

# MORE THAN MINERAL WATER

A COLLECTION OF IMAGES  
FROM BEDFORD SPRINGS' PAST



Scott D. Heberling



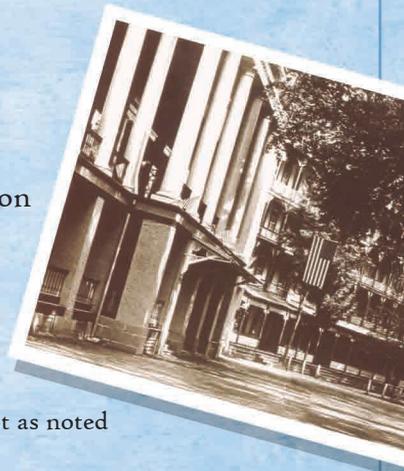
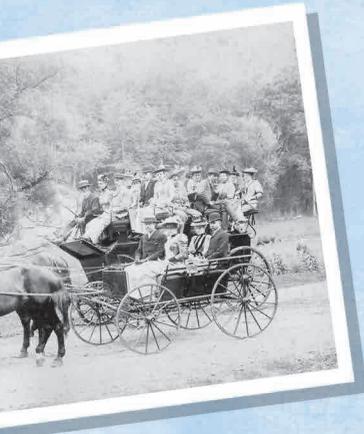


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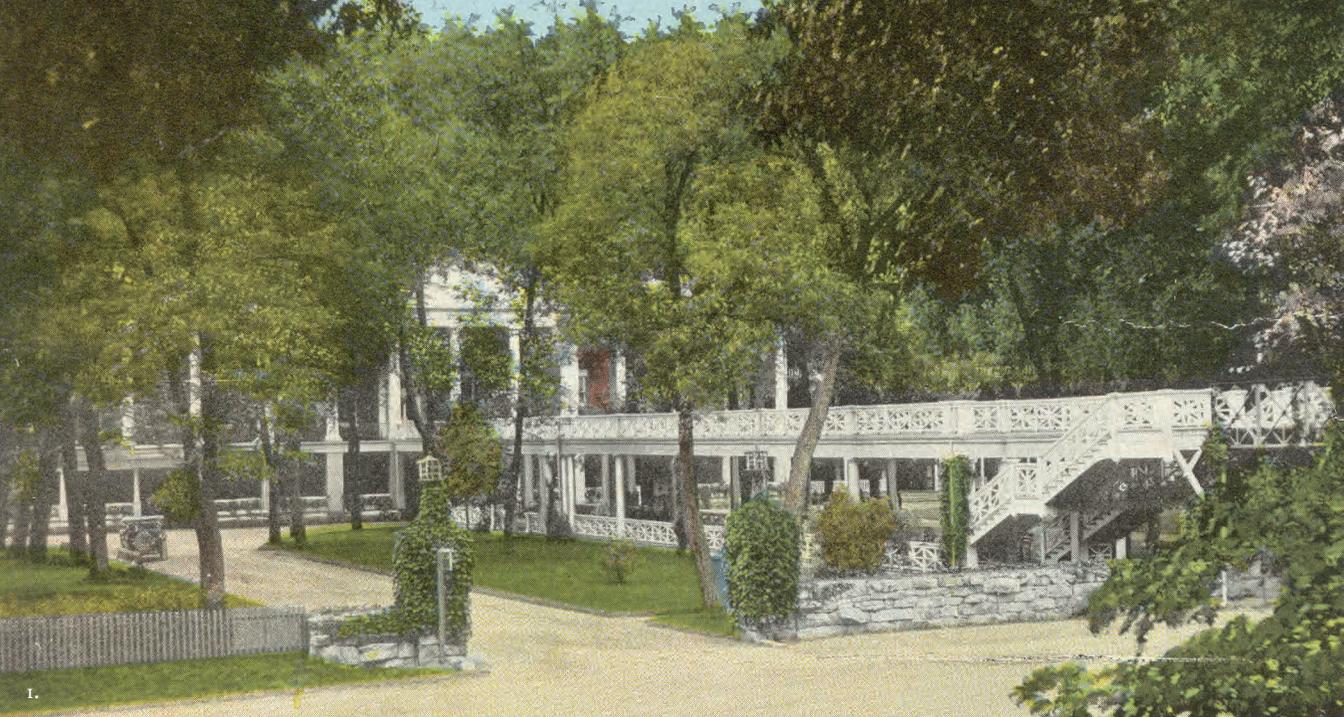
Federal Highway Administration  
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation  
2008



