



Early advertisement for Steamboat's springs



An elk takes a swim in the Heart Spring pool



# The Springs of Steamboat Springs



WALKING TOUR

## YOUR EXPLORATION OF THE SPRINGS

can be tailored to your own curiosity level. By starting at Iron Spring you are within easy walking distance (about one mile) of five mineral springs. For the more adventuresome—extend your tour with a hike to the Sulphur Cave or take a plunge in the “soothing and health-giving” waters of the *Old Town Hot Springs*.

Journey in the footsteps of the Yampatika Ute and Arapaho tribes and the early pioneers of Steamboat Springs as you discover the city’s mineral springs. No two springs are alike—and each has its own special mineral content and intriguing allure.

*Use this map for guidance, as the new trail differs from the one on the blue signs located at each spring. Suitable walking shoes are advised since parts of the trail are rough and steep.*

*After touring the springs, see if you know which is the:*

- Hottest spring?
- Lemonade spring?
- Most odiferous spring?
- Most palatable?
- Miraquelle spring?
- Vent spring?
- Chugging spring?

## DISCOVER STEAMBOAT'S SPRINGS:

- IRON SPRING
- SODA SPRING
- SULPHUR SPRING  
*SWEETWATER/LAKE SPRING*
- STEAMBOAT SPRING  
*NARCISSUS/TERRACE SPRING*  
*BLACK SULPHUR SPRING*

- LITHIA SPRING
- SULPHUR CAVE

## HEART SPRING AT THE OLD TOWN HOT SPRINGS

*Please be advised that the waters in these springs are natural flowing and untreated. Drinking from the springs may cause illness or discomfort.*

*For more information about the springs in Steamboat Springs please visit or call:*

- Tread of Pioneers Museum ~ 8th and Oak 970.879.2214
- City of Steamboat Springs ~ 137 10th Street 970.879.2060
- Bud Werner Memorial Library ~ 12th and Lincoln 970.879.0240
- Yampatika ~ 925 Weiss Drive 970.871.9151

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Historic photos courtesy of the Tread of Pioneers Museum

Cover photo: Sulphur Springs – Ken Proper Photography

## Nature's Great Laboratory



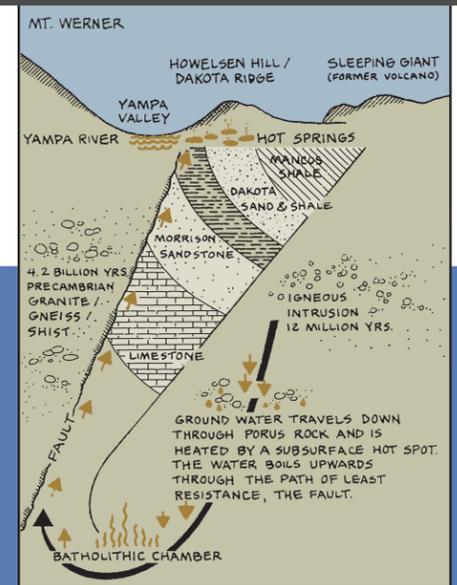
Heart Spring Bathers



Spa-goers at the Soda Spring gazebo

The cross-section to the right depicts the Yampa Valley and the fault-line which runs through the area. Ground water settles down into the igneous chamber area, heats rapidly and then travels upward through the fault line to the surface. A majority of the springs' ground water rises to the earth's surface along this fault line, near the Yampa River.

Each of the more than 150 springs has a unique combination of naturally occurring minerals; and because of the varying mineral content no two springs are alike.



Geology of Springs

### Mineralogy and Geology of Springs

### Underground Forces: Geology of the Springs

You are standing on a fault line generated 42 million years ago when the earth's upward thrust formed the surrounding mountains. Steamboat Springs' thermal waters originate in these faults at depths of 12,000 to 15,000 feet. Ground water settling into these faults is rapidly heated and forced to the surface. The water's mineral content is derived from its unique path through the fault's rock formations.

