and despite the fact that he once wrote of himself that "residence in a large city and a wife and eight children have degraded me into a mere physician"—seems to have had a strong interest in the therapeutic use of the several springs around Philadelphia. Two years after Harrowgate opened, he wrote a pamphlet—now very rare—titled:

Directions  
for the  
use of the  
*Mineral Water*  
and  
*Cold Bath*  
at  
*Harrowgate*  
near  
Philadelphia

Of this water he says:

"It is very light and contains a small quantity of iron, with a large quantity of air, which has lately received the name of hepatic air, and from which its offensive smell and taste are derived."

He expatiated at length upon the desirability of the cold baths, and amongst his remarks we read, under the head of "fifthly":

"The excess and defect of that evacuation which is connected with the health of the female constitution, have both been relieved by the cold bath. It not only cures these diseases but frequently removes barrenness and prevents abortion. Its agreeable effects upon female beauty would furnish material for many pages, but these are foreign to the subject of the present essay."

But as all such places have their zenith and decline, so had Harrowgate; and with the creation of newer and nearer resorts and amusement centres, Harrow-

gate Garden, springs and all, declined. It was offered for sale in 1816.

In location the springs were a little west of the Borough of Frankford, and were reached by what later became the Frankford and Kensington Plank Road. It appears on John Hill's map of 1808 as "Harrowgate Tavern" and on Melish's map of 1819 as "Harrowgate." It is, however, best shown on Dripp's Map of 1849 of Oxford Township and the Boroughs of Frankford and Bridesburg, etc."

It is perhaps fortunate that it does, for in no other way does the precise location seem to be of record. The wanderer now, in search of the springs, through the purlieus of the present factories near Harrowgate Lane, and at the head of Gunner's Run, will find difficulty in locating the right spot, and when so doing, will then find at present—nothing. A trickling rivulet, amidst ashes and débris, and no sign whatever of the structures or gardens of the once pleasure spot; where the wine and food were so good; where the amusement was of the best, and the mineral water did not harm, at any rate, the gentry of Philadelphia who gathered there five generations ago.

The two most prominent spring resorts, however, were unquestionably those at Bristol and at Yellow Springs. Each was of the top repute. Each dates back two centuries. It is probable that for a while Bristol was the more conspicuous, being nearer, on the main highway to New York and accessible as well by water. Its guests and patronage certainly were unsurpassed, and Dr. Rush and other physicians of early days experimented with this and other waters without even a mention of Yellow Springs. But these latter still survive, and in a new form have a revival of agreeable mention and of public interest, and it is likely that in course of time Bristol will be less and less remembered and Yellow Springs be deemed to

have outranked them all. It may, in future belief. It did not in the past.

The Bath Spring near Bristol, twenty miles from here, in Bucks County and pleasantly situated on the west side of the Delaware was known, it is said, as early as 1700 and as "that nasty water." It was used as a cure in 1722. In 1747 Kalm visited there, and some of his observations upon chalybeate or iron waters quite reflect the esteem and beliefs of his day. He says:

"The people who live near the iron mines, declared they were seldom or never visited by the fever and ague; but when they have the fever, they drink the water of such fountains, as arise from the iron mines and have a strong chalybeat taste; and they assure me that the remedy was infallible. Other people therefore who did not live very far from such springs went to them for a few days, when they had the fever, in order to drink the waters."

That would indeed seem to be a real going to the springs to use them as a cure and very far from any standpoint of fashion or of pleasure.

These American springs—especially around Philadelphia, with its English settlers—were often given the names of well-known English springs. Harrowgate has already been noted—being even advertised as "similar to the English Harrowgate." Of "Bath" of course named after the celebrated spa of England—there were three. Bath town already mentioned; the "Bath springs" at Bristol; and an enterprise at Yellow Springs, later to be described.

Dr. Rush featured the Bristol waters, with others, in a paper before the Philosophical Society, June 18, 1773, afterwards published in a thirty-page pamphlet form—also very rare—entitled:

"Experiments and Observations on the Mineral Waters of Philadelphia, Abington, and Bristol."

Water analysis, as we know it in modern times—consisting of creating a table of mineral contents,

worked out to the fourth decimal place, and then charging one twenty-five dollars for the information—was not known in those days, and the experiments of Dr. Rush were chiefly a tabulation of the results noted in mixing various substances with the water, and seeing what happened in change of taste or color or precipitation. However, his remarks as to the use of such waters are most interesting, as well as the statement of ills, in which they are helpful. The doctor enumerates fifteen different classes of trouble, wherein the drinking of these mineral waters is efficacious towards a cure, including the fact that “they may be given to advantage to children afflicted with worms.” The location of the Bath springs he describes as “about half a mile from the Borough of Bristol” (which at that time had about fifty houses) and the flow is stated as about a hogshead in five minutes. He states that:

“This water is found near the surface of the ground in the neighborhood of a soil abounding in black sediment. It is transparent but deposits a yellow sediment after standing a few hours in the open air. When it is put up in bottles and well corked, it will retain its mineral virtues for many months. It has a ferruginous taste, which is not disagreeable. Its specific gravity is exactly the same as that of rain water.”

