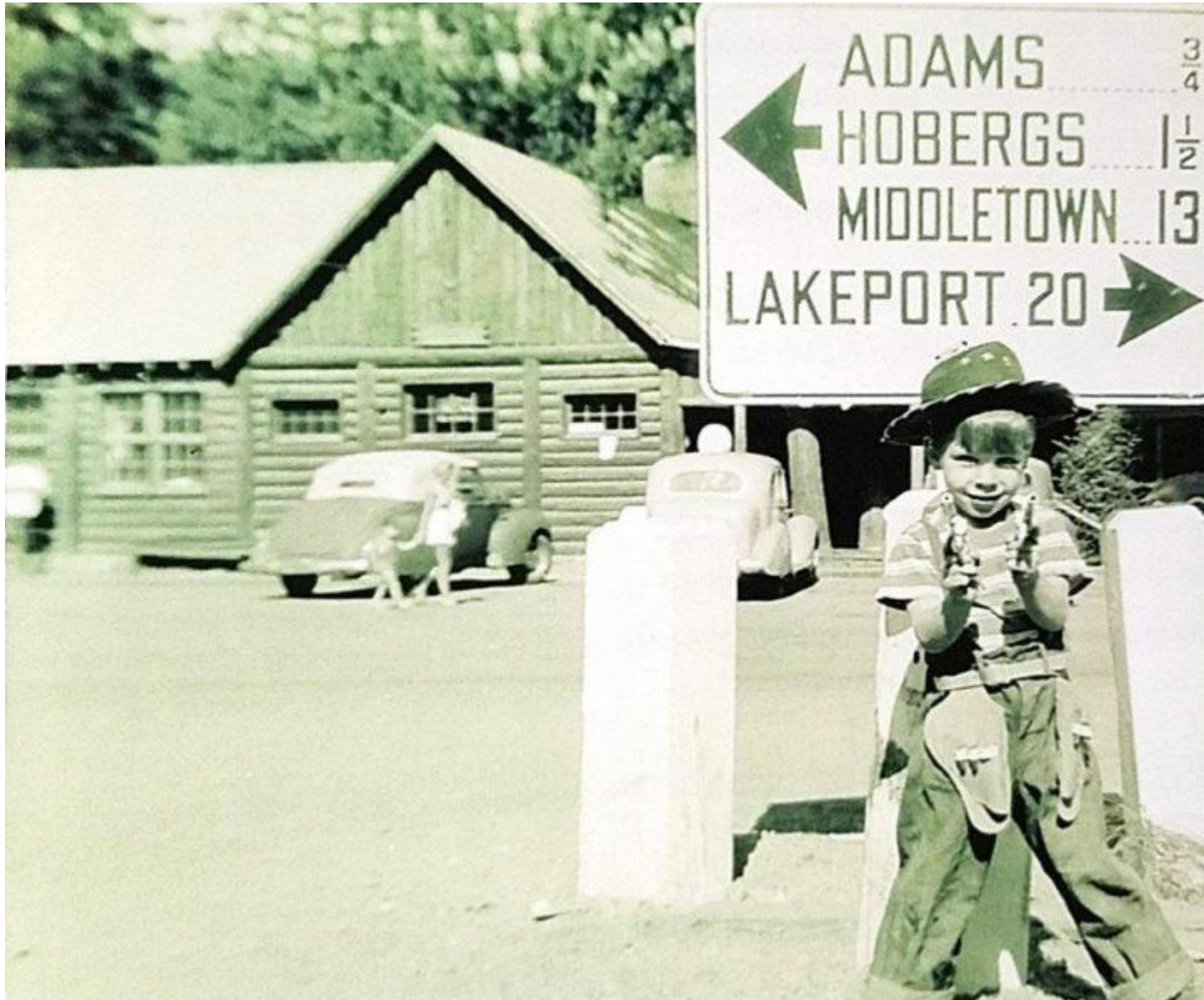


# The Story of Adams Springs, Loch Lomond, and the Prather Family

by DAVID WAKEFIELD



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## THE SPRINGS THAT MADE LAKE COUNTY FAMOUS: ADAMS SPRINGS

Where once stood a kitchen, only an old stove remains. It lays on the ground, flopped on its side, once-white enamel slowly rusting to grey-brown. Sheet metal and tin scatter across the grounds, holding back the scotch broom and blackberry bushes. Bedsprings jauntily poke out of the creekbed, sagged and twisted. Among the debris, a thick piece of handblown glass dating from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century sits, only a small slice of what once was a gallon jug. The winter sun barely pokes through the hazy sky.

It doesn't look like the map Steve Prather had scribbled on the bottom of a 24 pack of 7-Up a week earlier. His map had squares on it, marking houses and the location of the spring. I look at the torn piece of cardboard in my hand one more time, then look up. There's nothing here. Only couple of flat spots in a steep-walled notch that drops down into the depths of Big Canyon. In the tip of the notch, some fir and pine trees that made it through the Valley Fire still stand. A trickle of a creek winds through them, shaded in the depths.



I squint, trying to see any hint of the life and vibrancy that once lived in this place. Old pipes poke out of the ground in a rusty jumble. More broken glass litters the creek. But as I scan further up into the tree-darkened mountain, a fountain appears, hidden by broken tree branches and overgrown grass. It rises out of the ground like it had always been there, slowly appearing as the mountain eroded over millennia around it.



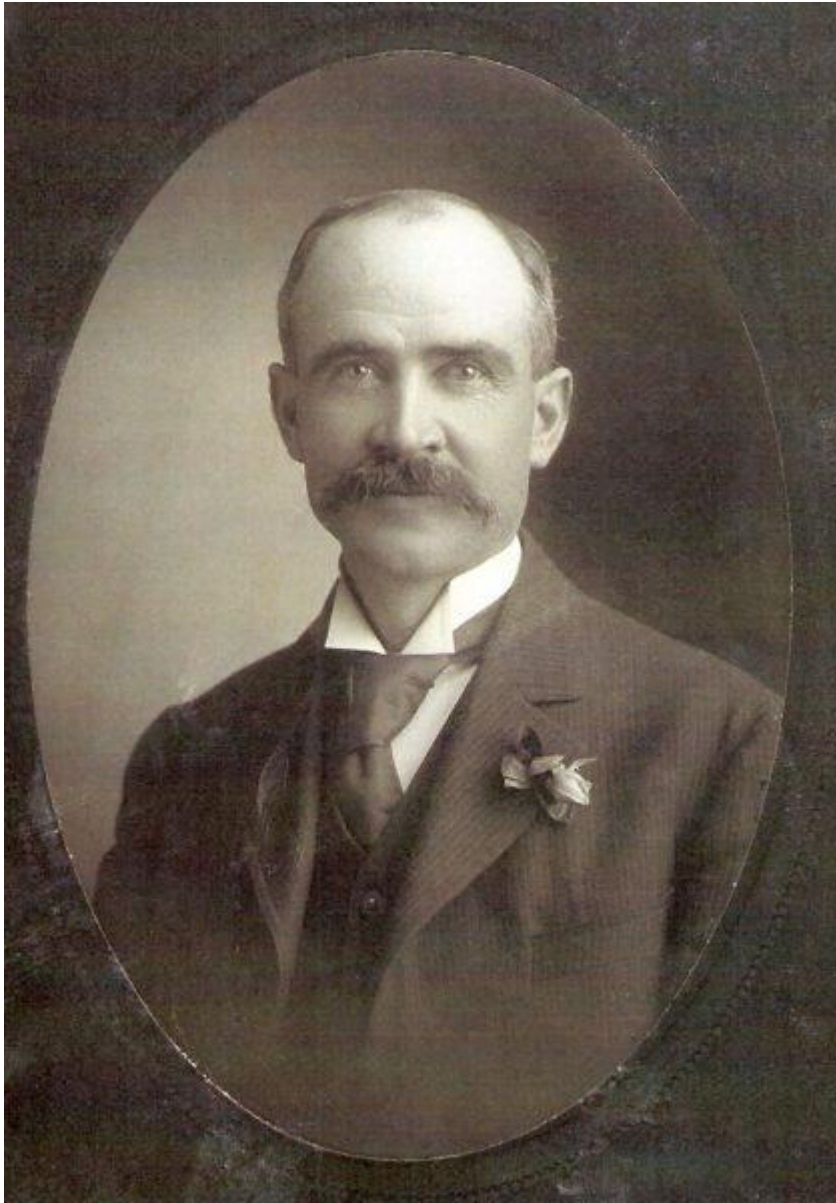
The Fountain.