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Layout and Design by Christopher Yohn

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ISBN 0-89271-132-9



## BEDFORD SPRINGS AT THE CLOSE OF ITS FIRST CENTURY

In 1900 the Bedford Springs Hotel was already over a century old. It was one of America's best-known mineral water spas, on a par with Saratoga Springs in New York and White Sulphur Springs in West Virginia, and was a regular stop on the fashionable "resort circuit" for the social elite of Middle Atlantic cities. It played host to the richest and most powerful people in the world, including captains of industry, financial and political leaders, and five U.S. presidents. The Springs even served as the "summer White House" during the administration of President James Buchanan (1857-1861), a native Pennsylvanian who was a frequent guest at the hotel.

In the early years guests arriving from Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh and other eastern cities were forced to endure long journeys over terrible roads, but the hotel became more accessible after the development of turnpikes in the 1820s and railroads a few decades later. When the Pennsylvania and Baltimore and Ohio railroads both established nearby connections in 1872, this initiated a building boom at Bedford Springs and ushered in a period of great prosperity. By 1900 it had expanded into an enormous complex encompassing 1,500 acres of land, five elaborate hotel buildings with accommodations for 600 guests, and a myriad of support structures. Many improvements were made after the Anderson family sold the property to a Pittsburgh partnership headed by Philander Knox in 1887, and again after it was acquired by Delaware industrialist Samuel Bancroft in 1896.

Of course the ritual of "taking the waters" was central to any visit to Bedford Springs, but there was far more to the Springs experience than just mineral water. Mineral spring resorts may have begun as places of healing for the sick and infirm, but as time went on they began to offer a wide variety of recreational activities to their guests. According to historian Cindy Aron, "savvy resort proprietors learned quickly to cater to clients who hoped to combine recreation with recuperation. It was not difficult for health resorts to serve, equally well, as pleasure spots." Bedford Springs certainly attracted many invalids who hoped to restore their health through hydrotherapy, but these individuals typically were accompanied by relatives or friends who sought leisure diversions. Other guests may have been in reasonably good health but hoped to improve it by imbibing the spring waters and exercising in the mountain air. Still others simply wished to escape the summer heat and pollution of the cities by coming to this "paradise in the wilderness" for a few weeks of recreation and amusement.

As early as 1824 the *National Gazette and Literary Register* reported that “music and balls in the evening, billiard tables, quoits, bowling alleys, &c., a convenient distance from the house, and the great abundance of game in the neighborhood, affords to the lover of sport and exercise an opportunity of indulging in every innocent recreation and amusement.” By the first decade of the 20th century this was even more true due to the new buildings and facilities that had been added. The well-heeled, genteel guests who frequented the Springs could engage in a full schedule of leisure activities from first light until well into the night. These activities—dancing, golf, tennis, bowling, lawn games, walking, riding, bicycling, swimming, or just simple sociability around a billiard table or card table—may have done more to promote good physical and mental health than plunge baths or the thirty half-pints of mineral water that some guests routinely drank before breakfast each day.

The historic images on the following pages illustrate some of the leisure pursuits and amusements that were enjoyed by hotel guests at the turn-of-the-century. This period was chosen because of the abundant photographic documentation that exists and because it also captures Bedford Springs at its historic zenith. The survival of these wonderful images is due to the efforts of Mr. William L. Defbaugh, who has spent a lifetime gathering and preserving Bedford Springs memorabilia when they easily could have been destroyed or scattered. Now at the beginning of the hotel’s third century they have come home to the revitalized Bedford Springs Resort, where they proudly adorn the walls and recall an earlier time.