While the Bristol water had “the pleasant taste of a half-boiled, half-spoiled egg,” there is no doubt but that the waters were highly esteemed by the public and the medical profession, and for some time prior to the Revolution. The bath was built about 1760 and the premises were at times so overrun by visitors that the Borough Council of Bristol, in 1769, ordained that:

“Persons not there on legitimate business, would be taken into custody unless they dispersed at the order of the constable or the bath keeper.”

Dr. James Cutbush made twenty-six experiments for chemical reactions with Bristol waters, which were duly published in the *Eclectic Repertory*, as late as March 25, 1811 (Vol. 1 No. 3: pp. 366-7 and 8) and a



few years before Rush's experiments and observations, Dr. John A. de Normandie, resident at Bristol, espoused the water and sixteen experiments and a variety of cases noted by him appears in the first volume of the Transactions of the Philosophical Society, under the caption of "An analysis of the chalybate Waters of Bristol in Pennsylvania," in the form of two letters on the subject addressed to Dr. Bond of Philadelphia.

Of the Bristol waters it was said "It is a cheerer of the spirits, a valiant tonic; a powerful alterative and deobstruent and deserves the amplest trial from many a distressed dyspeptic and gloomy son of Spleen. Let, therefore the votary of midnight excess, and the pining invalid repair to Bristol," etc.

The public did repair there extensively to repair its collective impaired anatomy. There was a big main building and pump rooms, and bath rooms and a race track was added by 1811. Bath reached its zenith at this period. Saratoga was known—its waters were written up as early as 1809—but had not gotten as yet into its later prominence, and the claim by a local historian, that between 1810 and 1820 that the Bath Springs at Bristol were then relatively as famous as were the Saratoga Springs later, is probably correct. That the Bristol waters were in the blue book of approval, we find by the publication in the "Portfolio" of a picture of its springs, also, and by the roster of the fashionable Philadelphians who visited it, and notables at large.

Governor Mifflin was one, General Cadwalader, Dr. Rush, Baron Ludwig, of Prussia, and Augustus Claudious, the German Consul; James Sime Ento, the Spanish Minister; Don De Onis; Captain Antonio Furey Piquot, of the French navy; these were some of the prominent people sojourning at the spa. Three rival stage lines jolted passengers to their destination and at the close of the war of 1812, in 1816, a

grand ball was given there, to celebrate peace. Over the river, at Bordentown—whose natural beauties are not entirely murdered in a little old woodcut of the place—lived for seventeen years, Joseph Bonaparte, the eldest brother of Napoleon I, and ex-King of Spain; and he, accompanied by the exiled Prince Murat, son of the Marshal of France of that time, Joachim Murat, were frequent visitors at the baths.

In 1807 the property was advertised for sale:

*"Bristol Baths;* Twenty miles from Philadelphia, pleasantly situated on the main road to New York, and banks of the Delaware.

The buildings are very commodious, and at this time, in complete order—with plunging showers and warm baths, for the accommodation of visitors—the waters are a pleasant chalybeate and have left more cases on record of their beneficial effects in chronic diseases, than perhaps any other waters in the Union.

The above is a remarkably healthy situation, affording fine fishing, and in the vicinity, game in abundance."

It was bought by a Dr. Joseph P. Minnick, who made extensive additions and added the race track. He sold it early in 1811, to one George Follett, as the latter in June so later advertised his acquiring and the buildings and equipment then existing are tolerably well indicated in the advertisement of January 2, 1811:

"Bath Hotel and Mineral Springs:

To Be Rented.

Mansion 112 by 33 feet; 30 lodging rooms; 12 ft. piazza in front of the whole; 2 kitchens; bar room and stabling for 100 horses (amongst the items) nearby—ballroom 45 by 18 feet, a billiard room, mineral baths, warm baths, pump room, etc.; 40 acres.

The mineral springs are allowed to be the strongest yet discovered in this country and equal to any in the world."

JOSEPH P. MINNICK."

