

April 6, 1962

Tassajara By Moonlight

"We had the road, the rugged mountain peaks, the deep canyons and the rocky gorges and all this grand panorama of majestic scenery all to ourselves, with no one to dispute our rights. "All nature was quiet, grand and beautiful," so wrote John Morrow in his letter to the homefolk in Santa Cruz in 1901, as he and Mrs. Morrow made their slow ride to Tassajara Springs via horse and carriage.

The last 30 miles of their trip they did not meet anyone on the road either afoot or on horseback, or in any other way. As we wrote in a previous article Mr. Morrow appreciated the scenery, the trees, and flowers that he saw and wrote about them. The altitude at the summit is 4,960 feet, but at that height he listed as being in full bloom what is commonly known as the Spanish dagger, which grew in summer to 8, 12 or 15 feet tall, with white flowers which may be seen at least a half mile away.

"And 'what is most strange," Morrow wrote, " they do all this without a drop of rain and apparently without moisture of any kind. The sharp ridges and rocky peaks add much to the beauty. and grandeur of the scene before us."

At the southeast end of the ridge there is a deep canyon where runs the north fork of the Arroyo Seco, which is quite a large stream. Here on its banks are located the Tassajara Springs.

"One would almost believe he was looking down into a gorge below the level of the sea. And now to get down to the hotel and springs we make a decent of 3,260 feet over a wonderfully picturesque piece of road. It is an interesting ride and rather exciting. About halfway down this grade we halted for an hour or so at a clear, cool spring by the side of the road for dinner. Here we boiled potatoes, fried bacon, and eggs, made coffee and ate with good appetites and Dolly horse also had a good appetite for hay and rolled barley. Now only three miles to go and all down grade!"

Mr. and Mrs. Morrow pitched camp in the early afternoon at the springs. The next day he noted in his report to the Santa Cruz newspaper: "The moonlight here is grandeur and more beautiful than any place I have ever been. It is a more yellowish, golden color, and

when it glides the tops of these rugged mountain peaks and slowly creeps down their rock-ribbed sides and casts its golden mellow light over all the valley and among the trees, it is indeed grand, and far beyond my power to appreciate or describe."

"I leave here tomorrow for Salinas, San Juan, Hollister, San Jose and other places. When I write the word me, I mean my wife, myself, and Dolly horse. Our work is about equally divided while on our trips. My wife is boss of the commissary department, I am chief quartermaster, while Dolly horse is superintendent of locomotion and transportation, and we all attend to our duties faithfully and successfully." The Morrrows had stayed for one month to the day at Tassajara Springs.

Tassajara ... Tas-sah-hah-rah ... a place where strings of meat or venison (jerky) are hung in the sun to dry. From early records and folklore it appears that Tassajara has long been a gathering place for many peoples: The Indians, who made an annual pilgrimage thither to receive the benefits of its waters; later, pioneer white men, who built rough log cabin and baths; and today, the modern vacationists, who seek the Tassajara Springs for vacation outings. The springs are in the heart of the national forest, about 45 miles south of Monterey.