

Saltair

NANCY D. McCORMICK and JOHN S. McCORMICK

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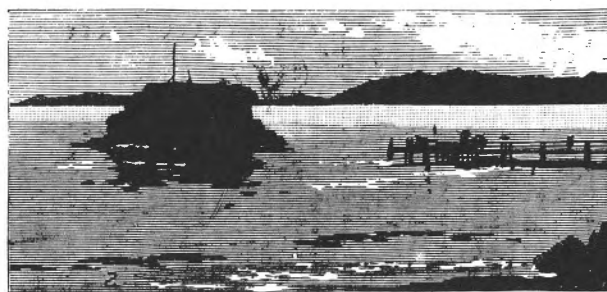
The Lure of the Inland Sea

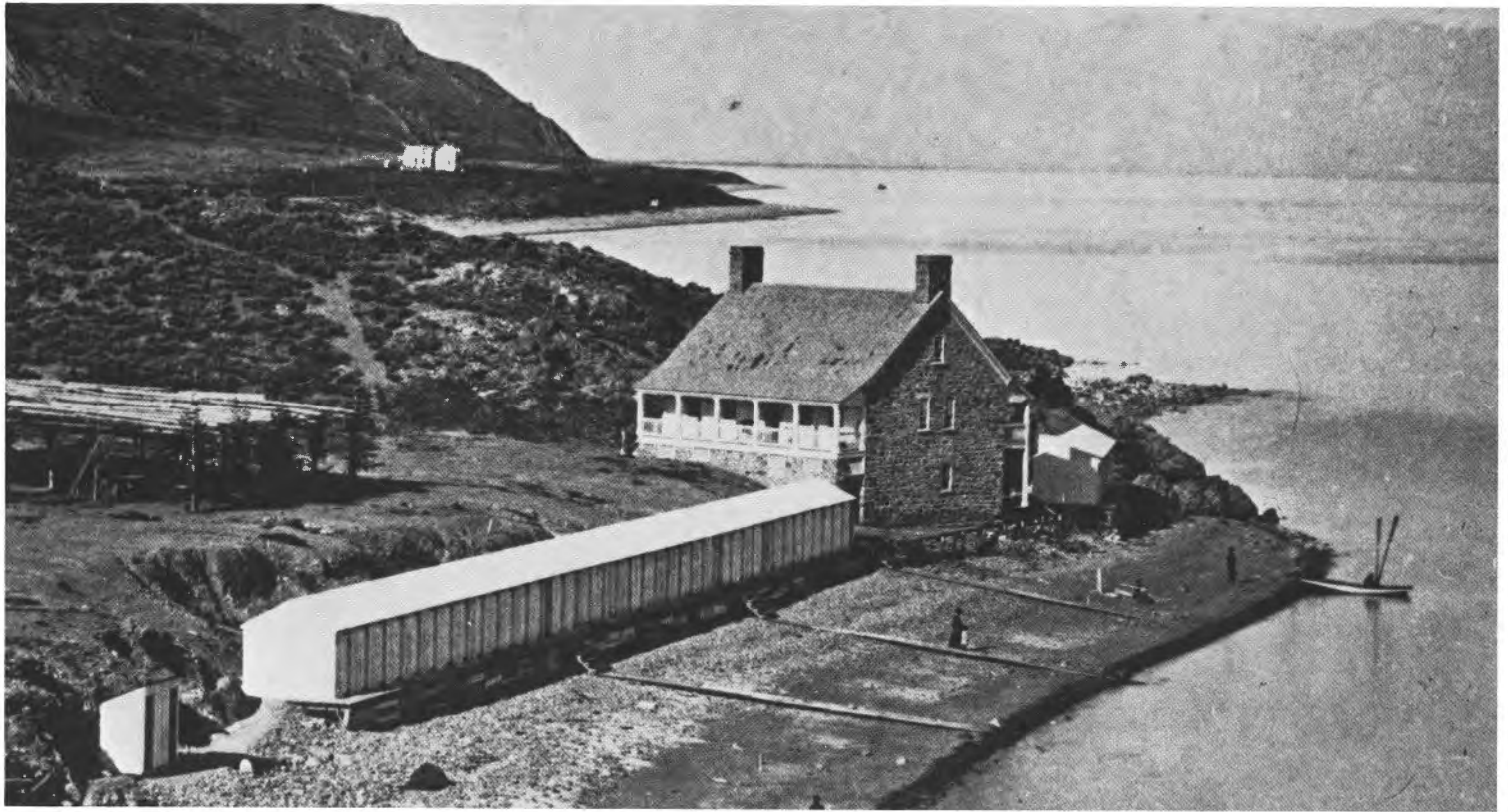
From the time Mormon pioneers settled the Salt Lake Valley in the summer of 1847, people have looked to the Great Salt Lake for recreation. Only three days after they arrived Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders traveled to the lake to enjoy the buoyant and briny water. According to one of the group, Wilford Woodruff, "No person Could Possibly sink in it, [but] would roll and float on the top of the water like a dry log . . ." The lake, he wrote, "ought to be added as the eighth wonder of the world."¹

In 1851 the residents of Salt Lake City planned a grand Fourth of July celebration, and nearly the entire population of the city went in a procession to the lake, accompanied by rumbling wagons, clattering carriages, hoofbeats, and the sounds of Captain Pitt's Brass Band. A military escort led the way, followed by the band's mule-drawn carriage, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball and some of their wives and children, other apostles and their families, invited "gentiles and families," and, finally, "lesser dignitaries and townspeople." It took four hours to travel the sixteen miles to Black Rock on the lake's southern shore. When the contingent arrived they erected an American flag on a tall "liberty pole," prepared a picnic dinner (which included snow from the Oquirrh Mountains), and spent the afternoon picnicking, swimming, and singing. Later they heard orations, danced, and slept overnight on the sandy beaches.²

Reports circulated in the early 1850s that Mormon leaders intended to build a "place of resort" on the Great Salt Lake with bathhouses, a hotel, and pleasure boats. Nothing came of those plans, but there are records throughout the 1850s of excursions by Mormon

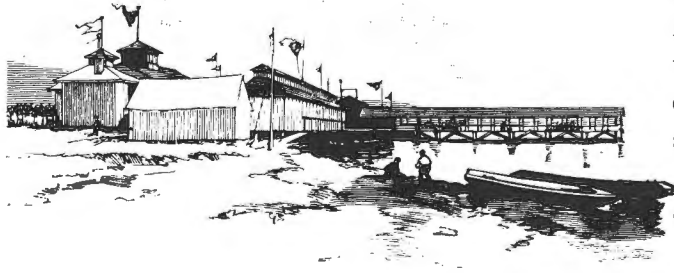
Black Rock and Antelope Island, Salt Lake. Harper's Weekly 31(1887):540.





Heber C. Kimball's ranch house near Black Rock. It was built in 1860.

Summer Resort on Salt Lake. Harper's Weekly 31(1887): 540.



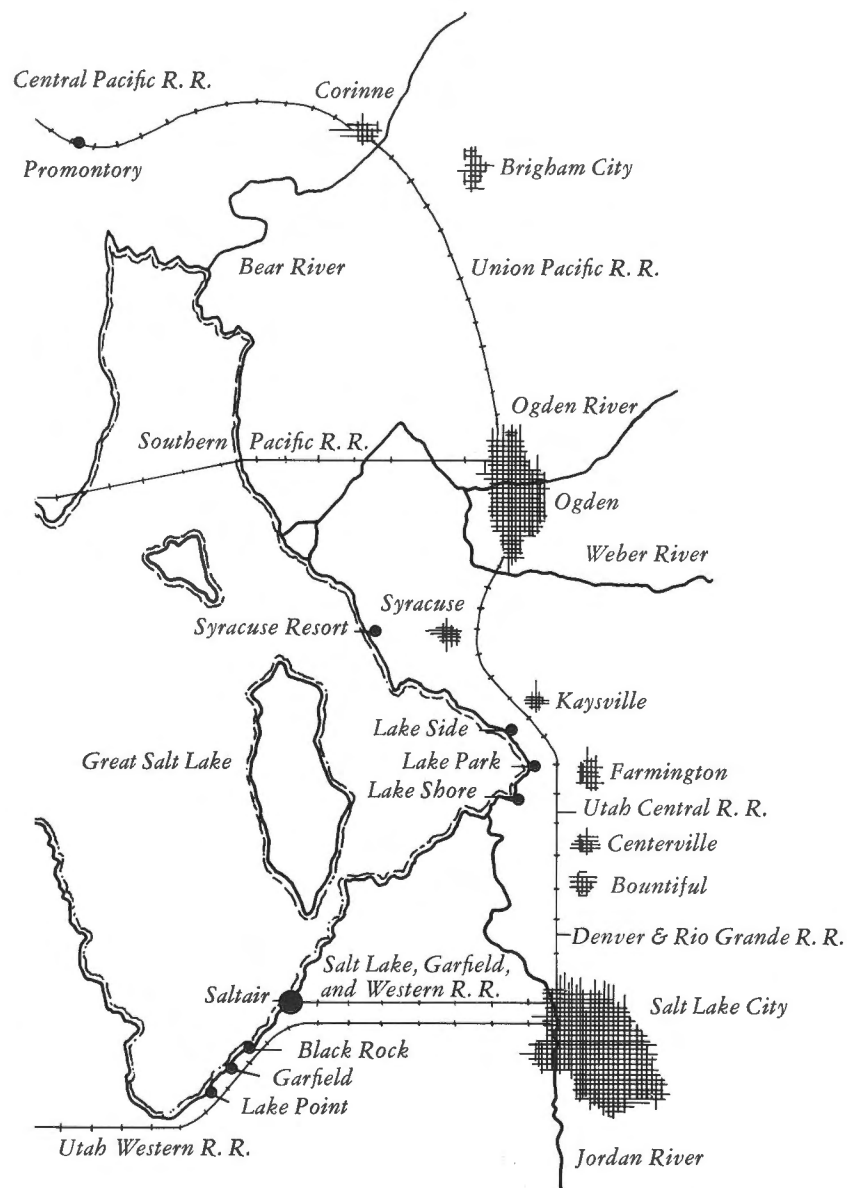
church groups to the lake, and newspapers periodically reported wagonloads of young people going there for a swim. The most popular location was near Black Rock, where the recesses of the giant boulder provided convenient dressing places. No formal buildings were erected until 1860 when Mormon apostle Heber C. Kimball built a ranch house near Black Rock and the overland stage stop. It came to be known as the Rock House and was later used to entertain visitors who came for swimming and dining. For the most part, however, Salt Lake's early settlers did not spend much time at the lake, and their initial attraction to it faded.

Even so, tales of the strange salty sea began to spread across the country as explorers, journalists, immigrants, and a new breed of

“professional traveler” published accounts of their journeys to the great American West including visits to the Great Salt Lake. Some wrote of the beauties of “America’s Dead Sea” and its supposed healing properties, others of mythical monsters, whirlpools, and underground connections to the Pacific Ocean, but the feature of the lake most curious to early visitors was its saltiness and the experience of swimming in it. Richard Burton, internationally known writer and traveler, who spent a day at the lake during his three-week stay in Salt Lake City in the summer of 1860, wrote of “a steady honest burning” in his eyes following his swim so that he presented “the ludicrous spectacle of a man weeping flowing tears.”³ After a swim during his visit in 1863 journalist Fitz Hugh Ludlow whimsically concluded that he felt “the pleasant sense of being a pickle, such as a self-conscious gherkin might experience,”⁴ while William Elkanah Waters, in *Life Among the Mormons*, published in 1868, said that after a certain depth he could wade out no further, “not because the water covered me, but because I couldn’t reach the bottom with my feet and there I was bobbing about on the waves, head and neck above them, like an empty bottle.”⁵

The coming of the railroads heralded a new era in lakeside recreation. The completion of the transcontinental railroad at Promontory in 1869, the Utah Central Railroad between Ogden and Salt Lake City, which ran close to the eastern shore of the Great Salt Lake, in 1870, and the Utah and Nevada Railway between Salt Lake City and Black Rock in 1875, made the lake much quicker and easier to reach. What was once a four-hour carriage trip from Salt Lake became a journey of less than an hour, and businessmen quickly moved to capitalize on the lake’s new accessibility. By the turn of the century eight resorts had been built, four on the southern shore and four on the eastern shore.

The first two opened in 1870, Lake Side on the east and Lake Point on the south. Lake Side was the Great Salt Lake’s first resort and, as Dale Morgan noted, for several years “monopolized the resort trade with a succession of Sunday school parties, reunions, ward parties





and excursions in general.”⁶ John W. Young, third son of Brigham Young who had made a lot of money as a subcontractor for the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific railroads, built it. Although the main attraction was swimming, Lake Side also offered a twenty-five-cent ride around the lake on the *City of Corinne*, a large, three-decked, stern-wheeling steamboat with eight staterooms, a gents’ and ladies’ cabin, and a fine dining room. It was inspired by Mississippi River steamboats and built of California redwood. Moonlight excursions on it with dinner and dancing were popular for “portions of Salt Lake City’s elite and their ladies” in the mid-1870s, though the *Deseret News* sounded a cautionary note and chastised parents who “let their daughters go away from home for an entire night to mingle with a mixed company of people.”⁷

The *City of Corinne* took people across the lake to Lake Point, which Dr. Jeter Clinton, “the Genial Doc,” as he was often called, built that same year on the southern shore near Black Rock. With the completion of the Utah and Nevada Railroad in 1875 Lake Point’s popularity increased, and more and more travelers stopped overnight to enjoy the scenery and a swim. The resort offered white sandy beaches and gracious dining in the three-story, stone Clinton House built in 1874, which had forty rooms and a large dancing hall. In 1875, after President-to-be James A. Garfield cruised the lake on Lake Side’s *City of Corinne* the boat changed its base to Lake Point and its name to the *General Garfield* and began two-hour, twenty-mile cruises of the lake for a dollar and a half. That same year one hundred new bathhouses and a small pavilion were built, and a buffalo herd, later transferred to Antelope Island, was added “for the interest of East Coast tourists.” Special outings, such as the Mormon church’s “Old Folks’ Day,” were frequently held at Lake Point. The *Deseret News* described it as “a marine pleasure resort” where “sightseeing, mountain views, cool breezes, serene, quiet, restful, healthy, bracing baths” could be enjoyed.⁸ There was “a general calmness and quietude in this attractive, beautiful place,” the paper continued, where people could “while away a few hours, days, or weeks in pursuit of recreative



Young girls in bathing attire at Black Rock beach, 1887.

Jeter Clinton's Mississippi-style stern wheeling City of Corinne. The steamboat was docked first at Lake Side resort and then became an attraction at Garfield.



Black Rock beach in the 1870s.

pleasures and renewed health.” In the mid-1880s Lake Point advertised itself as “Utah’s Great Sanitarium Resort” and invited families to stay at the Clinton House hotel for several weeks at a time.

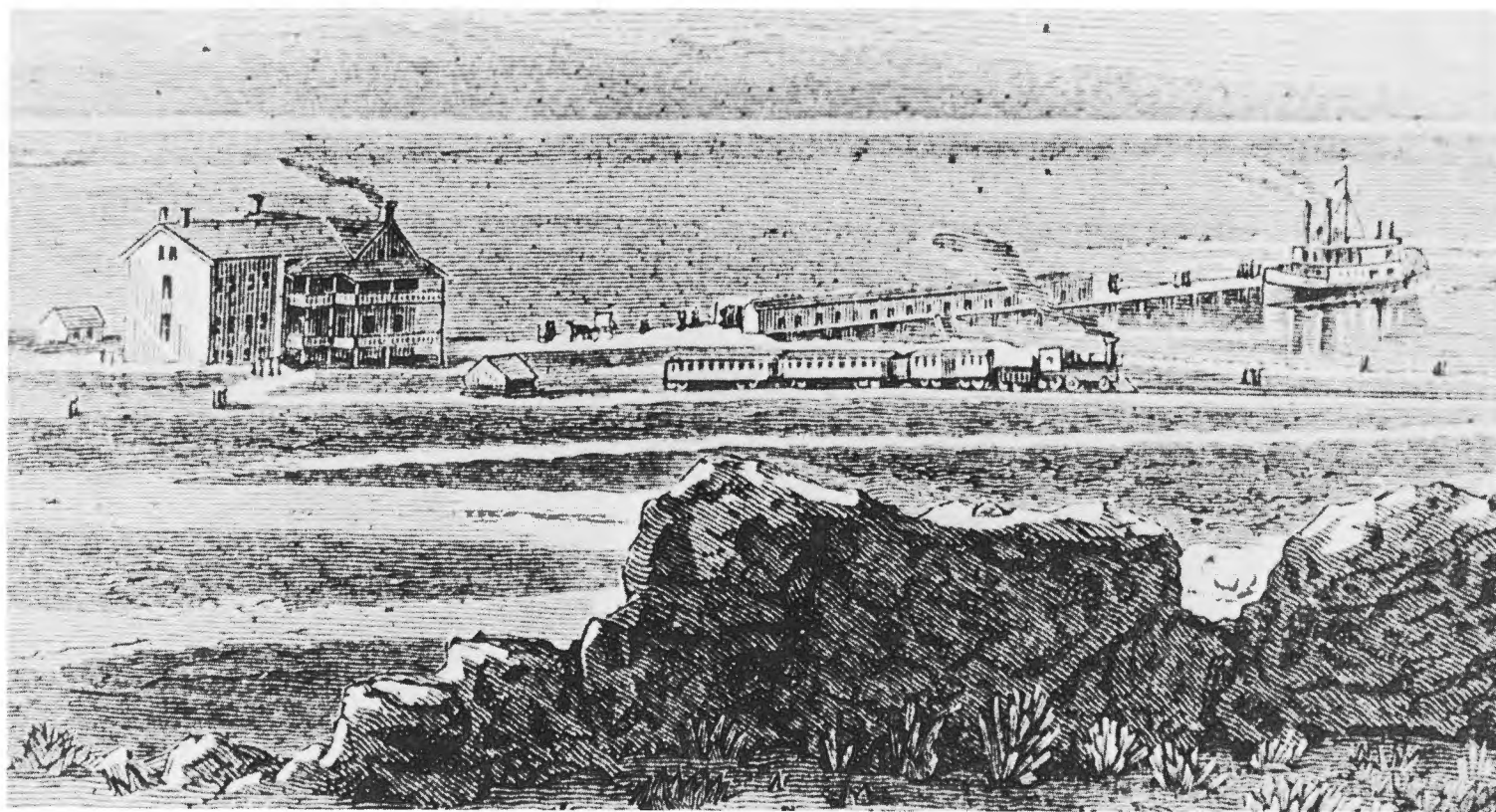
Lake Point was the first genuinely popular resort on the Great Salt Lake. An estimated 1500 people were there for the Fourth of July 1876, and an 1879 guide book of Salt Lake City attractions explained that “During the hot months cheap trains leave the city for the bathing wharf (Lake Point) daily at the close of business hours, sometimes carrying 500 at a load.”⁹

Lake Point’s success encouraged David John Taylor and Alonzo Hyde, son and son-in-law of Mormon President John Taylor, in 1880 to take over a small resort known as Black Rock, which was located



a few miles to the east of Lake Point, and try to turn it into “a fashionable bathing resort.” H. J. Faust had opened it in 1876, but it apparently never amounted to much, and local newspapers described it as “dilapidated” when Taylor and Hyde bought it. They turned Heber C. Kimball’s Rock House into a hotel, built cottages for rent by the season, added bathhouses with showers, boardwalks to the edge of the water, two twenty-one-foot-high swings, a merry-go-round, and a roofed picnic bowery, brought in “City Creek” drinking water, and built a pier and dock for steamboat rides and boat rentals. Still, it remained a relatively small enterprise where swimming was the main attraction even after the Utah and Nevada Railway bought it in 1883.¹⁰

An early scene at Black Rock.



Clinton's hotel at Lake Point built in 1874. The hotel boasted fine food and lake tours on the City of Corinne, seen here docked at the right of the drawing.

In 1879 a second resort was established on the east side of the lake. Known as Lake Shore, it was a modest enterprise, and only a little is known about it. In 1882 the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that "Lake Shore is located fifteen miles north of this city and is reached by the Utah Central Railway, which during the bathing season gives specially low rates for excursion tickets. The grounds have been filled up with dressing rooms and other conveniences, and Lake Shore is rather a pleasant place to visit and enjoy salt bathing." The granddaughter of George O. Chase, one of the owners, recalled that, "Everyone, of course, took his own bathing suit, if he was fortunate enough to have one, but for the most part they were improvised as they were a scarce item at the time."



In 1881 Thomas Douris, captain of the *General Garfield*, anchored his ship and built a bathing and boating facility just west of Black Rock that became known as Garfield Beach. Six years later the Utah and Nevada Railway bought it and spent \$100,000 to build “a new and resplendent” resort, bigger and more elaborate than any previous one on the lake. Its one-story pavilion had three towers and sat on pilings fifteen feet above the water and three hundred feet from shore. A “magnificent view of the most popular portions of the entire resort” could be seen from the center observation tower, and dances and afternoon concerts were held in the pavilion.¹¹

Among Garfield’s attractions were several hundred bathhouses furnished with washstands, showers, and elegant dressing rooms,

Garfield beach pavilion was 165 by 65 feet and provided space for dancing and daily concerts.



A family photograph and reunion at Garfield resort. Garfield, built in 1881, was the biggest resort on the lake until Saltair was built in 1893.

a restaurant serving “the finest French dinners,” a lunch stand and picnic bowery, and a saloon with “the choicest wines, liquors, and cigars.” Other amusements included a race track, games, a shooting gallery, bowling alleys, boats for hire, twenty-five cent steamboat rides, and cottages for “rusticating during the heated season.”

At the end of the 1887 season over 84,000 people had paid admission to the Garfield and Black Rock resorts. Many of them were tourists. Twenty carloads of New York Veteran Firemen, for example, held their national convention at Garfield. In 1888 the *Denver Republican* reported that it was considered the eminently “proper thing for persons crossing the continent to stop several days at Garfield Beach, where they may enjoy the novel and pleasing experience of salt surf-



bathing in the very heart of what was once called The Great American Desert, and no tourist may properly be said to have seen the sights of this country who has not paid some attention to this marvelous inland sea."¹²

In 1892 the Union Pacific Railroad bought Garfield and invested \$150,000 in it, adding new dressing rooms, more fresh-water wells, a thirty-two-and-a-half horsepower generator (which provided the first electricity to any of the lake's resorts), and installing lights in and on top of each bathhouse so that swimming could continue after dark. In 1904 a fire completely destroyed Garfield, including all the buildings and the steamboat. Only the pilings below the water's surface were left. There were several announcements that it would be rebuilt,

Garfield on a summer afternoon, towels drying in the lake breezes. Three hundred bathhouses provided room to change for a swim in the lake.



Richard Kletting designed the Lake Park pavilion, shown here in 1886. It provided a place for dancing by the edge of the lake.

but it never was, and in 1906 the Western Pacific Railroad ran its new tracks straight through the middle of what had been the lake's most popular and elaborate resort.

