



Mount Clemens Public Library

Local History Sketches

The Mineral Springs and Table Water Industry

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The abundant supply of mineral-rich water beneath Mount Clemens gave birth not only to the bath industry, but also to a number of businesses which bottled the water from natural springs or from wells. Mount Clemens mineral water, under various labels, was marketed across the country as both a table water and a medicine. The slightly alkaline water had mild laxative properties and was touted as a cure for all manner of digestive upsets and chronic diseases. Visitors to the baths from all over the continent took home bottles of water from the various springs along with testimonials to the liquid's curative powers. The fortunes of the mineral water business, therefore, rose and fell with those of the bath industry. As the bath house business declined in the 1920s and was dealt a death blow by the Great Depression, the various mineral water companies suffered a similar fate. By the start of World War II, most had disappeared from the scene.

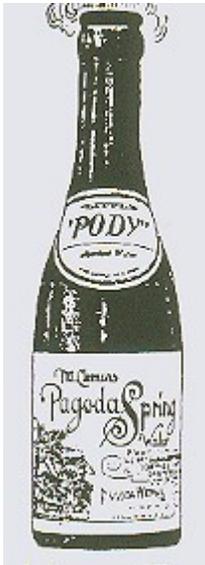
One of the earliest spring water companies to appear was the **Sprudel Water Company**, organized by **H.F. Meier** of Mount Clemens and **W.W. Leggett** and **James L. Edson** of Detroit in May, 1884. Early on, Sprudel water was bottled in the basement of **Ullrich & Crocker's** bank building, but as the business became established the bottling plant was moved to new quarters on Front St. which included steam power and new machinery. Wider marketing and growing demand caused the company to move again in 1892 to Clemens and East streets, where a two-story brick building housed the offices, bottling plant and warehouse.

Evidence of the success of Sprudel can be found in the *Mount Clemens Monitor* of July 22, 1892. The newspaper complained that a Detroit firm was infringing on Sprudel's trademark by marketing water under the name "Sprindel," with a label almost identical to Sprudel's. While decrying the deceit, the paper did note that only a superior product would be so imitated. The following year, an advertisement in *Cutter's Guide to Mt. Clemens* called Sprudel the "King of Mineral Waters" and recommended it for "the cure and relief of dyspepsia, indigestion, kidney and liver troubles, biliousness, stomach difficulties, and various other kindred diseases." The 1893 price was \$6.00 for a case of fifty quart bottles.

Sprudel was also one of Mount Clemens' longest-lived water companies. It continued despite the flagging fortunes of the bath industry, bottling spring water and various other beverages until about 1945.



Pagoda Springs was the first of the natural surface springs to be developed for the tourist trade. In 1890, a visitor to the **Avery House** declared himself cured of chronic ills by the nearby spring water, and hotel manager **E. R. Egnew** - after a brief period of initial skepticism - was spurred to action. In July, 1891, Egnew, along with business partner **Charles H. Scott**, acquired a ten-year lease on the spring and set about development of a new mineral water enterprise. The water was analyzed by chemist **C. Gilbert Wheeler** of Chicago, who advised in a telegram to the new partners that the water "will make you a fortune if judiciously managed." A magnificent oriental-style pagoda was built on the northeast corner of Dickinson Street for the accommodation of the spring's customers, the location of which was said to have been determined in accordance with Egnew's superstitious nature. He kept confined within the Avery House an American eagle named "Dick," which served as the hostelry's mascot. One day, the eagle escaped outside and flew around wildly, finally falling to the ground exhausted. According to the old story, it was upon the site where the eagle fell that Egnew constructed the pagoda.



The bottled product of Pagoda Springs bore the nickname "Little Pody" on the label and was advertised as "a fine purgative and liver stimulant." Among the corporate customers of Pagoda Springs was the **Michigan Central Railroad**, which served the water aboard its dining cars and used 75 cases (or 900 bottles) weekly in 1893.

Another business well-known to visitors was **Panacea Springs**, opened by **Frank W. Preussel** in 1903 at the corner of Crocker & Second. The spring featured an octagonal pavilion accommodating 500 guests, with an orchestra balcony at the north end and a polished maple floor for dancing. Summer visitors would enjoy the tables in the spacious gardens while eating popcorn and drinking unlimited bottles of water for 5 cents per person. **Byron Preussel** recalled for the *Monitor-Leader* in 1964 that "it was not uncommon for a customer to drink two half-gallons of spring water at one sitting. The all-time champ downed 14 half-gallons." Various kinds of musical entertainment were also provided at the pavilion to encourage customers to linger.