The inexorable came, however, and the property was abandoned as a spa and became a private residence. Then it was run as a picnic ground and excursion resort, and later was bought by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, and finally, when the railroad cut-off of recent years was built outside the town of Bristol, the new trackage and embankments completely obliterated.

ated the old spring property and the spring. No vestige now remains of the resort that at one time was of such prominence.

The American people have a curious custom, in the printing of sheet music, of embellishing the front page with a view of something of prominence or interest; and of the two views only, that are now available of the old Bristol resort one is from the front page of such a music sheet. It is in a sylvan setting and the statue of Venus on the lawn and the lamp-post suggest a mid-Victorian period!

The precise location of the Bath Springs is best shown on Sidney's "Plan of the Township of Bristol" of about 1850. The roadways, buildings and water courses, are clearly there shown.

Bristol, however, was not the only spa on the road to New York, and the citizen who desired to irrigate his insides and to flush his liver from the effects perhaps of too much turtle soup and madeira, whilst travelling via the inland route, could readily be accommodated on the Old York Road, at springs also of long knowledge and high repute, at Willow Grove. The name dates back to 1792, I am told, when Reading Powell mapped the district and gave this name to the place; and here were three more bad-tasting springs. Of them Mr. Frank H. Taylor writes me:

"At that time the springs here, along Round Meadow run, had been famous for more than half a century. All of the land hereabouts was bought by William Penn from Chief Matamicent. In 1684 it was acquired by Nicholas Moore, a London physician. His heirs sold much of it to Nicholas Waln and Thomas Shute. About 1719 James and Jacob Dubree came over and built a hotel, the "Sign of the Wagon." This house existed under that name through the years of the Revolution, when it was kept by Joseph Butler. After the fight at Edge Hill in December 1777, the American wounded were brought here. The original tavern was replaced in 1808 by the Mineral Springs hotel, which long enjoyed a favorable patronage. The horses of the five stage lines were changed at this busy stopping place, the traveller meanwhile being well fed. York road was turnpiked at that time and the perfection of its surface compared with ordinary highways of the period, made the Willow Grove route famous far and wide."

## *Springs and Spas of Old-Time Philadelphians.* 223

Dr. Rush, in his experiments, tested these waters, and of them says:

"This water is found about twelve miles to the north of Philadelphia on a plantation belonging to William French. The spring flows near the bottom of a hill with a gentle declivity. The soil around the spring is yellow reddish clay with a small mixture of sand. It has a ferruginous taste and by exposure to the air, becomes turbid and deposits a yellow sediment. Its specific gravity is to rain water as 1000.90 to 1.000."

A year after Dr. Rush's write-up of the waters, this advertisement is found.

### "ABINGTON MINERAL WATER

So useful in Chronic Diseases, situated in the most healthy Part of the Province of Pennsylvania; where good Accommodation at a moderate Expense may be had, at the House of WILLIAM FRENCH, and at several other commodious Houses in the Neighborhood of said Springs.

N. B. Of said French, may be had, Dr. Rush's Experiments and Observations on the above Mineral Water, with particular Directions in what Diseases, and in what Manner, it should be used."

Penna. Gaz. 8/10/1774.

The several springs around Philadelphia were of course in more or less competition, and that George Rex, the owner of the Willow Grove Springs, in 1811, had been somewhat stirred by some slandering remarks, is gathered from his advertisement in Poulson's "Advertiser" for July 22d of that year:

### WILLOW GROVE MINERAL SPRINGS

Fourteen miles from the City On  
The Old York Road

"The Subscriber takes this public method to return his sincere thanks to the Citizens of Philadelphia—and his friends in general for the very liberal encouragement extended towards him for some years past.

It is with pleasure that he informs them that the improvements lately made will enable him to accommodate a number of lodgers with convenience, and no pains shall be spared to render their situation comfortable. The shower and plunging baths are in excellent order and free of access to lodgers and visitors.

He has the satisfaction to assure the public that the ineffectual attempts to injure the reputation of the Mineral Spring, have proved abortive; that it has lately been cleaned and the water analyzed and found to contain aerated vitriolated iron, the presence of which is

## 224 *Springs and Spas of Old-Time Philadelphians.*

known by the ochre which it deposits, its taste, the black color which it strikes with astringents and the blue color produced by phlogisticated alkali.

An expeditious and cheap mode of visiting the Grove is afforded by the Swiftsure New York State, which starts from M'Calla's Inn, N. Fourth Street at 8 o'clock every morning, and an opportunity offers by the return stage to arrive in the city in the early part of the following day.

GEORGE REX."

