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Hospitality and Exclusion in the Transnational Spa of Saratoga Springs from the Late Nineteenth into the Twentieth Century

Abstract: The spa, understood here as a resort town offering guests a salubrious retreat into an environment simultaneously natural and urbane, operated over much of the nineteenth and into the twentieth as a transnational social space, a heterotopia in which visitors could enjoy a social environment where the rules of society were relaxed and boundaries eased, yet hardly erased. Yet distinctions between groups remained important, while others were excluded entirely. Broad cultural patterns emerged across national boundaries in this period, in Britain, France, German lands or the United States, tempered by local peculiarities of inclusion and exclusion. This paper seeks to explore how hospitality and exclusion were defined and negotiated at Saratoga Springs, New York. Founded around 1800 as an attempt to establish a resort of culture and refinement, Saratoga in its rise to prominence in the nineteenth century sought in some ways to graft class-based European patterns onto a society that saw itself as more open and egalitarian. Instead, in the second half of the nineteenth century it established limits based less in the boundaries of class than in the discourses of race, ethnicity and settler colonialism that endured well into the twentieth. To explore the transnational context, this paper draws comparisons to the German spa of Baden-Baden, a prominent and cosmopolitan destination that, like Saratoga, rose from obscurity to prominence during the same period and served as a site where elites gathered and negotiations of inclusion and exclusion took place outside the English-speaking world. This choice is intentional to highlight the diffuse and truly transnational nature of the culture of spa hospitality in this period.

Keywords: transnational spa, hospitality, heterotopias, Saratoga Springs, Baden-Baden

Over the course of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, inland spas and their seaside counterparts played a significant role as heterotopic spaces, meeting places for encounters between social classes and nationalities where the limits of social boundaries were drawn, tested,

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negotiated, loosened or reinforced, as Lotz-Heumann, Steward and others have shown. While many of these boundaries were rather specific to a given country, work by e.g. Borsay or Ward demonstrate how spa culture was also transnational in nature. Recent scholarship on the spa, likely the result of the boundaries of academic disciplines, tends to focus on either the spa as a transnational European phenomenon² or on North American resorts as part of the process of nation-building, as Mackintosh or Chambers have argued; nevertheless, this transnationality extended across the Atlantic, with a flow of people, ideas and practices that circulated throughout the spa world. These locales, whether Bath, Vichy, Baden-Baden, Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad) or Saratoga Springs, combined local variations with broader patterns recognizable to any spa-goer, be they British, French, German, Austrian, Czech, or from the United States.

Limited in space and scope, the spa can be investigated productively through the lens of hospitality, and not merely because it offered accommodation and services to (mostly paying) guests. Here, one might first think of hospitality as the relationship between host and guest—a social exchange that involves welcoming the outsider. That, of course, is one aspect of the experience. Yet for all their reputation as places where, under more relaxed mores, members of social classes could mingle (while still maintaining decorum), spas were always distant from Derrida's ethics of universal hospitality. Social control remained important, more in accordance with what Derrida understood as the law or politics of hospitality (Germann Molz and Gibson 4–5), adhering to a Kantian concept of hospitality where a guest is “expected to conform to acceptable behaviours with regard to their right to visit” (Lynch et al. 253). This understanding of hospitality, however, when applied to the spa, must be accompanied by the caveat that even such conditional hospitality was extended only to those considered worthy, while others were excluded entirely. To an extent, this judgement over what was deemed ‘acceptable behavior’ can be understood as a reading of cultural capital and habitus, which, according to Bourdieu, “is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification (*principium divisionis*) of these practices” (Bourdieu 166–67). However, as shall be seen, display of such ‘acceptable behaviors’ were hardly enough, and the boundaries around hospitality and exclusion might also be drawn along racial or ethnic lines, where behavior played little to no role. Thus, where inclusion in the relationship of hospitality can certainly “consolidate structures of relations by symbolically affirming them” (Selwyn 19), similarly, exclusion can also affirm or reinforce those structures.

