

*Back in the Country...*  
*Bell Acres Stories*  
By Debby Rabold

## Outdoor Pursuits...19<sup>th</sup> Century Mineral Springs Resorts

This is part of the *Outdoor Pursuits* series of articles that examine ways in which Sewickley Valley residents have long enjoyed outdoor activities.



**Sewickley Valley families**, along with those from nearby Pittsburgh, Steubenville and Wheeling once escaped summer heat and the confines of town life with visits to the fashionable Frankfort Springs Hotel in Hanover Township, Beaver County, Pennsylvania.

(Beaver County Historical Research & Landmark Foundation lithograph)

Nineteen miles from Sewickley, the Frankfort Mineral Springs were long thought to have medicinal qualities. Their owner, one Edward McGuinness, sought to capitalize on the springs by building a hotel for visitors. As early as 1848, the hotel was being advertised in Pittsburgh newspapers. Able to accommodate up to 200 guests at a time, the fashionable resort continued to attract visitors for over sixty years.

(Uncovering Pennsylvania photo)



In addition to mineral water, which was thought to cure any number of physical ailments, the resort offered a variety of recreational activities in its woodland setting. The combination of fresh air, fresh food from the resort's gardens, rest and relaxation resulted in some families staying as long as a month or more.



(Beaver County Historical Research & Landmark Foundation photo)

### A Beautiful Place

*“There is near this city a place where the weary business man, worn and depressed with the cares of the world, may find rest and quietude; where the young wife or the mother may find recreation and freedom from the cares of the home and the nursery; where the young man and maiden, the prattling urchin and the babe may ramble in the velvety grass of the country; where the weak and afflicted may regain health and strength, and in fact where everybody may enjoy the beauties of nature free from the mutilating hand of the busy city. That place is Frankfort Springs...”*

*The springs are surrounded by tall and stately trees which dot the ground and add to the natural beauty of the place, shading the sun’s rays and spreading everywhere the fragrance of real perfume...*

*Superb climate, pure air and pure water, form the trinity of blessings which have made Frankfort Springs famous in the land...Insomnia yields at once, malaria is conquered, hay fever vanishes and diseases of the kidneys, liver and other organs, which when out of order make life scarce worth the living, relinquish their grip when the genius of the air breathes upon the sufferer and the pure spring water begins to show its health giving qualities. It is a place where convalescents recuperate from any kind of trouble and in a very short period regain the vigor of youth. It is a delightful summer home for persons of all ages.*

**Daily Commercial 14 June 1893**

**Frankfort Springs Hotel.**  
**OPENS MAY 1st. 1906.**

If you are anticipating a vacation in the country, where you can be in close touch with nature, amid rustic surroundings and health-giving mineral water, fresh from the famous springs—then you had better engage your rooms at FRANKFORT SPRINGS HOTEL. The buildings have all been remodeled and refurnished. All the comforts of home at reasonable terms. The hotel is located nine miles from Burgettstown, and nineteen miles from Sewickley.

RATES ON APPLICATION. Address  
**Frankfort Springs Hotel,**  
**R. F. D. No. 3. Murdocksville, Beaver Co., Pa.**

Sewickley Herald 28 April 1906

**FRANKFORT SPRINGS HOTEL**  
WITH AN INDIVIDUALITY ALL ITS OWN  
 MURDOCKVILLE, BEAVER COUNTY, PA., R. F. D. NO. 3  
 H. AND W. M. CHRISTMAN, PROPRIETORS

*San Chie: This is a dandy place. With your cough, cold, and asthma, you will find it a dandy place.*

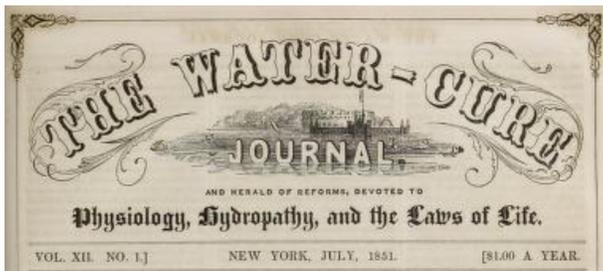
*“This is a dandy place.”*

(Undated postcard)

