

# The Salt Lake Tribune

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## Whatever happened to ... Saratoga resort on Utah Lake?

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**Saratoga Springs •** Looking at the modern-day site of the old Saratoga resort on the edge of Utah Lake offers glimpses of a simpler time, when thousands enjoyed swimming in hot-spring pools, twirling on midway rides, boating and dancing.

The old green picnic pavilion, now lovingly restored, graces a park shaded by cottonwood trees, accessible only by members of a homeowners association. The boat launching area and docks, though improved, recall a time when baptisms were held in Utah Lake. The site of the historic pools is now occupied by townhouses and a park.

Wardley Development, which planned what is now the bustling community of Saratoga Springs, pipes the hot springs into two hot tubs fed by a hot man-made waterfall, and into an outdoor pool. Heated by the springs, the pool is open year-round under the gaze of Mount Timpanogos to the east.

The site has been a resort or swimming area of one sort or the other since Mormon miner and farmer John Beck began developing it in 1884. Beck, who was known for his generosity, named the original resort after a New York hot springs area of the same name. Other resorts also dotted the lake.

Peter Staks, who planned the new community, said developers decided to keep the name in the mid-1990s. At that time, a story in The Salt Lake Tribune said



Courtesy | Lehi city

Historic photos of Saratoga resort in Saratoga Springs, Utah.

only 17 people lived in what was then a farming area west of Lehi. There was no town on Utah road maps, but all marked the Saratoga Springs resort with a dot, so it was decided to keep the name for the city, Staks said. It now boasts a population of close to 25,000.

For several generations, Wasatch Front residents trekked on old two-lane roads, via train and even horse-drawn hayrides from Lehi to swim and recreate at Saratoga.

According to historian Richard S. Van Wagoner, a Sept. 14, 1891, advertisement in the Lehi Banner noted that “for 25 cents, one could bathe in two large plunge baths and six hot tub baths” and claimed that “these springs possess wonderful medicinal properties ... for rheumatism and disease of the skin.”

A 1897 story in the Lehi Banner described a tonic developed by Professor A. Sieberg, a graduate of Heidelberg University in Germany, who used Saratoga spring water for an internal medicine called “Saratoga Salvation.” He advertised that it “possesses an actual and unrivaled power to cure many internal and external diseases.”

Another old advertisement, which hangs in the modern Saratoga Springs clubhouse, touted boating, fishing, dining, bathing and a cafe at the site.

According to Van Wagoner, Beck constructed a new 30-by-100-foot indoor plunge and a large bathhouse, as well as a chicken ranch, as the resort began to evolve in 1897.

Developers envisioned a town near the spring as early as 1914, but it would not materialize until 1996, when Wardley and his partners would begin the original Saratoga Springs development on 640 acres.

After several owners and managers of the property, Frank Eastmond, who operated the Geneva resort on the east side of Utah Lake, purchased an interest in Saratoga in 1930.

Water quality and swimming pools were improved, according to Van Wagoner’s research. The property offered baseball, band concerts, dancing, swimming, boating, boxing, wrestling, airplane stunts and picnicking, even during the height of the Great Depression. There were even frog catching contests.

Modern Saratoga Springs was recently under consideration as the site of a new Utah State Prison — just as the site had been in 1938. That summer, the Utah Legislature debated putting a new state prison at Saratoga, Van Wagoner wrote, before it eventually settled on the Point of the Mountain spot where the prison is today. Lehi residents of the time opposed putting the prison at Saratoga.

In 1950, more improvements took place, with a diving pool being built. According to Van Wagoner, the midway was expanded in the summer of 1954 to include two

Ferris wheels, a ride with a plane that rolled, a miniature train, airplane swings and a merry-go-round as well as a large slide for the outdoor pool. At one time, there were 35 rides, a game arcade and a miniature golf course.

Mick Eastmond took over management in 1963. The resort suffered a major setback in 1968, when a \$100,000 fire destroyed the dance pavilion and main building, which housed the indoor pool.

The Eastmonds kept the resort operating, adding a modern two-story water slide in 1978 that was eventually donated to Lehi City and used at its pool. Eastmond also created a giant hot tub in 1983.

Access to the resort was cut off in 1984 by flooding and the rising waters of Utah Lake, though the resort itself wasn't substantially affected since it was built on higher ground.

JoAnn Nicholes of American Fork, now 84, worked for the Eastmonds, collecting money out of a small brick building located right next to the hot springs. She remembers a swing hanging from the rafters of the old indoor pool that she used to get into the pool.

She said the water in one of the pools was so hot it "would just cook you," so she would go into a cooler pool. Nicholes, who said she was once greeted by a family of raccoons in the ticket building, remembers riding boats launched from Saratoga on Utah Lake.

Charlotte and Mike Dortsch operated Saratoga in the 1990s before it closed for good in 1993.

"We started going to the resort in 1988," said Charlotte Dortsch. "We were looking for a fun little park to take my kids."

The couple developed an affinity for the resort and worked with Eastmond to manage it.

"There were a lot of people who had fond memories of it," she said. "They would come out and spend time with us, giving us information. It was the place to be. There was talk about making it bigger and better. It was being considered for a Disney-type of thing, but it never came to be."

In its final days as a resort, Saratoga was popular with campers, picnickers, boaters and swimmers.

Many remember looking, as young children, for the old tall cottonwood trees on the edge of the lake as a sign they had finally reached Saratoga.

Heidi Hulme, a current resident, said she moved to Saratoga Springs because she could swim year-round in the outside pool. She said the view every morning is

different, beauty she documents with photos. She once watched a bald eagle winter in one of the large trees.

While different these days and not open to the public, the Saratoga hot springs on the edge of Utah Lake continue to provide recreation while preserving part of Utah's historic past.

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## Beck's Hot Springs Rules and Regulations

From the Lehi Banner on July 5, 1894:

1. No improper character or intoxicated person admitted
2. No profane or obscene language or boisterous conduct allowed
3. Splashing or diving in the vicinity of ladies is forbidden
4. Smoking or eating in dressing rooms or in or about the pools is prohibited
5. No dressing room can be occupied for a longer time than three-quarters an hour on Saturdays and Sundays
6. Soap is not allowed to be used in the plunges

If you cannot obey our rules, we do not want your money.

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The Terrace Ballroom

The chicken restaurant with the racially charged name

The Tampico

Casa Melinda in Bountiful

Johnny Quong's The Hawaiian

Wasatch Springs Plunge

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