

MOANA SPRINGS RESORT

By Phillip I. Earl

Moana Springs is located on a subterranean thermal belt which passes through eastern California and western Nevada. Also on this belt are Grover Hot Springs, near Markleeville, California; Walley's Hot Springs near Genoa; Carson Hot Springs, Steamboat Springs, Gerlach Hot Springs, Double Hot Springs on the Black Rock Desert, and Brady's Hot Springs on the Forty Mile Desert. All of these thermal sites have been used for recreational purposes for a century or more, but Moana has had a more extensive and diversified recreational development.

Located on the Haines Ranch just south of Reno, the property was purchased by Charles T. Short, Al North and John N. Evans in the summer of 1905 with the idea of putting up a resort. Short had spent some time in the Hawaiian Islands in 1904 and had stayed at a resort by the name of Moana Springs, hence the name for the new enterprise. After drilling and bringing forth an abundant flow of hot water on the property, the architectural firm of Fowler & Lyons was hired to draw up plans for a large bath house and swimming pool and for six smaller shelters with private pools. The firm also designed a clubhouse and a stately fifty-room hotel complete with a dining room and veranda. Work on the bath house and the clubhouse got under way in August of 1905 and the resort opened to

the public on October, 29.

The indoor heated pool was an immediate hit with the public and the resort was soon being served by carriage and auto lines from Reno. The hotel was constructed in the spring of 1906 and Moana became western Nevada's foremost resort. Among those who came were invalids seeking relief from their ailments in the hot mineral baths and those waiting out the required six months to obtain a divorce.

In October of 1907, the Nevada Interurban Railway, a trolley line owned by Louis W. Berrum, began service to Moana from the Reno city limits. At that time, the owners of the resort were making plans for further improvements and had a crew at work excavating a large lake for winter ice skating and summer boating. Other stockholders had meanwhile been taken into the ownership, one of whom was Berrum, who also owned an adjoining ranch. Trouble between the owners in 1911 shut down the resort and the trolley line for several months, but these problems ended in February of 1913 when Berrum bought out his partners and took sole control. Moana was to remain in the Berrum family for the next four decades of its operation.

Moana had a dancehall for many years, a theatre where motion pictures were shown, a baseball diamond, the ice skating and boating facility and a picnic grounds in the orchard surrounding the resort. In June of 1912, manager Jack Steele brought in aviators Frank Bryant and Roy Francis to stage one of Reno's earliest aerial exhibitions and other flyers, balloonists and parachutists appeared over the years. The grounds were also the site of school parties, circus performances, rodeos, trapshoots, baseball games and a variety of other sporting events over the years. Jim Jeferies, in Reno for his famous attempt to regain his heavyweight boxing crown, trained at Moana in June and July of 1910. Among those who fought at the resort was Jess Willard in July of 1913, two years before he became heavyweight champion of the world. Fraternal organizations also made use of the facilities and the resort was host to a picnic and fireworks demonstration sponsored by the Reno Klavern of the Ku Klux Klan in October of 1924.

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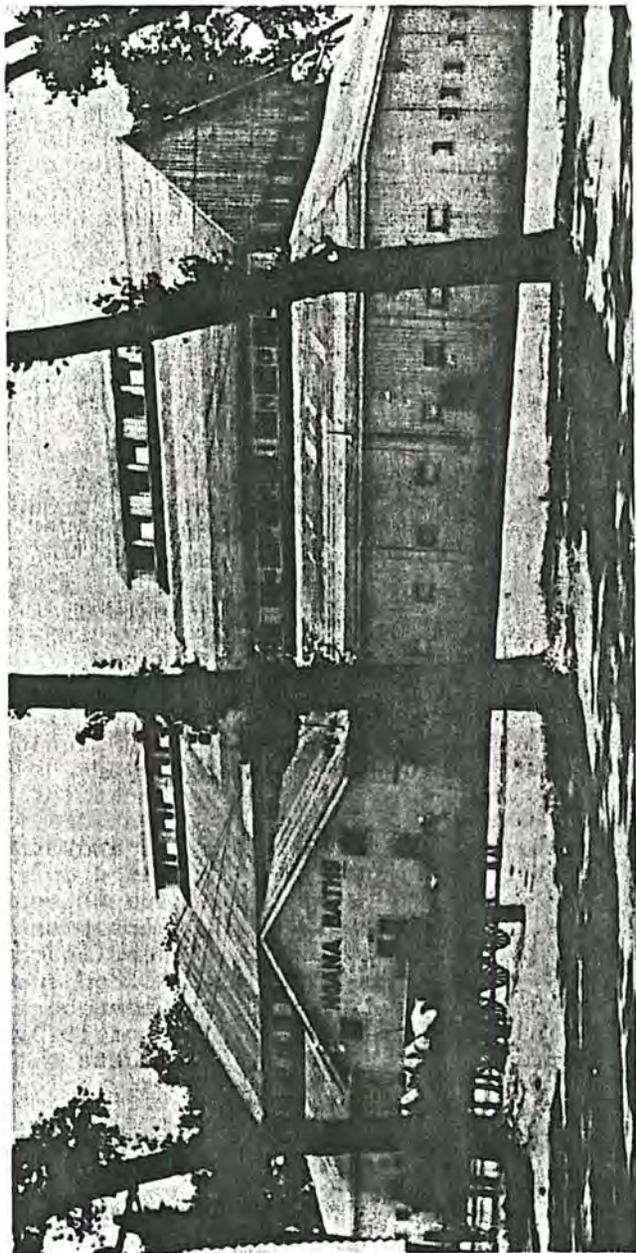


Photo: Nevada Historical Society

Moana had its ups and downs over the years, but remained in the Berrum family. Louis Berrum died in 1938, but his wife and son, Louis Jr., continued the resort for another twenty years. In the late 1940's Louis Jr. began to promote baseball and Moana is today the home of the Reno Silver Sox. The City of Reno purchased the resort property in 1956 and the remaining buildings were demolished in December of 1957 to make way for the present-day recreational complex which occupies the site today.

Moana Baths



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