Covered in moss and peppered by small fir trees growing in its circumference, it's all that remains of Adams Springs. In its heyday, people from all over the world came to partake of its famous carbonated mineral waters, enjoy nature, and soak in the Northern California sunshine. Depending on the decade, they showed up in covered wagons, Model T's, or Camaros



to stay anywhere from a weekend to a few months. The valley must have echoed then with the sounds of big band music, children's laughter, and the murmur of conversation.

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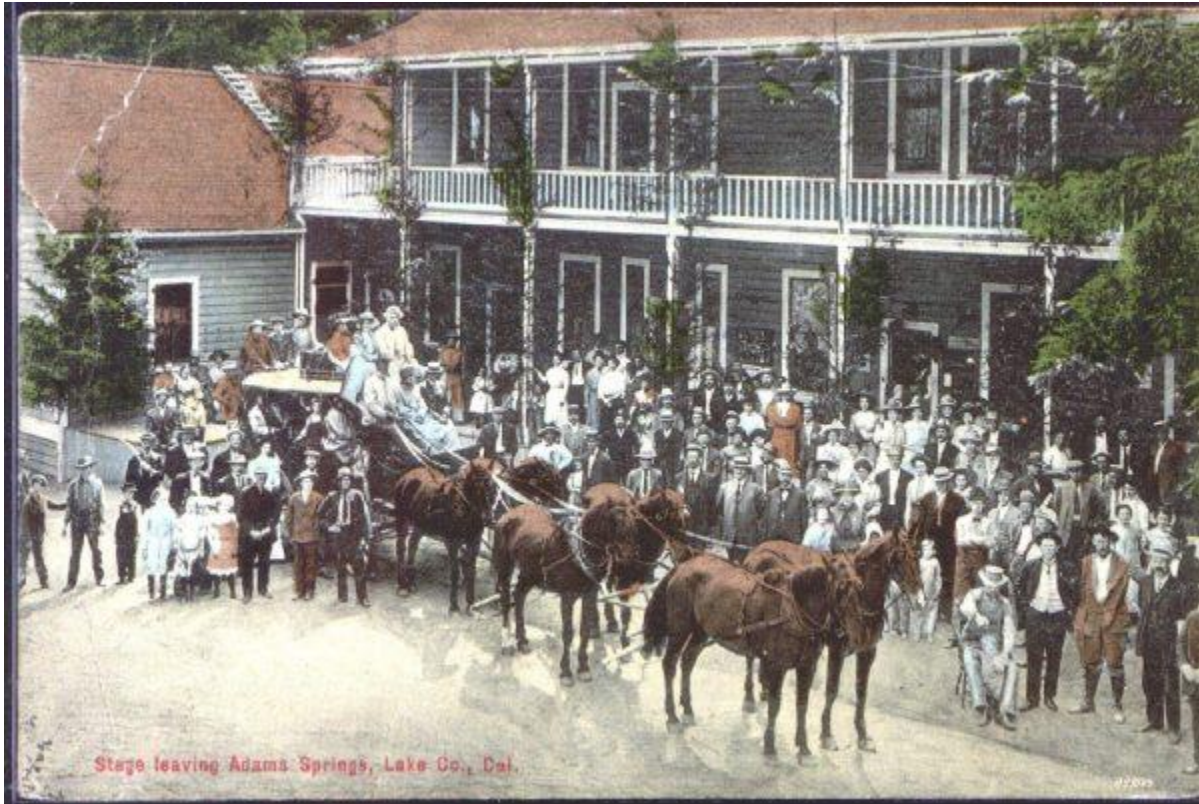
W. R. Prather. Photo courtesy

Douglas Prather.

William Robert Prather, known as W. R. to some, Doctor Prather to others, was not much like his dad. His father, a self-taught dentist (Yes, that was possible then), ran a successful business and wanted the same for his son. But W. R. had different plans. After finishing dental school and passing exams to be a doctor, he immediately chose another lifestyle. W. R. bought a small tent campground next to a mineral spring in the Mayacamas Mountains of Lake County and quickly transformed it into a world-class health spa: people came flocking from all over the world to “take the waters.” Adams’ Springs natural carbonation and unique combination of minerals made it popular with the guests.

W. R. was always an innovator, looking for opportunities to grow and gain an advantage over his many other competitors. In the heyday of the hot springs, Lake, Napa, Sonoma, and Mendocino counties were chock full of mineral spring resorts, all touting the benefits of their waters. But W. R. was a smart promoter. One of W. R.’s crowning triumphs was to bring electricity to Adams Springs. Desirous to have electric lights for his clients, he wrote Thomas Edison in the late 1890’s. And Edison wrote back, giving not just detailed instructions on how to create a Pelton

Wheel in Big Canyon Creek, but also where to get the necessary supplies. W. R. took Edison's advice, and Adams Springs had electricity before the city of Santa Rosa.



the

stage leaving Adams Springs. Photo credit Rick White.

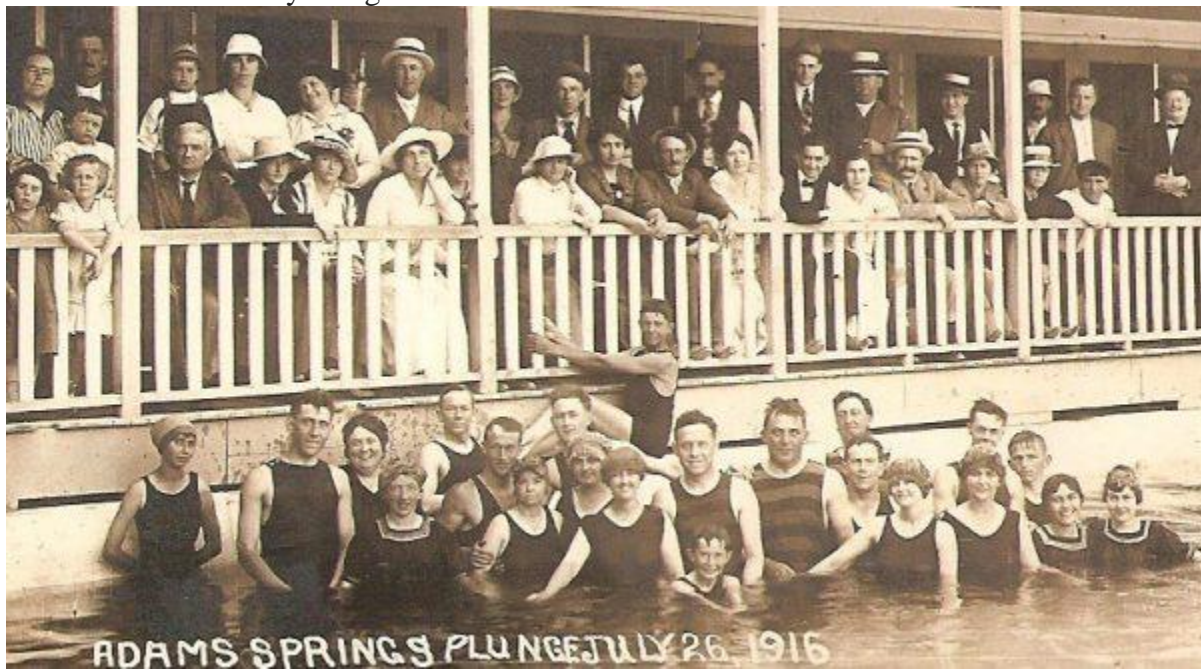
Where the Adams Springs golf course is now, W. R. planted orchards and ran his own farms and herds. Of course, to ensure that the guests were happy, he offered, according to historian Nina Bouska, “An on-site physician, barber shop, salon, a power plant and Adams Springs’ own post office were on the premises as well as a candy store, soda fountain and darkroom where guests could develop their film and print photos.”

