



The new Inn at Manresa Beach on San Andreas Road was fashioned from the old Thurwachter House.

From 1867 to 1998

Thurwachter House now modern beach resort

By MICHAEL MERRILL

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MANRESA BEACH — One of the area's oldest landmarks began a new life recently when it was moved five miles to a new location on San Andreas Road, then restored and transformed into a luxury beach resort.

Built on Beach Road a year before Watsonville was incorporated and chartered, The Thurwachter House, now known as the Inn at Manresa Beach, was constructed in 1867 by the Thurwachter family as a replica of Abraham Lincoln's Springfield home. It was the first mansion in the valley and often used as a home base by famed photographer Ansel Adams, said co-owner Susan Van Horn, who with her husband Brian Denny, moved and completely refurbished the landmark structure.

Van Horn said in order to relocate the 3,700 square foot building, it was cut into four pieces, loaded onto aircraft carrier wheels and moved one section at a time. "It was quite amazing," Van Horn said. "We were on tenterhooks the whole time. If it were to fall down the whole project would fall apart with it."

Originally the brainchild of Darrell Darling, owner of the Darling House in Santa Cruz, the project was approved by the county several years ago but was never completed. As the house was exactly what the couple was looking for, Van Horn and Denny stepped in and took over the project in 1995. "I have worked my entire career in the high-tech industry and I was ready for a change that would let me spend more time with my family," Van Horn said, "and Brian wanted to have his own clay tennis courts. Plus we wanted to live in a



Photos by Tarmo Hannula

Innkeeper Carol Pierce operates the three story inn. Here, Pierce sits in the Redwood Room, which serves as a common area and the breakfast room.

beautiful house."

The couple has invested over a million dollars in making their dream come true. "Now we're working harder than ever," Van Horn said. "But hopefully, once we get our occupancy rates up I will be able to quit my full-time job and spend more time with my two children, and we are expecting a third."

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THURWACHTER

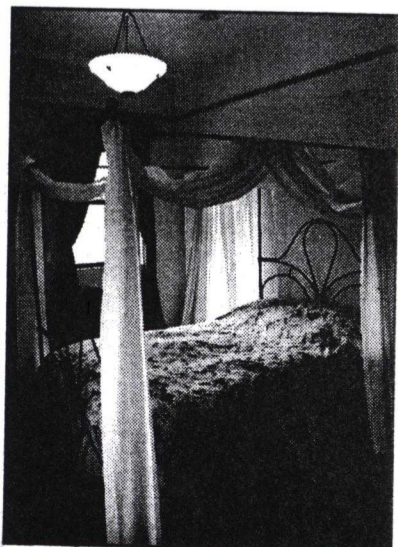
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Although the exterior has been restored as closely to its original condition as possible, the interior has been completely refurbished and modernized. "It didn't even have any toilets," Van Horn said. "The house was built before indoor plumbing."

Today the Inn features nine rooms which include private baths, individual fireplaces, televisions, VCRs and two phone lines. Options include two-person spa tubs, king or queen adjustable beds and in-room massage therapy. Even babysitting is available. Books, videos and games are available in an in-house library.

Outside are two clay tennis courts, volleyball, croquet and badminton facilities and a driving net for golfers. "The croquet set is a genuine, professional set for certified, international play," Van Horn said.

Conference facilities and multi-room suites are also available for private parties and corporate functions.



Tarmo Hannula

The artfully decorated Heather Suite is one of nine rooms to choose from.