

Mineral Wells' 'Crazy Hotel'

Mineral Wells was founded in 1880 by a traveler who bought land and dug a water well to relieve the family from having to haul water from the Brazos river four miles away. After drinking the water for some time, word began to spread how the family was recovering from their health problems, including rheumatism. Visitors began flocking to town to try the miracle water.

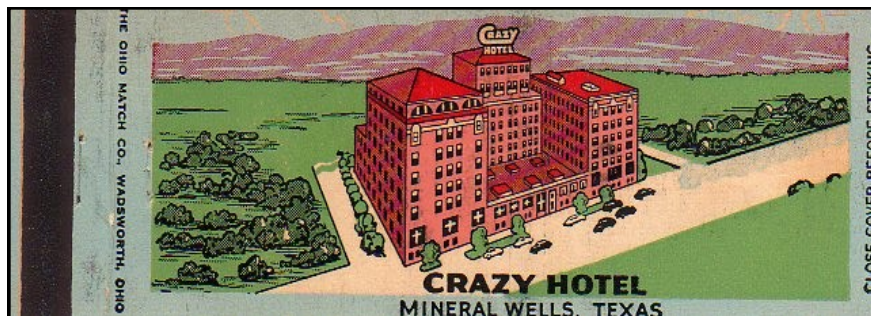
The name "Crazy Water" was coined when a woman who was known to be crazy was apparently cured by the water from the Wiggins well, which is still in operation at the Crazy Water Hotel .

In the early 1900's, a Texas hotel man named J.H. Baker came to town and was impressed that hundreds of people were in town to drink and bathe in the miraculous water now known as "crazy water." Large gazebo-like pavilions had been erected near the two most prominent wells. The pavilions provided a place of relaxation for the throngs. The pavilions were used for games such as dominos, cards and checkers, as well as for dancing to orchestra music.

Having visited on a regular basis and having seen the growth, Baker decided to build a hotel. In the meantime, the federal government had gathered a large portion of land and opened Camp Wolters. The railroad was the draw for both the tourists and the troops.

The thousands of health-seekers and conventioners that traveled to Mineral Wells began to arrive annually, following the completion of the first passenger train in 1891. At its peak, over 5,000 people per day were arriving and departing on the rail line into and out of Mineral Wells. The Collins brothers, owners of the Crazy Water Hotel, bath house, and Crazy Water Crystal Co., were doing \$11 million a year during the late 1920's and the Depression years. The country's wealthiest people, stars of Hollywood fame, had also discovered Crazy Water. So popular was the water, in fact, that the Collins boys evaporated the water and shipped the crystals all over the world where it was sold in grocery stores and pharmacies.

Two luxury hotels were built in Mineral Wells to offer the curative baths to visitors. T.B. Baker built the famed 450 room Baker Hotel at a cost of \$1.2 million in 1929. One of the 14 floors was devoted entirely to mineral baths and massage rooms.



The other famous hotel is the Crazy Water Hotel. The original structure was built in 1912 at the Crazy Water Well. The hotel burned in 1925, but the present Crazy Hotel was opened in 1927. The Crazy Hotel, Crazy Mineral Water, and Crazy Water Crystals were the products that made the city of Mineral Wells famous. Once a grand hotel which saw such stars as Mary Martin and Fibber McGee, the Crazy Water Hotel now serves as an independent living retirement apartment complex. It hosted the "Crazy Gang" radio broadcasts in the 1930's. Its tiled lobby still testifies to its glory days.