Soon, W. R. had added multiple cabins and campsites, including tent cabins that surrounded the concrete and rock fountain; within a few years Adams Springs was able to accommodate over nearly four hundred guests. And people kept pouring in, due largely in part to W. R.’s extensive advertising. He placed full page ads in numerous newspapers, created flyers, brochures, and matchbooks to send out, and aggressively touted the superiority of Adams Springs, calling it “The Springs That Made Lake County Famous.”





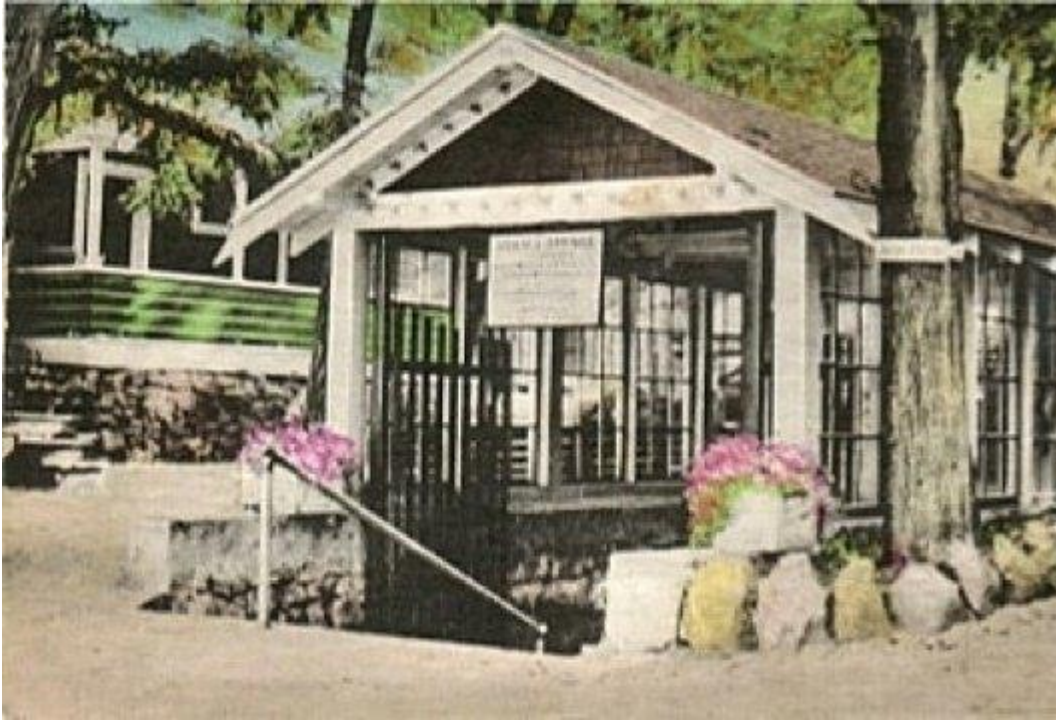
Cabins. Photo courtesy Doug Prather.



Guests posing at the pool, 1916. Photo courtesy Doug Prather

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But it's impossible to tell from the old photos where anything is now. Steve's map helps. I turn it sideways, then look again. There's the old spring house over there. I can tell by the size and shape of the rock foundations. The wooden housing is gone and all that remains are a few pipes and charred lumber. The Valley Fire in 2015 likely burned whatever was left. Before then, it housed the famous Adams Springs. The water sat in the ground, and guests would lower a bucket down into the spring, pull it up, and imbibe the carbonated, mineraly waters.



The spring

house. Photo courtesy Rick White.

People came from miles around to enjoy the uniquely flavored water. Historian Lyman Palmer was not impressed, however. In his 1881 History of Napa and Lake Counties, he says, “If you wish to know how it tastes just get a piece of tarred rope from some sailing vessel and chew it. That taste is its twin sister.” According to Nina Bouska, “Analysis of the waters showed it contained magnesium, soda, lime, silica, sodium chloride, organic matter, and iron with traces of potash and nitric acid. It was said to be healing for liver and kidney complaints and for malaria and dyspepsia.”

When I ask the Prathers about it, I get mixed responses. “It tastes. . .” Danny Prather pauses, thinking. “Funny.”

“It’s. . . different,” his brother Steve adds.

“You know, it’s got this . . . taste,” Danny continues. “It’s . . . unusual.”

“But they had this thing,” brother Mike says. “Next to the spring on the wall, like a little faucet. And you could put it in your water.”

“It was lemonade flavoring,” Danny chips in. “They called it Adams Springs lemonade.”

Needless to say, I’m disappointed when I can’t find the original springs. But a small trickle creeps out of the ground further up the hillside, where the cottages of the workers clung to the side of a steep gully. A small pool of water rests there, a twisted bedspring crazily cartwheeling out of a pile of tangled brush nearby. This pool must be the same water source as Adams Springs. The spring house sits right next to the creek. Carefully, I dip the edge of my water bottle in the puddle of clear water and take a closer look. It’s clean-looking, not orange-colored or chunky. There’s no smell, from what I can tell. What the hell, I think, and take a sip.

It’s. . . different. A first it just tastes like a glass of water, but then the other flavors start to come out. There’s something about it that leaves a strange taste in my mouth. Chalk? Paste? No, it’s near, but not quite like that. I take another sip. Yup, it’s weird. It has to be the magnesium and lime combined. One more sip, and that’s enough. It’s definitely medicinal, for sure. It just tastes healthy.





A water bottle label. Photo courtesy

Museums of Lake County.

W. R. added a new resort building on the hillside in 1927, extending the reach of Adams Springs until it filled a large area off of Highway 175. This hotel was much more magnificent, a large building sitting on the edge of Big Canyon. Its many windows and large, wraparound deck created a perfect space for the type of vacationer: the automobile tourist.

Adams Springs moved into the next era of its existence, one that would last through World War II. W. R., always the publicist, brought in the famed Merced Band to play some tunes “whenever guests desire to indulge in a hop.” Every evening, after dinner, the band would start up and the dance floor filled. And the swinging jazz music filled the pine-scented mountain air as the summer day’s heat slowly cooled until the crisp night took over and the stars speckled the clean air.

