Our Tahoe Heritage
By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

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The Phantom of the Far Shore

This Saturday evening, in a raffle sponsored by the North Lake Tahoe Historical Society, two lucky ticketholders will be chosen to travel back through local boating history to the era of wood and chrome. The two prizewinners will each have the privilege of selecting nine friends to accompany them in the pleasure of a one-hour cruise aboard George Whittell's legendary marine behemoth, the THUNDERBIRD.

Whittell, millionaire playboy of an earlier era on Tahoe's east shore, had a passion for the unusual, and his 1929 Hacker-designed marvel -- 55 feet of mahogany and stainless steel -- was only one of many such homages to novelty. Though his domicile (and his dreamboat) have long since passed into other hands (the estate to the Dreyfus family, the boat to Bill Harrah, Owen Owens and now to Buzz and Joan Gibb), mysteries surrounding the reclusive Whittell, once owner of more of the Lake Tahoe Basin than any other individual, remain myriad.

Arriving on the local scene in 1938 in the wake of the basin's lumbering era, Whittell invested a part of his father's fortune (acquired in banking, railroading and real estate) in the "useless" cut-over holdings of timber barons Bliss and Hobart. Eventually, Whittell obtained deeds to over 11 miles of Nevada lakefront, the boundaries of which extended from the east end of Crystal Bay south to Zephyr Cove.

On a lovely east shore inlet known as Sand Harbor, Whittell had constructed a $300,000 French chateau, the steep slate roofs of the main house and its numerous outbuildings setting off stonework common to the structures of medieval Normandy. Thunderbird Lodge, as Whittell named the estate, gained instant popularity with the curious public, whose efforts at close scrutiny by boat were monitored by a sound sensing device. When activated, a loudspeaker system broadcast strains of "I'll Be Glad When You're Dead, You Rascal, You".

From the first, news of any activity within the borders of Whittell's 23,400-acre "kingdom" was disseminated faithfully (if through a somewhat bent proboscis) by the local press, who were excluded with the rest, and who seized on any opportunity to play up the eccentricities of the recluse philanthropist for the edification of their eager readership.

The summer of 1939 was an especially juicy one for local newshawks, with the July 23 issue of the "Tahoe Tattler" gloatingly reporting several damaging crashes of Whittell "hydroplanes" (amphibious aircraft) based at his Tahoe fortress. In the third of such mishaps occuring within a one year period, pilot Fred Kane's failure to drew in the landing gear resulted in the plane "catching a wheel" and flipping over. A similar incident the year prior involved a flip-over during landing, sinking another of Whittell's seaplanes in 40 feet of water. Both planes sustained such severe structural impairment that they consequently required dismantling before they could be trucked out of the basin for rebuilding.

Neither did the "Tattler" miss the opportunity to report on Whittell's other activities that summer -- though they proved less dramatic. Progress on construction of his private yacht harbor (then being blasted out of the solid granite shoreline) was of sufficient newsworthiness to warrant three photos on page one of the July 28 "Tattler". The same article also made mention of a recently-launched 175 horsepower Ventnor hulled boat, which the captain hadn't "opened up" by presstime, according to observers, "but just going half-throttle it easily outdistanced all nearby lake watercraft."

Perhaps the most unique feature of Whittell's estate was not the architecture or the marine furbishings, but the inhabitants -- beasts native to the wilds of Africa which were shuttled back and forth between Spring Valley Lakes (Whittell's Woodside, California domain) and their warm-weather quarters at Thunderbird Lodge. Elephants, giraffes and lions were among the species which summered at Whittell's Sierra hideaway, and more than one incident involving an overzealous lion made the papers when a neighbor or guest found the beasts' presence disquieting. Whittell's confinement to a wheelchair in his final years was rumored to have been the consequence of a wrestling match with one of his over-sized felines.

Though the noted personality of George B. Whittell, Jr. passed on to his final reward at age 87 in April of 1969, the magnificence and mystery of the east shore legend he created lives on, nurtured by tangible reminders in the form of domicile and art deco dreamboat.

A chance to take a trip back into the glamorous past of this illustrious phantom-of-the-far-shore is yours with the purchase of a $1 raffle ticket (six for $5), available at the Gatekeepers Cabin Museum through Saturday. (Ticketholders need not be present at the drawing to win.)

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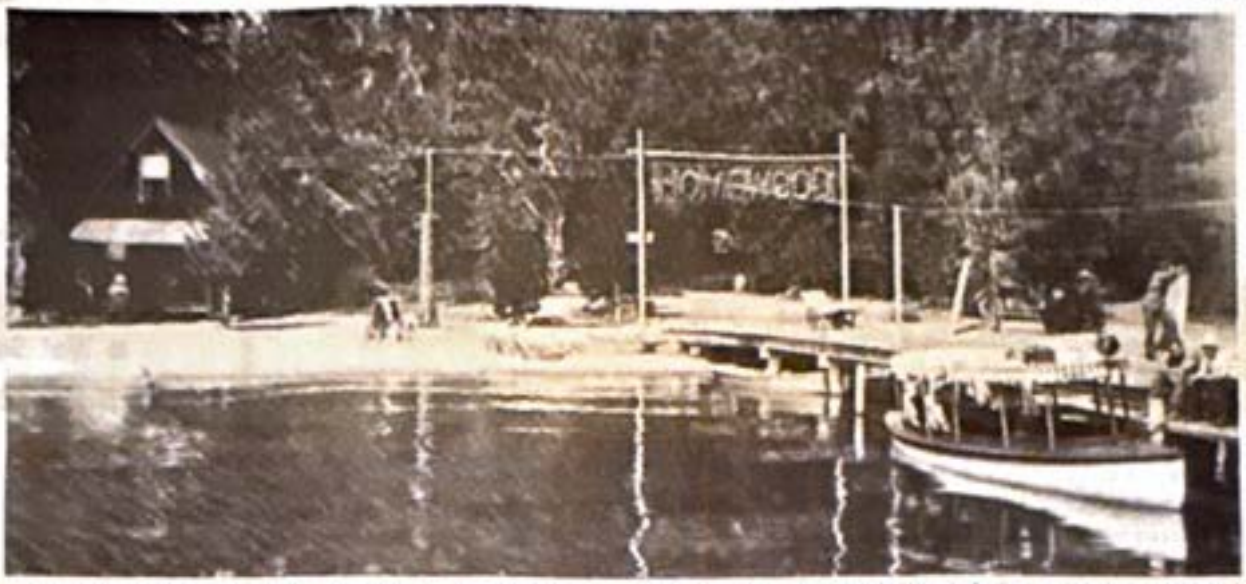
If the reader's familiarity with local lodging facilities does not precede the era of "time-share" and "interval ownership," he cannot know of the glories of the "family resort," an institution well-represented at Lake Tahoe a generation ago. These "destination resorts" of yesteryear, in view of their huge popularity, might have continued to this day were it not for several interfering factors which sealed their enterpreneurial doom.

For over half a century local single-family enterprises such as Homewood Resort, Chambers' Lodge, Meeks Bay and Fallen Leaf Lodge expanded their facilities through rich and lean times. Their successes, though chiefly the result of just plain hard work, were also indebted to the laissez faire attitude of government in those days, for these seasonal resorts came of age in spurts and starts, their proprietors adding to their offered accommodations and amenities as finances and free time permitted.

Following World War I, which marked the end of the boys' camp, the resort acquired land formerly belonging to the "Lucky" Baldwin estate, as well as property of Charles A. Swisler and the Blanchard family. Subsequent to the death of Mr. Price, his wife operated the resort, and in its final years, the business was overseen by daughters Harriet Price Craven and Frances Park Street. Connection to the sewer for each and every plumbed structure on the grounds (among them a great many guest cabins) was a hopeless expense for such an operation to endure, and Fallen Leaf Lodge did not survive.

Homewood Resort also dates from near the turn of the century, having its beginnings in 1910, when Arthur and Annie Jost of Woodland initiated construction of a three-story hotel on the lakeshore, later complemented by the addition of a dancehall and casino across the highway. Mrs. Jost operated the business for over a decade following her husband's death, but ill health forced the sale to another Woodland couple, Don and Bernice Hutt, in 1938.



The steamer "Lady of the Lake" readying to depart the Hotel Homewood's pier.

The Hutts began a remodelling project the following year -- one which continued to some extent until they sold the resort to Helen Alrich in 1964. Among their improvements was a commercial building (at the foot of what is now the Homewood Ski Area hill), constructed on the foundation of the former dancehall, which had collapsed in the snow the winter prior to their purchase of the resort.

Permits were not yet required, this freedom contributing to the tenuous nature of the structures and assuring that no such operation could survive the mid-1960's, when conversion to a common sewer system mandated changes too costly to be undertaken.

The oldest of these resorts, Fallen Leaf Lodge, was initiated by William Whitman Price, a professor at Stanford whose enthusiasm for the natural sciences led to the opening of a boys' summer camp in the canyon below Glen Alpine Springs in 1896. In 1905, he moved the camp (named for Louis Agassiz, "Father of the Ice Age Concept") to the southwest shore of Fallen Leaf Lake, where accommodations for the parents of his campers were provided at his new resort.

Another concession inaugurated by the Hutts was the famous Homewood Snack Shack, where the general public, as well as the resort's guests, could purchase sandwiches, soft drinks, ice cream cones, gum, candy and postcards without leaving the beach area. The Hutts also remodelled the hotel proper, relocating the diningroom from the interior of the building to the lake side, to take better advantage of the view.

Meeks Bay Resort, established in 1920 by Oswald Kehlet and sons George and Fred, was another enterprise which grew and developed sporadically as successful seasons generated the capital to expand. Starting with a grocery store and lodge building, the Kehlets eventually added a lakefront diningroom and dancehall, and over the years constructed a total of over sixty cabins.

Located on the route between Meeks Bay and Homewood was Chambers' Lodge, the domain of Dave Chambers, whose Hotel Samarkind in Santa Barbara represented more-than-adequate credentials for the operation of his Tahoe Resort, acquired in 1925. Originally established by John McKinney as "Hunter's Home" in 1863,

somebody standing at your desk. We'd try Meeks Bay and Chambers' and all along the line to get accommodations. We were a very, very friendly group of competitors."

Mr. Hutt recalls one case in point: "I remember one night our diningroom had a run on lamb chops, and we were beginning to run out of lamb chops. I went in and called up Dave Chambers and said, 'Have you got any lamb in your refrigerator?' He said, 'Well, let me see. Wait a minute -- hold the phone.' And by golly, he sent a boy out there and he brought up a rack of lamb chops to us while I was still on the telephone -- kept my diningroom going that night. But that's the way we all got along in those days."

But the inception of a basin-wide system of sewage disposal and the gradual acquisition of all but 3.6 percent of the basin's land by government entities served to bring to a close the era of family businesses, leading to the arrival of corporate interests able to finance the transition. And to some minds, we are the poorer for the loss of these resorts, which played such an important part in the way of life once enjoyed at Tahoe.

the resort's existing improvements were molded by Chambers into a well-remembered family resort, featuring an annual speedboat regatta for the entertainment of all.

Competition between the resorts was cordial and friendly, reports Don Hutt, Sr., formerly of Homewood Resort. All the businessmen on the California side of the lake were interested in promoting the virtues of the area at large, and shared the benefits of their efforts.

"All of our resorts could stand more people until we were filled up," Mr. Hutt explains. "Then we would try to help people find accommodations so that they wouldn't be discouraged with coming to Lake Tahoe. We had a comradeship of calling up the different resorts with

Prior to Dave Chamber's purchase of the resort in 1925, this is how the McKinney's "Hunter's Home" looked from the Lake. Behind and to the left of the wharf is the hotel building, which had been barged across the Lake from Glenbrook at the turn of the century.

CTS > King's Beach
Carol Van Etten Collection

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

The Kings Beach Story

From the earliest days of its existence, the lake shore community of Kings Beach has battled a honky-tonk reputation labeling it as the "Coney Island of the North Shore." Though grass roots efforts of local businessmen in recent years have contributed to a reversal of this trend, they can do nothing to invalidate the events and circumstances of history.

Kings Beach, born in the jazz age, was weaned on fresh, locally-distilled whiskey and grew up as the seamy poor relation of older neighboring communities. Yet prior to the late 1920's, Kings Beach was no more than a wide spot in the road. In fact, as late as 1936, advertising still referred to the location as "Brockway Vista."

Though the story has often been dismissed as rumor or legend, it is the firm recollection of more than one local resident that Joe King, a lumberjack from Truckee, acquired the property which later took his name in a fateful mid-20's poker game, in which the big loser was recluse millionaire George Whittell.

King soon began to build the core of a thriving community, developing commercial highway frontage along the edge of an ideally flat, shallow bathing beach and playing landlord to several seasonal enterprises including a barber shop, beauty salon and the Tahoe Theatre.

Best remembered of the early businesses of Kings Beach is Johnny Rayburn's Buckhorn Inn, which enjoyed several decades of popularity with vacationers and locals alike.

The Buckhorn and other local business ignored California's gaming laws in favor of Nevada's, conducting organized gambling on the premises. This encouraged the sort of customer skepticism commonly associated with games of chance. In 1937, the Inn's advertising sought to reassure potential clientele with a reference to manager "Honest John" Peralta.

The previous year, the Buckhorn had had trouble of a different sort when Tahoe City Constable Harry Johanson conducted a raid on the premises. At that time a Joe Perez had been found guilty of possession of a number of slot machines and gaming paraphernalia and fined $150.

But enforcement of state gaming laws was generally lax, and Kings Beach continued, through the late 1940's to be considered a "hot spot." Rayburn's success fostered the development of several other bars and nightspots, including The Pines, Freeman's Inn, Celeste's Cocktail Bar and a concern occupying the building which presently houses Los Tres Hombres.

The community was not all glitter and night-life, however. An all-important factor in the development of Kings Beach was Joe King's subdivision of a portion of his new property for a residential area. King felt sorry for the local working-class people who staffed the clubs and seasonal businesses of the larger, bi-state community, serving as waitresses, clerks, maids, barkeeps and card dealers. This labor force had been generally unable to afford property prior to King's involvement in local real estate, owing to the size of available parcels. King solved this by making his lots a modest 25 feet wide -- actually deeded tent sites just large enough to accommodate a 16 foot platform structure.

King furnished the seasonal tent city with an above-ground water system, providing a complimentary spigot at the edge of each lot. Soon after Labor Day each year, this system was drained and owners "broke camp" for the season. The makeshift structures were relieved of their roofs, and each fall a growing number of platforms remained as witnesses to the seasonal habitation. The following Memorial Day, the system would be reactivated, bringing the community back to life for another season.

Over the succeeding decades, property owners began to improve on and expand their summer residences, digging septic tanks and framing and roofing the formerly-canvas structures. Many Kings Beach dwellings owe the transient quality of their existing architecture to an early association with the sailmaker, and their diminutive size to the postage-stamp parcels on which they sit.

Today Kings Beach still serves as a bedroom community for employees of the north stateline clubs, just as it did four decades ago. A newly-landscaped P.U.D. Park, built on lakefront which once belonged to Joe King, provides local color of a different sort than that which characterized the community's early days -- more aromatic, if less interesting, than the era which preceded it.

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By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Crawling across Lake Tahoe

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Gazing across the panoramic expanse of blue that is Lake Tahoe, it is easy to imagine the challenge to conquer that affects some daring personalities. For marathon swimmers the vast surface represents an irresistible pull "because it is there", similar to the call of mountain climbers to the highest peaks.

The early 1930s was a period of superlatives during which people strove to improve their troubled circumstances in the performance of superhuman feats. The marathon dancers of the period, the flagpole sitters and the goldfish swallowers -- all manifested the urge to go to extremes to overcome the current burden of mankind.

Long-distance swimming was a popular manifestation of this urge to excel. In England, Gertruce Erdele, slathered with 4 kilos of grease, had recently conquered the English Channel. So it was in keeping with the spirit of the age when Myrtle Huddleston, 200-pound seasoned endurance swimmer and exemplification of fair womanhood, successfully crossed the breadth of Lake Tahoe on August 25, 1931. With her body heavily greased to prevent loss of heat in the grueling swim, Mrs. Huddleston set off from Deadman's Point, north of Glenbrook, at about 8 o'clock on Sunday morning, and driven by waves which forced her off course (she eventually swam something more like 20 miles), she came ashore at Tahoe City, having been in the water just under 24 hours. During the ordeal, she lost twelve pounds, but collected $700 offered for a successful crossing, and secured a position as swimming instructoress at Tahoe Tavern in the bargain.

In the next few years, Mrs. Huddleston's achievement received enthusiastic review on local tongues, prompting other hopefuls to step forward and attempt the formidable crossing. Most notable among these was Clay Sherman (21-year-old son of the San Francisco music merchant who founded Sherman Clay Music), at that time attending the University of Oregon. The August 5, 1935 edition of the *Tahoe Tattler* announced in front page headlines that the 6'4½" Sherman would start from Deadman's Point at midnight the following day, with the plan of coming ashore at Tahoe Tavern. But luck was not with the muscular, athletic Sherman, who was forced to stop the marathon after 4½ hours due to a sudden attack of cramps. He did not attempt another swim.

Three seasons later, in the summer of 1937, a seasoned French endurance swimmer named Paul Chotteau, who at that time held the record for swimming the Catalina Channel, managed to grab several headlines of his own with his proposed crossing of the lake. However, unable to find financial backing, Chotteau apparently abandoned the plan, as a *Tattler* correspondent was told that he had checked out of his room at Brockway. Chotteau refused, the *Tattler* reported, "to swim for the glory alone and states if he is unsuccessful, which he doubts, he will ask no reward other than to try again. (We wish we might convey his inimitable accent, but in words to this effect, that swimming the lake was as easy as smoking the big black cigar on which he puffed.)" The swim was never attempted.

William Long, a 27-year-old Van Nuys lifeguard, was the first man to successfully swim the width of Lake Tahoe, establishing a new record. Long, like his predecessors, was blown off course by the lake's treacherous winds, actually swimming an estimated 17 miles in the process of crossing the lake. Prompted by his success, a young girl and a 44-year-old man, swimming together, became the third and fourth to have crossed the lake during the summer of 1954.

Captain Fred Rogers of South San Francisco was the next to successfully swim the lake, conquering the width on August 8, 1955. Setting off from Cave Rock, Rogers stroked the distance in a mere 6 hours and 46 minutes, coming ashore at Meeks Bay. This success led Rogers to further glory in his successful swimming of the length of Lake Tahoe - formerly considered an "impossible" feat. On August 28 - less than three weeks after his successful crossing of the width, Rogers and another endurance swimmer, Jose Cortinas, set off from Kings Beach, stroking toward the south shore.

Rogers and Cortina became separated in the final hours of the swim, Rogers coming ashore at the El Dorado Beach having swum Tahoe's 21⅛ mile length in 19 hours and 6 minutes. Cortina landed at nearby Stateline Beach, having swum nearly as far but falling just short of conquering the actual length.

Since the mid-1950s there have been numerous trans-Tahoe swims, yet the public's enthusiasm for such efforts has faded a bit with familiarity. However, there is no taking away from the fact that the "great inland sea" that is Lake Tahoe represents every bit as much difficult challenge as ever it did, and any swimmer who attempts a crossing can only succeed with a combination of skill, guts, endurance and luck that the weather does not represent too formidable an obstacle.

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Real Live Indian Summer

Much is made in some local circles of one's pedigree as a seasonal pioneer of the area. "My family's been coming up here every year since . . ." is a time-worn claim to some kind of status as a summer local. A generation of more-or-less consecutive seasons' attendance represents a certain devotion to the locale. Among the general populus, fifty years' worth of summers is rare, and beyond a claim of three generations' seasonal residence few but toddlers dare tread.

