

Denton's Pool History

According to C.A. Bridges, author of the History of Denton, Texas, there was a swimming pool called Cascade Plunge that was built on the west side of Industrial Street in the 1930's (across from Morrison Milling). Cascade Plunge was opened under private management on June 12, 1919, with some 2,000 people attending its formal opening. This pool evidently preceded a swimming pool at North Texas, called an activity park, which the general public was admitted for a small fee. Then sometime in the 1940's, the TWU outdoor pool was built. Before the swimming pools opened. People swam in creeks, lakes, and swimming holes like Cottonwood Creek, Pecan Creek, Hickory Creek, Club Lake, and Taylor Lake. Early Dentonites might remember swimming at Millionaire's Island, which is now home to North Texas Baptist Conference Center (formerly known as Camp Copass).

There were very few, if any, residential swimming pools built in Denton until two men saw a need to be filled. Denton had no pool builders while Dallas and Fort Worth had several such as Anthony Pools and Blue Haven Pools. Dallas, Fort Worth, and Denton were much farther apart (population wise) at the time. Denton is now basically part of the metroplex, but back then it was not and pool builders from Dallas and Fort Worth did not like to come to Denton when they could stay closer to home and have plenty of work.

A young whippersnapper named Gene Gohlke and his mentor, Bert Moore, now deceased, believed Denton was ready for residential swimming pools. Some of the first residential swimming pools in Denton were built in the late 1950's to mid 1960's by the partnership known as Royal Pools of Denton. After forming in 1958, they built approximately 75 pools before deciding to cease pool construction in 1965. They continued to service pool and provide supplies for the pools that they built.

The pools in those days were built in a similar way as pools today, with the exception of one major difference. Instead of using the current method of applying gunite (applying the concrete by shooting it through a hose at high pressure and stating it up the walls), the concrete truck would back up to the pool and pump the load onto the floor of the pool. Laborers would then begin hand stacking the concrete up the walls. The amount of labor involved in this type of application had to be phenomenal, back breaking work. It was a very effective method of building pools as they have withstood the test of time. In approximately 1965, Royal Pools tried the gunite method, which is a much easier method of applying the concrete.

Although many improvements have been made to swimming pools since that time, most of the pools that Royal Pools built are still in operation. We personally know many of the pools, such as the VFW pool, Clayton House Hotel pool and residential pools on Mistywood, Ector, Bolivar, Cordell, Woodland, and Archer Trail.

Most all of the pools at that time were diving pools, and cost approximately \$3,500 to \$4,000. They were built mostly in the backyards of middle and upper class families, and very few of these customers had them financed.

In the 1970's, some of the first vinyl pools in Denton were built by Blue Dolphin Pools, which was operated by the father and son team of Hoyt and Sam Watson. Vinyl pools were also being built by Pools Plus, owned by Bill Reiss. His son, Chris, who helped install pools, currently owns Servipool, a pool service company located here in Denton.

Most of the pools built in Denton in the last 20 years have been gunite pools. There are now many pool builders operating in the Denton area, and it all started when two men who had a vision that Denton was ready for the common man to have a pool in his own backyard.

Same Laney, a longtime Dentonite, provided much of the information about this article.

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