It was a good time to be in Lake County; resorts dotted the Cobb Mountain area. Because people had to ration their gas during WWII, most people from the bay area could only drive so far. And Lake County was just the right distance. People would save up their gas ration coupons and they could just make it up to Adams Springs. For most of the guests, each Friday night worked the same: Dad, getting off work somewhere in the city, would make the drive up to the resort to meet up with Mom and the kids, who had rented a cabin and spent the week in the mountains. After dinner, and, once the kids went to bed, Mom and Dad would head to the bar/ballroom for a

nightcap. All weekend the kids played, swimming at the pool, horseback riding, or hiking. Mom and Dad had a few drinks to work off Friday night's hangover and to get them ready for Saturday night's dancing, bingo, and, at Adam's Springs, gambling. Then, Sunday evening or early Monday morning, Dad would leave again to the city, to work through the week before coming back up for another weekend of partying and fun.



The resort at its

peak. Photo courtesy Rick White.

But in 1943, the new resort burned. Lilburn Prather, known to most as Bob, was there that day. "The resort was full when the new hotel on the hill burned to the ground," he says, remembering back to the moment. "The two small fire trucks that were on the scene were completely inadequate to stop the fire; the water turned to steam in the air before it reached the flames. Jim and I tried to save some of the cars, but they were too hot to touch."

Guests stood in the parking lot and on the hotel balcony, watching it burn. The hotel quickly became fully engulfed and was a total loss. One woman, distraught over the loss of her jewelry, ran back into the building, and died from asphyxiation.

W. R. Prather never saw his life work go up in flames. He had passed away five years earlier at his home in Southern California.

His second son Clarence Prather had taken over by then, and kept the resort running for several more years, slowly losing income each year, until Adams Springs Resort was finally sold and the massive amounts of debt incurred paid off. The land was broken up and sold in pieces.





Photo courtesy Museums of Lake County.

The old resort in the valley remained, closed and unused, until it became condemned and was deliberately burned in the sixties. Now there's not much left; no post office, no horse corral or tennis courts. The hiking trails have overgrown, leaving only little indents in the mountainside to indicate their existence. All the young families grew older, and their children who used to play shuffleboard and ride their bikes around the resort became parents and grandparents themselves. Only the brick fountain standing underneath the pines and a few memories remain of the hotel.



Photo Credit: Douglas Prather.

## **A CHILDHOOD IN THE MOUNTAINS: THE BEGINNING OF LOCH LOMOND RESORT**

In 1936, Lilburn Prather, W. R.'s son, decided to move and start a new resort a few miles down the road from his father's resort at Adams Springs. There, on the edge of Highway 175 and hidden beneath the massive pine trees, he started building a rustic lodge. His wife Ruth, inspired by the mountain air and her Scottish heritage, named the resort that sat at the edge of a small vernal pond Loch Lomond.

Their son, Lilburn Prather, Jr., made the most of his childhood at the resort. Eighty-four years later, Trudy and I sit at his kitchen table. Known to most as Bob, his shoulders, though hunched, still stretch broadly in his flannel shirt. His son Danny sits next to him, flipping pages of a scrapbook. It's a crisp day outside, and waves from Clear Lake splash against the bulkhead. A few grebes squeak calls to each other.

Bob points a weathered finger at a photo of the resort in its early days, directing our attention to it.

"I got a picture here of the Loch Lomond Resort. This is before the bar," he says. "The bar was over here on the right. We used the porch in the middle to stow wood. Then we had no water. We had to haul water from Adams. And no electricity."

Bob leans back, takes a glance at his prepared notes, and continues. "My uncle Don Springston, brought work horses over from Adams and a scraper and scraped a place to build a house and a yard, out to the highway. Then he built a log cabin out of logs down by the field. He even split the shakes from pine. Then we built a house out of rough lumber. It had a kitchen, living room, and a hallway that had bunk beds for my brother, and that went on each side of the hallway. Then it went to a bedroom, my dad and mom's, and we had a flush toilet."





An early picture of the lodge. Photo credit Lilburn R. Prather.

Trudy and I smile, and Danny laughs. “How times have changed.”

Bob smiles, looking back in his mind to recall the years of his childhood. “That was just the beginning. There was a little lake that used to be much deeper than it is now. Sometimes my brother and I would dam it and flood the highway. Then the sheriff would complain to my mom, and we would have to take it out.”

He smiles. “The old carpenter who helped build the resort made us a little boat. We used a bed sheet for a sail and sailed around on it. One time my dad put lights all around it. It was so beautiful to see it at night. There would be a million pollywogs there.” Bob laughs. “The tree frogs would get in the shower, and we’d have guests complain.”

“He also drove a car across the Golden Gate bridge when he was ten years old,” Danny says.

“What?”

Bob smiles. “We started driving really young. One time we took one of the Model A pickups with a body on it and a rumble seat. We drove down the highway to the city.”

“That’s crazy,” Trudy adds.

Bob’s smiling now, as the memories of his childhood in the mountains return. “Where the church is now, the hill used to be a lot steeper,” he begins. “My brother Jim was driving, and I was riding with him. He could hardly see over the steering wheel. I saw the lawman go by, and said to Jim, ‘Stop!’ I got out and ran over to the driver’s seat, and Jim ran and hit behind a tree, then beat it down to the resort and locked himself in the bathroom.”

We all laugh.

“The sheriff come down, and he said to my mom, ‘I saw your kids driving on the highway. They can’t do that.’ And my mom said, well, you got all the drunks driving on the highway, and you don’t do anything.” He didn’t do anything, then. I don’t know if he was afraid to do it or not.”



The bar at Loch Lomond. Photo credit Lilburn R. Prather.

“But,” Bob looks at his notes for a second, then continues. “We kept adding cabins. Finally, by 1950, even before that, we had 19 cabins scattered around up the road there. They were all housekeeping cabins. We moved a lot of beds as we grew up, hauled the garbage.”

The scrapbook lies on the kitchen table, and Bob turns a few more pages. There’s his high school diploma. Bob drove the school bus his senior year. “Well, I had to go anyways,” he says, flipping the page, “And I made \$50 a month.”

A few pictures of Loch Lomond in several feet of snow come into view. “It was in ‘48 or ‘49,” Bob says. “Loch Lomond got about five foot then. We had an earlier snow in 37. More than three foot. We always had snow.”

“Not like now,” Trudy says, staring at the photo of men shoveling the roof of the lodge. “I can’t remember when we’ve gotten that much snow.”





Snowed in. Photo credit Lilburn R. Prather.

