

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 12, 1957

### **Cedar Cottage**

"Yosemite's Cedar Cottage" is the subject for No. 3 in the Keepsake series of pamphlets which members of the Book Club of California have recently received in the mail.

No. 3 has been written by Carl P. Russell, who has been with the National Park Service since 1923. He is the author among other works, of "One Hundred Years in Yosemite," the third edition being published this year.

It was in the spring of 1857 that S. M. Cunningham and his partner, Buck Beardsley, stood on the south bank of the Merced River in Yosemite Valley, about where the Sentinel Bridge now spans the stream and dreamed dreams. They "figgered" that city folks might be tired of frying bacon and sleeping on the ground when they got inside of the Yosemite walls. They "allowed as how maybe they could do some paying business, if they set up camp for tired sight-seers."

Beardsley discerned a tourist mecca in the making. He solved the problem of "wrong side of the river," according to the opinion of his partner by building a crude log bridge directly in front of his hotel site and upon the detection of Cunningham, entered into a new partnership with G. Hite. They conducted a general merchandise business during the summer of 1857. That fall they continued the giant task of e whip-sawing boards and timbers to be used in the construction of the two-story building.

In 1864 James Mason Hutchings purchased the place just before Congress removed the Yosemite Valley from the public domain. During Hutchings ownership he made the hostelry famous as the Hutchings House and also created quite a settlement by building the Rock Cottage, Oak Cottage, and River Cottage. The original building was known as Cedar Cottage. In 1874 the State of California took over these properties and arranged for different management. Colter and Murphy acquired them in 1876 and the Sentinel Hotel was built on the riverbank. In 1840 the most venerable of the group, Cedar Cottage was razed. It had served for more than 80 years.

Edgar M. Kahn, San Francisco investment counselor, is the writer of No. 4 in the Keepsake series, which gives the history of Napa Soda Springs. Kahn is also the

author of "Cable Car Days in San Francisco," "Land's End to the Ferry," "Bret Hart in California," and "Andrew Smith Hallidie." He is an associate editor of the California Historical Society Quarterly.

Prof. Erwin G. Gudde of the University of California, an authority on California place names is of the opinion that Napa is an Indian work of uncertain origin. It may be from the Indian work "napo" (house) recorded in 1851 in the Clear Lake region or it may be from the Patwin Indian "napa" (grizzly bear).

The first owner of Napa Soda Springs was Dr. John Henry Woods, who claimed that the spring water cured his inflammatory rheumatism. In 1870 the Spring was purchased by Col. John Putnam Jackson. The property of 1,000 acres selling for \$20,000. He invested another \$80,000 in buildings of ornate character.

In 1881, Col. Jackson invited 1,400 persons to attend the grand opening of Jackson Napa Soda Springs. History fails to record how many attended the greatest social event ever held north of San Francisco. A decade later, when his lifelong friend, President Benjamin Harrison became a guest at the Springs, Jackson had the satisfaction of seeing his dream come true. When he was offered excellent sums to dispose of the property, he would reply: "Do you want me to sell my soul, sir? My heart is tied up in these Springs."

It is quite amusing to study the route of a trip from San Francisco to fashionable Napa Soda Springs in the mid-80s and 90s, and to learn how much planning such a vacation would take. A carriage or cable car was taken to the ferry, a ride across the bay to the Oakland mole, a train to Vallejo Junction, a ferry across to South Vallejo on the north side of Carquinez Straits, a train trip to Napa, and a stage journey to the Springs.

Col. Jackson died in 1900, after his resort had enjoyed 30 years of successful operation. The property still stands as a memorial to the colonel, but the cottages have disappeared, the stone buildings gutted by fire still stand, but Napa Soda Springs Resort is all but forgotten by even old San Franciscans.

The next of the Keepsake series will be a story of Hotel Del Monte written by James D. Hart, followed by Tassajara Springs, for which Edith M. Coulter will write the history.