

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Paradise Changes Hands

Paraiso, pronounced pa-ry-zoh, means 'paradise' and is the only survivor of several places so named, according to "1,000 Place Names in California." Paraiso Springs is an old established resort in southern Monterey County and may be reached by motor car by turning to the west our of Soledad. From Monterey, the motorist should take advantage of the River Road going south and turn at the Spring's directional road sign.

On Sunday, October 27, the Monterey County Historical Society members gathered at Paraiso Springs for a business meeting and a talk on the history of the resort. Mrs. Donald Davies Jr. president of the organization, presided and introduced Dr. T.N. Peterson, who for several years was manager of the Springs and had made a study of its past history.

Paraiso Springs is at an elevation of 1,400 feet. It has been called the "Carlsbad of America" because of its soda, sulphur, arsenic and iron mineral springs.

It was in 1791 that King Carlos of Spain granted 20 acres to the Soledad Mission and it was known thereafter as the vineyard of the Soledad Mission. On November 19, 1859, the United States according to the provisions of the act of Congress approved the grant the 3rd day of March, 1851, to the Rt. Reverend Father Joseph Alemany, Roman Catholic bishop of the diocese, and issued a patent on the said 20 acres. The church held title to the land until August 16, 1866, when Pedro Zabala bought the property for \$10,000. Eight years later, Oct. 12, 1874, Mr. Zabala sold the property – 20 acres – to Reeve Bros. and Ledyard Fine of Gilroy for \$10,442.21.

The formation of the partnership of the Reeve brothers and Ledyard Fine was the starting point from which Paraiso Springs won fame as a resort. The next owners were the Bryant family who purchased the Springs on January 2, 1885 for \$15,000, according to Dr. Petersen.

In June of 1887 the Bank of Gilroy foreclosed on a mortgage and took possession of the property, which they resold in April of 1889 to Charles Ford of Watsonville. Mr. Ford owned Paraiso, putting in many improvements, until his death in August of 1892. His manager was a Mr. Robinson, whose given name the

speaker did not know. The Ford estate sold the property to Charles T. Romie in March, 1899.

Mr. Romie was a native of Germany and an American by training and education, and above all else a Californian, according to Guinn's history of the Central Coast. Most of his property in the county was situated about seven miles from Soledad, which was his home from 1875 until his death on January 5, 1904. He was a brother of the late Mrs. David Jacks of Monterey.

During the time that Mr. Romie owned Paraiso Springs it was under the management of a Mr. Schroeder of Salinas. At the death of Mr. Romie the Paraiso Springs became the property of his two nephews, Karl and Ernest Romie. Karl being a minor his father, Paul T. Romie, was appointed his guardian. On December 2, 1906, Romie Sr. petitioned the court to give permission to sell Paraiso. The petition was granted, reported Dr. Petersen, in February of 1907.

In March of 1907, an auction was held on the Monterey County Court House steps in Salinas and Mr. and Mrs. A. McGowan, being the highest bidders, became the new owners of Paraiso Springs. Mr. McGowan continued to operate the resort until his death in June, 1913, after which his widow, Alice McGowan, managed the Springs until the property was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Neuman in 1915. They kept it for two years and sold to Brandt Brothers and Frank Daniels who managed the Springs until it was purchased by the firm of Riley and Enquist in January of 1920. They owned and managed Paraiso until 1924 when it was purchased by the Petersen family. Then the fire of July 21, 1928 occurred and destroyed much of the property. In November of last year the Petersens sold out to the Barretts of Salinas who are busy renovating the buildings, building swimming pools and improving the entire property.