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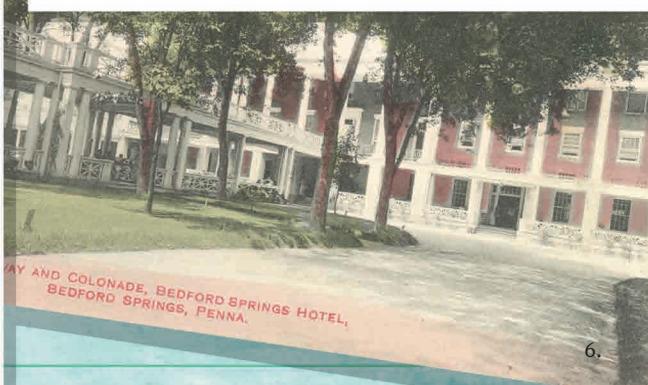
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Swimming Pool. Bedford Springs Hotel, Pa.

## Swimming and Bathing

It was the belief in the medicinal and curative powers of the waters that brought people to Bedford Springs and established its reputation as one of America's leading spas. Although the first visitors bathed directly in the springs, John Anderson built a bath house with an underground reservoir when he acquired the property in 1798. By 1811 there were two cold and two warm baths featuring in-ground tubs. Later, larger and more elaborate men's and women's bath houses were constructed closer to the lodging buildings. Hot and cold mineral baths and plunge showers were important parts of the treatment for a wide variety of ills.

In 1905 a spectacular new wing was built at the south end of the Colonial Building, housing a spring-fed Olympic size swimming pool with side galleries and solarium. It was one of the largest indoor pools in existence at the time. Hydrotherapy was a crucial part of the "Bedford Cure", but its recreational appeal cannot be denied.





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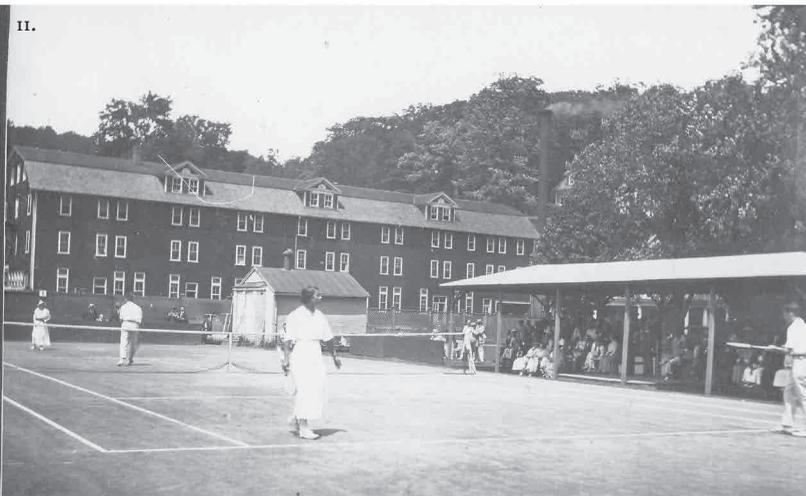
## Golf

Golf came to Bedford Springs late in the 19th century when enthusiasm for the sport was sweeping the nation. The “Old Course” at the Springs was one of the first golf courses in the United States and is associated with three of America’s most renowned course designers. Spencer Oldham designed the original 18-hole, 6,000 yard course in 1895. In 1912 the course was redesigned by A.W. Tillinghast, who converted the original 18 holes into 9 longer holes, including the famous “Tiny Tim.” In 1923 the legendary designer Donald Ross changed the course back to 18 holes. Today it has been carefully restored and incorporates the contributions of all three men.



