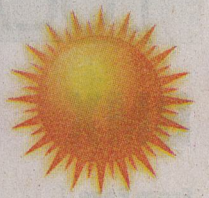




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# Los Alamos Monitor

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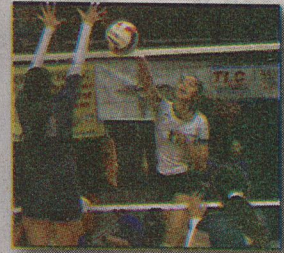
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## JEMEZ SPRINGS HISTORY



The historic Jemez Springs Bath House is seen in the center of this photo from the early days of Jemez Springs.  
JEMEZ SPRINGS/Courtesy

### *Jemez Springs Bath House -- Easing aches and pains since 1875*

BY MANDY MARKSTEINER

*The New Mexican*

In May 2019, the Jemez Springs Bath House celebrated their grand reopening after being registered as a State Historic Site.

"The Jemez Bath House has been such an anchor in the community," said Roger Sweet, the Mayor of Jemez Springs. "The building has years and years of use. People have been coming since 1875 with intentions. Even if their intention is just to relax, ease their aches and pains, improve their circulation and help their muscles relax."

Although the bath house has been in constant operation since 1875, the mineral springs have a much longer history.

About 1.25 million years ago, a massive volcanic eruption formed the Valles Caldera, a 13-mile-wide crater on top of a supervolcano. The breathtaking landscape of the surrounding area, including Bandelier National Park, the finger mesas of Los

Alamos, and the natural hot springs that are tucked away in the Jemez Mountains, are all the result of that massive volcanic eruption.

The natural hot springs are part of the Canyon de San Diego Land Grant which was settled by members of the Jemez Pueblo, the Jemez Mission Church for centuries.

Christopher Toya who works in the Tribal Historic Preservation Office of the Pueblo of Jemez said, "Jemez People have been using the Geothermal Hot Springs located up and down 'P'ae Tyúshulunu Wâamu" (Water Boiling Canyon) or San Diego Canyon since ancestral times. My great grandma Juanita Toledo, born in 1887, said the pool at Spence Springs was used by the Jemez People for rheumatoid arthritis. The pool was divided with a giant boulder to separate the men and the women, but when the hippies came in the valley in the 1960s, they got rid of the boulder to create one

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## LOCAL NEWS

## JEMEZ SPRINGS

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giant pool.”

Around 1860, a geyser erupted from one of the springs. Someone saw an opportunity to commercialize the springs and built a gazebo around the spring a built bath house to promote healing as well as a hotel to accommodate visitors (at the time it took six hours to get there from Santa Fe). It has been continuously open since.

People traveled from miles around to take advantage of the healing powers of the natural hot mineral springs. Tents sprung up making a tent town.

According to an article in [jemezspringshistory.org](http://jemezspringshistory.org) (managed by the Jemez Springs public library), Miguel Antonio Otero (1829-1882), an influential early landowner in Jemez Springs, owned the hot springs bath house in 1897, as well as the hotel, general merchandise store, and the Sulphur Hot Springs stage line, which brought travelers over the mountains from Santa Fe.

“He was head of a wealthy and politically powerful family in northern New Mexico that invested in vast amounts of property, as well as banking and merchandising. Otero was a great supporter of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad and saw it connect to Las Vegas, New Mexico, where he lived. He envisioned a big resort in Jemez Springs to be served by a branch of the ATSF up from Bernalillo.

“Imagine what Jemez Springs would be like today if he would have followed through with the railroad,” said Sweet.

Otero died before his railroad plans could be completed. His son (also named Miguel Antonio Otero) didn’t complete the project, but went on to become the 16th governor of New Mexico.

The spring is enclosed by a well structure which was built during the 1920s as a WPA project.

Other families have owned bath houses over the centuries, including Moises Aboussleman, a Lebanese immigrant who moved to Jemez Springs in 1912 and operated a bath house and mercantile, according to [jemezspringshistory.org](http://jemezspringshistory.org).

The Jemez Springs Bath House has changed hands throughout the 20th century.

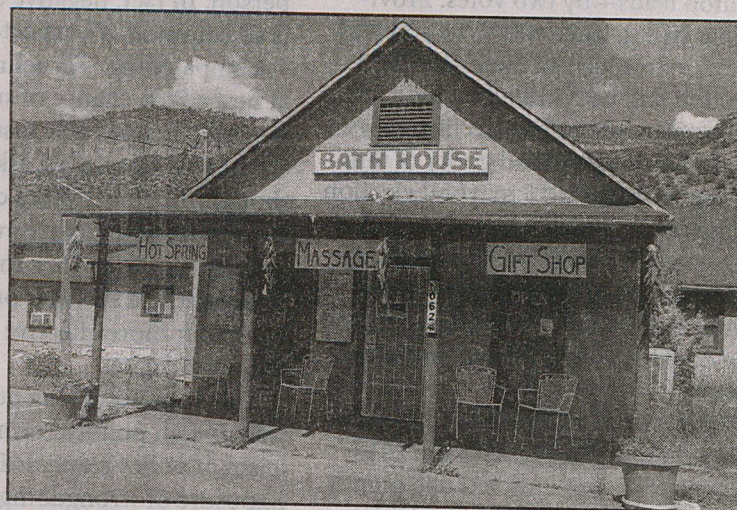


Around 1860, a geyser erupted from one of the springs. Someone saw an opportunity to commercialize the springs and built a gazebo around it and a bath house. Later, a lobby area and porch was added, above, to the bath house, creating the look of today's building, right. VILLAGE OF JEMEZ SPRINGS/ Courtesy

Operators have included the Otero and Perea families, Charlie Clay who operated in 1924, the Catholic priests, and finally the Village of Jemez Springs acquired the bath house in the 1960s.

Dorothy Stoy work to get it on the State Historic Registry in the late '70s. Being on the State Historic Registry made it possible for the city to petition the state for Capital Outlay funds that are used to maintain the historic structure. Funds that were secured by Rep. Christine Chandler and former Rep. Stephanie Garcia Richard to renovate the interior while maintaining the historic integrity of the building.

Jemez Springs became a resort destination in the late 1800s for those seeking its healing, mineral-rich waters, but there is evidence of human activity in the region dating back to 2,500 B.C. After barely surviving a rather violent history involving the Spanish conquistadors in



the 1600s, the pueblo now honors its past with museums, monuments and galleries full of artwork inspired by the canyon cliffs and lush bosques of the surrounding southwestern landscape.

A visit to the nearby Valle Caldera National Preserve is a must for the scenic drive alone along the Jemez Mountain Trail National Scenic Byway. Make a quick stop at Soda Dam on your way to marvel at a centuries-old geological formation created by mineral deposits, and maybe even take dip in the pool below—a local swimming hole. The park itself consists of a 13-mile-wide valley formed by the eruption of a “super volcano”—one of just six in the world—approximately 1.25 million years ago. The caldera is responsible for the

naturally heated waters that flow from its basin, and is a great place for hiking, snowshoeing, and mountain biking, as well as viewing wildlife like elk, bear, and wild turkeys (hunting is allowed, if procuring your own Thanksgiving dinner is on your bucket list).

The village of Jemez Springs is ground zero of the Jemez. The town popped up around the time of the Civil War and incorporated in 1955 but didn’t get telephone service until 1964. The pueblo north of town, though, is much older - it dates back 700 years, and the natural hot springs have lured people here for years. According to local lore, Chicago gangster Al Capone enjoyed the occasional dip in them.