... like some fantastic dream from a tale of Arabian nights. That is how William McCardell described the most-filmed Cave where he and his brothers lived for 18 months. 

Although they were not the first to discover the Cave & Basin hot springs, those three must be given credit for bringing the springs to public attention. In following their dream of fame and fortune, they unwittingly helped start Canada’s national parks.

There were already two national parks in existence in the 1880s—Yellowstone in the U.S. and Royal National Park in Australia. Canada’s first national park was still an idea, whose chief supporters were government workers blasting a tunnel into the Canadian Rockies. When it emerged in the Cave & Basin hot spring, ca. 1906.

Since they were the birthplace of our first national park, the Cave & Basin were recognized as an ideal location — here they would create the world’s third national park, and Canada’s first. Although none of the claimants had any legal rights to the hot springs, some, including McCabe and the McCardells, were paid settlement costs for their efforts in developing the area.

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(Authorship of the first national park, the Cave & Basin, was settled in 1905 — national parks continued to emerge throughout the 20th century, until 1985, when it meant the creation of Hot Springs National Park in Arkansas.)

Looking at the more than 30 national parks across Canada today, we can see that these hot springs started a fantastic dream indeed!

The water of the hot springs starts as rain and snow, falling on the other side of Sulphur Mountain and beginning a journey which transforms it. Following gravity’s pull, the water seeps through porous rock, drops more than two kilometres, to where it meets the intense heat radiating from the earth’s crust.

Pressurized and heated, the water strips minerals from the rocks as it is forced back to the surface along a natural fault. When it emerges in the Cave & Basin hot springs, at a temperature of 40°–50°C, it becomes mineral-rich. The vegetation is more lush than normal, with some plants remaining green all winter in the undisturbed snow. Some birds, such as killdeer and robins, neglect their normal migration, hauling in the warm water throughout the year. Several species of tropical fish invaded hot springs, creating a unique ecosystem adapted to the highly mineralized water.
SUGGESTED VISITS TO THE CENTENNIAL CENTRE

Just a taste ... (about 15 min.)

A quick trip ... (about 1 hour)

Swimmers' special ... (5 min. & swim time)

See it all ... (about 1 day)

The door marked “POOL” will lead you to:

For further information, contact:

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