### Preserving our Springs: A Fragile Balance

*Our springs exist in a fragile balance of natural forces and human care. To ensure the longevity of these natural landmarks please do not throw anything into the water or attempt to disrupt the springs' flow.*

MINERAL CONTENT	IRON SPRING	SODA SPRING	SULPHUR SPRING	STEAMBOAT SPRING	BLACK SPRING	LITHIA SPRING	SULPHUR CAVE	HEART SPRING
TEMPERATURE	73	55	73	79	70	72	61	102
Alkalinity, mg/l	1644.	1020.	2390.	2454.	2218.	2242.	1340.	183.
Bicarbonate, mg/l	1644.	1020.	2390.	2454.	2218.	2174.	1340.	103.
Boron, mg/l	none	none	none	none	none	none	none	.7
Calcium, dissolved, mg/l	79.	24.	35.	24.	49.	10	29.	18.
Carbonate, mg/l	none	none	none	none	none	none	none	84.
Chloride, mg/l	438.	378.	1250.	1470.	1230.	1360.	1300.	320.
Coliforms, -/100 ml, (1/100ml)	.6	none	none	none	none	none	none	none
Fluoride, mg/l (4mg/l)	1.0	1.0	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.2	1.9
Hardness, mg/l	464.	269.	235.	187.	237.	144.	204.	49.
Magnesium, dissolved, mg/l	65.	51.	36.	31.	28.	29.	32.	1.
Nitrate, dissolved, mg/l	.07	.46	none	none	none	none	none	none
Nitrate/Nitrite, mg/l	.07	.46	none	none	none	none	none	none
Nitrite, dissolved, mg/l	none	none	none	none	none	none	.01	none
Nitrogen, mg/l	none	none	none	none	none	none	none	.04
Ph, units	7.6	7.7	7.8	7.9	7.8	8.4	8.1	8.0
Potassium, dissolved, mg/l (5,600 mg/l)	60.	.53	120.	130.	110.	125.	120.	11.
Sodium absorption ratio	16.57	18.83	57.68	79.45	55.41	84.36	68.44	n/a
Sodium, dissolved, mg/l (3,000 mg/l)	811.	702.	2010.	2470.	1940.	2300.	2220.	300.
Silica, mg/l	none	none	none	none	none	none	none	49.
Sulfate, mg/l (250 mg/l)	228.	196.	584.	628.	574.	589.	836.	150.
Arsenic, dissolved, mg/l (0.05 mg/l)	.001	none	.087	.110	.027	.114	.099	.005
Barium, dissolved, mg/l (1.0 mg/l)	.04	.04	.02	.03	.03	.03	.04	none
Cadmium, dissolved, mg/l (0.010 mg/l)	none	none	.006	none	none	none	none	none
Iron, dissolved, mg/l (0.3 mg/l)	.79	1.96	none	none	.39	none	.03	.04
Lithium, dissolved, mg/l	.96	.85	3.35	3.75	2.75	3.70	3.45	.35

mg/l = milligrams per liter Elements: Maximum recommended by state and federal government in ( ).



Lithia Spring visitor

## Lure of the Waters: *The Power of Place*

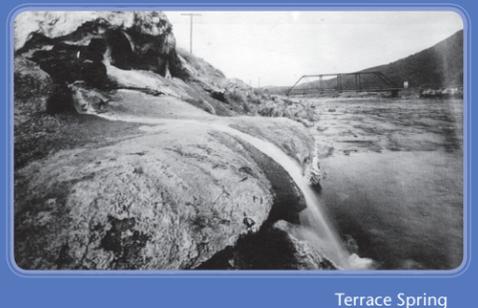
For centuries, visitors have been drawn to the thermal waters in and around Steamboat Springs. Yampatika Ute and Arapaho tribes, who summered in the area, considered the mineral or “medicine” springs sacred ground and valued the springs as places of physical and spiritual healing.

In 1874, James Crawford ventured into the Yampa Valley seeking a homestead site. Impressed by the region’s mineral waters, he built a cabin near present day Iron Spring and a log shelter over the nearby hot spring. This first bathhouse became a “community center” for the area’s few residents as well as miners from as far away as Hahns Peak. By the early 1900s, the springs were touted as a great natural wonder. Tourists came from across the nation to bathe in the spring-fed pools and drink from the area’s mineral waters. The arrival of the passenger train in 1909 opened the remote northwestern region to an influx of spa-goers, and established Steamboat Springs as a “spa town” and tourist destination.

Today, the mineral springs and the community hot springs continue to lure locals and visitors—discover why on the Springs Walking Tour.



