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# Did You Know?

Cascade Springs was once a water company, a horticulture business and a popular vacation resort?

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From 1909 until 1972, Cascade Springs was the home of several successful businesses, all operated by John H. Zaring, Sr. and family. Zaring, a native of Kentucky who was living in Florida, came to Atlanta to buy real estate in the growing Gate City of the South, and for medical reasons. He had learned that he was developing some symptoms of tuberculosis, and believed that mineral water was a natural treatment for the disease. Atlanta had a cooler climate and several mineral springs.

In 1909, Zaring purchased the Cascade Springs property at public auction for \$5,100. He decided to first operate a commercial nursery and a horticulture business at Cascade Springs. Over time he constructed six large greenhouses with a self-sufficient spring water and boiler heating system that allowed for the growth of flowers which were sold in a florist shop. The City of Atlanta, which was still developing its public water supply, was experiencing problems maintaining

the quality of its water. Zaring saw the potential for a larger commercial market for the water that had previously only been sold in small quantities to local residents. In 1910, he built an unique, indigenous stone springhouse over the larger of the two springs on the property and allowed the water to back up so it could be easily bottled. Over the next 30 years, Zaring leased the bottling rights to the Cascade Springs water to a series of business partners. Initially operating as the Cascade Spring Water Company, the water was advertised to be "Nature's Pure Water", "the purest, softest and most healthful water known" and was sold "for the Healing of the Nations." Zaring eventually constructed a bottling house with an assembly line to clean, refill and recork five-gallon bottles that were stored in warehouses then delivered to residential and commercial customers. At the height of its operations, the company averaged about 100 bottles or 500 gallons of water a day. But by 1942, the market for the spring water

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## *Did You Know?* continued

had died as the public supply of water improved. Zaring closed his commercial water business in the early 1950's.

In 1917, Zaring decided to take advantage of Cascade Springs' proximity to Atlanta and develop a small, middle class urban resort on the property. Working with a partner, Zaring formed the Cascade Springs Park and Camping Company. They refurbished an existing hotel on Cascade Road across from Cascade Springs and named it the Cascade Inn. It had a restaurant that sold breakfast for \$.35, luncheon and afternoon tea for \$.50, and a special "Old Fashioned" fried chicken dinner for \$.75. One of its four rooms could be rented for \$7 a week, meals included. In 1927, Zaring closed the Cascade Inn. During the Depression, he allowed it to become the home of the man who held the lease for the bottling company.

Below the waterfalls and along the stream, the company built furnished and unfurnished bungalow tents to rent to campers for \$5 a week unfurnished or \$7 a week furnished or \$25 per month for the summer season. . He also built a lake where campers could immerse themselves in the mineral waters. In the 1930s, the bungalows were refurbished and rented to persons who had lost their homes during the Depression.

To attract more business to its urban resort, Zaring built a large dance pavilion over a stream that flowed through Cascade Springs. Dances were held for free three nights a week and the pavilion was available to rent for private events three nights a week. Zaring built a soda fountain where drinks could be purchased. Spring water was available for free

To access Cascade Springs, visitors could drive to Cascade Springs or could take the trolley to the end of the car line on Beecher Street and be picked up by an auto bus that brought them to the hotel and camp grounds. Seasonal visitors could go into Atlanta for the theater or travel 2 ½ miles to the West End Golf Club for their further amusement.

The popularity of Cascade Springs as an urban resort destination declined in the 1920's as middle class people began to buy cars that allowed them to travel further than the Atlanta suburbs for their recreational resort destinations. Additionally, in the aftermath of the Depression,

the City of Atlanta received New Deal relief funding that paid for the creation of more city parks. In 1927, Zaring's business partner responded by promoting Cascade Springs as a daily or weekend destination for picnics and dancing. A restaurant was built on the property where boxed chicken dinners could be purchased for picnics. The dance pavilion continued to host dances at irregular intervals. A tennis court and a miniature golf course was built along one of the streams along with a penny Dixie Cup dispenser.

In 1952, when Cascade Springs became part of the City of Atlanta, Zaring demolished the Cascade Inn, and the bungalows and deeded the property to his son. The dance pavilion was dismantled and sold. Zaring continued drink the spring water until his death in 1957 at the age of ninety. The Zaring family continued to operate the greenhouses in Cascade Springs until the early 1970s.

Visitors who walk the trails at Cascade Springs Nature Preserve today can still see some of the ruins of the Cascade Spring Water Company like the old boiler in its original shed, and the historic spring house pictured below:



This history note summarizes information from the article entitled, "*Cascade Springs: An Atlanta Urban Spa*" by Russell A. Zaring, pages 43-58 in the Atlanta History Bulletin, Fall 1987 Edition. See the article for a more detailed discussion of Cascade Springs and for more pictures.