Yet, even the most ancient resident -- unless some of his ancestors were Indians -- cannot begin to compare his family's record of annual visitation to that of the Washo (correct original spelling) tribe. Since prior to the advent of a written local history, some members of this tribe are known to have made annual migrations from their winter range in the Carson Valley (remarkably barren of edible vegetation) to Lake Tahoe's west shore, where the abundance of fish and the availability of pine nuts and berries afforded a meager existence (the Indians never found a way of eating the view) prior to the turn of the century.

So, in the case of the Washo, it was with more than the ordinary enthusiasm that they greeted the arrival of the white man, with whom they quickly struck up a sort of coexistence -- a partnership which proved valuable to both groups. Several Indian encampments attached themselves to west shore resorts, annually returning to coexist with Chambers' Lodge, Homewood Resort and Meeks Bay Resort.

Don Huff, who, with his wife, Bernice, owned and operated Homewood Resort from 1938 to 1964, recalls his dealings with the Indians who attached themselves to the Resort. Each group of Indians, Huff recalls, had its own "territory", and would not encroach on its neighbors. They had a camp in the woods, generally west of the resort with which they were associated, and the same Indians would come back to the same spot year after year, where they were fed from the resort's kitchen, and, in exchange, provided the resort with fish and laundry service.

Evelyn Prentiss Choate, whose parents first purchased their Homewood property in 1904, remembers one such encampment which annually materialized "in back of McKinney's", near the present site of Chamberlands. The squaws from this group did the laundry and housework for Mrs. Prentiss and her neighbors, while daughter Evelyn played on the beach with Loubell and Fishhook, and Indian brother and sister of about her age.

The services were rendered in an old galvanized washtub provided by Mrs. Prentiss, who compensated the squaws with coins and cast-off clothing. The aboriginal ladies were not the least bit shy about requesting a garment still on the owner, "I like coat" being tantamount to a demand for possession.

In the early 1960s, Mrs. Choate visited the site which she remembered as the Indians' former encampment, and found a group still camped there! Among them was her former playmate, Loubell -- their happy reunion occuring after a hiatus of more than 45 years.

Since that time, this and other encampments have been obliterated by the advance of subdivisions and publicly maintained forest land, bringing an end to the migrations of the Washo. The sustenance they once injoyed along the peaceful west shore of Lake Tahoe is no longer available, gone forever in the mad march for the development dollar.

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Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

It's the Pfeifer House to You

Few local commercial structures can claim the history and variety of business activity associated with the Pfeifer House. During the building's 50-plus years of existence, it has served at least five proprietorships, offering a variety of cuisines and atmospheres - each one unique and every one popular.

Originally intended as a residence, this building's first use as a place of business was under the ownership of Mr. and Mrs. H.T. Marshall. They offered meals and - in the way of overnight accomodations - half-a-dozen cabins, located uphill from the restaurant. These buildings served a subsequent operation as quarters for a number of ladies of the night, who received callers with a startling frequency, among them (according to eyewitness accounts) certain prominent citizens of the town.

During the heavy snow year of 1938, the main residence was occupied by Floyd and Beulah Carnell. Mrs. Carnell remembers that when one of her husband's mustangs had to be shot, he had the animal stuffed in the bucking position and set the curiosity out in front of the Inn for tourists to use as a prop for picture taking. It was a ratty steed, recalls Mrs. Carnell, yet it offered irresistable roadside appeal to many passing motorists, who stopped and somehow ended up staying for dinner.

Nate Firpo followed the Marshalls as the next proprietor, his operation being remembered as a popular "hang out" of the day.

It was about 1939 when Firpo sold Lake Inn to the partnership of "Mom" and "Pop" Meyers and their future son-in-law, Tommy Bonano. The Meyers at that time owned and operated "The Hut", Ben Callender's former operation in Homewood, and they set to work with the same enthusiasm and friendliness which had made their west shore restaurant/bar so popular.

In the days when Tahoe City Constable Harry Johanson was the sole representative of law and order between Foresthill and the California-Nevada stateline, gambling on Tahoe's north and west shores was a commonplace, with slot machines to be found "out front" in most groceries and bars and restaurants. A phone call tip-off from the Constable, signalling an impending raid, would drive the one-armed bandits behind the counter until the heat was off, and few arrests were made.

This legal inclination toward a policy of live-and-let-live fostered other, more organized forms of gambling. Lake Inn was among the several businesses ready to separate a fool and his money, offering (in addition to the usual mechanized "sucker pluckers") "21", craps and a roulette wheel - all reputed by "victims" to be unfairly adjusted in favor of the house.

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Lake Inn hijincks

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But the lawless character of such days was ebbing away in the postwar tide, bringing a greatly-increased population and consequently better law enforcement. In a 1947 watershed conviction, Fred Ichelson (then owner of the Tahoe Tavern) pleaded guilty to charges of possession of gambling machines, marking the beginning of the end for the many semi-visible gaming operations on the California side of the lake. In a few years, the businesses which owed their success to the income generated by gambling began to close their doors - among them, Lake Inn.

It was not until about 1950 that Ric Giannini, at that time operator of five dairy routes for Golden State, purchased the property. The building had stood empty for several seasons, and was in a state of dilapidation. According to Giannini, he and his wife Bernice devoted considerable time and effort to cleaning and repairs before they were able to secure the blessings of the Board of Health.

Ric appointed his cousin, Lois Pfeifer, manager of the new business, and it was this arrangement which prompted the D.B.A. by which it is still known today. The new operation was a family affair from the start. Mrs. Giannini and the couple's two children, Trent and Jan, kept the dining room running smoothly, and in spite of his time-consuming dairy routes, Ric found time to tend bar occasionally. However, it was Hermann Schaeffer, one of Squaw Valley's first bartenders, who usually did the honors.

The arrangement worked well in all respects. In 1954, Hermann Schaeffer and Lois Pfeifer were married, taking over the Giannini's financial interest at the time. Under their ownership, the business continued to thrive - a pleasant gathering-place for locals and visitors alike.

In the fall of 1972, the partnership of Franz Fassbender and Henry Obermuller, two chefs who had first worked together at Swiss Lakewood Lodge in Homewood, purchased the business, building on the success enjoyed by the former owners. Today, the culinary traditions and atmosphere are in the Old European tradition, and the continental flavor is enhanced no less by the hand-carved decor than by the delicious, authentically prepared menu. A new banquet room caters to parties from 20 to 40 persons.

Though the establishment has lost its "wild and wooly" qualities, it nevertheless offers a delightful dining experience to be savored and enjoyed.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Folklore Forecasting

As each passing day reaffirms winter's inevitable approach, one may catch an occasional glimpse of a wild creature, body plump with the bounty of summer and pelage fluffy and dull against what the coming season may have in store, scurrying here and there in search of its winter food supply.

Do these furry little beasts know something we don't? Who can really say what Old Man Winter will have in his bag of tricks this year? Meteorology has proved itself to be a rather imprecise branch of science, and some have gone so far as to suggest that the term is really only a fanciful name for guessing.

Such detractors claim that several "non-scientific" methods of weather prediction have just as great a validity as the forecasts based on satellite maps and the divine guidance of data processing. Some point to the government's involvement in weather predictions as conclusive proof of inaccuracy.

In any event, the gradual supplanting of folklore predictions by (reputedly) more scientific methods has led to a widespread ignorance of these old ways, which once stood local inhabitants in such good stead. And so as a service to those unfamiliar with old-time weather prediction, the following collection of "tried and true" methods is offered:

One indication of the severity of the coming winter - as observed by several locals - is to measure the width of the black band on a native variety of fuzzy caterpillar - known to some as a "wooly bear." Advocates of this method have in the past four decades noted bands as narrow as 1/32" and as broad as 7/16" (the later being observed on a specimen collected in the fall of 1951, just prior to a record Sierra winter).

The activities of wild animals, say some amateur forecasters, are as significant as variations in physical appearance.

Some ancient authorities cite the relative industry of squirrels, chipmunks and other nut-gathering animals in a given year as an indication of the coming winter's severity.

Unusually large infestations of yellowjackets in the fall are said to be another forewarning of heavy snow years. In the fall of 1951, Tahoe City housewives took to the practice of hanging out their laundry at night to avoid being stung by the thick swarms of these buzzing annoyances.

In the realm of short-range forecasting, some turn to the observation of physical changes in their own bodies, noting "a touch of the rheumatiz" as a sure sign of approaching precipitation. According to this theory, when a trick knee or a cranky shoulder begin to ache, it's time to get out the mucklucks and snow shovel.

Once the white stuff has emptied the skies and lies in frozen drifts across the high country, scientific measurement of the "pack" provides data for official predictions of the relative drought or deluge promised by spring. However, old timers discredit this type of forecast as being nothing more than the observation that water eventually can be counted upon to run downhill.

Indeed, hindsight seems no better than foresight where the prediction of the COMING winter's weather is concerned. For one might study the hundred-year graph of records without producing any more prophetic observation than that the snowfall can certainly vary a great deal from year to year.

Should the diverse and questionable signposts of winter weather provided here fail to supply the reader with a sound basis for prognostication, perhaps the wisdom of the Indians is worth noting. When consulted about the impending winter, the aboriginals' sage advice is unwavering. If a person really wants to know, they say, about how serious a winter is in store, the best indicator available is the size of the white man's woodpile. Judging by the accumulation of cordwood in evidence in many back yards this fall, it's going to be quite a winter.

P.O.'s of the WEST SHORE

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

The traditional picture of the postmaster on his appointed rounds, sack on his back, is one only remotely familiar to residents of the Tahoe Basin, who have never had home delivery and instead collect their mail at their respective community post offices.

For the first 80 years of local postal service the mail was - of necessity - delivered by boat. Roads were poor or non-existent, and marine service was the only practical method of distribution. In those early days, snow removal was conducted with a long-handled instrument known as a shovel; the mail would not have gone through for months on a time during Tahoe's long, white winters.

Hunter Burton of Burton's Island Farm (now Lake Forest) had the first mail contract, making his postal deliveries on his sloop, the EDITH BATTY. His schedule allowed a full week for the round-the-lake trip, owing to the possibility of a dead calm which could halt progress altogether.

In 1868 Ben Holladay and his steam tug EMERALD took over the mail contract, increasing service to three deliveries a week. Half a dozen steam-powered vessels succeeded Holladay in this marine service, meeting the mail coach at the lake outlet (after 1900 it was the narrow gauge train, whose tracks terminated on the Tahoe Tavern pier) and proceeding from that point down the west shore and on around the lake in a counterclockwise direction.

At each stop, the purser would exchange mailbags with the postmaster waiting at pierside and the incoming correspondence would then be taken to the post office for sorting and distribution.

Following her launching in July of 1896, the steamer TAHOE had the contract to provide summer mail service on a daily basis to post offices around the lake. In winter, the smaller (and thus more economical) NEVADA made three trips weekly over a route abbreviated by the seasonal closure of some post offices.

Burton's deliveries had provided mail service to existing habitations, the oldest of which was "Tahoe", opened in June of 1871. (The name of this post office was not officially changed to "Tahoe City" until October of 1948). From there, Burton tacked his way south, delivering mail to Tallac, Rowland's and Glenbrook before heading back across the lake to home port.

Last year, a similar consolidation effort [illegible] closed the TAHOE station as well. Originally housed in the hotel proper, the office had been moved up the hill to the present highway location in September of 1946, following the closure of the Hotel, and had provided service since 1916. Adamant backslider response to a survey conducted by the U.S. Postal Service overruled the closure and the post office remained in operation.

Though west shore mail now travels at a speed impossible in the days when the mail boat took eight hours to circle the lake, the real romance of the early day service has, like so many other treasured memories, faded permanently from the local scene.

In 1896, post offices had been added at Emerald Bay and "Sunbeam", a short-lived station on the wharf of Billy Lapham's Bellevue Hotel. "The Bellevue" was located on Sugar Pine Point on property which later became part of the Hellman-Ehrman estate, and the "Sunbeam" post office provided service from the resort's inception in 1888 until 1895, when a fire destroyed most of the structures and forced closure.

By 1916, postal outlets had been established at "Idlewild" (now known as Tahoe Pines, the post office established in 1912), Homewood (1918), McKinney's (later Chambers' Lodge - 1901), Tahoma Hotel (1916), Pomin's Lodge (a subsidiary established in 1910 on the present site of Walter's Edgewater Condominiums in Tahoma) and Frost's Rubicon Park Lodge in Rubicon Bay (about 1932).

Steamers continued to carry the mail until 1934, when Captain Arthur Brodelli and his gas-powered cruiser, the MARIAN B, won the contract. Marine mail service had a certain - and very popular - romantic charm, but improved roads were gradually making overland travel easier, and when the MARIAN B exploded while on its mail run in May of 1941, the tragedy marked the end of mail service by water.

From that point, there were few changes in local mail service until 1967, when a post office was established at Lake Forest, two miles northwest of Tahoe City. A structure (since demolished) which stood across the road from Bacchi's, housed the post office, operated by postmistress Lucille Heuga. Consisting of 28 boxes (most held by seasonal residents) the office remained in existence until about 1984, when a rerouting of the highway which eliminated the loop now known as Lake Forest Road put the community "off the beaten track."

Another post office which did not survive the march of progress was Meeks Bay. This seasonal outlet opened for business May 9, 1925, and for over 40 years it [illegible] guests of Meeks Bay Resort. However, following the 1972 summer season, the office (with its grand old oaken service window and ornate brass bowes) was put into retirement, its subscribers being directed to service available in Tahoma.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Boats and Trains

THE ROUNDHOUSE

As one of a small handful of early-day Tahoe City businesses which survive into the 1980's, the Tahoe Boat Company boasts a colorful history spanning over half a century. As an essential link in local transportation prior to the development of roads around the lake, this Tahoe City center of marine activity was closely linked with other aspects of local growth.

The history of the structures associated with the Boat Company is older yet. Prior to purchase by Norman Mayfield in about 1930, the buildings known today as the Roundhouse Mall and the Chart House Restaurant, had served the Southern Pacific Railroad as roundhouse and machine shop, and between 1900 and 1926 in the same capacities for the Bliss family's narrow-gauge line.

At the heart of the family's new enterprise was the Tahoe Tavern, an elegant hostelry which would eventually include over 400 rooms. The first phase of construction called for the removal of short line track in Glenbrook and Lake Valley (now South Lake Tahoe) for use in the Truckee River Canyon, where a new narrow gauge line (Lake Tahoe Railway and Transportation Co.) was being built to connect Truckee and Tahoe City. The terminus of the main rail line was on one of Tahoe Tavern's two piers, from which passengers destined for other points on the lake could board the steamer TAHOE, which in summer circled the lake daily. A spur track ran the length of Commons Beach, before reaching its terminus in the roundhouse.

The complex of buildings which constituted the railroad's maintenance yards included, in addition to the roundhouse and machine shop, several small outbuildings (sided over, but still in existence today) which had been barged intact from Glenbrook to serve as storage and employee housing. To these Mayfield added several structures of his own, siding most of the structures with corrugated metal.

In his early years of operation, Mayfield had a contract with Will Bliss for annual maintenance on the famous steamer TAHOE — a job he remembers as being of the "bread and butter" variety. Each fall, the huge vessel could be found on the ways of the Tahoe Boat Company, where the safety of the boilers was ascertained and a thorough job of patching and repainting the hull was performed.

Mayfield saw the need of a safe harbor near the lake's outlet, and set about the arduous task of building one. The solid bedrock bottom which exists along this stretch of shoreline rendered the driving of pilings impossible, but Mayfield overcame the obstacle with a breakwater of 16 foot square "cribs". These structures were built of 6" x 8" timbers, secured by bolts and (once in place) filled with boulders hauled from the Nevada side of the lake on an old cordwood barge acquired from Matt Green, another local builder.

These sections of breakwater, Mayfield remembers, were built on the shore and then loaded aboard the barge and hauled out to be "launched" over the desired location — a tedious yet reliable method. Between 1932 and 1935, the work advanced slowly, crib following crib until a circular curve of pilings extended 300 feet out, 300 feet across and 20 feet back toward the shore.

To compliment his growing harbor, Mayfield offered a marine service station using the same facilities installed by Standard Oil (from whom he also purchased property), as well as complete repair and maintenance facilities and winter storage. He soon acquired the local Chris-Craft dealership, and in the off-season would make an annual pilgrimage to Algonac, Michigan, to view the new models and place his order for the coming year.

Business boomed. The popularity of wooden speedboats, locally enhanced by the activities of the Tahoe Yacht Club, was keeping the ways of the Tahoe Boat Company busy with frequent launchings of new craft. In addition to the Chris-Craft franchise, Mayfield also handled the sales and deliveries of the prized marine products of John Hacker, another Michigan boat builder.

An institution around the Tahoe Boat Company yards for many years was the colorful and well-remembered Fred Main, formerly a mechanic for west shore entrepreneur J.P. "Jake" Obexer. It was the character of Main which perhaps more than any other single factor was responsible for the success of the Boat Company in those years. Main managed the business and was a financial partner as well.

On Main's retirement, the business was sold to the partnership of Walker and Miller. They continued to operate the Boat Company with few changes until the death of Miller, at which time the 6.8 acre parcel was sold to the Moana Corporation, a well-known local developer.

In 1973, Moana revealed plans for development of the property, including razing of most of the original structures (some of which had been barged from Glenbrook by the Bliss interests at the turn of the century) in favor of a 70-unit multi-story condominium complex. This proposal met with vociferous opposition by those who wished to see some of the historic elements of the property preserved.

The Moana Corporation was eventually satisfied to develop the north end of the structure now known as the Boatworks Mall. Another group, managed by John Kearns, took charge of the renovation of the buildings existing on the south side of the property, tying together the former railroad roundhouse and machine shop with a small connecting structure, the resulting complex known as the Roundhouse Mall.

Chiefly responsible for the thorough, yet historically thoughtful, changes in the original buildings is Project Architect Ron Nunn, the same creative talent responsible for the transformation of Bechdolt's Tahoe Inn into Victoria Station Restaurant.

Structural considerations required that the original buildings be jacked up, and then lowered back onto a new, more substantial framework, built to carry the load of future winters. The metal siding was removed, revealing original planking. Inside the buildings, the "presence" of former tenants remains in evidence. The openbeamed ceilings and massive unplaned timbers, smoke-blackened by the bellowing of balloon-stacked locomotives, recall a day when Tahoe City was a bustling destination for bowler-bedecked gentlemen and their long skirted, shirt-waisted ladies.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

CELEBRITIES AT TAHOE

The proximity of Lake Tahoe's many wonders to Hollywood (a mere day's - or night's - train trip), made it a relatively early "discovery" of scouts seeking locations suitable for adventure tales of the great northwest. Tahoe area scenery was featured in early "talkies," and scenes from such popular motion pictures as "Lightnin'," "Rose Marie," "The Call of the Wild," "White Fang" and "The Country Beyond" were filmed in the Tahoe basin. A number of these epics featured the talents of Tahoe City Constable Harry Johanson, who with his dog team doubled for such love interests as Gary Cooper, Paul Kelly and Nelson Eddy.

Anxious to please the visiting film companies, local proprietors and citizens-at-large bent over backward to accommodate the needs and desires of their moveland guests, and were repaid with return visits, not only from camera crews, but also from the stars themselves, eager to enjoy at their leisure what they had but sampled while on location.

For, as the Tahoe Tattler put it, "Luminaries of the celluloid world of Hollywood have not alone discovered the glories of Tahoe . . . they have taken our lake to their respective bosoms . . . both literally and figuratively." And indeed they had, just as prominent citizens of previous generations had embraced it.

The reigning "society" of the 1930s was well shot with Hollywood celebrities, and the stars came to the Lake in droves.

