

# The History of Lake Arrowhead

What started out as a grand scheme by The Arrowhead Reservoir Company to create a vast irrigation project utilizing water from the mountains to supply water to the San Bernardino Valley, eventually turned into Lake Arrowhead.

The original plan called for the creation of several reservoirs—one in Little Bear Valley (Arrowhead), one in Green Valley and one in Huston Flat. These reservoirs would be filled by a large canal that would carry the winter water from Deep Creek to the lakes. Then each reservoir would be connected so that all could be drained into the San Bernardino Valley through a tunnel at the head of Waterman Canyon. The plan was to reverse the direction of the mountain streams that were flowing into the desert and divert them into San Bernardino. Of course, the desert water interests were not about to let this happen; they counted on the water for irrigation. After years of legal battles, The Superior Court in San Bernardino enjoined the Arrowhead Reservoir Company from diverting any water from the desert slope watershed to the San Bernardino Valley. This ended the company's 22-year effort of selling water to San Bernardino.



*Lake Arrowhead Village - Late 1920's*

After the death of James Mooney, the Arrowhead Company president and major stockholder, Little Bear Lake and all the properties of the Arrowhead Reservoir Company were sold to a syndicate headed by Morgan Adams and J. Benton Van Nuys. The two businessmen were interested in the recreational possibilities of the area. The group called itself the Arrowhead Lake Company and renamed Little Bear Lake, Arrowhead Lake. Because there was already a

post office at Arrowhead Springs, the name was changed to Lake Arrowhead to avoid confusion.

The well-financed Arrowhead Lake Company began to put their money to work. They built a Norman English style village with steep-pitched roofs and stucco walls. To the west they built Arlington Lodge, which later became Arrowhead Lodge, with a great hall, luxurious furnishings and a terrace overlooking the lake. The quaint Village

Inn with its spacious dance pavilion and bathhouse overlooked the lake. The goal was to make Lake Arrowhead the finest mountain resort in Southern California.

More lodges, camps, and subdivisions popped up along with a campground, tennis courts, and a 9-hole golf course in Grass Valley. Horseback riding, sailing and fishing were available activities for mountain visitors. With the building of exclusive estates on the north shore came the beautiful people from down the hill. Among the celebrities who



*Lake Arrowhead Village - 1920*

While the efforts to divert water to San Bernardino were thwarted, the dam at Little Bear Lake had still been built and in 1911 there was enough water in the lake to attract campers and fisherman. The Arrowhead Reservoir Company wanted to keep the lake a private fishing preserve but public pressure caused the company to open it up for all in 1915. On opening day in 1916, 2,000 fishermen lined the shore of the lake. Three years later, the Little Bear Resort was home to a pavilion, a lunchroom, 26 rental cabins and dozens of boats for rent.





Lake Arrowhead Village - 1930's

bought lakefront homes were Myrna Loy, Adolph Menjou, J. Carol Nash and Buster Crabbe. Cathryn Eiten of the National Biscuit Company built the Flemish chateau that still stands today.

Lake Arrowhead Village was opened to the public on June 24, 1922. The opening celebration was attended by over a thousand people and included speeches, music and a ground tour. One year later the Arlington Lodge opened its doors to the rich and beautiful with a champagne party and a midnight dance. Advertisements for "California's Finest Playground" promoted nightly dances at the pavilion, moonlight boat rides, yacht regattas, diving and swimming competitions and even bathing beauty contests. Soon thousands of people were flocking to Lake Arrowhead to enjoy "the combination of the works of nature with artistic and beautiful works of man."

The depression years of the 1930s saw a decrease in lot sales. The lake grew quiet as the sounds of big bands became only a memory. The dance pavilion was turned into a cafeteria and the people who lived there struggled to stay. Stay they did, even finding a way to build a school and organize a chamber of commerce. The gas rationing of World War II kept visitors away as well and if it wasn't for the large number of servicemen who used the resort as a get away, Lake Arrowhead might have become a ghost town.

Lake Arrowhead changed hands several times over the next 20 years. The Arrowhead Lake Company sold the lake properties to the Los Angeles Turf Club, who in 1960 sold the property to the Lake Arrowhead Development Company, that later merged with Boise Cascade Corporation. The Arrowhead Woods property owners purchased the lake and beaches from Boise Cascade in 1975 and created a nonprofit corporation to administer the

holdings, making sure the lake and its contiguous properties were owned and operated for the benefit of all the owners.

Boise Cascade sold its remaining Lake Arrowhead investments—the village and lodge properties—to the Metropolitan Advertising Agency who then sold it to a group of investors headed by George Coult. Coult's company, G.C. Properties, had a plan to create a whole new commercial village and hotel complex. The old village was purposefully burned to the ground by the Lake Arrowhead Fire Protection District, in what was called "The Big Blaze of 1979." Every structure in the old village was destroyed except for the dance pavilion, post office, bank and real estate office.

Arising from the ashes was a new two-level village that retained the Alpine theme of the old village. The Village now included a complete shopping center, including restaurants, boutiques, gift shops, specialty shops, banks, a beach of white sand and a marina offering rental boats and a lake tour on the paddleboat, The Arrowhead Queen.