A few years after Garfield was established another resort sprang up on the Great Salt Lake's eastern shore. Named Lake Park, the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad built it in 1886 midway between Ogden and Salt Lake and two-and-one-half miles west of Farmington where the tracks of the Utah Central Railroad came closest to the lake. "One of the most attractive watering places in the West," it opened on July 15, 1886, and featured an open-air pavilion with delicately carved lattice work and archways that Richard Kletting, later the architect of Saltair, designed. Summer cottages



rented by the week or month, and bathhouses were available for changing. For fifty cents admission people could enjoy swimming, dancing, boating, a merry-go-round, roller skating, target shooting, and bowling alleys. Another fifty cents bought a full-course dinner in the resort's restaurant. The first year Lake Park had fifteen dozen men's grey flannel bathing suits and three dozen women's blue flannel suits available for rent. In an effort to deter "bathing suit thieves, who have already played havoc at other places on the lake," the management stenciled "Lake Park Resort" across the front of the suits and announced that, "The first person caught will be made an example of."

Six trains ran daily from Salt Lake to Lake Park and three from Ogden. The resort was the home of the Salt Lake Racing Club, which

Trains brought visitors to Lake Park, where there was swimming, dancing, boating, a merry-go-round, roller skating, and target shooting.



Swimming at Lake Park. Built by the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, Lake Park was intended to be the best resort on the eastern shore of the lake.

held several successful sailing regattas, and a rowing club with fifty members. By the end of the first season 53,347 people had paid admission, and owners reported that “The exceeding liberal patronage bestowed upon the Resort in the unfinished state clearly indicates the popular demand for and appreciation for better accommodations than had ever before been given for Lake Bathing.”¹³

Lake Park was a vigorous competitor with Garfield until 1893 when the lake began receding, leaving its beaches with “a sticky brand of blue mud” that was miserable for bathers. Though owners thought about building an enclosed swimming area or a walkway over the mud to the water, they finally closed the resort instead. Three years later, in 1896, Simon Bamberger, later Governor of Utah, moved Lake



Park's roller skating rink, saloon, pavilion, cafe, and merry-go-round ten miles inland to the outskirts of Farmington and began a new resort he called Lagoon.

The next resort built on the Great Salt Lake was Syracuse. Located near the town of Syracuse, five miles west of what is now Clearfield, it was easily accessible by rail from both Salt Lake City and Ogden, and thirteen trainloads of people came from Ogden alone for its grand opening on July 4, 1887. Syracuse advertised itself as "An Oasis in the Desert" and was the only resort on the Great Salt Lake with shade trees. A grove of round-leaf poplars from Weber Canyon was planted three hundred yards from the water, and willow-covered boweries provided picnic spots under the trees. A railroad car, some-

Oozing, bluish mud forced Lake Park owners to close the resort in 1893. Three years later, enterprising Simon Bamberger moved several of the resort structures, including Kletting's delicately arched pavilion, inland to a new resort he called Lagoon. This is a photograph of Old Folks' Day at Lagoon, 1898.



Developers of Syracuse bathing resort, shown here about 1889, planted a grove of round-leaf poplars brought from Weber Canyon for shade.

times powered by a steam engine and sometimes by horses from the Syracuse Horse Railroad Company, left every fifteen minutes from the picnic grove and took passengers to the large pier where they could take excursion boats to nearby islands, dance in the pavilion, or change into swim costumes in one of the seventy-four bathing compartments. Visitors could also watch “high wheel” bicycle races held on a dirt track. The main complaint of patrons during the first season was that “bathers had to pass close to the spectators to get to the water,” and for the second season bathhouses were moved so that people could enter the water directly from them. Syracuse was popular for a few years, but it was forced to close after the 1891 season because of a legal dispute over ownership of the land.¹⁴



Sailing and Sunday outing at Garfield Beach, about 1890.

By the early 1890s the resort business on the Great Salt Lake was booming, with each new resort larger than the last and each offering more rides and more entertainment. But the last, the most elaborate, the most expensive, and the most popular was yet to come.



A Moorish Palace in Zion

On January 14, 1893, the *Deseret News* announced construction of a new resort on the shores of the Great Salt Lake to be called "Saltair." Though the pleasure of swimming in the Great Salt Lake was "world renown," the paper said, never before had there been a resort as magnificent as Saltair was destined to be, and word of it would spread "wherever newspapers are read or words transmitted by lightning."¹

The owner of the new resort was the Saltair Beach Company, and its largest stockholder was the Mormon church, which held half of the company's 2500 shares. Mormon church leaders and prominent Mormon businessmen held the other shares and were company officers. George Q. Cannon, first counselor to Mormon president Wilford Woodruff and the most influential Mormon leader from the time of Brigham Young's death in 1877 until his own in 1901, was president. Joseph F. Smith, Woodruff's second counselor, was vice-president, while Isaac A. Clayton was secretary-treasurer, and his brother, Nephi W. Clayton, was general manager. Both Claytons were officers in the Brigham Young Trust Company and were involved with other Mormon businessmen in the Inland Salt Company, which operated on the southern shore of the Great Salt Lake near the new resort. The board of directors consisted of President Woodruff; L. John Nuttall, Woodruff's private secretary; James Jack, church treasurer; and George Henry Snell, who owned the Utah Soap Company and was a founder of the Inland Salt Company.

Mormon church officials organized the Saltair Beach Company in June 1891. Shortly afterwards they acquired from Mormon busi-

Men wore two-piece bathing suits, and women wore mididresses in this turn-of-the-century photograph.

nessman Matthew White 744 acres of beach property. White lived in a small house on the property and had earlier planned an elaborate commercial development there that would have included a residential section of about six hundred houses; a pier with bathing and boating facilities; a clubhouse and casino to be open year-round; a hotel; and a "sanitarium." Soon after church officials bought the property from White they announced that they also meant to build a residential section near Saltair. "The construction of cottages on shore about a mile from the pavilion will soon commence," Nephi W. Clayton said. "It is our intention to build a little town there just as soon as we can. More than that some of us intend to make our home there nine months in the year, and we expect to find residence there healthful and agreeable in many ways."² Why those plans were never carried out is not clear.

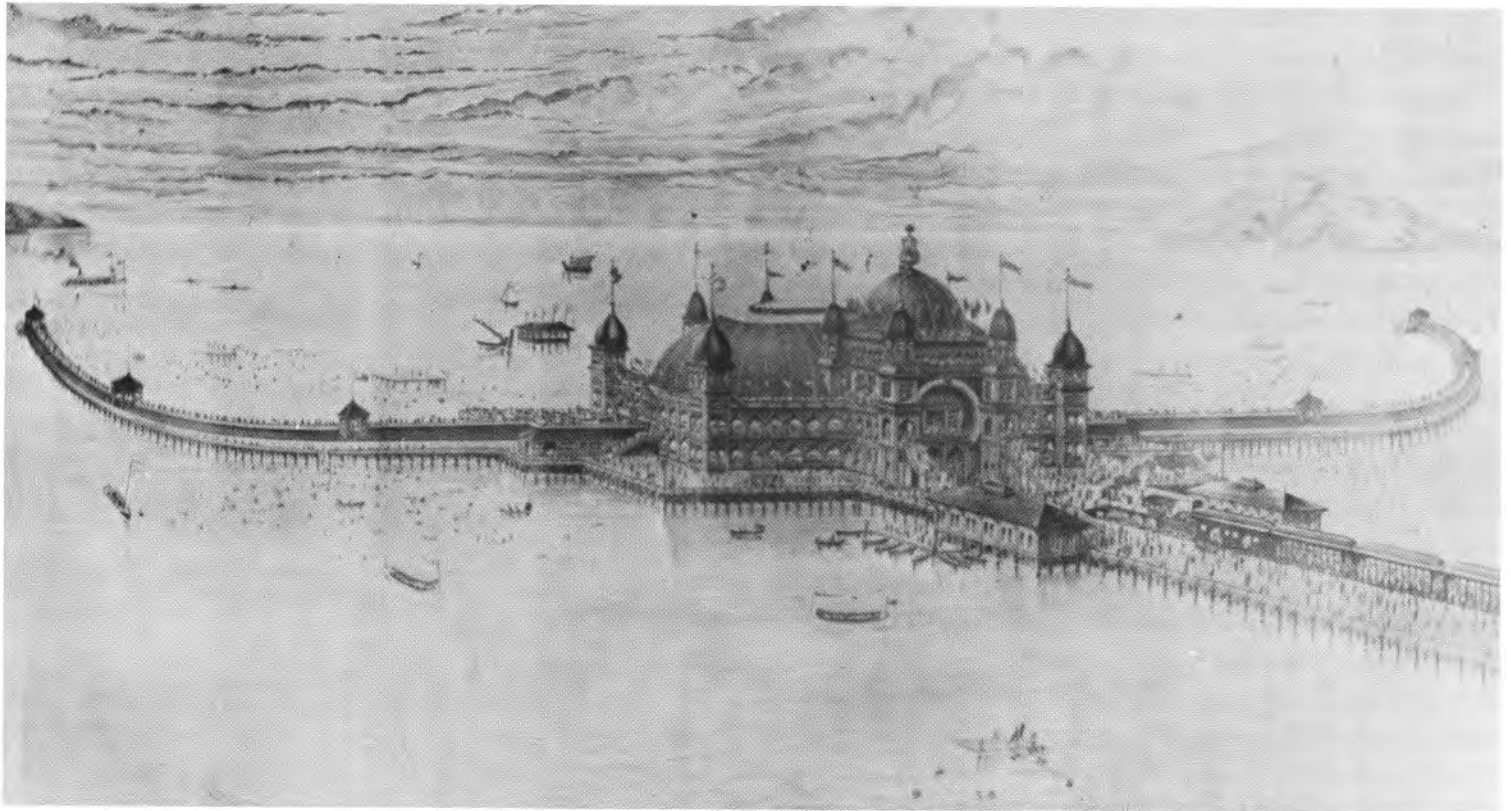
In September 1891, two months after the establishment of the beach company, the same Mormon leaders and Matthew White and Abraham H. Cannon, a Mormon apostle and son of George Q. Cannon, formed the Saltair Railway Company to build a railroad from Salt Lake City to Saltair. The company was soon renamed the Salt Lake and Los Angeles Railway Company, reflecting an intention to eventually extend the line all the way to California.

The Mormon church established Saltair in an effort to provide a wholesome place of recreation under church control for Mormons, particularly families and young people. For the previous ten years or so church officials had been concerned about "pleasure resorts" and their harmful influence on members of the Mormon church, especially young men and women. In 1883, for example, the church-owned *Deseret News* warned parents that "to allow children of either sex of tender years to go unprotected to pleasure resorts where all classes mingle indiscriminately is criminal." Resorts, it continued, exposed Mormon children "to the villainous arts of practiced voluptuaries" and "degraded character destroyers" who sought to "overthrow" the Mormon church.³ Church officials were particularly distressed about the resort at Garfield, which non-Mormons owned and operated.

According to apostle Abraham H. Cannon, Saltair was intended for “our people” so that “they can have a place to go and bathe, if they so desire, without being mixed up with the rough element which frequents Garfield.”⁴

The Mormon church intended as well that Saltair be the “Coney Island of the West,” and it was advertised as that before its completion and for many years afterward. By the late nineteenth century commercial amusement parks were increasingly popular in the United States. Made possible by rapidly growing urban populations, and spurred by the development of electric trolley systems, they reached their height in the first two decades of the twentieth century when other forms of mass entertainment such as movies, dance halls, and spectator sports also expanded rapidly. By 1919 there were an estimated 1500 amusement parks across the country. The best-known and the most elaborate was New York’s Coney Island. A quiet seaside resort in the years before the Civil War, it had become “the top banana of amusement parks” by the turn of the century and was attracting more than ten million visitors annually.⁵ Coney Island’s carnival atmosphere became the model for all other parks. Its popular entertainments included swimming, dancing, music, variety shows, catch-penny games, shooting galleries, stunts, food vendors, mechanical rides of all kinds, and circus sideshows.⁶

The Mormon church’s effort to establish a “Coney Island” on the Great Salt Lake was part of a larger movement toward accommodation with American society that had begun in the early 1890s. Throughout the nineteenth century most Americans viewed the Mormon church with suspicion because of its commitment to polygamy, theocracy, and communalism. In the late 1890s church authorities made a conscious decision to bring the church into the mainstream of American life, a commitment they maintained and intensified in the twentieth century. Their decision followed the federal government’s passage in the 1880s of two pieces of legislation: the Edmunds Act of 1882, which outlawed the practice of plural marriage, denied the right to vote or hold public office to people who either practiced



Richard Kletting's drawing of Saltair, 1892.

polygamy or believed in it, and placed much of the government of Utah Territory in the hands of a five-person presidential commission; and the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, under which Mormon church property was made liable to confiscation and the church itself was disincorporated. In the face of these pressures, Mormon President Wilford Woodruff issued a "Manifesto" in 1890 proclaiming an end to the performance of plural marriages. A year later the church dissolved its People's Party and divided the Mormon population between the Democratic and Republican parties. In the next few years it gave up its efforts to establish a self-sufficient cooperative economy. It discontinued the promotion of cooperative enterprises, sold most church-owned businesses to private individuals, operated those busi-

nesses it did not sell as income-producing ventures rather than as shared community enterprises, and began a process of participation in and accommodation to the national economy.⁷

Mormon officials saw Saltair as a way of demonstrating Utah's new sense of national identity. When church leaders and others talked about the importance of Saltair as an "advertising agent" spreading Utah's "name and fame," they meant both that Utah was a place of modern recreational opportunities and that it was no longer a strange, isolated land of curious people and practices.

Mormon leaders wanted to have the best of both worlds—Saltair was to be both a typical American amusement park and a place that provided a safe and wholesome environment for Mormon patrons. In less than a decade, though, the first goal had clearly triumphed over the second. Nevertheless, initially Saltair signified the Mormon church's intention at the turn of the century to join the world and at the same time minimize its influences and avoid its excesses.

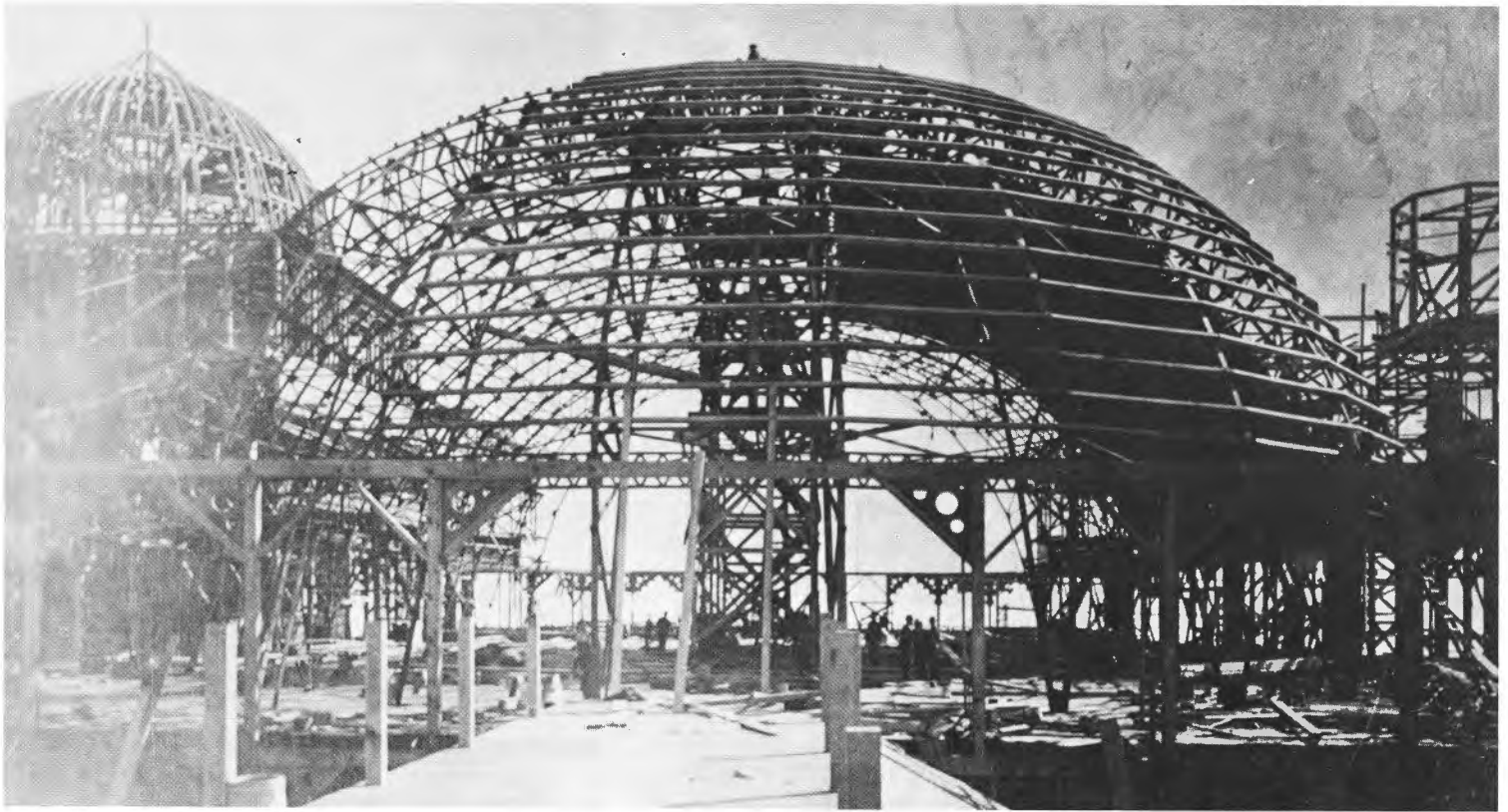
Construction of the railroad to Saltair began in May 1892 and was completed in September, and a few days later church officials announced that architect Richard K. A. Kletting's drawings for the new Saltair resort had been approved.

Kletting was one of Utah's most important architects from the late nineteenth century until his death in 1943. Born in Germany in 1858, he worked on several major European projects including the Sacré Coeur at Montmartre before settling in Utah in 1883. Today he is best known as the architect of the Utah State Capitol Building, completed in 1916, but he also designed the State Mental Hospital at Provo, and the original Salt Palace, the *Deseret News* Building, the McIntyre Building, and the New York Hotel in Salt Lake City.⁸

Construction on Saltair began in January 1893. It was built on a platform over the water held up by twenty-five-hundred ten-foot pilings of native pine, each ten inches in diameter and placed twelve feet apart. Driving the pilings into the lake bottom, which was composed of an initial foot of loose sand and then extremely dense sodium sulphate, was the most difficult part of construction. After experi-



Richard and Mary Kletting and family.



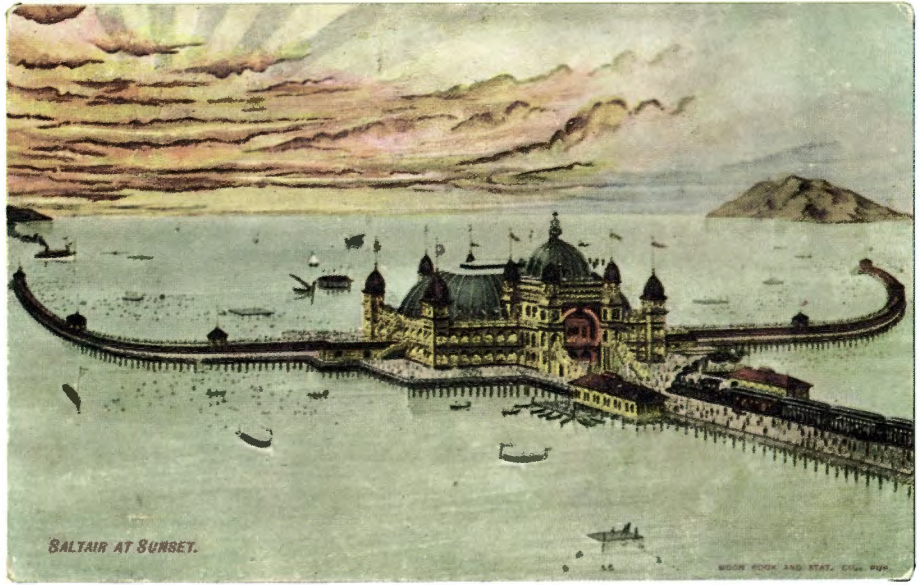
Work began on Saltair pavilion in February 1893 and was finished in May. The dome was similar in size and shape to the Salt Lake Tabernacle. Three hundred tons of steel girders supported it.

menting with several methods, workers hit upon the idea of forcing steam through pipes to temporarily dissolve the lake bottom at points where posts were to be sunk. After a few hours the sodium hardened again, and the posts were virtually immovable. Construction proceeded rapidly and was completed by the end of May.

When finished, Saltair was an architectural wonder. Wings on either side of the grand central pavilion extended crescentlike into the lake. The entire complex measured more than 1100 feet from tip to tip. The pavilion itself was about 250 by 140 feet and rose more than 100 feet skyward. Three hundred tons of steel girders supported its large, shallow dome, which was similar in size and shape to the Mormon church's Tabernacle on Salt Lake City's Temple Square. At

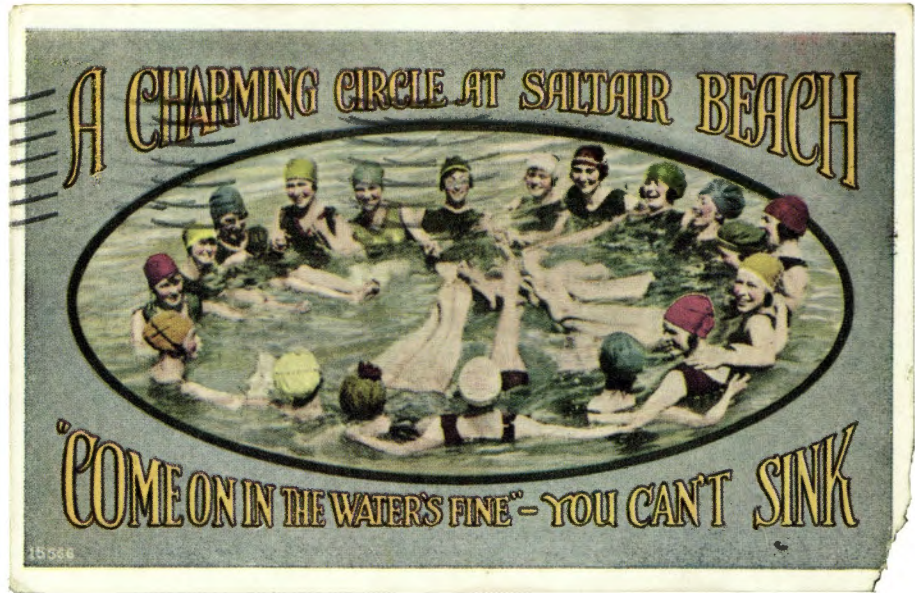


"Saltair, about 1920," by Ken Baxter.



