

This One Will Go Down...

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The big house stands there under a single redwood tree. It looks forlorn and down-at-the-heel. This falling-apart look is emphasized even more because next to the house there is a sparkling new swimming pool.

This house, once the focal point, home and office for Smithwoods Resort near Felton, started its existence as a one-room cottage. That was built by a man named Clark, prior to 1920, and he operated Clark's Big Trees Auto Camp until about 1920. It was built from redwoods cut on the place.

In that year Charles and Frances Smith of Oakland came to the San Lorenzo Valley for a weekend outing, saw the auto camp which borders the San Lorenzo River, and fell in love with the place. They came back, bought it and started adding rooms onto the one-room cottage. Eventually they had a 16-room home and office combination.

"They couldn't stand to cut a redwood tree that stood in the way, so they built the

room around it," said their daughter Betty Kelly. She and her husband Don, have operated the place for the past 10 years.

Betty has heard that Clark's first name was Malcolm and that he got his property from an owner of Rancho Canada del Rincon, the old Mexican Land Grant. It contained nearly 6000 acres and extended to what is Paradise Park today. But this is hearsay and Betty isn't sure.

Her parents lived there, developed the campground and raised their four children in the constantly growing house, adding rooms as they were needed.

"There were boats on the river — people went boating then, and we all swam there too," Betty recalls.

An old "brick pond," a depression where rain water collected and new bricks made nearby had been washed, also served as an informal swimming hole. The Kellys are now building a recreation hall on the site.

The old narrow gauge railroad from Boulder Creek, a lumber spur according to

the Kellys, also ran through the property originally and he has a tie he dug up. The roadbed can still be seen in places.

There was a redwood tree growing up through the kitchen Betty's parents added on, and another through the living room.

Betty recalls that her father was one of the first customers of H.H. Ledyard Company, Santa Cruz wholesale grocers who were located on Vine Street in Santa Cruz. (Vine Street has disappeared. It is now part of Cedar.)

"We carried bread and candy bars and tobacco and things like that to sell to our campers."

The Kellys have just moved out of the old house and into a new mobile home. It wasn't an easy move.

"It's hard when you've lived in a place so long, you have memories and you have to get rid of many things that are dear to you —," she said. "Don was going to throw away a metal cylinder he found in the basement. I said with a view to saving the old house but found it was a

'Oh - no. My father used to let me crack walnuts with that.' "

They consulted contractors highly impractical hope due to

dry rot, termites and a few other construction problems.

And so in a few days, the house will come down. A new mobile home will go in its



Ceiling window above, fills hole where redwood tree had to be removed in 1930's. At right, rambling old house soon to come down.