Resorts in the United States, like their counterparts in Europe, had a role in redrawing and affirming evolving social norms over the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, a period of indisputable social change. The transnational spa seems well-suited to address questions of inclusion in and exclusion from hospitality (in essence, who is allowed in and who is left out,

2 See, for example, the excellent work associated with EU HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area)-funded project, *The European Spa as a Transnational Public Space and Social Metaphor* (2019-2022), presented at <https://www.theeuropeanspa.eu>.

on what grounds and terms). To make this wide topic more approachable, a comparative approach has been chosen, focusing on two relatively similar spas—each regarded as a premier resort in its respective country during the nineteenth century. For the United States, the resort of Saratoga Springs has been selected as the focus of discussion. Located in upstate New York, it was frequently referred to as the “Carlsbad of America” and enjoyed a premier position as a prominent locale for society not just from New York, but from much of the country and even abroad. It serves as a valuable case through which to investigate questions of inclusion and exclusion in the United States. In an attempt to discern which elements and practices might be distinctively American and not simply a local variation of a transnational phenomenon, comparisons will be drawn with the German spa of Baden-Baden. Historically one of what Large calls the ‘Grand Spas of Central Europe’ and, since 2021, one of the eleven UNESCO World Heritage ‘Great Spa Towns of Europe,’ this spa town provides a solid basis for comparison. Selecting an example from outside the English-speaking world highlights the properly transnational nature of spa culture, while also avoiding what might intuitively seem like a more direct connection had the comparison been drawn with a British spa, such as the well-known Bath.

Discussion of the relationships among guests or between hosts and guests can provide valuable insights in more focused studies of spas in a national context; for the purposes of this article, some generalizations are sufficient, as the patterns are broadly similar. One key issue is the creation of a type of spa sociability built upon relative equality. Obviously, the term ‘relative’ is key here—for example, in a German spa like Baden-Baden during this period, as Geisthövel or Fuhs each have argued, it referred to rising middle classes who initially sought to interact with, and in some ways emulate, the upper classes—first tentatively, then more confidently as the century progressed. In a society that thought of itself as more egalitarian, such as the one that the United States aspired to be, as Chambers argues, the boundaries of social class were perhaps less prominent, although hardly invisible. There were complaints as the century progressed that by the last third of the nineteenth century, a certain refinement of old had been lost as the era of railroad-driven mass tourism arrived in Saratoga. These were articulated by none less than Henry James, who lamented in his rather unflattering portrait of Saratoga, first published in *The Nation* in 1870 that “the good old times, [when] it was the chosen resort of none but ‘nice people’” (James 327) had indeed passed. Yet such complaints were hardly unique to Saratoga or the United States; they reflected broader patterns across Europe, where smaller, more exclusive, and generally more refined spa societies gradually gave way—over the course of the nineteenth century—to more socially diverse ones. This transformation was significantly shaped by the expansion of railroads, which made resort travel more accessible to a broader socio-economic spectrum of potential guests, as Walton has demonstrated.

It does not seem out of place to wonder here about Henry James’ remark about “nice people.” While it might be tempting to think that this could be an indication of distress with a new influx of ethnically diverse guests, it is clear from the remainder of James’ essay that what he had in mind here was the general lack of sophistication and refinement, in particular among

the American men (James 330), whom he portrays more like rakish self-made men lacking in the kind of social graces he had found in the British spas of which he was so fond. In a sense, then, James would seem to be bemoaning Saratoga's failure to observe a 'proper' Kantian-type of hospitality, as people exhibiting clearly 'inappropriate' behaviors outside the boundaries of acceptable *habitus* were still welcomed. James seems to have been more distressed by these blurred boundaries of social class than by expressions of ethnic or racial diversity among the guests. Still, he makes two references to Black Americans in his description of Saratoga—specifically, to the presence of 'negro waiters'—in conjunction with terms that reinforce imagery, such as 'lounging' (James 328), 'shuffling,' and 'steamboat-cabin' (James 329) – the latter full of associations with racialized servitude. It is therefore clear that he was not colorblind in his perception of the guests. This does beg the question, though, about the presence of racialized groups within the resort community: were there any Black guests? It is here that the clear distinctiveness of American resorts becomes apparent. This itself is not at all surprising; the contours of inclusion and exclusion, however, are perhaps somewhat less intuitively obvious, and merit a closer look.

Black Americans and other racialized people were important parts of the workforce, both as hotel staff and as independent service providers and owners of small businesses (Salomon Northrop, notably, was a musician in Saratoga), as has been well-documented in studies of American resorts, notably those by Corbett or Armstead. The simplest and most intuitive assumption might be that the guests were, on the whole, white. Yet this was not entirely the case, and the composition of the resort's clientele underwent a process of change beginning in the last third of the nineteenth century. This can be seen as part of the process of racial formation, whereby "[c]oncepts and ideologies of race have shifted over historical time and differ according to the sociohistorical conditions in which race is embedded" (Omi and Winant 13).