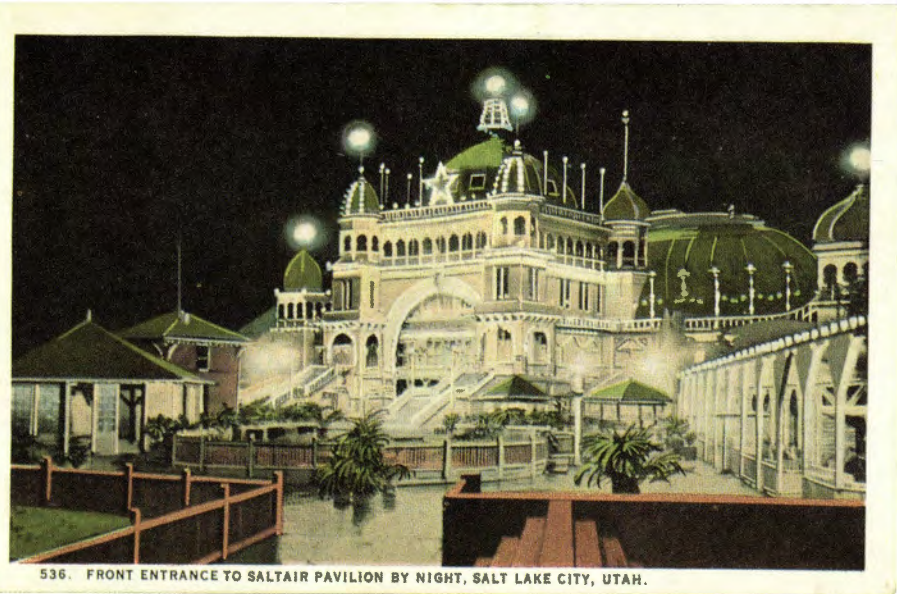


No. 3. The Laundry Girls, Great Salt Lake.

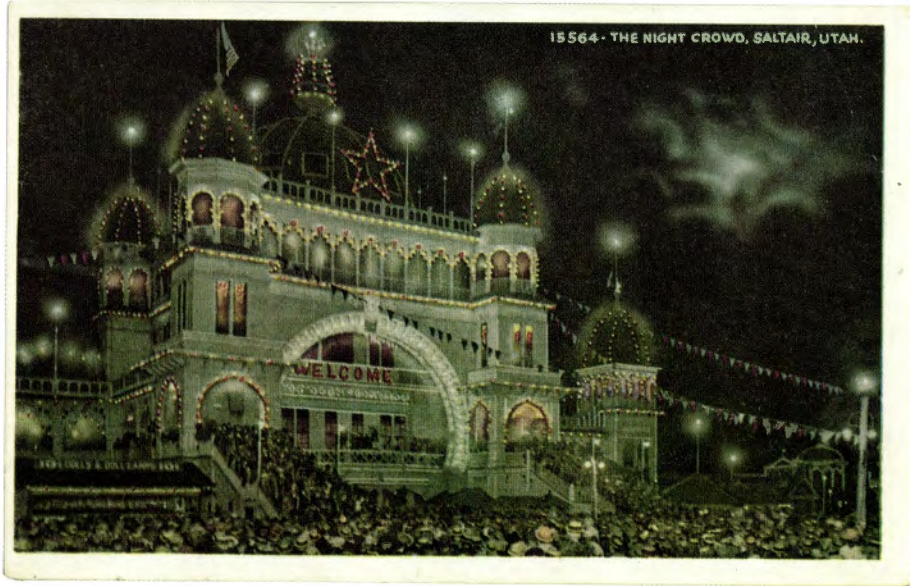




PAVILION AND HIPPODROME, GREAT SALT LAKE,
UTAH BY NIGHT



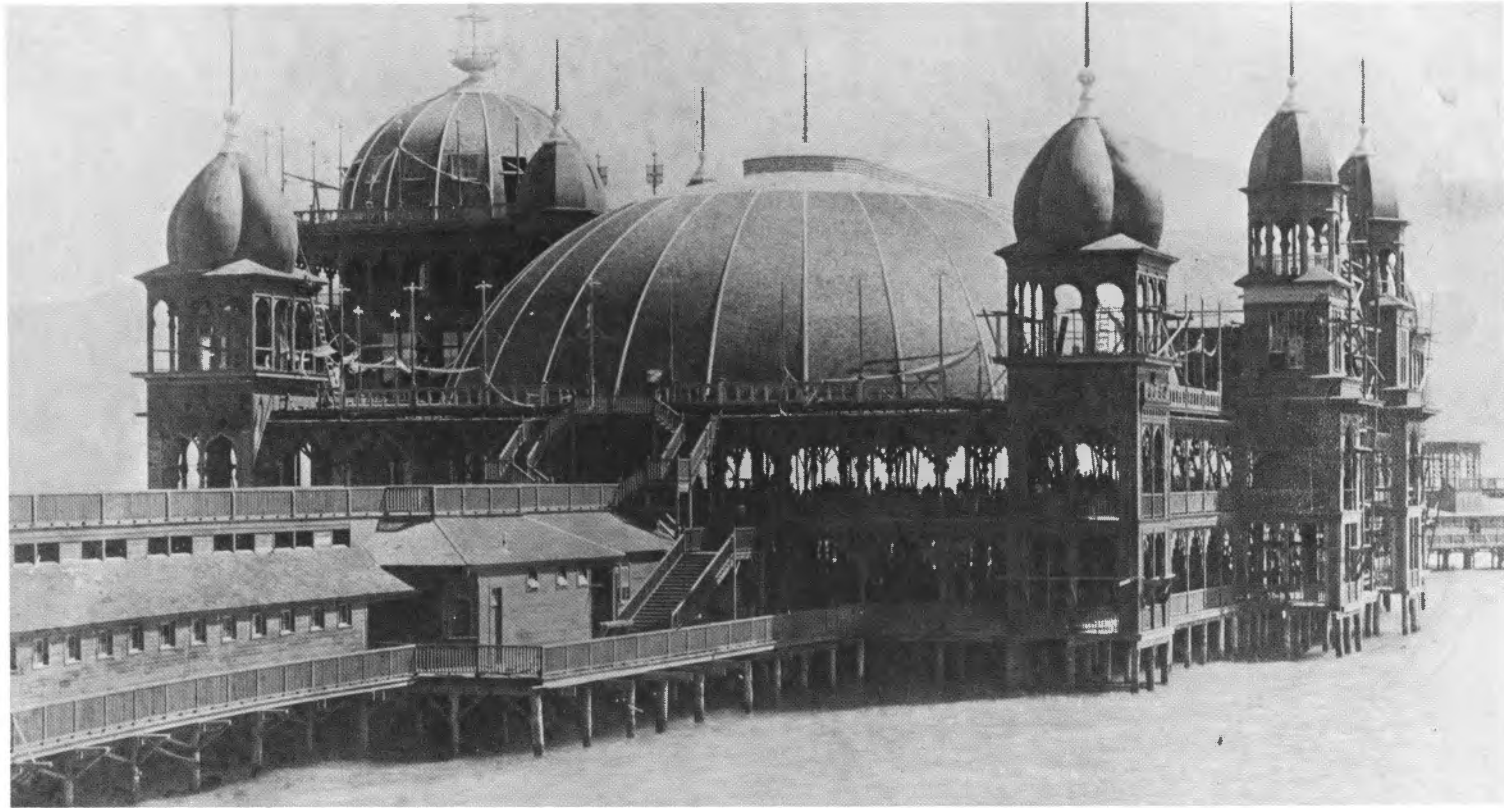
536. FRONT ENTRANCE TO SALTAIR PAVILION BY NIGHT, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.



15564 - THE NIGHT CROWD, SALTAIR, UTAH.



Pavillon at Saltair, Salt Lake, Utah



each corner were six-sided domes. Farther out bud-shaped onion domes graced two and three levels of arched and ornate trelliswork. Tall mosquelike towers in the middle of each wing and at each end added to Saltair's exotic atmosphere. A huge central archway announced the entrance to the pavilion. Thousands of lights studded the complex, and at night the building became a dazzling spectacle. Its Moorish design reflected an architectural style popular in the last half of the nineteenth century. Earlier Kletting had designed airy arches framed by patterned screens for the pavilion at Lake Park, and his sketchbook was filled with Near Eastern drawings. Saltair sprang from the same oriental inspiration.⁹

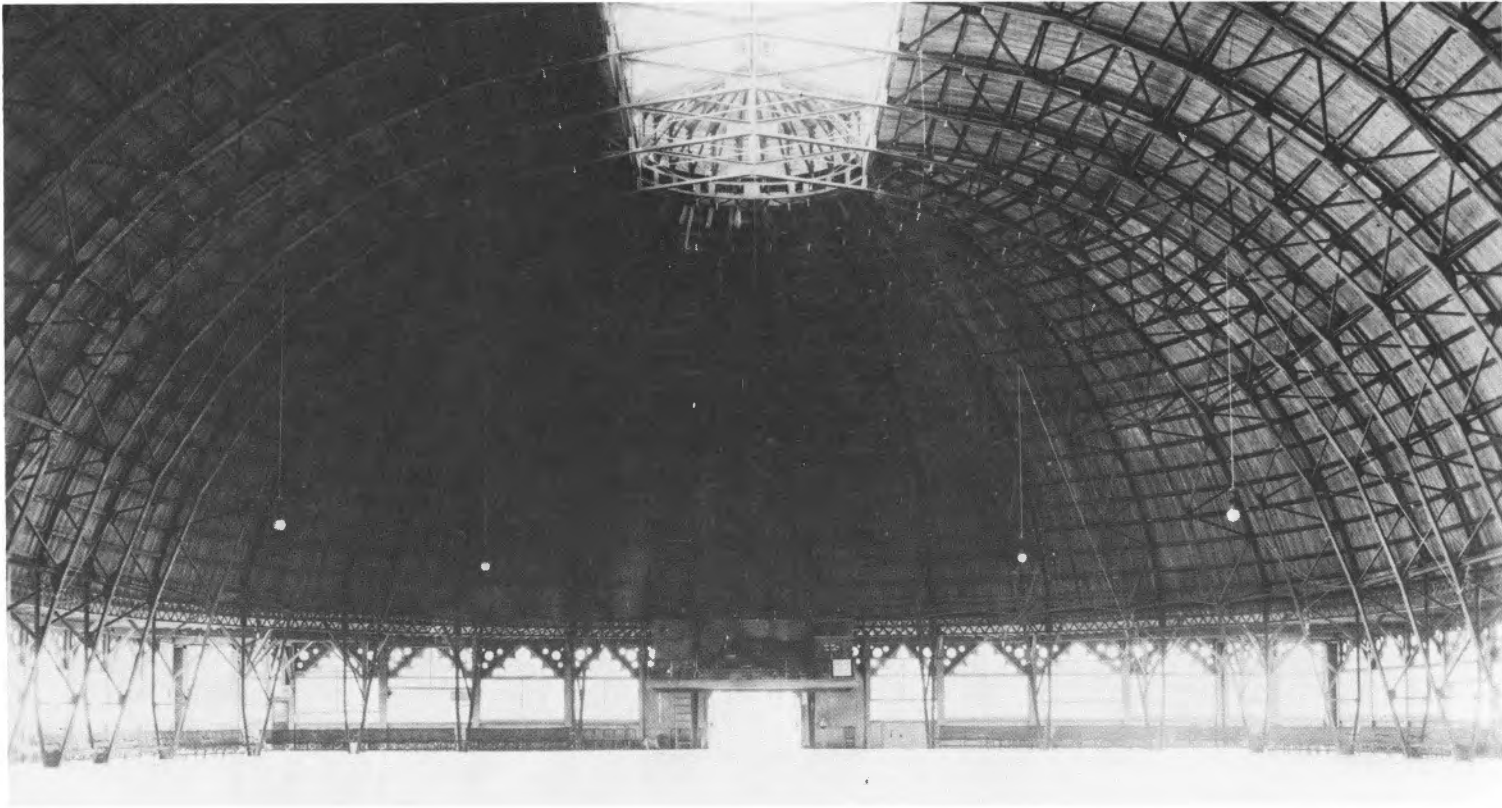
Picnic and luncheon areas, a restaurant, snack bars, and rest-

Scaffolding on the right side of the pavilion is all that remained of signs of construction. Saltair officially opened on June 8, 1893.



The first floor of the pavilion was used as a picnic area where people could bring their own lunch or dinner.

rooms were on the first floor of the pavilion. The grand staircases rose to "a large and magnificent dancing hall, dressing rooms, clubrooms, and ladies' and gents' parlors" on the second level. The wings were two stories high and about thirty feet wide. On the first levels were walkways with rows of bathhouses—300 "double compartments" on either side. At frequent intervals stairs led down to the water so that, the *Deseret News* said, bathers could go into the lake "unseen by the mighty crowd of spectators and avoid the light remarks and ridicule of the vulgar and unrefined if clad in the too often abbreviated and unsightly bathing suit."¹⁰ The second levels of the wings were promenades where strollers could watch bathers "sporting in the Brine" or view the magnificent sunsets for which the Great Salt Lake was fam-



ous. A plaza in front of the pavilion accommodated concessions, the midway, and crowds arriving and departing from the railroad terminal.

In designing Saltair, Kletting's intention—and the intention of architects of amusement parks across the country—was to create an “architecture of escape and pleasure.” It was not enough that an amusement park have a variety of individual attractions. It was necessary to create an environment that sustained a festive spirit. Buildings of American amusement parks were typically grand, but not solemn, and they featured a profusion of arches, towers, curves, bright colors, rich ornament, and an abundance of detail, all designed to stimulate visitors, even overwhelm them, temporarily transporting them out of their everyday world into another realm.¹¹ As the *Deseret*

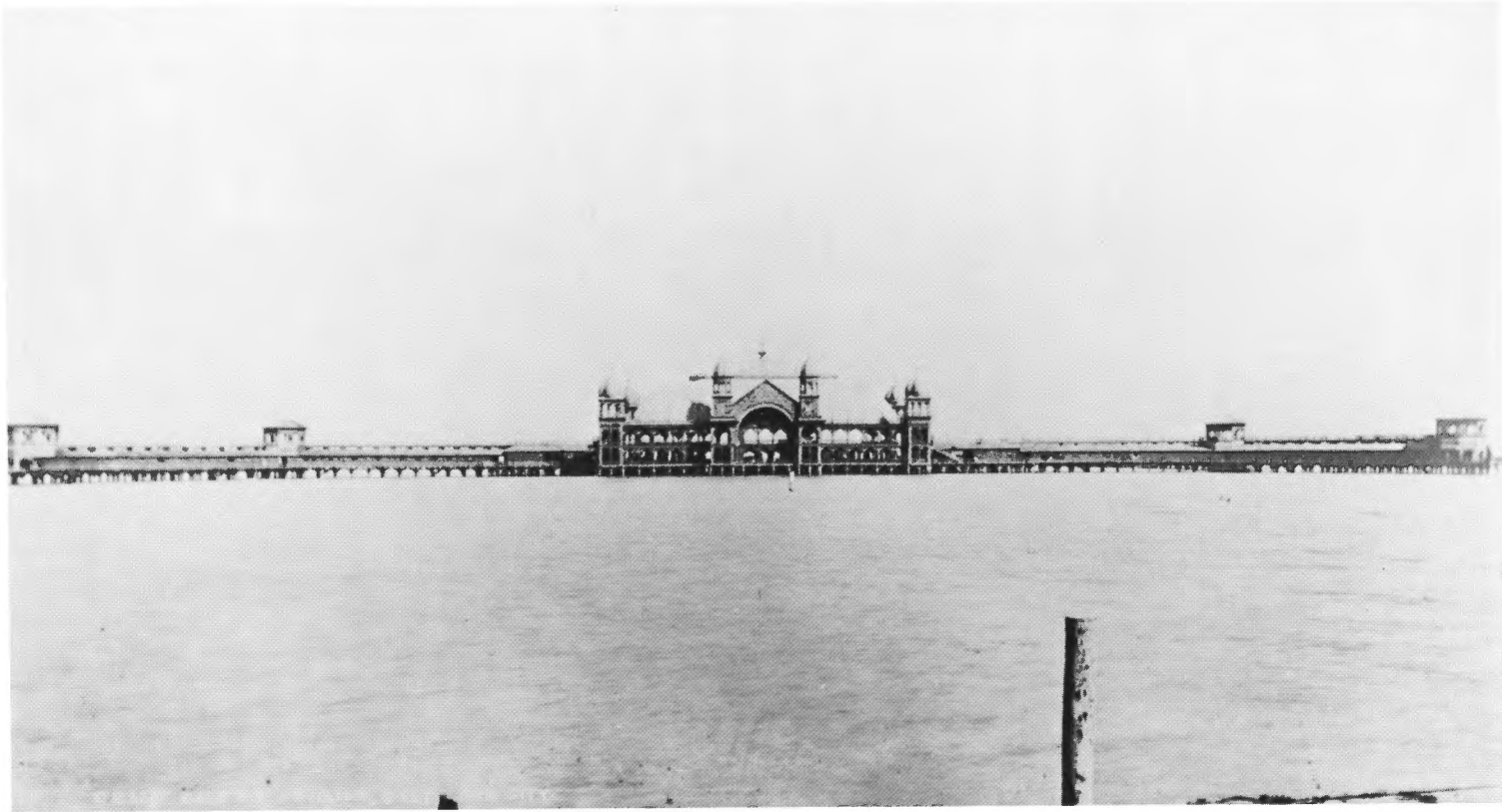
The dance hall at Saltair. The dome-shaped hall transmitted sound to dancers anywhere on the floor.



Entrance to Saltair. Railroad cars unloaded at the gate.

News suggested at Saltair's opening, it had just that effect: "The magnificent pavilion, rising, Venice-like, out of the waves in stupendous and graceful beauty, deepened in its semi-Moorish architectural lines, the suspicion that what one saw was not firm structural reality but rather a delightful oriental dream."

Saltair opened to the public on Memorial Day 1893 and was officially dedicated on June 8. An estimated 10,000 people were there, with many arriving on special trains from Logan, Ogden, Provo, and other outlying areas. The main speaker at the ceremonies was Territorial Governor Caleb W. West. He repeated the long-standing myth, still prevalent today, that the Salt Lake Valley was a barren desert when Mormon settlers arrived in 1847, but said that it had since been



transformed into a place of "fertility and productiveness, progress and prosperity." In his view the construction of Saltair was a further step in that direction, a proof of what "manly vigor and determination" could do. More important, Saltair's construction meant that people in the rest of the country, particularly Easterners, who commonly charged Utah with being "out of civilization," would no longer be able to say that. "Magnificent Saltair," he said, proved otherwise.¹²

Saltair soon after completion, viewed from the west.

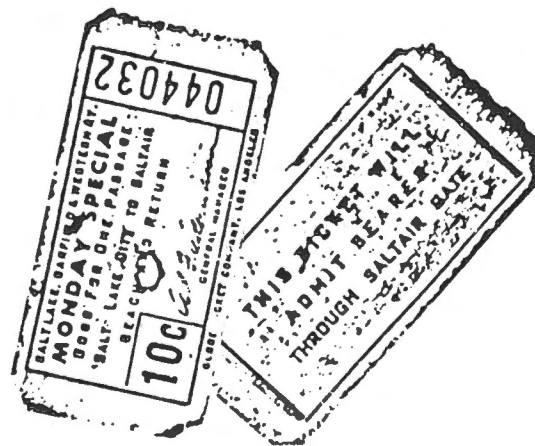


The Golden Years 1893-1924

Saltair was extremely popular from the first. People flocked there, making Saltair their summer outing place. Sometimes they made a day of it. They rode the train out early in the morning, bringing picnic lunches and dinners, changes of clothing and swimming paraphernalia; then, weary but exhilarated after a day of swimming, dancing, picnicking and rides, they climbed aboard the midnight train back to Salt Lake. Often, because Saltair was so close and the journey there so convenient, Salt Lake residents went for only a couple of hours, frequently after work for a short swim and a walk around the pavilion. Total attendance the first season was a little more than 100,000 (the population of Salt Lake City at the time was less than 50,000). By 1906 attendance had more than doubled to 250,000. In 1915 it was 300,000 and in 1919 reached 450,000. The largest crowds each year came on holidays—Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, the Twenty-fourth of July (the local pioneer day, celebrating the founding of the Mormon settlement), and Labor Day. During the first season daily attendance averaged 1000 people, but on the Fourth of July, 11,000 people came. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, "If anybody was absent from Saltair yesterday he wasn't missed. . . . At meal hours the lunch floor got the Surge when a 'howling mass' of humanity, that sounded like a roaring cataract, gathered around the tables, bars, and counters." The dance floor, the *Tribune* continued, "was thronged, and the dancing room was markedly curtailed by the pressure from the crowds in the circumference." So many people wanted to go swimming that by noon every available suit had been

"Carl McMillan and Laura Ford, charged with having committed fornication at Saltair on last Monday evening, were given a preliminary examination yesterday before Commissioner Sommer. . . . The officers stated that the couple, though not discovered in the act charged, were found under suspicious circumstances on the north pier. The defendants, when put on the stand, contended that their relations with each other on the occasion were not criminal, but merely those of proper lovers."

Salt Lake Tribune, August 31, 1895.



A round-trip ticket to Saltair on the Salt Lake, Garfield, and Western Railway.



Getting ready for a day at Saltair meant taking chairs, lunch, dinner, and clothes for swimming, dancing, and travel.

"Once they ran out of long black stockings that went with every bathing suit, and how was I to get from my dressing room into the water with my bare legs showing? It was a problem I solved by having two of the girls walk real close by me until I got down the steps into the water."