Among early celebrity visitors was Will Rogers, whose motion picture "Lightnin'" had been partially filmed on location at Cascade Lake and in the original Cal-Neva (the building burned to the ground and was rebuilt in 1937). The internationally-popular humorist and philosopher was often a visitor at the Tahoe Tavern, and was held in such esteem that in 1933, then-California Governor James Rolph declared that Rogers, as "Governor of Beverly Hills," should be entitled to a tree in his honor in the famous Governor's Grove on the Tavern grounds. On the occasion of Rogers' untimely death in August of 1935, Tavern manager Walter Roundsevel placed a black ribbon of mourning on the little tree. Other early film stars sampled the local wonders, including the likes of Mae Murray, Mary Pickford, Mae West, Nelson Eddy and Lon Chaney, who purchased property in Tahoma.

Celebrities on holiday have the reputation of seeking anonymity. In spite of the comparatively few heads which might have been turned locally by the recognition of a famous personage half a century ago, most stars of the day were nevertheless careful to employ the familiar dodges, disguises and disappearances in order to maintain a low profile. Of course, there was some justification for the secrecy, as local newshounds were eager to guess at what they could not verify.

For instance, reported the Tahoe Tattler in July of 1937, "right now the Brockway resort harbors a young man whom rumor says is a figure of importance in the cinema. And in describing a party which took place at Cal-Neva the following month, the paper noted, "a lovely blonde young lady attracted considerable attention - being a dead ringer for cinemactress Bette Davis." And later in August, the columnist for a weekly Tattler item, "WE SAW," observed "a roulette croupier wondering where Mary Pickford and friend husband are staying."

Some stars did not consider their notoriety an inconvenience, and in fact participated in the activities offered at the resorts where they were vacationing - or initiated their own. Groucho Marx and family were annual visitors at Brockway during the mid- and late-1930s. The irrepressible Groucho helped entertain fellow-guests in at least one very low-key dramatic production staged on the premises, and in August of 1937 attended a costume party at the resort where he was flattered to find that he was also represented by one of the masquerading guests.

Brother Chico, a Tahoe Tavern guest in 1936, amused fellow-patrons by improvision on the Coralounge piano before "dashing off to fulfill theatrical engagements."

In July of 1936, Jeanette McDonald was a visitor at Brockway for five days. Her role in "Rose Marie" (filmed at several locations on the lake in the fall of 1935) had first introduced her to the wonders of the area, and the following summer she was back, accompanied by her mother, aunt and fellow-celebrity Gene Raymond. "Fishing, golfing, swimming, tennis and aquaplaning," reported the Tattler, "in between signing autographs, took up all their waking hours."

Today, a number of well-known personalities have homes on the north shore or are frequent visitors to the area. These include Hoyt Axton, Robert Goulet, Peter Graves, Bruce Jenner and Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. While most of these personalities prefer relative anonymity, a few participate in the activities of the community.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

NAME GAME

The grandeur of the Tahoe Basin defies description, to be sure. Yet the necessity of place names is inescapable, and the attitude of those whose job it was to name local places is laissez faire, to say the least, as reflected in such names as Tahoe City, Tahoe Park, Tahoe Pines and Tahoe Vista (slightly more inspired were the namers of Homewood, Lake Forest and Tahoma).

Many local sites retain the names of the area's pioneers. This is especially true of the area's drainages and creeks, which are (north to south) Griff (for Griffin of Lousy Point), Watson (for Tahoe City Constable Robert Montgomery Watson), Dollar (for Robert Stanley Dollar), Burton (for Homer D. Burton) and Bliss (for the Bliss family). From the Truckee River outlet south, the creeks are Ward, Blackwood, Madden, McKinney (for John McKinney, of Hunter's Homes), General (for General Phipps) and Meeks (for Stephen Hall Meek).

The flora and fauna of the area have inspired names such as Fir Crags and Bear Creek. In Desolation Valley, to the west of Tahoe's west shore, can be found lakes named Bear, Buck, Duck, Eagle, Grouse and Loon. Cedar Flat (three miles northeast of Tahoe City) and Cedar Point (a development about one and a half miles south of Tahoe City) take their names from the venerable stands of cedar found at the two locations.

The principal features of the landscape from Carnelian Bay south are divided chiefly between the surnames Watson and Dollar. To each belongs a prominence of land (Mount Watson and Dollar Hill). In addition, we have Watson Creek and Dollar Creek, Watson Lake and Dollar Reservoir.

Of course, by standards of local place-names, Dollar is a fairly recent tag, the point of land having been previously known as Griff, Old Lousy, Wychwood and Observatory (the basis for each appellation being a story in itself).

Geological attributes helped to name several locations on the north shore. Turn-of-the-Century visitors to North Lake Tahoe found pleasant diversion on the beach at Carnelian Bay, where the gem-strewn shoreline proved as good as its name, producing plentiful pea-sized samples for the diligent seeker.

The Marietta Day Boundary Survey of 1852 discovered "agate and crystals on the water's edge," and the bay hence came to be known as Agate. Though the bay on which Incline Village lies is logically assumed to have been named for its clarity, in fact the extensive logging operations of Douglas County (Nevada) lumberman George Ives Crystal on the northwest shore of the bay in the late 1860s is actually the source of the name.

Things of the earth supply the source of many names. Only Tahoma boasts anything like what might be considered "city" addresses with its numbered streets. In spite of periodic massive influxes of metropolitan influences, Tahoe retains a rural atmosphere reflected forever in its place-names.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

JUMP HILLS

It is amazing to think that sixty years ago winter was considered a time for enforced hibernation, snow being an insurmountable menace which brought a halt to all but the most essential activities until spring. But as methods of snow removal slowly improved and connective transportation became a reality, there was time for more pleasurable pursuits.

By the mid-1920s, civilization had advanced to the point that snow was beginning to be regarded by some as a positive aspect of winter, with potential recreational uses, no less. In 1925, a group of enthusiastic local citizens formed the Lake Tahoe Ski Club, initiating snow sports activities in the basin. In its earliest days, the club was chiefly recreational, but in the late 1920s, the purchase of the Tahoe Tavern by Southern Pacific Railroad prompted a shift in emphasis.

The new ownership had the narrow-gauge track connecting Truckee and Tahoe City changed to standard gauge, and announced their intention to open the hostelry for a winter season. "Snowball Specials" transported sizable weekend crowds to the Tavern, where the chief entertainment centered around the white fluff which had so plagued the community in the past.

Reigning national skijumping champion Lars Haugen was commissioned to design and oversee the construction of a world-class "trajectory" at one end of the natural, north-facing "bowl" discovered about a mile west of the Tavern property — the site chosen for the hostelry's winter sports area (now part of Granlibakken).

The construction was completed in December of 1927 and that winter the Tavern management hired a group of east coast ski jumpers to perform in exhibition jumping competition on the hill. The skill and daring of these jumpers — mostly Scandinavian-born athletes who had perfected their art in their native lands — caught the imagination of local spectators, and soon competition began to include aspiring local talent.

A similar recruiting effort was undertaken by Wendell Robie of Auburn, who in 1928 had been instrumental in the founding of the Auburn Ski Club. The promise of employment with Robie's Auburn Lumber Company lured a number of world-class jumpers from Chicago, swelling the ranks of the fledgling ski club with such prominent names as Roy Mikkelson, Halvor Halsted and Rolf Wigaard.

The lessened demand for building materials in winter allowed the talent that Robie had assembled an opportunity to indulge in their favored recreation, and the jumping event soon became a popular part of local competition.

In 1931, the Olympic tryouts in Nordic ski events for the 1932 Games were held on the Tavern trajectory (thenceforward known as Olympic Hill). A smaller jump, constructed on the hillside above the Tahoe City golf course, served as a practice

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Page 6 NORTH TAHOE WEEK January 3-9, 1985

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

"Bringing in the Cubes"
ICE HARVESTING

During the holiday just past, many readers doubtless took occasion to elaborate by the time-honored year-end tradition of "hoisting a few", the beverage kept cold by means of cubes of ice. The ease with which this substance is produced in the modern kitchen is in marked contrast to the inconvenience of its procurement in the days before icemakers — or electric refrigeration.

The harvesting of ice by a number of companies along the Truckee River prior to the turn of the last century is well documented. Indeed, the development of this Sierra industry brought about the first truly affordable ice for San Francisco tables and meat lockers. (In 1850 the commodity was going for as much as 30¢ per pound, having made the trip to the Bay City by boat from distant Boston Lake.) The procurement of ice for Tahoe's own cocktails and cold storage is less well known.

Certainly there was no shortage of ice for local winter use, especially since the year-round population in the days before homemade icecubes consisted mostly of caretakers and a few shopkeepers. Yet with electric refrigeration still a distant development, the gathering and storage of a year-round supply fell to these permanent residents.

The annual supply of ice for a number of large estates was harvested from private ponds and diversions of tributaries which passed through estate property. George Schlumpf, born in Truckee in 1911 and still a resident of Tahoe Pines, remembers harvests made on General Creek (now part of Sugar Pine Point State Park) for the use of the Ehrman estate. This harvest was stored in an icehouse which stood near the pond.

The ice-cutting crew consisted of Ernie Pomin, John Pingaree, Otto Darlin, Henry Soll, Eddie Lathe and Schlumpf, and a bottle was passed among the workers at intervals as protection against frostbite and chills. Schlumpf recalls that ice was also cut on the Fleishhacker estate on a pond near Eagle Rock and stored at Homewood for use at the hotel. A camping and picnic grounds near Eagle Rock also made use of this source of ice.

Ice for the Tahoe Inn (now Victoria Station) and other Tahoe City consumers was cut at the reservoir which also served as the water supply for the Tahoe Tavern. Situated above the town proper, the reservoir drained into what old-time residents know as "Sucker Creek", which crosses Highway 28 just west of Pizza Hut. Greatly simplifying the task of harvesting ice from this source was the grading of the access road, which allowed blocks to be slid across the frozen surface directly onto trucks for transport to town.

Of course this home-made variety of ice was likely to contain all manner of particulates. Don Huff, former owner of Homewood Resort, tells the amusing story of his and his wife's first summer of operation, following their purchase of the property from Mrs. Annie Jost in 1938. "Our first year," Huff remembers, "we used up the

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ice that Mr. Pomin had put away in our ice house the winter before. I'll never forget trying to use that ice that he had sawed out of the pond. You were lucky to get a glass of ice water that didn't have a pine needle in it."

A reliable means of insulating a year's supply of the frozen commodity was essential, and local ice houses were typically double-walled affairs with the interior space of walls and roof filled with a foot-wide sawdust barrier against the heat of summer. Sawdust was a commodity in abundant supply in the wake of the lumber boom. Yet though the fluffed leavings of the buzzsaw have excellent insulative qualities, they represented a serious fire hazard, as witnessed by the 1938 Independence Day blaze which destroyed an icehouse near the Lake Forest wood wharf.

Today a stroll to the refrigerator is all that is required of one in search of ice, — a low risk proposition to be sure, yet not nearly so exciting as in the days when the procurement meant a harvest.

Page 10 NORTH TAHOE WEEK January 24-30, 1985

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

SNOWFALL
Feast or Famine

From the midwest to the Atlantic seaboard, record precipitation continues to make life interesting for unaccustomed municipal transportation departments, while here in the Tahoe basin, sunny, warm day follows sunny, warm day under cobalt skies. Visitors revel in the "spring" conditions as powder hounds eye the nightly news jet stream diagrams showing storms swirling around the high pressure systems, veering north or south. Trust the weather to have its own way.

Of course, human nature dictates that the strongest recollections are of feast or famine, and prior to the days of Cal-Trans, the "banquet" within memory of many now living was the winter of 1951-52. The previous winter of comparable inclemency can be recalled by only a hardy few. That meteorological milepost was the siege of 1937-38, when a quarter-ton of fresh foodstuffs had to be airdropped on the Tahoe City Golf Course for distribution to 40 basin households isolated by monumental drifts — one being that of the reclusive Sand Harbor millionaire George Whittell.

It was 47 years ago this week that mail and provisions were being delivered to caretakers and other basin residents by the only available means — an outboard motorboat. Tahoe City Constable Harry Johanson, assisted by Frank Slater, undertook the distribution of these foodstuffs. It was a tongue-in-cheek remark of Johanson's, meant to be off the record, which raised initial concern for the imminent starvation of those trapped by the storm.

A February 17 article in the San Francisco *Examiner* datelined Tahoe City quoted Johanson as saying that he was "holding in reserve 1,000 pounds of fresh horsemeat, should the situation get serious and the need for fresh meat become acute." In the days before myriad appeals for "Aid to Everything Under the Sun" destroyed the public enthusiasm for giving, this campaign resulted in the collection and delivery of 500 pounds of fresh meat, dairy products and vegetables to the high Sierra residents imperilled by the weather.

Many local structures failed under the weight of the snow, notably the "Roundhouse" on the Tahoe Tavern winter sports grounds, and Bill Johnson's Hunter's Lodge, which stood near the present site of Cedar Crest (at the north end of Homewood).

In late December, 1937, the narrow dirt wagon road which had provided access to Glen Alpine Springs, was swept down the canyon by a roaring wall of water, carrying with it homes and debris. By mid-June of 1938, a foot of water was pumped into Echo Lake in order to raise the lake level and speed the melting of ice on the lake's surface.

Communication with the outside world was totally cut off for two days of the 21-day series of storms, and locals rode out the balance with a single wire to convey all incoming and outgoing messages from the stranded high country. Privation was generally the rule for residents, and special problems generated by the weather were many, some lingering on long after the snow had receded the following spring.

Unusually heavy damage forced resurfacing of several sections of basin roadway (— once crews could clear the drifts and the blacktop reappeared) including the stretch between Tahoe City and Dollar Hill. Still closed as of mid-July were Sonora and Ebbetts Passes — these important arteries of the day did not open to through traffic until the first week of August that year.

The summer of 1938 brought with it other problems as well. The Tahoe-Sierra Association (a sort of regional chamber of commerce composed chiefly of resort owners on the California side of the basin) lobbied to have the lake level's maximum legal limit lowered.

In striving to offer their guests true lakeside accommodation, many proprietors built structures below the allowable high water line. This worked well enough in the low after years of the late 1920s and early 1930s. But the five feet by which the lake level increased between December, 1937 and July, 1938 proved the error of that practice. The first July issue of the *Tahoe Tattler* quoted the group's urgent requests for a one-foot reduction in the legal limit — established, ironically, only the season before.

All in all, it was quite a winter! And Mother Nature will be changing forecasts when she sees fit. In the midst of beautiful weather which has brought Tahoe record holiday ski crowds, there are still those who yearn for powder, and lots of it.

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EHRMAN MANSION

NORTH TAHOE WEEK February 14-20, 1985

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Pine Lodge — the name conjures up accommodations not necessarily auspicious, but perhaps more along the lines of a rustic retreat. However, in local use this name was bestowed on a grand residence — the summer home of the Hellman-Ehrman family. In the case of Pine Lodge, foresight, and the wealth to take best advantage of it, combined to produce an estate which set the standard for West Shore elegance. And while the original owners are no longer summer residents, they left behind a legacy to be enjoyed by millions.

Those who believe they recognize a certain kinship of architectural spirits between the Tahoe Tavern and the Ehrman mansion are witnessing two instances of the same genius. By 1901, when the Tahoe Tavern opened for business, Isaias Hellman, a wealthy San Francisco capitalist, had acquired title to over 1,000 acres of land surrounding the mouth of General Creek (named for the former resident, General William Phipps). Hellman admired the magnificent hostelry, and retained its architect, William Danforth Bliss, to design his new residence.

Before the construction could begin, huge quantities of topsoil were hauled in by wagon to stabilize the sandy hillside chosen as the site for the main house. Granite brought in from nearby Meeks Bay formed the foundations for the residence, and native timbers became the massive roof supports for its lakeside entry. All other construction materials which could not be gathered in the immediate vicinity had to be delivered by steamer, as nothing more than a cowpath existed between Sugar Pine Point and Tahoe City at that time.

The development of the estate was prior to the days of local water companies, and so the estate had to be self-sufficient in this regard. A ditch and flume system which ran from General Creek supplied water to the storage tower located near the main house, and from there the water was dispersed to the individual buildings.

Another necessity, in view of the estate's isolation, was that it be capable of generating some of its own food, and to that end, the compound had its own dairy and vegetable garden.

The main building was only one of the many structures which dotted the grounds. During the family's annual two-month stay, they were attended by a virtual army of over 30 servants, including caretakers, chauffeurs, maids, cooks, laundry workers, groundskeepers, gardeners, tailors and boatmen. Housing for these employees alone accounted for at least half a dozen buildings on the property.

The family's two boathouses attest to their enthusiasm for marine activities. Among their mahogany-planked

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water toys were Ester's two Belle Isle speedboats, the 26 foot bronze-trimmed CHEROKEE, and the MISS LIBERTY, a 1929 Bearcat, powered by a 1,000 cubic inch Invader engine. Charles Ehrman's plaything the JACQUELINE, was raced during the summer season of 1937, taking first place in the 200+ horsepower event in the Tavern Regatta that season.

All this came to an end in 1965, however, when the State of California purchased the 1,989 acre property for use as a State Park. During the summer months, tours of the Mansion and grounds are conducted several times daily. Though the mansion is presently closed for the winter season, visitors can get a feel for the enormity and beauty of the family's estate by taking one of the four cross-country ski trails laid out on the grounds. Whatever the season of your visit, a glimpse into the magnificence of the past is well worth the trip.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Getting It and Keeping It Cold

Shopping for provisions at Tahoe today is quite a different matter than it was before the days of convenience supermarkets, now liberally scattered around the perimeter of the basin. Travel around the lake two generations ago was not accomplished with the speed which characterizes today's auto traffic, and trips "to town" were consequently reserved for one day a week, resembling more of an expedition.

The variety (or even existence) of some items was not a constant, by any means, at any store. Year 'round basin residents generally had the good sense to keep the larder — especially as winter approached — stocked against all want and care — and then, let it snow! Inconveniences in the form of shortage and outage were the rule, and expected.

In summer, a typical family entourage (Tahoe veterans) carried its own healthy supply of canned goods. As it is a rule of California geography that the price of an item correlates directly with its elevation at point of sale, vacationers in the know arrived well-equipped with non-perishable items as well.

High-country storekeepers, whose revenues were in large part gobbled up by the phenomenal cost of doing business on a seasonal basis, beyond the reach of four-lane blacktop, nevertheless acquired a reputation as genial highwaymen. It was pay or do without.

Produce available at 6,200 feet elevation bore little resemblance to that which took prizes at the State Fair, less than 150 miles to the west. But lack of quality did not diminish its value on the High Sierra market. Every morsel was as dear as gold, as suggested by the sign (and accompanying hairy sample) which hung for many years above the produce section of the Meeks Bay Market. DON'T PINCH THE FRUIT — PINCH THE COCONUT.

Meat was not such a rare commodity, some varieties being locally supplied. In fact, in Tahoe City, venison was sold commercially at Jack and Dinty's Market as late as 1946. Sacramento meat jobbers also supplied local outlets, with the prices reflecting the difficulty of the delivery.

Several dairies operated locally; early seasonal inhabitants of the West Shore can recall the milk route of Arnold Luneman, who served the scattered residences with the dairy products of Crescent Creamery. Where the highway was some distance from (and elevation above) the water, lakefront inhabitants would leave their empty containers in a box at roadside, to be replenished by Mr. Luneman. Where geographical conditions were ideal, some residents took advantage of nature and retrieved their completed orders by means of a cable and pulley system, such as one devised by Dr. Fairbanks in the South Tract of the Meeks Bay Vista subdivision.

