Edward Wishart, Maura Wishart: Field guide to the mineral springs of Victoria, Spa Country, Victoria's Mineral Springs

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Knowledge of the mineral springs of Victoria, Australia was first publicized around the time of the gold rushes of 1850s when miners searched the adjoining creek beds and hillsides, although the native people of the Central Highlands of Victoria had long known the existence of these special waters. As word spread, numerous guest houses, hotels and tourist facilities were established to take advantage of the therapeutic properties of the water, and the district became known as “Spa Country”.

The book begins with an overview of the history of mineral springs worldwide from ancient cultures such as the Celtic, Greek, and Roman to the present. There is a tour of similar spas of different countries, and a discussion of the diverse ways to use these resources.

Then the focus shifts to the mineral springs in Australia. A broad account of the country's history is related to these mineralized waters, and their different use over time has left its impact on the development of settlements.

For those less familiar with groundwater properties, a brief summary of general theoretical aspects concerning the formation of springs is provided. Concepts such as permeability or water table are discussed along with a brief description of collection methods. There is also a small

section dedicated to the health effects of the different components of mineral waters, with personal testimonies related to the use of such waters.

Another chapter reviews the use of mineral springs as drinking waters. A wide variety of bottles, containers and closures are shown; how the old bottling plants worked are described; and some of the different companies along with the products they offered are discussed.

The 35 major mineral springs of Spa Country are divided into different regions. The history of the springs, the different uses, and site-specific information are discussed. Travel directions, maps of the area and water chemistry analysis are presented. Interesting comments on the predominant taste of the waters according to their chemical composition are provided.

The book is beautifully illustrated with colorful maps, charts and diagrams. It also includes pictures of historical documents, places, people, bottles and utensils related to mineral waters. These old photos enhance the detailed level of documentation provided by the authors.

Spa Country—Victoria's Mineral Springs is a beautiful book whose reading is both entertaining and enriching, fulfilling the most fundamental mission of any publication.

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