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Sandy Beach/Sandy Bottom

I. The Early Years 1925-1947

Sandy Beach was developed by Thomas Pugh and William Davis. In October 1924 they began a series of purchases until they acquired most of the beach lands. Tons of fill were brought to the area for the rough spots. A preferred fill was the flat rocks from stone fences at area farms. Sand was brought by train to Alderson and trucked to the beach. Sandy Beach was rushed into preparation for an opening on July 4, 1925, although the bathhouse was still under construction. The following season Sandy Beach was in full operation. Independence Day 1926 was a three-day affair. A Sunday ban on musical entertainment was ignored as Gilligan's Orchestra played for the Sandy Beach crowds Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The new park also sponsored swimming races, a high diving contest, and a speedboat race between two motorboats equipped with Curtis aeroplane engines. They could travel sixty-five miles per hour. The evenings featured fireworks at the beach.

A large one-story restaurant fronting the Lake was built in the center of the park. To the right of the restaurant was a large bathhouse for men and women. In 1928 Sandy Beach advertised 350 private lockers; the beach rented Bradley bathing suits. To the rear of the bathhouse was a small amusement area with a Merry-Go-Round and Dodgem, each of which was enclosed in a small pavilion. On the west corner of the park, a one-story dance hall was built.

The Sandy Beach dances were very popular, and crowds drawn by name dance bands could not be contained in the original dance hall. The one-story dance pavilion was removed, and on Memorial Day 1930 a new two-story dance hall was opened with Eddie Worth's Master Musicians from Greenwich Village, New York. The second story was used for dancing while the first floor became the men's bathhouse and as a rental area for canoes and rowboats. By this time the Whip was also added to the amusement area. In time the most popular bands of the 1930's were to play at Sandy Beach including Cab Calloway, Willie Osborn, Guy Lombardo, Paul Whiteman and the Dorsey Brothers.

On June 30, 1931, Johnny Weismuller, the 1924 and 1928 Olympic champion and star of the Tarzan movies, was in Wyoming Valley for a swimming exhibition. At the time the six foot two sensation held forty-nine world records. After a morning demonstration in the Susquehanna River near the Market Street Bridge, Weismuller traveled to Sandy Beach where he equaled his forty-nine second record for a one hundred yard course. Weismuller was joined in the water exhibitions by Stubby Krueger, a swimming and diving comedian who was a former world swimming champion. The Weismuller and Krueger visit to the Lake was sponsored by a national swimwear manufacturer.

SANDY BEACH 2 SHOWS WEEKLY
DRIVE-IN Theatre
Open Every Day for the Rest of the Season

FRIDAY
"Desert Rat"
James Mason — Richard Burton
"An exciting story of World War II and the taking of Tobruk"

It holds the scorching saga of the west!
GUN BELT
Technicolor

SATURDAY
DOUBLE FEATURE
GEORGE RAFT SALLY GRAY
I'll Get You

SUNDAY and MONDAY
Special Double Feature

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK
WITH A MUSICAL BABY TO TAKE!
Technicolor
GIVE A GIRL A BREAK
MADE BY STU CLARK
CHAMPION - REYNOLDS
M-G-M's
KEYSCRAPER MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT!

TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY
"Let's Do It Again"
Technicolor
Jane Wyman — Ray Milland
Aldo Ray
"Wait 'til you see that GO-Girl-GO!"

M-G-M's GIGANTIC ADVENTURE!
ALL THE BROTHERS WERE VALIANT
IN TECHNICOLOR!
STORY BY TAYLOR
FEATURING
GRANGER • BLYTH

THURSDAY & FRIDAY
"Inferno"
Technicolor
Robert Ryan — Rhonda Fleming
William Lundigan
"A raging inferno of violence and suspense"

Kiddy Rides will be open if weather permits, all rides five cents. Row boats to hire by the hour or by the day. Snack Bar will also be open with all kinds of refreshments.

The Dallas Post, Friday, April 30, 1954

When Sandy Beach was originally opened, a long swimming dock stretched out into the Lake from the center of the beach. At the end of the dock was a high diving board. Over the years the dock was shortened until finally it was replaced by a large floating dock anchored in the deeper water. A small dock was also built in front of the dance hall. For a time there was a children's sliding board on the water front. Another beach attraction was shoot-the-chute which was built near the original bathhouse. Although the chute survived into the 1940's, it was not nearly as grand as the chute at the Picnic Grounds. The beach area ended at West End Creek and did not extend into the area known as Old Sandy Bottom.

Another feature of the West Corner was the home of C.N. Booth, built near the beach and popularly known as the Stone House. Booth was a detective for the Lehigh Valley Railroad. From 1933 to 1946 the Stone House was the quietly maintained bar of Jimmie Brennan. In recent years the Stone House was reopened as Sandy Beach Inn but it is currently listed for sale.