But once the groceries were in hand, a means of keeping them cool — in the absence of electricity — had to be devised. Some seasonal residents wealthy enough to have winter caretakers enjoyed the warm season luxury of ice cut from ponds and stored in sheds with sawdust-filled walls. However, many used the lake (or colder yet, the chill water of a nearby tributary) to submerge their perishable foodstuffs. Of course, in the days before airtight plastic containers, the variety of foods which could be "refrigerated" by this method without consequence was limited. Therefore, many campers resorted to the use of a "cooler" — a rectangular frame contraption covered with screen or netting and fitted with several shelves — enough to hold a camp's perishable provisions. The unit was usually suspended by rope from a convenient tree and when not in use could be hoisted up out of the reach of scavenging animals.

The whole affair was kept cool by the use of a burlap sack, draped over the top, which was periodically doused with water. It seems the evaporative properties of the burlap were sufficient to prevent spoilage of the cooler's contents nearly as well as modern methods.

So when you grumble that the icemaker isn't working or the grocery store is out of the brand of blintzes you prefer, remember the pioneer of yesteryear, who set it in the snow to keep it cold, and probably never heard of a blintz.

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Winter Carnivals
Not so New

In the upper reaches of the Sierras, the difficulty of attracting sufficient winter business to justify operation (or, in more recent times, the presence of non-essential services) has been overcome by local business people in a variety of ways. The most recent of these promotional efforts, Snowfest, is commencing its 4th Annual celebration on Friday, March 1.

The Sierra region suffered for many years from lack of winter access. In spite of the fact that the Central Pacific railroad first arrived in Truckee in 1868, it was not until 1894 that the nimble intellect of Charles F. McGlashan, then editor of the town's newspaper and guiding spirit in the early development of Truckee, hit upon a plan by which the snow could be put to the town's advantage rather than serve as a deterrent to commerce.

McGlashan had met with difficulty in transporting a "cultured" monster icicle of his making to the San Francisco midwinter fair, concluding that it would henceforth be more practical to take advantage of Truckee's trackside location and bring the spectators to the spectacle.

Plans for a winter carnival soon took shape. McGlashan urged his fellow businessmen to refrain from "hold up" prices, as the chief aim was fun and not profit. And fun was indeed the order of the day. From McGlashan's sixty-foot icicle grew a collection of events and attractions which included a toboggan slide, ski jumping contests and dogsled races all against a backdrop of icy splendor known as "Ice Palace."

This huge frame structure, covered with chickenwire and sprayed with water to form walls and roof of ice, originally occupied a prominent place in the very middle of the downtown, and was the dazzling scene of ice skating on a 200 by 700 foot rink. If the skaters should become chilly, they could warm themselves at the several open fireplaces in the building. There was even night skating around a rink lit by sparkling incandescent bulbs.

By the mid 10 teens, the name of the annual winter festivities was changed to Fiesta of the Snows, and by that time had already been the subject of national news coverage. Though weather occasionally entered the picture and ruined the best-laid plans, in general these promotional activities were quite favorable in their effect on Truckee's winter commerce.

The Sierra Dog Derby, an event of national prominence in sledding circles, was another promotional venture which helped establish the Truckee area as a winter sports destination. Participants included such notable drivers as John Johnson, two-time Alaskan Sweepstakes champ and 1915 winner of the Truckee event. Another popular driver in the early years of the races was "Scotty" Allen, who gained yet more fame in later years with his own brand of dogfood.

Allen himself proved a local attraction, camping with his malamute team on the grounds of the Tahoe Tavern during the winters when that hostelry, located half a mile south of the lake outlet in Tahoe City, was open for winter business.

The Southern Pacific Railroad, which at that time owned the Tavern, capitalized on the successes in Truckee and initiated "Snowball Special" — rail service to the high country for such events as the National Ski Jumping Championships, as well as for similar exhibitions on many winter weekends.

Guests were also offered sleigh riding and tobogganing, and ice skating could be attempted on the rink which was formed by flooding the floor of the Tavern's garage — the space not needed for automobiles as the highway was blocked by snow.

So you see that Snowfest, with all its variety and enthusiasm, takes its place in a long line of promotions which provide something for all comers.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Major Storms

Late Winter Snow Always Possible

Sunny, warm weather in the Sierras, when it occurs in the latter half of winter, has a tendency to produce (in the mind of one not familiar with the area's meteorological history) a misplaced sense of euphoria over the near approach of spring. However, predicting winter's departure is no more possible than correctly forecasting the arrival of its first flakes, and in the high country some memorable "winter" days are, by the calendar, well into the next season.

The year 1958 followed such a pattern, with an Easter Week blizzard noted as the heaviest April storm on record at that time. A total accumulation of eight feet of new snow at the 6000 foot level caused slides which for three days closed the River Road linking Tahoe City and Truckee, and highways 40 (now Interstate 80) and 50 were both closed for several days.

Donner Summit received 104 inches of new snow in the first four days of the storm, bringing the pack to more than 20 feet. Power and phone outages as a result of the siege of weather were minimal, reported the April 11 *Tahoe Tattler*, thanks to the diligence of maintenance crews. "Mountain folk were reminded of the winter of '52," the *Tattler* reported, "as they waxed up their clam guns and prepared to dig out."

Local ski areas were all closed for a few days while able-bodied personnel shovelled. Some equipment sustained heavy damage as a result of the storm; Squaw Valley's then-famous Sky Chair was put out of commission for the balance of the ski season.

Memorial Day weekend of 1971 was another white one on the West Shore. After a heavier-than-normal snow year, a true feeling of spring had begun to surface in the days and weeks preceding the holiday, and groups both large and small (including a Sierra Club party of 40) had begun gathering at the northern terminus of the Tahoe-Yosemite Trail (west of Meeks Bay) in preparation for departure on a camping trip to the high country of Desolation Valley.

Sunny weather prevailed as the weekend began, with a light breeze pushing fluffy clouds across the sky and nothing more menacing promised for the long weekend. However, before the holiday was over, Mother Nature had pulled one of her typical surprises: in the dark of night, a freak storm dropped 16 inches of snow at lake level, with up to two feet at higher elevations - sending the hikers scurrying back down the mountain like so many soggy bugs.

The winter of 1981-82 was a severe one, and by March the fervent hope in most local hearts was for an early spring. However, the evening of March 27, a light snow began to fall, and by early the next morning it was evident that a spring storm of some magnitude had settled in.

Almost continuous snow for the next four days stacked up drifts of several feet, and on March 31 came the news that a tremendous avalanche at Alpine Meadows had destroyed part of the lodge and killed several persons -the fatalities totalling seven by the time rescuers finished their search. By April 4, 1982, many west shore residents were still snowed in, though county and private plows were working around the clock to clear roads which for the preceding week had received a daily foot or so of new white stuff.

Measurable snow in the Tahoe Basin has been recorded in every month of the year, though of course summer storms at lake level are short-lived and represent inconvenience rather than danger. But should a few days of March sunshine lead you to thoughts of spring, remember the virtue of patience and have another ski. It's not over yet.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

In the days when the local population was only a fraction of what it is today, there was a widely held theory that the residents enjoyed unusual longevity, blessed by the region's rarefied air and pristine waters. Thus it was held that when a "laker" passed on to his final rewards before attaining the age of 90, those who remained were not obliged to turn out for the funeral.

Whether this philosophy actually caused poor attendance at local services is unknown, but there is a certain validity to the original statement, local waters DO have demonstrable powers of preservation — these discovered when the area's original burial grounds were abandoned in favor of the present location.

The difficulty of accurately dating the relocation of the cemetery is described by Ethel Joslin Vernon (writing under the pseudonym of Shark Twayne) in the August 16, 1949 issue of *Tahoe Topics*. "The year date of the moving operations," she wrote, "is disputed among the few witnesses still living, but according to one of them it was in the summer of 1911." As of this writing there are no living witnesses to the exhumings, so we must be content to set the date of the project at some time soon after 1908.

That year, C.T. Bliss, whose family had recently moved their business interests from Glenbrook to Tahoe City, chose as the site of his new residence the very creekside location (now Tahoe City's Lighthouse Center) which had served as the community's burial ground, necessitating its relocation. For the purpose, Bliss donated to the community a gently sloping hillside parcel overlooking the town and lake beyond, and adjoining the golf course.

Overseeing the work of exhuming, transporting and reinterring the remains of those buried in the old graveyard was Robert Montgomery Watson, the old pioneer who had had a hand in laying many of its inhabitants to rest and was the unquestioned authority on locations of the graves. Assisted by several other local citizens, including his son, Robert Watson, Jr., and Ernie Pomin, Watson located and moved 15 coffins to the plot above the golf course.

A larger group had to be enlisted to aid in the removal and loading of several coffins, for the exhumation yielded a curious surprise: the underground meanderings of Bliss Creek, on whose banks the old graveyard had been located, had caused a petrification of the corpses which lay in its path, transforming them to metallic likenesses of their former, vital selves.

The person of Mrs. Campbell, in life the ample wife of J. Campbell, keeper of Campbell's Custom House on the Commons wharf, had in repose achieved such a weight that eight men were required to load her coffin onto the wagon.

Robert Watson Jr., suggested the new site be given the name "Trail's End" in honor of his father, whose reputation as a trailblazer and guide was local legend. And so it was named, with the sentiment immortalized in a poem of the same name, written by Ethel Joslin Vernon.

Following this relocation, the local dear departed were allowed to rest in peace for over four decades — to the point of neglect. However, in 1953, Constable Harry Johanson, dismayed over the uncared for plots, began an effort to improve the condition of the cemetery.

TAHOE HERITAGE

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By studying existing records, the Constable was able to locate 43 graves, and for each one he fashioned a redwood marker, banding the tops with copper to prevent their splitting out.

Johanson also induced local business people to contribute to the cemetery's upgrading. The Tahoe City Women's Club took up the case, raising several hundred dollars to add to what Johanson collected. The skillful masonry work of Marshall Ruhkala — rock walls and a graceful rock entry arch — completed the project in 1959.

In the late 1960s, Carl Bechdolt donated to the district a 1/3 acre parcel adjoining the south side of the cemetery, greatly increasing its future capacity.

When Constable Johanson retired and moved to Reno, maintenance of the cemetery was taken over by Harold Farr, who remained in charge until his own passing, earlier this year.

Today, the cemetery is the final resting place of all the persons mentioned in this article.

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CEMETARIES

SCAN, READ & PLACE
Shark Twayne

Then - write
correcting text

NORTH TAHOE WEEK April 4-10, 1985 Page 9

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Old Head Shops

In the ongoing quest for truth and beauty, residents and visitors alike have had over the years, a number of shoppes and salons on which they have relied for that special edge not provided by nature.

First-hand evidence of the availability of such essential services locally takes the form of an advertisement which appeared in the Tahoe Tattler during the summer of 1935. Whether the Meeks Bay Beauty Shoppe was the first such professional operation on the west shore is not absolutely certain, but Rosalee Heller, Beauty Culture Graduate, was the proprietress of the establishment that season. The operation was located in one of two small cabins adjacent to the lodge, an identical cabin housing a barber shop. A similar service was provided in neighboring Homewood the following year, operated by Mrs. J. Christie, licensed beautician.

In 1937, both of these ladies had given up their seasonal style-and-set operations, though both former businesses continued under new management. At the Meeks Bay Beauty Shoppe, Marion Kiefer was the new owner-operator, while the Homewood mecca for curl-seekers early that summer featured Rose M. Marney of Pasadena, who used "only quality materials." Later that same summer, Ms. Marney had abandoned the location, and the DeBeers Beauty Parlor, "for your personal needs," appeared in its place.

At the north end of the lake, another such operation also had its beginnings in 1937. A phone call to Brockway 95 could arrange an appointment with Mrs. Bertha McCarthy at the Beauty Box in Brockway Vista (King's Beach), who, in addition to haircuts and manicures, featured Marcel, finger and permanent waves.

In keeping with its efforts to be a destination resort, the Tahoe Tavern (one mile south of Tahoe City) had for many years provided the services of a beautician, and in 1939, Cecil Davis, formerly associated with the Tavern, announced the opening of a new beauty shop in the recently-completed King's Building in Tahoe City.

The postwar population boom at Tahoe led to the establishment of several new beauty shops, as well as the revitalization of several already established. Finger's Beauty Shop in Lake Forest offered hair-styling, feather cuts, bleaching, permanent waving and manicuring by Margaret Finger, with 12 years experience.

The King's Beach Beauty Salon opened about the same time, and a phone call to Brockway 118 (a number shared with the Kings Beach Sport Shop) could set up an appointment with one of their expert operators and (or?) hairstylists.

In the off-season, a desperate client could resort to a trip to Bijou, at the south end of the lake, to partake of the services offered by Olive's Beauty Salon — "Open year Around."

Today, hair dressing salons on Tahoe's North and West shores number almost two dozen, with another 10 in and around Truckee.

Our resident historian, Carol Van Etten, chose beauty salons of yesteryear for her "Tahoe Heritage" column this week. Upon being asked why she chose such an obscure topic, she reported only that upon turning the pages of old newspapers there seemed to be a lot of beauty salon ads.

Just to add to this topic, we note that Bob Montano, of Village Hair Styles in Kings Beach, has in his history the honor of having been "Mr. Colorado."

Clearinghouse

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NORTH TAHOE WEEK through April 24, 1985 Page 7

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

The Lake Tahoe basin is an ever-changing scene. What was 150 years ago the ungenerous domain of Washoe Indians has in the intervening years evolved — through an unlikely progression of uses, into a high country playground for the affluent.

A local census of one hundred years ago would have revealed the strong influence of the timber industry in the basin at that time. Of the white residents who arrived in the area prior to 1890, an estimated nine out of ten were employed in some phase of the wood harvest, whether as loggers, mill hands, steamboat crewmen or wood splitters. The intense demand for the product soon all but denuded the surrounding hillsides, to the extent that nearly a century would be required to restore the basin to its former silvan beauty.

The basis of the wood industry had initially been in supplying ties for the Transcontinental railroad, and soon operations provided the timbers needed to shore up the network of tunnels and shafts burgeoning below the streets of Virginia City, Nevada, where the rich mines were booming.

The dwindling stands of basin timber were spared further eradication by the decline of activity in the Nevada mines. By about 1890, the demise of the Comstock Lode was in evidence, and basin business interests were already looking to diversify. By the century's turn, local commerce had also turned, focusing its attention on tourism.

The year 1900 saw the construction of a narrowgauge railroad connecting Truckee and Tahoe City. The completion of this vital link was critical to the successful operation of several grand resorts on the lakeshore. From the terminus of the railroad line, on a special one-eighth mile trestle pier at the Tahoe Tavern (one mile south of Tahoe City), passengers could board a steamer which in summer circled the lake daily, connecting with equally opulent hostelries at Tallac, Glenbrook, and Brockway.

Many wealthy vacationers were impressed with their initial exposure to Lake Tahoe, and word of the area's beauty soon spread. Subsequent development followed a natural course: the enamored elite purchased property of its own and returned to build palatial seasonal residences up and down the lakeshore.

With the increasing use of the automobile, America's middle class took to the open road, seeking the simple pleasures to be found in communing with nature. And the prosperity of the late 1920s brought success to the "family" resorts such as Camp Richardson, Meeks Bay, Chambers' Lodge (now Chambers' Landing), Homewood Resort (gone but for a few cream-colored buildings on the lakeshore across from the Homewood Ski Area) and Sandy Beach Resort (the lodge now housing Col Clair's in Tahoe Vista).

Camping and trailering flourished, with small private campgrounds to be found in abundance. Auto courts were another popular alternative, providing those who found the campfire and bedroll a bit too primitive with the amenities of electricity and indoor plumbing.

In the years immediately following the Second World War, the region experienced tremendous growth. Having for years been deprived of scenic sierra vistas by wartime conditions, vacationists flocked eagerly to the high country, and an inevitable number extended their vacations indefinitely, relo-

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OUR TAHOE HERITAGE

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The 1960 Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley were the basis of another growth spurt, marking the beginning of a steady increase in year-round population. Another trend in basin demography has been the result of the federal and state acquisition of private land — especially former private estates and resorts (Emerald Bay, Meeks Bay, Sugar Pine Point). Increasing government ownership of basin lands (now comprising over 85% of Tahoe geography) will inevitably result in private ownership of the balance by an affluent few who are able to carry the tax burden generated by the existence of so much public domain.

Today, the upper middle class dominates the visiting population, since a family's typical weekend expenses may represent the same capital outlay which a generation ago would have financed several week's vacation. The reader may count himself among the fortunate if he is able to enjoy Tahoe's scenic wonders under any circumstances.

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

As the snow rapidly recedes, revealing the green fairways of local golf courses, scratch golfers and duffers alike joyously return to the links in celebration of another spring.

Of the eleven courses now operating in the Tahoe Basin and Truckee, three can be said to be truly historic. The oldest of these is the Tahoe City Golf Course, originally part of the Tahoe Tavern, a retreat of the elite since its opening in 1901.

Golf was coming into its own in the early years of this century, and was a favorite pastime of the wealthy. Thus, a portion of the Tavern's extensive holdings was set aside for a golf course. In 1917, May "Queenie" Dunn, (of the famous golfing Dunn family of Scotland), who had the previous year designed the Reno Golf Club course near Moana Springs, was invited to oversee the laying out of a Tavern course.

Initially planned as a 6-hole course, the Tavern links became nine holes and 2700 yards by 1926, a status which the development of surrounding property obliged it to maintain permanently.

Subsequent sales of the Tahoe Tavern resulted in the division of its outlying parcels among several partners, and in 1951 Gordon Hyde sold the course to Carl Bechdolt, Sr. and his wife, Elsie. Today their daughter Sharon Ragon operates the course, which continues under Bechdolt family ownership.

The popularity of the Tavern links was soon matched by that of a second golf course on the north shore: Brockway Tahoe Vista Golf and Country Club. This course opened in 1924, and was offered as an amenity of both the Brockway Hot Springs Resort and the Brockway real estate development known as Woodvista.

The golf course (now known as Woodvista) came into being under the guidance of Robert P. Sherman, partner with Harry O. Comstock in the Resort and better known as the developer of Sherman Oaks, California. The nine-hole course was originally planned as an 18-holer, and at one time boasted 13 holes, but those across highway 28 had to be abandoned when increased traffic made access risky, if not impossible.

Sherman's poor health forced him to dissolve the partnership after only a few years, and Harry Comstock assumed control of the enterprise's various aspects. Brockway, like the Tahoe Tavern, was a popular watering hole of the rich and famous, including numerous stars of the silver screen. Bing Crosby was among the regular guests at the Hot Springs, and some point to an annual Brockway golf-centered gathering of the 1930s promoted by Crosby as the true beginning of the Pebble Beach Golf Classic which today bears his name.

Following Comstock's death in 1954, the family continued to retain ownership of the Brockway course for over two decades, selling in 1978 to Modland Corporation. Diablo Investment corporation purchased the property from Modland in 1984, and at present an upgrading is in progress.

Glenbrook is the site of another basin golf course which has the distinction of being well over 50 years old. With the decline of the local lumber industry in the closing years of the nineteenth century, the once-bustling community had become a virtual ghost town, but the opening of the Glenbrook Inn and Ranch in the mid-19-teens reestablished the local economy on a new basis. Some years later, a 9-hole,

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2550 yard golf course was added to the resort's varied offerings, and it continues in operation today.

The development of Tahoe Paradise Golf Course dates back over 35 years to a partnership headed by Bruce Beeman, a Woodland, California tomato farmer. Beeman, bought out his partners early on, and continued to operate the challenging 18-hole course until his death several years ago. Held in a family trust since that time, this recreational property is currently for sale. If you're tired of green fees and the difficulty of etting a convenient tee-off time, you might consider checking on the price.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

With warmer days returning, the lake's many buoys, which bobbed empty all winter, are once again in service, mooring a wide variety of boats. In the realm of watercraft, fiber glass is the rule today. Less commonplace are the wooden hulls of yesteryear, reminders of an era when natural materials and fine craftsmanship combined to produce results both beautiful and functional.