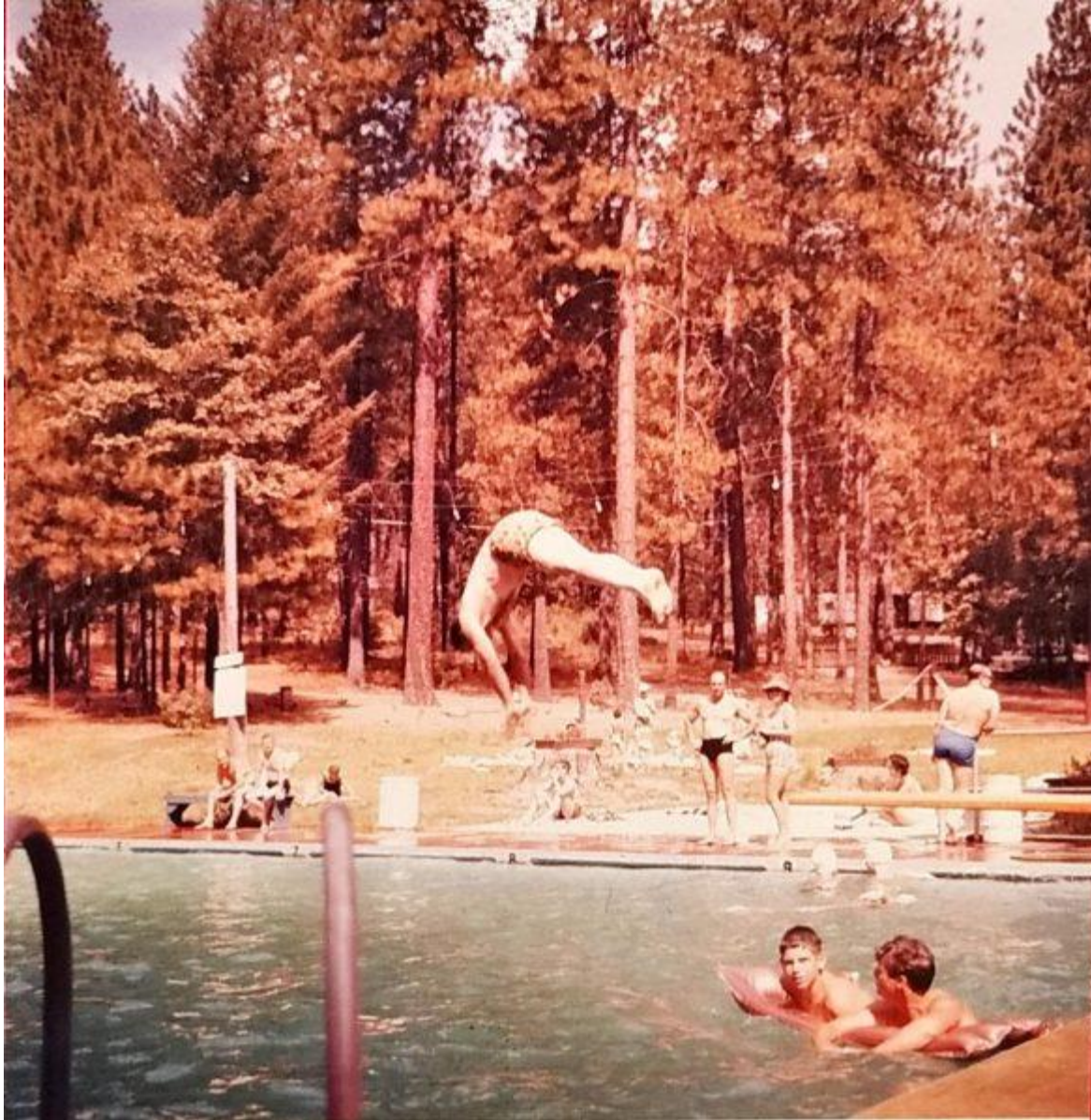
Bob turns the page again. Photos of the Loch Lomond Pool appear. For a rustic resort, one might expect a small pool. But Lilburn Prather had some of his father W. R. in him; he knew a publicity opportunity when he saw one. In 1946, he decided to build an Olympic-sized swimming pool, the largest in the area. (It's true; you can see the plaque for yourself at the Loch Lomond Market.)

“So, what was the decision to make such a large pool?” I ask, looking at a picture of at least a hundred people swimming and sunbathing.

“My dad wanted the biggest pool in the area, so he decided to make it that big,” Bob replies, matter-of-factly.

Danny pitches in. “You said you worked seventeen hours straight on it.”

“Yup. Us boys, six of us, we would take turns. There was the guy who dumped the water. That was the easy job. The gravel was next harder. The wheelbarrow was hardest yet. So, we rotated. My dad didn't want any seams in it, so we did it in a single pour. We made a rich mix, and it got harder and harder.”



The

Loch Lomond Pool. Photo credit Judy Cortesi.

“They said that they ever had to jackhammer out when they redid the pipes,” Danny says. “It was the hardest they had ever seen.”

We chat for a bit more, flipping through the pages of the scrapbook until we reach the end and somewhat reluctantly close it. “Well, that’s about it,” I say, sliding my chair backward.

“Thank you,” Trudy says. “That was special.”

Bob stands up, stretches his shoulders backward, and reaches to shake our hands. “It’s been nice,” he says.





Bob Prather at his home on the lake.



Photo Credit: Douglas Prather.

## **MEET RUTH SPRINGSTON MOODY**

To understand Loch Lomond, you need to get to know Ruth Springston (Prather) Moody. You met her last week; she's the one who named the place, helped build it, and maintained it for years.

"I loved her," says Judy Cortesi, who spent her childhood summers in Loch Lomond. "Some people didn't like her. She was tough. But she was always nice to me."

Ruth was there from the beginning. She cleaned rooms, checked guests in and out, filled in at the restaurant, ran the bar, and did everything else in between. After her divorce from Lilburn Prather, Ruth took over the resort and ran it for several years, influencing many. Her strong opinions and tough-mindedness still can be seen in her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



Ruth. Photo credit:

Douglas Prather.

She's the one who let Bob drive his brother and friends across the Golden Gate bridge at ten and dam up the pond until it crossed over the highway. She's the one who put the grandkids to work but let them play just as hard. She gave her children and grandchildren the freedom to explore the woods and mountains surrounding them.

"Grandma Moody was great," her grandson Danny Prather said.

"She'd let us do anything," his brother Steve chipped in. "She didn't care. We explored everywhere. And I've got some stories about that white Volvo she owned." Don't worry; you'll hear them over the next few weeks.

Oh, there's one more thing you need to know about Ruth Moody: She wouldn't take guff from anyone. You already about her standing down the sheriff. But there's one story that encapsulates who she was and what she meant to Loch Lomond. It's the story of a church: Our Lady of the Lake.

The church stands on the crest of a rise that slopes steeply down into Big Canyon. There Mary rests quietly under the trees, her arms reaching outward in compassion.





### Our Lady of the Lake.

The prayers for this small church nestled in a saddle of the mountain began years ago, back at Adams Springs Resort. W. R. Prather's wife Hattie and her daughter lived as devout Catholics. For years they searched for a place to build a church on the resort property, but W. R., not a particularly religious man, didn't see it as a priority.

"Use the resort's dining room for masses in the summer, and the hotel in winter," he told them.

So Hattie grew older and still had no church to attend. But before she died, her son Lilburn promised her that he would build one for her. Driven by this vow, in 1948, twelve years after the start of Loch Lomond, he set aside a piece of land for a church.

For the Prathers, it was more than just a project; it was a matter of a vow. Jim Prather (who would later design the courthouse in Lakeport) designed the plans. Wilbur Prather (who ran Lake County's only railroad) graded the lot. And Bob Prather pulled the logs. "I used my work horse, Chico, a half Clydesdale," he said. "He pulled the logs on the level ground, but as it got too steep, we had to get the rest with the tractor. All the smaller poles on the church I drug with a horse." They hauled bricks from the Sulphur Bank Mine, whose tailings were pink, for the walls. The community chipped in, and the church became a reality. And finally, Hattie's wish was granted.



Now here's where Ruth fits into that story. The Prathers had hired out some non-union carpenters to finish up the church. Now the Carpenter's Union got word of it and sent a couple "representatives" out from Ukiah to "have a talk" with them.

They sauntered into the Bar at Loch Lomond one day while Ruth, Lilburn, and the boys were hanging out. "We're going to shut down the job unless you hire union carpenters," one representative threatened.

"It's a free county," Lilburn replied. "I've got no obligation to do so."

All this time, Ruth was simmering. Finally, she exploded. "Just how do you intend to shut the job down?" she fumed.