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the hotel had lost its luster. In an attempt to revitalize the once popular facility, three Sewickley businessmen took ownership in 1905 and refurbished the property. The resort closed in 1912 and the hotel building burned in 1932. The dance hall remained open for a few more years, but in time, the property was absorbed by Raccoon Creek State Park. Nature has reclaimed the once famous landmark with only a few stone ruins remaining as reminders of what once was.

**FRANKFORT SPRINGS  
CHANGES HANDS.**  
—  
W. C. Duncan Makes Sale Whereby  
Three Sewickleyans Acquire  
Title to the Property.  
—  
**WILL IMPROVE BUILDINGS.**

Sewickley Herald  
7 October 1905



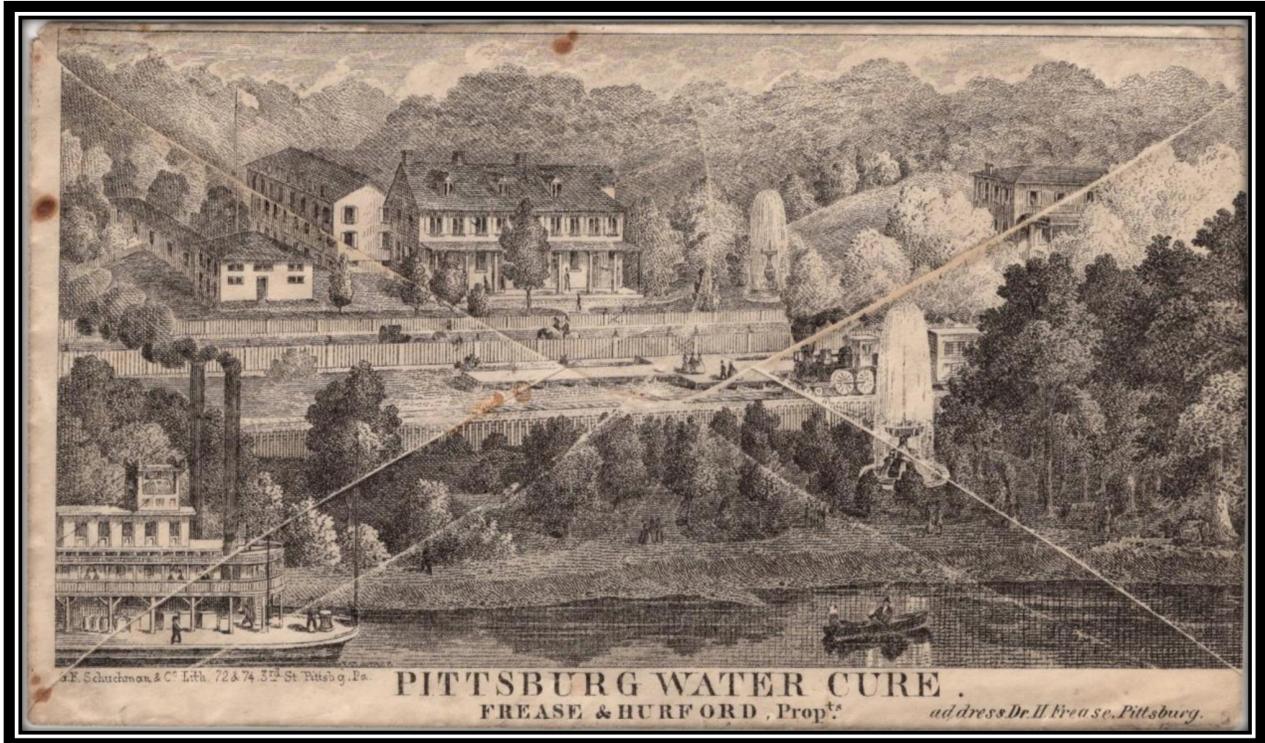
**Hydropathy** – A method of treating disease or illness by copious and frequent use of water both externally and internally.  
Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Viewed as an alternative to conventional medicine, hydropathy was practiced in Europe prior to being introduced to America in the 1840s. At one time, as many as two hundred 19<sup>th</sup> century water-cure facilities operated throughout the U. S., including the Pittsburgh Water-Cure located in Haysville, ten miles from Pittsburgh on the Ohio River.