Abbie Rees Madsen, in Salt Lake Tribune, September 4, 1968.

rented. "As the suits became exhausted only the large and small sizes were left, and they were eagerly grabbed by the besiegers of the suit booths. Men attired in boys' pants that pressed like elastic and showed plenty of the thighs; thin women wearing no. 42 suits into which a dozen pillows might easily have been stowed to fill surplus space; one man of some 250 pounds creating unbounded laughter by parading down the ladies' pier in white underclothing, or something that looked strikingly like it."¹

Saltair's appeal was its liberating atmosphere. It provided a temporary escape from everyday routine and convention, a distinctive environment that encouraged behavior not appropriate elsewhere.² And the railroad fare to Saltair was always low. Originally fifty cents



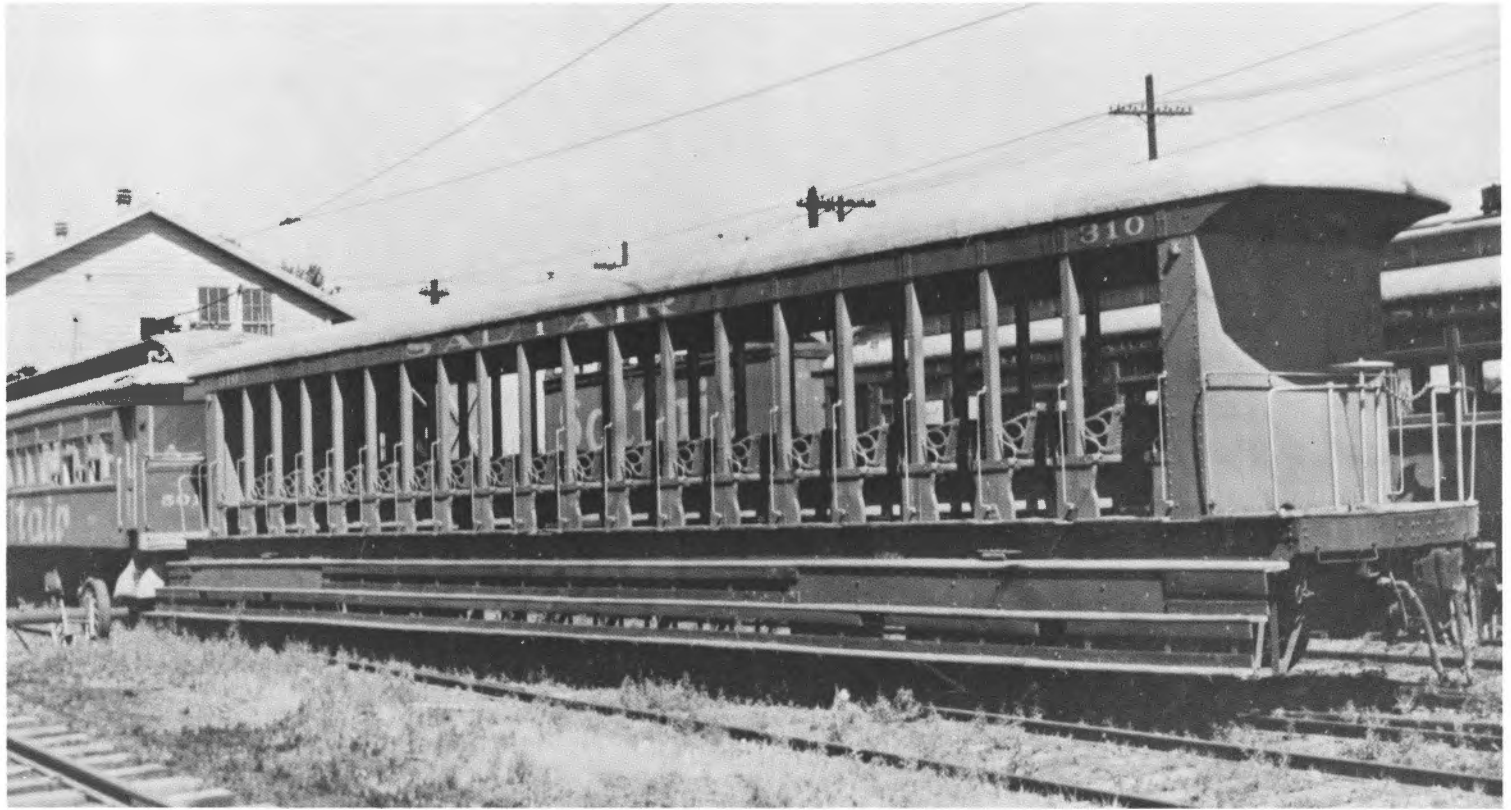
for a round-trip ride, which included admission to the resort itself, it was in reach of most people, and company officials deliberately kept fares down to increase patronage. Lagoon, in contrast, adopted a different policy. In 1903 it raised its train fare to fifty cents each way, double that of Saltair's, and the next year announced that it had no intention of lowering it. "It has given us only the best class of patronage," owner Simon Bamberger said, "and even though the crowds have not been as large as last year, they have been of the class we want and are really more profitable to us."³

The train ride to Saltair was not only inexpensive, it was also fun. Wallace Stegner remembered riding in the open excursion cars, watching the approaching city lights and the mountains behind them,

Trains went to and from Saltair every forty-five minutes beginning at 9:30 A.M. The last train back to Salt Lake City left Saltair at midnight.

"George Vincent and T. R. Smith, two young men who went in bathing at Saltair on Sunday without first donning suitable costumes, were sent to jail for thirty days by Justice of the Peace Margetts yesterday."

Salt Lake Tribune, July 13, 1897.



Open-air cars roared along at 30 mph clanging their bells.

"Automobiles had not yet become commonly owned, and the open-air railway coaches filled to overflowing with jolly couples will never be forgotten. Many a romance started with a man's clean handkerchief removing a cinder from a lady's eye."

Joseph S. Nelson, "When Saltair was a Jewel."

feeling the night wind and experiencing the salt flat smells. "Necking couples sat on the steps eyed with disapproval by matrons in charge of large families. Boys worked their way fore and aft along the cars, risking their necks and interrupting the neckers. Whole cars sometimes burst spontaneously into song. If we were lucky, a moon would have floated free of the Wasatch and would be washing the broad valley with silver. Sometimes we came in like an old-fashioned hayride, the little kids asleep, the lovers quiet, the singers all sung out."⁴

The Mormon church regularly endorsed Saltair and counseled its members to patronize it. In June 1902, following Saltair's decision not to sell "intoxicating drinks" that season, the church's Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA) and its Young Ladies'



Mutual Improvement Association (YWMIA) issued a joint statement urging “our membership, in all the stakes of Zion, to patronize Saltair with their pleasure excursions, in preference to other resorts where intoxicants are sold.”⁵ The *Deseret News* did the same. In an editorial the same year it said that Mormons had a “duty to themselves, to their families, and to the church” to patronize Saltair.⁶

There was another factor contributing to Saltair’s popularity—the moderation of the extreme division that had existed between Mormons and non-Mormons in the nineteenth century. A basic feature of life in Utah, almost from the moment of its founding in 1847, had been the division of the population into two opposing groups, Mormons and non-Mormons, those inside the Kingdom and those

Saltair was advertised as a wholesome family resort where “rowdies” were unwelcome.

“‘Big Joe Smith,’ a tall, splendid athlete, took over, mainly to suppress any rowdyism that might flare up. The obstreperous ones became docile when ‘Big Joe’ slid his third finger down the backs of their shirt collars and gave a tightening twist as he marched them off.”

George S. Nelson, “My Intimate Old Friend, Saltair.”



Saltair sunbathers, fully clothed, around the turn of the century.

"The navy blue and black 'brilliantine' bathing suits, which we rented for twenty-five cents, had bloomers that came below our knees. Some of the women's bloomers had a short skirt or 'flounce' over them and when they got wet they were as heavy as lead. We wore bathing caps made of a rubber material that would almost float us if we got salt water under them. The mens' suits were modest knee length and their chests had to be covered."

Allie H. Packer, in Deseret News, June 28, 1975.

outside it. By the late nineteenth century it was perhaps Utah's most striking feature. Prior to Woodruff's Manifesto, there were no national political parties in Utah—only the church People's Party and the "anti-church" Liberal Party. Two school systems existed, a predominantly Mormon public school system and a mainly non-Mormon private one. Fraternal and commercial organizations did not cross religious lines; Mormons and non-Mormons sometimes even celebrated national holidays like the Fourth of July separately. By the early twentieth century hostility, though it still existed and still affected almost every public issue, had moderated considerably. Saltair clearly benefitted from the new spirit of toleration, attracting Mormons and non-Mormons alike; it also promoted it. Groups holding

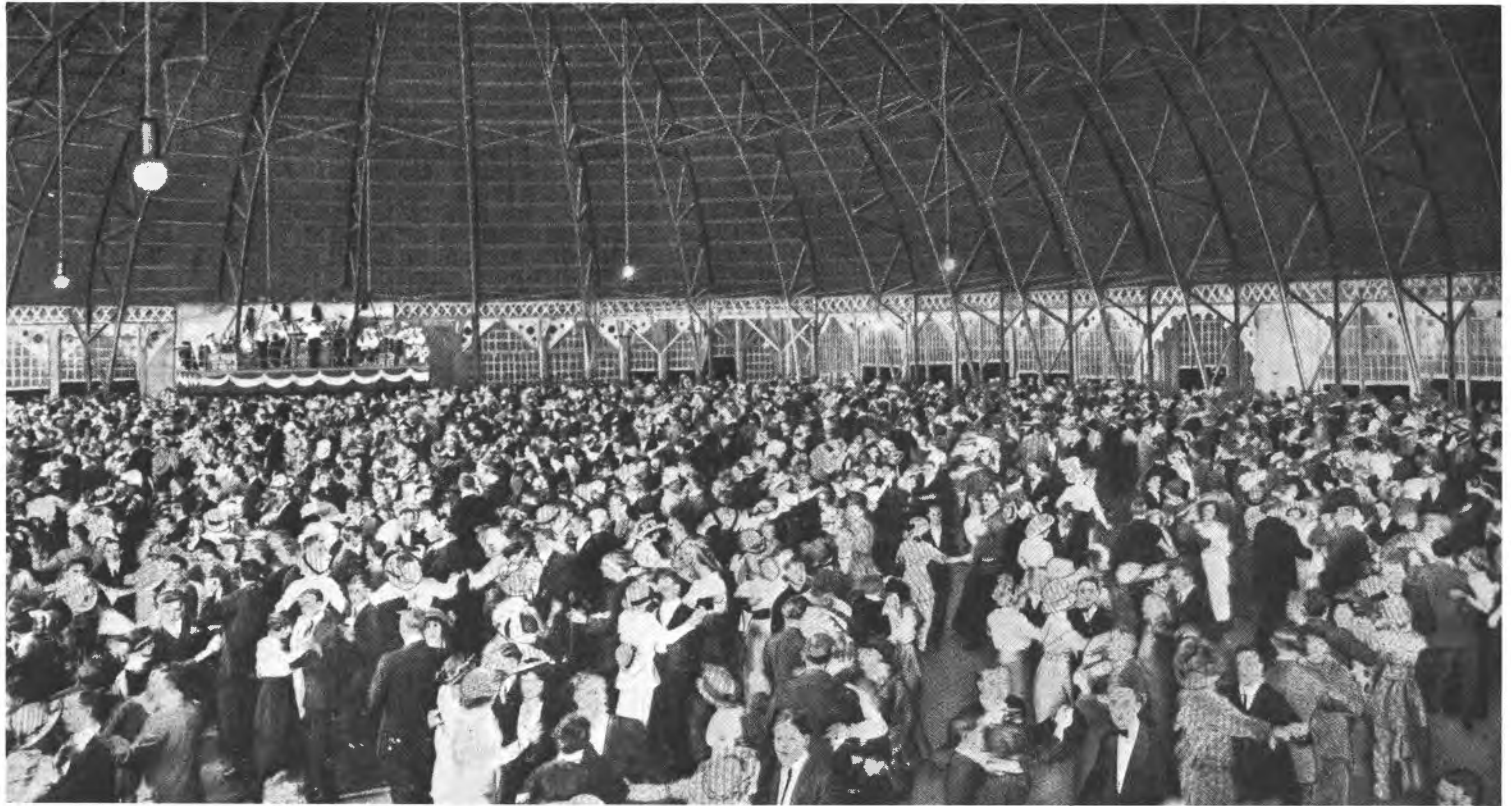


outings there in 1893, for example, included the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the Salt Lake Eleventh LDS Ward, the Salt Lake YMMIA, the International Order of Odd Fellows, the Ancient Order of United Workmen, the Railway Switchmen's Union, and the National Real Estate Exchange.

When it opened Saltair's main attractions were swimming and dancing. Swimming at Saltair was an event—people loved bobbing around like a cork and having their pictures taken with their feet out of the water. On ordinary days hundreds of people, and on weekends and special occasions thousands, swam at Saltair.

People also loved to dance. Saltair's dance floor was advertised as the largest in the world, and it may have been, though Coney Island's

Swimming was one of the major attractions at Saltair. Bathing clothes and towels could be rented and usually were, except by "two young men, who," the Tribune reported, "went in bathing at Saltair on Sunday without first donning suitable costumes," and were sent to jail for thirty days (July 13, 1897).



Dancers at the Saltair pavilion in 1914.

Advertisement, 1916.

Moon-Light Night
BEGINS
TUESDAY, APRIL 11



There's no
full moon above
let's find the
time to love!
The music will
sure be right.
So there—EVERY
TUESDAY NIGHT

Dreamland also advertised its ballroom as the world's largest. On special occasions two bands played, one at each end of the floor, one picking up when the other stopped so that dancing was continuous. Couples customarily danced the first and last dances with each other and changed partners in between. Those who forgot and danced cheek-to-cheek were asked to leave the floor. Once they banned the Charleston "for fear all those people coming down hard on the down-beat would shake the whole pavilion into the lake."⁷ In an effort to attract even more dancers Saltair offered free dancing lessons. In 1914 they were given every Saturday afternoon. According to instructor "Professor" William Woodward, "Before the summer is over, more people in Salt Lake will be dancing the new and modern steps than



in any western city.”⁸ The dances he taught included the maxixe, the tango, the hesitation waltz, and the crown prince waltz. Dancing was so popular that at the turn of the century Saltair began holding regular pre-season and post-season dances, usually twice weekly for the two months before the resort opened for the summer and the two months after it closed. Christian Christensen’s Orchestra played regularly from the time Saltair opened until the early twentieth century. Harry A. Montgomery followed him, and from 1917 until 1924 R. Owen Sweeten’s “Jazziferous Band” played.

During its first season Saltair had a variety of food and refreshment stands, rowboats, an excursion boat christened the *Talula* (which made a three-mile trip around the lake), something called a

Owen Sweeten’s band played at Saltair from 1917 to 1923.

“Our pre-season dances starting in April averaged 5,000 persons every Saturday night,” Mr. Sweeten remembers. “Transportation cost 35 cents for a round trip and there were three trains each with sixteen cars, and each car carried 100 people. Every half hour the train would come in and they were hanging on the cars. It was quite a sight to see that huge crowd coming down the pier.”

R. Owen Sweeten, Salt Lake Tribune Home Magazine, June 18, 1961.



Saltair's Ship Cafe. It could seat nearly one thousand people.

"Best Bottled Goods Always on Hand at SALT-AIR BEACH BAR."

*Advertising brochure, 1900,
Utah State Historical Society.*

"Cosmerama," and a merry-go-round, a standard feature of American amusement parks. It also had a bar that served beer and liquor operated by Charles Auer, who owned the Occidental Saloon in Salt Lake City. Like many of the concessionaires at Saltair, Auer did not own the bar, but leased it from the Saltair Beach Company and paid back a percentage of his gross receipts.

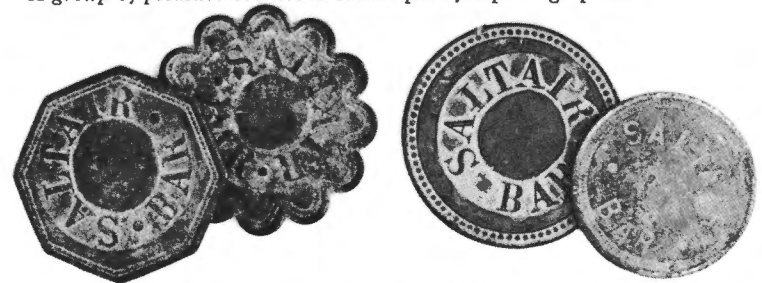
Company officials originally intended that liquor not be sold at Saltair, but changed their minds before the resort opened. They also changed their minds about not opening on Sunday, even though only a year earlier the *Deseret News* had criticized the owners of the Garfield resort for lowering Sunday rates in an effort to attract Sunday business.⁹ Thus, from the time Saltair opened, as Leonard J. Arrington



points out, the Mormon church found itself “in the embarrassing position of owning a resort which served liquor and having in the interests of profit to work up patronage for it.”¹⁰

Throughout the 1890s Saltair’s bar was periodically closed when Mormon church groups held outings there. In January 1901, following a recommendation of the church’s First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles, Saltair’s management decided not to sell liquor at the resort during the next season but to allow people to bring their own liquor with them if they chose. They subsequently decided to adopt the same policy for the 1902 and then the 1903 season. In 1904 company officials leased the entire resort to Mormon businessman Jeremiah Langford who announced that under his management a bar

A group of pleasure-seekers at Saltair pose for photographer.



“Drink the Best — FISHER’S BEER — Utah’s Favorite. Sold at Saltair at 20¢ Bottle.”

*Advertising brochure, 1900,
Utah State Historical Society.*



A crowded day at Saltair around 1918. Concessions in the background advertise Baby Dolls, Barking Dogs, and Silk Pillows for 10¢. Free Sunday concerts were given by Sweeten's military band.

"It cannot be denied that many a fall dates from bad associations at pleasure resorts. Many a young man or woman has been led astray as a consequence of acquaintances at such places, and the indulgence of that which is forbidden."

Deseret News, June 12, 1902.

would once again operate at Saltair. Two years later, in May 1906, the church sold Saltair to a group of private individuals, including Langford, Charles W. Nibley, Joseph Nelson, and Nephi W. Clayton, because, according to the *Deseret News*, it had long been caught on the horns of a dilemma. Allowing liquor to be sold increasingly attracted "disreputable, rowdy" people, but closing the bar simply meant that people brought their own liquor, and more liquor was consumed than when the bar operated. The only solution, the *News* said, was for the church to get out of the resort business.

Saltair offered more than swimming and dancing, and its other attractions became increasingly popular. New attractions were added nearly every year. For the 1894 season billiard rooms and gambling

devices, referred to as "nickel-in-the-slot machines," were brought in. The next year saw the addition of a number of midway games, including Bagatelle, which was played with a cue and balls on an oblong table that had cups or cups and arches at one end, and a "Nigger Babies" ball game, in which a person tried to knock down weighted dolls with a thrown baseball. "Come on, now. Knock 'em down," the barker cried. "Four balls for a dime. A great big pack of gum with every doll down." In 1899 free silent, or "flickering," movies were shown every night.

One of the biggest early attractions was the roller coaster, also known as the giant racer, and sometimes advertised at Saltair as The Ride Through the Clouds. In 1884 Coney Island installed the first roller coaster in the United States. By the early twentieth century it was a fixture in amusement parks across the country, and each new one tried to outdo the others in height, length, speed, and thrills. Saltair had one by at least 1914 and in 1919 advertised it as "the largest roller coaster ever erected in Utah and one of the largest in the West."¹¹

Another popular attraction was Ye Olde Mill. More familiar by the 1930s as the Tunnel of Love, couples rode boats through dark, quiet waterways, occasionally getting a glimpse of a scene, but mostly staying in the dark. A large water wheel located at the entrance of the tunnel kept the water flowing.

Saltair's regular attractions for the 1915 season included automatic baseball, motor boats, six bowling alleys, the roller coaster, Ye Olde Mill, a fish pond, a ferris wheel, a moccasin wheel, a Gee Whiz (known today as the funhouse), laughing parlors, a merry-go-round, Ping-Pong parlors, spot-the-spots, a pennant wheel, several pool halls, a photograph gallery, a penny arcade, a silk hose wheel, and a shooting gallery.¹²

In 1916 a roller skating rink and a surfboard ride were added. Paddle boats, captive airplanes, and a bike-go-round (a device similar to a merry-go-round with bicycles on a circular platform that revolved at "motordome speed") were added in 1919, and in 1924 a Dinty

"They had those kewpie dolls, and they were so cute, and they had all those feathers around them. Every time we'd go out Dad would always win us a kewpie doll."

*Georgiana Patterson, Interview,
September 10, 1984*

"The merry-go-round played the Merry Widow waltz all day long to the delight of the children and to the dismay of the employees who worked nearby."

*George S. Nelson, "World Famous
Saltair Brought Millions to Utah."*

"I worked on many jobs at Saltair. When I was about 14 I ran the turnstiles at the bathing gate. On days when I ran through about 4,000 bathers I found it rather trying to answer all the questions, make change, insert quarters into the slot to release the turnstile and turn the gate to get the patrons through unbruised. But I took the sign down when a young woman looked at it thoughtfully and then asked, 'Will you please tell me what you mean by an 'unnecessary question?'"

*George S. Nelson, "World Famous
Saltair Brought Millions to Utah."*

"When the Wright brothers gained national fame, father engaged their services to fly their heavier-than-air machine at Saltair. This attracted large crowds. There were anxious moments when it seemed uncertain whether the machine would clear the five-foot fence at the other end of the field and there were cheers when the craft flew about eighty feet above the ground for a few minutes."

George S. Nelson, "World Famous Saltair Brought Millions to Utah."

"Saltair is so beautiful and it has so many attractions. Only when you go out there, girls, always have some older person with you to watch and care for you all. It is not meet nor proper for our girls to go even to Saltair alone or with other girls as young and thoughtless as themselves. When you go, let the loveliness and purity of nature enter your soul, and strengthen it for the cares of your home life. Seek to enjoy it spiritually as well as physically. Only so can you get the greatest good from that magnificent sea palace, Saltair."

Young Woman's Journal,
6 (June 1895): 432

"Then there was the very proper, dignified dancing master, Mr. Robinson, who walked the dance floor with an eagle eye to see that no dancing partners danced close together. But a new era was coming. When the Charleston caught on, Mr. Robinson gave up in despair."

George S. Nelson, "My Intimate Old Friend, Saltair."

Moore Walk Thru, a simulated coal mine, dodg'ems, the Swanee River, and the African Dip joined the bill.

Amusement parks had difficulty maintaining their patrons' interest and constantly had to provide new, fresh entertainments. "Novelty, that's the answer," said Sam Gumpertz, long-time manager of Coney Island's Dreamland.¹³ In addition to periodically adding to its regular attractions, Saltair every year featured special ones. In 1893 it had several fireworks displays, "the greatest balloon ascension ever seen in the interior West," and a "parachute dive from the clouds by Professor Harmer and his Dog." The following year "Miss Annie May Abbott, the little electric magnet," appeared for a two-week engagement. She performed a number of tricks, the most impressive of which, according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, involved "transmitting her powers to a child in the audience so that the strongest man can't lift her or him."¹⁴ That year also Salt Lake's YMCA put on a Grand Gymnastic Exhibition featuring routines on the horizontal, parallel, and spring bars, Indian club swinging, dumbbell exercises, a grand bicycle drill, and pyramid building.¹⁵ The 1895 season included a Grand Masked Ball and Carnival, Professor Wilbert's Slide for Life, and Eleason, the Wizard. During Jubilee Week in 1897 Saltair celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Mormon settlement of the Salt Lake valley with seven days of special attractions: an Indian brass band; high divers names Phylon and Speedy, who dived 125 feet into three feet of water; the Three Houstons, swinging trapeze performers; a musical pageant on the lake at sunset entitled the Wedding of the Waters; a Ghost Dance; a Wild West Show; a balloon ascension; fireworks displays; and Hal Clawson, a hypnotist.¹⁶

For a month in 1899 Professor Macarter's African Baboon, Dog, and Monkey Comedians appeared nightly. It advertised itself as "a remarkable exhibition of animal sagacity," and featured "a Baboon Clown, a Baboon groom, a Baboon Bicyclist, a skirt-dancing dog, an acrobatic dog, and a dog that dances the Hoochie Coochie." It also included what the *Salt Lake Tribune* termed "a sensational effect: dogs enacting the rescue of a child from a burning cottage." The company

concluded its performance with a group of acting dogs that presented "an Emotional Dog Drama entitled 'A Widow's Devotion.'"17

Touring vaudeville companies often performed at Saltair. During the summer of 1903, a troupe from the Keith Vaudeville circuit appeared featuring Raymond and Webb, "American Dialect Comedians"; Miss Nettie Walsh, "Soubrette"; Kelly and Clayton, "Knock-about Wonders"; Miss Mamie Walsh, "Song and Dance Artist"; John W. Mack, "banjo player"; and the King Sisters, a "sketch team."18

During the summer of 1911 Saltair had a particularly large number of special attractions. The first was a Wild West Show with "Bucking Bronchos, Wild Steers, the West's cleverest riders." A Spanish Festival followed the Wild West Show highlighted by bullfights under the direction, ironically, of "noted French matador, Felix Robert, who will bring a full troupe of toreadors, bulls, matadors, picadors, and barrerillos."

