

CALIFORNIA'S FIRST SWELL SUMMER RESORT

ANECDOTES AND MEMORIES OF THE VACATION PEOPLE IN THE DAYS OF GOLD.

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WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS? Ask the graybeards and they will tell you that the first fashionable summer resort that California boasted of was the White Sulphur Springs of Napa Valley. To-day nothing remains of the once famous resort but the tottering walls. All vestige of its former popularity has been effaced by the years. The sulphur springs still trickle, but none save the wayfarer quaffs.

Time was when youth and beauty, on pleasure bent, made merry at the springs. It was the only fashionable summer resort and society checked its saratogas there.

People did not ask "Where are you going this summer?" It was White Sulphur Springs or nowhere. The Californians, the hospitable ranchers, usually had their houses crammed with guests. But White Sulphur Springs was always down on the programme for the summer. Never a bud or belle considered her summer complete without a jaunt to the springs.

Since those days summer resorts have sprung up thicker than mushrooms. Of all grades and prices, it is possible for those not born in lavender to have their outing. As a consequence Society, with a capital S, has taken a fancy to country houses. Summer resorts have lost their prestige with the "400," who only make short pilgrimages to the ultra-fashionable ones and then lie back to their own green hedges that hide them from hot polloi.

But during the reign of White Sulphur Springs society beamed on the institution. It made them feel more civilized to know that the State could boast of a fashionable resort. It was very delightful to

visit the ranches, but a trip to the springs sounded better in the letters "back East." However, society did not betake itself to White Sulphur Springs merely because it was the thing to do. Mirth was king there and the spirit of good comradeship pervaded every nook and corner. In those days society was not so complex as it is now and the lines were not drawn so fine. The Blue Book was less bulky and "everybody knew everybody." There were no social fences, for there were no fifty warring "sets."

It was a day's journey to the springs from San Francisco. The little steamer Gaudaloupe, under charge of Captain Pat Dowling, took the guests as far as Napa City. It was a pleasant trip and the demon of mal de mer seldom stalked the decks. They sailed up the bay and then followed the windings of Napa Creek to the town. Thence the journey was by stage, over dusty roads and slippery "sidelines," more numerous than dangerous, though the command to "sit well to the right or left," as the case might be, made the heart feminine do a two-step.

The stage usually reached the hotel at nightfall. The guests were always there, en masse, to greet the newcomers and see whether any expected friends were aboard. Those hearty greetings in novice resembled the lognetic inspection of today.

The hotel was considered a fine one, and it was handsome for those times. A two-story frame building, it had long wings on either side, surrounded by broad balconies, upon which the windows opened. It stood on an elevation on the west side of the canyon, thickly wooded hills rising on either side, and further down was the flower garden, through which rippled the brook. The three sulphur springs which gave the resort its name were hot, tepid and cold, and were flanked by bath-houses.

For amusement the men had billiards,

a bowling alley, shooting—before the heat of summer dried up the watercourses—riding and driving. After dinner the chairs and tables were pushed back, the violinist and harpist mounted a table, and presto, "change!" A ballroom was made while you waited. Saturday night was the great night, for most of the city beaux came up to stay over Sunday.

John Wise carried off the honors of the ballroom one season. He literally won out "at a walk." Noticing one of the elderly ladies drooping among the wall flowers, out of kindness of heart he asked her to take a promenade around the ballroom. She responded with alacrity and proved too much of a sprinter for Wise, who finally exhausted from the number of "turns" and the heat of the evening, suggested that she might like to sit down. "No, sir," replied the dame, "I haven't had any exercise for several days and I'm going to make up for it to-night!" Naturally Mr. Wise did not play the philanthropist again.

Commodore Farragut was in command

of Mare Island navy yard before the war and with his winsome wife was a yearly visitor at White Sulphur Springs. The commodore could out-Chesterfield Beau Brummel and was extremely fond of dancing the minuet and courtly waltzes, which he danced with all ceremony, holding his partner at arm's length, circling round and round the room in the three-step of the long-ago.

When dancing grew wearisome, there was always room for one more in the adjoining parlor, where card games, gay or absorbing, held sway. A favorite diversion was to cry "bat!" and immediately Mrs. Governor Johnson would gather up her skirts and fly. Bats occasionally flew in through the open window, and some one had told Mrs. Johnson that bats had a particular penchant for ladies' tresses. Mrs. Johnson had very beautiful hair, which she wore in flowing ringlets.

On Sunday the guests assembled in the parlor, where General Joshua Haven read from a volume of quaint but wholesome old sermons. In the evening there was al-

ways sacred music. Miss Lucy twin (now Mrs. E. J. Coleman), Mrs. George Guthrie and Douglas Saunders led the hymns. They were beautiful Sabbaths and very different from those of to-day at the summer resorts.