Situated on the hillside at the corner of River and Beaver roads, the facility opened in 1855 and was conveniently served by the recently opened rail line connecting the Sewickley Valley with Allegheny City and Pittsburgh. The water-cure operated throughout the Civil War years until being destroyed by fire in the summer of 1872.

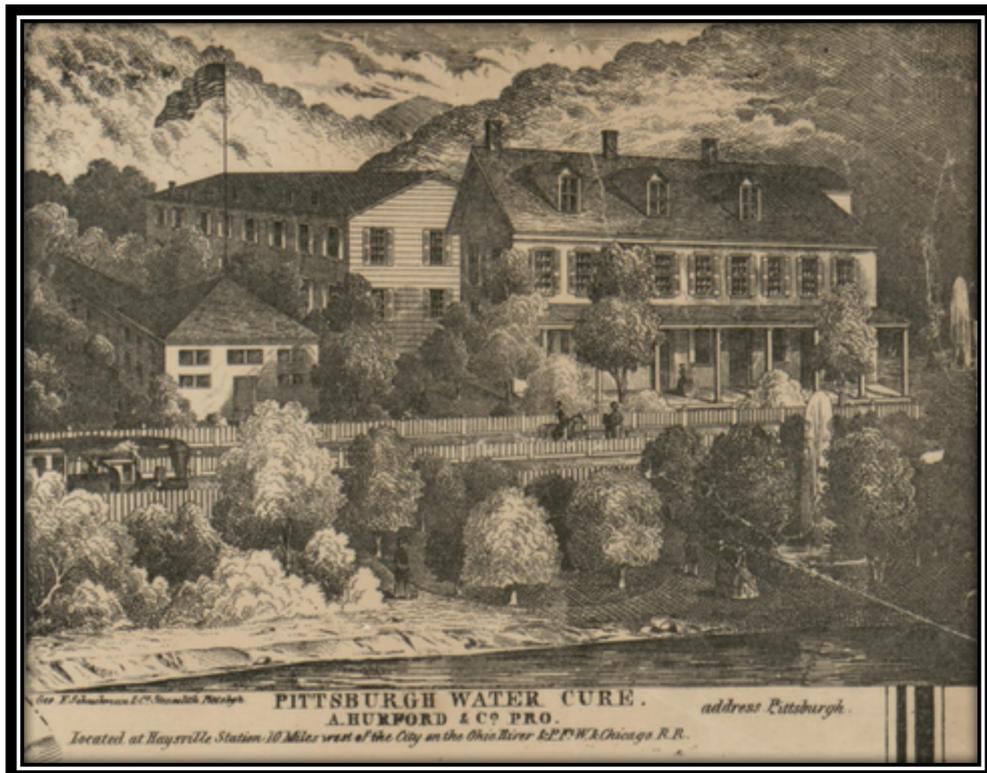


**PITTSBURGH WATER-CURE. — This Institution is situated on the Ohio River and Ohio & Pennsylvania Railroad, ten miles west of the city at Haysville Station, and is under the charge of Drs. and Mrs Frease, heretofore of the Sugar Creek Falls Water-Cure. We are within twenty minutes' ride of Pittsburgh, have an abundance of pure, soft spring water, sufficiently elevated to be conducted to any part of the house. We have the most varied and magnificent scenery,—river, railroad, lofty hills and deep valleys, green woods and cultivated fields. We see thousands of people here daily, on steamboats and railcars, passing to all points of the compass. Our bath rooms are numerous, large and well ventilated, and are on both the first and second floors of the building. In short, our location and facilities for the successful treatment of disease is unsurpassed, and from our long experience and success in the Water-Cure practice, we feel confident of being able to give general satisfaction. The female department is under the charge of Mrs. C. P. R. Frease, a graduate of the New York Hydropathic Institute and the Eclectic Medical College of Cincinnati. Patients should bring 1 linen and 2 cotton sheets, 2 woollen blankets, 2 comforts, and 5 towels, or we will furnish them for 50 cents per week. Terms, from 6 to 10 dollars per week, payable weekly in advance. Address either of the physicians, Pittsburgh, Pa., Box 1304. S. FREASE, M. D., H. FREASE, M. D., C. P. R. FREASE, M. D., Aug 14**



(Ebay photo)