The coming of railroads put an end to staging and Willow Grove went into a decline and the old Mineral Springs Hotel vegetated into almost nothing until the building of the great trolley park there. Since then, and with the advent of the automobile, the old stand is rejuvenated and active, but with the changes of a century or more. The springs still flow, but the modern advertisements quite ignore them, and in place of the results of "phlogisticated alkali" and the virtues of the water, the place now revolves around rubber-tired wheels, and the lure of the visitor is made upon chicken and waffle dinners!

We come now to Yellow Springs.

Vying with Bristol in early renown, also dating from 1722 or earlier, of maximum celebrity, patronized by the elite of the Colonies and of the Revolutionary period, its waters having a strong infusion of fashion as well as of mineral ingredients, and still further, sanctified by including in its history a chapter of the illness and suffering of our Continental Army in the dark Valley Forge winter of 1777, Yellow Springs, all things considered, is likely to be thought of as the most notable of all of the spas and spring resorts around Philadelphia.

It is about thirty-two miles from Philadelphia on Pickering Creek in Chester County, West Pikeland Township. For at least a hundred years it held a continuous record of repute as a health resort. Its detailed story, however, is so lengthy that lack of space here forbids other than the briefest reference

to it. Those who would delve deeper are referred to the Bulletin of the Chester County Historical Society, revolving around the placing of a marker stone and tablet there, October 7, 1916. Most of what is known as the Yellow Springs will be found in considerable detail within such covers.

There was a hotel there as early as 1750, twenty years before the venerable old milestones were fixed on the Gulph Road, one route to Phoenixville and the Springs, when roads were but little more than trails through the woods, and horseback was perhaps the best way to travel and log cabins probably outnumbered more pretentious houses. Ten years before the Revolution, the Good Friends of Uwchlan Monthly Meeting were concerned about the resort; witness an extract from their records of August 1765:

"We believe some amongst us are desirous to avoid Excess on all occasions, and that our Moderation may be conspicuous in all our conduct, but some Instances manifest that all are not so careful as they ought to be herein, and further the Yellow Springs being a place of Promiscuous Resort and at this time of year in particular is made a place of Diversion, we fear some Friend's children not belonging to our meeting, as well as some that do, are suffered to go there without any real necessity which may be very hurtful to them in a religious sense. We desire the same may become the concern of the Quarterly Meeting."

The ownership of the Springs, in 1774, was with the able and patriotic Dr. Samuel Kennedy, and an advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of February 4th, that year, to rent the place, indicates both the character of it and repute:

"To be Lett: and may be entered on the first day of April next: That noted INN at the Yellow Springs, together with 150 acres of excellent land, about 25 acres of extraordinary good meadow well watered; a large dwelling house and a large new stone barn.

The Baths and other outhouses are in good repair; also a saw-mill, rebuilt last summer. The advantage of these Baths is well known to the public, an incontestible proof of which is the great concourse of people—from four to six hundred persons have convened there in one day in the summer season.

DR. SAMUEL KENNEDY.

East Whiteland."

For a considerable period, Yellow Springs was the chief military hospital of the Revolution. Dr. Rush worked there, and other conspicuous names of the Revolutionary period are associated with it. Washington had headquarters there for a short time; some of his letters are dated there. The room probably occupied by him is still shown and one of the principal present buildings bears his name, the Washington Building. After the Revolution, the place reverted to spa uses and in 1806 was in the possession of a man with the rather compelling name of Col. James Bones. He was an enterprising individual and he laid out a town, called it "Bath," plotted one hundred and one lots (100 for sale and one, with the main spring on it, to be kept on common account) and sold about a third of them by lottery, which number, however, was not enough to make the real estate scheme succeed, although the fame of Yellow Springs was enough to get its picture in the early magazines. There is a curious little old view from some early source not yet identified; and of course we find it in that safe and sane and ever dependable and quite readable family magazine, the "Portfolio" in July 1810, and with a four-page description of the resort, as well. Such publicity should have materially helped Colonel Bones in selling his lots; but perhaps a long Latin poem written upon the place in that period (1810) was a handicap that he had not reckoned upon!

Amongst successive owners, a Dr. Lingen had the property in the forties, and in 1847 he caused a lithograph to be made of the premises, for an advertising circular of his mineral and bath resort, that is quite good in showing the general aspect, and which is probably now the rarest of all of the pictures of these early local spas. In 1869 the property, however, quite ended as a spa and was sold to an organization with the extended name of "The Chester Springs

Soldiers' Orphans' School and Literary Institute." Under this weighty appellation, the place slumbered along until 1912, when "the stock of Soldiers' Orphans was exhausted."

The original name of Yellow Springs is attributed to the yellow rust or deposit on the stones of the outlet of the principal spring.