Panacea Spring Water was shipped across the country in five-gallon glass jugs and 32-gallon barrels. The capitol building in Lansing and several of the larger store and office buildings in downtown Detroit were regular customers. The Preussels sold the business in 1919 to **Louis Green** of Elizabethtown, N.J. The company suffered financial setbacks and was reorganized in

February of 1930 under the management of **Harry Hulburt**, former warden of Jackson state prison. The business fell upon hard times again and was declared insolvent in 1936; it was dissolved by court order in early 1937 and the remaining assets were sold off.

A favorite spot for guests of the magnificent **Park Hotel** was **Park Spring**, operated by Elijah J. Garvey on the banks of the river, at 28 Riverview, directly opposite the hotel. Guests of the Park were treated to a complimentary boat ride across the river to enjoy the spring water. Free peanuts were provided (to promote further sales of the water), and guests enjoyed hours of card-playing in the open-air pinochle house. The Park Spring was established in 1911 and lasted until around 1937, when the business was combined with an adjacent roller rink operated by **George T. Brown**. The Park Springs Roller Rink continued until approximately 1953.



Maple Leaf Springs was founded about 1904 by **John H. Charbeneau** at 78 Dickinson. Like its competitors, Maple Leaf featured a large pavilion which served as a combination spring house and dance hall, surrounded by a pleasant garden. Around 1935, sons **Harold H. and Roland J. Charbeneau** used the water to produce dry ginger ale and other carbonated beverages. In later years, until the business ended in approximately 1956, Maple Leaf Springs was a beer distributor.

A smaller, but long-lived spring water business was **Victory Springs**, established at 23 Third St. by **Charles Shorkey** in 1892. Victory changed hands sometime in the 1930s, when **Nicholas and Mary Hanoitis** were the proprietors, and continued until the early 1950s, when the business name was changed to **Victory Gardens** before disappearing around 1958.

There were a number of smaller, less widely advertised springs. Among them were: **Ambrosia Springs**, operated briefly around 1905 by **C.U. Glover** at 62 N. Front St.; **Arbor Springs**, operated by **Frank B. Roberts** from around 1900 to 1906 at Dickinson & Third Sts.; **Athenian Springs**, operated by Dr. Abner Hayward at 99 Cass from 1910 to around 1916; **Aurora Springs**, operated by **Eugene Moser** at 35 Crocker starting around 1905, and from 1921 to about 1930 by **Lewis Peter**; **Concentra Corporation**, which marketed "**Mount Clemens Laxo-Water**" from its offices at 29 Market St. from about 1914 to 1925; **Imperial Springs**, operated by **Joseph and Nellie Moore** at 105 Pine from about 1904 to 1930; **Orchard Springs**, operated by **Delia Addis** and later **Charles H. Addis** at 48 Jones, from about 1910 to 1926; **Peerless Springs**, operated at 44 Dickinson by **William Ditchburn** from about 1904 to 1916; and **Sanitas Springs**, operated at 77 Crocker by **Eugene Moser** and later by **Mrs. B. F. Jenne**, from about 1898 to 1922.

For more information about Mount Clemens' mineral springs and mineral water companies, we recommend:

- "Sprudel Water Company," *The International*, vol. 1, no. 3 (March 1892), p.106.
- "The Sprudel Co.: Something About a Prosperous and Growing Mt. Clemens Concern," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, July 22, 1892, p.1, col.4.
- "More Mt. Clemens Water," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, July 17, 1891, p.1, col.5.
- "The Pagoda Springs," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, September 18, 1891, p.1, col.3.
- "Pagoda Water," *Mount Clemens Press*, February 4, 1892, p.1, col.4.
- "The Unrivaled Pagoda," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, July 14, 1893, p.4, col.1.
- "The Pagoda Springs," *Headlight* [a publication of the Grand Trunk Railroad], vol.3, no.1, 1897, p.35.
- "Panacea to Have Formal Opening," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, May 23, 1930, p.1, col.8.
- "Park Improvements," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, March 17, 1911, p.8, col.4.