

GHOST TOWNS OF THE SA

SKYLAND, HIGHER
THAN HIGH, ONCE
BUSY SETTLEMENT

Thrived On Lumber And Viti-
culture, But Declined With
Turn Of Century.

Magnificent Beadel Estate
And Big Indoor Pool Once
Widely Acclaimed.

By JOHN V. YOUNG.

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CHAPTER XII.

SKYLAND AND HIGHLAND.

An attempt to find a name signi-
fying a place higher than high ac-
counts for the present name of
Skyland, an isolated community well
up on the crest of the Santa Cruz
mountains, off the Soquel road, in
the Highland district.

Highland Hill was the original
center of things here, the home-
place of a man named Dodge, who
in 1867, leased a tract of land from
Lyman J. Burrill (Burrell) to es-
tablish a vineyard and winery.

Later, as families moved into the
region to join in the growing
wine-grape industry that spread
through the hills in the late 60's
and early 70's, a colony adjoining
Highland Center, as it came to be
known, was labeled Skyland, under
which name the community has
come down to present days, al-
though both are practically iden-
tical.

FIRST BOOM, THEN DECLINE.

Booming with the rest of the re-
gion, the town benefited principally
from grape and fruit raising, and
to a lesser extent from the lumber-
ing industry which went on around
it in the gulches and canyons be-
low.

But as it benefited, so it suffered.
The close of the lumber mills on
Soquel, the Amaya and Laurel
creeks as the timber was cut off,
coming of the automobile that spell-
ed death to the remunerative sum-
mer resort trade of railroad and
stage coach days, and competi-
tion by valley products with moun-
tain fruit crops took their toll from
Skyland along with many another
mountain town.

office had then been in operation
six or seven years.

In 1887 the pious people of the
community erected a church, of the
Presbyterian denomination, plant-
ing in the front yard under huge
spreading oaks a large bell in a
tower, standing today as is the
church, but no longer in use, a pic-
turesque remnant of the hey-day
of the town.

Skyland was the home for nearly
20 years of Joseph James Bamber,
one of the most colorful characters
of the region, whose death was
marked by an obscurity no less re-
markable than his variety of activi-
ties in a harried life.

KILLED IN 1930.

An "unidentified itinerant" knock-
ed down by a car near the county
alms house brought only the brief-
est of notices in the press at the
time, March 19, 1930, when Bamber
died in the county hospital from a
skull fracture. He was later iden-
tified as "Joseph J. Bamber of Los
Gatos, a former newspaper man,"
and that's about all.

Bamber was a newspaperman,
publisher of a struggling but none
the less remarkable newspaper, the
"Mountain Realty," which enjoyed
a more or less troubled existence
from 1901 until it was gradually ab-
sorbed by Hyland Baggerly's Los
Gatos News in 1922 and 1923.

SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 10, 1934.

SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS



PEDDLER BECOMES CZAR OF COUNTY; HIHN STORY TOLD

Arrived Penniless In Santa
Cruz In '51 To Climb To
Power And Wealth.

involved land deals were explained in the installment of this series of May 6.

This portion was the area lying in the northwest corner of the augmentation, terminating at a point in Mountain Charley lagoon, and including the site of Laurel and the mills.

The Hihn company, operators of the mills, in 1892 was composed of F. A. Hihn, his sons, Louis W., August C. and Fred O. Hihn, and his son-in-law, W. T. Cope. These formed a board of directors, with August C. Hihn as president, Cope as secretary and F. O. Hihn treasurer.

VARIED INTERESTS.

Hotels, railroads, beach concessions, forests, mills, manufacturing plants, shipping lines—there was little in the line of business and industry that the Hihn company did not enter actively in Santa Cruz county in this period.

Hihn married Therese Pagen, a native of France of German parents, November 23, 1853. They had seven children: Katie C., Louis W., August C., Grace Cooper, Fred O., Theresa and Agnes.

Buying, selling and building, Hihn gradually extended the scope of his enterprises until he became actively engaged in real estate promotion. He is credited by one Santa Cruz county history of 1892 with having founded Capitola. The Santa Cruz, Soquel and Capitola water supply lines, constructed of redwood pipe in 1860, was one of his projects, along with the City bank and City Savings bank of 1887, which he served as vice-president.

LEGISLATOR.

He assisted in the organization of the Society of California Pioneers of Santa Cruz county, was a trustee of the city's one-teacher school, and later became a supervisor for six years. He was elected to the state

by historians of the period, little or no mention is made in contemporary works of Hihn's coming to Santa Cruz, simply it is stated that "with Henry Hinch he established a mercantile business in Santa Cruz in October, 1851."

