

Washington Heritage Trail

The Washington Heritage Trail in West Virginia



The Washington Heritage Trail is a 136-mile national scenic byway inspired by the prominent footsteps of George Washington through the three historic counties of West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. Compelling history, spectacular scenery, geologic wonders, recreation and year 'round activities and festivals are highlighted by 45 historical sites. The trail meanders across mountains and rivers, through forests, farms and orchards as it connects five 18th century towns that remain the center of life today and offer comfortable lodging, unique shopping and fine dining. More information on attractions and services throughout the area is available at each town's Visitor Center.

www.washingtonheritagetrail.com



Courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association

Roman Bathhouse and Museum of the Berkeley Springs

The second floor of the historic Roman Bath House, oldest public building in Berkeley Springs, is the Museum of the Berkeley Springs, with exhibits on the natural and cultural history of the springs and town. There are both permanent and changing exhibits. It was established in 1984 and is open regularly in season. Historically, this space has been used for everything from a Reading Room and doctor's office to the American Legion hall.



On the first floor, there are nine individual bathing chambers with tubs that hold 750 gallons of spring water heated to 102 degrees and open to the public daily, year 'round. The Federal-style brick Roman Bath House was built in 1815 on the site of an earlier bathhouse often attributed to James Rumsey. The original, built in 1784, was described as having five bathing chambers and dressing rooms.



From the 18th century into the 20th, the main entrance by road to the park and springs was along Wilkes Street to the Roman Bath House rather than along Washington Street and today's park "front."

About the Water

The warm mineral waters are available for bathing in two park bathhouses; for drinking from a fountain at the 19th century Gentlemen's Spring House; and from every tap in town since the springs serve as source of the municipal water supply. Berkeley Springs water is also commercially bottled.

The water flows through the Oriskany sandstone of Warm Springs Ridge and out along its base at 74 degrees Fahrenheit. Dominated by sulphates, nitrates and carbonates -- mostly magnesium carbonate -- the water has a fresh, clean taste. Flow varies from 750 to 2000 gallons per minute. Since the 1750s it has been taken internally for digestive disorders and in baths for stress relief.



"I think myself benefitted from the water and am not without hope of their making a cure for me -- a little time will show now."

George Washington to Reverend Charles Green -- August 30, 1761