II. The Expansion Years 1948-1955

In March 1948 the Lake front at Sandy Beach was acquired by Sam Slomowitz. He purchased additional Sandy Beach property in August 1961. Slomowitz improved the park with the addition of Kiddie-Land, an amusement area near the dance hall. He acquired a new Merry-Go-Round and new children's rides for the small amusement park. Slomowitz also converted the restaurant into a cafeteria. On June 12, 1948, the Sandy Beach Drive-In was opened. Built by Ray Heddon of Dallas, it was completely modern, with in-car speakers and inclined parking. The Saturday grand opening of the Sandy Beach Drive-in featured the technicolor musical *I've Always Loved You*. Regular movie features began on June 13, 1948, with the comedy *The Time, The Place, The Girl*, starring Dennis Morgan and Jack Carson. The drive-in was enormously popular and ran for twenty seasons.

There were other improvements added to Sandy Beach by Sam Slomowitz. The original bathhouse was removed to provide enlarged sanitary facilities. Men and women's locker rooms were now located under the original dance hall. The dock in front of the dance hall was lengthened and forty rental slips for boats were made. U-drive boats, with three horse-power motors, were rented to the public, but after a few years the small power boats were withdrawn in favor of paddle-boats. Eventually, rental boats were discarded in favor of Lake cruises on a pontoon boat. Slomowitz also improved the beach with tons of white sand from Atlantic City. Bingo was also added in the pavilion under the supervision of John Lynch.

III. Old Sandy Bottom/Rood Campground

Irwin A. Rood came to the Lake from Sweet Valley in 1898. He taught at the one-room Rock School on Sorber Mountain for two years, but in 1901 he purchased the Al Goode store at the West Corner. Rood ran an early horse and wagon school-bus service, and in 1918 he became the Laketon postmaster, a post he served until 1937. Two generations of the Rood family managed the general store and served the West Corner until 1965.

In 1928 Ben and Vernon Rood, the two sons of I.A. Rood, began to rent tent sites on a large plot of land previously used as a truck farm. The site was across the Lake road and opposite the Sandy Beach site. Guests had a camping ground and access to the beach. The tent ground was an enormously popular attraction and was frequently called Tent City. A camp site rented for

two dollars weekly. In May 1930 a Pure Oil gasoline station was added, which later changed to Atlantic-Richfield. The tent ground soon attracted trailers. In 1933 five rental cabins were built.

Shortly, additional cabins were built until sixteen cabins were available. They were one, two and three-room cabins which originally rented for fifteen, twenty and twenty-five dollars a week.

At the height of its popularity, the Room camp ground would accommodate six hundred people in 125 tent sites, fifty trailer sites and the sixteen cabins. In 1935 Rood built the Martha Washington Inn. It had rooms for six boarders in addition to a restaurant trade.

In December 1954 Joseph and Margaret McCaffrey purchased West Corner beach land from Margaret Pugh. Brush and trees were cleared and tons of fill dirt topped with the fine sand were used to improve the beach. In the summer of 1955, Old Sandy Bottom Beach equipped with a convenient refreshment stand and picnic tables, was opened to the public. A second generation, James and Carlene McCaffrey, continued to operate the attractive beach.

It was a lucky child whose parents had a cottage at the West Corner or whose family rented one of Rood's cabins for a week. Sandy Beach had all the attractions of a small resort. It was a delight to fill the hours with the exhausting adventures of a summer day at Sandy Beach. Some of the camp children could earn welcome change early in the morning by helping to clear the Sandy Beach Drive-in of the candy wrappers and small trash thrown from the cars during the evening.

For another generation after the 1950's, Sandy Beach continued to attract large crowds. It was the largest public beach at the Lake, especially after the addition of Old Sandy Bottom. But the changing recreational demands of the public challenged the owners of area parks to attract large crowds. The cost of renovations to maintain public interest often taxed the resources of family-owned parks. Then, too, parks became casualties of the costs of compliance with increased environmental and safety standards.

IV. The Final Years 1965-1984

There was renewed interest in Sandy Beach when dances were revived at the Sandy Beach restaurant during the rock and roll era in the mid-1960's. Eddie Day and his bands, along with other popular dance talents like Dennis Yost and The Classic IV and Johnnie Maestro and The Brooklyn Bridge, played at Sandy Beach. But the beach itself was attracting smaller crowds, and the Sandy Beach Drive-in was closed after the 1968 season. The Slomowitz family, which had nurtured Sandy Beach for over two decades, sought to sell the park. In August 1973 Scarlet Enterprises, Inc., purchased Sandy Beach. But in late May 1974, as the season was to open, the original restaurant, which was serving as a cafeteria, arcade, and dance hall, was lost to fire. After the fire, Sandy Beach was not opened to the public, and two years later the dance hall and bathhouse were dismantled.

Old Sandy Bottom Beach continued to operate as the Lake's largest public swimming area as the Hanson lakefront operations were converted to marina facilities. In 1968 James and Carlene Kocher McCaffrey assumed the family business. Carlene is descended from T.T. Kocher, a pioneer Lake settler. Her grand-father, Arthur Kocher, was an engineer on the Lake steamboats.

After the 1984 season Old Sandy Bottom Beach was closed to the public - the end of all practical public swimming access to the Lake. The beach was reopened in 1986 as Harvey's

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Lake Beach Club, Inc., on a private membership basis.

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