But it was not so simple as that. Hihn was broke and nearly down and out. He entered Santa Cruz in 1851 with all his earthly possessions in a pack on his back—a pack that carried trinkets and the paraphernalia of a typical country tinker.

It was this magical pack that gave Hihn his start, although few in the region at the time could have prophesied that here was the man who would one day dominate not only the city, but the county of Santa Cruz, and whose weight would be felt in the state legislature.

His arrival at Santa Cruz was remembered, and often remarked upon by C. O. Martin, pioneer of the Glenwood region and father of Herbert Martin, who recalls his father's story of Hihn and his pack.

BUSY MAN.

Hihn set up business in a crude

coming of the automobile that spelled death to the remunerative summer resort, trade of railroad and stage coach days, and competition by valley products with mountain fruit crops took their toll from Skyland along with many another mountain town.

Phylloxera, dreaded grape disease, wiped out large acreages in 1906 and 1907, a year after the earthquake had played havoc with much of the region which lies directly over the San Andreas fault line. Erosion on the steep hillside ranches, where forest cover had been removed for planting, had set in after 40 years of cultivation, and was stripping the upper ridges of soil and filling the lower lands with its spoil.

CLINGS TO PAST GLORIES.

With nothing much but a surprisingly mild climate and an unsurpassed view to offer in competition with more accessible towns, Skyland began to recede early in this century, although the coming of good roads aided somewhat in its tenacious clinging to its departed glories of the 80's and 90's.

Travelers and residents and visitors found ready ingress and egress down the ridge to Hall's bridge and the Soquel road, over the hill to Redwood lodge, to Hester creek, or down less traveled routes into Asbury gulch and across to Highland Way.

Here it was that Don Beadel, Pacific coast shipping man of no little fame, came to purchase a large tract of land from F. A. Hihn and to establish the Willows ranch, above the site of the old McEwen-Adams lumber mill of the '80s.

Beadel's son, Alec, one of the three brothers who operated the Beadel Brothers shipping concern, started in about 1904 in building up the estate to a stage of affluence which makes it even today one of the show places of the entire mountain region.

BIG INDOOR POOL.

Al Beadel married the daughter of a Mrs. Holt, who had acquired the land from Don Beadel, and brought the property back into the family. Cottages and a beautiful rambling central home on the style of English farm houses sprinkled the landscape, crowned with the largest privately-owned indoor swimming pool in the United States at the time. Under a huge canopy of glass, the magnificent double pool of concrete and tile was a sight that brought the curious from miles around, and occupied columns of space in eastern newspapers of the period.

Exotic garden plants from all quarters of the globe were planted in profusion, grassy terraces, fountains and rock gardens transformed the forest into a paradise. Acquired recently after a series of shifts in title by J. B. Enlow, Fresno rancher, the estate is now being renovated for its eventual opening as a summer resort, and is already in excellent condition again.

POSTOFFICE ABANDONED.

Skyland postoffice ceased to exist as such in 1904 after the rural free delivery came to the mountains at the end of a hard fight by the ranchers for this new service. The

and that's about all.

Bamber was a newspaperman, publisher of a struggling but none the less remarkable newspaper, the "Mountain Realty," which enjoyed a more or less troubled existence from 1901 until it was gradually absorbed by Hyland Baggerly's Los Gatos Mail-News in 1922 and 1923. Appearing under a Skyland date line, the paper was devoted to mountain news and realty notes, circulated throughout the central Santa Cruz mountain region.

In its early years it was printed by the Santa Cruz Sentinel, later in Los Gatos. Advancing age took the journal out of Bamber's hands.

Born in 1872, in Illinois, Bamber came to the west coast as a young man, settling in the bay region, and engaged in a wide variety of enterprises.

ONCE WEALTHY.

A rare old original cover in the philatelic collection of E. E. Place of Los Gatos bears the heading of the "Bamber & McLeod Express," a pony service running from Oakland to the American House at Centerville and to way points. Bamber at one time amassed a considerable fortune in this business, but lost it later. The Pacific Coast business director of 1887 lists his American House as one of the principal hostleries of Alameda county.

In 1872 Bamber married Miss Virginia Hill of Oakland, the first white child born in Oakland (in 1853), who died in 1917. The couple operated a laundry in Alameda for a time, the famous old Newport baths near Neptune Beach, also in Alameda, for another brief period, then moved to the mountain in 1893, where Holy City now stands. In 1895 the family moved to Skyland, where they shifted about a bit, operating a hotel of sorts, a ranch or two, and finally the newspaper which was Bamber's last enterprise.

