



THE MINERAL SPRINGS OF SARATOGA

The mineral waters that inspired the name “Saratoga Springs” have long been known for their healing properties. Native American Indian people, who have lived here for more than 9,000 years, have many different names for the mineral springs. To the *Kanienkehaka* Mohawk people, they are known by several names, including *assarat* - “sparkling water.” To the Abenaki people they are *nebizonbik* - “medicine waters.”

The lands and springs of Saratoga were shaped by ancient earth movements that compressed and transformed the remains of marine life, from what was once ocean shoreline, into limestone now layered in-between metamorphic crystalline rock, shale, sandstone, and dolomite. Some of that ancient marine life is visible in the outcroppings of limestone reefs containing fossilized stromatolites (lime-secreting algae) that look like cross-sections of cabbages. These stone formations are identified in local Native oral tradition as the remains of a rich garden that was planted by ancient ancestors. But after these people fought with their neighbors, the stories say, then the sky spirits devastated their village and turned the crops to stone, to teach the people not to make war. Geological traditions describe these events, in scientific terms, as a series of cataclysmic earth-shiftings, when ancient storms and volcanoes cracked open fissures in the limestone, cross-sectioning the fossilized marine life and creating faults that forced subterranean waters to the surface in the form of mineral springs.

Thus, the waters that flowed through the stone crops were given special healing properties. The more than forty mineral springs in the region each have varying degrees of carbonic acid, dissolved salts (calcium bicarbonate, magnesium bicarbonate, sodium chloride or potassium chloride), and/or iron (ferrous bicarbonate), with some small amounts of sulfur (hydrogen sulfide), silica, and trace elements. Each individual spring, whether it bubbles in a pool, spouts from a geyser, or pours from a tap, has a slightly different mineral balance. Used internally or externally, these waters have traditionally treated skin, digestive, and many other ailments.

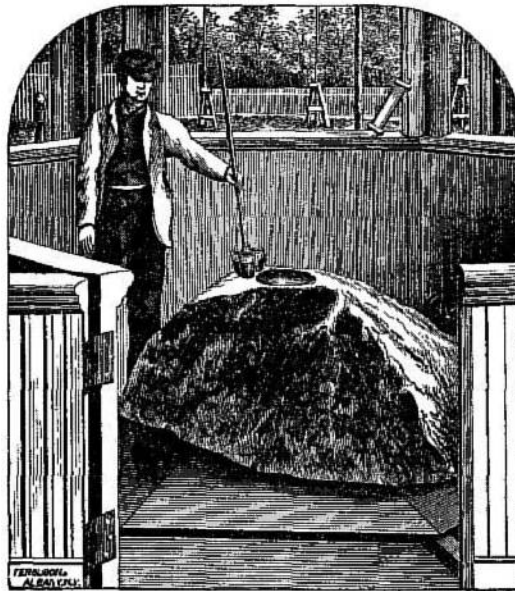
Although the sparkling waters of Saratoga are clear, the precise origin and meaning of the local place-name “Saratoga” is a little murky. In 1646, Jesuit Father Isaac Jogues identified the lands east of the Hudson River around Old Saratoga (present-day Schuylerville) as *Ossarague*, meaning “fishing-place.” In the 1683 Saratoga patent, the Dutch called the region *Sarachtogoe*, but the Mohawk called it *Ochseratongue* or *Ochsechrage*, and the Mohican called it *Amissohaendiek*. *Ochseratongue* seems to be a variant of *oserake*, meaning “at the beaver dam,” and

Amissohaendiek roughly translates to “beaver-hunting territory” from *amisk* for “beaver.” Both of these terms reflect the abundance of small streams and meadows that offered ideal beaver habitat during the 1600s-1700s, a time when Mohawk and Mohican peoples were providing thousands of beaver furs for the lucrative European fur trade.

When the lands to the west of the Hudson River in present-day Saratoga County were sold by the Mohawk in the 1704 and 1708 *Kayaderosseras* patent, they were also called *Sarachtoga*. The name *Kayaderosseras* (a variant of *Kaniatarossa*) indicates “land where the lake mouths out” onto its flood plains, and present-day Saratoga Lake was known as *Kayaderoga* - “at the lake.” Local traditions

suggest other variants of Native words that seem to describe the mineral springs, including *Soragh-aga* - “salt springs,” *Saragh-aga* - “swift water,” and *Sar-a-ta-ke* - “where the prints of heels may be seen,” pointing to the impressions in some of the rocks around the springs.

By the late 1700s, the mineral springs, and the beautiful lands surrounding them, proved irresistible to white settlers. Some local historians claimed that Sir William Johnson was the first white man to visit the springs, but evidence suggests that other white visitors preceeded him. The waters soon became wildly popular. During the 1800s, the waters at Saratoga Springs, piped into Victorian spring-houses and bathhouses, were an important part of this popular tourist destination for American and European visitors. Saratoga waters were bottled and shipped around the world. By the early 1900s, the mineral waters that had



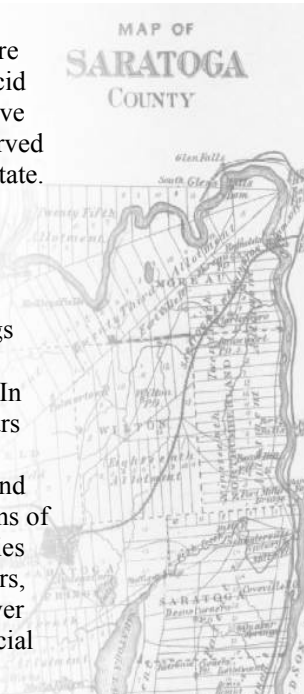
High Rock Spring during latter part of the 1800's.
[source: *Saratoga and How to See It*, R. F. Dearborn, 1872]



MINERAL SPRINGS continued...

flowed for millennia almost disappeared altogether when they were over-tapped to provide carbonic acid for soda bottling. Some springs have dried up, but others are now preserved and protected by the city and the state.

The land where the Saratoga Performing Arts Center is located today was known to the Mohawk people as *Dandaraga* - "vale of springs," and one of its best springs was *Awasa*, an Algonkian word meaning "where the bear drinks." In northeastern Native traditions, bears were responsible for introducing people to many medicinal plants and healing ways. The ancient traditions of this place, and the healing properties of the much-beloved mineral waters, make Saratoga Springs, by whatever name it is called, a sacred and special place for Native people.



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