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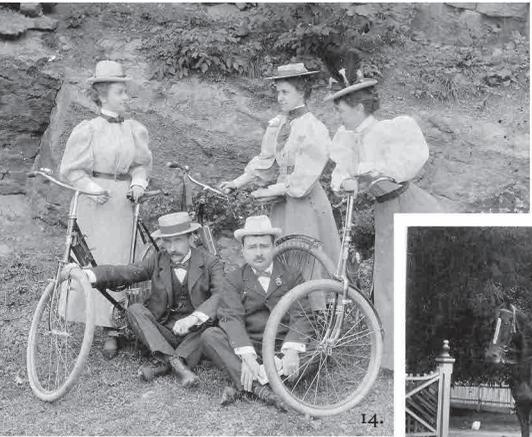
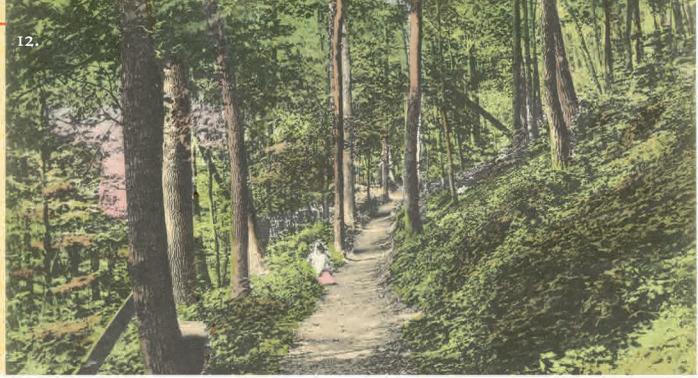
## Tennis

Tennis was another sport that made its debut at the Springs late in the 19th century. Tennis courts and a viewing stand were built between the Colonial Building and the golf course. The hotel staged tournaments and exhibitions for its guests, and professional players offered personalized instruction.

## Exploring the Grounds

Strolling the property's many hillside paths and trails was a favorite activity for hotel guests. Not only did it provide healthy exercise and a breath of crisp mountain air, but it also offered good social opportunities. Trails linked all seven springs. It was a common routine for guests to take a "daily constitutional" where they made a complete circuit, taking the waters at each stop. Bicycling and horseback riding also were popular.

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## Excursions

The beautiful rural environment of Bedford County provided many opportunities for excursions and outings. A favorite activity was for guests to pile on board the hotel's "Tally Ho" coach for a sumptuous chicken dinner at the nearby Defibaugh Tavern. As the coach clattered through the streets of Bedford the passengers used instruments and noisemakers to be as loud and ostentatious as possible. Although automobiles eventually supplanted horse-drawn vehicles the tradition persisted well into the 20th century.



16.

BEDFORD SPRINGS, NEAR BEDFORD, PA.

17.





## Parties and Balls

Although some went to Bedford Springs only to take the waters and restore health, the Hotel had an active social scene. Historian Cindy Aron notes: "Hops, balls, and cotillions were regular occurrences... Balls and dances encouraged courting, another important amusement for which watering places quickly became known. Resorts, even those initially renowned for their health giving possibilities, offered arenas for men and women to meet, socialize, play, and sometimes find mates." At Bedford Springs, individual guests sponsored "germans" (a cotillion or group dance) for which they issued formal invitations and created special favors and decorations.

18.



19.

## Card Games

Card games such as whist, euchre and faro were popular at Bedford Springs and other mineral springs resorts. By the late 19th century it was perfectly acceptable for women to play cards, but in fashionable society only men could gamble, and then only if there were no ladies present. Historic images from the Bedford Springs collection suggest that many hours were spent around the card tables.



20.



MORNING CONCERT, BEDFORD SPRINGS

21.