The representative, full of himself, snapped at her. "We'll send over a goon squad," he boasted.

That was too much. Ruth, furious, yelled right back. "Well, we'll meet your good squad with a gun squad!" As she yelled, she curled up her fist, reared back, and swung at that union representative, walloping him so hard he toppled over the barstool onto the floor.

Everyone in the bar stood up, ready to fight. The union representative, bruised, humiliated, and outnumbered, beat a hasty retreat and was never seen again.





Mike, Gary, Danny, and Steve Prather at a controlled burn on their mountain.

## THE PRATHER BOYS, PART 1

Danny Prather bears a striking resemblance to his great-grandfather, William Robert. Broad-shouldered and solid-footed from years of felling trees, he hunches over the steering wheel, winding among dirt roads that zigzag across the mountainside. A controlled burn heads into the distance off to the left, eating away at the greenbrown leaves and needles and leaving behind a smoldering haze.

I first met Danny at The Roadhouse, Loch Lomond's long-time, and now closed, bar, where he and his brothers would regularly play music together.

"We got it from our mother," Gary Prather told me when I asked him about how musical his family was. "Not from Dad. He used to say that the only thing he ever could play is the radio." A gifted pianist, Evelyn could play almost anything. "You can't forget Evelyn," said Judy Cortesi, who spent her summers in Loch Lomond. "Ruth may have been the first lady of Loch Lomond, but Evelyn was the second. She was amazing, especially because she's the one who raised all seven of those boys." Evelyn also loved music and enjoyed playing whenever she could. Her gift for the melodic spread to her sons, and the Prather brothers have played just about everywhere, including opening for bands like The Doobie Brothers, The Guess Who, and Kansas. Just ask Danny; he can tell you an interesting story about Billy Gibbons. And, if you're curious, Gary Prather's former band [The Graveyard 5](#) had a cult hit a few decades ago in Australia.

Danny peers through the dusty windshield as we climb a steep hill. "Some people call this Siegler Mountain," I say. The woods around spread in a patchwork of pine, fir, cedar, and oak trees, all groomed and free of undergrowth.

"Yeah, and some people call it Prather mountain," Danny quickly replies. "It's been in our family longer than anybody else's. Siegler was there only a few years." He cranes his neck to look up the road. "It looks like Gary's doing some burning," he says, slowing down. "There he is!" He pulls over and begins walking up towards the burn line.

"Look at how Gary's burning it," Danny explains. Hey Gary!"

Gary looks up from his work. “Howya doin’, Danny?”

After introductions, Gary pauses for a second, rests his gloved hands on his McLeod tool, and adjusts his hat. Danny wanders off to find his other brother Mike, who’s somewhere off at the other end of the fire line. Gary starts, a smile on his face. “We burn downhill,” he says, pointing to the fire winding through the woods. “It depends on the slope and the wind. We want them both in our favor, so it just kind of backburns down. I’ve got a grandson who lives down in Loch Lomond; he’s 6<sup>th</sup> generation here. Every time we get a chance, we try to teach them why we do it, how we do it the way we do. The object to eliminate the ground fuels, but save the trees.”

Gary stretches a gloved hand and points uphill a short ways. “You see that log over there on fire?” he says. “We want those to burn up.” He points in another direction, the sleeve of his weathered yellow jacket raising and gesturing off in the distance. “You see that dead tree over there on the other side of the hill? We see them, we try to get them down as quickly as we can, and salvage the logs out of it to take to the mill and mill it out ourselves. Once in a while, we lose a tree, and the flames go up the bark. It torches up.” Gary shrugs. “About three years ago, I had that happen to a fir tree.” He points again at a fir, still green and bright. “Here.” He moves to the side a little. “You can see it right through those. You see the bottom, how it’s kind of scorched?” He smiles again, his dark sunglasses hiding his bright eyes. “But it came back to life. I thought I killed it, but it made it back.”

“Hey, bro!” Gary suddenly yells. “It’s my brother Steve. We’ve got half the clan here!” Steve pulls his truck to the side of the road and wanders up the hillside. Meanwhile, Danny pops out of the woods, walking next to Mike.

“This is my brother Mike,” Danny says, continuing the introductions. “He actually owns the cabin we’re going to go to and have a whiskey.” We shake hands. “Anyways,” Danny continues, “David was interested in stories about Loch Lomond.”

Mike immediately laughs, his thick white beard shaking with glee. “There’s lots of stories,” he smiles. “But I don’t think that many are printable.”

Gary quickly changes the subject. “Like where there dumped the trash?” he pitches in. “Up on this mountain, and unfortunately, on this piece. Look at my travel trailer, and there’s trash all over the place. I’m still finding things.” He pokes at the ground, and a partially decomposed tin can pops up.

“Yup,” Steve adds. “We’d dump it just up the mountain there. “We’d use old junk pickups and a half-track of all things.”

“Once in a while,” Mike says, “We’d pick it up with an old garden tractor. We started driving when we were about ten.”

“I remember driving the old Volvo when I was ten or eleven,” Steve says. All the brothers laugh.

“I’ve got stories about that Volvo,” Danny smiles.

Steve looks at the fire line winding down the mountain. “Grandma Ruth Moody would drive around the mountain in that white Volvo, then drive down, and the whole mountain would be on fire behind her. She was control burning, but there was no one there to control it.”



“She would start at the top of the mountain,” Gary says, “and light matches and throw them out the window as she drove down, then let it burn down around the subdivision.” He thinks back to his childhood. “It was a wonderful place to grow up. We had a lot of freedom. People used to come up here and be envious of us. ‘You live here? No way?’ We’d tell them, ‘We’re going to go on vacation,’ and they’d look at us strange. “This is vacation.”

Mike chips in. “‘No, this is home,’ we’d tell them. ‘We’re going to Yosemite.’”

“Hey,” Danny says to his brothers. “We’re headin’ to the cabin. We can tell more stories there over a whiskey.”



Mike Prather’s cabin on the mountain.

## THE PRATHER BOYS, PART 2

In the days when Loch Lomond Resort still ran, seven Prather brothers roamed the mountain, raising hell wherever they went (Those are their words, not mine): Steve, Mike, Gary, Danny, Donny, Timmy, and Darryl. At Mike’s cabin/bar on Prather mountain, I’m chatting with three of them. Danny’s rummaging through the icebox for ice while Steve and I sit at the table and talk about the past. A few minutes later, Mike walks in, takes off his coat, and kicks back in a chair. The cabin’s made entirely of wood from the mountain, milled on-site, and built by the Prathers. Framed pictures of bobcats, cougars, and bears caught in a game camera line one wall, surrounded by old guns hanging from hooks.

“That gun up there was behind the bar in at the resort,” Mike says, leaning back in the chair and pointing to the top right gun. It’s weathered and worn, and I’m certain has stories of its own to tell. “Well,” he pauses, “It’s that one or the one below it.”

Next to me, Steve pulls out his tablet. “You know,” he says, poking at the screen. “I was writing some stuff, too.” He opens a file and begins scrolling through a long, single-spaced document. “You’re welcome to look at it. Basically, it’s like a life story I’m writing for my unborn great-great-grandchildren so that they know who I was. I call it the Best Parts of Life.” He looks closer at the screen and begins quickly reading:

“The best parts of life are all the little parts added up. There is no best part of life. Every day you take something to enjoy, and they add up.”



Inside the cabin.

Danny sets four red plastic cups on the table, pours in three fingers of Crown Royal in each, and tops them off with 7-Up. “When do I get them?” he interrupts. “When do I get the best parts?”