One hundred years ago, boating on Lake Tahoe was not generally considered a leisure-time activity, and all but a very few vessels which found their way to the high Sierras were work boats - primarily steamers used to tow log booms across the lake to the Glenbrook mills. Prior to 1900, roads connecting Lake Tahoe with "civilization" were the deep-rutted, mud-or-dust-depending-on-the-season variety, and so all but the smallest craft had to be shipped in pieces by rail as far as Truckee, and then by oxcart to the lakeshore, where they were reassembled before launching.

By the turn of the century, the lumber boom was in its decline, and pleasure craft were beginning to appear on the lake, the early examples being mostly open cockpit launches. These generally had colorful canopy tops to shade passengers from the glaring sun, replete with fringe like the proverbial surrey. Vessels of this type found service with the major resorts, used by guests for fishing and excursion parties. Wealthy lakeshore residents also employed them as private shuttles to ferry their guests to and from the nearest steamer stop. No road circled the lake, and though overland travel was possible, any trip was far more pleasant by boat.

By the early 1920s, a new marine breed - with the accent on speed - was being developed. These new boats, designed to ply the wild open waters of the Great Lakes region, were known as runabouts and found their widest representation in the products of two Michigan companies: Chris-Craft and Gar Wood. The progenitors of these two firms, Christopher Columbus Smith and Garfield A. Wood, were good friends, and prior to a shift in emphasis from race boats to pleasure craft, they collaborated on the building of boats for both the British Harmsworth International trophy and the Gold Cup races. In the early years of pleasure boating, the hulls of Gar Wood boats were actually manufactured by Chris Smith and his crew, a fact which accounts for the strong similarity between early models of the two makes.

Tahoe boating enthusiasts shared the national passion for these new "speedboats," and it was only a matter of time before these sleek new hulls began to appear on the lake. In 1927, the enterprising J.P. "Jake" Obexer of Homewood acquired the Lake Tahoe franchise for Gar Wood boats. At about the same time, Norman Mayfield, founder of the Tahoe Boat Company of Tahoe City, became the local distributor for Chris-Craft.

Marine sales by both agents were brisk, especially in view of the cost of the products. In 1934, as the Great Depression came to a close, the Gar Wood Company offered 18 models, ranging from a 16 foot runabout of 70 horsepower at $895 to a 40 foot cruiser with twin 200 horsepower engines for $25,000. Chris-Craft, which the same year offered 21 models, was less expensive, owing to its production-line approach to construction. Its cheapest model in 1934 was a 15½ foot craft boasting 32 horsepower and selling for $495, with the top of the line being a 27 foot, 250 horsepower model priced at $4950.

By late summer, 1935, Obexer had sold 22 Gar Woods, and Mayfield a similar number. Each year, the two men made annual pilgrimages to their respective company headquarters in Michigan to view the product lines for the coming year.

Mayfield was also special Lake Tahoe representative for the boats of marine architect John Hacker, whose elegant designs brought prices commensurate with their uniqueness. One such craft, launched from the ways of the Tahoe Boat Company, was the "Thunderbird," a Hacker design built in 1939 for Nevada millionaire George Whittell at a cost of $87,000. The Tahoe Boat Company is now the summer port of this magnificent example of marine architecture, where it is available for hire at $500 per hour.

The Gar Wood Company's last products appeared in 1948 and Chris-Craft turned to fiber glass hulls in the late 1950s, as did most other marine manufacturers. But a new generation of boating enthusiasts has revived the popularity of the old wooden beauties - for show if not for daily use. This summer, the Tahoe Yacht Club promises unprecedented opportunities for the public to view wooden boats, with no less than three shows here at the lake. The first of these, set for July 5 at Chambers Landing, will set the stage for a full week of boating activity planned for August 3-10. Consult your NTW for details.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Among the oldest and most popular hostelries on Lake Tahoe's north shore is Tamarack Lodge, located on the uphill side of the intersection of Highway 28 and Lower Lake Forest Road. Mr. and Mrs. Angelo Oppio (whose daughter Louise Fenech is still actively involved in the operation of the Lodge) were the original proprietors, opening their doors for business in 1927. As with almost all local businesses of the day, the operation was seasonal, opening about Memorial Day and closing soon after Labor Day.

In those early years, Lake Forest Road was actually a part of the highway, and above the roadway just west of where it bent down the slope toward the little community of Lake Forest, Mr. Oppio hung a sign, its perimter illuminated by electric bulbs, proclaiming the existence of "TAMARACK." Travellers of the day could not help but notice the lodgings, especially since other structures were so scarce. The Oppio's establishment at that time adjoined Lake Forest's dairy, and wandering cows were among the pastoral views from the windows of its bungalows.

The modern availability of dinner houses is virtually limitless, and today it is considered unnecessary for local innkeepers to provide on-premises dining for their customers. Yet in 1927 the public dining rooms of the Tahoe Tavern (a grand lakeshore resort one mile south of Tahoe City) and the Tahoe Inn (on the bluff above Commons Beach - now Victoria Station) were practically the only places where dinners were served daily. The two or three miles to these establishments was a comparative trek at that time, and so it behooved Mr. and Mrs. Oppio to make a dining room and bar available to their guests and the public at large.

The restaurant building was connected to the northeast corner of the Lodge proper and was built around three large pine trees. When heavy snows collapsed the structure, the Oppios elected not to rebuild - by that time the selection of local eateries had grown to the extent that it seemed unnecessary. However, the pine trees and the stone fireplace which once lent atmosphere to dinners at the Tamarack are still standing.

The Lodge's accommodations originally included five bungalows, built around a main lodge and restaurant, and in the early days these peripheral units were the scene of regular poker games. Avid suitors of Lady Luck would come from far and near to partake of this opportunity to gamble, while their female companions passed the time in the main lobby, conserating amicably in the comfortable surroundings, beneath the same antique glass chandeliers which still grace the room's knotty pine ceiling.

Today, in spite of the addition of 12 modern units, the five original "Poker Rooms" continue to be specially requested by many returning guests. Perhaps it is this romantic aspect of their past which makes them so eagerly sought-after, or the fact that several of Hollywood's biggest stars of the 1930s and 1940s were frequent inhabitants of the little cottages.

Celebrities appreciated the Lodge's charm, returning to savor the kind personalities as much as the comfy accommodations of the Tamarack. Clark Gable enjoyed the Oppio's generous hospitality and considered the retreat among his favorite trout fishing hideouts. Gary Cooper was another Tinsel Town refugee who found the Tamarack a pleasant home away from home. Wallace Beery occasionally visited the Lodge when on vacation from the

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The Potte

Betty Layton is carrying rugs in the historic Wateo house at its original loc "Husky" Hunt had an env Navajo weavings.) And, including original stone nationally renowned artis sured addition to your ho the Big Tree. 583-6457 Da

Tamarack Lodge in the 1930's. The building at left contains the office, lobby and bar. The automobile is parked in front of the restaurant building, which collapsed under heavy snows over 25 years ago. Photo courtesy of Bill and Bernie Bechdolt.

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cameras, and still another well-known personage chose to remain cloaked in anonymity, signing the guest book simply "Cash Register."

A whimsical touch was added to the construction of the Lodge by a foresighted carpenter (his name apparently lost to history) who installed a bottle of Jim Beam under every staircase on the property. One such well-aged surprise turned up during a recent bit of remodelling, recalling for Mrs. Fenech the discovery of similar "treasures" in years past.

Distilled spirits played another part in the Lodge's colorful history. In the days of the Volstead Act, several local entrepreneurs were engaged in the production of alcohol, one such operation conducted at the Tahoe Tavern. The reputation of Tamarack Lodge held it above suspicion by the "Feds," and in consequence it was chosen as the repository of the Tavern's illegally-produced beverage.

Today, the Tamarack Lodge continues its well-earned reputation as a comfortable, friendly retreat for the weary traveller. As ever, its rates are among the most reasonable on the lake. Manager Jackie Toles and her daughter Ann carry on the day-to-day work of operating the Lodge, while Louise Fenech, with her late husband Al owned and managed the business for a generation, is still on hand to enhance the visits of interested guests with her charming stories of the Lodge's early days.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

"Keep on the Sunnyside of Life"

When Sunnyside Resort reopened its doors last month after a long closure, it was an event greeted in local hearts with benign optimism. Those who recall the Sunnyside of yesteryear have had occasion to long for the ambience which characterized the resort's early years, and to hope for a return to the fine style of former properietorships.

The much-amended building which today houses Sunnyside Resort has a history approaching 50 years old, having been built as the summer home of the Effinger family. It is more popularly known as the residence of the second owners - the Charles Kendricks family, who occupied it for many summers before sale to Conrad and Monica Briner.

The doctors Briner were first to use the building for commerical purposes, operating it as a restaurant which had the convenience of an adjoining boat harbor. As early as 1916, fishing guide Chris Nielson had operated a harbor and marine way, described in The Saga of Lake Tahoe as "the only commercial marina of consequence existing on Tahoe at that time."

Dr. Monica Briner's marriage to Ralph Sears following the death of Dr. Conrad Briner assured the continuity of the business, as Sears assumed active involvement in the resort's operation, managing the restaurant and bar while Conrad and Monica's son Bill (now head of California's Parks and Recreation Commission) oversaw the activities of the marina. With the passing of Monica and stepfather Ralph, Briner assumed control of the resort.

In 1972, a three-man partnership purchased the business from Briner, whose increasing responsibilities as manager of the Tahoe City P.U.D. diminished his former active role in Sunnyside's operation. Recognizing the popularity of the existing enterprise, the new owners made no radical changes, but rather continued to operate the restaurant on a year-round basis, serving three meals a day. Their operations also included the marina, "The Hatch" (an off-sale liquor store on the street front), and overnight accommodations in renovated rooms above the main lodge and in dormitory-style quarters above "The Hatch."

Henry Bardelli, the active, on-the-scene partner, had an extensive background in the preparation of the resort's varied menu. Bardelli could usually be found in the kitchen, from which emanated his tantalizing invention, "French Fried Zucchini." This local delicacy became such a popular trademark of the establishment during Henry's reign in the kitchen that the curent management felt obliged to include it on their own menu.

Under the new proprietorship, the popular resort continued to be home port for the lake's sailors, catering on late weekend mornings to turn-away crowds. In fact, it soon became necessary to expand the existing sundeck to accommodate the overflow - one of several improvements initiated by the partnership. During the drought years of the late 1970s, they found it essential to dredge the existing marina, at the same time increasing the number of berths.

Inside the restaurant/bar, the enthusiastic reception given Sunnyside's brand of live music called for a bigger dance floor, and with its completion, the resort was unquestionably the best shore location for lakefront dining and dancing. While Henry kept the kitchen on an even keel, veteran jigger-juggler Forrest "Forrie" Collins kept the patrons' glasses full while entertaining them with his amusing tales of Tahoe.

When the partnership decided to sell its thriving business in 1979, the future looked rosy for buyer Mickey Lowell. Lowell implemented some of his own ideas regarding the restaurant's atmosphere, seeking a younger clientele by booking a more contemporary variety of live music. Sunnyside had indeed taken on a new personality, yet some disappointed old-timers felt they had lost an old friend.

Another loss, in November of 1984, resulted in the closure of Sunnyside altogether when Lowell's 34 foot motor launch, the "Buena Vista," was found unoccupied and dragging anchor in the San Diego Naval Shipyard.

The previous year, financial difficulties with the resort had forced Lowell's filing of Chapter 11 bankruptcy, and in a reorganization plan, San Marino Savings and Loan had entered the financial picture as co-partner with Lowell. But in early 1985, San Marino Savings in turn failed, and the Federal Savings and Loan Commission assumed proprietary interest in the resort.

By request of this federal organization, Bill Parson of Granlibakken Management has agreed to operate the resort's restaurant and bar for the 1985 summer season. Patrons of the resort under its new management are pleased to report something of the flavor of the Sunnyside of old, and Executive Chef Bill Witowski is gratified by the public's initial enthusiastic response to the reopening.

In addition to the french fried zucchini special, the menu features daily lunches and dinners of fresh seafood and a champagne brunch served weekends and holidays on the sundeck overlooking the marina and lake beyond. Live music runs the gamut from jazz to swing to contemporary "easy listening." Those in the know cheer the rebirth of one of the west shore's oldest and finest restaurants. Get your reservations early.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

The Achievement of Bliss

Veteran Tahoe campers will tell you that among the loveliest of the basin's State Parks is D.L. Bliss, located at the south end of Rubicon Bay. Though the site is every bit as picturesque as its neighboring facilities, Emerald Bay and Sugar Pine Point, Bliss State Park has a history which is not nearly as well known.

According to Owen McKeon, chronicler of the Bliss family's railroad and steamer activities on Lake Tahoe, the family donated to the state 162 acres of land between what was then the estate of Harper (of magazine fame) and Emerald Bay for use as a park. The property included over one mile of the most spectacular shoreline on the lake, and seemed an ideal location for public use.

However, the country was at that time in the depths of the Great Depression, and there seemed little hope for the land's use as a State Park in the foreseeable future. It was in the spring of 1933 that the means of developing this spectacular tract of land became a reality. Newly-elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt's sweeping plan for national economic recovery contained a program perfectly suited to local needs in the form of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

This program, one of the President's pet projects, proposed to employ as many as a quarter of a million young men between the ages of 18 and 25 at the work of forest conservation: tree planting, establishing firebreaks, and clearing underbrush.

Work on the Rubicon Park tract commenced in May of 1934. The installation, designated Camp 917, was a seasonal camp, housing and feeding over 200 boys, whose gratitude for the chance of employment was clearly demonstrated in the amazing progress which characterized their work.

In late June, 1935, after only six months at hard labor, a commendable transformation of the park grounds was reported by the Tahoe Tattler. Directed by Foreman Allen C. Woodward, the crew had already completed a road circling the point, cutting through heavy timber and brush undergrowth by the exclusive use of axes, picks and muscle.

Additionally, they had "set up concrete campstoves, restrooms and hiking paths to various points of vantage." The only work not done by hand was the blasting of boulders which blocked the proposed entrance to the park.

By late August, the crew had completed these projects and were occupied with the development of trails, a road to circle the Point via Pine Flat, and the construction of a 30-inch culvert intended to divert Rubicon Creek "to a more picturesque and desirable setting." This progress was more praiseworthy for the fact that the crew's services had been required on the fire line when conflagrations threatened Fallen Leaf Lake and an area north of Carson City.

In their free time, several of the Camp's enrollees distinguished themselves by rescuing a six-year-old boy from drowning at Meeks Bay Resort, about three miles north of the camp. Other free moments were devoted by the entired camp to ministering to the every whim of "Virgie," a diminuitive nanny-goat which had been relocated from the camp's winter headquarters in San Pablo Bay.

By the 1937 season, CCC projects still included landscaping and grounds improvement at Rubicon, with the crew continuing to find constructive diversion in deeds of honor and heroism. On three occasions that summer, CCC search parties were successful in locating missing children - and received due accord for their efforts in the pages of the Tahoe Tattler.

The work of developing and improving the Bliss State Park was all but concluded by the summer of 1939, if newspaper accounts of the Camp's summer activities are a valid indication. Baseball was the main occupation that summer, with the Camp entering the Lake Tahoe League, to do battle on several occasions with the Camp Richardson nine. Toward the end of August, a big dance was held at the Al Tahoe CCC camp as a fund-raiser to purchase musical instruments. The price of admission was 25 cents.

And so, unlike so many government programs, the Civilian Conservation Corps - at least at the outset - proved to be of great benefit to the Lake Tahoe basin. In these days when large construction companies carry out the development of civic projects, it is refreshing to return to a time when a group of just over 200 ambitious young men transformed a beautiful but unimproved piece of acreage into a State Park with little more than hand tools and the willingness to work hard.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Pleasure Boats and Their Owners Since 1925

FLORENCE M

photo
circa 1918
courtesy of
Mrs. Ross Bewley

The Tahoe Yacht Club, previously known as the Lake Tahoe Power-Boat Club, has been a well-known organization on the Lake for many years. The Club is celebrating its 60th anniversary this season. However, pleasure boating on Lake Tahoe dates back well over a decade prior to the club's formation, and the history of those boats is a story in itself.

Popular theory at the turn of the century held that long, narrow hulls made the best use of available power, and resulting boats were of the "toothpick" variety, having extremely narrow beams. Of this type, perhaps the earliest on the Lake was Edwin Letts Oliver's HEY THERE, a craft which was built around 1910, and was originally the property of an off-shore alcohol distributor of the early years of prohibition. Oliver's grandson, William Letts Oliver III, describes the boat as a "kayak" of about 40 feet in length - not the sort of vessel that any but a desperate person would want to be aboard in oceanic conditions.

These early precursors of the modern-day speedboat had characteristics of both their predecessors and the runabouts still in the future.

Such a hybrid was J.P. "Jake" Obexer's HOBO, built about 1915. Though Obexer's speedster had the narrow-beamed hull of a launch, it sported an extremely long deck, which put driver and passengers well toward the stern in a cockpit small by launch standards.

A contemporary of the HOBO was the CUTEY SCAUP, another forerunner of the modern speeboat, which took its name from a play on words involving a famous brand of Scotch and a diving duck. The CUTEY SCAUP was a product of the George Kneass Company of San Francisco. This boat came into the possession of Brockway Metcalf when he and his wife purchased property from J.V. de la Veaga just south of the Tahoe Tavern (now Tavern Properties). Metcalf changed the boat's name to SUERTE, which translates something to the effect of "quiet waters of the evening."

A boat of about the same vintage was the MYSTERY, a vessel with a V-bottom hull framed by Stephens Brothers of Stockton and built by Dr. H.W. Davis of Carnelian Bay in 1917. Davis, a pioneer seasonal resident of the North Shore, had previously built the ZAYA and the PETITE ZAYA for use on the Lake. The ZAYA was 35 feet long, with a beam of approximately 6'6", and was powered by a 6 cylinder converted Thomas Flyer automobile engine. THE MYSTERY, with a length of 22'6", was powered by a 40 hp Scripps 4 cylinder engine, and, like the HOBO, sported a large rear cockpit. The hull was of Port Orford cedar, and was originally painted grey above the waterline and green below. The deck was yellow.

TAHOE HERITAGE

By Carol Van Etten

Speedboat rides were all the rage at Tahoe in the 1930s, with a number of marine enterprises carrying passengers to the Lake's scenic and noteworthy points.

Available for excursions at the south end of the Lake in those days was the MISS BIJOU. The Young Brothers' Bijou pier was the site of Charles MacFarland's marine concession, which had its modest start in 1936, offering canoes and backrests for rent. Three years later, MacFarland expanded the business, purchasing a 1929 Gar Wood from the William R. Ray family for the purpose of offering speedboat rides.

This boat was one of the Lake's several painted Gars, sporting a blue hull and a clear mahogany deck. During Ray's ownership, the boat had been known as the JUNE BUG. MacFarland estimates that prior to his purchase, the boat had seen less than 1000 hours of use.

All that soon changed, for business was brisk on the 1800 foot pier and MISS BIJOU's three cockpits were often filled to capacity.

Two excursions were offered. One was to Emerald Bay, a trip lasting about an hour and costing $3 (a price which held through the end of World War II). The alternate trip was to Zephyr Cove, which took just over half an hour and called for $2 per head.