Sign advertising Steamboat Springs' rejuvenating waters

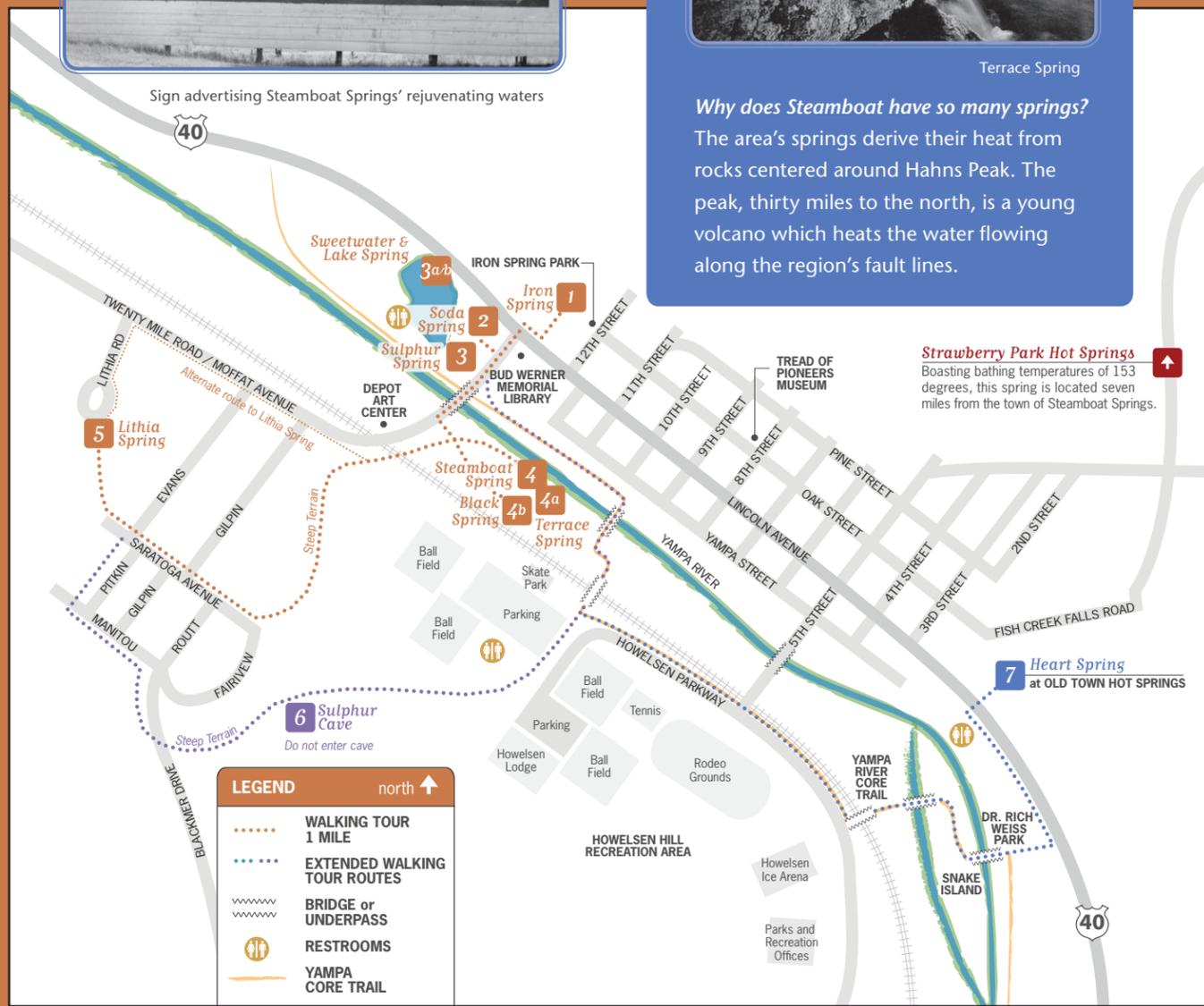


Terrace Spring

## Why does Steamboat have so many springs?

The area’s springs derive their heat from rocks centered around Hahns Peak. The peak, thirty miles to the north, is a young volcano which heats the water flowing along the region’s fault lines.

Walking Tour Map



## Strawberry Park Hot Springs

Boasting bathing temperatures of 153 degrees, this spring is located seven miles from the town of Steamboat Springs.

1

## Iron Spring

Steamboat Springs' founder, James Crawford, frequented the Iron Spring for its mineral waters. His granddaughter, Lulita Crawford Pritchett, described growing up on Iron Spring lemonade which the family made by mixing half a lemon with a tablespoon of sugar and then adding in Iron Spring water to create a carbonated fizz.