In 1911 Saltair also maintained an Alligator Farm with more than "fifty alligators of various sizes, ranging from 2 feet to 10 feet in length." Other attractions during the year included an Egyptian Hall of Palace of Illusions"; a "Wild Man of Borneo in full eruption"; a gigantic Gorilla"; and Siamese twins who on one occasion "got into a big fight . . . and came near to breaking the eternal bonds that hold them together."19

The last week of the 1915 season was Carnival Week with women and children admitted free. "Cake walks" were held and Slivers' Clown Band played regularly. Thursday was Charlie Chaplin Day. The Excella Duo, "a couple of rare comedy ragtime singers and coon shouters . . . famous throughout the country in vaudeville circles as a high class . . . entertainment," sang. Montgomery's Band and the Hand Opera Company performed *Faust*, the third act of *Rigoletto*, and the fourth act of *Il Trovatore*.20

In the spring of 1917 the United States entered World War I. Unlike much of the rest of the country, where United States' involvement initially met with widespread opposition, Utahns strongly supported the war effort. That summer one of the most popular special

"Gertrude Hoffman, at that time had gained renown on the vaudeville stage by appearing in an outfit that exposed her bare midriff. Father contracted with her agent for an appearance at Saltair. He did a lot of advertising and the event attracted a large crowd. Unfortunately for Father, Miss Hoffman became inebriated that night and failed to appear. Father had a hard time mollifying the crowd."

George S. Nelson, "World Famous Saltair Brought Millions to Utah."



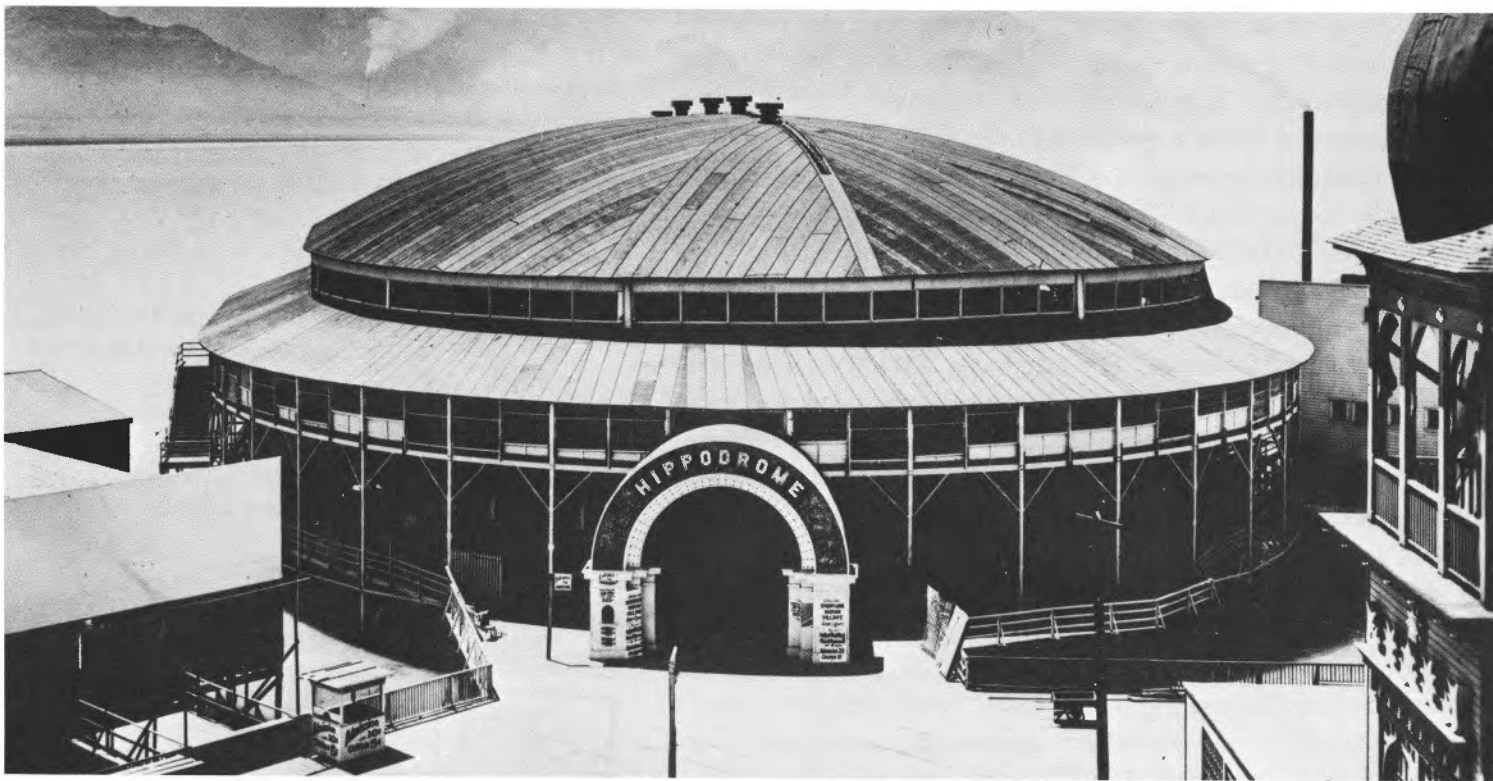
This advertisement was in Goodwin's Weekly July 7, 1917.

Do you like fun You'll find it
at

SALT AIR

Utah's greatest amusement resort. Dancing, boating, bathing, bowling, and all other fun feasts now in full sway. Free band concerts every afternoon by R. Owen Sweeten's Concert band.

Summer time table now in effect. First train at 9:30 a. m.



The Hippodrome, located south of the pavilion, was built about 1910 and used for roller skating, movies, and special events. In this photograph a "Heap Big Indian Wedding" is advertised. Admission was 25¢ for adults and 10¢ for children.

attractions at Saltair was a patriotic Musical Spectacular entitled the Call to Arms featuring the singing of "The Flag Without Stain" and a mock sea battle on the Great Salt Lake. According to the *Deseret News*, "To bring out the thrillingly patriotic theme more vividly and illustrate graphically just what war means, there will be a naval sham battle fought on the lake, just west of the pavilion. More than 100 soldiers from Ft. Douglas will participate in the battle, which will be made realistic in the extreme. It will consist of an attack on an enemy ship, which is being constructed just west of the pavilion. The soldiers will embark in the smaller vessels, armed with rifles and cannon, and will surround the big ship and bombard it. The culmination of the spectacle will be an explosion of the attacked vessel which sets it on fire and consumes it."²¹

During the summer of 1918 Saltair staged a new event to draw people, a widely advertised “public wedding” performed in the roller skating rink in which “one entire company of soldiers from Fort Douglas” and “thirty pretty girls” participated.²² Three years later it staged a “Heap Big Indian Wedding,” with “prominent officials participating and society women as bridesmaids.”²³

By the early 1920s Saltair had reached the peak of its popularity. The great Moorish building with its domes and latticework rose magnificently out of the lake almost a mile from the shore. The air was clean and dry, and the breezes from the lake cooled the rays of the summer sun and fanned the dancers at night. Scenery and water were everywhere—fantastic views of mountains and lake, pastel blues and pinkish tones of sun and sunset. Bands, railroad whistles, hucksters, honky-tonk, and the roar of the roller coaster all created marvelous sights and sounds far removed from the routine of everyday life. At night its mystical qualities intensified. Thousands of lights outlined the buildings, and orchestra music played for couples who strolled along the promenade and danced under the twinkling lights. “An enchanted playground,” Wallace Stegner called it. “I remember it like lost Eden.”²⁴



Bicycle racing was popular from the 1880s at resorts including Saltair. The nationwide bicycle craze reached its peak around the turn of the century.



Second Chance, 1925-1930

Early in the spring of 1925, as workmen readied Saltair for another record-breaking season, a fire broke out in the Ali Baba Cave concession under the grandstand seats of the Hippodrome. At 2:25 P.M. on April 22, an employee smelled smoke and discovered a four-foot wall of flames. He beat it out with his hands and hat and reduced the fire to embers before running for help. In the two minutes he was gone, the wind fanned the smoldering coals into a blaze. Workmen hurried to put it out and quickly sounded the alarm bell. A telephone call was made to Salt Lake for help, but the raging fire spread into the Hippodrome. For two hours Saltair employees, workers, concessionaires, and volunteers from the Inland Crystal Salt Company struggled to save the pavilion. Firefighters from Salt Lake were on the scene in record time. Some arrived on specially built flatcars kept in readiness to speed fire engines to the resort, and the Sugar House fire station came with the only truck that could pump salt water.

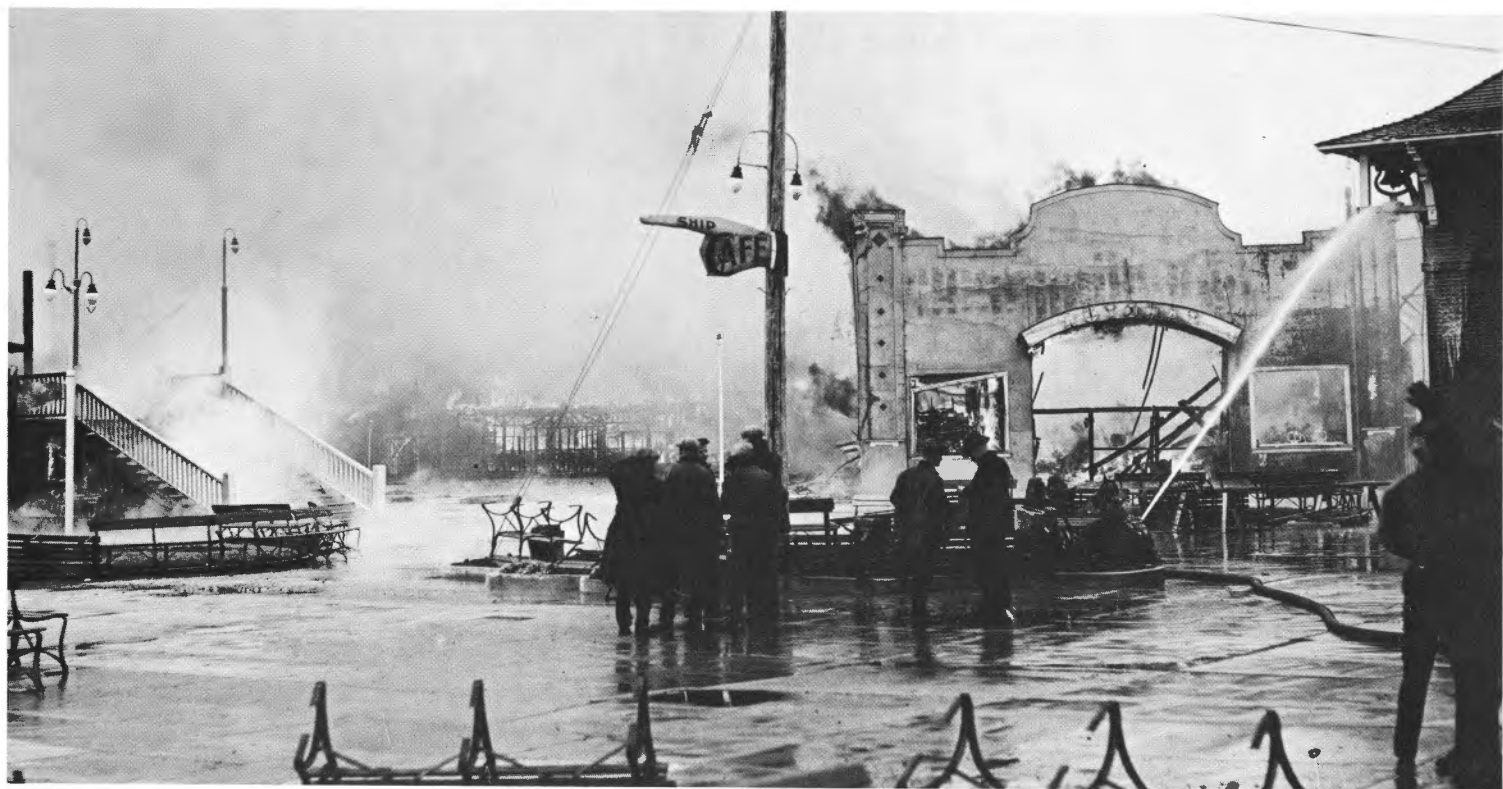
About 4 P.M. the winds shifted away from the resort, and it looked for a time as if the famed pavilion could be saved. Maddeningly, minutes later the wind swerved and drove the fire back toward the pavilion, fanning the flames into an inferno. As the *Tribune* reported, "tongues of the flame and smoke leaped fifty to one hundred feet [and] shot out and licked up the timbers and beams of the great structure as though they were cardboard."¹ Heat and smoke drove the firefighters away, and the fire burned out of control. Within ten minutes the pavilion was a mass of twisted iron and charred beams.

Flames could be seen as far away as Salt Lake City, and films of

Sunset at Saltair

*Far to the East, beyond the busy city,
Darkening shadows fill the canyons with
suggestions of despair;
Above, the snowcapped peaks gleam white
and cold,
Like a soulless woman's face.
I turn, a path of golden glory gleams across
the lake,
Leading to some enchanted cloudland, where the
Goddess of the West,
Enwrapt in slumber, dreams of love.
And blushes in her dream
And then the flow transforms itself to dusk. The
golden glory faces into the gloom.
The last faint ray is lost in gathering clouds.
A gull on silent wings sweeps slowly by.
Chill night descends.
In silence I watch the cold and passionless stars.*

*J. B. Miller, in Salt Lake Tribune,
August 6, 1911.*



Fire of 1925.

the fire were shown that night in local movie houses even as the fire still burned. It took twenty-six hours for firemen to put out every ember. When it was all over, only the bathing pier, beach office, merry-go-round, pilings, and giant racer were still standing. Everything else was destroyed. Insurance covered only \$150,000 of the estimated \$500,000 in damages.

The day after the fire workmen began removing blackened timbers that littered the concrete base and waters around Saltair, and on April 25, Saltair manager, Stringham A. Stevens, announced plans to rebuild the resort. It was not known when construction would begin, he said, but company owners had decided to build on the same site and to reuse Richard Kletting's original plans for sentimental and historical reasons. Stevens set May 30 for the opening and promised

that the new bathing suits the company had ordered would still be arriving to replace "the cumbersome old style bathing suits in favor of modern ones."²

Saltair, however, did not open on time. Mormon church owners began to have second thoughts about their involvement in Saltair and saw this as an opportune time to divest themselves of the resort. On May 8, church President Heber J. Grant offered Saltair to Salt Lake City Mayor C. Clarence Neslen as a gift to the city. According to Mormon officials, "this resort is of such community importance it should be under control of the municipality."³

The city commission took three weeks to decide whether they wanted Saltair and considered various ways to finance the venture, including popular subscription and bond elections. For city officials the decision hinged on economics. Even if Saltair were given free to the city, Salt Lake would have had to assume a \$267,000 debt for the electric railroad and spend an estimated \$300,000 rebuilding. In 1924 Saltair had earned a profit of seven percent over maintenance, amounting to \$75,000, but \$25,000 of it had gone to pay off the bond, and the rest was used to pay back interest and reduce the debt principal. Since electrification of the railroad in 1917 Saltair had not paid dividends. Committees evaluating the proposal announced on May 19 that the railroad, which was worth \$632,000, had only scrap value "unless it is maintained at a high degree of efficiency" for resort traffic and that "without the resort the railroad property would rapidly become valueless"; the property was reported to be worth \$90,000.⁴

Utah Governor George Dern and businessman James H. Waters each offered to donate \$20,000 to help the city finance Saltair in exchange for a share in the profits. Others, however, urged the City not to accept ownership of the resort. The Board of Governors of the Chamber of Commerce said that Saltair should be privately owned and sent a committee to urge church leaders not to give it to the city. "The resort should be reconstructed, possibly even along a more pretentious scale," the committee said, "but every effort should be made to conduct it as a private enterprise."⁵



Boosting the opening of the new resort, the Salt Lake Tribune of May 28, 1925, shows the old resort burning and the newly built pavilion.

Saltair Comes Back To Meet Popular Demand



**Weeks of Planning, Telling and Improving
Have Made Utah's Greatest Attraction Again
Available to the Public**

Business Saltair belongs in a peculiar sense to the public-to you-able frank statement is submitted for your enlightenment and consideration.

Saltair is now partially restored. Its two most attractive features are again available for bathing and dancing. You will see the picturesque house rebuilt with its newly restored porch, when you come to Saltair this season. This new structure was wired out.

But you will be pleased to know that the reconstruction that has been completed thus far.

No one, not even those most intently opposed with the management, appreciated the full worth of Saltair as a community landmark until it was built-until the disastrous fire happened. Then began to pour in appreciation.

BATHING—Better Than Ever

The bathing facilities at Saltair were never better. The new bathing house built, making the superior need to any demand of the largest bathing establishment. Your swim and lounge have been purchased and the building has been built over the extensive deck and the distance between the various deckable baths. The temperature of the water is ideal for outwearing bathing.

Train Schedule

Trains 7:15 and 9:15 a. m., 12 noon, 1 and 2 p. m., and then every half-hour.



Saltair

This advertisement for Saltair appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune July 3, 1925, about two and a half months after the fire. The resort openly appealed for support even though there was no pavilion and few concessions.

To add to the difficulty Lagoon ran a half-page *Tribune* ad May 27 announcing its grand opening where people would find a “bigger, prettier, finer, more thrilling Lagoon.” Lagoon owners sensed an opportunity to step in and attract summertime crowds looking for a resort and were not wasting any part of the season waiting to see what happened to Saltair.

City officials took a hard look at the economics, competition from Lagoon, community feelings, and business pressures and on May 28, 1925, declined the Mormon church’s offer. “We feel that you are imbued with the highest of motives in offering this valuable property to the municipality,” city commissioners wrote to church President Heber J. Grant, “and that your only motives were to insure the re-establishment of this indispensable institution and its management along high moral grounds, . . . [but] given the limited funds of the city this year, we do not know how we could possibly replace the pavilion and other necessary buildings.” After the city declined President Grant announced that swimming would resume immediately at Saltair. “The railroads are bringing a lot of tourists here,” he said, “and most of them want a dip in the lake.”⁶

Preparations furiously began to ready the resort for a shortened summer season, and on June 29, Stringham Stevens announced that Saltair would open July 1, two and a half months after the fire. “Bathing would be available with complete accommodations in the way of dressing rooms, new suits, and towels,” he said, as well as a luncheon bowery overlooking the lake, refreshment concessions, a merry-go-round, a giant racer, and trains on half-hour schedules. A high fence and potted palms hid the burned sections from view. A temporary maple dance floor big enough to hold five to six hundred people (only a fraction of the number previously served), had been built, and the new “California style” of paying for one dance at a time and then clearing the floor was introduced because it was so much smaller.⁷

Saltair began the 1925 season with a lick and a promise. Owners let people know that their patronage would determine the resort’s future. They urged tourists and Utahns to come and enjoy the new

bathing facilities, the beauties of the lake and the sunsets and "to bear in mind the recent heavy loss" and temporary facilities. With a straightforward appeal advertisements read: "Do you want Saltair? Say it with your patronage now!"⁸

Throughout the summer Saltair launched a heavy advertising campaign to recapture the crowds that were finding their way to Lagoon and other places. An advertising war between Saltair and Lagoon ensued.⁹ Lagoon's July 4 *Tribune* ad encouraged people to spend the glorious fourth at Lagoon where there were fireworks, matinee and evening dances, swimming, boating, concessions, picnicking, and 3000 parking spaces. Lagoon, advertisements read, was "The ideal outing place, the coolest place in Utah, the fun place for all." Saltair responded with an appeal to sentimentality and loyalty and tried to convince people it was the "greatest amusement value in the world." On July 24, a large Saltair ad encouraged people to

Come where the fun is July 24!
 Come out with the family.
 Spend the day where it is cool, where the crowds
 are, where the fun is.
 Plenty of room for the kiddies to romp and scores
 of amusements, a picnic bowery on the waterfront,
 evening dances 2 for 5¢, free matinee dances.
 Dance on the new maple floor to the toe-tingling
 melodies of the Oscar C. Martin Ambassadors.

A continuous stream of gimmicks brought people to Saltair that summer. There were carnivals, costume dances, three dances for five cents, dances all night for twenty-five cents, ladies' free nights and childrens' free days, free hats, and free confetti. It advertised the swimming, the water, the fun, the temperature, the crowds, and, most of all, the place "where you'll feel like a million dollars." The advertising apparently paid off because the next winter when no one was thinking of summer sun and fun, a *Tribune* headline, on January 27, 1926, announced that a "New Saltair Will Rise on Old Site at Lake."

Saltair
NOW
 for the fun,

SALT AIR
Opens Today!

Be there to enjoy in the Joy Season of the jolly old Lake. All the attractions that you enjoyed last year are there, besides some fascinating new thrillers.

TWO BIG CONCERTS TOMORROW

CONVENIENT TRAIN SERVICE

SHIP CAFE

AUTO SPEEDWAY

Join the Decoration Day Crowds at the Lake Monday

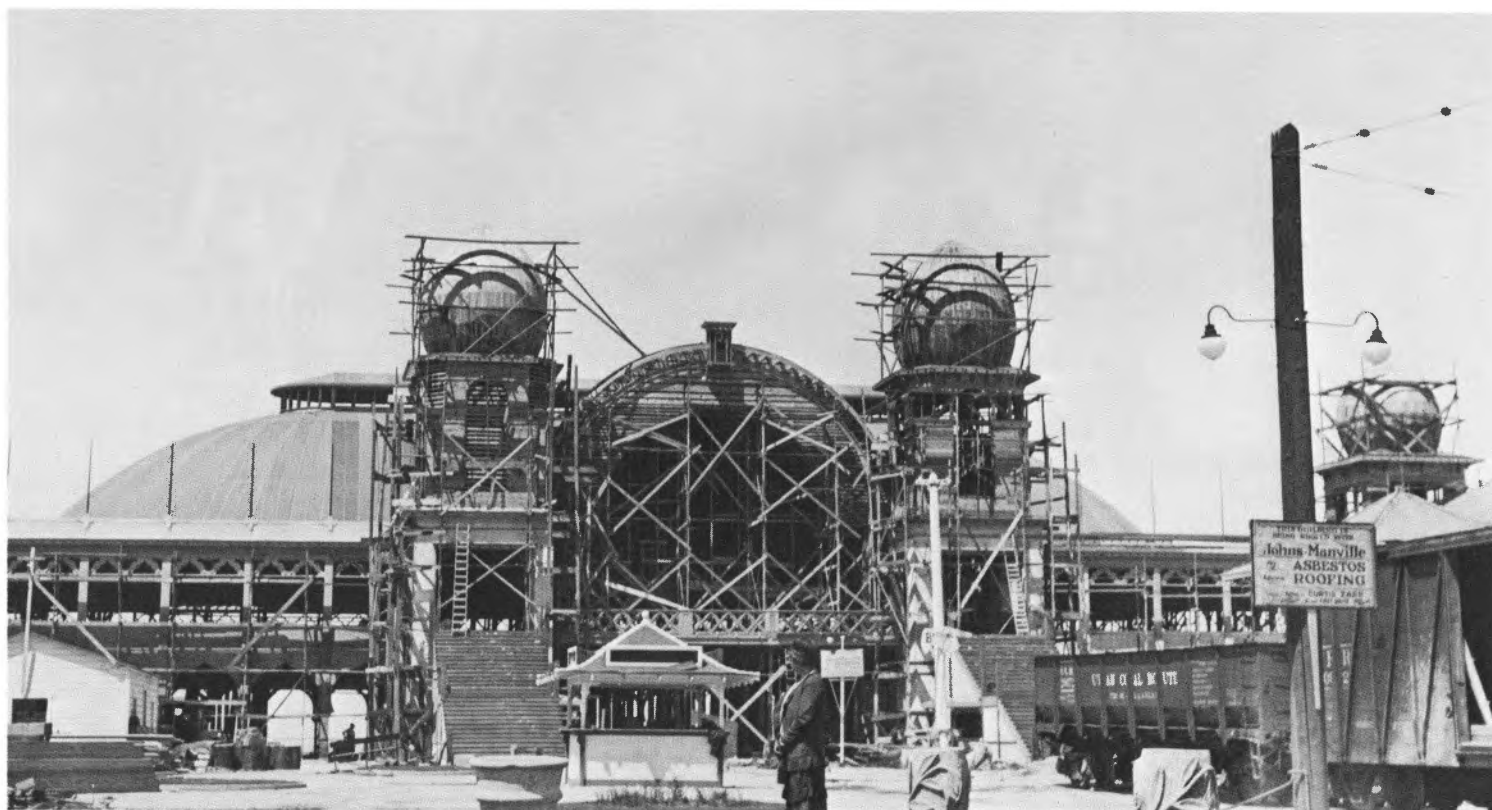
Advertisement, early 1920s.



