

Fabled Brookdale Lodge — ghost and all — up for sale

By GWEN MICKELSON
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✓ *Note: 152 Bearding House*
BROOKDALE — If someone were to buy the Brookdale Lodge, the ghost would be part of the package.

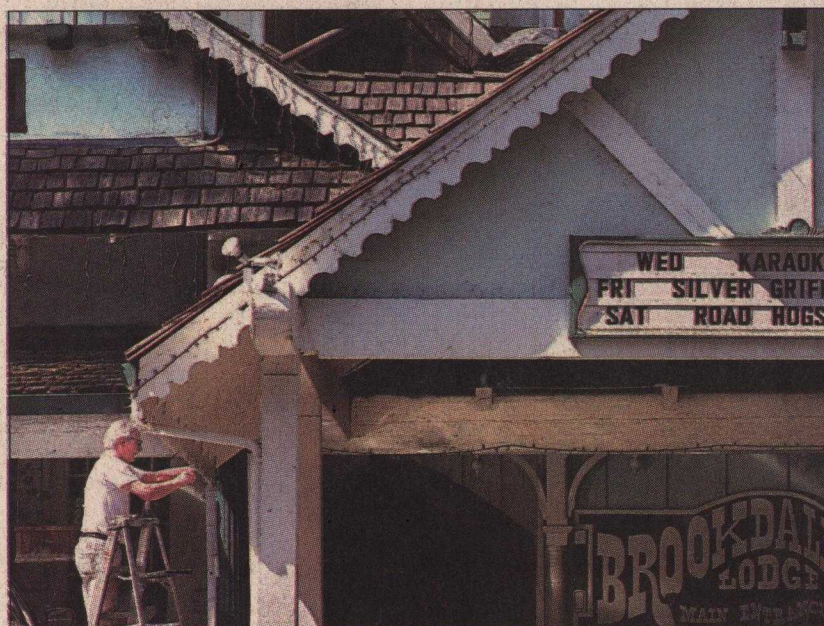
The storied and rustic lodge — reportedly haunted by the spirit of a little girl who drowned in Clear Creek — is on the market. The asking price is \$5.45 million, or \$50.37 per square foot, according to real estate agent Harry Altick of Sperry Van Ness Commercial Real Estate Advisors in Larkspur.

The original lodge was built in 1890. The dining room with the brook running through it was

added in the early 1920s. A feature in "Ripley's Believe It or Not" brought the lodge worldwide fame, and it's played host to a number of notable guests, including Marilyn Monroe and President Herbert Hoover.

The 1940s and '50s ushered in a period of gangsters and other shady characters at the lodge, according to Halloween and harvest season event Web site Haunted Bay. Secret passageways and hidden rooms were installed throughout the lodge, and rumors of buried bodies under the floor began to circulate. Also during that time, Sarah Logan, 6, the

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Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

A painter removes inoperable exterior lights from the Brookdale Lodge facade Wednesday. The fabled lodge is up for sale for \$5.45 million.

Brookdale

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niece of the lodge owner, drowned in the dining room creek. Her ghost is the one reportedly seen at the Brookdale.

The present-day owners, William and Lee Ann Gilbert of Woodside, have been interested in selling the legendary property for several years, according to their granddaughter, Melanie Gilbert, who lives in Brookdale and works at the lodge. They also listed the property in the late '90s, saying the challenge of renovating it was more difficult than they'd expected.

Now, said Melanie Gilbert, her grandparents are ready to step up their efforts to sell in order to concentrate on a new investment or on their other businesses.

"There are so many different facets to the Brookdale Lodge that it's hard for them to spend time and effort here," said Gilbert, speaking at the lodge on a quiet weekday morning. Her grandparents have owned the lodge, which is surrounded by towering redwoods, since 1989.

Real estate agent Altick is marketing to upscale hotel operators. He hasn't received any offers yet, but said he has gotten 15-20 interested responses to his listing, mostly from California hotel operators but a few from out of state.

"Ideally who's going to buy this is a

Brookdale Lodge

THE SALE INCLUDES:

- The 8,000-square-foot Brookroom restaurant with Clear Creek tumbling through its center
- A 46-unit motel
- A 68-unit apartment complex
- Convention facilities
- Two indoor heated swimming pools
- A commercial strip center featuring a market, cafe and shops
- 13 separate houses and cottages
- The old Brookdale Inn building, the original lodge, which is in need of renovation

hands-on upscale resort developer who can maximize all the properties," Altick said. "It's an outstanding investment for someone with the expertise and money to do the upgrading, and the wherewithal to promote it properly."

Gilbert said the community need not worry about a hotel developer coming in and obliterating a prized — if faded — piece of valley history.

"If a big chain destroyed it, that would devastate my family," she said. "I don't think they'd sell it to someone like that."

A developer will be subject to certain

restrictions regardless of moral issues because the Brookdale is on the preservation inventory for the county, said valley historian Barbara Kennedy, a commissioner on the county Historic Resources Commission and a board member of the San Lorenzo Valley Museum.

That means "any changes would have to go through the historic commission," she said.

For Ben Lomond resident Summer Finley, who lives a couple of miles from the lodge and goes there for entertainment on occasion, an improved lodge sounds like "a really good idea."

"The community could benefit a lot from it financially," Finley said. "It really does have the potential to be a really neat lodge, but it's just lost its way."

Gilbert declined to give sales figures for the business, and Altick did not yet have accounting returns for last year. The lodge employs about 25 people, Gilbert said. She was not sure whether the employees would be able to stay on if the lodge is sold, since there haven't been any offers yet.

But if they come in, will the ghost be included?

"Well she should be," said Altick, laughing. "I haven't really advertised her."

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