



Briton's Hobby Of Obtaining Evergreen Trees From All Sections Leaves Mystery

By Wally Trabing

Those who knew him say the late Edwin Gilliland was figuring on owning an evergreen tree from every country in the world and from all the states in the union which could claim a fir as a native.

Gilliland, the old timers say, was a wealthy Englishman who took a liking to the natural beauty of Santa Cruz county and bought an estate up in the Zayante country in 1919 from Ben Marcum. The present address is 1151 Zayante road.

It seemed to be love at first sight and, according to neighbor Under-sheriff Bud Hendrick, Gilliland spent around \$50,000 in landscaping and remodeling.

The rolling green hills reminded him of England and, to make it more realistic, he got a neighbor to turn his cattle into the area in front of the large house so he always could look out on a Devon-like pastoral scene.

Then he began bringing in evergreens from all parts of the world. Asiatic pine, Chinese fir, Arizona cypress began dotting the landscape about the house.

He was proud of his collection, according to Hendrick.

"I remember one time a couple of us came over to help the old gentleman fall a huge common pine that was blocking a view," Hendrick recalled. "He was very anxious that we guided it in the right direction so it would not injure some very valuable foreign trees."

"It was then he told us that he was attempting to own a tree from every country in the world."

He also was a great one for growing azaleas. In fact, the place is even now called Azalea Dell.

Did Gilliland fulfill his ambition?

No one seems to know. Gilliland died in the early 1940s and after that few paid much attention.

Last month with the permission of the present owner, Mrs. Ola Rickert, the Sentinel-News asked Fred Keast, associate ranger at Felton and an authority on evergreens, to try to find out if Gilliland accomplished his mission before he died.

Although Mrs. Rickert said she didn't have an inkling where any of the pines, firs and cedars came from, she did have possession of one bit of lore that has been handed down from owner to owner since the death of the Briton.

She pointed to two unidentified firs which stand guard on either side of the porch entrance. "Those were planted as seedlings here. They're from Kit Carson's grave."

Keast, who spent an afternoon

roaming about the estate, shook his head in wonder at the end of the tour.

"I've never seen anything like it," he said. "I've identified as many as I know and copied down the scientific names of those I've never heard of."

He believes there are probably more trees about that he missed.

In all, Keast identified 16 different species. Twigs of several trees which stumped him were sent to the University of California by Robert Burton.

Following are the trees positively identified:

European Larch from north and central Europe; Japanese Cryptomeria, Bunya-Bunya, from Australia; Torrey pine, from San Diego county; white fir, from western U.S.; red cedar, from eastern U.S. and Canada; Podo Carpus, from South Africa; Norway spruce, from Europe; Chinese fir, from Asia; bald cypress, from southeastern U.S.; Italian cypress, from southern Europe; Arizona cypress; Colorado blue spruce, from the Rocky mountains; lodgepole pine, from southern California; Coulter pine, from southern California; Retinospora, from Japan; Bhutan pine, from Asia and the Himalayas; white fir, from the Sierra; Gowen

Ola Rickert, the present owner of Azalea Dell, 1151 Zayante road, is shown with Fred Keast, associate ranger from Felton, as they spent an afternoon attempting to identify the species of pine and fir trees, gathered from all over the world in a fabulous collection which was the hobby of the late Edwin Gilliland who owned the dell around 1919.

cypress, and the Port Orford cedar.

According to Keast, whether or not Gilliland completed his curious hobby, is still a mystery.

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