

The History of Peoria Mineral Springs

Ancient Origins

The waters of Peoria Mineral Springs trace their journey back more than **14,500 years**, to the end of the last Ice Age. As glaciers retreated across the Midwest, they carved the land and left behind aquifers of ancient limestone. Over thousands of years, rain and snowmelt filtered deep underground through these stone layers, slowly gathering minerals before rising naturally to the surface at what is now the historic West Bluff of Peoria. Unlike modern wells, the spring has always flowed freely, gravity fed and untouched by pumps.

Early Indigenous Use

For countless generations before European settlement, Indigenous Peoples held springs like this one as sacred places of renewal. Across many Native traditions, mineral waters were believed to heal, cleanse, and connect the physical and spiritual worlds. Archaeological evidence from the Illinois River Valley supports the long-standing use of such natural water sources for ceremony, health, and community gathering.

Founding Years (1818 to 1847)

1818 The same year Illinois became the 21st state, Augustus O. Garrett received a federal land patent for property that included the spring, signed by President James Monroe.

1840 Garrett deeded the land to Captain **William S. Moss**, a successful riverboat captain and entrepreneur.

1843 Moss built the brick home that still stands today, overlooking the spring.

1847 His sister, **Lydia Moss Bradley**, purchased the property from him. Lydia later became one of Peoria's most influential figures and the founder of Bradley University. She piped water from the spring directly to her home, making this one of the few physical resources tied to her daily life.

Peoria's First Public Water System (1834)

Even before Lydia's purchase, the spring was already vital to the community. In **1834**, a brick reservoir was constructed at the site, one of Peoria's earliest waterworks, to help supply the growing town. Though later systems expanded, this reservoir remains a lasting feature of the city's earliest infrastructure.

The Bottling Era (1892 to 1930s)

By the late 19th century, Peoria was booming as the "**Whiskey Capital of the World.**" Against that backdrop, **Preston Clark** purchased the property in **1892**, secured rights to the name *Peoria Mineral Springs*, and launched a successful bottled water business. Spring wagons, drawn by horses, delivered glass bottles of mineral water to homes and businesses across the city. The site's reputation for purity and health offered a unique counterpoint to Peoria's distilling fame.

Local Access and Community Use (20th Century)

Throughout the 20th century, the spring remained a well-known local landmark. Even as municipal water systems expanded, families continued to collect water here, bringing glass jugs to fill directly at the source. In the **1980s**, the tradition carried on with an honor system. Residents dropped coins in a box and filled their jugs from the spring's flow, a practice fondly remembered by many in Peoria.

Modern Revival (2010 to Present)

In **2010**, the historic home and spring were purchased by **Tobias T. Traynor**, son of Charles Traynor Jr., continuing a tradition of family stewardship. Tobias undertook restoration work to preserve the spring's integrity and resumed bottling water on site.

Today, Peoria Mineral Springs is licensed as an Illinois Bottled Water Plant (License No. 11591, Facility No. 11554). The water remains:

- **Naturally mineral rich** with over 900 ppm of total dissolved solids
- **High in calcium (160 mg/L) and magnesium (64 mg/L)**, giving it health value and a distinctive taste
- **Lightly carbon filtered and UV sterilized** for safety, while remaining gravity fed and unpumped
- **Bottled on site**, just as it has been for more than a century

A Living Legacy

Beyond water, the site has become a place of quiet beauty. Down the hill from the spring, a hand-tended lavender field now blooms each spring and summer. Like the water itself, it is grown simply and sustainably, a reminder that this land continues to give back in ways both practical and beautiful.

Peoria Mineral Springs today stands as one of America's rare historic mineral springs, still flowing, still bottled at the source, and still connecting people to a tradition of purity, healing, and place that stretches back thousands of years.

Verified Mineral Content (mg/L)

Mineral	Peoria Mineral Springs	Typical Bottled Water*
Calcium	160	20–60
Magnesium	64	5–20
Sodium	130	5–50
Potassium	1.0	<5
Bicarbonate	650	50–300
Chloride	220†	10–100
Iron	0.015	<0.1
TDS	~930	100–500
pH	7.3	6.5–8.5

*Typical values from commercially bottled spring or filtered waters

†Well within EPA secondary taste standards (250 mg/L) and part of the crisp, mineral-forward flavor profile found in historic mineral waters.

With over 900 parts per million of naturally dissolved minerals, our water is rare even among premium brands. Its taste reflects the same character enjoyed for generations.