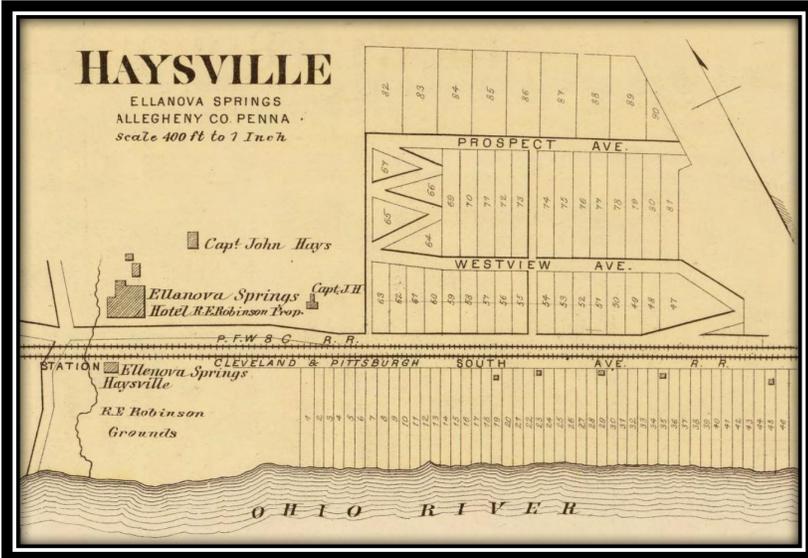
*“Below Kilbuck is Haysville Station, with its hotel and water-cure establishment, surrounded by gardens, with a fish pond in the front, from which a fountain throws a continuous jet of water. The visitors seated in the shaded porch looked like anything else but invalids...”*  
(Daily Post 6 June 1863)



(Old Maps 1862)

# ELLANOVA SPRINGS.

Within the year after the water-cure was destroyed by fire, the newly built Ellanova Springs Hotel opened on the same site overlooking the Ohio River.



The luxurious country spa and resort continued to operate until it also was lost to fire in April 1882.

The riverside park, which was once connected to the hotel by a pedestrian bridge that crossed over the Beaver Road and railroad tracks, continued to be enjoyed by visitors until the property was acquired by the Sterling Varnish Company in the late 1800s.

(Illustrated Atlas of the Upper Ohio River Valley 1877 photos)





“...Mr. R. E. Robinson, the popular proprietor of [Pittsburgh’s] Robinson House, yesterday opened the Ellanova Springs House at Haysville, and now offers to the public generally a summer resort in every respect equal to any in the country...In place of the old structure Mr. Robinson has erected a magnificent hotel of four stories, of the most approved architectural style and furnished throughout with all imaginable modern comforts and luxuries. The feature which strikes one first and foremost favorably from the outside is the splendid range of wide piazzas which run around the first and second stories of the house.