As Armstead has shown in her study of Black Americans in Saratoga Springs and Newport, in the antebellum period, racial segregation did not figure prominently in northern resorts. Wealthy northern Black Americans could be found alongside white middle- and upper-class patrons at exclusive resorts, such as prominent Detroit families vacationing on the (still today) quite exclusive Bois Blanc Island, or that "[i]n addition to white patrons, Saratoga Springs, Newport, and Cape May, New Jersey, all drew a black clientele as well" (Armstead 18). This is not to suggest that racial discrimination or animus were absent, far from it, but that the rules of Kantian hospitality applied in some measure to non-white guests. Hospitality could be extended to those with the appropriate cultural capital and the financial means to support a stay.

The turning point came, not surprisingly perhaps, in 1877, the year most often associated with the end of Reconstruction in the South and the opening of the doors to the Jim Crow system of segregation. Yet the effects of this atmosphere that was then more permissive of explicit racism (in spite of the Fourteenth Amendment promising equal protection under the law) were not limited to the South, nor to Black Americans alone. In Saratoga, 1877 is most significant for what was known as the Seligman Affair, which opened the gates to the explicit exclusion

of guests based on their race or ethnicity, regardless of means, cultural habitus or displays of Kantian ‘acceptable behavior.’ More at issue here was the question of racial formation in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Jacobson argues, “it was not altogether clear just where that line ultimately would be drawn” (7) around the boundaries of whiteness, and thus inclusion, as well.

The story of the Seligman Affair, while fairly well-known, bears a brief retelling here. In June 1877, due to a problem with the riverboat he was travelling on with his family, Joseph Seligman needed to make an unplanned stop in Saratoga Springs. Seligman was, in no sense of the word, an ordinary traveler. A prominent financier, he had served as an adviser to several presidential administrations and played a key role in restructuring the Union debt from the Civil War. The details of what specifically transpired on June 14 of that year at the Grand Union Hotel remain somewhat disputed in the literature, but what is clear is that Seligman and his family were denied accommodation at the hotel, and the key factor was the fact that he was Jewish.

According to the report in *The New York Times*, the hotel manager made it quite clear that he was under specific instructions from the new owner of the hotel, Judge Henry Hilton (of no relation to the contemporary hotel chain), to henceforth deny accommodation to Jewish guests, as it was believed that their presence drove away gentile guests, and that was responsible for the recent decline in the popularity of the hotel (“Sensation at Saratoga” 1). That, in fact, was new. Overt discrimination against Jewish guests had not been apparent prior to the Civil War, leading one Southern guest to complain how “half of these people [in Saratoga] are Jews and the other half are snobs” (qtd. in Chambers 219). Hotels in Saratoga generally tended to cater to particular social classes, and for Seligman and many other prominent Jewish guests, the Grand Union Hotel had been appealing precisely because it was not dominated by the established “old money” of the Northeast, but rather was open and welcoming to a breadth of guests with the means to pay for accommodation. Seligman and his family had, in fact, stayed in that very hotel for ten years prior to the incident, meaning they clearly possessed not just the necessary financial but also cultural capital to make them eligible to be welcomed in the spirit of Kantian hospitality. This fact did not escape *The New York Times*, where the second line of the headline read, “New rules of the Grand Union Hotel. No Jews to be admitted. Mr. Seligman the banker and his family turned away” (“Sensation at Saratoga” 1).

A scandal ensued, and until today, there are different interpretations of the actual causes of the incident. To be sure, the backstory was complicated, and there were personal rivalries between Hilton and Seligman. Out of this complex story, some conclude that while antisemitism may have played a role in the incident, it fit more broadly into “a larger battle between old and new money for social control in 1870s America” (Chambers 220). In essence, it was a battle for primacy between the rising new middle classes and the established ‘aristocracy,’ which was not unlike what could be observed in European spas. That certainly was part of the story, and Hilton himself suggested that to be the case in his statement to *The New York Times* on the incident (“Sensation at Saratoga” 1), where he drew a distinction between “Hebrews,” whom he deemed