Saltair's giant racer and the tracks leading to the resort were not burned down in the fire of 1925. This photograph taken in the late Twenties shows some of the 4000-foot approach to the resort and cars parked alongside the tracks.

According to the paper, owners of the Salt Lake, Garfield and Western Railroad, Ashby Snow, David P. Howells, and Willard T. Cannon, had purchased Saltair from the Mormon church and planned to build a new \$350,000 pavilion. Snow said he decided to buy the resort and rebuild with the help of his partners because he felt depressed over the public loss every time he visited the site. From their “intimate knowledge” of Saltair’s history, the partners knew the resort had never paid a dividend. They hoped to change that, but even if its “previous investment history is repeated,” they would feel repaid “in the saving of this unique amusement place to the community.”

Raymond J. Ashton and Raymond L. Evans were the architects of the new Saltair pavilion. They were prominent Utah architects from



the 1920s to the 1960s and designed a number of important buildings, including fieldhouses at the University of Utah and Utah State University, the Mountain States Telephone Building in Salt Lake City, and the Utah State Penitentiary at the Point-of-the-Mountain.

Saltair's new owners wanted to rebuild it along the Moorish lines of the old Kletting pavilion. "It seems to embody the very spirit of the place. No other design would fit so well," Snow said. At the same time they wanted it to be bigger and better—one hundred feet longer and fifteen feet wider, more spacious, more elaborate and well-appointed, and lacking in the incongruities that marred the old building. Manager Stringham visited amusement parks from California to Florida. The new building, he said, would be the nearest to

Second Saltair pavilion under construction. The decision to rebuild Saltair was made in January 1926, and construction began soon after. This photograph was taken sometime in the spring of 1926.



The original Saltair pavilion, shown here before the fire of 1925, was smaller and less elaborate than the second, shown on the opposite page.

fireproof of any similar structure, with the most modern equipment, the most sanitary methods of refuse disposal, and restrooms of the most modern type.

The owners broadcast revival of the resort throughout the nation when the new pavilion was finished. Dignitaries and newspaper people from across the state toured it on May 28, 1926, and responded with enthusiasm and praise. Saltair was "a playground which crowns the glory of the lake and magnificence of the mountains," the *Tribune* reported after the tour. "Out of every bad comes good, and Saltair is larger, stronger, and more beautiful than ever."

The pavilion, finished in stucco and painted in a variety of vivid Mediterranean colors and intricate patterns, was predominantly an



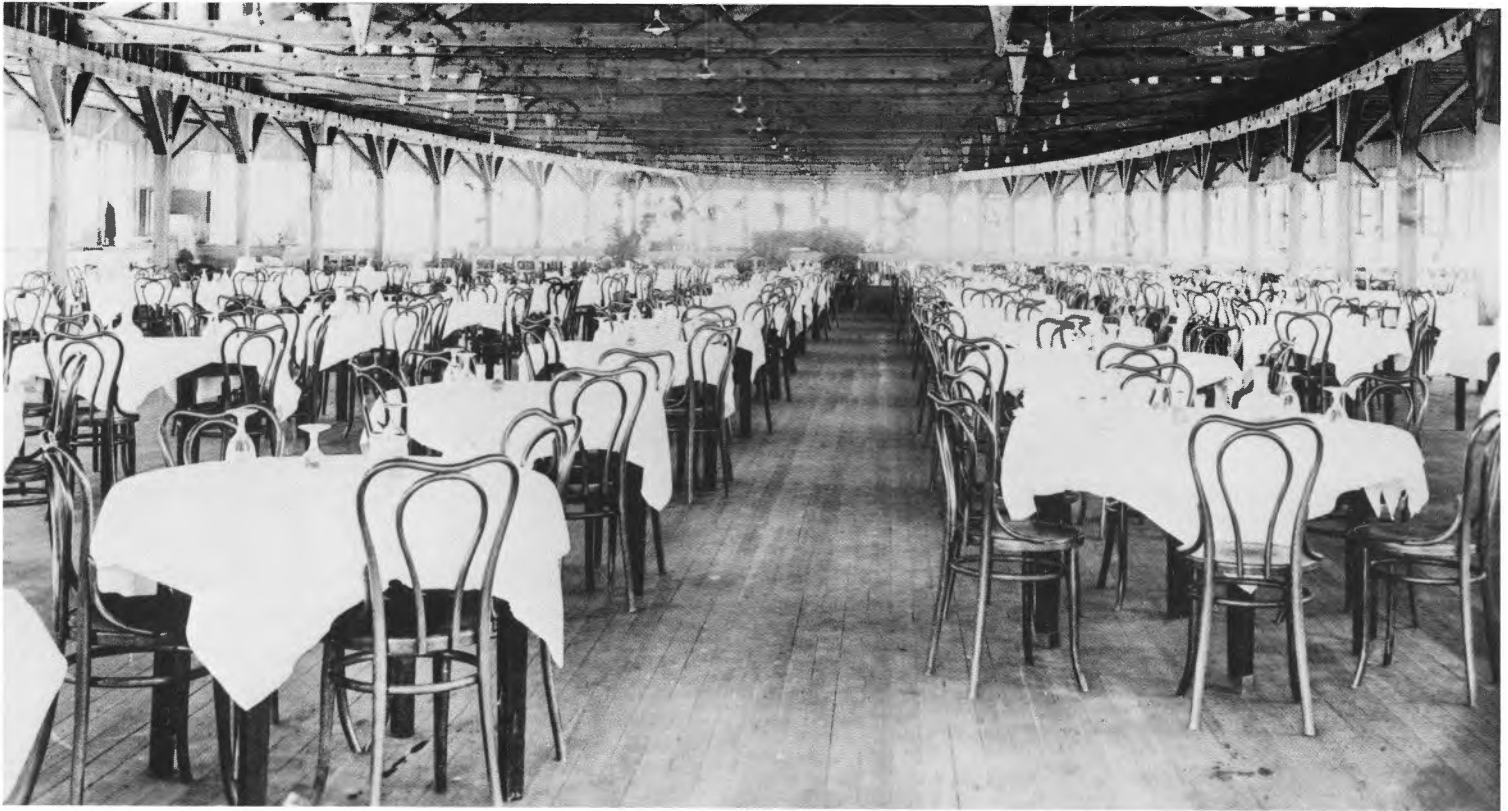
orange-pink, a unique color, the *Tribune* wrote, that “glints back the brightest rays of the sun.” One thousand white dressing rooms, covered with green lattice work for shade, flanked the pavilion. Thousands of lights outlined the new building as they had the old, making it a wonderful picture, a fantasy playground. A huge dance floor was at the center; to the north was a cafe, and to the south were restrooms and lounges. Fare and admission prices were twenty-five cents. Concessions and rides included the fun house, heydey, Missouri mule, giant racer, children’s playground, and shooting gallery.

Opening day, May 29, 1926, brought huge crowds and headlines reading “New Saltair Is Appreciated.” Many visitors had to park at the salt works and walk two miles to the resort; the trains were so

The second pavilion, constructed after the fire of 1925.

“It was the dances that I remember most. You’d take your girl out to Saltair and dance the first and last dances with her. The crowds were big and friendly then. Go somewhere now and look at another guy’s gal and he wants to fight you.”

*Pete Rock, in the Deseret News,
May 20, 1961.*



Interior of the Ship Cafe.

"I remember when people on weekends would send the youngsters out by train at 6 A.M. to reserve bowery space for the family later in the day."

*Art Teece, in the Deseret News,
October 21, 1964.*

jampacked that they were off schedule. Stringham Stevens responded to the enthusiastic crowds. "If the success of the opening continues with the season," he said, "there will be no doubt of the wisdom of restoring Saltair."¹⁰ Newspaper editorials and advertisements by Salt Lake businessmen heralded the owners as "men of vision, ability, and public spirit," who were determined that "the resort would be conducted on a high plane of morality and wholesomeness."¹¹

Saltair had emerged from a devastating fire with a second chance to be Utah's top resort. Throughout the Twenties Utahns and tourists responded with approval through their patronage. Advertising for Saltair during the decade noted events like Jack Davis and his eight-piece orchestra playing "matchless music," free patriotic concerts, fire-



works, and the Greatest Independence Day Celebration in the resort's history in 1926 where "half the population of the state would be."

There were beauty contests advertised as "the most gorgeous revues of beauty ever staged in Utah," where "one hundred of Utah's choicest" could be seen. There was Black Jack gum day (free gum with admission), Hoo Hoo Day (where everyone wore their scariest costumes), All-German Day, Pacific Island Day (with an erupting volcano), a Night in China, frequent carnivals, and Charleston contests. In 1927 a parkway green Buick sedan, valued at \$1,530, was given away, and when Charles Lindbergh flew the "Spirit of St. Louis" to Salt Lake that year, Saltair stayed open six extra days. Spectators could watch the landing and then catch the train to Saltair.

Newly finished Saltair pavilion and swimmers in the "new modern swimming suits." Suits and towels could be rented for 10¢.



Swim attire of the 1920s.

"In those days it was considered immodest for a lady to appear, when bathing at a public resort, with anything but her head and forearms exposed. I remember one 'brazen' young lady who dared to leave off her long stockings when she went for a swim. Other bathers (women I suppose) were so scandalized that they reported the daring young woman to Father who promptly sent the Sheriff out to bring her in."

George S. Nelson, "My Intimate Old Friend, Saltair."

Group outings continued in popularity. In August 1926, for instance, the Grant, Liberty and Pioneer stakes of the Mormon church, the Cohn Dry Goods Employees, the University of Utah students, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, and the Young Men's Democratic Club all held outings at the resort.

In 1927 Sunset Pier was added. Patrons could stroll along the 400-foot walkway out over the lake and view unsurpassed sunsets. And each year brought new rides and new concessions—such as the balloon racer, candy wheels, or tango games.

In 1928 there was a startling adaptation to changing public tastes when people were permitted to walk around all sections of the resort, except the dance floor, in their swim suits. In that year 7000 people attended Saltair on opening day. Other enticements to keep



people coming included costume parties, free candy, peanuts and wafers for boys' and girls' days, and the chance to see A. L. Roberts do his "daring thirty-five-foot dive."

As the nineteen twenties wound to a close, Claude Kiff and the Saltair Orchestra played syncopated rhythm to continuous crowds. Saltair was repainted and redecorated and a 200-foot sandy beach area was added near the pavilion. Officials at season's end estimated patronage to be equal to the previous year's.

Like Phoenix rising from the ashes, Saltair had discovered new life. In the Twenties the grand lady of the lake glittered once more under the bright summer sunlight of popularity and fame. Ominous clouds, however, hung on the horizon.

"The lake, along its western edge, gleamed softly in the late afternoon as if a film of chiffon had been thrown over its rippling waters ere the glow of the sunset fell upon it. As the evening descended, the blue of the water melted into liquid gold; the bathers by now mere black and grotesque spots against the color of lake and sky, dipped and delved in the waves and shook from their arms diamond sparkles."

O. H., Salt Lake Herald, August 10, 1904.



WELCOME

S & DOLLAR'S 104

From Road 104

Surviving the Depression

During the 1930s the Great Depression settled over the United States and Utah like an oppressive storm cloud. In 1929 three million Americans were out of work. By 1933 sixteen million were not working, and in 1939 at least ten million people remained unemployed. Utah was hard hit; in 1932 the unemployment rate was 36 percent, the fourth highest in the nation. For the entire decade it averaged 26 percent. Here and in the rest of the country people edged along sidewalks to get a meal at community soup kitchens, demonstrated at tax sales, stood in endless lines for jobs, participated in mass protest marches, and sold apples on street corners.¹ Marriage and birth rates declined. The divorce rate increased. More and more women sought work outside the home. Those who stayed at home practiced endless little economies: buying day-old bread; relining old coats with old blankets; saving broken crockery, string, rags, or wire in case they might come in handy some day.

Despite the dismal economic situation, however, entertainment thrived in Utah and across the country. Perhaps for escape, or out of a need for something fun to do, people jammed public activities, dance halls, resorts, and movies during the Depression.² On opening day 1930 10,000 people visited Saltair, and on Labor Day 1931 15,000 went to Lagoon.

Advertisements on the entertainment pages of local newspapers suggest that people literally danced through the Depression. Dance halls sprang up around the valley. There were a dozen in Salt Lake by 1938 including the Old Mill, the Hotel Utah Starlight Gardens, Pinecrest in Emigration Canyon, the Bluebird, the Coconut Grove, Al's

"On moonless nights a few bright stars would melt their way through the black skydome, followed by a crescendo of smaller ones until the whole sky became luminous with stars that seemed to grow steadily brighter. A soft light descended like an iridescent mist and transformed the Moorish domes of the pavilion into magic creations of Arabian Nights stories. Perhaps the magic was imagined but the enchantment was real."

George S. Nelson, "World Famous Saltair Brought Millions to Utah."

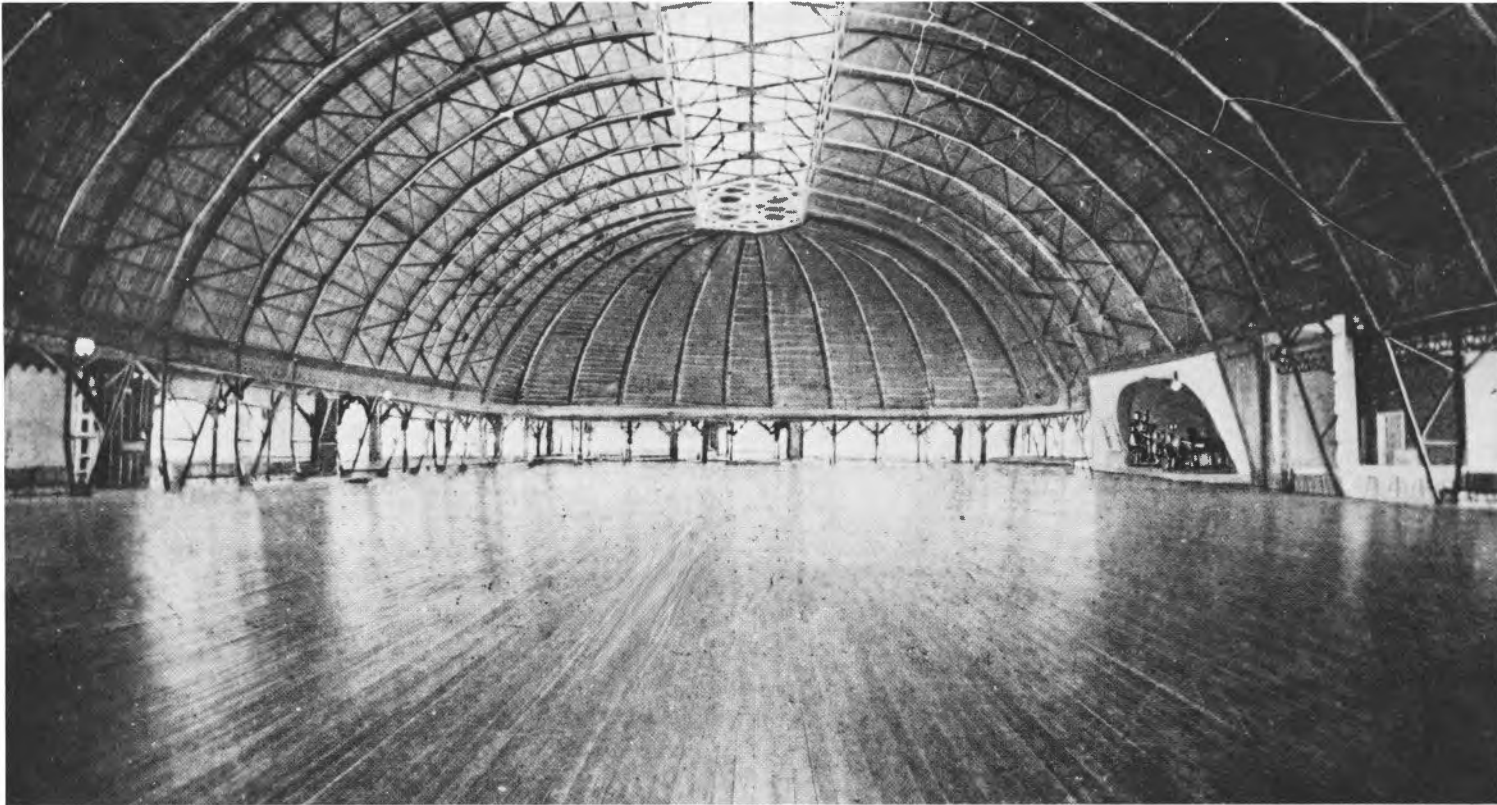
"I remember one time when a 90-mile wind whipped across the lake and knocked the lights out at Saltair. The only light we had was the one on the front of the train, but the musicians didn't stop playing and we didn't stop dancing."

Pete Rock, in the Deseret News, May 20, 1961.



View of the entrance to the pavilion taken atop the giant racer late 1920s.

Cabaret, the Silver Slipper, and Melody Lane—as well as Lagoon and Saltair. All of them advertised romantic, elegant dancing. At Saltair dancing was never better. In 1930 it offered the “magic of melody” and the “witchery of waves” for people who danced to the tunes of Harry Erickson and the Greater Saltair Orchestra. In 1932 the “sweet and hot” bands of Marve Scott and Clayt Kirkham played six nights a week until midnight for ten cents admission. Nightly dancing continued in 1934 and 1935 with local band leader Jerry Beesley directing the Saltair orchestra. In 1936 Saltair announced that it would begin bringing in dance orchestras from around the country and that season booked Carol Lofner, Eddy Duchin, Xavier Cugat, and Bart Woodyard, with his “smoothest, peppiest rhythms.” The big band



sound was “in” across the country, and in 1937 name bands like those of Phil Harris and Dick Jergens played to large crowds for two- and three-week stands.³

As the Depression dragged on through the late thirties with thousands of Utahns still out of work or just scraping by, Saltair continued to advertise daily dancing, fun, and entertainment. In 1938 the bands of Harry Owens and His Royal Hawaiians, singer Tony Martin, Jimmy Walsh and his orchestra, and the KSL orchestra and variety show performed for big crowds. That same year a new bandstand was built, and in 1939 Saltair advertised the largest unobstructed dance floor in the world and an acoustically perfect sound system where dancers could hear music with equal volume and clarity

The dance hall at Saltair.

TONIGHT

SALT AIR

presents
America's Swinging Singing Favorite

IN PERSON

PHIL HARRIS

AND HIS
ORCHESTRA

FEATURED ON
JACK BENNY'S JELLO PROGRAM

Featuring
Ruth Robin

Standing 50¢
Per Person
(Plus Taxes)

Tomorrow
Ladies Free
JIMMY WALSH
Forever

Featuring
Friday
1939

Saltair

throughout the hall. The policy of bringing in big names continued and Anson Weeks, Muzzy Marcellino, Skinnay Ennis, and Artie Shaw all played at Saltair. On opening day 1939 Jimmy Walsh brought in one of the largest crowds in Saltair's history. Price of admission varied with the prestige of the performer. It was seventy-five cents a person to hear Phil Harris and fifty cents for Eddy Duchin, thirty cents for Jimmy Joy, and twenty-five cents for Sterling Young. In the swinging Forties performances by Glen Miller cost \$1.12, while dancing to Kay Kyser, Jan Savitt, Charlie Barnett, or Ozzie Nelson was only seventy-five cents. Saltair's fiftieth consecutive year of operation, 1942, brought Bob Crosby, Paul Whiteman, Gene Krupa, Sammy Kay, Les Brown, Bobby Sherwood, and other nationally known dance bands and performers. Throughout the Thirties and early Forties Saltair was *the* place for couples. Taking a girl out on the train, dancing to a famous band, walking on the boardwalk, and looking at the moonlit lake was the most impressive date in town.

The popularity of the automobile signaled an important change for Saltair during the Thirties. Car sales boomed in Utah. In 1903 only twenty automobiles were registered in the State, but by 1939 there were 112,661 registered cars and fifty-eight automobile dealers in Salt Lake City alone. Saltair had to "modernize" to attract the new driving excursionists and began advertising in 1926 two motor ways, via either the speedway or Garfield, Utah, and plenty of parking space. By 1929 the county road commissioner vowed that since as many tourists visited Saltair as Yellowstone Park, the road to Saltair would be kept in excellent condition all summer.⁴ By the time the Depression hit drive-up beaches along the lake shore, like Black Rock and Sunset, were popular. People could drive out when they wanted, lay out on the sand, and not get in the water. They liked the independence and freedom of having their own car more than meeting a train schedule. And in 1936 gas was only eighteen cents a gallon. In 1930 Saltair doubled the parking area and increased it again in 1936. In 1937 they advertised a parking area adjacent to the beaches large enough to accommodate thousands. In 1938 Crystal Beach,

where people could drive to the water's edge, was added. The popularity of the automobile eventually proved to be one of the factors that hurt Saltair's business, however, because a car gave people access to more choices of entertainment, including canyons, nearby towns, other resorts, and Sunday drives.

Even though thousands of people attended resorts during the Thirties, all resorts, including Saltair, had to constantly reduce their prices and advertise value and economy to attract patrons. Admission prices varied from ten to thirty-five cents for what was promised to be "The Biggest Amusement Value in the World."

The price of a meal at Saltair also dropped. Chicken, trout, or steak dinners that had been a dollar a plate in 1930 were seventy-five cents in 1939. Sodas were five cents, and beer and sandwiches sold at ten-cent "city prices." By 1941 full course dinners ranged from forty cents to a dollar and a quarter, except on Thursdays when they were only fifty cents.

Other problems plagued Saltair in the Thirties. Strong winds and salt spray ate away at paint and wood, and each year everything had to be repainted. Annually Saltair advertised its new look and completely new decorations. That heavy expense, however, was particularly troublesome during the Depression when money was tight and revenue was down.