The grand opening of the luxurious 176-room Hilton Arrowhead Lodge in 1982 was attended by former President and Mrs. Gerald Ford, Bob Hope, and Phyllis Diller. Residential property values in Lake Arrowhead began to skyrocket in value. Luxury condominiums adjacent to The Village carried price

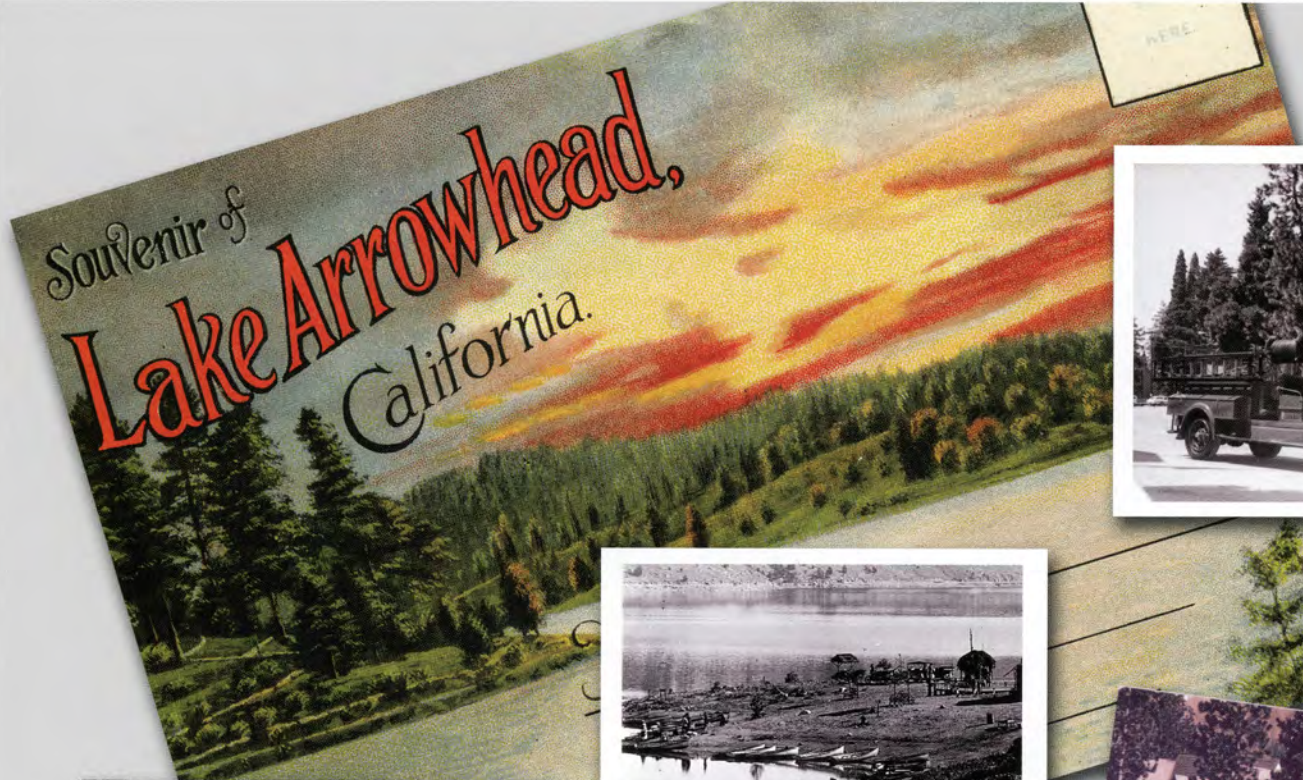


Blue Jay -1940

tags of a half million dollars. The least expensive homes in Arrowhead Woods, away from the lake, sold for upwards of \$80,000, with waterfront homes selling for up to a million dollars. Lake Arrowhead was quickly becoming "The Beverly Hills of the Mountains."

As Lake Arrowhead continues to grow, The Lake Arrowhead Association and G.C. Properties are striving to maintain a balance between the natural beauty of the area and the growth and prosperity of what once was known as Little Bear Lake.





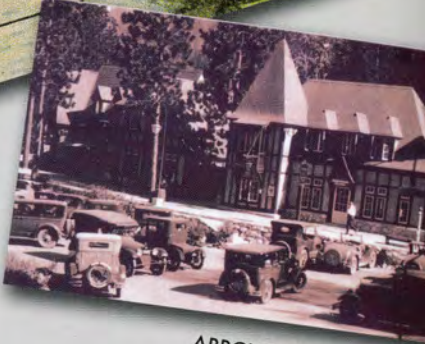
1927



LITTLE BEAR



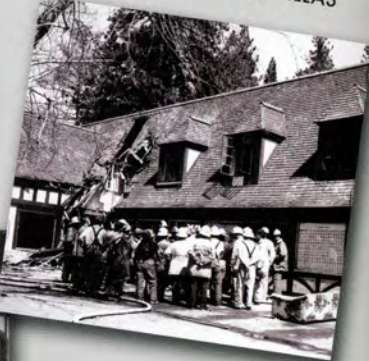
MAY 1948



ARROWHEAD VILLAS



LAKE ARROWHEAD 1922



LAKE ARROWHEAD 1922



1905

Historical photos courtesy of Chuck McClure. See his ad on page 79



# A History of The Area Through Post Cards and Old Photos



THE CLUB HOUSE



DAILY SCENE IN THE VILLAGE.



LAKE ARROWHEAD BEACH



BOATING.



LAKE ARROWHEAD VILLAGE 1926



THE LAKE