

WHY THE LAKE IS PRIVATE

Lake Arrowhead—pristine...beautiful...private. The fact that Arrowhead Woods property owners are the only people on the mountain allowed to use Lake Arrowhead has been a point of contention for years, and many people both inside and outside of the woods have no idea why. The story of the lake is long and complicated, but the bottom line is that if you don't live in the woods, you can only enjoy the lake at arm's length. And here's the story of why according to Arrowhead Lake Association: A History of Lake Arrowhead.

"In the mid-1800's, lumbermen and their families came to harvest the vast timber resources of the San Bernardino Mountains. By 1890, many prosperous sawmills were producing millions of board feet of lumber annually for the small but growing communities of San Bernardino and Los Angeles, 90 miles to the west. In addition to lumber for homes and businesses, much of the lumber was made into crates for citrus growers to ship their produce to far away cities in the East. Although the San Bernardino Valley had fertile soil and a perfect climate to grow oranges and other produce, it lacked sufficient water for irrigation.

During this time Little Bear Valley (now Lake Arrowhead) was a pastureland for oxen, cattle, horses and mules used by several mill owners whose sawmills dotted the valley. Fed primarily by Little Bear Creek, which runs through present-day Blue Jay, it has an ample, year-round water supply.

{In 1891} engineer Adolph Koebig and Col. Adolph Wood., representing a Cincinnati syndicate headed by millionaire James Mooney and soap baron James Gamble of Proctor and Gamble, began purchasing large timberlands in and around Little Bear, Grass Valley and Huston Flats, now Lake Gregory. All this was done in name of the Arrowhead Reservoir Company; and their ambitious plans were to change the mountain forever.

At an elegant banquet attended by 200 San Bernardino businessmen, Adolph Wood announced plans for the Arrowhead Reservoir Company to build a dam at Little Bear Valley, impounding waters from Little Bear and other creeks, and through an elaborate system of flumes and tunnels, divert water then flowing naturally toward the desert to the San Bernardino citrus groves instead...

By 1893, the difficulty of getting material and equipment to the project was being felt. Accidents at the construction site, severe winters and the rugged terrain slowed progress to a crawl. Seven years later, as the 20th Century dawned, Gamble, Mooney and other had poured another million into the project—and dam construction had yet to begin.

In 1901, the Arrowhead Reservoir Company sought a powerhouse site in upper Waterman Canyon. Water would be channeled by way of a 56-inch pipe from the portal of Tunnel One at Willow Creek through a system of flumes to the mountain front, then the cascading flow would provide hydroelectric power sufficient to generate enough power and subsequent revenues for the intrepid investors to recoup their losses. That was the plan—it was never realized.

A year later, desert water companies filed formal protests against the diversion of waters from their arid land. This was the first battle in a legal war over riparian rights that would last for a decade. Still, the company persisted...

With Mooney driving his engineers and contractors hard, 1905 was a promising year. By April, Little Bear Dam was 43 feet high...

The dam, however, quickly became a thorn in the project's side. To everyone's dismay, the concrete corewall leaked. Finger-size cracks were discovered and tempers flared over responsibility. In the end, it was decided to cover the corewall with a one-foot thick curtain of dryer concrete, reinforced with steel rods toed into the former work. Much of the earthen fill from the previous two years' work had to be removed. Year passed. World War I depleted the supply of both men and materials, but work on the corewall curtain continued—slowly. In the

end, it was a California Superior Court decision that dealt the fatal blow to the company's dream of sending San Bernardino all the water and electricity it could use. The 1913 ruling stated clearly that water from one watershed could not be diverted to another for the purposes of irrigation.

As an irrigation project, Little Bear Lake was a white elephant. As a resort destination, it was a potential gold mine. In 1914, the lake was opened to fisherman through a concession at Orchard Bay and 2,000 anglers promptly descended on Camp Fleming. Lakefront lots at Cedar Glen sold for as much as \$150. A few years later, Little Bear Resort, the predecessor of the Lake Arrowhead Village, had 26 rental cabins and a dance pavilion.

In 1918, the corewall curtain was finished and height of the dam raised to 170 feet. A year later, James Mooney, the driving force behind the entire project, died at his Cincinnati mansion. Work ground to a halt while his huge estate was probated. For two years, everyone wondered what would become of the Little Bear project.

Then, in 1921...a syndicate of Los Angeles millionaires, headed by J.B. Van Nuys, had purchased all the Arrowhead Reservoir and Power Company's project, including 47,000 acre feet of water, for almost \$5 million.

Calling themselves the Arrowhead Lake Company, this new group had plans drawn that would mold the newly-christened Lake Arrowhead into a fashionable alpine resort. Millions would be spent on roads, lodges, dance pavilions, marinas, a grand hotel, a golf course and Norman-style village.

Thirty years and millions of dollars after Gamble and Mooney began their unprecedented enterprise, the dam, was raised to its final height of 190 feet, impounding almost 16 billion gallons of water from a six-square-mile watershed.

Over the next five decades, ownership of the lake changed several times until, in 1973, the state proclaimed the dam unsafe and subject to failure in a 6.5 earthquake. To alleviate pressure on the dam, the state insisted the lake level be lowered 70 feet. In doing so, the domestic water supply would have been severely affected. The lake would have been rendered unusable for recreation and property values would have plummeted. The surrounding Arrowhead Woods property owners banded together to save the lake. Together, they formed an association call Arrowhead Lake Association of ALA, and purchased the lake from Boise Cascade. With the slogan "Give a Dam", they issued a \$7 million bond to build a new, far more secure dam just downstream from the original, and thereby; saved the lake; its water now preserved solely for domestic and recreation. Management of the lake now rests with the property owners {in Arrowhead Woods}...

The new dam was completed within 18 months of the approval of the bond. It is 210 feet high and was build from two and one-half million cubic yards of material readily available at the site, compacted to maximum density to withstand an eight point earthquake.

A new lake, Papoose, was created with water from Lake Arrowhead and has a surfaced area of 31 acres. Other important assets were included in All's purchase of Lake Arrowhead: Grass Valley Lake, which supplies water to Lake Arrowhead through the old Arrowhead Reservoir Company's Tunnel; three members-only beach clubs; the land lease of the North and South Shore Marinas; Outlet Tower and all the inflow and outflow tunnels, the spillway, with its 67,500 gallon per minute capacity and, when the lake is full of course, the original dam still traversed by Highway 173.

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