

Cave & Basin Centennial Centre

Some Fantastic Dream — A History

“... like some fantastic dream from a tale of the Arabian nights.” That is how William McCardell described the mist-filled Cave when he, his brother Tom and their partner Frank McCabe first saw it in the fall of 1883. Immediately, their plans began to form. They could build a bathing resort! ... become rich! ... if only they could gain ownership of the springs.



Although they were not the first to discover the Cave & Basin hot springs, these three must be given credit for bringing the springs to public attention. In following their dreams 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 the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Government of Canada. Both saw the potential for tourist traffic, the advantages of western settlement, and the prestige that a national park would bestow on a young country.


Arguments over ownership of the Banff hot springs escalated into a legal battle and the government was called in to settle it. The government recognized 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 right to the hot springs, some, including McCabe and the McCardells, were paid settlement costs for their efforts in developing the area.

(EXHIBITS ON THE HOT SPRINGS' DISCOVERY ARE FOUND AT  AND  ON THE MAP OVERLEAF)

Government workers blasted a tunnel into the Cave in 1886, and built bathhouses beside the two springs in 1887. In 1914 the present stone building was erected.





(THERE IS A MODEL OF THE ORIGINAL 1914 BUILDING AT  ON THE MAP OVERLEAF)



Since they are the birthplace of our first national park, the Cave & Basin hot springs are a focus for 1985 — national parks centennial year. Responding to public sentiment, Parks Canada has rebuilt the swimming pool and returned the buildings to their 1914 appearance. The facility has been re-named the Cave & Basin Centennial Centre.

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

(FOR INFORMATION ABOUT NATIONAL PARKS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, SEE  AND  ON THE MAP OVERLEAF)

A more complete look at the history of the Cave & Basin and our national parks can be found in the book *A Grand and Fabulous Notion*, by Sid Marty, available in book stores or at the Cave & Basin tea house.




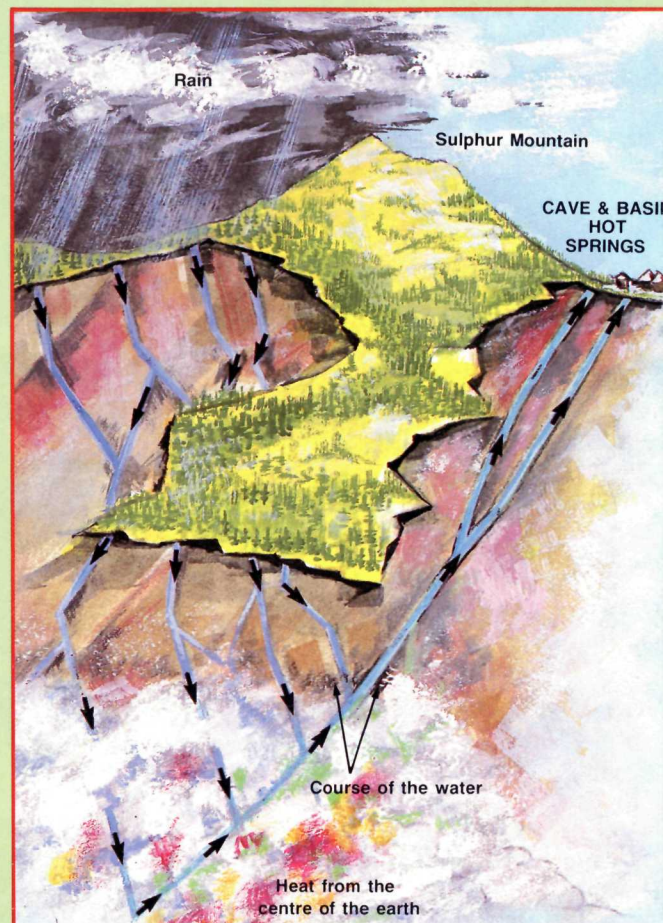
Eternal Spring — A natural history

As the warm water bubbles from the hot springs, it flows down the mountains to a small marsh below. The entire hillside is affected by the streams' warmth.

The vegetation is more lush than normal, with some plants remaining green all winter in the unfrozen streams. Some birds, such as killdeer and robins, neglect their normal migration, feeding in

the warm water throughout the year. Several species of tropical fish released here, including mosquitofish, black mollies and jewelfish, compete with native minnows adapted to the highly mineralized water.

(FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE NATURAL HISTORY, SEE THE MARSH TRAIL,  ON THE MAP OVERLEAF)




Mineral Water — The Geology

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, down more than two kilometres, to where it meets the intense heat radiating from the earth's core.