That name appears on Hindman's rare old maps of Chester County of 1822 and 1830. But on Painter's map of 1856 it appears as Chester Springs. It was changed about the middle forties to the present name. Lingen's circular carries both names. That the change was made, is by many regretted, for while the present name is euphonious, it lacks old-time quaintness of the original.

During the hey-day of this resort, its threshold was crossed by many a notable. DeWitt Clinton of New York, Senator, Mayor and Governor and the chief promoter of the Erie Canal, a hundred years ago, was one of them. And while in later days the traveller to the prominent eastern springs could at least take chances on an early railroad train fearfully and wonderfully made (of then wonderful construction, and now to us, fearfully made) Clinton had but the stage and horseback to come the distance from New York, prior to his death, which was in 1828. The principal method of reaching this resort in 1821, for instance, is clearly shown in advertisements in the Philadelphia papers such as these:

#### YELLOW SPRINGS

"The subscriber has established a coachee line of stages in connection with the Philadelphia and Downingtown Coaches; for the conveyance of the citizens of Philadelphia and others desirous to visit the above celebrated waters. The Coachee will leave Thomas Davis's at the Black Bear, south Fifth Street, near Market Street, Philadelphia, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 7 o'clock A. M., dine at the Ship and proceed to the spring same afternoon; return to the ship same evening, leave the Ship next morning so as to arrive in the city by 2 P. M.

The Coachee will convey families, parties &c. to the spring at other



## 228 *Springs and Spas of Old-Time Philadelphians.*

times than the stated days above mentioned if desired. The Philadelphia and Pittsburgh mail coaches stop daily at the Ship. Fare from the city to the Ship \$1.62½; from thence to the springs 87½.

HOLLAN BROWN

Ship Tavern 25 Miles from Philadelphia & Lancaster Road."

Daniel Webster, the famous statesman, orator and lawyer, was another whose name graced the register of the resort, if register was kept. And when persons of that class set their seal of approval on such spas, and visited with associates of kindred character, what an unwritten history attaches to the place. One of the most interesting of Yellow Springs visitors was Jenny Lind, the Swedish nightingale, so called; that wonder songstress, whom that first great and never surpassed, if ever equalled showman, P. T. Barnum, brought over as one of his tremendous ventures. She arrived in New York in 1850, September 1st. Barnum tells us, that when reaching Philadelphia, she was tired and had a headache and could not appear, and when the carefully pre-arranged-for crowds, outside of the Old Jones Hotel, were clamoring for her appearance on the balcony, he seized her hat and shawl, jammed them on her maid, pushed *her* to the balcony, made her bow three times, and the crowd went away satisfied. Jenny Lind was probably too busy on her first visit to Philadelphia to take time to go to Yellow Springs, and it is likely that her going there was on a later visit in the middle of June, 1851.

This was three generations ago; and the success of Barnum's adventure and the brilliant tour of Jenny Lind was such that ninety-five concerts averaged \$7500 each, and the latter received \$176,000 as her share, and Barnum took \$535,000 as his share—out of which came his expenses.

There are five principal springs. Two on the hill-top furnish abundant pure drinking water. The chief mineral spring is chalybeate and is in the meadow in front of the hotel. In the old days it ran from the

rock into a white marble reservoir and near it there was a pool constructed for bathing purposes, as from the medicinal standpoint, in some diseases, it was quite as important to bathe in the waters as it was to drink them. It will be noticed that all the springs that I have described offer baths, and facilities for plunging, showers, etc. Most of these consisted of a built up pool or basin, a few feet deep, in which the guileless, hopeful, or confident patient, as the case might be, squatted in the water, for some ten or fifteen minutes or until he or she became comfortably and properly chilled, the water being not a great deal above its emerging temperature of 53 to 55 degrees. Small dressing rooms adjoining, and according to one jocose writer of 1835, one should have the following somewhat startling outfit, in which one would meander from the log cabin cottage or other quarters, to the pool:

"To bathe comfortably, you should have a large cotton morning gown of a Cashmere shawl pattern lined with crimson, a fancy Greek cap, Turkish slippers and a pair of loose pantaloons; a garb easily doffed and donned."

"At Yellow Springs, the Transparent bath is surrounded by a stone wall 12 feet high, the bath itself being  $8\frac{1}{2}$  feet square, and 4 feet deep, the bottom of fine blue gravel, through which, in a variety of places, the rising of the spring is visible."