The Gar Wood saw a great deal of use in those summers prior to and during the Second World War, and exhausted three engines in her years of service to MacFarland. Her last engine, a 220 hp 8 cylinder Kermath, finally succumbed to old age when it threw a rod, "practically cutting the bottom off the engine," according to Don Veihmeyer, who worked for MacFarland and was the last person to drive the boat.

Three Chris-Craft runabouts were the successors of the MISS BIJOU in MacFarland's marine concession. These were the GLADYS D, the GLADYS G, and the MISS BIJOU II. Veihmeyer believes that the MISS BIJOU II, a 1946 20-foot Chris-Craft Custom Runabout, was the first of its kind at Tahoe following World War II. She was powered by the standard 145 hp Chris-Craft Model ML, first available just after the War. The GLADYS D and the GLADYS G were both 1940 Chris-Crafts - 19-foot Custom Runabouts powered by 130 hp Model Ms.

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Following the shoreline northwest from Bijou, along the Lake's California side, we come to one of the earliest marine concessions of its kind, located in Emerald Bay. In Vol. 1 of **The Saga of Lake Tahoe** (p. 437, Early Marine History chapter) E.B. Scott notes a Stephens hull of about 1920 vintage (probably a true "potato boat") owned by one Ralph Graves. This boat, says Scott, "reportedly attained a speed of 25 mph . . . considered the fastest thing afloat on the south end of Tahoe for years." According to Scott, the boat exploded in 1941.

Meeks Bay Resort, which had its beginnings in 1921, soon gained a reputation for its marine concession, operated by Fred Oswald Kehlet, a son and partner in the resort. Captain Fred owned a succession of speedboats which he operated as commercial carriers. The first of these, the PICO, was a Stephens and must have had a fast hull; local recollection has it that while operators of the Lake's other marine concessions were allowed to compete in the regatta events, Fred O. was barred from the contests. The reason given was its status as a commercial carrier. Interestingly enough, brother George is listed as an entrant in the Stephens race for the 1929 regatta, driving the PICO.

The EFFIE MOON was a raised-deck Chris-Craft of about 1927 vintage, with special handrails and a stainless steel dash, inlaid in which was a silver dollar of Fred's birth year.

Last of Captain Fred's wooden speedboats was the STARDUST, a 1934 Chris-Craft. She and the EFFIE MOON were still in use in the mid 1950's. Their public careers finally ended when fiberglass hulls first came into vogue and the thrill of a ride in an old wooden speedboat temporarily disappeared (at least as far as a fickle public was concerned).

Other West Shore marine concessions of the prewar era included Dave Chambers' operation at Chambers' Lodge and Don DelCarlo's speedboat ride and boat rental, just upstream from Fanny Bridge in Tahoe City. The name CAPTAIN KIDD graced the transom of several of Chambers' speedboats - at least one of which was a late 1920s Gar Wood. DelCarlo employed the PRESIDENT, a 1927 Gar Wood sedan formerly belonging to R. Stanley Dollar, Sr., but with the cabin removed.

Today, wooden speedboats for hire are a thing of the past. The notable exception is the THUNDERBIRD, a 55-foot, 16 ton super classic available in Tahoe City for charter and sightseeing cruises to Emerald Bay.

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In 1948, Dr. Davis' son, Edward W. Davis, had a cockpit cut in the deck and replaced the original engine with a 90 hp Chrysler Marine 6, making it a worthy contemporary of the current generation of speedboats. The MYSTERY was still in active use on the Lake when Davis sold her to William Dashiell in about 1970, though her present whereabouts are unknown.

The FLORENCE M, a precursor of later runabouts was owned by J. Carroll Skinner. It had a hull whose specifications - make, model and year - are apparently lost to history. This boat sported a narrow beam and a high split windshield, and featured a typically large single cockpit which could seat 6 in comfort.

Yet another ancient vessel was discovered a decade or so ago by Gordon Hooper in fairly shallow water off Rubicon Properties beach (formerly part of the George Newhall estate in Rubicon Bay). Hooper reports that the hull was approximately 40 feet long, and estimates it to have been vintage 1915. Though the lack of proper storage eventually necessitated the huge boat's demolition, Hooper salvaged the shaft log, carburetor and nameplate, as well as the ERD engine which powered the boat.

The 1920s marked an era of rapid expansion in the realm of power boating at Tahoe. Such famous names as Stephens Brothers, Belle Isle, Chris-Craft and Gar Wood provided local boaters with marine excitement in these years. Disputes over which boat was the fastest afloat gradually led to the establishment of a regular regatta season, which provided still more thrills for boat owners and spectators alike.

MYSTERY 1957

Photo courtesy of Edward W. Davis

THIS ARTICLE IS PART OF A CHAPTER FROM A FORTHCOMING BOOK BY CAROL VAN ETTEN ENTITLED **PREWAR WOOD**. THE 112-PAGE BOOK CONCERNS ITSELF WITH WOODEN SPEEDBOATS OF LAKE TAHOE PRIOR TO WORLD WAR II, AND WILL INCLUDE OVER 30 COLOR PHOTOS OF LOCAL BOATS, PLUS MANY BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS, HISTORY OF TAHOE SPEEDBOATS AND THEIR PREDECESSORS, AND EXTENSIVE CROSS-REFERENCES AND LISTS. THE BOOK WILL BE AVAILABLE AT LOCAL BOOKSTORES IN MID-AUGUST.

NORTH TAHOE WEEK August 22-28, 1985 Page 11

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

It was 28 years ago this month that an event took place which had an impact on local history, perhaps unparalleled except for the region's "discovery" by white man in 1944. The summer of 1957 saw the maiden appearance at local outlets of a publication destined to be the basis for any discussion of Tahoe's fact and legend for all time. This was Edward B. Scott's The Saga of Lake Tahoe, a work of over 500 pages chronicling the characters and events which shaped the course of local history.

Because most people do not make the time to learn about the past first-hand, information found in books assumes a great importance in their comprehension of a given subject. Thus the historian "makes" history by recording it - regardless of the degree of accuracy.

In this sense, seekers of local history were well-served, for not only had Scott managed to contact nearly every living pioneer of the region, but with his skill as a word-crafter, he wove their tales into a delightful piece of reading which, over the years, has made converts of some who thought history to be a dry bone.

Adding to the book's awesome import was the fact that within the short space of a decade following its publication, more than a handful of Scott's principal interviewees had "gone to their rewards." The next ten years took an equally significant number. These sad departures had the effect of sealing a large amount of history from future scrutiny, except where Scott's research has presented us with a window.

But what a window! Happily, Scott's view is a broad panorama - the product of untold hours devoted to retracing with accuracy the broken trail of time past. And to give proper credit for the achievement, it should be noted that the trail was poorly marked by the transient citizens of the area's early years; their concern was for the tangible present rather than the sweeping future.

As a summer resident of Tahoe since childhood, Scott's personal recollections of the Lake were an invaluable asset in recovering information (in finding anything, the key is knowing where to look). Among the important aspects of local history traced by Scott was the documentation of 154 of Tahoe's early boats, an untold number of which - but for his mention - would have been lost to history.

Even prior to the research associated with the writing of the Saga, Scott's general knowledge of local boating history was excellent. As a son of Bert C. Scott of Hall-Scott Motors, he had a first-hand familiarity with the Lake's exotic watercraft, including some belonging to his own family. Many of the early runabouts were powered by the massive engines manufactured by the Hall-Scott Company. Among these were the pre-war marine products offered by the author's brother, Ken Scott, head of the John G. Rapp Company, San Francisco dealer for Chris-Craft.

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The gathering of information for Scott's epic history took him (among other places) to Sacramento and Berkeley, where, at the State archives and the Bancroft Library, he was able to peruse the documents which verified many early activities at the Lake. For those unfamiliar with research of this type, it is accurately described as both fascinating and tedious. Hours of turning the dial on the microfilm machine may be without any result except the discovery that the document in question has been found to be without relevance to the topic at hand. Yet, sometimes a brilliant revelation will spur the researcher on to further study.

When Scott had completed the basic process of interview, library, and courthouse research, he was ready to begin the arduous task of sifting and mixing the information he had compiled into a readable, accurate history. The author and his wife had decided to spend the last winter before publication at Tahoe, to get the proper feel for the book, and so in a residence near Cedar Point, intended only for summer use, the book took shape, its author braving the winter chill which crept in through the uninsulated walls.

In 1973, Mr. Scott published Volume II of The Saga. In his words it is "a definitive pictorial documentation of Lake Tahoe's development over the last one hundred and twenty-five years." Scott's efforts proved well worth the effort, and the books continue to enjoy a wide popularity, a tribute to the efforts of one man to preserve what was left of the Tahoe history he had seen as a child. This history is now found only in the minds of those who were his contemporaries, and in the pages of his books.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

"Famous For Our Beautiful White Sand Beach"

Among the most appealing stretches of shoreline on Lake Tahoe's California side is the shimmering crescent of white sand rimming Meeks Bay. Though it has seen a variety of owners and uses, this sheltered curve of land maintains a certain serenity which transcends the seasonal hustle and bustle which have characterized its summers since the arrival of white man.

The Bay's first inhabitants were Washoe Indians, the first white resident being John Meeks, who settled in the meadows which bordered the Bay in the 1860s, building a log barn on the present site of the beach snack bar. Meeks cut and baled the meadow hay, storing it in the barn before barging it to points on the Lake where it was needed for the livestock used in the Basin's lumbering operations.

With the arrival of the railroads, the importance of the meadow's proximity to the lakeshore was diminished, and Meeks' presence was supplanted by that of C.W. Lusk, an El Dorado County cattleman. The land west of Meeks Bay (and Rubicon Bay to the south) became the summer range for Lusk's herd of cattle, numbering as many as 1,000 head at one time.

In 1872, Lusk hired brothers George and James Murphy (still teenagers then) to help in the operation, driving the cattle over the old Georgetown road to summer in the lakeside pastures of the West Shore - a five-day trip from their winter range. Before the decade's close, the Murphy brothers had assumed control of the enterprise, purchasing Lusk's tangible assets (pans, churns and a milkhouse.) In 1884, the brothers bought the real estate (Section 29) then belonging to Bliss and Yerington. This land was a railroading and lumbering concern in the mid-1870s when all usable timber was cut off the land and boomed across the Lake to Glenbrook for milling.

The Murphy brothers continued to operate the dairy, rowing their milk, butter and meat products across the Lake to Glenbrook and other points to sell. Because of the existence of this dairy, the locale was for many years known as "Buttermilk Bay."

In 1891, the Murphys (in partnership with brother-in-law Luke Morgan) took over operation of McKinney's Hunters Home (at that time comprising a single log cabin -one of less than a handful of lodgings available at the Lake). This was the beginning of an arrangement which was to last until 1919. The Murphy's proprietorship became so well-known that an 1894 map notes the site - now Chambers Landing - as "Murphys."

In the brothers' absence from Meeks Bay, their holdings there were overseen by Martin Lowe, a colorful backwoods sort whose squalid existence inspired some amusing anecdotes in E.B. Scott's **The Saga of Lake Tahoe.** The Murphy brothers ,by 1920, were both past 60 years old, and had no special plans for their Meeks Bay property, though the time was ripe for its development.

As the waters of the Bay were too shallow to admit the steamer TAHOE, the Bay had been a sort of backwater during the Murphys' years of ownership, the only available transportation being by water. However, with the completion of a road around Emerald Bay in about 1912, the land was reachable by auto, and in 1920 George Kehlet, seeking the restorative qualities of a high-altitude vacation, was led to the Bay's tranquil shores. Impressed by the singular lack of campground facilities at Tahoe, Kehlet, formerly of McKittrick, California, hit on the idea of developing the site for that purpose, and by summer's end had taken a short-term option on the land.

Kehlet's abiding dream - entertained in the face of considerable obstacles - was to develop the Bay for recreational use. In this pursuit, Kehlet was soon joined by father Oswald V. and brother Fred, who together with their families went to work in earnest to develop the property. By 1925, improvements at the new Meeks Bay Resort included a grocery, dining room, clubhouse and 15 cabins in addition to the campground. In 1928, the first cabin to have indoor bathroom facilities was built, and the following year the 15-room hotel building and six more cabins were completed, making 47 cabins in all.

In a matter of a few short years, Meeks Bay Resort had became a miniature city unto itself, with the vacationist's every want answered on the premises - or deliverable in short order by the helpful proprietors. In the spring of 1961, a 120-berth boat marina was completed, concluding the development of the property by the Kehlets.

By the mid-1960s, the introduction of Nevada-based gaming casinos (with their attendant accommodations) were beginning to make clear the inevitability of a basin-wide sewer system, and Meeks Bay Resort, like so many other local family businesses, was faced with the prohibitive expense of connecting with the trunkline, then inching along the shoreline toward completion. At this point, the Kehlets elected to sell their popular resort, then having operated it for nearly 50 summers.

The State of California was a potential buyer, yet sufficient state funds were not immediately available, and Macco Corporation, a subsidiary of Penn Central Railroad, purchased the property. That company's plans to develop high-rise condominium towers were not far from realization when the parent company's bankruptcy threw the development into limbo - amid great rejoicing by local residents and annual visitors who had strongly opposed the plans.

In 1971, the 645 acre parcel was purchased by William Hewlett, who held the property in trust until December of 1974 when the U.S. Forest Service acquired it for $3.1 million. Today, the campgrounds and several of the original cabins are available for public use, and a new visitor center provides less-rustic accommodations as well as a gift shop for visitors. Most of the Kehlets cabins have been removed, as it is the policy of the Forest Service to return the area to its original state. However, the "beautiful white sand beach" - once the feature of the Kehlet's resort publicity - remains, as always, for the enjoyment of all.

This photo, circa 1940, shows Meeks Bay Resort's two speedboats, the Stardust (foreground) and Effie Moon, with since-demolished beach cabins south of the pier, and the old boathouse beyond. *Photo courtesy of Darel D. Kehlet.*

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

MEADOW PARK RESORT

West shore pioneer Alfred Maffly dates his Tahoe experience at 61 years, having first seen the Lake in 1924. It was in that year that Maffly's father-in-law, Dr. Frances Leroy Herrick of Berkeley, purchased 200 acres of west shore property lying south of Meeks Creek and fronting on the highway.

Dr. Herrick's pioneering spirit had brought him to You-Bet, California, prior to the turn of the century, where he became involved in hardrock mining. He subsequently worked as an orderly in the Stockton mental hospital, and, while thus employed, found time to study medicine at Lane Medical College (which later became the Stanford University Medical School) and then in Kentucky.

In the manner of the day, Herrick then served, for several years as an itinerant medical practitioner in Johannesburg, South Africa. Following this apprenticeship, Herrick returned to California, where in 1904 he organized several doctors and founded a hospital in Berkeley, which subsequently bore his name.

The 1924 acquisition of the Meeks Bay property was the first step in Herrick's plan to develop a domestic fur farm - a venture which seemed to promise favorable returns. Wire pens were constructed on the property, and ten silver foxes were purchased at a cost $1,000 per head (or perhaps it is rather "per tail" in the case of foxes). A year 'round caretaker was hired to tend the precious herd.

Summer turned to fall and the operation appeared to be well-launched. The pelts produced in Tahoe's chill winter climate promised to be of the prime sort, which would bring a good price. Dr. Herrick secured an option on the meadowland west of the highway property with the intention of pasturing horses there prior to their use as food for the foxes.

The venture might have succeeded but for several significant factors, which Dr. Herrick had failed to take into account: the depth of winter snows and the venturesome nature of the vixen. The captivity of those future fur-pieces came to an abrupt termination when the rising snowpack allowed the herd their opportunity to make good an escape by simply jumping the fences to freedom. None of the four-legged fugitives was ever recaptured, much to Dr. Herrick's dismay. But, adds Mr. Maffly, the venture is said to have produced a local population of blue-blooded coyotes.

Frances Herrick passed away in 1932, and Alfred Maffly took over control of Dr. Herrick's business affairs. At Meadow Park this included operation of the grocery store, cabins and a filling station, which over the years featured Shell, Union Associated and Gulf Oil products.

Life was of a more primitive nature then, all utilities being the responsibility of the individual. Meadow Park had its own well, and a gravity-fed system from a spring on the property supplied water for the household. A shower for proprietors and guests was available in the form of an elevated holding tank, with water flow regulated by a pull chain borrowed from an old toilet tank. Restroom facilities consisted of two privies. Direct-current electrical power was generated right on the property, and a one-lunger pump chugged noisily during daylight hours. The absence of a phone is remembered by Mr. Maffly as an idyllic circumstance rather than an inconvenience.

Although the Forest Service now owns most of the property which was once Meadow Park Resort, Maffly retains the property on which the grocery store and several outbuildings (two real estate offices and a plumbing shop) now sit. The grocery, now known as the Wilderness Store, is operated by Jerry Cunningham and still does a good seasonal business, serving local residents and summer visitors who find it convenient to the Meeks Bay Campgrounds. But Meadow Park Resort exists today only in the memories of those who knew the area in earlier times.

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
- Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

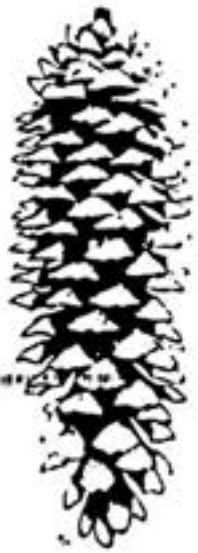
BOURNE IN AN EARLIER AREA

The near North Shore has, among its natural virtues, a pebbly beach where vacationers of four generations past flocked to search among its beautiful backwater tailings for the red and yellow stones scattered there. This geologically-named bit of geography is Carnelian Bay. This designation refers to the shoreline between Dollar Point on the south and Flick Point on the north. Primarily a seasonal community, the Bay boasts a post office, lumber company, coffee shop, restaurant, boat company, chain market and some of the most improbable monsters ever to blight the local landscape.

The pace of life in Carnelian Bay was somewhat slower at the turn of the century. Homewood summer resident Don Huff, Sr., whose parents first brought him to the Lake by stagecoach in 1906, recalls one popular pastime of the day was a trip to the shores of this delightful Bay for the purpose of gathering carnelians - wave-washed geological treasures easily discovered along the broad sweep of this North Shore beach.

At the time of Huff's first visit, most of the property in the Bay was owned by a trio of bachelor brothers from Ottawa, Illinois, by the name of Flick. These three, William, Joseph and Nicholas, were commercial fishermen who shared the unusual fate of having all been born on December 25 - in 1841, 1847 and 1851, respectively. The Flicks had purchased their holdings (including the Carnelian Bay Hotel, a post office, store and cottages) in 1896, following a financial setback in Nick's dry good concerns and injuries sustained by Joe in a circus performance.

The hotel had been built in the mid-1870s by one Dr. Bourne, who operated it under the name "Dr. Bourne's Hygenic Establishment" and later as "Cornelian Springs Sanatoria" - billing it as an unsurpassed mecca for health seekers with good fishing an added attraction. The reclusive Dr. Bourne, a self-styled meteorologist and local chronicler of snow depths and lake levels, religiously forwarded this statistical information to Truckee each month for publication in the Truckee Republican.



When Bourne passed away in the mid-1880's, rancher James Cleland acquired most of the doctor's holdings, raising remarkable vegetable gardens and crops of timothy hay on the flat now occupied by Carnelian Woods and its near neighbors.

By the time the Flicks acquired the property in 1896, the wharf which Bourne had constructed was a twenty-year veteran of steamer traffic, serving an established community which - under the brothers' direction - continued to be a popular destination for residents, picnickers, and overnight guests.

Marion MacKay, a seasonal resident who has spent nearly all of the past 70 summers beside the Bay, recalls the daily arrival of the steamer at the hotel pier, highlighted by the distribution of mail - the postmaster calling out the names of his patrons from the incoming stack of unsorted correspondence.

