

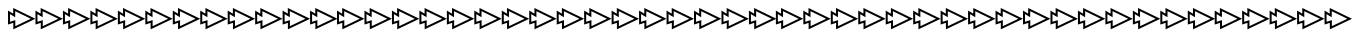
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A professional photographer captures a treasured memory for guests at Arrowhead Springs in this 1915 pose near the Mud Cienega. - *Author's collection*

Introduction



 Stamped onto a mountainside just above San Bernardino, is a natural rock formation in the shape of a colossal arrowhead that points to an amazing source of water and local legend.

The arrowhead landmark and the springs at its base are the most recognized landmarks of San Bernardino County. One can only speculate whether the springs alone would have grown to such prominence without the arrowhead or vice-versa, but their combination brought fame to the isolated mountain perch.

The unique naturally-formed arrowhead is 1,375 feet high, 450 feet wide, and covers about 7 ½ acres. The landmark formation is comprised of light quartz that supports the growth of white sage.¹ The lighter vegetation provides a dramatic contrast that can be seen all across the San Bernardino Valley.

Wildfires frequently burn over the arrowhead nearly erasing the landmark, but it inevitably returns to its natural outline. Local residents and governmental agencies have mounted several restoration projects over the years that have helped the

arrowhead recover from erosion caused by heavy rainfall. Local volunteers have even placed hardy plants around the arrowhead's border to provide a more distinctive outline, and check dams have been built to slow erosion on the 40° slope.²

At 2,000 ft. elevation, Arrowhead Springs is blessed by mild climates and dramatic views of the San Bernardino Valley and the surrounding mountains. The pure hot and cold springs that bubble up through the hillsides, provide the legendary water as well as a cool oasis of trees, grass, and waterfalls.

In San Bernardino County, the arrowhead is more than just a shape found on the county seal. The arrowhead symbol and name are widely used for everything from businesses, streets, products, community names, and even a festival.

The story of the water and the resorts that developed at Arrowhead Springs are deeply intertwined with the development of the surrounding San Bernardino Valley and mountains, and indeed the entire Southern California region.

It was David Noble Smith, who first developed the springs for commercial use in 1864. Smith had



Arrowhead Springs Hotel viewed from the tennis courts in 1930. - *Steele's Photo, SBH&PS*



Advertisement circa 1938. - *Author's collection*



Postcard view of the hotel lobby, circa 1930. - *CCC*



Night scene showing the elegant entrance to the Arrowhead Springs Hotel brilliantly illuminated, circa 1948. - Author's collection

Chapter 21



The Grand Opening: A Hollywood Super-Spectacle

The local press had been closely following the progress at the hotel, and by the night of the grand opening, the excitement had risen to a fever pitch.

On December 16, 1939, the Arrowhead Springs Hotel held its grand opening. The following day, the San Bernardino Sun began their opening night coverage in dramatic fashion:

“Like the setting for a Hollywood super-spectacle, the magnificent new Arrowhead Springs hotel last night swung its doors open to awe-struck guests. The list of whom read like the Who’s Who of filmdom.”

From ashes to splendor, the movie moguls, architects, designers, and builders, had accomplished a miracle by completing the fabulous new Arrowhead Springs Hotel in just 13 months.

Newspaper accounts declared the cost of the hotel to be around \$1.5 million dollars.³⁹⁷ That translates to roughly \$25 million dollars in 2012 currency.³⁹⁸ In comparison to other luxury hotels

of the era, the price tag was not overly extravagant.

The carefully selected guests were allowed to check into the hotel the day before the grand opening, and inspect the facilities. Dorothy Draper was personally escorting many of the dignitaries around the hotel, and showing off her latest triumph. There was dancing and entertainment that evening for the early arrivals.³⁹⁹

On the day of the grand opening, diving champions Ruth Jump and Dutch Smith performed a diving exhibition at the pool. A fashion show staged by I. Magnin featured 15 starlets in a variety of stunning gowns.⁴⁰⁰

As evening closed in, long lines of limousines were gathering at the entry gate, waiting to flash their exclusive invitation cards.⁴⁰¹ The guests passed through the stone entry arch that had a new sign illuminated in brilliant red and green neon, and they approached the hotel on a newly landscaped drive.⁴⁰²

Stepping from that crisp December evening into the splendor that waited inside, must have been a memorable moment, even for the rich and