

Glossary of Terms Used in Descriptions of 19th Century Spas, Springs, and Resorts of North America

Note: Unless indicated otherwise, the following definitions were obtained from *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, originally published in the early 1900s and now available online via the Project Gutenberg Website (<http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/>).

acidulous: Slightly sour.

alkali: "One of a class of caustic bases, such as soda, potash...and lithia, whose distinguishing peculiarities are solubility in alcohol and water, uniting with oils and fats to form soap, neutralizing and forming salts with acids, turning to brown several vegetable yellows, and changing reddened litmus to blue."

alum: "A double sulphate formed of aluminum and some other element (esp. an alkali metal) or of aluminum."

alterative: "A medicine or treatment which gradually induces a change, and restores healthy functions without sensible evacuations."

antacid: "A remedy for acidity of the stomach, as an alkali or absorbent."

aperient: A laxative.

bath/bathing house: "A building containing an apartment or a series of apartments arranged for bathing."

bicarbonate: "A carbonate in which but half the hydrogen of the acid is replaced by a positive element or radical, thus making the proportion of the acid to the positive or basic portion twice what it is in the normal carbonates."

biliary system: "Relating or belonging to bile (i.e., "A yellow, or greenish, viscid fluid, usually alkaline in reaction, secreted by the liver. It passes into the intestines, where it aids in the digestive process)."

bracing: Invigorating

bridle road: (1) "A path or way for saddle horses and pack horses." (2) "A road in a pleasure park reserved for horseback exercise."

Bromide: "A compound of bromine with a positive radical."

carbonate: "A salt or carbonic acid, as in limestone, some forms of lead ore, etc."

carbonic acid: "Carbonic acid (Chem.), an acid H₂CO₃, not existing separately, which, combined with positive or basic atoms or radicals, forms carbonates."

cathartic: (1) "Cleansing the bowels; promoting evacuations by stool; purgative." (2) "A medicine that promotes alvine discharges; a purge; a purgative of moderate activity."

chalybeate: Containing iron.

chloride: "A binary compound of chlorine with another element or radical; as, chloride of sodium (common salt)."

chloridic: "Of or pertaining to a chloride; containing a chloride."

commodious: "Adapted to its use or purpose, or to wants and necessities; serviceable; spacious and convenient; roomy and comfortable."

consumption: "A progressive wasting away of the body; esp., that form of wasting, attendant upon pulmonary phthisis and associated with cough, spitting of blood, hectic fever, etc."

cutaneous affections/eruptions: "Of pertaining to the skin; existing on, or affecting, the skin."

debility: "The state of being weak; weakness; feebleness; languor."

deobstruent: (1) "Removing obstructions; having power to clear or open the natural ducts of the fluids and secretions of the body; aperient." (2) "A medicine which removes obstructions."

diaphoretic: (1) "Having the power to increase perspiration." (2) "A medicine or agent which promotes perspiration."

diuretic: (1) "Tending to increase the secretion and discharge of urine." (2) "A medicine with diuretic properties."

dysentery: "A disease attended with inflammation and ulceration of the colon and rectum, and characterized by griping pains, constant desire to evacuate the bowels, and the discharge of mucus and blood."

dyspepsia: "A kind of indigestion; a state of the stomach in which its functions are disturbed, without the presence of other diseases, or, if others are present, they are of minor importance. Its symptoms are loss of appetite, nausea, heartburn, acrid or fetid eructations, a sense of weight or fullness in the stomach, etc."