In the spacious hallway on the first floor the office is located. Following the hall farther back, one comes to the billiard room, in which a beautiful fountain continually plays, and beyond this are the wash rooms and barber’s shop. On either side of the grand entrance are the ladies’ and gentlemen’s parlors, and large sleeping apartments. On the second floor are more parlors and dormitories, and above the billiard room the large and cool dining hall, at one end

of which is a gallery for Prof. Toerge’s band, which enchants the guests with sweet music while at meals. The third and fourth floors are devoted exclusively to sleeping apartments.

The house has one hundred and six large transient rooms, with elegant suites for families, and twenty-six rooms for servants and nurses. The whole building is lighted by gas manufactured on the place...

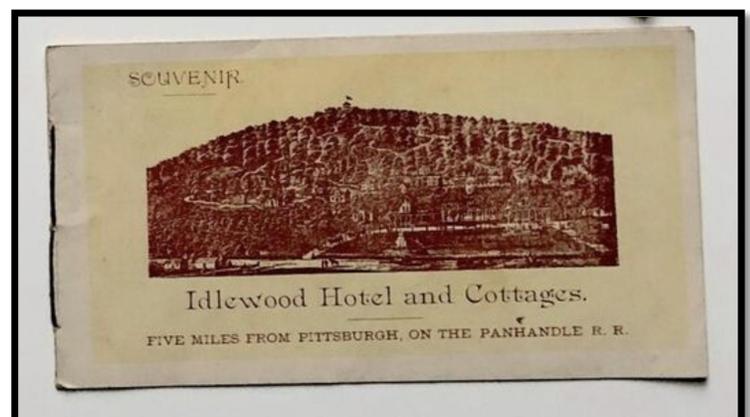
The china in use is very elegant and unique, and was imported by Mr. Robinson from Europe, each piece bearing the imprint of “The Ellanova Spring.”

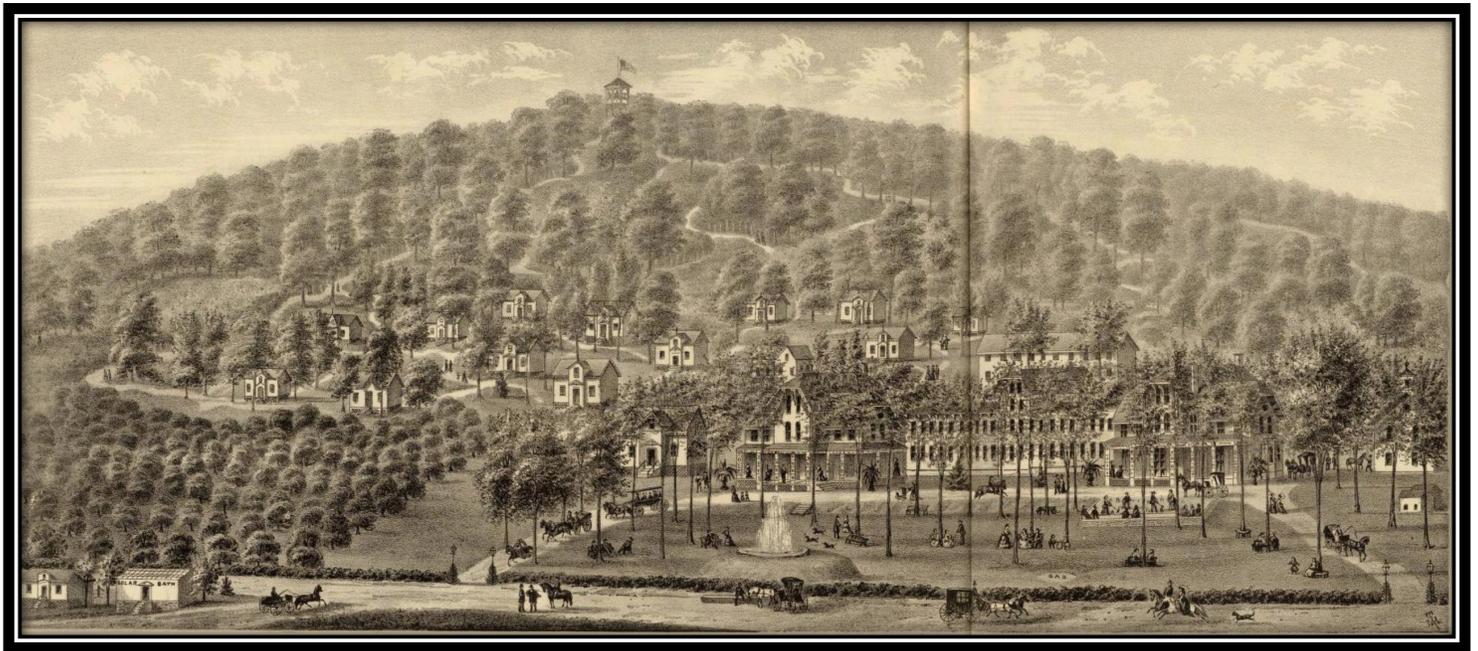
So much for the hotel; it is in every minutest particular first class and elegant. But the natural surroundings are what have made the springs so popular, and what must prove the strongest attraction this summer. In the rear of the Ellanova House, the cliff rises abruptly and affords a most magnificent view of the Ohio and its scenery for miles. In the hill side several private cottages are already nestling, and more are in process of construction. From the front of the house a park of eight acres slopes to the very water’s edge. The park is, after all, the gem among the beauties of Ellanova. It is tastefully laid out and well shaded, convenient seats are provided throughout, and a pavilion for the band will soon be completed. At night, it is lighted by innumerable Chinese lanterns, which give the place a weird and fairy-like appearance; but when, as was the case last night, the bonny moon lends her charms to the scene, it is hard enough to compass the fact that Pittsburgh, with its prosaic brick and stone, is but ten miles away.” (Excerpts from **Daily Commercial** 2 July 1873)

