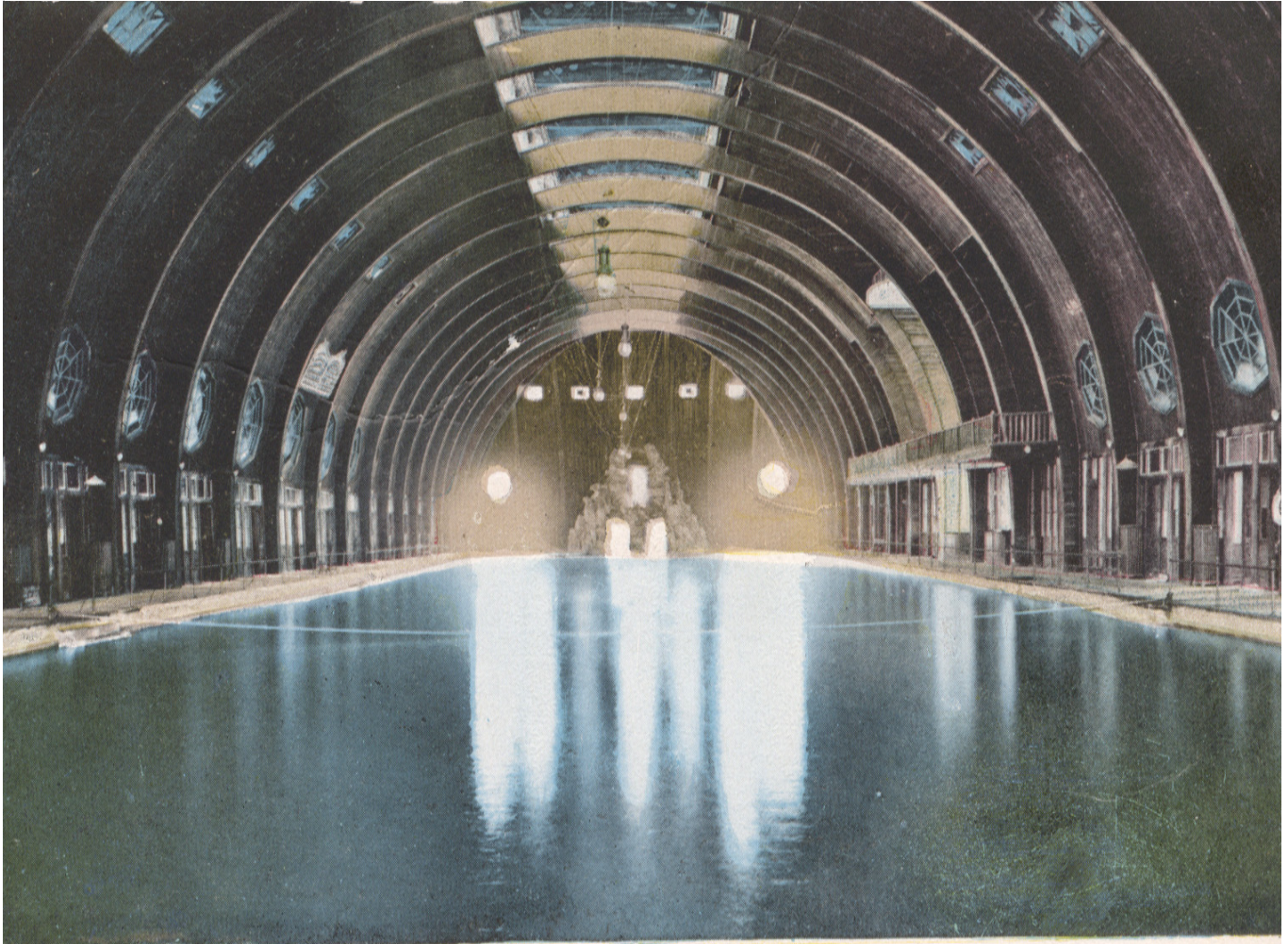


## 8. Swimming Pool Heating

The earliest use of geothermal energy in Montana was most likely for bathing, soaking, and swimming. While these pioneer hot springs pools were often undeveloped or simply enclosed by crude cabins, Montanans began constructing more elaborate spas and pools in the 1880s. Several of these elegant pool structures, such as the Broadwater Natatorium near Helena and the Hunter's Hot Springs plunge near Big Timber, were some of the largest buildings built in Montana at the time.



Interior of the Broadwater Natatorium near Helena, Montana circa 1889.

Today more than 200 hot springs resorts and spas in the western United States use geothermal energy in their swimming pools, including at least a dozen swimming pools in Montana.

## Ensuring Water Quality for Montana's Hot Springs Soakers

Montana health regulations were proposed in the 1990's to require chlorination of all hot springs swimming pools, similar to what is done in municipal swimming pools. Since many bathers visit hot springs resorts specifically to soak in the natural hot water, the chlorination requirement was opposed by resort owners.

Owners of Montana hot springs resorts created the Montana Mineral Hot Springs Association in 1994 to address this chlorination issue. In 1995 the association helped pass a bill in the Montana Legislature that clarified water quality issues for Montana hot springs resorts. All natural hot springs pools at resorts may now operate without chlorinating their water, provided all of the hot water is exchanged in the pool at least once every eight hours, and the pools are drained and cleaned every 72 hours. This helped ensure the safety of all soakers while avoiding chlorination of the hot springs water. Temperature and pH in the soaking pools must also be carefully monitored.



Outdoor pool at Quinn's Hot Springs Resort in Western Montana.

*Photo by Jeff Birkby*

## Ensuring Water Quality for Montana Hot Springs Soakers - *continued*



Outdoor pool at Fairmont Hot Springs Resort near Butte, Montana.

Indoor pool at Bozeman Hot Springs. Small hot and cold soaking pools are located at the right end of the large swimming pool.

*Photos by Jeff Birkby*