acceptable, and “Jews,” who were slated for exclusion. In his choice of terms, however, Hilton—and those who followed his reasoning—were assigning different values to these two terms than American Jewish circles did in the nineteenth century. In that usage, “Jew” often connoted an antisemitic caricature of an unworldly European immigrant, while ‘Hebrew’ indicated someone more sophisticated and socially suitable within American society” (Eleff). By this understanding, Seligman would have qualified in the socially acceptable category of ‘Hebrew’, as he had for ten years prior to the incident. Hilton, and subsequent advocates of Jewish exclusion, reduced the definition of ‘acceptable Hebrews’ to families whose ancestry in America traced back to the early colonial period—in effect, “the Jewish equivalent to the Lowells and Cabots, families of noble Puritan stock” (Eleff). All later arrivals into the category of ‘Jews’ were, in his view, those who could—and should—be excluded. In a real sense, Hilton was appropriating for himself, a gentile Anglo-American, the right to decide who a ‘real’ Hebrew or Jew was.

One must wonder to what extent what James had heard in Saratoga in 1870 about the loss of ‘the good old times’ referred not only to nouveau riche Anglo businessmen, but also specifically Jewish ones, regardless of social class or behavior, and whether there was some truth to what hotel manager was reported to have said to Seligman regarding the sentiments of gentile guests. Such questions become less abstract when considered in light of what followed in the years and decades following the Seligman Affair. While there were rather vociferous protests and vehement denunciation of the overt discrimination practiced at the Grand Union Hotel by some, Hilton himself rather accurately predicted what would ensue: his act opened the door to overt discrimination and exclusion of Jewish guests at a much wider range of establishments, so that soon many, if not most “resorts had strict anti-Jewish policies, either explicitly or implicitly enforced” (O’Donovan 271).

This became apparent in the growing struggle against the rise of segregation. It seems important to emphasize here something that should be obvious, namely that the rise of segregation after 1877 in the United States was not a phenomenon limited to the South, but forms of it were practiced in the North and West as well. One area in which Black and Jewish activists grew to become allies was in the fight against exclusion from accommodations in New York, as both were affected by the increasing segregation and exclusion in the state and the region. Outright exclusion of both groups became commonplace by the end of the century, and there were efforts to pass effective legislation that would ban such practices in 1895 against Blacks and in 1913 against Jews (Friss 72). These had become so widespread and overt that in 1907, president of the American Jewish Committee Louis Marshall wrote to New York State Assemblyman Sherman Moreland about widespread advertising practices for resort hotels that boasted of how, as he summarized them, “Hebrew patronage is not solicited or catered to; that Jews are not desired; that there are no Jews, dogs or consumptives” or, most infamously perhaps, how there were “no mosquitos, no malaria, no Jews” (qtd. in Gurock 116).

While civil rights legislation protecting Jewish people did pass in 1913 and was celebrated for a time by optimists as a success, others remained pessimistic about the prospects for

improvement. Both it and the 1895 Civil Rights Act in support of Black Americans fell short of expectations and were circumvented by lawyers refusing to accept civil rights cases, courts that tended to interpret the law quite narrowly, or sometimes simply by proprietors using evasive language—today known as dog whistles—to comply with a narrow interpretation of the law that could stand up in court. The noxious and overt phrases Marshall had described were replaced by “phrases like ‘Gentiles only’ or code words such as ‘Churches nearby,’” so that “the message that Jews were not welcome remained crystal clear” (Friss 90). Similar practices excluded Black Americans. In Saratoga by the early twentieth century, “African-Americans were not welcome in the spa’s hotels, except as employees,” and other facilities remained largely segregated, owing to how, as a 1916 park commission report stated, “many patrons strenuously object[ed]” to integrated facilities (qtd. in Armstead 113). On October 16, 1942, bar owner Edward Sweeney wrote to the organizer of the Yaddo artistic retreat—a letter now preserved in the New York Public Library, though the original is only accessible in person—stating that he would only admit poet Langston Hughes to his bar if Hughes were accompanied by another person, presumably white, from Yaddo (qtd. in Dobrzynski 1). A review of the New York Public Library’s online digital collections reveals that the well-known Green Book contained entries for establishments in Saratoga Springs that welcomed Black patrons from 1937 until its final edition in 1966. While the southern states practiced *de jure* segregation, this is an illustration of how, in northern states, even the existence of appropriate legislation prohibiting discrimination, much like the Fourteenth Amendment itself, was often not sufficient to prevent *de facto* segregation in apparent compliance with the law.