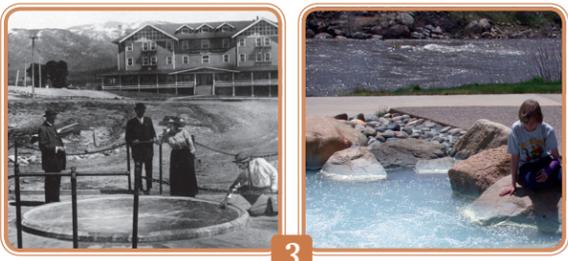
2

## Soda Spring

High carbonation and the lack of a sulphur taste made Soda Spring the town's favorite drinking spring. Visitors staying at the nearby Cabin Hotel (1909 - 1939) often enjoyed a glass of “lemonade” made with the Soda Spring water. While the gazebo remains, the water's natural flow was disrupted by the construction of Highway 40 in the late 1970s.

Visitors at Sulphur Spring

Sulphur Spring and Yampa River



3

## Sulphur Spring

The region's Native Americans attributed curative powers to the pungent and odiferous sulphur water of the Sulphur Spring. Deer, elk, black bear and horses have shown a particular craving for the Sulphur Spring water. Look for the stones with tie rings where early settlers tethered their horses.

*Sweetwater (3a) and Lake Spring (3b)* as well as several other springs feed the nearby pond.

4

## Steamboat Spring

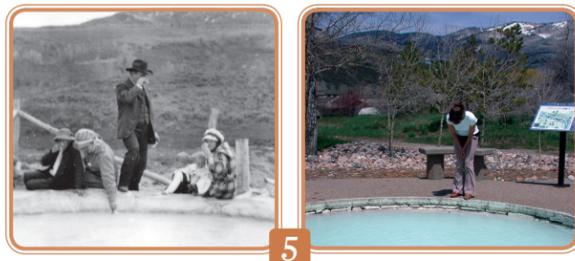
James Crawford staked his land claim on a quaking aspen near Steamboat Spring in 1874. At the time, this spring was a geyser expelling water in “jets” reaching five to fourteen feet high. The resonant chugging sound of the gushing reminded early trappers of a steamboat—thus giving the town its name. The spring ceased its chugging in 1909 when it was damaged by the blasting of railroad crews laying track along the Yampa River.

Just a few yards up river you'll find: *Narcissus* and *Terrace Spring (4a)*. Many people regard these waters as healing for skin disorders. At Terrace Spring, look for the holes carved in the rock wall by centuries old springs.

Nearby *Black Sulphur Spring (4b)* has turned inky as nature reduces its hydrogen sulfide into sulphur.

Partaking of Lithia Spring's waters

Lithia's milky “medicinal” water



5

## Lithia Spring

The milky waters of Lithia Spring contain a high content of lithium, a mineral used to treat the mood swings of manic depression. The spring's stone entrance columns were built by H.W. Gossard, who planned to bottle and sell the waters as “Miraquelle” in the 1930s.

*From Lithia Spring, choose to hike up to the Sulphur Cave on Howelsen Hill (following signs), or reward yourself with a soak in the Heart Spring at Old Town Hot Springs which is located at 136 Lincoln Avenue. (An admission fee is charged.)*

6

## Sulphur Cave

The geologic features of this cave demonstrate the force of an underground stream, now mostly inactive, which is 20 to 30 feet below the surface. The cave served, at one point, as a vent for a spring of massive proportions. The cave interior is porous rock with free sulphur crystals. In 1988, spelunkers equipped with oxygen masks reported that inside the cave a sulphur spring can be seen 30 feet beyond the chamber and that its strong flow indicates the water continues to run all the way to the Yampa River.

*Do not enter Sulphur Cave—toxic gases present!*

Heart Spring, 1910

Old Town Hot Springs bather



7

## Heart Spring

The Heart Spring at the Old Town Hot Springs has a storied past dating back centuries. Yampatika Ute camped and soaked at the spring. Steamboat Springs' first settlers also regularly bathed in the spring. As the town grew, Heart Spring became its focal point. A stone bathhouse with indoor and outdoor pools was built in 1909, replacing James Crawford's original log structure. Since that time additional architectural changes have been made, but Heart Spring's 102 degree water still supplies the baths and swimming pools. The unique effervescence of the water, consisting of natural bicarbonates, lithium and minerals, provides bathers with a stimulating and rejuvenating experience.