Fire, too, was a continuing problem. A fire swept through the roller coaster, fun house and other concessions and rides in 1931. Though it only closed the resort for an hour and a half, it was an "expensive little fire."⁵ In 1932 owners spent \$100,000 replacing the roller coaster and adding a fun house, scooter, games and children's playground.

The Great Salt Lake itself proved to be another problem during the Thirties. Over the years the lake level had continuously fluctuated. There had been a brief low-water period from 1901 to 1906, but beginning in 1925 the water began a steady, gradual recession. As the lake level dropped people could no longer climb directly into the water from the pavilion. By 1933 the lake had reached the lowest





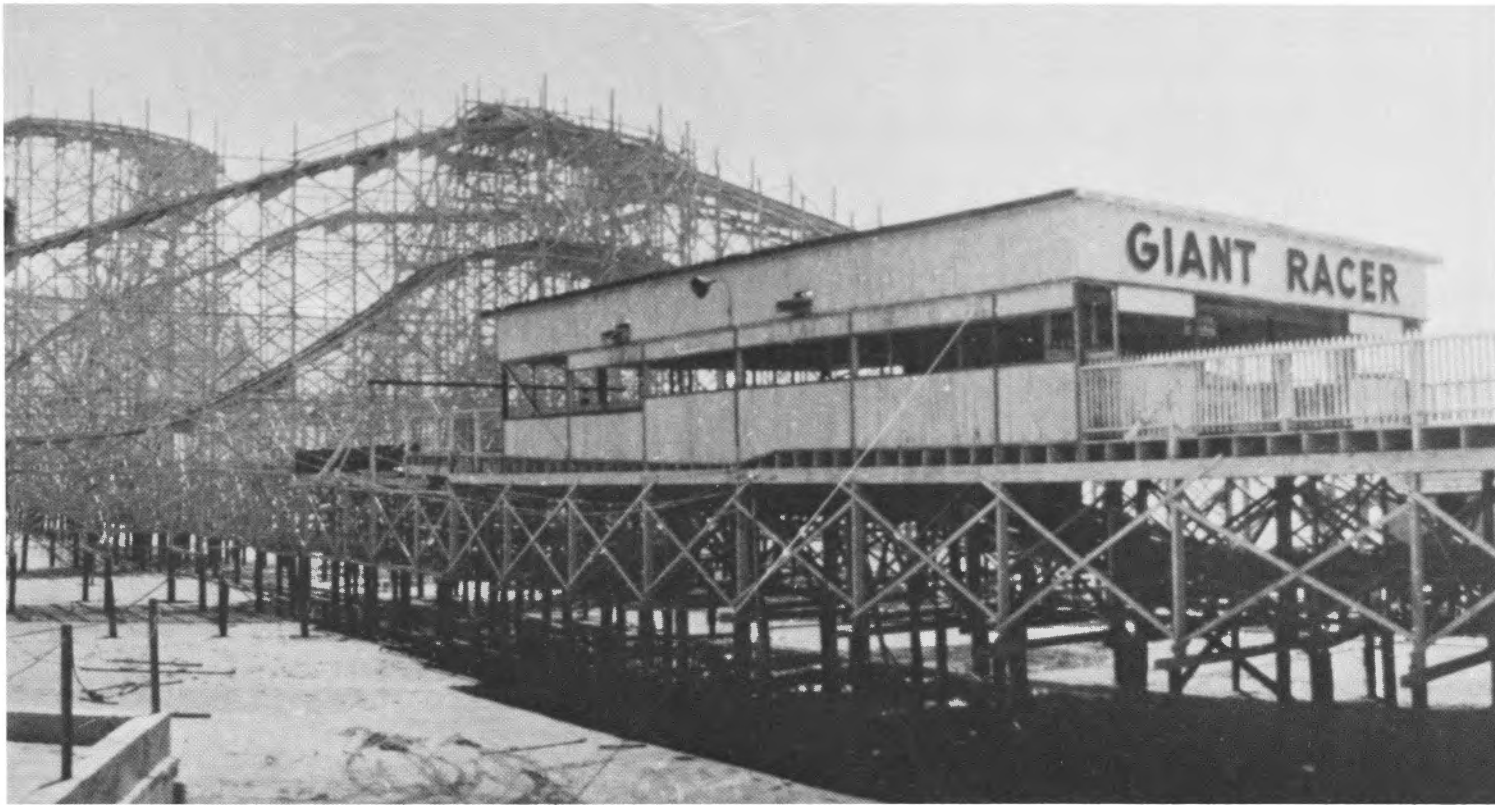
The Great Salt Lake receded to its lowest recorded level in 1933. Railroad tracks in the upper right were for the miniature railroad built to take visitors to the water.

They gave away Model A Fords out there to attract people in the Depression.

Jack Reynolds, Interview, December 6, 1984.

level in the resort's history, and Saltair sat beached, a muddy, odorous, half-mile walk from the water's edge. First, owners brought in tons of sand to create a new beach. Then, in 1934, they built a boardwalk from the pavilion to the beach. Undaunted, in 1935 they constructed a miniature train to take people to and from the water.

Besides the problems that nature created, the Thirties was a period of intense competition for the entertainment dollar. Saltair's popularity had been taken for granted the first thirty years of its history, but as Salt Lake City increased in population and diversity, many more entertainments and activities became available. Almost anything that was new detracted from the patronage that Saltair had once freely enjoyed, and its entertainment monopoly disappeared. Saltair



became “old fashioned” in the face of modern diversions competing for the public’s attention and money. One of the main competitors was Lagoon.

For years a thorn in Saltair’s side, Lagoon’s popularity increased during the Thirties. Gate receipts for Labor Day 1931 showed that 15,000 people responded to Lagoon’s hard-line advertising campaign calling itself a cool, clean resort. Lagoon owners sought to make a great distinction between Lagoon and Saltair, advertising its filtered, fit-to-drink, clean and clear water, and its flowers, grass, gardens, and cool temperatures. Lagoon did not spend money on the big name bands that visited Saltair, but employed local groups for entertainment. In 1939, influenced by the Chicago World’s Fair, Lagoon added

The “new” giant racer rebuilt in 1932.

The Giant Racer had two parallel tracks that came together at the end so that you knew who had won. We used to send the cars up together. I was scared to death of it until I had my first date. It was in the seventh grade, and she showed up with long white gloves. The man who ran it knew me, and we got to ride for free. Once I got over my fear of it, we wouldn’t get off, and we rode it seventeen times.

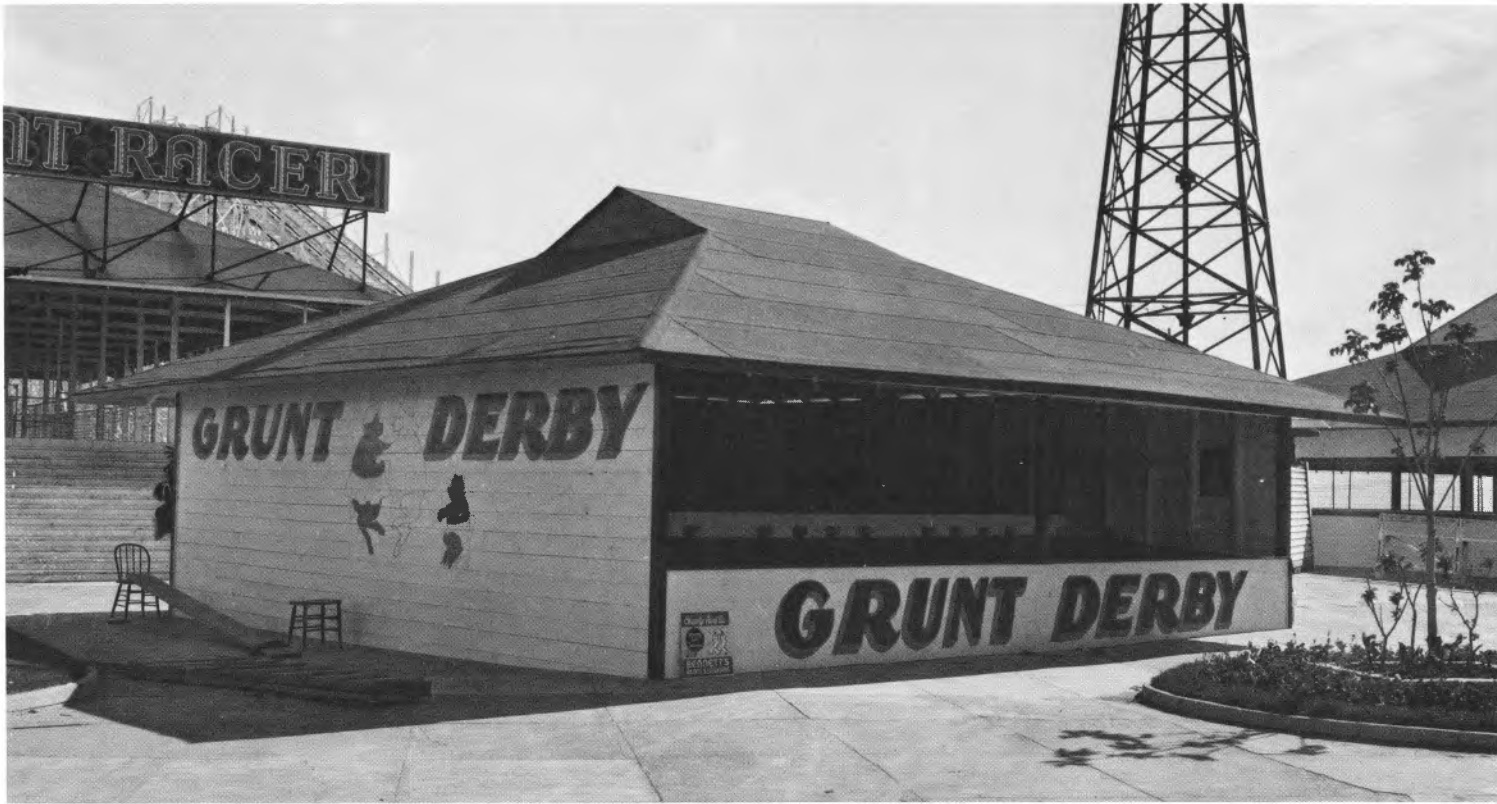
Jack Reynolds, Interview, December 6, 1984.



In the 1930s people could drive to the beach. Taking the train to Saltair became less popular.

bright colors, new building fronts, colored lights and the popular “dodg’em” cars.

Saltair also had to compete with a large and growing number of civic and public activities. More Utah cities offered free holiday entertainment than ever before, and parades, fireworks, games, rodeos, and pageants at city parks and fairgrounds attracted thousands of people. In 1936, 25,000 people went to the Twenty-fourth of July pageant in Salt Lake City and another 100,000 reportedly watched the parade. In 1939 12,000 people went to the rodeo at the Salt Lake City fairgrounds. In earlier years, when there were not as many things to do, a larger percentage of the population would have spent the Twenty-fourth of July at Saltair.



The Thirties also saw the lure of the silver screen drawing entertainment dollars away from Saltair. Newspaper sections dealing with movies and movie stars grew tremendously by the late Thirties and made up a much larger portion of the entertainment page than ever before. Movies cost a maximum of thirty-five cents and offered a different kind of escape in troubled times. In 1939 Salt Lake City's twenty-five movie theaters drew large audiences who were anxious to see anything on the screen and who were no longer spending an afternoon or evening at Saltair.

To compete Saltair sponsored new attractions—boat races and ten-cent speedboat rides, midnight bathing under floodlights, wrestling and boxing matches, burlesque shows, circus clowns, vaudeville

Concession at Saltair.



Many people in Utah have photographs in their family albums such as these. A day at Saltair was both fun and memorable.

"I always wore a bathing cap and put a clean handkerchief underneath it. And that was so if you got a dose of salt you would have a clean handkerchief to wipe your eyes."

Alice Joplin, in Great Salt Lake: A Scientific, Historical, and Economic Overview, 39.

acts, and even trained and educated dog shows. There were swing nights, waltz nights, balloon nights, ladies' free days, Wheaties days, and Republican days. Group outings hosted by Saltair included the Brigham Young family reunion, Mormon youth groups, the Civil Engineers Society, the University of Utah Summer School students, and the Utah Manufacturing and Employees League.

The Thirties was a leveling off period for Saltair. The resort remained popular, but the Depression meant lower revenue even when the number of patrons remained high. Competition and circumstances forced owners to spend their profits for improvements and changes. Dancing was at its best at Saltair from the Thirties until World War II, but bringing in big bands was expensive and required



large crowds to be profitable. Swimming in the Great Salt Lake largely evolved into a tourist attraction as the lake dropped away from Saltair, and the fun of walking down the stairs into the water evaporated. Salt Lakers more and more wanted to sit on the white sandy beaches and stay out of the water. Bringing in sand and creating a beach worked but cost money. Yet despite the Depression, fire, the low lake level, and competition from other beaches, dance halls, movies, and Lagoon, Saltair kept afloat. The owners could no longer take its popularity for granted, however, and they kept their heads above water only by paddling as fast as they could.

There was very little what you would call swimming and no diving whatever because the water was like hitting a board. Now there was lots of floating on the back and one of our favorite pastimes was to make a chain. There would be a leader and the next one would hook his arms over the leader's feet and then the next one and the next one and then the leader would guide everyone around."

Alice Joplin, in Great Salt Lake: A Scientific, Historical, and Economic Overview, 41



GIANT RACER

The Last Resort

World War II changed Utah as rapidly and dramatically as a sharp frost turns summer to fall overnight. The war created more than 50,000 jobs in the state, and newcomers to Utah filled twenty-five percent of them. Seventy-five thousand Utahns served in the armed forces, 24,000 Utah women went to work outside the home, the state's ethnic population increased, and 100,000 men passed through Utah's military training centers. Utahns rationed food, conserved essential goods, and sent their young people off to war just like the rest of the nation did.¹

As the summer of '42 drew to a close, America's involvement in World War II began to affect Saltair. The first pinch was a shortage of workers. In August Manager Thomas Wheeler announced that dancing would end early that season. "The difficulty of obtaining help necessitates the early closing," he said. "Many school teachers who work at Saltair during summer vacation must report to work Monday and there is no other help available."²

Then in May 1943 Wheeler declared that due to shortages of gasoline, tires, repair parts, manpower, and even hot dogs and ice cream, Saltair would not open for the season for the first time in its fifty-year history. It remained closed in 1944 and 1945 as well, but in December 1945, with the war finally over, crews began gearing up for a new season; Wheeler announced plans for an extensive improvement program that he hoped would launch the famed resort into prominence once again. Saltair's re-opening would celebrate the end of the gloomy war years.



Advertisement, 1940s.

"Frankie Laine's appearance blocked traffic all the way to the airport, and the singer got caught in it. Laine was having dinner at the airport and finally had to get a police escort in the other lane to get to the pavilion."

*Art Teece, in the Deseret News,
October 21, 1964.*

Work on the resort was erratic due to shortages of lumber and building materials, but finally, in May 1946, it was ready for the season. Attractions included the giant racer, the heyday whip, the turning barrel, and a new \$12,000 airplane. There were six nights a week of dancing where "couples were encouraged, but stags were accepted." Featured were a few big name bands—Sammy Kay, Henry King, and Jack Burrows.³ In 1947 local band leader Murray Jones played for the entire season. The dance floor was refinished, and dancing was a dollar a person. In 1949 Stewart Grow's Orchestra and vocalist, Cozette, entertained dancers.

Saltair added new fountains and concessions and a malt shop for the 1948 season. The lake level temporarily increased, and advertisements read, "The water is back at Saltair, come float like a cork." For a while during the late Forties it looked as if the excitement of getting back to post-war life would carry over to Saltair. Record crowds came during the centennial year of 1947, and newspapers reported 10,000 visitors at Great Salt Lake beaches on the Fourth of July 1948. Overall, however, Saltair did not consistently attract enough patrons to clear a profit, despite high hopes.

Throughout the post-World War II period Saltair faced a number of problems. One was continued fluctuations in water levels of the Great Salt Lake. When Saltair was built in 1893 four feet of water lapped at its pilings and extended a mile to the east beyond the pavilion. The water level reached a peak in the mid-1920s and then began to fall. It was at its all-time low to that point in 1933, stayed near that level for a decade, rose gradually until the mid-1950s, and then declined to its historic low in the early 1960s. After the war Saltair's owners tried, as they had for decades, to deal with the lake's whims and uncertainties, but to no avail. Profits were eaten up; measures taken one year were washed away the next. What had appeared to be a perfect location for a resort when Saltair was founded eventually turned into a nightmare.⁴ In the 1930s, for example, when lake waters were half a mile west of the pavilion, brine flies and litter covered the beaches and the peculiar foul smell of "mud flats" per-



4390. Saltair Pavilion and Bathers, Great Salt Lake, Utah.



7008. Mirage of Saltair Pavilion, Great Salt Lake, Utah.



966 - ENTRANCE TO PAVILION, SALT AIR, GREAT SALT LAKE, UTAH.



545—Sunset, Great Salt Lake.

833—Saltair Pavilion, Great Salt Lake, Utah



08-H2252



531 SALT AIR PAVILION, GREAT SALT LAKE, UTAH

118763



411 Portion of Saltair Pavilion on Great Salt Lake, Salt Lake City, Utah

119414

1004—BATHING AT SALT AIR — GREAT SALT LAKE, UTAH



FLOATING LIKE A CORK

28-H36





*Sandcastle of Saltair designed by Norman Richard Kraus for
1984 Utah Arts Festival.*



vaded the air. Resort owners brought in tons of sand in an effort to create an attractive beach, and they built a miniature railroad over the dry land to the water. In 1946 rising waters, which owners at first cheered, washed out the miniature railroad tracks and carried the imported sand away. In 1949 thousands of dollars were spent to build a large fresh-water swimming pool on Saltair's west side. Three years later there were several feet of lake water under the pavilion, and the swimming pool was submerged. Two years after that the lake had receded once more, and new sand had to be brought in again.

While owners were trying to make swimming appealing, another problem surfaced. Newspaper articles began calling attention to possible sewage contamination of the lake. On March 10, 1950, a *Salt*

This 1947 photograph was used to promote Utah's Centennial.



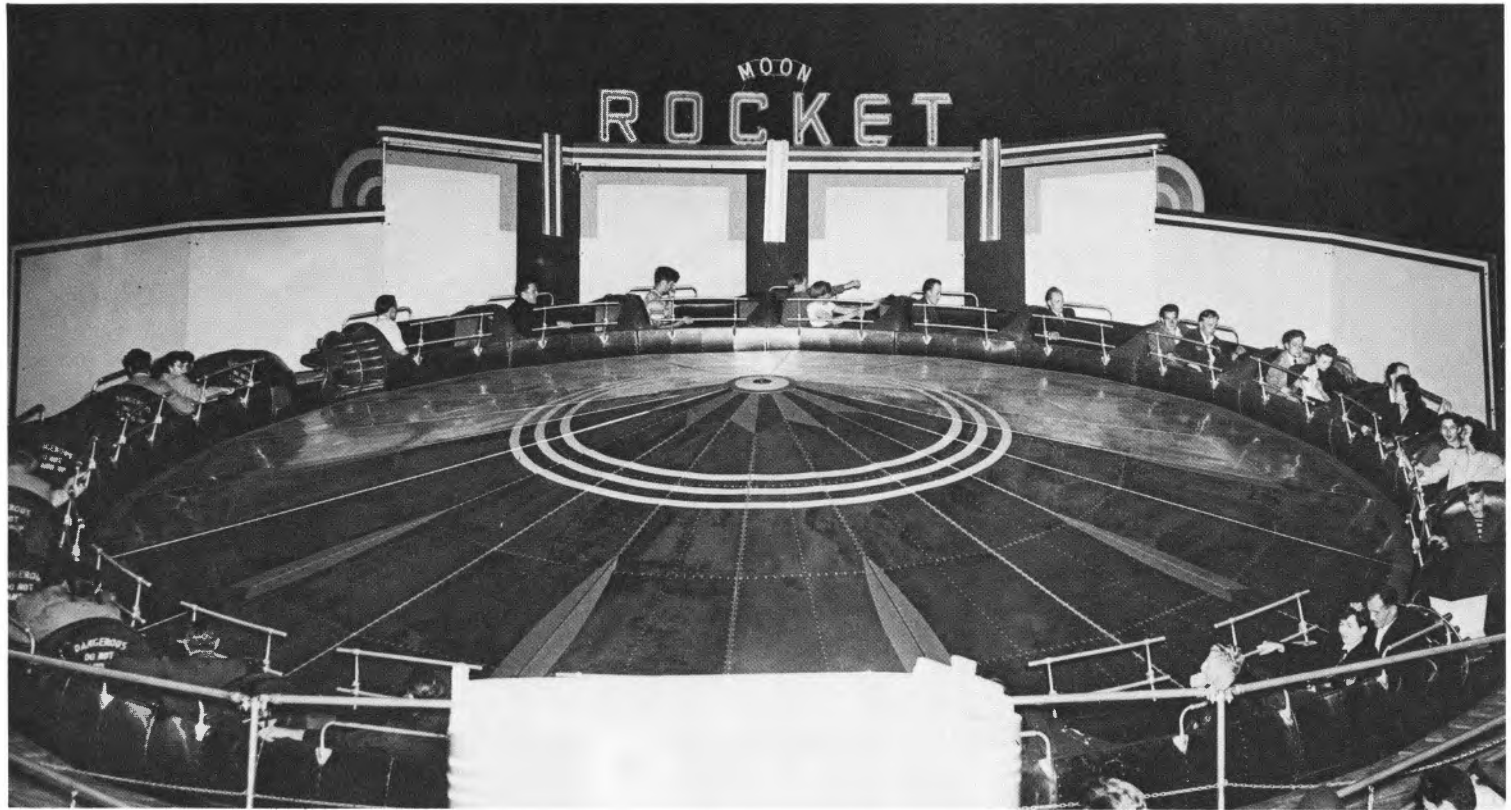
This 1954 photograph of Black Rock Beach shows the remains of Heber C. Kimball's ranch house (built in 1860) against a backdrop of sand, sea, and automobiles.

Lake Tribune article announced to an increasingly wary public that the Great Salt Lake beaches would be threatened or closed if water levels continued to rise, since sewage dumped at the north end of the lake near Antelope Island could float to beaches at the south end. Only a dike built from Antelope Island to the shore could keep it back. In December 1950 the State of Utah built a 3.4-mile dike to block the sewage migration, but outcries for a sewage treatment plant and a general feeling that the lake was becoming a cesspool kept the issue alive. Further investigation proved that the lake's salt content did not kill bacteria, as was commonly believed, and evidence of harmful bacteria was found in duck ponds and on Antelope Island. People's desire to swim in the lake took a nosedive.⁵



Another challenge that Saltair faced in the years following World War II was pressure from various groups for a county- or state-operated resort on the Great Salt Lake. Support for the idea followed the publication of studies showing Utah well below the national average in the length of time tourists stayed in the state and the amount of money they spent while here. The Magna-Garfield Lions Club, in 1946, was among the first groups to make such a proposal. Later the Salt Lake City Chamber of Commerce, the Salt Lake Lions Club, and several other organizations studied resort possibilities near Black Rock, while Salt Lake City Commissioners discussed the possibility of a large resort to be jointly operated by the city and the county. In 1951 a bill to set aside the shores of the Great Salt Lake for a state

Sometimes even such strange events as diving mules attracted attention at Saltair in the 1950s.



