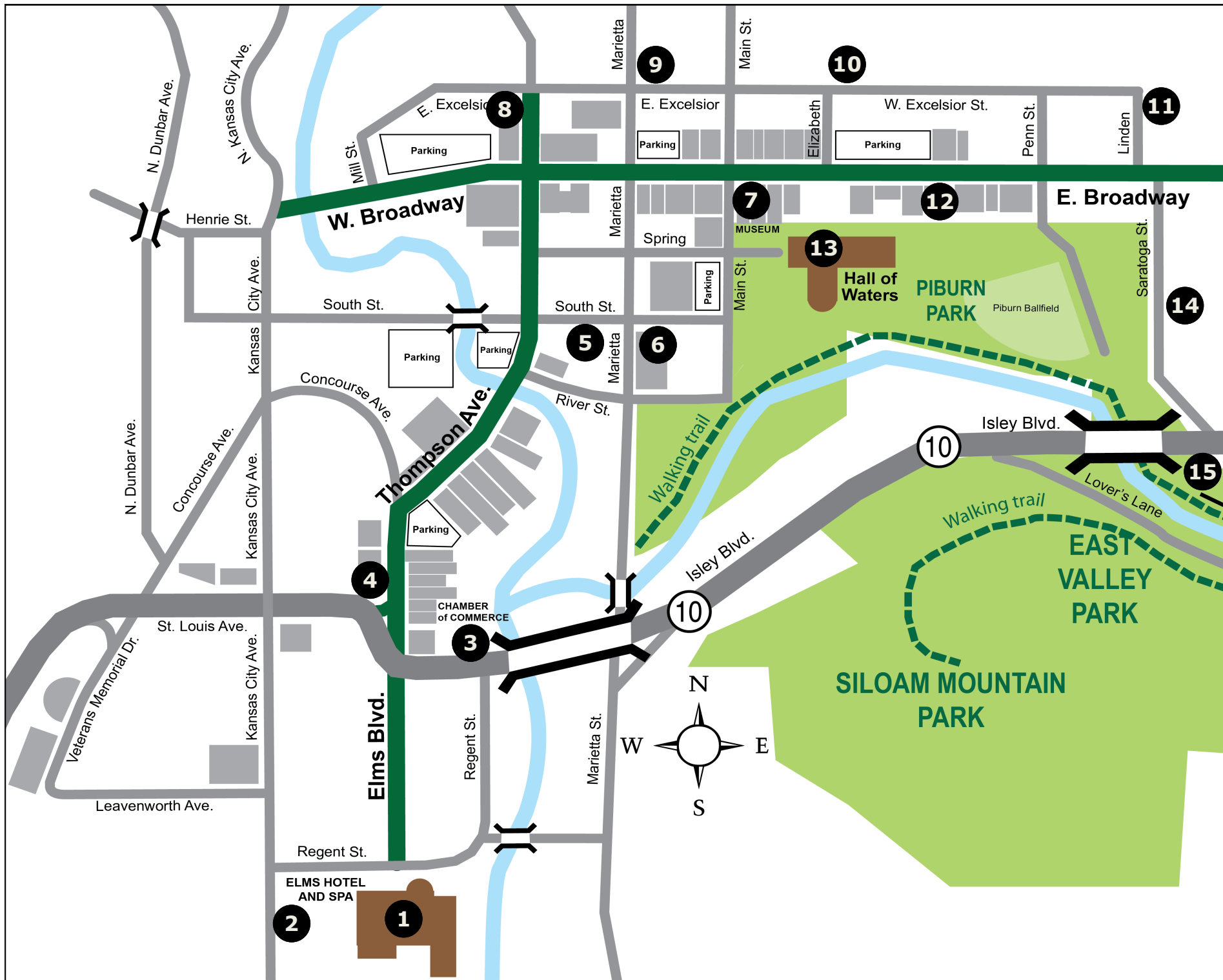
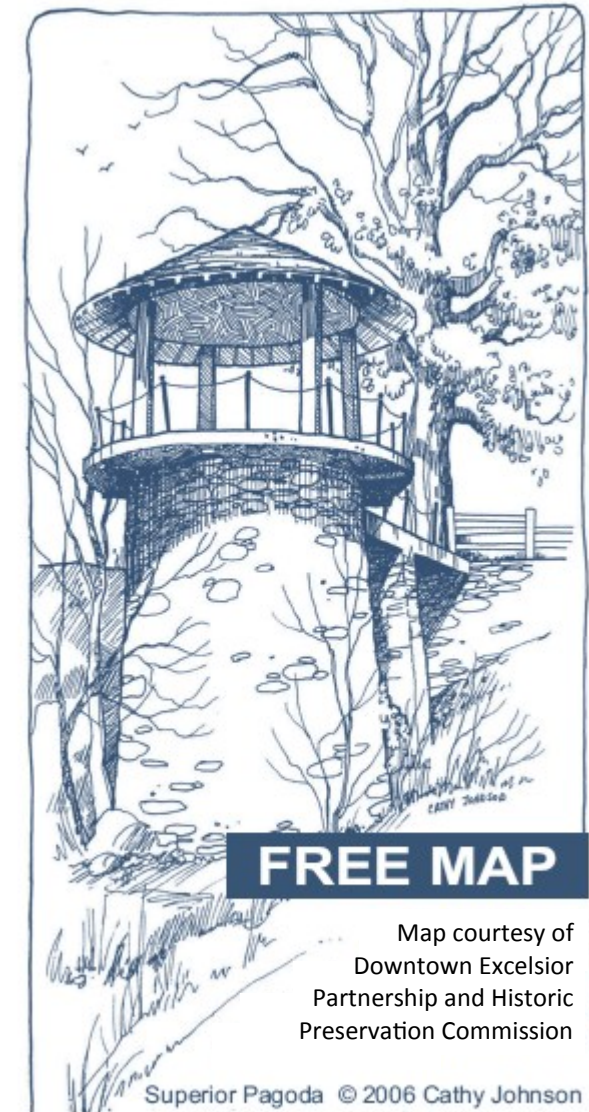


