

A Howling Wilderness: Resorts in the Summit Road Area

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Hotel de Redwood, the first hotel in the Summit area of the Santa Cruz Mountains, was built in 1859, at the time that the San Jose-Soquel Road was being built. The hotel was about twelve miles from Soquel above the later site of Redwood Lodge Road and four miles from the summit. The original owner, a "Yankee", built his home, store and several guest rooms into live redwood trees and stumps. Tourists came via the San Jose-Santa Cruz Stage Line to stay at the unique hotel and take refreshment from the sulphur spring. The tourists were also able to enjoy the excellent hunting and fishing nearby.

As the hotel was a stage stop, it also served as a post office for local residents from June 3, 1879 to October 16, 1882. With the hotel's increased popularity, the owners had to build additional rooms and the old redwood tree gave way to a hotel with two stories and ten rooms with a balcony. This structure burned down in 1885, one year after Myron S. Cox bought it. Cox rebuilt the hotel to accommodate 110 people with the use of tents in the summer season. This structure was destroyed in 1903, also by fire, after another owner, a Mr. Fitzgerald had bought it. Fitzgerald rebuilt the hotel and Messrs. Dickey and Jay managed it. The second story was knocked off and slid down the hill during the 1906 earthquake. With new owners, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Waltz, the hotel was rebuilt only to be again destroyed by fire. The hotel was rebuilt for the last time and included a store and cottages, along with a gasoline station which was added in the 1930's. This structure burned in 1953. Little is present on the property to indicate that a hotel was ever on the site, save for the remains of the gasoline pumping island. (33:5/9/1874; 62:478; 40:8/6/1959; 34:6/1906, 10/1906, 6/1907, 4/1927)

About a half a mile down the San Jose-Soquel Road from the Hotel de Redwood, was the old Terrace Grove Hotel. This establishment was first called either "Bonny Blink" or "Blink Bonny". The unusual name derived from the vast view to Santa Cruz, Monterey, and the Pacific Ocean

that the hotel boasted. The hotel served as an early stage stop and tourist resort. The hotel's basement held a large barn for horses while the upper floors housed the hotel guests. During the 1906 earthquake the hotel suffered some damage but the owner, R. S. Griffith, rebuilt it, adding a third story and remodeling the basement. (40:8/4/1959; 62:477-478; 34:6/1906)

In 1872 Reverend James Richard Wright built the Arbor Villa Hotel, across Summit Road from the Burrell residence, on the corner of Summit Road and Loma Prieta Avenue. The hotel served as both the Wright's home and as a resort hotel. The hotel and residence was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake. After the Wrights rebuilt it, the new building served only as a residence as the resort and hotel business was declining in the mountains. (62:456; 34:6/1906)

In the 1880's Judge George Miller was forced to build the Hotel Miltonmont to house his many friends when they visited from the valley. Miller's hotel was located on the Skyland ridge at the corner of Miller Hill and Miller Cut-off Roads. Judge Miller's son, Anson, operated the resort after his father retired until the Tre Monte Corporation purchased the property in 1930. The new owners changed the name to Tre Monte and operated a mental hospital there for many years. Like many other structures, the building shifted on its mudsill foundation during the 1906 earthquake, but was realigned with the use of house jacks. It is presently a private residence. (40:8/11/1959; 34:6/1906)

The most famous resort in the Santa Cruz Mountain area was The Willows. In 1886, Donald Beadel, a wealthy Pacific coast shipper, bought the land located at the junctions of Stetson, Skyland, and Long Ridge Roads, from Frederic A. Hihn, the lumber czar of Santa Cruz. Beadel built a large house and cottages on his property, surrounded by an impressive garden. A Mrs. Hannon operated the summer resort until a Mrs. Holt bought the property. In 1904, Beadel's son, Alex, married Mrs. Holt's daughter and started making improvements to the property. Along with an impressive English country house and summer cabins, Alex Beadel built the largest, privately-owned, indoor swimming pool in the United States at that time. Eastern newspapers featured the pool, establishment, and extensive exotic gardens as the showplace of the mountains. (38:6/10/1934; 40:7/30/1959)

In 1887, Fred Loomis, who had moved to the Summit area in 1882, built the Summit Hotel. This hotel, sitting on the crest of the ridge, was an immediate success. Patrons traveled from the San Francisco Bay area of the Santa Clara Valley on the train to Wright's Station where buggies picked them up and drove them on up the mountain. Along with the usual walking trails and gardens, the hotel boasted a croquet field. Fred Loomis sold the hotel to Mr. A. N. Nichols in 1891 after his wife's death. Nichols operated the hotel until 1910 when it was converted to a private residence. (16:3/13/1966; 38:4/29/1934; 40:12/14/1961)