Moon Rocket, 1950s.

park passed the state House of Representatives, but died in the Senate.⁶ The next year a more concrete proposal was submitted to Governor J. Bracken Lee that would have created a state park and yacht harbor four miles southwest of Saltair. In an August 31, 1952, feature entitled "Utah Needs This Dream" the *Salt Lake Tribune* advocated passage of the \$4.2 million proposal. Plans called for a one-mile stretch of white sand, bathing facilities for 35,000 people, fresh-water swimming pools, facilities for dancing, observation pavilions, fresh-water showers, 15,000 parking spaces, picnic shelters and concessions.

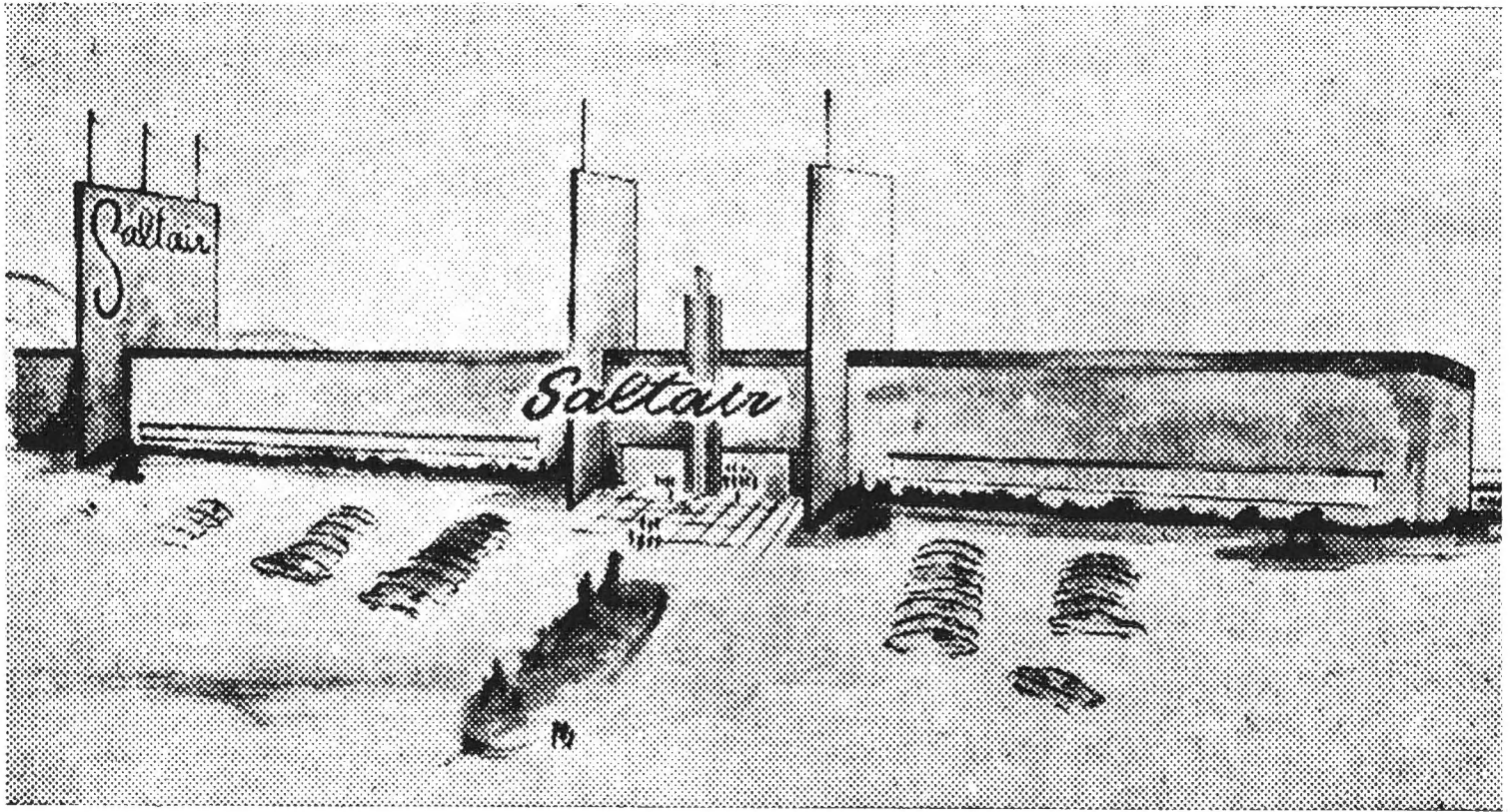
The idea of a publicly owned beach resort was part of an effort to promote tourism in Utah. A new beach would bring in an estimated \$60,000,000 each year. "Why shouldn't tourists make Utah



a stopping-off place instead of a carpet on their way someplace else?" the *Tribune* asked. "We must exploit the opportunities of a unique lake, as well as gain a much needed recreational spot for Utahns." Part of the proposal included cleaning up the lake and allaying people's fears about sewer contamination. At the heart of the proposal was the unstated assumption that Saltair was no longer Utah's premier resort.

Despite discussions about a new competitor, Saltair opened as usual in 1951 with an entire renovation and redecoration and water "like the good old days." Dancing on summer evenings was to George Engar and his Miller-style orchestra. In 1952 Afton Pitt's Dixie Combo and Shelly Hyde's Onsombo were featured singly and together on Friday and Saturday nights. The year 1953 brought a new manager

Ferris Wheel, 1950s.

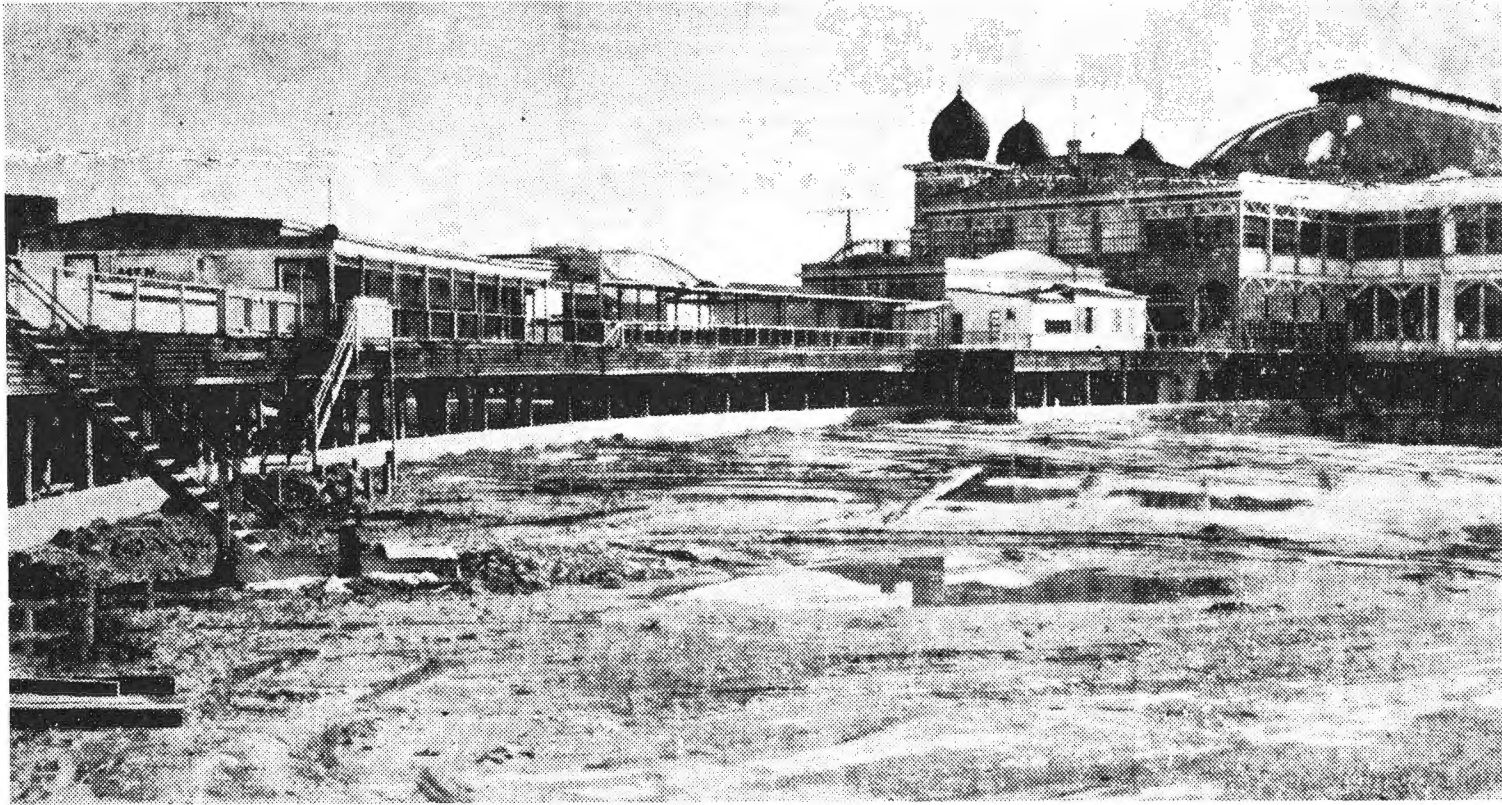


An artist's drawing of the new entrance gate to Saltair appeared in the Desert News November 10, 1954. It was part of the huge renovation project planned to revitalize the resort.

and a new look to the old resort. Manager Stayner Frederickson advertised a bright and gleaming pavilion, a new sunbathing deck, and local band favorite Harold Geersten playing on Friday and Saturday nights. An all-female band, Micky Paramore and her eleven-piece "Swingettes" also performed.

"What they have done to Saltair is Atomic," the resort advertised in 1954. It offered new rides and games, a refurbished snack bar, picnic and banquet facilities, and, once again, George Engar and his fifteen-piece orchestra playing on weekends.

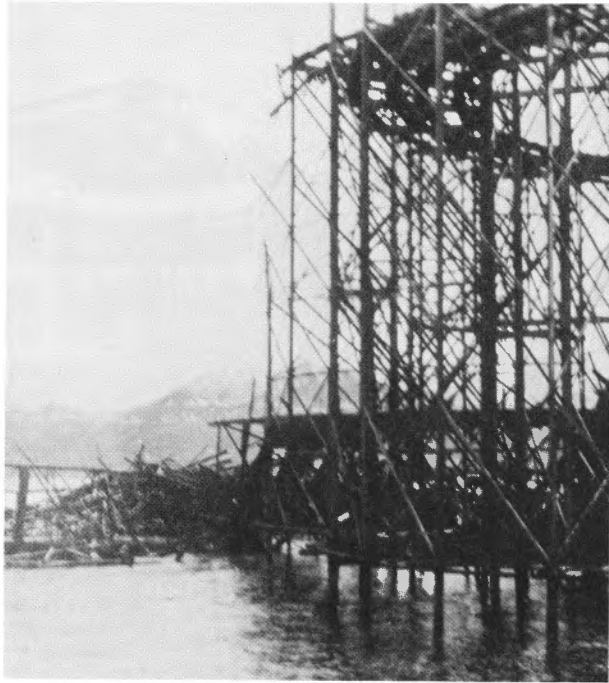
Pressure continued to mount to provide a better recreational retreat on the lake, however, and at the end of the 1954 season Saltair's owners, realizing that plans for a state park would doom it,



announced the most extensive renovation project since the pavilion was rebuilt in 1925. Feeling that for several years tourists had gone away disappointed, the company decided to invest \$250,000 to upgrade the resort. According to Manager Art J. Teece, revenues had declined drastically in previous years. "In my opinion," he said, "there is much to do to bring Saltair up to tourists' expectations."⁷

As part of the rebuilding a permanent dike was added to create a 400-foot-square, five-and-a-half-acre lake immediately west of the pavilion. Bathhouses adjoined the lake, and seven million gallons of salt water were pumped into a bathing area large enough to hold 10,000 people in two to four feet of water. Spillways and pumps provided for a complete change of water every eighteen hours. The

This Tribune photograph of work on the dike at Saltair appeared February 28, 1955. The dike, pumps, and pipes created a 400-foot-square swimming area west of the pavilion. The 1954-56 renovation cost \$250,000.



On August 30, 1957, 75 mph winds blew the giant racer over. In three minutes the \$100,000 structure was no more than a pile of wood. As one workman said, "it was like a giant stack of matchsticks crumbling."

Nat Cole was the number one attraction. When soloists, like he or Sarah Vaughn, would come, they would maybe bring a pianist or a drummer and then our band would rehearse with them before the performance for a couple of hours. The people who came out there were drawn either by the attractions—the special guest artists, or they were die-hard Saltair fans, who had come out all through the years.

Ardean Watts, Interview, October 17, 1984

midway was extended thirty percent, and the dance pavilion was reroofed and redecorated. The much-requested open-air train cars were brought in to add a romantic turn-of-the-century atmosphere. Big name bands were booked, and the bandstand was enlarged and a new sound system installed. A final addition was a neon-lighted entrance gate, twenty feet high, to welcome patrons to the resort.

Fire struck again in 1955 destroying the boiler room and many bathhouses. In 1956 renovations begun the year before were carried on, and sections that had been destroyed by the fire were rebuilt. A long avenue of trees, flowers, shrubs, and lawns was planted down the middle of the resort to add color. Local musician Ardean Watts and his orchestra played between special performances of the Mills Brothers, Bill Haley and His Comets, and Gogi Grant. Special days like Saltair had in the Twenties were reinstated—including Uncle Roscoe Day and Oriental Day. Invitations were issued to Mormon stakes, wards, and quorums to have outings at Saltair.

Big name bands played five nights a week for ten-night stands at Saltair in 1957, and a new policy featured soloists and double attractions on weekends. Stan Kenton, Charlie Barnet, Nat King Cole, the Ames Brothers, and June Christy all performed and brought in large crowds. Because of the increased attendance, the man-made lake and the parking lot were both enlarged.

A major blow came near the end of the season, however. On August 30 the giant racer, 110 feet high at its peak, blew over in a freakish seventy-five-mile-an-hour gust of wind. The racer was not rebuilt. Saltair opened in 1958 but had a disastrous year financially, and on January 9, 1959, Ashby Snow gave the grand old resort to the State of Utah. "Saltair hasn't been profitable for years," Snow said. "It doesn't make enough money during the three months it's open to carry it through the other nine months." The Utah State Park and Recreation Commission accepted the gift, and Saltair was closed.

Saltair spanned an era of sixty-four years. Its domed pavilion, which at first witnessed the sprawl of early lakeside railroads, decades later shared the sky with man-made satellites. Appealing as it was,



however, it faced enormous problems. High winds and salt ate away at boards and paint so that expensive repair and repainting were necessary each year. Fire played havoc over the years. The sand, which had first attracted people to the lake's southern shore, became muddy, and new sand had to be brought in often. By the early 1960s the lake was at its lowest level in 110 years, and the pavilion was left high and dry almost a mile from the water. An ever-present odor of dead brine shrimp, which littered the beaches, hung in the air, and sand fleas feeding on the shrimp flew up in hordes when visitors walked by.

In the 1960s curious visitors found desolation, decaying buildings, corrosive salt, and litter. Sheldon Brewster led a movement to "SAVE SALTAIR" but received no substantial financial backing. The

Saltair in 1960. Deterioration set in quickly after the resort was given to the state in 1959.

"More than a year ago (1963) the Salt Lake-Garfield Western Railway decided to run an old, open-air train down memory lane to Saltair. The day of the 7,000-paid-admission event is gone. Only about a dozen people showed up for the ride."

Deseret News, October 21, 1964.



Fire completely destroyed what was left of Saltair in November, 1970.

once elegant and spectacular Lady of the Lake that had filled turn-of-the-century patrons with wonder and delight had become a "white elephant on a dead sea."⁸ Saltair stood abandoned and forlorn far from the lake that had prompted its beginnings. After years of vandalism, indecision, and neglect, it burned to the ground in 1970. Firefighters stood by helplessly as fire finished off the famed resort. They could not even get fire trucks close enough on the rotting boardwalks to fight the flames.

"From the abandoned pavilion on any evening excepting those in the dead of winter, one could see the most beautiful of sunsets to be had anywhere. There was almost a mystical quality to the experience, to watch the sun sink into the lake at a distance, casting the waters into the same salmon color as the pavilion itself."

Gregory Navarro, letter, September 7, 1984.

"Those of us who lived the last years of Saltair still relish it the way New Englanders breathe in the smell of burning leaves in autumn. To us it means racing for the open-air car of the train that went out to Saltair, riding in the Giant Racer and screaming all the way, and dancing to Harry James and Louis Armstrong as the waves lapped at the pilings under the biggest outdoor dance floor in the world. And now, years after the grand Lady of the Lake burned to the ground, new folks or visitors smell that lake wind and say, 'What is that strange sour smell?' We 'old timers' lick our lips, trying for a taste of salt, that stupid, pecky salt, and maybe trying, too, for a taste of our childhoods."

*Terrell Dougan, in the Deseret News,
July 14, 1975.*



Epilogue

Despite history, good sense, and the ravages of nature, Saltair's mythic past continued to tantalize the imaginations of developers. In the summer of 1981 a new resort began to rise "out of the ashes of the old Saltair Pavilion." Known as Saltair III, its owners were four determined Utah businessmen — John C. Silver, James S. Silver, Wallace Wright, and Stewart Grow—who sought to recapture the popularity and appeal of its predecessors. The pavilion was a 36,000-foot-square abandoned airplane hangar from Hill Field to which a facade—designed by F. Grant Haycock to resemble the original Saltair—had been added. There were shops, restaurants, a giant water slide, a space coaster, a video arcade, bumper cars, and amphibious tricycles, as well as dancing and free swimming. Though construction was not quite complete, Saltair III officially opened in July 1982.

Ironically, owners had expected lake levels to affect the new Saltair less than they had its predecessors. In the spring of 1982, shortly before it opened, the pavilion was a quarter mile from the water. The next spring, however, following the wettest winter in Utah's history, the lake began to rise steadily and persistently. By the summer of 1984 it was threatening to surpass its historic high. The resort parking lot was inundated; five inches of water washed the main floor of the pavilion. Previous Saltairs had succumbed to fire; Saltair III, in operation less than two years, had drowned.

It is too early to judge, however, whether the lake has had the last word. Kletting's monumental pavilion continues to inspire artists, essayists, folk-tellers, and those who rode the racer, swam in the lake,

or waltzed the length of the ballroom. The 1984 Utah Arts Festival featured a large sand sculpture of Saltair as it appeared at the turn of the century. Norman Richard Kraus, an internationally known artist and sculptor, designed it, while Professor Kazuo Matsubayashi and nearly two dozen architectural students from the University of Utah undertook the actual construction. A charming creation, it evoked a sense of the exuberance of early Saltair, and was one of the festival's most popular attractions—evidence of Utah's continuing fascination with the star-crossed resort.

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Bibliographic Essay

As popular as Saltair was, and as well remembered as it is, surprisingly little has been written or published about it. Most of what has been is sketchy, anecdotal, fails to place Saltair in a larger context, and contains frequent errors of fact and interpretation. There is little understanding of why it was built, what significance it had, or how it related to what was going on in Utah and the rest of the country. The focus tends to be on its early years. Little has been written about Saltair during the 1920s, the era of the Great Depression, and after World War II, or about the attractions it offered besides swimming and dancing. Hundreds of wonderful photographs of Saltair have never been published, while many of those that are reproduced are used again and again. The only full-length work is S. Todd Shoemaker's recent master's thesis, "Saltair and the Mormon Church, 1893-1906," University of Utah, 1983, and it deals only with the resort's first thirteen years. Another master's thesis, John D. C. Gadd, "Recreational Development of the Great Salt Lake," University of Utah, 1967, has a long section on Saltair. Gadd's "Saltair, Great Salt Lake's Most Famous Resort," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 36 (Summer 1967), 198-221, is the only published account that provides an overview, however brief, of Saltair's entire history. Even less has been written about the history of previous resorts on the Great Salt Lake. No account correctly identifies all of them. The best discussion is Dale L. Morgan's chapter, "Place of Resort," in his *The Great Salt Lake* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973), 347-66.

Salt Lake City newspapers are an indispensable source of infor-

mation about Saltair. They are particularly rich in information for the period before the fire in 1925. During most of that time Salt Lake had at least four, and sometimes five, daily newspapers. They contain almost daily items about Saltair and other resorts, as well as periodic lengthy accounts, particularly on holidays like the Fourth of July and Labor Day. Going through the newspapers day by day, year after year, yields a wealth of information that has never made its way into historians' consciousness. The Mormon church's Journal History is also an important source. A scrapbook of clippings from a variety of publications, the index to it is in effect a partial index to Salt Lake City newspapers. Using the index is a convenient way to locate information, but it cannot substitute for a thorough search of the newspapers themselves.

George S. Nelson, son of a former owner of Saltair, has written several short essays on his experiences at the resort, including "My Intimate Old Friend, Saltair," in *Good Old Days*, July 1976, and "World Famous Saltair Brought Millions to Utah," in *The Pioneer*, 21 (September/October 1974), 15. A brother, Joseph S. Nelson, has also written an article, "When Saltair was a Jewel," which appeared in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, compiled by Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers) 8, 454. A general source of information on the lake is *Great Salt Lake: A Scientific, Historical, and Economic Overview*, edited by J. Wallace Gwynn (Utah Geological and Mineral Survey, 1980).

Architectural drawings of the original Saltair are not on deposit at any public institution and if they exist are in private hands. Copies of drawings of the second pavilion are at the Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah. Sanborn maps at the Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, depict the pavilions in great detail and are very useful. Among the most important manuscript sources relating to Saltair's history are the Abraham H. Cannon journal at the Utah State Historical Society, the L. John Nuttall journal at the Mormon church library, the John Henry Smith letterbook and journal at the Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of

Utah, and the Saltair Beach Minute Book for the period 1891–1906 at the Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. The Utah State Historical Society has a rich collection of several hundred photographs of Saltair from its construction to the fire that finally destroyed it in 1970.

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"Those of us who lived the last years of Saltair still relish it the way New Englanders breathe in the smell of burning leaves in autumn. To us it means racing for the open-air car of the train that went out to Saltair, riding in the Giant Racer and screaming all the way, and dancing to Harry James and Louis Armstrong as the waves lapped at the pilings under the biggest outdoor dance floor in the world. And now, years after the grand Lady of the Lake burned to the ground, new folks or visitors smell that lake wind and say, 'What is that strange sour smell'? We 'old timers' lick our lips, trying for a taste of salt, that stupid, pecky salt, and maybe trying, too, for a taste of our childhoods."

*Terrell Dougan, in the Deseret News,
July 14, 1975.*

Nancy McCormick received a master's degree in history from the University of Iowa and teaches history at Highland High School in Salt Lake City. John McCormick is a historian at the Utah State Historical Society, teaches Utah history at the University of Utah, and is the author of two previous books, *Salt Lake City, The Gathering Place*, and *The Historic Buildings of Downtown Salt Lake City*.

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