Among the yearly guests at White Sulphur during the heyday of its reign were Mrs. Gwin and Miss Lucy Gwin, Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Vandewater, General Joshua and Mrs. Haven, Governor and Mrs. John V. Weller, Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Brewster, Miss Moore, the Misses Arrington, Miss Lucy Judge, Mrs. George Guthrie, Mrs. Dan Murphy and her sister, Mrs. George Logan, Miss Maggie Middleton, Judge Crockett and Miss Carrie Crockett, Mrs. Judge Terry, Mrs. J. H. Kinkaid, Mr. and Mrs. Murray Morrison, Mrs. Governor Johnson, Mrs. Dick Sinton, Miss Martha Scott (Mrs. Nick Kittle), Mrs. C. L. Weller, Mrs. Ojier, Miss Addie Mills (Mrs. A. M. Easton), Miss Mollie (Mrs. F. F. Low), Mrs. A. G. Abell, Mrs. J. H. Redington, Miss Rosa Gore and many others.

Among the beaux were Eph Leonard, who as the owner of "Harry Clay" and an open buggy was a great favorite with the ladies; John Wise, Billy Botts, George Penn Johnson, Milton S. Latham, Harry Logan, Alfred Godeffroy, Peter Naylor of New York, Douglas Saunders, George Fiske of Sacramento, W. E. Dumeron, Judge McKinstry, Judge Macrea, Dr. R. P. Ashe, Joe Lawrence, Joe McKibben, James Otis, Henry Norton, William C. Little, Henry Tricou, Lafayette Hammond and the naval officers from Mare Island or a wearer of the buttons from Benicia.

The army and navy contingent gave the place the splash of gold lace so dear to the ladies. The naval officers could drive over for at least a day or two at a time, so that there was always a fair sprinkling of shoulder straps among the civilians. Benicia was a more important station then, and always sent a squad of gay

young officers to help keep the ball rolling at White Sulphur Springs.

The Southern element prevailed in society in those days, and the guests of the springs were usually P. F. V. or of equally distinguished ancestry. The climate in Napa Valley was as warm and balmy as the South, and the ladies, away from the fog and winds of San Francisco, lived and dressed as they did "down South." Gathered together under one roof in that soft, sunny weather life slipped away as serenely as at a Southern Springs was William Stone Botts, known to his intimates as "Billy Botts." He was a young Virginian, a nephew of the Governor of that State, and a protégé of Mrs. Senator Gwin. The first swallow brought "Billy Botts" to the springs and he stayed until the leaves began to turn.

Billy Botts was the acknowledged society leader "just befo' de war." Ned Greenway at his best never wielded accepter half so powerful. An affair without Billy Botts was flatter than an egg without salt. He was always gay and debonair, a tireless dancer and an accomplished dimer-out.

Never a debutante was launched upon the social sea without the aid of Billy Botts. He was the guide, philosopher and friend who steered the buds clear of the snags that block social success.

At White Sulphur Springs Billy Botts was King Carnival. He it was who planned lunches and moonlight drives, who saw that all went smoothly. It was an axiom that if Billy Botts had his finger in a merry-making pie it was bound to be a success. He played leading part in a serio-comedy that set society agog. It was at a masquerade planned by Billy himself, who went as a court lady, sacrificing his mustache for the occasion. How well he carried the part, how he was mistaken for a damsel and proposed to is the star page in the unwritten history of White Sulphur Springs.

"Billy" artfully brought the bashful swim to the proposing point, which was more than the maiden herself had ever managed to do. When the deluded lover discovered his mistake he fled the ballroom. It was said he could never gather up sufficient courage to propose to the maiden at whose feet he thought he had laid his heart. Certain it was that she married another.

An incident often told by those who made yearly visits to White Sulphur Springs clearly shows how thoroughly congenial the guests were. An Englishman stopped there at nightfall. From the general appearance of the place he judged it was a hotel, but the hearty greeting of the host was so unlike that of the usual landlord that he came to the conclusion that he was a Californian entertaining his friends in the lavish manner native to the soil. The Englishman was made to feel perfectly at home by the guests and departed on the morrow. He merely thanked the landlord profusely, hoped that some day he would be able to return the compliment and, swinging into his saddle, was off.

A handsome pipe sent later to the landlord from England proved how sincere was the Englishman's gratitude and how entirely he had mistaken the character of the place. This one incident tells the whole story. It is the keynote to the life at White Sulphur Springs.

The years have brought their changes and the hand of time has fallen heavily on the once popular resort. Other fashionable resorts rose and wrested the honors from it. At length it became a "back number" and finally was abandoned and fell into decay.

To-day California's first fashionable resort is nothing but a memory. But to those who visited White Sulphur Springs it is the most pleasant memory in their book of summer resorts.