The Carnelian Bay Hotel was another favorite gathering-place, and Mrs. MacKay and her playmates were fond of visiting "Big Chief," a huge woman who ran the hotel and baked fresh bread each morning. A daily ritual for Mrs. MacKay and her cousin was the consumption of a loaf of this delectable treat - spread with peanut butter - from a vantage point on the end of the hotel pier.

The downstairs of the hotel building was given over to a post office and general store, where three slot machines consumed the interest and cash of locals and visitors of all ages.

The Flicks had sold most of their holdings by 1910, retaining a small piece of roadside real estate, on which was a cabin where the two younger brothers resided until their deaths, ten days apart, in April of 1938.

J. Humiston, F.O. Norton and L.P. Delano, calling themselves Carnelian Bay Improvement Company, purchased the greater portion of the property, and commenced an extensive development program, the initial phase of which is described by George Wharton James in his 1915 publication, Lake of the Sky. The developers, says James, ". . . out of their 81-acre tract, put on sale convenient-sized lots. Of these 75 were purchased almost immediately, and by 1914 there were over 45 homes, large and small, already erected." The sale of bonds was expected to finance the construction of the club's initial buildings, including a clubhouse and half a dozen cottages. However, like several other early-day North Shore ventures, this project was never fully realized.

As its name suggests, the Old Post Office Coffee Shop was formerly the domain of the U.S. Post Office (the entity having moved from the hotel). From 1942 until 1974, postmistress Marge Fellows handled the community's mail, while across the street husband Ray operated the Trading Post Resort, which in addition to the letting of overnight accommodations also included a small gas-and-grocery concern.

Today Carnelian Bay's chief claim to fame is perhaps Sierra Boat Company, west coast mecca for wooden boat enthusiasts, where each winter over 250 of these mahogany masterpieces are stored. In spite of sweeping developmental changes in the region, the general atmosphere of the Bay is still one of quiet ease, where a patient search may still produce a gem such as that for which the Bay was named.

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten

Courtesy of the North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

'IITYWYBAD'

Tahoe's pioneer residents were first lured to the Lake by a variety of enticements. Some came to earn the comparatively healthy wages available in many aspects of the local timber industry. Some settled here to escape the mad crush of the city, and others strictly to enjoy the view. From the earliest days of its settlement, the region was

THIS VAGUELY TROPICAL facade was the original Hut, as it appeared circa 1936. (Photo courtesy of Mel Doyle)

Tahoe's pioneer residents were first lured to the Lake by a variety of enticements. Some came to earn the (comparatively) healthy wages available in many aspects of the local timber industry. Some settled here to escape the mad crush of the city, and others strictly to enjoy the view. From the earliest days of its settlement, the region was widely celebrated as a high altitude mecca for health-seekers, its rarified atmosphere touted as the cure for a diverse assortment of complaints.

One pioneer family which owes its long presence at the Lake to the quest for better health was the Callenders of Homewood. It was during the summer of 1906 that Howard's severe case of asthma compelled him to abandon the family's Bay Area residence in favor of the restorative climate to be found on Tahoe's sunny west shore. Upon his return to San Francisco at summer's end, Howard's description of his summer habitation were understandably glowing, and by the following summer, he had convinced brother Benjamin Franklin Callender to accompany him on a return trip.

Though the area between Homewood and Tahoe Pines (Idlewild) is the oldest residential community on the west shore (its subdivision dating back to the early 1880s), the area's commercial development was still in its infancy by the time of Callender's arrival, and so earning one's daily bread called for a degree of ingenuity unnecessary today. But the Callenders were equal to the challenge, and had soon established themselves in the realm of commercial angling and marine transit, employing their diminuitive canopied steamer, LADY OF THE LAKE, as a combination fishing boat and taxi.

Though the local commercial fishing industry had already seen its heyday by the turn of the century, the plentitude of the piscatorial product was still phenomenal (at least by modern standards), and the Callenders continued to supply the elegant tables of San Francisco's restaurants with the delicious commodity, their pay averaging two bits a fish. This continued as a fair source of livelihood until 1917, when (following a policy of increasingly limited fishing,) commercial ventures were prohibited altogether.

Since poor local roads made overland travel inconvenient (if not impossible) prior to 1925, LADY OF THE LAKE was a valuable means of transportation, and as such was used by the population at large. A case in point was Ben's yearly boatload of passengers from Tallac - an aboriginal entourage which included eight or nine adult Washoe Indians and their offspring and dogs. The passenger list was always of such proportions that it threatened to exceed LADY's draft, and Ben annually feared swamping.

The very birth of local tourism can perhaps be linked to the prohibition of commercial fishing, for soon thereafter camping facilities began to spring up all along the west shore. The Callender's Camp Franklin was among these, competing with Bill Johnson's El Campo and the Kehlet family's Meeks Bay Resort campground.

Over the years the enterprise grew, and the enthusiasm of an increasing number of visitors gave rise to Ben's fame as a local restauranteur. His roadside retreat was The Hut, initially an open-ended structure, replete with Tahoe's answer to the thatched roof and bark on exterior walls. Ben served a scandalously delicious hamburger according to Lillian Farr, who enjoyed her stops at The Hut while enroute home from the Meeks Bay dances of the 1930s and 1940s.

The Hut occupied the same plot of ground where the Tahoe Ski Bowl sales office now sits, and its bar did a good seasonal business as well. Callender was a shrewd businessman, recalls nephew Mel Doyle (still a resident of Tahoma), and a sign above the bar - "IITYWYBAD" - was an amusing source of revenue for the proprietor. To inquiries about the meaning of the curious cryptograph, the bartender would reply, "If, I tell you, will you buy a drink?"

About 1947, Callender sold The Hut to "Pop" and "Mom" (Blanche) Meyers, and the popularity of the operation continued during their ownership. However, a 1955 fire razed the much-enlarged structure, and Peggy French, the Meyers' successor who operated The Hut during the summer of 1958, could not sustain the appeal of the former properietorship.

Following his sale of The Hut, Ben Callender had planned a retirement in Florida, but Tahoe was in his blood, and after several years he returned to the Homewood area, where he purchased his former competitor's El Campo Lodge, developing it into Callender's Lodge. This enterprise featuring a unique "Horseshoe Bar," the decor of which included about 500 examples of equine footwear. Before leaving the premises, patrons could fill 'er up at the Flying A pump across the street, or survey the array of produce available at a vegetable stand concession close by.

Benjamin Franklin Callender passed away in the spring of 1976, having seen nearly seven decades of Tahoe summers, during which he had personally been contributor to the colorful legacy which is our Tahoe Heritage.

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

The October 22 fire which seriously damaged Rosie's Cafe, a popular Tahoe City eatery, may be the demise of the structure, which is approaching 50 years old and is situated on a piece of real estate which saw commercial use even before the turn of the century.

Tahoe City resident Lillian Vernon Farr says her records of the property indicate that the earliest structure on the site was a stable, one of two livery barns built by James Cardwell. An adjoining barn to the east (site of the Vernon Building today) was used for carriages, and later autos. When the barn burned to the ground in 1933, C.W. "Bill" Vernon and his wife Ethel Joslin Vernon built their two-story block residence on its foundations.

By 1938, horses were no longer commonplace in Tahoe City, and sometime between that year and 1941, an enterprising Mediteranean type named Sam Landesburg built an open-air produce stand next door, on the site of the former stables. The business was necessarily seasonal, owing to its lack of walls, but Landesburg's success gradually allowed expansion into such varied sidelines as hardware, dry goods, and a soda fountain lunch counter, which was situated where both of the subsequent businesses (The Hearthstone and Rosie's) located their bars.

Landesburg is remembered by his patrons as an entrepreneur in the true mercantile tradition, who could almost unfailingly produce a desired article from somewhere in the depths of his extensive inventory. Sam's Market remained a fixture on the local scene until 1951, when he sold the business and quietly disappeared from view, over the hill to no-one-remembers-where.

His successors were partners Jack Dunne and Dinty Moore. Jack and Dinty's Market included a meat counter where (in the partnership's early years) shoppers could procure, in addition to more cuts of meat, such exotic flesh as venison, now outlawed for sale. Moore's wife Robbie was generally found behind the lone checkstand, while Dinty himself (in a somewhat supervisoral capacity) could usually be discovered on the porch, chair tilted back against the storefront.

Partners Moore (who died in a house fire almost twenty years ago) and Dunne (now a resident of Grass Valley) sold the business in 1963 to another partnership. Peter Johnson and John Sproehnle were joint proprietors of The Hearthstone. This uproariously successful, bistro-tavern featured steak, spareribs, spirits and "gifts of whimsy" on its bill of fare. The Hearthstone logo consisted of a rather angular cherub seated astride a keg of brew, a barberpole looming fortuitously in the background, while a hooved quadraped of indeterminite species looked on, its meaning remembered by only a handful today.

Johnson, a later Sproehnle, bowed out of the enterprise, and the building, now owned by Franz Fassbender and Walter Pfeifer, is leased to Sue Dunsford, D.B.A. Rosie's Cafe. Whether the business is able to continue in any form at the location, in light of the restrictive governmental attitudes regarding reconstruction, remains to be seen. This dining hot-spot's future will be the history of another era, yet its popularity of the recent past suggests the success of anything with which Ms. Dunsford can see fit to replace it.

Fall of 1958

Carol Van Etten Collection

Life @ the Lake
1958 Van Tattler

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

THIS IS NOW . . .

THAT WAS THEN

THE WINTER OF '58

Despite the fact that winter is still nearly a month away by the calendar, the season as observed locally is in full swing. Most year-round residents of the Lake Tahoe basin look forward to the arrival of winter, which signals a return to the seasonal pleasures that are characteristic of the high country. With the area's ski resorts back in operation, visitors are once again making their weekend pilgrimages to our slopes and ski trails, and promoters of local tourism are doing everything possible to present local attractions in the most appealing light.

A generation ago, such was not the case. Prior to the 1960 Winter Olympics held at Squaw Valley, winter tourism was relatively unknown at Tahoe. Most businesses in the basin were strictly seasonal, closing their doors soon after Labor Day, or at least by the first snowfall. Local publications of the late 1950s did not feel any responsibility to tout the area's amenities, as these rather ambivalent remarks in mid-November 1958 issue of the **Tahoe Tattler** attest:

"Left here to face the oncoming winter with a stout heart are those of us who tingle with the excitement

Winter was even more confining in the past than it is now. A case in point was the Vernon Building in downtown Tahoe City. Upstairs was the residence of Judge C.W. "Bill" Vernon and his wife, Ethel. (Photo courtesy of Vince Cardinale)

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to tout the area's attributes, as these words remarks in mid-November 1958 issue of the **Tahoe Tattler** attest.

"Left here to face the oncoming winter with a stout heart are those of us who tingle with the excitement of the challenge, determined to keep warm regardless of what comes our way, and sure we'll enjoy every part of it we can, especially those of us who have no other choice. It's surprising what having no choice can do."

Not that there was much to attract the prospective visitor in winter. Road closures were more frequent and more prolonged than they are these days. The number of plows and graders available to clear the existing highways were but a fraction of today's force. Interstate 80 was still on the drawing board, and the trip down the icy Rainbow Road (highway 40) which wound breathtakingly down from Donner Summit was enough to discourage most travelers from venturing into the Sierras by auto.

Yet, there was really no need to maintain better access. At that time, commercial ski operations in the north shore area were limited to Granlibakken, Deer Park and Squaw Valley. This latter concern, still a long way from emergence as a world-class ski mecca, had just expanded its facilities with the addition of the KT22 lift, making three up-mountain conveyances at the fledgling resort.

The cost of living at the Lake in 1958 was comparatively inexpensive - at that time more like the cost of living anywhere else. Realtor Charles Beardsley, with the offices at the Tahoe City Wye, advertised two and three-room apartments for rent, ranging in price from $49.50 to $85 per month (the latter price including lights, water and snow removal). Beardsley's "Best Buy" house for sale was listed at $7,200, with $1,200 down. Lots went for about $2,500 to $4,000.

Competing realtor Max Hoff advertised that he had more people who wanted lake front homes than he had homes to offer. "If you have something to sell," his ads pleaded, "at an honest price - won't you please let me know. We can then make the buyers happy, you will be happy, and I will be DELERIOUS (sic)."

Locals comprised a much more close-knit community in those days, where everyone knew everyone else and social activity was highlighted by events of the school, church and club calendars. As fall turned to winter in that year of 1958, residents looked forward to such activities as the Tahoe-Truckee PTA Scholarship Dinner (only slightly marred by a power outage which forced the farming-out of cooking chores to several Truckee restaurants with good supplies of gas).

Winter was even more confining in the past than it is now. A case in point was the Vernon Building in downtown Tahoe City. Upstairs was the residence of

Another big event on the fall calendar that year was the Harvest Ball Barn Dance, sponsored by the Tahoe City Twirlers, featuring caller Herman Henke (husband of the local kindergarten teacher). A Buffet Dinner Dance and Winter Fashion Show presented by the Tahoe Squaws (a popular women's group whose name might be considered somewhat anti-feminist today) was slated for November at the Nevada Lodge.

For recent arrivals to the community, there was the Newcomers Club, which held a poolside potluck luncheon at the Cedar Glen Lodge in Tahoe Vista in Mid-October. Potlucks were a popular form of public gathering, then as now, and no less than half a dozen are publicized in the pages of the **Tattler** issues during the fall of 1958.

Eating out was comparatively inexpensive in any form. At the Crystal Bay Club, a complete chicken or "chuck wagon" steak dinner went for $1.00, and Eugene's Chalet in Crystal Bay regularly advertised a dinner special of Broiled Lobster in drawn butter for the tantalizing ticket of $3.75.

As Christmas approached, the Tattler reminded locals that a policy adopted the previous year prohibited the cutting of Christmas trees on federal land, the population having grown to the extent that the supply could not be expected to keep up with the demand.

On everyone's Christmas list was an autographed copy of the revised edition of E. B. Scott's marvelous new history of the area, **The Saga of Lake Tahoe**, retailing for a hefty $15.00. The Tahoe City Rotary Club was once again preparing for their annual children's party beneath the Big Tree, and the local Girl Scout troop, which included such familiar names as Karen McBride, Stephanie Snyder, Cathy Conners and Julie Anne Bechdolt, was busy with their pine cone project, destined for patients at DeWitt Hospital.

A Christmas issue **Tattler** editorial was remarkably prophetic in its forecast for the new year. The editor wrote: "A new shopping center (now the Lighthouse Center), the addition of a promising subdivision (the Highlands) in the Tahoe City area, the finished schoolon Tahoe City and the increase of permanent population, all these things do indicate the Lake is destined for a new way of living for all of us." Indeed it was.

Judge C.W. "Bill" Vernon and his wife, Ethel. (Photo courtesy of Vince Cardinale)

Businesses had their share of access problems as well. Here, employees of Snyder Lumber in Lake Forest dig out following Mother Nature's latest tantrum. (Courtesy of Don Snyder)

Squaw Valley was hardly a world-class resort in the 1950s, as this photo, taken from the deck of Squaw Valley Lodge, attests.

Photo courtesy of Jim Williamson

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten

Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

High Sierra Mush

Down through the ages, mankind has tended to prefer play to work, turning the contrivances born of necessity to more trivial purposes in his leisure time. Perhaps owing to the species' inbred tendency toward competition, athletic pursuits have traditionally been accorded an importance shared by few other activities which are not germane to human existence.

In snowy climes, dogsledding has developed as such a pastime. While Alaska's vast expanse necessitated such means of travel, the shorter geographical distances to be overcome in the Lower 48 could be traversed on skis or snowshoes, and so the activity had no practical precedents in this area. However, the romance of a driver calling to his team of dogs as they urged the sled through frozen drifts has a certain appeal which cannot be matched, and so it was perhaps inevitable that our terrain and climate would be used as the scene of use such canine-powered conveyance.

Hollywood had a hand in the area's introduction to dogsledding, for the earliest record of such activity locally seems to have been in connection with some of the many motion pictures which were filmed in and around Truckee and Lake Tahoe during the late 19-teens and early 1920s. These are the thrilling (and in some cases hilarious) tales of the Great Northwest, starring such tinsel-town notables as Charlie Chaplin, Ben Turpin and Clark Gable.

In 1926, the Southern Pacific Railroad had taken over operation of the rail line which connected Truckee and Tahoe City, and following a conversion from narrow gauge to standard size track, the way was paved for the institution of "Snowball Specials" — trains which carried passengers to the high country to observe and participate in snow sports of all kinds. End of the line was Tahoe Tavern, a grand hostelry on the shores of the Lake, about a mile south of Tahoe City.

The late Judge C.W. "Bill" Vernon of Tahoe City, chronicler of much early day winter sports activity of the area, described the dogsledding competitions staged for visitors of this later era. These were a revival of the Sierra Dog Derby, which had originally sprung up as part of the Truckee Winter Carnivals masterminded by C.F. McGlashan.

One such Sierra Dog Derby, Vernon reports, "was run on three consecutive days - February 10, 11 and 12, 1929. The race course was from Truckee to Tahoe Tavern and back. The uphill course was over a trail east of the Truckee River, by way of Beartrap and down what is now the dump road (Jackpine Street in 1985) to Tahoe Tavern... There were nineteen dog teams of from seven to nine dogs driven by men - and one woman driver - Lydia Hutchison of Idaho. She was known as Whistling Lyd because she could whistle louder than any man.

Miss Hutchison, Vernon goes on to report, "directed her dogs, especially at the start and finish where there was noise by the throngs, with one sharp whistle for Gee, two for Haw, and a long fading whistle for Whoa. For start it was a chirping whistle."

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The drivers were almost without exception dog-racing notables, outstanding among whom was Scotty Allan, winner of the Alaskan Sweepstakes. However, Allan's malamutes proved too heavy for the comparatively short thirty-mile course, where their stamina was not such a critical factor. In spite of not finishing with a winning time, Allan was a popular favorite locally, and spent the winter in

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

"When Johnny Comes Marching Home"

Local impact of the seemingly interminable conflict known as World War II was perhaps even greater than the war's effect elsewhere in the nation. Since most commercial activity in resort areas was considered non-essential, the war years were especially lean ones for Basin businesses.

Local enterprise suffered in several key respects from the national emphasis on the war effort. During the first two years of America's involvement in the conflict, the call had gone out for non-essential scrap metal with which to mold the weapons of war, and shortly thereafter, the railroad line which connected Truckee and Tahoe City had been sacrificed for the cause. The elimination of this means of access, when combined with the rationing of gasoline, effectively kept all but the most determined visitors away.

In light of these adverse circumstances, many local prewar proprietors who had not been called to one or the other branches of the Armed Services voluntarily closed their doors and relocated "down the hill" for the duration - to places where factories with defense contracts offered plenty of work at good wages.

Soldiers and sailors on leave found Lake Tahoe a virtual paradise and resolved to return when peace was restored. Those essential local businesses which somehow managed to stay in operation during the war years gratefully welcomed the return of the proverbial Johnnies with the coming of spring in 1946. The local economy would never be quite the same again.

Servicemen who found themselves weary of the sticky tropics of the South Pacific or the over-crowded rubble of the European theatre were eager to return home - or better yet, to the pristine expanse of the Sierra Nevada, where they could do some catching up on lives which had been for so long deprived. A brighter day, when they would once again find themselves in God's Country, served as the sustaining thought for many soldiers under fire in distant lands, and it followed naturally that some of these sought out the source of their solace at war's end.

The spring of 1946 saw a flurry of activity at the Lake, with returnees and newcomers to the area putting into action the dreams which had been formulated and revised during the long years of the War. Proprietors of most "duration" enterprises were planning some kind of expansion or improvement with the promise of a busy summer season, and would-be entrepreneurs were plentiful. On every front, the wheels of peacetime progress were being once again set into motion, driving the economy to a virtual boom status.