CHAPTER XIII.

James B. King—The Cruise of the Bowhead.

Skyland today is the home of James B. King, 76-year-old pioneer of the '80's with a lively sense of humor, and whose recollections of days gone by are sharp with the tang of keen observation of human failings.

King is prouder today of his title of old than he would have been of Jack Dempsey's departed name, he declares. Dempsey was a frequent visitor in the region at one time—he considered buying the Willows estate for his parents, but after he had been stuck in the mud a few times one winter before the auto roads were graveled, he changed his mind.

CHAMPION PLOWMAN.

"Champion plowman of the world" was the crown awarded to King in an international competition held near Chicago 54 years ago, when King, then a mere boy, triumphed over veterans in his third competition. He had previously won third place twice.

One of his liveliest recollections is of an ill-fated trip to the Klondike in 1898—a trip like so many of its kind that failed before it was fairly started

Tucked away on an unsuspected knoll only two miles from Soquel road is one of the mountain region's most flourishing communities of the nineties, now almost completely unknown to the average traveler through this section—Skyland, the heart of the Highland district.

At the upper left is shown part of the interior of the magnificent swimming pool on the Beadel estate, constructed 50 years ago as a private home, then the largest private indoor swimming pool in the United States, if not in the world. Upper right is a view of the Skyland church, with the old bell at the left.

Curious colony of a religious nature is the Mt. Sinai

Following a story of an old prospector to his claim somewhere on the Klondike, where all they had to do was shovel out the gold, load it into their boat and wait for the coins to roll in from the mint.

No sleek-lined yacht was the "Bowhead"—a tub that had been built for a tug at Puget Sound, later to be stripped of its engines to be used for a seal hunter and whaler. When the government restricted seal hunting the vessel was floated to the mud flats at Oakland and left with an attachment by the sailors who had operated it on its last trip.

STORMY VOYAGE.

The party paid \$1500 for it and used an old Russian coastal survey book for charts. They landed in Resurrection bay, making the trip through heavy storms in 15 days.

Of the party only four were experienced sailors, although all signed on as sailors to obtain clearance papers under a Captain Edwards. M. R. Morse of San Jose, first mate and a member of the company, took command on the return trip.

Besides King and Morse, the party included Julius Josef and Clayton Jones of Skyland, John Rankin, Wayne Rudy, F. LaSalle of Soquel, Bill Peakes, Bob Baxter, Bill An-

derson, Albert Wright and A. G. Imlay, Chauncey Lease and A. W. Bryant and others, most of whom are now dead.

QUEST FOR GOLD FAILS.

Landing at Resurrection bay the crew packed to Upper Kanian lake by way of Summit lake and Snow river, and spent eight months looking in vain for gold.

The party had been organized on the strength of reports of an old prospector named Boggs who was to have taken the men to a rich diggings he had discovered. So confident were they of finding riches, they organized under an incorporation as "The Kanian Mill and Lumber company."

But Boggs inconveniently died the day the party left San Francisco, and without him, the search was hopeless.

The return trip was made in 22 days, the ship and its crew being stalled for several days in a storm. After landing in San Francisco the company chartered the vessel for one year to carry provisions to Arctic missionaries. It was sold in 1900 for \$3000 and went to pieces on the beach at Nome shortly afterward.

SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE.

The company was organized on the basis of a crew sharing every-

Hihn set up business in a crude store constructed of packing boxes, and between trading from his "store" and making long forays into the country, was a busy man.

A man of many accomplishments, and of many friends, he had also many enemies, who delighted to recount stories, not without some foundation, of how Hihn acquired his thousands of acres of timber holdings.

How he traded a fortune in forest land for a silk shawl; another sizeable tract in return for repairing a cracked tea pot for one of the innocent Castro heirs—these are legends of the country, but legends they will remain without verification.

ACQUIRED LANDS.

Whatever the means, he did acquire enormous redwood holdings, including 404 acres of Soquel rancho in partition in 1860, and 12-29 of Soquel augmentation rancho in 1864, partly from a mortgage of Joseph L. Majors and his wife dated 1856 on rancho interests of the couple. Mrs. Majors was a daughter of Martina Castro, whose

legislature in 1869.

The Spring Valley Water Works, the San Francisco Gas company, the Visitation Water company, the Stockton Gas company, the Donohoe Kelly Banking company, the Patent Brick company—these are but a few of the early enterprises in which he was interested.

