

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Early Resorts

The first four parts of the new keepsake series, Early California Resorts, designed and printed by Albert Sperisen and Harold Seeger at their Black Vine Press, have arrived for the membership of the Book Club of California. Dr. Albert Shumate is the editor of the series.

No. 1 in the series of California Resorts is a history of "The Tallac" at Lake Tahoe. It was written by Edward B. Scott, who has been intimately associated with the Lake Tahoe-High Sierra region of California for the past 30 years. His history, The Saga of Lake Tahoe, will be released by the Sierra-Tahoe Publishing Co. this year.

Scott's opening description of Lucky Baldwin, the owner of The Tallac, in the 1880s, is excellent and gives a very fascinating picture of this man who played such a prominent part in the state's history of that period.

"In the summer of 1879, a tall, shrewd-eyed stranger registered at Ephraim 'Yank' Clement's forty-room 'record' that bordered the south shore of the world's greatest Alpine lake, a pebble's throw from its indigo-blue waters. The newcomer was immediately placed as a personage, for the cut of the broadcloth, gold nugget watch chain casually draped across an intricately brocaded vest, and highly polished boots all bespoke importance.

"He marveled at the unspoiled timber stands surrounding the hotel, tramped the white sand beaches and squinted across 22 miles of the Washoe Indians' Big Water (Tahoe) curving in the sunlit arc to the 10,000-foot northern wall of the Sierra Nevada's Carson Range."

On Nov. 14, 1880, he was back. Elias Jackson "Lucky" Baldwin, multi-millionaire Comstock Lode plunger, real estate promoter and dedicated libertine, had decided to purchase the hotel and adjoining land; but first "Yank" had to be convinced. After some fast horse-trading, at which Baldwin was an expert, "Yank" agreed to sell. Before he was through, Scott tells us, he owned 2,000 acres; one mile facing Lake Tahoe, the balance stretching south to Fallen Leaf Lake.

"My land acquisition," Baldwin announced flamboyantly, "will save this vast forest from the beauty-destroying woodsmen's axe so that these

mighty pines and cedars may remain to be admired by generations to come."

No. 2 in the series is the Calaveras Big Trees Hotel. Dr. R. Coke Wood, a member of the faculty of the College of the Pacific, Stockton, contributed the history of this famous hotel. Dr. Wood is also the executive secretary of the Conference of California Historical Societies and editor of the Calaveras County Historical Society's Quarterly. Included in this pamphlet is a lithograph by C. C. Kuchel after a drawing by Edward Vischer. The original is owned by the Society of California Pioneers. An interesting feature of the drawing is a band of camels being driven along the road near the hotel by horsemen.

The first hotel had been opened for business in 1855 and Proprietor A.S. Haynes announced to the public that he had "refitted and refurnished" the first hotel when he ran an advertisement in the San Andreas Independent, July 24, 1858. These two hotels entertained some of the great people of the world.

A.T. Dowd, a hunter for the Union Water Co., which was building an aqueduct from the Stanislaus River, has been given credit for discovering the Calaveras Big Trees, the Sequoia gigantic, while following the trail of a wounded grizzly bear in 1852.

The resort's oddest visitors were a string of nine Bactrian camels that passed through the grove in 1862 on their way to Virginia City to transport salt to the mines after having been imported from Amur, China. Famous visitors registered at the Big Trees Hotel were such persons as John Hittell, 1867; Henry Ward Beecher, 1877; U.S. Grant, 1880; and Mark Twain, 1877.

The State of California now owns the property and it has been operated as a State Park since 1931.