



Lowell and South Pools

Boise's first municipal pools, Lowell and South, opened during the summer of 1953, marking the culmination of a roughly twenty-year campaign by citizens and civic organizations for a city owned and operated public swimming pool. Prior to the construction of the Lowell and South pools, the Natatorium on Warm Springs Avenue had been Boise's only public pool. Privately managed and located in the eastern portion of the city, the single pool could not sufficiently serve Boise's growing population and was inconveniently located for citizens living outside of the downtown core.

Between 1930 and the early 1950s, Boise citizens continually pressured city government to invest in a municipal pool. In 1952, the question was submitted to voters and presented as a \$200,000 bond issue designed to fund the modernization of the Natatorium pool as well as the construction of two new swimming pools, one in the North End and one on the Bench. The ballot measure passed, and the city began work on the projects almost immediately. City officials entered into contract negotiations with pool designer Wesley Bintz, an engineer from Lansing, Michigan whose company built above ground, ovoid shaped pools. The Bintz pools, it was argued, required a smaller footprint than traditional sunken pools as the support facilities, such as restrooms and dressing rooms were located beneath the pool decking. Proponents noted the above ground designs saved municipalities money by requiring less land acquisition, reducing excavation costs, and creating accessible plumbing infrastructure. Although Bintz pools were not regulation size for swim competitions, the city's recreation director noted that the pools were intended as

recreation places, not as facilities for competitive events. Sites were chosen at Lowell Elementary and South Junior High Schools.¹

During the pool design and construction phases, Bintz occasionally visited Boise in person. Construction of the pools and renovation of the Natatorium began at the beginning of 1953 and was handled by local contractors J. O. Jordan and Son.²

Construction of the Lowell and South pools was completed in time for summer 1953. The Lowell Pool opened to the public on June 20th and reached capacity during its first afternoon in use. The formal dedication of the pool took place amidst much fanfare two days later. The dedication was heavily attended, and *The Idaho Statesman* estimated 1,235 people visited the pool on its dedication day. By necessity, city staff had to institute "swimming shifts" to accommodate everyone. One week later, on June 30, 1953, the South Pool opened to the public. Renovations to the Natatorium, which included shortening the deep end and removing the stone diving platform, were not completed until later that summer. The new Natatorium pool officially opened in mid-August.³

¹ Approval of pool bond: "Voters Okeh [sic] Swim Pool Bond Issue: Project Approved By Narrow Margin Of 134 Ballots." *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, July 16, 1952: 1, 2. *NewsBank*.

Promotion of swimming pool bond, Bintz pool designs, and city recreation director: "Exchange Club Proposes Bonds For Boise Swimming Facilities." *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, April 18, 1952: 15. *NewsBank*.

Description of Bintz pool designs: "Swimming Pool Backers Urge Voter Turnout: Committee Contends Pools Are Necessary For Summer Program." *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, July 13, 1952: 10. *NewsBank*.

² Contract with Bintz: "City Contracts For Designing Of Swim Pool: Plans Drafting Marks One Step Nearer Actual Construction." *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, August 27, 1952: 11. *NewsBank*.

Contract with J. O. Jordan & Son: "Boise Company Wins Swim Pool Contract: J. O. Jordan & Son To Build Plunges, Repair Natatorium." *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, January 27, 1953: 5. *NewsBank*.

³ Lowell Pool opening day: "Youngsters Swarm at New Lowell School Swim Pool." *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, June 21, 1953: 12. *NewsBank*.

Lowell Pool dedication ceremonies and "swimming shifts": "Hundreds of Youngsters Take Part in Opening of New Pool." *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, June 23, 1953: 16. *NewsBank*.



Bintz pools were constructed in many cities across the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. In a 2018 article, the *Lansing State Journal* estimated that while approximately 120 Bintz pools had been built in the United States, only a small number remained in operation.⁴

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Opening date of Natatorium: "Natatorium to Open, Show Planned Thursday." *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, August 11, 1953: 12. *NewsBank*.

⁴ Bintz pool statistics: Hansen, Haley. "Here's what makes Moores Park Pool one of the most unique pools in the nation." *Lansing State Journal*, June 27, 2018. Accessed November 10, 2020.

<https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/2018/06/26/moores-park-pool-one-few-wesley-bintz-pools-still-operating-lansing-tegan-baiocchi/720960002/>.

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