Both the Jewish and the Black communities responded to this discrimination in a similar manner. While civil rights advocacy continued unabated, another response was to simply establish resorts of their own. Consequently, by the turn of the century, predominantly Black resorts such as Idlewild, Michigan, Manhattan Beach in Florida, or Highland Beach in the Chesapeake, developed in part by the family of Frederick Douglass, “emerged as the most trouble-free vacation option for African-Americans” (Armstead 18). Similarly, a variety of Jewish resorts arose as well, ranging from small farmhouses and clusters of bungalows to elaborate resorts, most notably in what became known as the ‘Borscht Belt’ in the Catskill Mountains of New York. Here, within relatively easy travelling distance from the city, Jews were able to “form their own communities where they did not have to feel the sting of Anti-Semitism or anti-immigrant sentiments” (O’Donovan 277). While not giving up the struggle against discrimination, the immediately most effective way to escape widespread hostility and exclusion was to establish their own communities.

It is at this point that a transnational perspective can be brought to bear in order to understand what might be considered ‘particularly American’ within spa culture. When discussing discrimination against racialized others, and in particular against Jewish people, the comparison with the context of Germany might be illuminating (and, potentially, somewhat surprising).

Before entering into that comparison, however, it must be stated at the outset that one cannot— and indeed must not—ever understate or relativize the horrific and genocidal effects

of German antisemitism. Yet, at the same time, the outright evil of the Holocaust should also not be a reason to understate the dangers of forms of antisemitism elsewhere. Richard Frankel cautions in particular about underestimating the virulence and danger of the phenomenon in the United States, arguing after a detailed comparison that “the notion of some kind of exceptionalism in the history of American antisemitism in the first half of the twentieth century no longer holds – that the cases of Germany and the United States are, in fact, comparable” (Frankel 258). The United States, he argues, was not somehow uniquely protected by its liberal tradition, and the degree and character of antisemitism in the two countries prior to the 1930s were similar, with shared ideas and rhetoric. It was, he argues, in the United States that fears of a “Jewish flood” helped usher in immigration restrictions in the 1920s, and that it was there that “everyday social discrimination against Jews achieved a breadth and intensity not seen in Germany until the height of the Third Reich” (Frankel 258)—not to mention its less than ‘liberal’ history of other forms of xenophobia and racialized violence against its own Black and Indigenous peoples. The United States, he concludes, was not exceptional; given different circumstances (the notion of ‘one crisis behind’ in the title of his essay), “a right-wing antisemitic movement gaining power in America and carrying out some kind of violent anti-Jewish campaign” (Frankel 235) was hardly impossible.

It is obviously far beyond the scope of this article to evaluate Frankel’s speculative conclusions. It is possible, however, to follow up on his statement regarding the comparability of everyday antisemitic practices in the spa. These findings might be somewhat surprising. German historian of the Nazi period Frank Bajohr, in his monograph on German spa antisemitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, found that in the large urbane spas like Baden-Baden and others, resorts comparable in prestige and popularity to Saratoga Springs in the United States, there was, in essence, no systematic exclusion of Jewish guests prior to 1933 (after which, obviously, this rapidly began to change with the arrival of the Nazi regime). Isolated hotels in these spas may have used dog whistles to signal that Jewish guests were not welcome, but these were rather the exception than the rule. The grand spas like Baden-Baden were, in fact, so hospitable to Jewish guests that some smaller resorts, either through conviction or detecting a potential market, came to specialize in an antisemitic, nationalistic clientele and made it explicitly clear that Jewish guests were not welcome at all. Yet the number of such resorts was stable at around some twenty in the 1920s, and despite an increase in the number of establishments that did not accommodate Jews, especially in smaller resorts, the percentage of resort hotels that did so remained low, almost certainly in the single digits (Bajohr 60). By comparison, statistics compiled by the Anti-Defamation League in 1956/57—more than a decade after the end of the Second World War—show that in the Northeast (excluding New York, where the Borscht Belt was thriving), as many as 56% of hotels still excluded Jewish guests, a figure Bajohr suggests is up to fifteen times higher than those that had such prohibitions in Germany prior to 1933 (162–63).

The rather surprising conclusion is that in the United States, discrimination and exclusion were so prevalent that Black and Jewish people found it easiest to establish their own resorts,

a *de facto* segregation regime, sometimes in spite of a law banning such practices. In Germany, prior to the Nazis coming to power in 1933, it seems it was the antisemites who had to move to their own ‘dedicated’ resorts to avoid having to share spaces with people they hated.

