



**City of San Bernardino
Historical and Pioneer Society
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LIBRARY NEWS MAY 2009

By Richard D. Thompson, Librarian

ARROWHEAD SPRINGS WATER

By Ronnie Featherstone.

Arrowhead Springs has a long and rich history going back to 1851 when the Mormons arrived at the foot of the arrowhead-shaped geological formation in the San Bernardino Mountains. Many historians have covered its history in great detail and told the story very well. Many others have provided pictures over the years, and descriptions of the 1,961-acre site that has come to comprise the Arrowhead Springs Hotel and grounds. Structures at Arrowhead Springs, including the many hotels, have suffered from fires over the years, and they have been rebuilt over and over again. However, it is not my intention to add any history to the stories from 1851 to 1960, the latter year marking the last of the water trains that climbed the uphill route to the Arrowhead loading rack.

In 1960 tanker trucks started hauling loads of water, to be delivered to the Arrowhead Puritas bottling plant in Los Angeles, and eventually to other Puritas plants that would be built around the Southland. I drove one of those Arrowhead Puritas water rigs for several years, from 1969 to 1973.



Jack Whitmeyer photo courtesy of Christian Tobar

Water train coming down the center divider on Mt. View Avenue circa 1949



Water tankers taking on pure mountain spring water

When Arrowhead Puritas Water hired me in 1969, it was mandatory to attend a two-day orientation class at the Los Angeles plant. A complete history of the company was given, which included photos and slide shows. After hearing this history, I was impressed with the accurate and detailed account given to Arrowhead Puritas employees.



The rig I drove was similar to the one shown above. The tanker rigs were designed to be the lightest on the roads. Look carefully and you might see that the trailers were frameless, and they were all aluminum with aluminum wheels. Short wheelbase tractors were used to keep weight down so as to carry the most

water possible. The weight of the whole truck was only 13,500 pounds. We were allowed to carry a maximum of 80,000 pounds over the highways. That meant the total weight of water we could carry was 66,500 pounds, or 8,188 gallons. We loaded the front trailer tank at 4,000 gallons and the rear tank at 4,188 gallons. Trucks always left the loading rack at 80,000 gross weight.



The current entrance to Arrowhead Springs is shown above. My yellow 1931 Model A is in front of the Indian statue. If you look at the Indian, you'll see how badly burned he is, from a forest fire that came down to Arrowhead Springs only a few weeks before. Nothing was seriously damaged on the 1,916 acres this time, as Arrowhead Springs has its own fire suppression system in place.



This photo, contributed by freelance correspondent Mark Landis, shows the entrance/exit for trucks to the loading rack, virtually using the same alignment as the old railway



This truck is loading from about the same spot used by the Pacific Electric trains for so many years. The facility has been upgraded with new underground plumbing, and new roads in and out.

The actual storage reservoirs for Arrowhead water are not at Arrowhead Springs. They are several miles up the mountain, and the water is piped down to the loading rack at Arrowhead Springs. It is all gravity flow downhill and the pressure on the plumbing at the loading rack is huge. When a tanker is hooked up to load at the rack, and the release valves are opened, the tanker loads very quickly from volume and pressure. The whole rig virtually moans and groans from taking on so much weight so fast. Site glass on the rear of the tanker shows how fast the tank is loading, and the water must not exceed the maximum marks on the glass. Not paying attention will cause an extreme blow off of water. You don't just get a little wet, you get totally soaked, and it's very cold.

A normal shift of eight hours operating the tanker rig, would be a load to the San Diego plant and back, and reload to deliver to the Colton plant. Another driver would then take over for an eight-hour shift. He may deliver a load to the Los Angeles bottling plant, then reload to take another to the Orange County plant, return to load again, and take the tanker back loaded for the next oncoming driver. The destination depended on which plants needed the water the most. The big rigs ran 24 hours a day, with three drivers for the three shifts. To meet demands during the summer months, Arrowhead would contract additional tankers to help get more product to the bottling plants.



To this day Arrowhead Springs still has nine wells on the property. Two of them are hot geothermal wells, and provide a massive amount of hot water for the swimming pools, spas, and the entire hotel. It has been said many times that Arrowhead Springs has the hottest geothermal wells in the world, with temperatures exceeding 200 degrees. Four of the wells are fresh spring water wells, and three others provide water for irrigation and fire suppression systems. On the 1,916 acres are still two lakes, Lake Vonette and a reservoir lake on the southern portion. Arrowhead Springs is still fed by two ample streams coming onto the property, which are fed by several other streams way above the site.

To date, many plans are in the works to improve and add to what is now called Arrowhead Springs Resort, which is currently closed to the public. The complex is very much self-sustaining, with its own water company, power company, and fire suppression systems, and if the planned improvements come to fruition, it will be like a city within itself—a huge community including upscale residences, shops, theaters, golf courses, gardens, and many other amenities. If you would like to learn more about the resort, the Arrowhead Springs Hotel, and the Arrowhead Puritas Water Company history, below are just two of the website links available to view. There are several that have history contributions. A special thanks to all who wrote about Arrowhead Springs, and supplied photos for generations to see.

<http://www.arrowheadspringsresort.com/>

http://www.geocities.com/gatewaycityca/Arrowhead_Line.html#PE_101_mt_view

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