Mineral Water History

Walking Tour of Excelsior Springs



Excelsior Springs was founded in 1880 after settlers discovered the medicinal qualities of Siloam Spring. Eventually at least 40 wells were located within a half mile radius of Siloam. These wells contained four distinct varieties of water, thus giving Excelsior Springs the rightful claim of having the world’s greatest group of mineral waters, including two of only six iron-manganese wells known to exist worldwide. Most of the wells were within the three local historic districts in the downtown area. They are: the Elms Historic District, the Hall of Waters Historic District and the Boarding House Historic District. Funds are being raised through several sources to support a project to identify as many of the original well sites as possible with either a structure, where appropriate, or a plaque. *Collection buckets for donations to this project are located in businesses around town and the Visitor Center. Contributions are greatly appreciated.*

Elms Hotel (1)

The Elms Hotel Resort and Spa, built in 1912 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, appears today very much as it did on the day of its grand opening. At one time offering mineral water baths and with mineral water available for consumption in the lobby, the hotel has been an integral part of the mineral water history of Excelsior Springs. This is the third Elms Hotel building, with the two previous structures having been destroyed by fire in 1898 and 1909 respectively. It was designed by Jackson and McIlvain in the Tudor Revival style. The lobby and grounds are available for touring and the restaurant is open to the public. The Elms is host to many special events throughout the year for the enjoyment of hotel guests and the general public. The desk clerk will have events information.

Salt Sulphur Well (2)

The small brick building in the parking lot on the west side of the hotel was the Elms pump house. Built in 1913, it is the site of the original sulpho-saline well. When the second Elms Hotel burned, permission was given to the owner to sell the water to help recoup the devastating loss. Before that time, the water was free.

White Sulphur Well (3)

The site of this well is 505 Elms Blvd. It is adjacent to Highway 10. The water from this well was piped into the Hall of Waters for use in the swimming pool. There is

presently a concrete slab marking this well site. There are plans to build a reproduction of the pagoda that originally housed this well.

McCleary Thronton-Minor Hospital (4)

The brick structure located at 402 St. Louis Ave. is the last remaining portion of the McCleary Clinic that was founded by Dr. A. S. McCleary. The largest portion of the hospital once stood on the ground that is now the site of the Colony Plaza Apartments. The formal opening of the clinic was June 1925. Mineral water was given to patients as an important part of treatment. The famous painting “Our Flag” by Fred Tripp was painted of a view across the street from a patient room in the hospital. The flag was at rest on a pole in front of the old post office building when it inspired the artist to capture the image. Prints of this world famous painting are available for purchase at the Excelsior Springs Museum and Archives.

