

Boys Pond

The end of May--school is out! In fact, it feels like a distant memory, replaced by the smell of cut grass, the sound of screen doors slamming, and the endless golden stretch of sunlight. There is freedom in the air, no bells, no desks, just bikes, tree houses, forts, and endless imagination. This is the season of running wild, of scraped knees and sun-burned noses. And of the ultimate pleasure—swimming at the “Boys Pond!”

Hans Hafen shared his memories and feelings about this uniquely iconic treasure, Santa Clara Boys Pond:

‘Boy’s Pond was a local gathering place in Santa Clara for the young people of the community. It was a place where many, mostly fond, memories originated for the children of Santa Clara.



“It was located approximately where the new bridge is now (2025), a couple of blocks south of the present-day Post Office.

“It was also about a block south of the home where I grew up, so it was always very convenient for me and my brothers and sisters.

“Boy’s Pond was formed by water that was taken from the Santa Clara River, carried through a metal culvert, approximately three feet in diameter, and about 40 feet long. There was an old rock/cement diversion dam that backed up the water in the river and a sluice gate about 15 feet above the

elevation of the river that, when opened, allowed the water to flow from the river into Boy's Pond. The metal culvert was one of the important parts of Boy's Pond, as we would always crawl into the culvert and float from the river side of the culvert into the pond. The level of the water in the culvert varied, so sometimes there was only about a foot or less between the water level and the top of the culvert, while other times there was only about a foot of water or less from the bottom of the culvert. When the water level was on the low side, we would often crawl from the pond up through the culvert and sit in the culvert for a while. When the culvert was nearly full, the force of the water was so strong that we were unable to do this.

"It was in this culvert where I learned that cherry bombs float. On one occasion my cousin, Brad Hafen, lit a cherry bomb and dropped it in the river just where the water entered in culvert. I happened to be in the culvert at the time, about in the middle, when the cherry bomb started its journey through the culvert. I'm not certain Brad knew I was in the culvert when he lit the cherry bomb, but I'm pretty sure he did. When the cherry bomb was a few feet away from me, it exploded. The sound was deafening, and I'm not completely convinced that my hearing wasn't permanently affected.

"There was a lot of overgrowth around the pond, including trees, bushes, weeds and other greenery. There was a fairly large tree that grew out over the pond, and we would climb out onto the main limb and then jump into the water. Someone had made a rope swing with a stick on the rope that hung from this main limb. We could sit on the stick and swing back and forth and then drop from the swing into the water. There was also a sluice gate that was about three feet above the normal level of the pond that we would jump from into the pond. Many flips, dives and other jumps were attempted from the wheel on the top of the sluice gate, with varying amounts of success. The bottom of the pond was covered with layers of fine sand. This fine sand would often be used for "mud fights" and would sting pretty badly if you were hit at close range on your bare chest, back and legs.

"Even though the name of the pond indicated it was for boys only, girls were usually welcome. We would swim and jump and play for hours in the pond. As the pond would start to fill up with sand and silt, one of the members of the canal company would come down to open up the sluice gate and drain the pond to remove the excess sand and silt. Once this

happened, the fun was over for a few hours as the pond would get filled back up.

“Back in the day when I grew up, no one had swimming pools, and a trip to St. George to swim at the City Pool was a rare opportunity. Boy’s Pond filled the void of a local swimming pool and is something I will always remember and treasure the memories made there.

I am also pleased that my children have memories of playing at Boy’s Pond. I think my dad (Arlo Hafen) also swam there, which makes three generations of Hafen’s with memories of Boy’s Pond.”