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 as the Cave & Basin hot springs, at a temperature of 30° - 35° C, it has become mineral water.

As the hot springs water bubbles from its underground channel, it begins to drop the load of minerals it gained on its journey through the earth. One of these minerals is calcium carbonate, which hardens into a porous gray-brown rock called tufa (pronounced too-fa). The entire hillside around the Cave & Basin hot springs is composed of tufa.

(FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE AREA'S GEOLOGY, SEE THE DISCOVERY TRAIL,  ON THE MAP OVERLEAF)

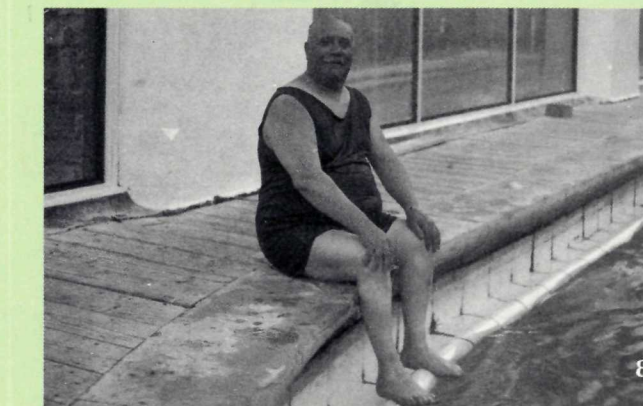
Minerals in the Cave & Basin Hot Springs Water (1981-1982)

Dissolved Solids (parts per million)	Cave Spring	Basin Spring	Banff Tap Water
Calcium (Ca)	252	440	56
Magnesium (Mg)	47.4	79.0	16
Strontium (Sr)	1.7	8	—
Sodium (Na)	5.6	7.1	1
Potassium (K)	4.2	6.1	5.2
Lithium (Li)	0.038	—	—
Bicarbonate (HCO ₃)	145	154	156
Sulphate (SO ₄)	575	1,080	68
Chloride (Cl ⁻)	5.7	5.8	3
Silica (SiO ₂)	31.0	36	4.9

Good Times — A present day perspective

When these hot springs first became known, they were hailed as a marvellous cure for scores of ailments, from gunshot wounds to mercury poisoning. Today, few people have such high expectations, but swimming in the hot pool at the Upper Hot Springs or the cooler mineral water at the Cave & Basin are still popular pastimes.

All the rental bathing suits and lifeguard uniforms at the Cave & Basin are 1914-style, recalling the site's colourful history. The Cave & Basin Centennial Centre exhibits are open year-round, with swimming from late May to Labour Day.



Captions

Cover
 Feats of daring and endurance were part of life at the Basin hot spring, ca. 1906.
 Photo: Archives of the Canadian Rockies.

4 McCabe and the McCardells' shack beside the vent hole of the Cave hot spring.
 From the N.F.B. film "Steam, Schemes and National Dreams."

5 Construction of the 1914 stone building.
 Photo: Archives of the Canadian Rockies.

6 The original bathhouse at the Cave hot spring, ca. 1908.
 Photo: Archives of the Canadian Rockies.

7 Cave & Basin bathhouses, ca. 1920.
 Photo: Archives of the Canadian Rockies.

1 The three discoverers cluster around the opening to the Cave hot spring.
 From the N.F.B. film "Steam, Schemes and National Dreams" with David Daniels, Steve Atkinson, and Raimund Stamm.

2 William McCardell descends a crude ladder to discover the Cave hot spring.
 From the N.F.B. film "Steam, Schemes and National Dreams" with David Daniels.

3 The McCardell brothers bathe in the Cave hot spring.
 From the N.F.B. film "Steam, Schemes and National Dreams" with David Daniels and Steven Atkinson.

8 Bather enjoying the Cave & Basin pool.
 Photo: Archives of the Canadian Rockies.

9 Swimming in the Basin hot spring, ca. 1922.
 Photo: Archives of the Canadian Rockies.

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 1/2 day)



The door marked "CAVE" will lead you to:



The door marked "POOL" will lead you to:



For further information, contact:

The Superintendent
Banff National Park
Box 900
Banff, Alberta
T0L 0C0
(403) 762-3324

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Morning Mist, Cave & Basin hot springs.
Parks Canada photo.



The Marsh Trail, Cave & Basin hot springs.
Parks Canada photo.



Fish viewing area on the Marsh Trail.
Parks Canada photo.