His Aptos mill, which had a capacity of 70,000 feet of lumber a day, it is recorded, was one of his largest projects, logging well up into the Aptos canyon on his augmentation lands. The upper portion of the holdings, in Soquel canyon bordering on Spanish ranch and Skyland, now the property of the Monterey Bay Lumber company, is still known as the Hihn forest.

NEXT SUNDAY: The romantic story of Lexington and the early stage coach days, of Buffalo Jones and the toll road, of the coming of Captain John Fremont, the "Pathfinder" of early California history, are told in the opening of a series of several installments about Lexington.

colony of Mrs. Ernst Benninghoven, whose departed husband is memorialized in a sign to be found by the side of the road, half-hidden in brush, pictured at left center. To the right center is a bird's-eye view of the Beadel estate and swimming pool.

Lower left is Joseph J. Bamber, publisher of the Mountain Realty, ambitious newspaper of the early part of the century, and an early-day-resident of the Santa Cruz mountains. He was killed in a highway accident a few years ago.

J. B. King, one-time champion plowman of the world and a pioneer of the Skyland region, as he appears today, is shown at the lower right, on his mountain ranch.

think alike with the exception of tobacco and whisky, which were considered luxuries and not carried in the provisions of the company.

Skyland was a residential section of note in the 80's and 90's, numbering among other famous people Charles H. Allen, a principal of San Jose State normal school, and Professor Norton, also of the San Jose school.

While several fine homes are still to be found in the community, the principal attraction at the present time is New Jerusalem colony of Mrs. Ernest Benninghoven, a strange religious cult which has struggled along for the last 15 or 20 years with a handful of converts. Its center is the "Mt. Sinai Shrine, a memorial to the memory of Ernest Benninghoven," who departed this earth a few years ago.

CHAPTER XIV.

-Frederick A. Hihn

The story of Skyland would not be complete without the story of the man who owned the forests that surrounded it and gave it much of its living, who paid at one time a tenth of all Santa Cruz county's taxes—Frederick A. Hihn.

Hihn was born August 16, 1829, at Holzminden, Duchy of Brunswick, in Germany. His early youth he spent as an apprentice to a mercantile

house, and for a time gathered herbs for market.

Little is known of this period of his life, but in April of 1849, he and a party of 60 others, all political refugees, embarked on the brig "Reform" out of Bremen via Cape Horn for California, following the gold rush.

He landed in San Francisco October 12, 1849, and the following month set out with Henry Gersteker and a party of four others for the Feather river country.

LIVED ON BERRIES.

A storm destroyed their supplies and equipment, and the party was forced for a time to subsist on manzanita berries before it made its way out to civilization again. The party then disbanded.

Hihn returned to Sacramento and went into the candy business with E. Kunitz, who later became his neighbor in Santa Cruz. Again a storm, flooding the Sacramento river, wiped out his property, and Hihn returned to the mines.

A marked lack of success dogged his tracks through a hotel venture later in Sacramento and a drug store in San Francisco. The latter establishment was destroyed by fire in 1851.

Hihn then turned to Santa Cruz. **HUMBLE START.**

With the great discretion evinced

Ghost Towns Articles Bring Reminiscences From Former Resident

(Note: Additions to and corrections of stories which have already appeared will be published here from time to time as further information is uncovered. Following is a letter received from Mrs. E. H. Case of Fresno.)

Editor, San Jose Mercury Herald.

Dear Sir—A friend sent me your papers containing the articles on early days in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

She knew that I would be interested in reading them as my early girlhood was spent in that vicinity among the people you mention who were friends and neighbors.

We moved up there from San Jose in 1876 and built on property across the road from the Chase place and directly over the long tunnel.

We could often feel the jar from the blasting when it was being put through. That part of our place became the home of Moses Hanger who purchased it about 1879 and we built a new house a short distance north.

My father, A. Loomis, and my three brothers, all helped in building the Summit opera house and later took an active part in the literary society which was organized soon after the building was completed.

Almost the first school I attended was the old school located near the lagoon which was a favorite spot in which to pass our noon hour paddling around on a half-submerged log.

The schoolhouse was later moved to the present location about a half-mile down the road.

I note that you state that the Summit Hotel was established by Fred Loomis. Instead, it was Samuel Loomis, his father, a brother of A. Loomis, who built and operated it. Fred, at that time, was a boy of about 18.

You can readily see why I have been so much interested in the articles.

Sincerely,
MRS. E. H. CASE,
Fresno.