

You're Invited

Laurel Dedication Saturday

A project started three years ago will be completed Saturday when the little Santa Cruz Mountain town of Laurel dedicates its first historical plaque. The bronze tablet is the gift of the former Santa Cruz Bicentennial Commission, of which Margaret Koch was co-chairman.

And therein lies a tale.

It goes back about 80 years, when the little neighboring mountain towns of Laurel and Glenwood were rivals in just about everything, from shipping wine grapes and redwood lumber to the resort and tourist business.

Glenwood is the older of the two towns, and was founded by Charles Christopher Martin who was Mrs. Koch's great-grandfather. And by a curious twist of events, Mrs. Koch is responsible for Laurel's receiving the Bicentennial plaque.

At Glenwood Martin owned a sizable hunk of mountains, operated a winery, a ranch with cattle and angora goats, and the famed old Glenwood Resort Hotel. He also was Postmaster when the Glenwood Post Office was established, he founded and operated a general merchandise store, and dabbled in businesses elsewhere.

For a time before starting his Glenwood resort business, he was in partnership with Goodwin and Martin's Livery Stable at the Santa Cruz House, one of the oldest hotels in the town of Santa Cruz. Martin in later years also invested in the Ocean Shore Railroad which went kaput—and he invested in mining stock on the Comstock Lode in Nevada City.

With all his peripatetic business ventures Martin never approached the financial status of F.A. Hihn, the

millionaire who really was responsible for putting Laurel on the map when he built his lumber mill there around the turn of the century.

An interesting comparison exists in the way the two men arrived in California.

Martin left the State of Maine in 1847 to go to sea, a family tradition, at the age of 17. He was a cabin boy on a sailing ship—and it must have been a horrible existence for he jumped ship on the West Coast and never ventured to sea again, even as a passenger, in all of his years. When he traveled it was horseback or buggy, by train, and by auto in later years.

When he first settled in the Santa Cruz Mountains in the early 1850s, horses or feet were the only methods of travel possible. Indian trails and wagon tracks were the roads. Mountain Charley McKiernan was Martin's only neighbor at first, and they disagreed over property boundaries and it was said, "carried guns for each other" for awhile.

The first road over the mountains was the Mountain Charley Road, finished just a few days before the Old San Jose Road, and Martin operated the south end of it. He had a stage coach station stop there, and McKiernan operated the northern end which ran through his land holdings.

Glenwood School was first named Martin School, and indeed the little settlement itself was known as Martinsville at

first. That is, until a Scottish relative of the Martins protested and christened it Glenwood instead. She said it was prettier.

Hihn, a native of Germany, arrived in San Francisco aboard a sailing ship in 1849. He and partners operated a mine on the Feather River which flooded them out, reducing them to eating manzanita berries to keep body and soul together. In 1850 Hihn went to Sacramento where he owned and operated a hotel—and in 1851 he was burned out, losing everything.

Despite his paralyzing difficulties he came to Santa Cruz in 1851 and established a mercantile business which was to be the first step in founding his fortune. When a depression hit Santa Cruz, Hihn bargained and exchanged goods for local products, shipping them to San Francisco, Monterey and Los Angeles. Eventually he branched out into lumber mills, real estate, resort hotels, banking, a water company for Santa Cruz and other various and assorted activities, all of them lucrative.

The great Hihn mansion on Church Street in later years was used as the town's City Hall before the present one was built on the same site.

Hihn's lumber mills were located in many areas of the county, but the Laurel mill gained special fame because redwood lumber from it went to re-build San Francisco following the great earthquake

and fire of 1906.

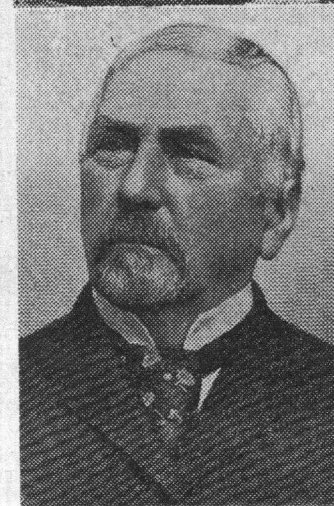
Laurel got its school in 1868, and the narrow gauge railroad (South Pacific) came through in 1880. Laurel was on one end of a 5,720-foot tunnel, and Glenwood on the other end of it. The railroads and these tunnels made it possible for Hihn's lumber to rebuild stricken San Francisco in 1906. His Stearns mill turned out 50,000 feet of lumber in a day, cutting in a stand of virgin redwoods along Laurel and Soquel Creeks. Today the area abounds in second growth redwood.

Another interesting comparison between Hihn and Martin may be made concerning transportation. Hihn backed the railroad line from Watsonville to Santa Cruz, bringing the first "rails" into town, anticipating the great tourist tides to come.

Martin pioneered the paved highway from Los Gatos to Santa Cruz, today it's Highway 17 and goes by another parallel route. Martin's old highway, or portions of it, are still in existence and it runs through Glenwood, "his town." When Martin's highway was built it replaced the tortuous Mountain Charley stage coach road which dated from the 1850s. In 1913, on his 83rd birthday, Martin turned the first furrow for the road he had dreamed about for years.

"I want to see a paved road through the mountains where I first rode horseback without even a trail to mark the way," he said. The highway was complete when he died in 1920.

The South Pacific Railroad had opened the mountains up in 1880—trains steamed through both Glenwood and Laurel, making possible the extensive lumbering opera-



F. A. HIHN

C. C. Martin in his 80s with white beard and hair, sat at base of Mountain Charley Tree with granddaughters Vivian Martin, above left, and Callista Martin. Standing at right was his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Edwin (Ned) S. Martin and a friend, Mildred Kuhlitz of Watsonville.

tions and fruit shipment. In 1940, storms closed down the railroad line through the towns of Laurel and Glenwood.

In 1950, Glenwood was designated a State Historical Monument, the bronze plaque reading in part: "Glenwood, historic town founded by Charles C. Martin who came around the Horn in 1847, and his wife, Hannah Carver Martin, who crossed the Isthmus. First homesteaded area in 1851..."

And ever since that June day in 1950 when Glenwood dedicated its plaque, Laurel

has wished for a plaque of its own.

Tomorrow at 3 p.m. Laurel will dedicate its plaque. Speakers and guests will include Congressman Burt Talcott, Supervisor and Mr. Dan Forbus, Attorney Donald Younger who is a descendant of F. A. Hihn, and Margaret Koch, great-granddaughter of Charles C. Martin.

The Laurel plaque will commemorate Hihn's lumber mill which made it possible for San Francisco to "rise like Phoenix from the ashes" the devastating 'quake fire of 1906.

**Tree'n'Sea
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