“The best parts will eventually get there,” Steve says.

“Well,” Danny says, raising his cup in a toast. “This is the best part right here.” We all raise our cups and have a drink.

“It’s a part of the little parts, you know,” Steve says. Momentarily distracted from reading, he starts to reminisce. “As far as we go, we’ve done everything from logging to guitar playing.”

Mike, caught up in the conversation, chips in. “We worked in the campground store.”

“Yup,” Steve replies. “I tell you what, I’m going to read some to you.” He begins scrolling back and forth on the tablet, trying to find the spot. “Here it is.” He begins reading, quickly rushing through sentences.

“I had to stock shelves with groceries after hand-labeling them with prices, wash the fingerprints off the display cases, and mop those huge floors, which I absolutely hated doing. I had to count back change for the customers. I had to pump gas, and wash windshields, and check oil levels because it was what they called a service station. Comic books were just showing up, and during silent moments I would read the Superman or Batman ones, being very careful not to bend the pages before putting them back into the magazine rack.”

By the time Steve Prather was spending his afternoon reading comics in the store, Loch Lomond Resort was in full swing. It had moved beyond the years of no electricity and having to haul water, and the lodge had more than just indoor plumbing. When it was running at its peak, it had a large front entrance that opened into a vaulted lobby with a hand-hewn timber ceiling. There, a massive fireplace sat; it would take two men to load the six-foot logs that burned in its midst. Chairs stood in the lobby, freshly cut ferns and dogwood blossoms rested in vases on the table. Near the lobby stood the dining room, which offered all kinds of high-quality food, from steaks to fried chicken. At the side of the dining room was a milkshake counter, where anyone could pick up a burger or malted, then take it outside to the flagstone patio and enjoy a lunch overlooking the waving grass in the vernal pond.





A

bear caught on game camera visiting the cabin.

Steve's once again interrupted as the door swings open, and a mountain of a man wedges himself through.

"Hey, Terry," everyone cheers. "This is Terry Andersen. He's been around forever," Danny says, popping up from the table to get him a drink. "We're telling David here stories about growing up in Loch Lomond."

"Grandma sold a guy a lot for \$500 and wrote it on the back of the placemat," Mike immediately begins. Terry chips right in, his bass voice rumbling like a muscle car.

"I'll never forget," he says, his beard stretching halfway down his chest. "It was 1958. My family was in the campground, and my dad went for a ride. He ended up in the bar at the resort. He came back and said, 'We just bought a lot. We're going to build a house up here.'"

"Grandma Moody would write up bills of sale for the lots on the back of a placemat," Danny explains. "We used to have one of the placemats showing the sale."

"Is she the one with the white Volvo?" I ask. Everyone laughs.

"She let us drive any vehicle they owned," Danny smiles. "She didn't care."

"I think between all of us, we wrecked every car they owned," Terry says.

"We all started driving around ten," Steve adds. We had an old pickup. We'd keep it in low gear, so all you had to do was turn the key. It started in gear, you know. Either Mike would run the

gas pedal, and I would steer, or vice versa. We'd stand on the seat and drive around the mountain."

"Steve and I tag-teamed," Mike says, sipping on his drink. "Neither one of us could see over the windshield. One of us would stand on the seat and steer, and the other would work the pedals. But that white Volvo," he smiles. "Me and Andy and Terry were driving it to Hobergs, and the steering wheel came off, and I was in the middle. Andy just panicked. He didn't try to put the brakes on, he just went over the cliff." Mike belly laughs.

Terry talks between his booming laugh. "He handed me the steering wheel. 'You drive,' he said. I gave it back to him and told him, 'No, you drive.' Over the cliff we went. I remember looking out and thinking; this is going to be ugly. But it turned out okay. There was a fir tree about six inches thick that stopped us."

"You should tell David about your motorcycle ride over to Hobergs, when Andy ran into Rose Pezzolo," Danny pitches in between the laughter. Terry readily agrees, takes a deep breath, and, like a practiced storyteller, begins to talk.

"Rose, she had a blue Cadillac, like a '56. Now, we were all on a Honda 50, going up to Hoberg's." He pauses. "We were going up to check out the girls. We come around the corner, and Andy was going too fast, and we drifted into the other lane. He hit the edge of Rose's Cadillac and was catapulted up and went up and over." He cartwheels his hands, showing how both the bike and Andy somersaulted over the yellow Caddy. The room explodes in laughter.

He landed on his feet somehow," Mike chuckles. "He was running so fast, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry."

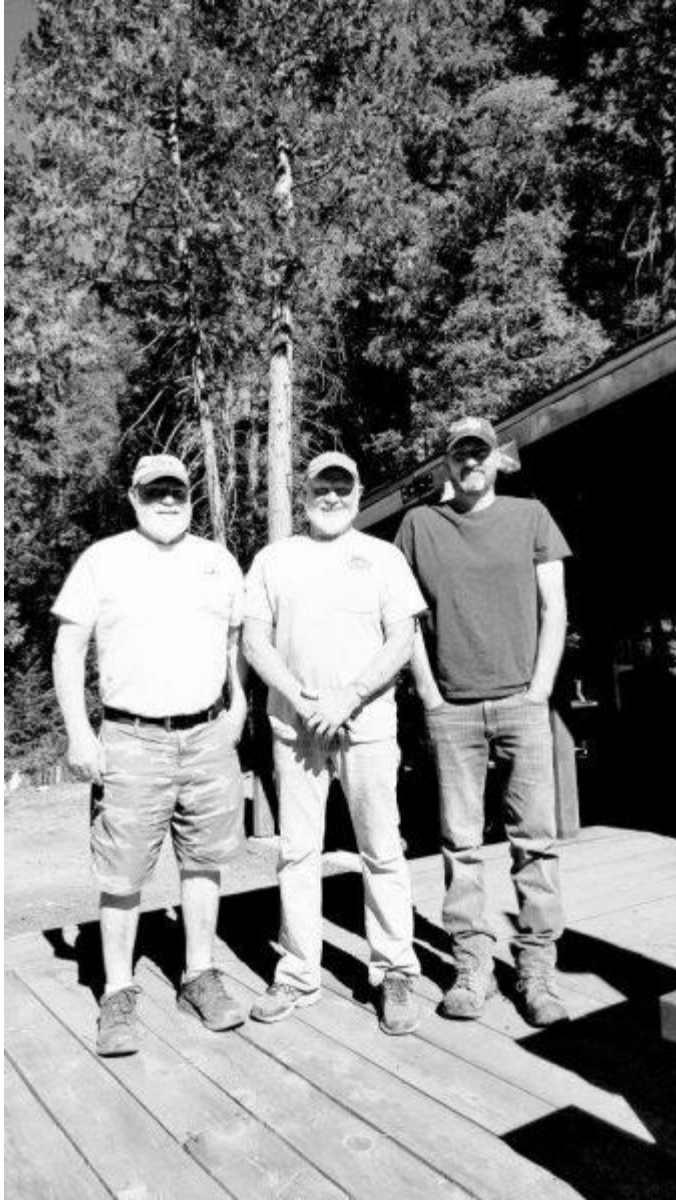
Terry continues through the laughter. "I remember when Rose got back to Loch Lomond, she was in there going, 'Goddamn it, I need a shot.'"

The cabin's warm, filled with laughter. Outside, the February sun has already sunk behind the mountain, leaving a pale winter twilight. My red plastic cup sits empty on the table, the ice slowly melting.

"You want a refill?" Danny asks, reaching for a can of 7-Up. "I gotta get goin' soon."