So far, the comparison of Saratoga Springs and Baden-Baden has not yielded anything on a larger scale that could not be regarded as distinctively American, and even in its discrimination against racialized others, it was not unique but instead fit into a spectrum in which American resorts can be compared, not necessarily favorably, with spas in other countries. To find something that might be more distinctively characteristic of North American spas, it might be fruitful to examine the role of Indigenous Americans in Saratoga.

Saratoga Springs, like many other resorts in the United States, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, had its own origin story, which can be widely found, but began appearing in print no later than in William Leete Stone’s 1875 *Reminiscences of Saratoga and Ballston*. In the opening pages of this collection of local lore and sketches from “ye Olden Time,” Stone tells of how in 1767, during the French and Indian War, or the North American theater of the Seven Years’ War, Sir William Johnson, a general in British service, was the “first white man” to visit Saratoga Springs (6). Of course, this was not just a visit, but he was in need of healing after suffering a leg wound, and, most importantly, the local Indigenous people chose to share it with him. The phrasing of Stone’s telling of the story should be quoted at greater length. He wrote:

[T]he Mohawks determined, in solemn council, to reveal to their beloved brother, War-ra-ghi-ya-ghy, the particular medicinal properties of the ‘High Rock Spring.’ Nor, perhaps, could there have been any stronger proof of the affection in which he was held by these sons of the forest, than their resolution to give their brother the benefits of that which they had always sacredly guarded as the precious gift to themselves alone from the Great Spirit. (Stone 7)

Later in his reminiscences, Stone tells further stories of how, for example, George Washington visited, how the nearby battleground became a pilgrimage site, the escape of a captive white woman to Saratoga, and other tales leading up to the founding and settlement of the town. The overall course of the progression of the stories is constructed to support the presence of white settlers and their ownership as legitimate, gifted to them (after “solemn council”) with an air of divine providence by the Mohawk people, who conveniently vanish from the story shortly thereafter.

Although Stone’s story of the ‘origins’ of Saratoga might be among the best known, it was hardly an isolated case. In a strategy employed by many spa towns across the United States, imagined origin stories served to create a new identity, separating the colonial settlers from their British origins and replacing it with a ‘transfer’ that made them properly and legitimately “American” (Mackintosh 424–25). The disappearance of the original Indigenous owners was no coincidence; rather, it appears to have been part of what Jean O’Brien (White Earth Ojibwe) has termed “firsting and lasting” in her study of local histories and the erasure of Indigenous peoples in New England. This process entailed creating a narrative of “non-Indian modernity and Indian

extinction” that took shape in communities across the region (O’Brien xiv). Once removed from the historical record and imagined out of existence—despite continuing to be a living presence in the area—Indigenous peoples could then be idealized and instrumentalized in written accounts. For example, an article on the “Sulphur Springs of New York,” published in Harper’s Magazine in 1856, indulged in readings of legends of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) people, whom the author characterized as “the Romans of the Western World” (qtd. in Mackintosh 435). The evocation of Romans both lent a certain gravity to this heritage, even to American republicanism as its heir, and at the same time, it also emphasized that, like the Romans, it belonged to the remote past, a civilization and people that no longer existed.

These represent clear attempts to claim uniquely and distinctively American identity for the resort towns and, by extension, its patrons. This would seem an unlikely area where a transnational approach would bear much fruit other than to confirm the distinctiveness of American spa culture. While the erasure of Indigenous peoples is clearly rooted in the discourses of settler colonialism, the deployment of origin stories reaching into the distant mists of time to lend a spa and its claims to the salubrious power of its waters (Corbett 172) is indeed part of a transnational pattern. Baden-Baden, for example, by the early nineteenth century, tried to make currency of its origin as a Roman town, *Aquae Aureliae*, ‘rediscovering’ the ruins, building new neoclassical facilities, and trying to spin a rather dubious story about the waters being in continuous use, following in a path pioneered by Bath and others in the eighteenth century. Others reached for local legends passed on in the oral tradition, for example, of how the stallion of a king stumbled, opening up the spring with his hoof. Such stories and legends are widespread, but alas, have not (yet) been systematically studied.