It is said that there was also sort of a trapeze arrangement by which a swinging plunge through the water could be effected by those acrobatically inclined. Taking the baths, to the younger set, would scarcely be a hardship, under such circumstances. In another meadow is the so-called Diamond Spring, and the Jenny Lind spring, named after the conspicuous visitor of 1851, and these too had more or less bathing shower and plunge facilities. The diseases benefited by the waters were stated in 1810 as "rheumatic and nervous affections, palsy, hysteria, epilepsy, obstructions of the liver and spleen and all complaints

accompanied by general debility and languor." Surely enough to interest a goodly fraction of the human race.

Under Colonel Bones, the place prospered and he properly returned thanks by this advertisement:

YELLOW SPRINGS

THE SUBSCRIBER

RETURNS his warmest acknowledgements to a generous public, for the encouragement they have favored him with, and respectfully informs them, that, for their better accommodations, he has since last season erected, in addition to the former buildings, a handsome house, 3 stories high 106 feet in length by 26 in breadth, in which are a dining room 60 x 26 feet, a large drawing room, 2 parlors and 20 lodging rooms, besides accommodations for servants.

The superior quality of the waters of the YELLOW SPRINGS, is so universally known and acknowledged, that I deem it unnecessary to make any further comment upon them—those who may visit them will be the best enabled to judge.

The WINES, which are of the choicest kinds, will be best judged by those who try them.

JAMES BONES.

June 29."

The esteem in which Yellow Springs was held in Philadelphia is reflected by such helpful editorial notices and "write ups" as we find in the *National Gazette*, for instance, of July 11, 1822.

"Coaches proceed also thrice a week to Yellow Springs, celebrated for their medical virtues, situated in the midst of the finest natural scenery and distant only thirty miles from us. The houses of entertainment at these springs are spacious, cleanly and liberally administered. Colonel Bones, who keeps the principal one, has much enlarged and in every respect improved his establishment. It is the resort of many among our most respectable families who not only find the water an agreeable and beneficial beverage, but derive advantage from the use of a remarkably cool, crystal bath in the immediate vicinity of the fountain."

In 1916, the premises were purchased by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and they have since been used as a summer art school. There scarcely could be more felicitous disposition of this venerable old property. The Pennsylvania Academy is

itself one of the oldest and one of the most respected of Philadelphia's early institutions. Knowledge of its work—of the highest standards—brings respect at once and its acquisition and occupancy of the Old Yellow Springs premises should insure the indefinite preservation of both the physical property of these very old and famous local springs and the traditions that attach to the history of this old spa.

The success of Yellow Springs, Bristol Springs, etc., naturally led to imitators cropping up, hopeful of getting in upon what would seem to have been a prosperous business, *i. e.*, the extending to invalids or to those who thought that they were the creature comforts and the opportunity to drink and bathe in healing waters. A trace of iron in some local spring being noticed in more than one instance was soon followed by the water being vaunted as of the highest curative power, and the starting of another "spa." Colestown Mineral Water—out near the present community of Haddonfield, New Jersey, is advocated in Poulson's Advertiser of June 13, 1812. Perhaps the most labored effort of these lines, however, to make something out of nothing—or at least out of very little—attaches to the Marple "Spring of Health" enterprise, near Newtown Square.

It seems that one Isaac Burns, who owned a farm in the extreme tip of Marple Township, in Delaware County, about 10 miles from Philadelphia, had on his premises a spring, that he at any rate, considered of such excellent medicinal value as to warrant his calling it the "Marple Spring of Health." It is shown and so labeled on Ash's painstaking map of 1848 of that county. In order to open a public house and obtain a license, this petition was duly presented to the Court of Quarter Sessions in April, 1811:

"The petition of Isaac Burns of the township of Marple, humbly present that the petitioner has discovered on his farm, in said town-

## 232 *Springs and Spas of Old-Time Philadelphians.*

ship about one mile north of the West Chester road, a mineral or chalybeate spring; that he has erected a bath house and other improvements for the accommodation of those who wish to use the waters for the restoration of their health; that for want of necessary accommodation for entertainment, many persons may be deprived of the benefits of the use of said waters. Your petitioner therefore requests the favor of your recommendation to the Governor to grant him a license to keep a house of public entertainment on his farm, in said township, near the said springs, which he will endeavor to merit by keeping a good and orderly house.

We the subscribers, (twenty-two in number) do hereby recommend the above petitioner as a sober and orderly person, and request that the prayer of his petition be granted."

This was accompanied by the following certificate as to the virtues of the waters, from Burn's benchmen, adjacent to the old milestones of the Westchester Pike:

"We the subscribers, do certify that having heard of the great virtues attributed to the mineral springs on the farm of Isaac Burns, in Marple township, have been induced during the last summer and at various times previous thereto, to drink at and bathe in the waters and by means thereof, have been greatly relieved, and in many instances entirely cured of our respective disorders.