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**Allegheny County** once had two spa resorts, Ellanova Springs in Haysville and Idlewood Cottage Hotel in what is today the Pittsburgh suburb of Greentree. Opened in June 1874, Idlewood boasted a hotel and cottages on thirty acres along Noblestown Road near the Chartiers Cemetery. A short five-mile distance from the city, Idlewood was a popular destination for summer visitors.

(Ebay photo)





(David Rumsey Maps)

*Idlewood Cottage Hotel,*  
**W. S. JACKSON.**  
**IDLEWOOD, PENN'A.**

**BREAKFAST.**

Coffee. Black Tea. Green Tea. Oolong Tea. Chocolate.

**BROILED.**

|                |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Sirloin Steak, | Mutton Chops,  | Salt Mackerel. |
| Beef Steak,    | Smoked Salmon, | Ham.           |
| Veal Cutlets,  | Calf's Liver,  | Smoked Bacon.  |

**FRIED.**

|                 |             |                     |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Ham, with Eggs, | Hash,       | Smoked Beef, Fried. |
| Veal Cutlets,   | Bacon,      | Fish Balls,         |
| Calf's Liver,   | Fresh Fish, | Fried Mush.         |

**POTATOES.**

|                 |                 |                  |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Fried Potatoes, | Baked Potatoes, | Stewed Potatoes. |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|

**OMELETS.**

|                        |                       |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Omelets, Plain,        | Omelets, with Onions, | Omelets, with Cheese. |
| Omelets, with Parsley, |                       | Omelets, with Ham.    |

**EGGS.**

|         |        |            |          |
|---------|--------|------------|----------|
| Boiled, | Fried, | Scrambled, | Dropped. |
|---------|--------|------------|----------|

**BREAD AND CAKES.**

|                 |                  |                |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Wheat Rolls,    | Corn Bread,      | Brown Bread,   |
| Water Crackers, | Soda Crackers,   | Dry Toast,     |
| Butter Toast,   | Milk Toast,      | Griddle Cakes, |
| Cream Crackers, | Boston Crackers, | Cracked Wheat. |