Epsom salts: "Sulphate of magnesia having cathartic qualities; originally prepared by boiling down the mineral waters at Epsom, England, whence the name; afterwards prepared from sea water; but now from certain minerals, as from siliceous hydrate of magnesia."

ferruginous: "Containing particles of iron."

goiter: "An enlargement of the thyroid gland, on the anterior part of the neck."

gout: “A constitutional disease, occurring by paroxysms. It consists in an inflammation of the fibrous and ligamentous parts of the joints, and almost always attacks first the great toe, next the smaller joints, after which, it may attack the greater articulations. It is attended with various sympathetic phenomena, particularly in the digestive organs. It may also attack internal organs, as the stomach, the intestines, etc.”

gravel: “A deposit of small calculous concretions in the kidneys and the urinary or gall bladder; also, the disease of which they are a symptom.”

hydriodate/hydriodide: “A compound of hydriodic acid with a base; distinguished from an iodide, in which only the iodine combines with the base.”

inclined plane: “An inclined portion of track, on which trains or boats are raised or lowered from one level to another.”

iodine: “A nonmetallic element, of the halogen group, occurring always in combination, as in the iodides. When isolated it is in the form of dark gray metallic scales, resembling plumbago, soft but brittle, and emitting a chlorine like odor.”

limpid: “Characterized by clearness or transparency; clear.”

magnesia: (1) “A light earthy white substance, consisting of magnesium oxide, and obtained by heating magnesium hydrate or carbonate, or by burning magnesium. It has a slightly alkaline reaction, and is used in medicine as a mild antacid laxative.” (2) “A bulky white amorphous substance, consisting of a hydrous basic carbonate of magnesium, and used as a mild cathartic.”

market-house: “A place where provisions are sold.”

mineral water: “Waters which are so impregnated with foreign ingredients, such as gaseous, sulphureous, and saline substances, as to give them medicinal properties, or a particular flavor or temperature.”

muriate: “A salt of muriatic hydrochloric acid; a chloride.”

neuralgia: “A disease, the chief symptom of which is a very acute pain, exacerbating or intermitting, which follows the course of a nervous branch, extends to its ramifications, and seems therefore to be seated in the nerve.”

Omnibus: “A long four-wheeled carriage, having seats for many people; especially, one with seats running lengthwise, used in conveying passengers short distances.”

pellucid: “Transparent; clear; limpid; translucent; not opaque.”

piazza: “An arcaded and roofed gallery; a portico.”

public house: An inn.

purgative: (1) “Having the power or quality of purging; cathartic.” (2) “A purging medicine.”

rheumatism: “A general disease characterized by painful, often multiple, local inflammations, usually affecting the joints and muscles, but also extending sometimes to the deeper organs, as the heart.”

rod: “A measure of length containing sixteen and a half feet.”

saline: (1) “Consisting of salt, or containing salt.” (2) “Of the quality of salt; salty.” (3) “A salt spring; a place where salt water is collected in the earth.” (4) “A metallic salt; esp., a salt of potassium, sodium, lithium, or magnesium, used in medicine.”

salubrity: “Favorableness to the preservation of health; wholesomeness; healthfulness.”

scrofula: “A constitutional disease, generally hereditary, especially manifested by chronic enlargement and cheesy degeneration of the lymphatic glands, particularly those of the neck, and marked by a tendency to the development of chronic intractable inflammations of the skin, mucous membrane, bones, joints, and other parts, and by a diminution in the power of resistance to disease or injury and the capacity for recovery. Scrofula is now generally held to be tuberculosis in character, and may develop into general or local tuberculosis (consumption).”

sedentary: (1) “Accustomed to sit much or long.” (2) “Characterized by, or requiring, much sitting.” (3) “Inactive; motionless; sluggish; hence, calm; tranquil.” (4) “Caused by long sitting.”

silex: “Silica, SiO₂ as found in nature, constituting quartz, and most sands and sandstones.”

spa: “A spring or mineral water.”

spring: “Any source of supply; especially, the source from which a stream proceeds; as issue of water from the earth; a natural fountain.”

sulphur: “A nonmetallic element occurring naturally in large quantities, either combined as in the sulphides (as pyrites) and sulphates (as gypsum), or native in volcanic regions, in vast beds mixed with gypsum and various earthy materials, from which it is melted out.”

turbid: “Having the lees or sediment disturbed; roiled; muddy; thick; not clear; used of liquids of any kind.”

watering place: “A place where there are springs of medicinal water, or a place by the sea, or by some large body of water, to which people resort for bathing, recreation, boating, etc.”

valetudinarian: “A person of a weak or sickly constitution; one who is seeking to recover health.”