April 8th, 1811.

Samuel Lewis, relieved of a rheumatic pain in the arm and inflammation in one of his eyes.

John Horton, relieved of the inflammation in his eye.

George Lewis, relieved of a sick stomach."

Whether the owner of Beaumont's Tavern at Newtown Square nearby did not like the idea of another tavern so near, and persuaded the Court to deny Burns application for license, or whether the proprietor of the Old Drove tavern, at what is now Broomall, even nearer, also objected, cannot be said, but at any rate, Burns was refused, and the following year also on renewal of the application, as well as his son, William Burns, six years later, when he petitioned for the same thing, according to one account. But there must be some error in this, for only four months after the petition of April 1811, as above related, we find in the *United States Gazette* of July 10th Burns advertising for trade thusly:

**MINERAL CHALYBEATE SPRINGS:**

In the township of Marple  
Delaware County, ten miles from the city of  
Philadelphia and half a mile north  
of the road leading to  
Westchester

Where the subscriber has erected Baths and Summer Houses one of which is a Shower Bath, for the accommodation of those who would wish to resort there for the benefit of their health, pleasure or curiosity.

The waters of these springs have been inspected by a number of medical gentlemen, both of the city and country, and are admitted to be equal if not superior in their medical and healing qualities to any of the kind ever discovered in America, or perhaps in the world.

Liquors of the best kind will be provided and entertainment as good as the country and the season will permit.

Isaac Burns.

N. B. The Baths are now ready.

Whatever the Marple Spring of Health may have been a hundred and ten years ago, it is not now. It is a veritable nothing. A visit these days discloses but the veriest rivulet, tasteless, and indistinguishable from any of a thousand similar small springs. Nor is there now the slightest trace of the bath house, pavilions or other structures erected by Burns, to accommodate the hoped-for rush to the waters that were alleged as equal to any in America and perhaps the world! .

One more spring remains to be mentioned in the Philadelphia Zone, Brandywine Springs. While in Delaware, thirty-six miles from Philadelphia, it was scarcely further than Yellow Springs. Wilmington was then an inconsequential small place, and the patronage of Brandywine Springs was national, coming from all the eastern cities. It flourished as a spa over an extended period, and had much the most pretentious hotel of them all in its time.

Located on Red Clay Creek, in Mill Creek Hundred, Newcastle County, these springs are eight miles west of Wilmington, with which they are now connected by a trolley line. The histories of the State make but

## 234 *Springs and Spas of Old-Time Philadelphians.*

scant mention of it. I have been unable to gather much as to it. An atlas of New Castle County, 1893, plate 10, shows its location, prior to the coming of the trolley, and styles it a picnic ground. The springs are three in number, of sulphur and iron character, flowing some few hundred gallons a day. A large hotel was built there in 1838, which was duly burned in 1852. It was of that type of three-story columned porch that characterized the early resorts—Long Branch, Cape May, Saratoga, etc. Of architecture that now seems monstrous, it yet had an old-time spaciousness, a dignity and relative comfort, not always to be found in far more modern structures. Henry Clay, the celebrated orator and statesman, rusticated there. Who knows what influences for strength and power may have come from the stimulation of the Brandywine Hills!

Moorman, in his "Mineral Waters of the United States and Canada," 1867, says:

"Brandywine Springs claims the notice of Philadelphians and Baltimoreans and the inhabitants of adjoining counties as well, on account of the curative powers of the waters as of the facility of access to them, and the admirable accommodation for both the invalid and the healthy. These springs are within a short distance of Wilmington. Persons desirous of visiting them, are landed from the steamboat and transported in stages, without delay to the springs. The adjoining country is represented as extremely picturesque, and affords fine walks and rides in carriage or on horseback, according to the strength and taste of the invalid."

John Adams, our second President, is another reputed patron of the Brandywine Springs. We may be sure that the metaphorical bureau was trundled into his room upon his arrival, and that Sam was told to kill four more chickens for his party. And who knows what influence upon his brilliant and constructive career of patriotism may have also come from the refreshing ozone and stimulus of the chalybeate waters of this old-time spa. A relieved liver or a headache

dissipated, may have had a direct though unknown influence upon American history!

A trolley park was built, perhaps a generation ago, at these springs, and a visitor to the spot, a short time ago, was so shocked at the ill repair and cheap appearance of the place that, like the old-time visitor to the tomb of Napoleon expressing the emotions welling up within, he straightway expressed the following:

"EMOTIONS UPON VISITING BRANDYWINE SPRINGS."

