The Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium: One Man's Unfulfilled Dream

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Abstract
Little remains of the Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium except memories and stories.1 What once represented the great vision of its creator has become a field of rampant weeds and broken dreams. The site of the old Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium, on the west outskirts of Helena, Montana, for years has drawn the passerby's curious interest. For residents, the Hotel retains a mysterious aura. How could something so grand disappear so quickly and leave so little evidence of its existence? Colonel Charles A. Broadwater, a man of vision and hope, demonstrated an extraordinary faith in Helena.2 "Broadwater was very near to the best life of Helena, and his manner of expressing his faith in the city was as big and fluent as his name."3 The Colonel dreamed of constructing a grand hotel, reflecting Helena's elegance. Sadly, Broadwater's elaborate objective never would be fulfilled. Events and circumstances worked against the Hotel's success from the moment of its conception. Historian Bob Fletcher reflected, thirty years after the Hotel's demise, that despite the Colonel's faith in Helena and his dream, the "Hotel was never a financial success and opened and closed several times."4 No single event or person can be blamed for the failure of the grand resort. The Broadwater Hotel symbolized elegance second to none in the world. Yet much more underlies the Hotel than a mere dream, notably the man himself. A shrewd businessman, Broadwater invested his enthusiasm in various ventures. Wise and timely investments allowed for the pursuit of his grand dream. For these reasons, both the man directing the dream and his guiding visions require examination. Colonel Broadwater devoted a great deal of energy and time to the development of railroads in Montana. Contemporary historians cite Broadwater's railroad involvement as the driving force in the creation of the Hotel. Broadwater initially purchased the land to thwart rivals laying tracks in the area. The effort failed, however, and he looked for a lucrative alternative for the property. A clever businessman, the Colonel realized the potential of the location and utilized his land to create a first-class resort. The era in which the Broadwater Hotel and Hot Springs flourished became as critical to its existence as the man himself. A closer study of the "Gay Nineties," or Gilded Age will reveal the people, styles, and attitudes that shaped the elaborate Hotel. Changing times, attitudes, and values reshaped the function and purpose of the Hotel. As events unfolded, the Hotel could neither withstand nor adapt to widespread and drastic change. After Broadwater's death, the Hotel endured a series of alterations and changes of ownership. Inconsistencies in management and ownership created the ultimate tragedy leading to the final closure of the Hotel in the 1940s. The events that transpired after Broadwater's death in 1892 may shock and anger. As the reader will learn, the fairy tale that was the story of the Broadwater lacks the traditional happy ending. The events of Broadwater's life reflect the traditional rags-to-riches story. Hard work, perseverance, and a keen business sense resulted in success throughout his life.

Recommended Citation
The Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium stood as a symbol of Helena’s wealth and Montana’s progressiveness. Built on and around the Ten-mile Hot Springs with an investment of $500,000, these structures were masterfully constructed in the Moorish Spanish architectural style. The all-over effect was characterized by its massive size, complex rooflines, towers, domes, stained-glass windows and rows of high windows called clerestories. 

1. UNFULFILLED DREAMS. "The need to know beyond Is planted within ourselves" I whisper in your ear. Unspoken dreams fill Your eyes with gazing shadows And in this ominous silence You scream: Death is frightening me!! But you must die But you must die. You must die For certain The ending Unfulfilled dreams. You live in fear Of what will become Of you. Your anguish Is unbearable Just a thin fragile hope. Lord, please, don’t let this man Die in his own sorrow Don’t let me pay for the sins That I’ve done I didn’t understand your will So I did mine And how I reach my hands to you In despair Just one question remains Can you help me?? For here I am. 5. thor’s symphony. The Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium complex was built in 1888-1889 close to the town of Helena, Montana, USA. Charles A. Broadwater intended it as a hot springs, countryside retreat for millionaires and so, no expenses were spared. The natatorium was, at its time, the largest indoor swimming pool in the world. After several hardships the hotel was permanently closed in 1941. In 1974 the furnishings were auctioned off and what was left of the decaying hotel was demolished. Media in category "Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium". The following 2 files are in this category, out of 2 total.