

# **GARDEN CITY SWIMMING POOL**

Finney County, Kansas

Written by Bernice Crooms

*Consultant: Earl Richardson*

*\* Additional information added to this story*

Garden City, a growing town of 6000, can boast of the largest freshwater municipal swimming pool in the United States. The only swimming pool that is larger than this is one in California. The water in it is not as fresh as the one here in Garden City, as the ocean supplies its water there. Therefore the pool here in Garden City is considered the largest swimming pool in the United States.

The swimming pool is located in Frederick Finnup Park, a municipal park of 110 acres, and located in the southeastern part of Garden City. Construction began for this pool in February of 1922, and it was open to the public on July 18, 1922. It is 337 feet long and 218 feet wide. It is all concrete with beach banks and slanting depth that ranges from 1 to 8 feet.

In the winter of 1921 and 1922, when there was hardly any work in town, the Chamber of Commerce appointed a committee to call upon the merchants and business people. These folks were to furnish laborers for the excavation work of the pool. The men who did the job were men who owed labor to the merchants and businesses. This way, the swimming pool was built, and the laborer paid his debts also.

The men were glad they were doing something useful for the public and themselves. The lumber yard furnished cement for the concrete work at their actual cost. The labor of laying the concrete was, to a large extent, done the same way as excavating.

The actual cost to the city for the materials and supervision amounted to 10,000 dollars. But, if they paid cash for all of the work, it would have cost the city 20,000 dollars.

The water supply for the pool is furnished by a well that pumps 800 gallons of pure water a minute. It runs by a centrifugal pump operated by an electric motor. This pump, owned by the city, irrigates the trees, shrubbery, and gardens in the park. More drained water irrigates the park when the pool is drained and cleaned. This happens every ten days or two weeks.

The city operates the pool, and it is free to the public. However, there is a Jim Crow law that bars the Negro from this enjoyment. It isn't a state law, but it is practiced all over Kansas. *(Sadly, this practice was alive and well back when these stories were written and before. After World War II, everyone was welcome to the swimming pool.)*

This swimming pool is quite a drawing card for the youths of Garden City. On Sundays, the park is full of visitors from surrounding counties and towns. During the winter months, the pool becomes an ice skating rink for all to enjoy.

### Additional Information

“THE LARGEST CONCRETE POOL IN THE NATION”



SKATING ON THE SWIMMING POOL  
*In the 1930s before the pool had a fence around it.*

Remembering the early years and those fun moments at the Garden City pool...

“Albertine Becquet remembered learning to ride a bike in the empty pool when she was about seven years old.”

*Postcard photograph and Garden City Swimming Pool memory from the book  
“Our Becquet Family Heritage”- researched and compiled by Kathye Snyder-Knight*