In the late 1880's Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Cotton built a hotel that catered to California's literary society. Harald Frend described the hotel as a "Bohemian Bungalow" in the *Overland Monthly*, the magazine in which most of the writers and poets were published. Such notables as Jack London, George Sterling, Ambrose Bierce, Herman Scheffauer, and Mark Twain journeyed to Wright's Station on the railroad, then either walked or rode in a hotel buggy up the hill to

Bohemia. The main reason that they were attracted to this hotel was it was located on Loma Prieta Avenue and a colleague of theirs, Josephine Clifford McCrackin, lived at the end of the avenue. The old hotel is still standing, although now abandoned. (38:5/6/1934; 34:12/1927

The remaining four hotels on the Summit were: the Jeffries Hotel, located above Bohemia (It was just torn down in 1975.); the Woodwardia Hotel, built in 1911 by Mr. and Mrs. Rucker and located on the Santa Cruz Highway near Summit Road (the hotel was named after the giant ferns found growing in shaded spots all over the mountains); the Edgement, located in Patchen and operated by Mr. and Mrs. L. N. Scott; and the Anchorage. (40:1/2/1962) An advertisement placed in The Realty by the owners of the Anchorage, could have been referring to any of the early hotels:

"Spend your vacation in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The Anchorage is the place to rest and recuperate. Situated midway between San Jose and Santa Cruz on the Soquel road. Beautiful new rustic cottages, well furnished for housekeeping. Cottages stand on a fine open plateau, surrounded by hundreds of acres of beautiful redwood, madrone and oak timber. Splendid walks and drives through the woods. The best of spring water piped to each cottage. Altitude 1,900 feet. Public hall and church adjoin the place. Long distance telephone near. Hunting, fishing, croquet, tennis, shooting gallery, swimming pool and other amusements. Branch store will be opened for benefit of guests. Butcher calls three times a week. Rural mail delivery. Horses boarded. Magnificent camping grounds at a nominal rental. No consumptives. Entirely new management. Trains met at Alma. Write in advance for accomodations. Address The Anchorage, Wrights, Santa Clara Co., Cal. " (34:2/1905)

The Southern Pacific Railroad Company established Sunset Park at Wright's in the 1890's as a weekend tourist attraction. To attract the weekend business the company cut the usual rate from \$5.00 to \$3.00. This move increased trade and on busy weekends several trains, each hauling ten cars with fifty people per car, would climb the mountain grade to Wright's and take the spur siding a few hundred yards to Sunset Park. As many as 5000 tourists made the trip to Sunset Park on the "Picnic Trains". Once at the park they were greeted with beer and such food as French bread, cheese, salami, and barbecued lamb. The site consisted of picnic tables, barbeque pits, cabins, and hiking trails, with electric Japanese lanterns strung overhead. Most of the visitors came from the Bay area and included many national groups as well as fraternal organizations, such as the Foresters, who came from all over the state.

Too much to drink often resulted in fighting, both at the park and on the train going home. The train trip back to the Bay area resembled a small war on wheels. Windows were kicked out to enable the drunken mob to have elbow or breathing-room.

"When the last empty flask had been hurled from the windows at whatever target presented itself--horses, wagons, or ladies with immense bonnets-seat railings, spittoons, chunks of wood from the stove and even doorknobs were removed and thrown."

People with too much to drink fell or were thrown off the train on the homeward journey. Policemen who foolishly attempted to quell the mob "arrived at hospitals with their badges pinned to the seats of their trousers." (48:185; 47-51; 38:5/13/1934)

From the 1880's to the early 1900's campers, going into the mountains or over to Santa Cruz on school vacations, blocked the roads with their numerous horse-drawn vehicles. At the height of the season as many as seventy-five teams would be waiting to travel over the grade to Santa Cruz.

Other families would arrive in Wrights or Laurel on the Saturday train where they would be picked up by the hotel buggies and transported to the resorts. The husbands would help the family settle in at the resorts and then return to the Bay area on Sunday. They would return to the mountains on the next weekend and rejoin their families. The cost per vacationing family was \$7.00 a week for board and room.

Young men from the mountains would come to the resorts in hope of finding a young lady with whom to take a moonlit ride. Those that had access to their parents' buggy had the advantage. Dances were held to amuse both the vacationers and the local inhabitants. Walter Young recalled that when he was in a singing group, the group "had lots of fun, and two songs were always good for a handout." (40:8/6/1959)

With the advent of reliable automobile travel, the resorts in the Santa Cruz Mountains no longer drew large crowds in the tourist season. Sunset Park was closed in 1910 and the other resorts and hotels quickly followed suit. The vacationing tourists would travel farther and farther away--to Lake Tahoe, Yosemite, and other places even more distant.

Source

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