In June, Greyhound instituted daily express buses from San Francisco, restoring comparatively good access from the Bay Area. Two north shore cab companies provided public transportation within the area: Tahoe Cab Company served both Al Tahoe and Kings Beach, while Lake Cab was dispatched out of the Richfield Station in Tahoe City.

Places to go and things to do sprang up on the horizon as if after a long sleep. It seemed that suddenly everyone had a yen to eat out, and the list of local restaurants grew in number and variety. Among fledgling eateries in the summer of 1946 were Iturreria's Place, a Lake Forest restaurant specializing in French and Spanish cuisine.

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Yvonne's at Veren Villa in Crystal Bay was another of the more refined dining offerings. Walt's Coffee Shop in Tahoe City provided some middle ground, with the Here 'Tis Drive Inn in Kings Beach ("Watch for the Neon Sign") doing a brisk business. In the novelty category was Pronto Pups, a wagon in the shape of a giant wiener which held sway that year just across the bridge from Tahoe City.

If a visitor wanted to secure a more permanent status in the Tahoe Basin, real estate was easy to come by: A number of new subdivisions sprang up that year, among them Tahoe Heights, Ward Creek and Rubicon Properties. At the south end of the Lake, 50' x 100' lots in Al Tahoe (none more than four blocks from the Lake) were offered at $750 and up. Other property was similarly priced.

Shortages were commonplace at the Lake, as elsewhere, during that first summer following the War. A July issue of *Tahoe Topics* - first local periodical to find its way into print in peacetime - noted that Tahoe Tavern photographer Fred Bennett had been seen "hopping a bus to San Francisco for some flash bulbs," with the comment, "He must known the right people . . . he got them." However, in the wake of even more serious deprivations, the citizenry found little to complain about. They had finally come "home," and whether old timers or new arrivals, they had come to stay.

The end.

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

"SKY LODGE"

The placid demeanor of the Tahoe City's Sky Lodge Building, on Tahoe City's "miracle mile" between Victoria Station and Alpine Liquor and Sporting Goods, belies its colorful past. During its formative years, the structure housed a drug store/soda fountain as well as a restaurant-bar downstairs, while at one time the second story was headquarters for ladies of the evening.

Best guesses by long-time locals associated with the building put its construction at about 1940. Lillian King, daughter of the couple who founded a rather unsuccessful seasonal restaurant in their street-front commercial building, later inherited the property. With her husband Joe King, a popular local character for whom Kings Beach was named, she managed the property with more imagination.

The two story structure at the back of the lot had served as residence for Mrs. King's parents, but soon some changes were in evidence. It was during this dimly-lit period of the building's history that several "disreputable characters from the Bay Area" acquired the lease on the upstairs of the street-front structure, and soon several ladies of ill-repute were installed in the rooms. However, the outrage of some local citizens proved an obstacle to commercial success and the venture was short-lived.

Soon after this flirtation with infamy, the building recovered some of its former dignity with the opening of a branch of the Loynd family drug stores, which once upon a time included locations in Kings Beach and Homewood. Jay Shontz, an employee in the business who had worked at each of the several outlets, eventually purchased the Tahoe City operation, which he continued under the name Jay's Drugs.

Next door to Shontz, on the Atherton's Market (later Kehoe's Market) side, was Sky Lodge Bar, a popular local watering hole and eatery. In the building's early days, this concession was operated by Les Wisler. Later, Frank

Turner was connected with the bar operation for a time before its acquisition by Tony Donadio, with whom it is most often associated.

The bar's liquor license was of the seasonal variety, with a 90-day annual closure mandated by law. It was during those breeches of business, according to a reminiscent off-season patron, that locals would occasionally purchase alcohol elsewhere and then repair to the relative seclusion of Tony's to consume it.

Even the bar's open season was sometimes insufficient to occupy the agile intellect of one former Ski Lodge bartender. This same wit, for want of better entertainment, suspended an apple through the bar ceiling one night, connecting the upper end of the nylon line with the bedstead of a starry-eyed honeymoon couple, and thus making for much merriment among the crowd of locals drinking downstairs. Unquestionably, the bar had not seen such a good night in some time.

Ivy Browne was the owner of record during some of the building's colorful postwar years and held a number of

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leases, including one on the Sky Lodge Service Station, which was situated across the street from the Lodge proper, (between what are now the Tahoe City Fire District building and Tahoe Marina Lodge).

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Bernard purchased the property from Ivy Browne, and, using Mr. Bernard's contracting skills, extensively remodeled both structures on the main parcel, turning the back building into office space and maintaining the storefronts on a rental basis.

It was the era of Flower Children, and an early-day "head-shop" (which later evolved into Gesenstack's) was the first new tenant in this lower end of the building following the Bernard's remodel. For a number of years, Tahoe City Health Foods has occupied this storefront.

Jay's Drugs eventually relocated to the Safeway shopping center (space presently occupied by the post office) and the Sky Lodge vacancy was filled in 1979 by Alpenglow Sports. Proprietor Don Fyfe explains that the building is presently owned and managed by a corporation known as White Dog Properties — a far cry from the shaggy dogs of yesteryear, but doubtless better suited to the Tahoe City of today.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

"WHO'S A TURKEY?"

While Ben Franklin's choice for the national bird continues to command a place of honor on the holiday table, the epithet "turkey," in contemporary jargon, has been in vogue as a term of derision for some time — perhaps owing to the parallels some see between the behavior of newcomers and that gobbling grand duke of the barnyard.

Length of association with a given geography has always been a source of pride in the human species, yet the tenure of residence which constitutes "oldtimerhood" is a matter of widely varying opinion. For some, several generations of local citizenship are considered a mark of seniority, while to more transient types, one whole winter's residence represents habitation bordering on the historical.

Skipping over the seasonal habitations of native Americans on Tahoe's north and west shores, we come to the Lake's original European settlers. It was an ill-starred stampede after gold which first brought the semblance of a population into the area.

Knoxville and Claraville, (two once-upona-towns along the Truckee River canyon which failed to live up to their advance publicity as rich gold fields) were of such proximity to Lake Bigler (as Tahoe was then known) that many miners made the short trip to Tahoe's shore. Within a few months of their birth, these two towns were returned to perfect obscurity when another gold stampede carried away the majority of the local citizenry. Yet, a dozen or so individuals found their surroundings so idyllic that they spent the winter occupying their time with such diversions as they could create for themselves in their total isolation.

Of this inital group, no known descendants have been traced — or at least none has a modern-day association with Lake Tahoe. Earliest arrivals on the north shore whose descendants still reside in the area were the brothers Pomin(e), natives of Alsace-Lorraine whose experience in the maritime realm earned them a place in Tahoe's boating history as pilots of the Lake's premiere steamers.

William Pomin(e) is said to have arrived on the local scene in 1863, and is generally given credit for surveying the townsite now known as Tahoe City and building its first hotel, the Tahoe House (on the present site of Victoria Station).

Close on the heels of the Pomin(e) brothers was Robert Montgomery Watson, who first set foot in Tahoe City in 1875. Watson engaged in a variety of pursuits before purchasing the Tahoe House from Pomin(e) in 1887. Ten years later, Watson's spirit of adventure lured him to the Yukon gold fields, where he spent several years before returning to Tahoe City, there to settle and raise a family. Watson, known as the "Pathfinder," had the respect of all who knew him and served as local constable until his death in 1932. Watson's descendants still consider the Lake "home," though their residence is now of a seasonal nature.

A large and well-known family still in local residence are descendants of Antone Russi, a Swiss dairyman who settled Lake Forest in the 1880s. Perhaps the harsh meteorological conditions in the Tahoe area discouraged the establishment and perpetuation of families other than on a seasonal basis, and though many "local" families can claim long-time summer residence, year 'round habitation for most does not precede the turn of the century.

Isolated individuals on the west shore continue the year 'round residence begun over half a century ago. George Schlumpf of Tahoe Pines, born in Truckee in 1911, became a permanent resident of the Lake in 1929. It was in 1911 that Herb Obexer's father, "Jake," arrived at Tahoe, and commenced his legendary marine enterprise, now based in Homewood.

A relatively large number of year 'round residents can trace their families' arrivals to the mid-1920s. Many more came in the years just preceding World War II, though, for the most part, these new "turkeys" were destined to be only seasonal citizens, buying property on which to build their "cabin in the pines."

The postwar "boom" brought more newcomers on the scene; the atmosphere was generally one of hospitality. The same welcome prevailed as the coming of the 1960 Olympics boosted the local population to new heights.

In the final evaluation of a person's status as a "turkey" or an "oldtimer," perhaps the basis is not so much length of time in residence, but rather the degree to which that individual shares a love and respect for what was here before he came, and will remain long after he departs.

Gray Fox

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

A FUR PIECE FROM HERE

North American Indians, whose oral almanac divided the year into "moons," called our month of November "the Beaver Moon." This referred to the fact that beaver pelts (and those of other animals) were in the most prime condition during that time, having grown thick and full for the cold season approaching, but not yet subject to the wear and tear of the animal's winter struggle for survival.

Experienced trappers regard any of the winter months as appropriate to the pursuit of their occupation, and the harsh physical demands of basin winters tend to further enhance the quality of local fur pelts in season. Trappers were among the earliest white men to visit the Tahoe region, yet prior to the turn of the century, commercial fishing was considered more profitable for those seeking their occupation outdoors, perhaps owing to the difficulty of servicing a trapline in the deep snows of the Sierra.

Hank Emmons, a backwoods type who arrived at the Lake in 1901, was one who originally found employment as a commercial fisherman. However, according to his obituary, (in the July 4, 1941 issue of the *Tahoe Tattler*), "when the California legislature enacted laws against commercial trout fishing, Hank turned to trapping . . . would run a line through the range at the east end of the Lake for mink."

The Tahoe basin in those days supported a variety and abundance of furbearing animals, including brown bear, fox, coyote, beaver, racoon, rabbit, badger, marten mink and weasel (ermine). It is interesting to note that the beaver, now considered a serious predator, is not native to the Sierras, and was imported from lower elevations with the hope of improving local trapping.

While the income derived from the sale of pelts was the primary purpose behind most local trapping activities, a few species also had a place in the trapper's diet, being the basis of many a winter stew. A well-known trapper of somewhat more recent days was John Parham, whose skill kept him supplied with oppossum, racoon and other exotic table fare in all seasons.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Bill Johnson, the "Sage of Homewood," operated a resort in that west shore community known as El Campo. An important aspect of the resort's mercantile operation was the buying and selling of furs. A number of local men generated a second income by maintaining traplines and some of these part-time trappers sold their pelts to Johnson, himself an experienced trapper.

The TAHOE NAVAL ENSIGN, an obscure wartime publication emanating out of Tahoe City, interviewed the 64 year-old Johnson in the spring of 1942. At that time, the long-time trapper described his occupation as "not nearly as profitable as in days gone by." Johnson's trapline, in the hills back of his El Campo Resort, wound past Quail Lake on its way to the upper reaches of Mt. Ellis, and yielded many a furry reward during the years in which he worked it.

The early abundance of fur bearers alluded to by Johnson must certainly have been remarkable, for following the same winter in which Johnson reported the decline of local mammalian populations, a Jameson Beach (Camp Richardson) trapper named Nick Nicholson recorded a winter take including 14 coyotes, one civit cat, 12 marten, 10 skunk, nine ermine, one racoon and one badger.

George Schlumpf of Tahoe Pines recalls that trapping was the off-duty occupation of several west shore caretakers, among them Ernie Pomin, who checked his string of traps by boat, covering half of his line at a time. An animal lover who knew Ernie well recalls that, unlike some other fur-takers, he conducted his trapping activities in a humane way, visiting the traps often and thus sparing captive animals much suffering.

Another local caretaker who engaged in trapping as a sideline was Willie Arnhold, a gardener for many years on the Ehrman estate (now Sugar Pine Point State Park). Arnhold's territory was General Creek, much of that drainage being part of the Ehrman property at that time.

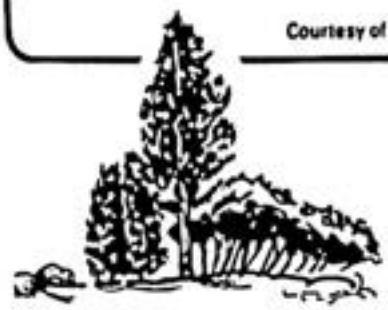
Meeks Bay, one drainage south of General Creek, was the site of a short-lived bonanza in silver fox pelts. There, an ill-starred attempt to raise silver foxes for profit went astray when the rising level of snow in their topless pens eventually permitted their escape. Trappers that year enjoyed a bumper crop of the non-native pelts, though these foxes, particularly unwary of human danger, were soon wiped out.

As recently as the late 1940s, US Forest Service Ranger Butch Beavers operated a trapline along the Truckee River corridor and it was the last to engage in the practice locally.

Today, trapping is controlled by a $40 government permit, which can be obtained only after the potential trapper has passed a test of his knowledge of proper trapping methods — this in an effort to prevent the waste of carcasses and cruelty to animals which have been decried by those who oppose the practice of trapping, even though the rigors of the pursuit prevent any serious depletion of local animal populations.

Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society



The more things change, the more they stay the same. While many of the developed portions of the Tahoe Basin bear only a passing resemblance to their appearance of half a century ago, a glimpse into our local past reveals the truth of this tired axiom: some aspects of contemporary basin life retain an amazing similarity to their place in the 1936 scene.

On the Homewood horizon, Obexer's new building was the marvel of the 1936 season, providing under its considerable roof not only staple goods and sundries, but the luxury of a resident tress tender. "This new edifice," reported the *Tahoe Tattler*, "houses a 1936 version of milady's favorite hideout ... a beauty parlor, no less."

Mrs. J. Christie, Licensed Beautician, was duly installed as proprietress of the curlworks. Cold waves were all the rage in those days before blowdryers and electric curling wands and many a cool coif graced the West Shore gathering-places in that long-ago summer season, courtesy of Mrs. Christie. Homewood continues to be the only West Shore community offering the services of a commercial beautician — two, in fact — though Obexer's Market, still a mainstay of Homewood commerce, is no longer headquarters for either "headshop."

Public transportation, an essential element in the local scene then as now, was available in 1936 in the form of two daily trains from Truckee. Standard-gauge Southern Pacific track (converted from narrow-gauge ten years earlier) connected the mill town, sixteen miles distant, with Tahoe City, its mainline terminating on the wharf at Tahoe Tavern, one mile south of town. By prior arrangement, those requiring more personal transportation could procure rental cars from Paul A. Walters in Reno.

Modern motorists who find our local highway projects a source of aggravation might be assuaged to learn of the inconveniences experienced by their 1936 counterparts in traversing the Dollar grade, where a $30,000 effort was underway to improve the road connecting Tahoe City and Cal-Neva (there was little worthy of mention in between).

The July 17 issue of the *Tahoe Tattler* reported that contractors Hemstreet and Bell had set up a camp for their men (numbering over 100) at Carnelian Bay. Blessed with "a husky steam shovel and some dump trucks," the crews were reported at midsummer to be making excellent progress toward the straightening of sharp, blind curves and the widening of narrow portions of the road.

L.C. Shank's Carnelian Village, one of the few businesses along the North Shore route, reflected a certain optimism as the season approached, adding six new cabins. Shank had also found it necessary to rebuild his wharf, thanks to an extremely high lake level the winter before.

Rayburn's Buckhorn Inn was another popular stop-over along the North Shore thoroughfare, and for visitors in search of excitement, the establishment was even the scene of a raid in that summer of 1936.

Another mile up the road, Brockway Hot Springs was the scene of still more excitement, where noted Hollywood luminaries-on-holiday (including Jeanette McDonald, Gene Raymond, Chester Morris and Groucho Marx) paid visits to the North Shore resort of the same name.

Though these commercial enterprises are now gone, a myriad of ventures founded on the same premise have since sprung up to replace them. Motion picture personalities continue to find Tahoe the ideal sport for their idle hours: witness the annual Celebrity Tennis Tournament held at the Lake each summer. Some stars have even made their homes here; though owing to their pursuit of privacy, the details regarding these local residences are secrets kept as quiet as they were in 1936.

So although the names and faces on the local scene present the outward appearance of constant change, life at the Lake nevertheless has a quality of continuity about it which — for better or for worse — the passage of time has done little to alter.

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Our Tahoe Heritage

By Carol Van Etten
Courtesy of The North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

North Lake Tahoe has its share of "historic" restaurants, some operating under the same roof or ownership for as much as half a century. One local eatery - Honker's Bar and Grill - has a claim on relative antiquity by virtue of the structure in which it is operated - one which predates every other commercial building on Tahoe's north shore.

Some "history buffs" would take legitimate exception to this statement on the grounds that the building has undergone such sweeping renovations that it scarcely resembles its original proportions or facade. Yet history of the building's basic structure dates back nearly a century to the late 1880s, when it served quite a different purpose - and in a different location.

Some basic history of the Lake Tahoe region necessarily comes into play in a discussion of this building's past. During the 1870s and 1880s, our local economy was based on the lumber industry, most of the raw timber being "boomed" across the Lake to the then-thriving community of Glenbrook (on Tahoe's east shore) for processing into lumber or cordwood.

However, when the mines of the Comstock Lode (the destination of most of Tahoe's lumber) began to close down, Glenbrook's economy folded along with it. As the town's mills began to close, the Bliss family interests in Glenbrook, heavily concentrated in lumbering at that time, were gradually being redirected to a new industry: tourism. As industrial development on the east shore (including 5 mills, at one point) was not compatible with the scenic vistas pleasing to visitors, the Bliss family interests in Glenbrook were relocated to Tahoe City.

From 1899 to 1901, the Bliss interests - and indeed most of Glenbrook - underwent a relocation of amazing proportions, moving "lock, stock and barrel" to Tahoe City - by barge. All travel around the basin at that time was by water, since no road circled the Lake, and during this period of upheaval, the sight of these transient structures enroute to relocation, became commonplace. Many company houses, used by employees in Glenbrook, were thus ferried to their new homes across the Lake, where they were put to the same purpose on the bluff above the Lake Tahoe Transportation Company property.

Among these houses was one belonging to Andrew Jackson Sumpter, a faithful employee of the Bliss Company in Glenbrook who, with his new bride, Annie Mattie Fick Sumpter, had first taken up residence in the house in 1891. Following the mass relocation to Tahoe City, the Sumpters resumed occupancy of their house, now situated on Front Street (Hwy. 28), just east of its intersection with Grove Street.

The precise date of Sumpter's demise is uncertain, but a *Tahoe Tattler* of 1936 records the fact that he celebrated his 74th birthday in the house on May 19 of that year, marking 44 years in the same residence - on both sides of the Lake.

Subsequent occupants of the house were Captain Arthur Brodehl and his family, renters for a short period of time just before the war. Tahoe City Constable Harry Johanson followed the Brodehl's brief tenancy, purchasing the building in a 1943 auction. Johanson's woodworking skill soon wrought many changes and improvements in the rather plain frame structure, including a unique and beautiful mantelpiece which welcomed his guests with a meticulously carved greeting in Swedish, the Constable's native tongue.

Johanson moved to Sparks, Nevada following his retirement in 1968, and the house was sold to a business partnership which opened the building to the public in 1971. This enterprise, which enjoyed a successful decade of operation under the name Tomfoolery, changed hands once again during the fall of 1982.

The building underwent extensive remodelling under its new ownership, emerging in January of 1983 as Honker's Bar and Grill. It continues under that name today, an attractive dining establishment in its own right, yet bearing only the remotest resemblance to its original appearance of a century ago.

Should have included photo credit to Lillian Vernon Farr & photo cap.

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