That Saratoga and other spa towns reached into the Indigenous past to construct stories supporting their own identities was part of a broader trend in which such towns crafted narratives of ancient origins as a marketing strategy. At the same time, it also represented a distinctly American form of settler-colonial appropriation. Yet beyond questions of appropriation and identity, there is one clear, obvious, and yet, in a way, invisible distinction: there were no Romans in Baden-Baden in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Saratoga Springs, however, throughout much of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, there was an area known as the Indian encampments on the margins of the resort, something often forgotten today.

These were areas set aside from the main resort areas of Saratoga Springs from ca. 1840–1900, where local Indigenous people were permitted to sell their art and handicrafts to visitors. While an important part of the tourist economy, popular with visitors, they also had their virtues from the perspective of the settler town: “the encampments required no buildings, the workers needed neither a wage nor housing, and thus the attractions were inexpensive to produce” (Corbett 178), although there was sometimes some doubt among visitors as to their authenticity. This sentiment has even made its way into twenty-first-century historical scholarship, where one can read it is “doubtful that more than a handful of nineteenth-century Mohawks were in any sense pure-blooded [*sic*]” (Corbett 179).

Indigenous archaeologist and repatriation specialist Margaret Bruchac (Abenaki), whose great-grandparents sold wares at the encampment (M. M. Bruchac 68), brings a different perspective to the story. It was not that the Abenaki and others participating in the encampments were not genuine, but they seemed inauthentic to visitors owing to their preconceived notions about Indigenous people. One example is a visitor who “described the Native artisans as ‘picturesque’ ... and mistakenly identified the Native people as a ‘gypsy band, part Canadian, part Indian’” (qtd. in (Margaret M. Bruchac 29). Others simply had difficulty recognizing the local Indigenous people as “Indians,” as they did not conform to their preconceived expectations. Yet the Indigenous artisans showed considerable resourcefulness and ability to adapt to their clientele. Many dressed in costumes that appeared “real” to non-Indigenous visitors, with a blend of eighteenth-century style clothing combined with Native elements at mid-century, later adopting the stereotypically stylized Western Plains costuming popularized by Buffalo Bill’s Wild West shows (an image that remains prevalent to this day). The artwork itself, crafted with great care and pride by Indigenous people, also followed the shifting fashions of the Victorian era (Bruchac, “Native Artisans” 29). For visitors, what was more important here, however, was not the actual encounter with living, working Abenaki, Mohawk or other Indigenous people who had lived in the area for centuries, but the “fantasy images and antiquated tropes” (Bruchac, “Indigenous Journeys” 68) that they had in mind of what a “real” Indian should look like, images that remain persistent, not just in American culture.

While broad conclusions cannot be drawn from such a short examination as this, a few patterns do emerge from examining hospitality in Saratoga Springs in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century within a comparative context with the German spa of Baden-Baden. While it certainly could have been concluded nearly a priori that the approach to hospitality would follow a more Kantian model, and that norms of social class—expressed through cultural habitus and enacted as expectations for behavior in order to receive hospitality—would be operative, this was clearly not the case in an absolute sense. In Saratoga, the social structures reinforced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through exclusion were less class-based, less of an entrenched upper class seeking to defend its territory against incursion from the rising middle classes, but rather a more class-diverse resort society seeking to exclude racialized others. This in itself is not particularly insightful and hardly would have needed any investigation to verify. More interesting are the contours of exclusion that emerge in a comparative context, which can be fairly regarded as more distinctively American. Particularly characteristic is the manner in which members of dominant groups in society assumed the power to define those they excluded. Henry Hilton granting himself the power to discern Jewish identity, in direct contradiction to the way Jewish people in the United States defined themselves at the time, bears a striking resemblance to the visitors to the so-called Indian encampments who felt that they could be the arbiters of what constituted ‘real Indians.’ They did so despite standing face-to-face with people who understood themselves as very real and very much part of the present, indeed, but who did not conform to their imaginations.

Resorts in the United States were certainly not alone in excluding members of their own society who the dominant groups regarded as racialized others; Germany clearly did so as well, as part of a path leading to uniquely horrific consequences. Yet exclusion from American spas—even in New York State, often considered a ‘more enlightened’ part of the country—was more pervasive than in Germany, at least through the 1920s, and these patterns continued in the United States for decades thereafter. Perhaps this can only serve to emphasize Frankel’s admonition about the dangers of an approach to exceptionalist thought that would understate and trivialize the potential harm of such currents in the United States that continue into the present day.

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