Royal Hotel (5)

The oldest of the three major hotels, with construction beginning in 1898, the Royal now stands vacant and in need of restoration. It began life as Wholf’s Tavern and was later known as Snapp’s Tavern until 1905. By 1910, with a six story addition to the west, it had doubled in size. The Royal featured its own mineral water known as Royal Salt Sulphur and housed both men’s and women’s bath departments. It is the only major hotel with no history of fire.

Oaks Hotel (6)

The present Oaks Hotel structure is the second building to have been constructed on the site. The first hotel, known as the Snapp, opened in June, 1907. It was destroyed by fire on January 7, 1912. The second Snapp Hotel opened May 15, 1913 and is the building that remains today. After a few years, the name was changed to the Oaks Hotel, but the letter “S” is prominent in the ornate embellishments that top the building. The hotel was designed by Frank J. Jackson. Among other amenities, it featured spacious men’s and women’s mineral water bath departments on the lower floor. After suffering from fire, vacancy and years of neglect, the Oaks was given a new life when it was totally restored and opened as senior housing in 2008. Residents host several events at the Oaks Apartments throughout the year for public attendance. The lobby of

the former hotel has been restored to its original elegance and is open for viewing.

Excelsior Springs Museum and Archives (7)

In 1905, Dr. William Woods contracted the renowned architect, Louis S. Curtiss to design the building that now houses the Excelsior Springs Museum and Archives. It opened February 28, 1906 as the Clay County Bank. The building was expanded in 1920 and at that time the two large paintings on the north and south walls were added. They are copies of “The Gleaners” and “The Angelus”. Today these paintings are considered to be priceless. The museum is open to the public Tuesday thru Saturday and houses a wealth of historic items and memorabilia pertinent to the mineral waters.

Soda Saline Well (8)

Also known as Lithiated Soda Well, this well is located at 302 W. Excelsior Street behind the School District office building. It is marked with a newly constructed pagoda.

Fowler’s Inn and Magnaferro Well (9)

Once located on the lawn, a north addition to the historic Fowler’s Inn was built over the Magnaferro Well. The Inn, one of the oldest buildings in the Hall of Waters Historic District, is being renovated. The inn is now a private residence.

Sulfo Salt Well (10)

Located at 200 E. Excelsior Street in the Hall of Waters Historic District, the Sulfo Salt Saline Well was housed in this old stone gazebo. It was restored as part of the Downtown Villas project. It had been missing a roof for many years.

Excelsior Soda Well and Hiawatha House (11)

The Excelsior Soda Well is marked with a red hand pump on the north side of Hiawatha House, located at 101 Linden between Broadway and Excelsior Streets, in the Boarding House Historic District. The Hiawatha was constructed in 1905-06 and is one of the few examples of Queen Ann architecture remaining in Excelsior Springs. The three story structure, featuring a wrap around porch and original stained glass windows, is on the local Historic Landmarks Register. The home is a private residence.

Lithia #1 Well (12)

Located at 245 E. Broadway in the Hall of Waters Historic District, this well was discovered in 1883 or 1884, making it one of the earliest to be found. The water was also known as calcium bicarbonate. This is one of the 10 wells that were piped into the Hall of Waters. A new pagoda was constructed in 2006 on the well site and it serves as a relaxation spot for visitors.

Hall of Waters (13)

Constructed in 1936 as a W.P.A. project, the Hall of Waters stands as a tribute to the mineral water history of Excelsior Springs. It opened in 1937 as the central location in which to partake of the waters. A variety of water from 10 wells was piped into the building to be used for drinking, bathing, swimming and bottling. Today this wonderful art deco style building houses city government offices, a cultural museum and the Visitor Center. Bottled mineral water, informational brochures and souvenirs are available at the Visitor Center seven days a week. An ambassador is present to answer questions.

Crystal Lithia Well (14)

This well site is located in a residential area at the corner of Saratoga and Benton streets, in the Boarding House Historic District. The Lithia Bottling Company advertised in 1907 that it was the only company on earth to manufacture its soda waters from pure Lithia water using Crystal Lithia’s water. A new pagoda was constructed on this well site in 2009 and serves as a rest area for walkers.

Superior #2 Well (15)

This well pagoda is located in a peaceful location close to Fishing River on the beautiful walking trail in East Valley Park. It has the distinction of being the last remaining original well pagoda and is listed on the local Historic Landmarks Register. An extensive restoration of this structure is planned to begin soon.

More information can be found at VisitESprings.com