## Music

The Hotel employed musicians to entertain its guests. In 1901 the Bedford Gazette noted that "One of the best orchestras in the state gives attractive lawn concerts in the morning and afternoon and furnishes dance music in the ballroom in the evening." The musicians also performed at private celebrations and in unscheduled performances around the grounds.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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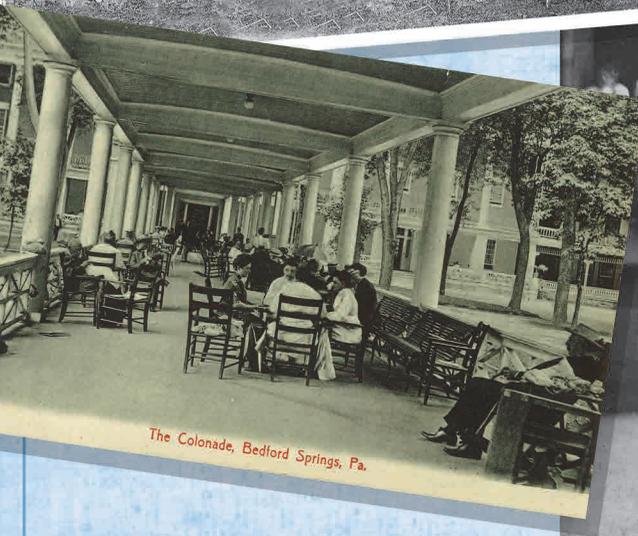
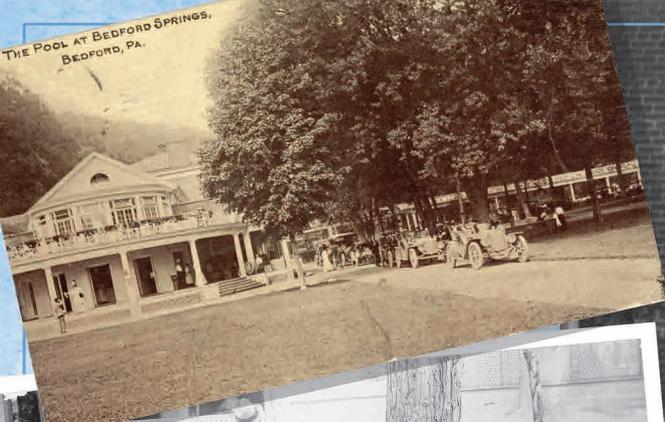
## IMAGES

- cover, front. "Tally Ho Party at the Colonnade" c. 1890.  
cover, back (top). postcard: "The Pool at Bedford Springs" undated.  
cover, back (middle). "Card Game on the Lawn" July 1896.  
cover, back (bottom). postcard: "Pastimes in the Colonnade" c. 1905.  
title page (top). [no title] 1887.  
title page (left). "A Willow Party" c. 1890.  
title page (right). postcard: "The Colonnade Building, Evitt House and Bandstand" Sept. 1899.
1. postcard: "South Gate" [postmarked July 30, 1919].
  2. postcard: "Winter Scene" undated. Heberling Associates collection.
  3. "Lemonade Party" July 1895.
  4. "Reading on the Lawn" c. 1892.
  5. "Cake Party" August 1892.
  6. postcard: "Driveway and Colonnade" undated.
  7. postcard: "Swimming Pool" [postmarked June 15, 1922].
  8. postcard: "Spring Water Pool Building" 1905.
  9. "Aerial View of the Old Course" c. 1940s.
  10. "On the Golf Links" c. 1896.



11. "Mixed Doubles on the Courts" c. 1920.
12. postcard: "Mountain Trail" [postmarked 1911].
13. "Bridging Shober's Run" July 1895.
14. "Lady Bicyclists" c. 1895.
15. "Out for a Ride" July 1892.
16. postcard: "Lining Up for an Excursion" c. 1910.
17. "Tally Ho Party Departing from the Miller's House" c. 1895.
18. "Mrs. Robinson's Morning German on the Porch of Evitt House" July 1895.
19. postcard: "Miss Weiss' Morning German at the Sulphur Spring" July 1895.
20. postcard: "Whist Party on the Colonnade Loggia" August 1, 1892.
21. postcard: "Morning Concert on the Colonnade" c. 1890.
22. "Young Guests at Anderson House" July 1896.
23. "Gathering on the Colonnade Loggia" July 29, 1893.





**BEDFORD SPRINGS  
RESORT**