"The sorry group of decayed and tawdry amusement shacks, that now make up Brandywine Springs, is perhaps the greatest of all the several contrasts of past and present, of the old time mineral spring resorts around Philadelphia. Yellow Springs is kept up, and has character in its new use and purposes. The Willow Grove resort, while now highly commercial and overrun with Sunday motorists, is also kept up and fit. And Bristol, obliterated, at least does not arouse the emotions. But Brandywine Springs is awful! A fifth rate summer park, and in bad repair at that Carousals, Oriental palmists, fakirs, and jim-cracks.

What a contrast to the condition of eighty and a hundred years ago. Then a dignified and most pretentious hotel of its time, with the old style colored porters, announcing the arrival of the stage, or some one in private coach or on horse back, and of the gentry of our forefathers. An Adams, a Clay, a Webster; welcomed to the hospitality of the old hostelry, the pump room, the springs and the baths of this former spa." Oh tempora! Oh Mores!"

An incident of some humor transpired at these springs a few years ago. The *N. Y. Telegraph* is a daily paper, chiefly devoted to horse-racing and to the stage. For some inscrutable reason, one of its writers, Frank J. Price, decided to visit the Battlefield of Brandywine upon the occasion of the 138th anniversary of September 11, 1777. With some companions, he proceeded to Wilmington, and thence to Brandywine Springs, where he evidently took it that the battlefield must be. At the springs, he was not within fifteen miles of the battlefield or the celebration he had in mind. Not suspecting his error, he interrogated some of the concessionaires at the trolley park (whom he later referred to as being "as numerous as Howe's advance guard"), chided them for their lack



of celebration and patriotism and returned to New York, where a few days later, he wrote a column screed deriding the American people for their failure to commemorate the anniversary, deriding their patriotism, and sarcastically referring to the present condition of the sacred shrine and battlefield, etc. All of which is about what one might expect from a sporting writer going outside of his field and venturing into history; and showing also, that even a New York newspaper can come an awful cropper at times.

And now let us close this aqueous review of our local springs and spas, with brief mention of one of the best jokes of early Philadelphia history.

Shortly before the Revolution, a spring was discovered but a few yards from the State House or Independence Hall, that during the flush of its newness caused considerable commotion. It was indeed probably that that caused Dr. Rush to read his paper upon it and Abington and Bristol waters, before the Philosophical Society, above mentioned, and but a month later.

The eagle-eyed editor of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* records the matter in the issue of May 17, 1773, as follows:

"A mineral water has lately been discovered in a lot of ground at the corner of Sixth and Chestnut Streets, in this City. From the most accurate Experiments, made by different gentlemen of the faculty, it appears to exceed in strength any Chalybeat Spring yet known in the Province. It hath already proved of great Service to several persons afflicted with Disorders, in which Waters of this Quality have generally been useful. Such a Discovery may therefore be justly considered as a matter of great Importance, as Chalybeat waters are known to be peculiarly efficacious in many Diseases, which resist the Power of every other kind of medicine. The gentleman who owns the lot, with a view of rendering the discovery more convenient and generally useful, hath allowed an indigent person who will at all times attend, to deliver to the Poor, gratis, and to other for a trifling consideration."

The lot at the corner of Sixth and Chestnut was owned by P. S. Duponceau, that well-known early

Philadelphian—and it was close to the House of Foreign Affairs, a view of which Watson kindly extends us, with some remarks as to the notable personages—the early John Hays or Hughes of the times, who traversed its humble stairs, in the settlement of the largest questions of policy of the day.

In Dr. Rush's paper, he refers to the "Philadelphia Water" being the water from the above spring:

"This water is found in a well, twenty six feet deep in Sixth street, near the corner of Chestnut street, on a lot of ground belonging to John Lawrence, Esq., the water when it first comes from the pump has a slight foetid smell, is somewhat turbid and after standing a few hours exposed to the air, deposits a yellowish sediment. The smell of the water is increased by rest. It has a strong ferruginous taste. Its specific gravity compared with rain water is as 1000.45 to 1000."

Again Dr. Rush asks:

"To what is the peculiar odor of the Philadelphia water owing?"

The answer to this question is given in a further extract from Watson, and is one of portent! Referring to this "Philadelphia Spring" Watson says:

"It enjoyed its fame but for a short year, when by intrusive interference of science, the discovery was reluctantly confessed, that it owed all its virtues to the deposit of foul material even from the remains of a long covered and long forgotten privy pit."

We can but believe that for some little time thereafter the great Dr. Rush must have in preference walked the back streets to avoid his intimates and their polite inquiries and gibes, as to the merits of the Philadelphia spring water, that "appeared to exceed in strength any in the country," that had a smell that he could not account for, and the merits of which he had so extolled!