**HOURS FOR MEALS.**

|                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Breakfast,      | from 7 to 9 o'clock. |
| Dinner,         | " 1 to 2½ "          |
| Tea and Supper, | " 6 to 8 "           |

**SUNDAYS.**

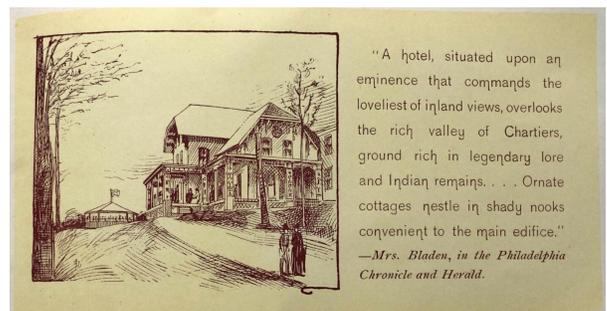
|                 |                        |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| Breakfast,      | from 7½ to 10 o'clock. |
| Dinner,         | " 1 to 2 "             |
| Tea and Supper, | " 6 to 8 "             |

W. S. JOHNSTON & CO., PRINT.

“...There are 22 acres of picturesque landscape embraced in the tract of land, including large orchard of finest fruits, mineral springs, cultivated hedges, rare shrubbery, shaded lawn, charming woodland and most inviting drives and walks. The main hotel has 60 rooms, large dining room, spacious corridors, ample porches, both gases, water and every convenience for 300 guests. There are, in addition, 13 cottages on the ground, nicely located and ready for occupancy, besides croquet grounds, covered dancing pavilion and lookout...” (Daily Post 20 February 1892)

With frequent daily train service between Idlewood and Pittsburgh, it was not unusual for families to spend summers at the resort while fathers and husbands commuted to city offices.

Mounting debt forced the closure and sale of the property in the 1890s. The former hotel reportedly served as a sanitarium for tuberculosis patients for a short time before being destroyed by fire in 1908.



“A hotel, situated upon an eminence that commands the loveliest of inland views, overlooks the rich valley of Chartiers, ground rich in legendary lore and Indian remains. . . . Ormate cottages nestle in shady nooks convenient to the main edifice.”  
 —Mrs. Bladen, in the Philadelphia Chronicle and Herald.

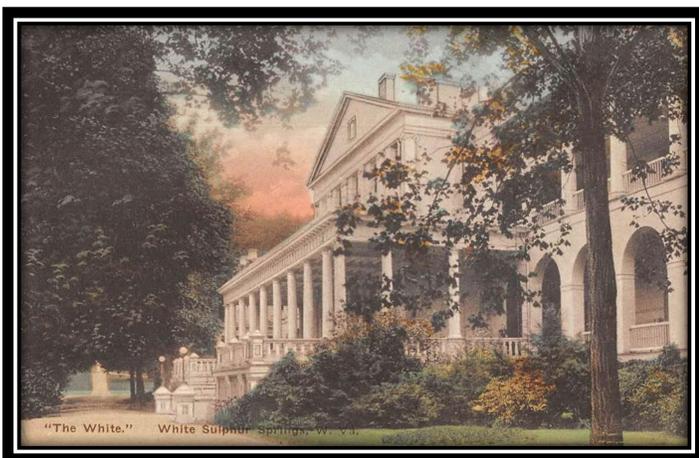
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As the practice of medicine changed, water-cures and mineral springs used for the treatment of illness and disease gradually fell out of favor. Once popular resort hotels fell into disuse and soon disappeared, surviving only in memories of what once was.



Between 1884 and 1915, Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania boasted forty inns and resort hotels, including the landmark Rider (above) and Riverside (left) hotels.

The Mountain House in Cresson Springs, Pennsylvania (below) was razed in 1916.



After having undergone renovations, the Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia (above) and the Bedford Springs Resort in Bedford Springs, Pennsylvania (right) have continued welcoming guests. (Undated post cards)

