

HISTORIC 8-5-93
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Buildings

Toll House set to become state landmark

By MAY WONG
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FELTON — What is considered the gateway to the San Lorenzo Valley and the last standing toll house known in the county is poised to be named a state point of historical interest Friday.

Located on Highway 9 next to Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, the Toll House in Felton was built in 1867 originally as a roadside saloon. But as the population and traffic in the area grew, the rustic wood-frame building along the road linking the lumber mills of San Lorenzo Valley and the shipping piers of Santa Cruz became a stagecoach stop where toll was collected from oxen-drawn wagons.

"It's really the gateway from Santa Cruz to Felton," said Joan Brady of the county Planning Department.

Since its toll-collecting days, the building has survived various uses and two major earthquakes. Most recently, it has become a part of the Toll House Resort with 14 cottages that are rented to tourists.

William Sinnott, a 78-year-old Felton native, remembers it as a bootlegging joint.

Arlene Pike, also a 78-year-old Felton native, remembers it as one of a handful of restaurants in town where you can get steaks and chops.

"It was a very nice place to go," she said.

The current owners, brothers Larry and Trey Noon, plan to restore the building at 4700 Highway 9 to its original form.

The brothers, two San Jose firefighters, bought the property in 1989. Their escrow closed shortly before the Loma Prieta earthquake hit, said Steve Sutherland, the landscape architect for the renovation project.

The Noon brothers plan to rebuild the toll booth where it was before, on left side of the front porch. The booth would become an information center with brochures on the tourist attractions in San Lorenzo Valley, Sutherland said.

It seems a logical choice, since even to this day, the building is often the first place tourists heading into the valley stop for advice.

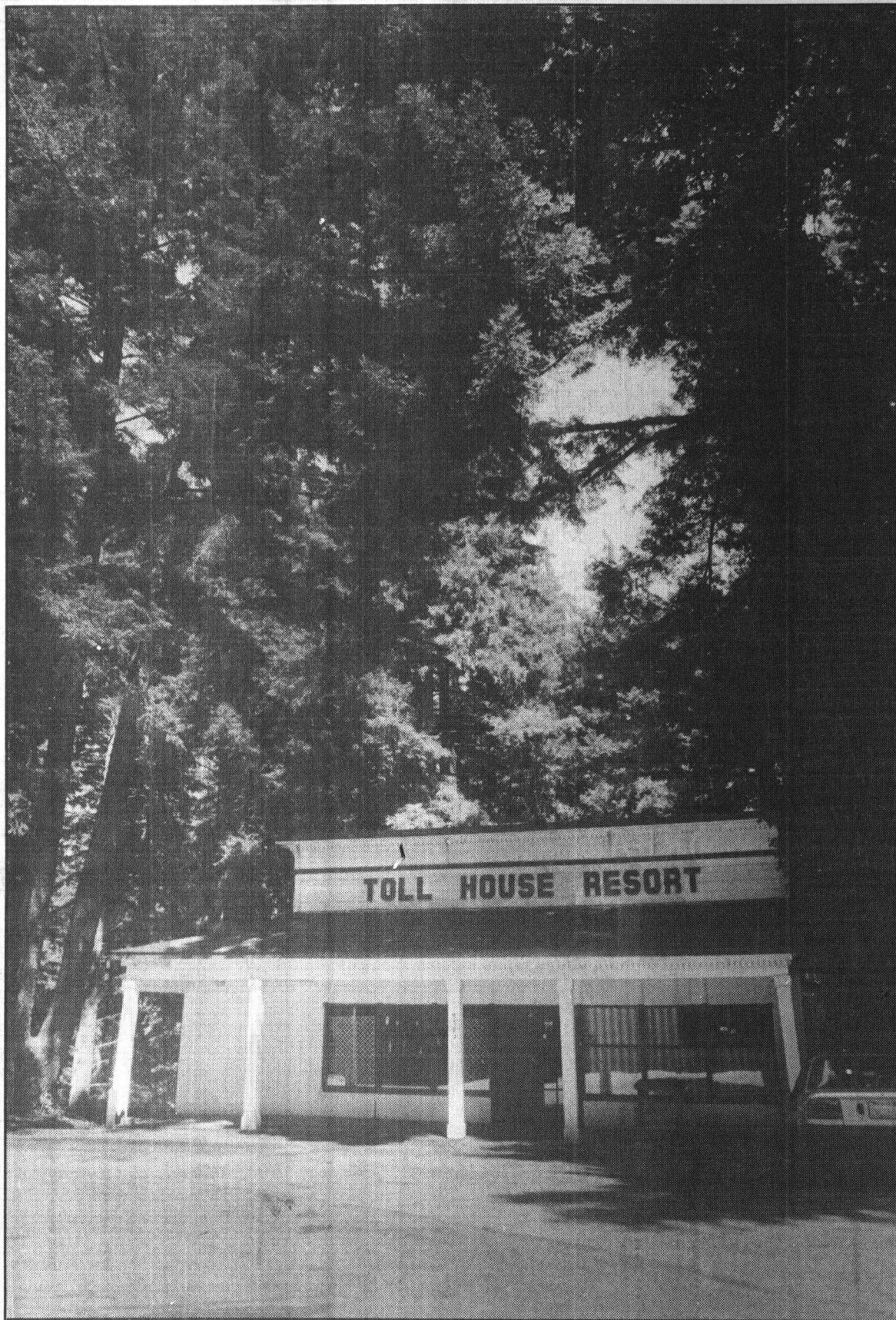
"Every time I'm out there, someone from out of state stops to ask me questions about where to go," Sutherland said.

The brothers also plan to improve trail access into Henry Cowell Park and renovate the campground area.

They are applying for a federal grant to help pay for the renovations, which include a new foundation for the Toll House.

The county Historic Resource Commission in April adopted a resolution in April nominating the building as a state point of historical interest.

"There's a lot of historical integrity left and (the Noons') work has brought that out," said Bill Burkhardt, who serves on the county commission.



The Toll House was built in 1867 as a saloon, and became a stop where tolls were collected.

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