"Nah, I'm good," I say. "But before we head out, I've got a question." I grab my phone and turn off the recorder. "So, what are some of the stories you can't tell on tape?" Everyone laughs.

"Well," Danny says, leaning forward, a big grin on his face. "Let me tell you one about Tommy Tutone."



(L to R) Mike, his brother Steve, and Mike's son Chris.

## **SUMMERS IN THE PINES**

Soon after setting up the lodge for Loch Lomond, Lilburn and Ruth Prather (Moody) opened a campground, had the land subdivided, and began selling lots. At this time in America's history, a working-class family could own a vacation home. And the Loch Lomond Resort was no exception: If someone wandered into the bar on a Saturday afternoon, they could have a chat with Ruth, and she'd write up a deed of sale on the placemat. For \$500, a person could buy a lot and build a cabin.

Ralph and Rose Pezzolo, an Italian couple who spent their summers in Loch Lomond giving accordion lessons, were some of the first. Pupils would come up from the city for a week or a summer, learn the accordion, and fall in love with the place. Of course, many ended up buying a lot and telling their friends and family, who also bought lots. Soon Loch Lomond, the resort with the Scottish name, became filled with Italian families. Reading the cabins' nameplates is like a tour of Italy: Biggi, Faenzi, Restani, Martinelli.

From Memorial Day to Labor Day, Loch Lomond filled with families from the city. Every day, people could more than fill their time with activities. Bingo games ran on a regular schedule, and there always was the Olympic-sized pool to enjoy. Then there were weekend hayrides, Scrabble tables, bocce games, outdoor movies, horseback riding, innumerable, over-the-top dinners, and accordion dances at the Pezzolo's.



But for many families, their summers in the mountains weren't just about playing. They spent their weekends building cabins, some more successfully than others. These cabins represent some of the best and worst styles of the 1940s and 50s, some looking like forest service lodges, others like two decades of haphazard weekend projects cobbled into a livable space.

Fortunately, more skilled craftsmen built our home. It sits just above three other cabins, all built by Italo "Dea" Faenzi, his brother Romi, brother-in-law John Tavoni, and the Mullins and Ansaldo clan for their families. "My dad and Uncle Romi spent weekends up here building this," Deanna Faenzi-Glass says one night over dinner at our place. "And they built it for my dad's brother and sister, Romeo and Juliet." Deanna continues, her dark eyes sparkling as she talks. "They made it so they both could come up here with their families."

That explains the house's somewhat unique layout, a perfect mirror image: two bedrooms separated by a bathroom on either side of the house with a kitchen and living room stretching down the middle.

Deanna laughs. "It was Romeo on one side and Juliet on the other."

It's a warm evening in late July, and Deanna and Madelyn Martinelli sit around the table on our patio, chatting over dinner. They have birthdays within a week of mine, so Trudy and I had them up to celebrate. Both spent their summers up here as kids and have celebrated their birthdays together for decades.

"We decided every year we'd party for a week on our birthdays," Madelyn says to me, sipping on a glass of wine.

"But we're getting old, David," Deanna adds. "I'm 70, and I don't know how much longer we're going to be able to go on partying like this."

Madelyn smiles and turns to her food. Since we moved to Loch Lomond, Trudy and I have learned quite a bit about Italian cooking. But the truth of it is we don't know much. So perhaps we shouldn't have served pasta.

"Do you like the gravy?" Trudy asks as Madelyn takes a bite.

"At least that's what I think it is," I say. "I was told it was an authentic Italian gravy recipe."



Deanna at age ten riding a horse in Loch Lomond. Photo courtesy Deanna Faenzi-Glass.

Madelyn swallows and wipes her mouth with her napkin. “It’s good,” she says, “but this isn’t what I thought was gravy. The gravy my mother used to make was a dark sauce with roast and mushrooms.”

“You know,” Deanna says, trying to be polite. “It’s probably from a different region of Italy. They all have different recipes.” Then she begins telling the story of a long trip she took to Italy. Deanna’s always got a story, and they’re all good ones. She was pregnant on tour with Grace Slick and Jefferson Starship and hung out with Janis Joplin and The Grateful Dead. Talking with her is like taking a trip through two decades of great music. (“She blew my mind,” my son said one day after talking to her. “When I asked her if she had ever met Ringo Starr, she told me he was a nice guy!”)

“Could you pass me some bread?” Deanna asks, taking a break from her story.

I hand it to her.

“Grazie.” She takes the bowl, sets it down, and puts a piece on her plate.

“Prego,” I reply, using one of my three Italian words.

She looks at me and smiles, then says something in Italian.



A photo from young Madelyn's modeling portfolio. Photo courtesy Madelyn Martinelli.

"Don't get your hopes up," I say. "That's about all I know."

Deanna winks. "We'll make an Italian of you yet," she replies. "Don't you worry."

As dinner winds down, Madelyn pulls out a binder filled with newspaper clippings and photographs. For twenty-nine years, she has run the Loch Lomond Mail Express. She's the first person Trudy and I met when we moved up, and she's always been a wealth of knowledge about the area.

"I know you were looking for information, so I brought this," she says and begins to flip through her book. Trudy, Deanna, and I arch our necks to see each page.

"Ooh, look at this," she says, pulling out a copy of "Cobb Connection," a newspaper column she wrote for the Middletown Times-Star. "This one's about Andy Goske. He was the chef for Adams Springs. Do you remember him?"

"I remember him," Deanna says. "He made the best blackberry pies."

Madelyn flips the page, and a photograph of Hoberg's airport appears, the runway lined with planes. A DC-3 sits at the corner of the image, probably some band in to play for the weekend.



“Hoberg’s had the big bands come in,” Madelyn says. “Glenn Miller played there, if you know who he is.”

She flips the page again, revealing a photograph of Howard Springs Resort. “People would party all night at Hobergs, then go to Howard Springs to work off their hangovers,” Madelyn laughs. “It was more health-oriented. There were different springs with different minerals in them, like magnesium or sulfur.”



A photo of Paul Hoberg Airport in its heyday. Photo courtesy Madelyn Martinelli.

“You could go from resort to resort back then,” Deanna says. “And there was always something going on.”

It’s true; resorts dotted the entire Cobb Mountain area. Even the resort of Loch Lomond had smaller resorts in it: Pezzolo’s, now called Italian Village, is still known for its incredible family-style dinners. Overseen by Maria Angelli, people sit side-by-side at long tables, laughing, chatting, and drinking wine while teenagers serve platters heaped with bread, salad, pasta, and meat, just like their parents did before them.

It’s also the scene of my first truly Italian eating experience.

Trudy and I had been to Italian Village’s dinners and enjoyed them, so we decided to bring up another couple for a work dinner one night. We didn’t know them well but figured that the joy of a dinner in the mountains would compensate for any awkwardness.

We sat next to Julie Ciardella, who helps set up the dinners. While we talked with our business associates, she handed us plates of food.

“You need some more pasta,” she said to me, spooning a large pile on my recently emptied plate.

“Thank you,” I replied. The pasta was good, so I didn’t mind eating a bit more. We still had pork coming, but, figuring I could make it, cleaned my plate.

Seeing my need and realizing that I was distracted talking, Julie spooned on another pile of pasta. “Here you go,” she said.

“Thank you,” I replied again.

“You know,” Julie said, plopping some more on top of what I hadn’t finished yet. “When I was a kid, my priest told me it was a sin not to eat all your pasta.”

I looked at my plate and realized I was in trouble. But seriously, it’s a sin not to eat all the pasta? Well, I didn’t want to go to hell, so I ate it.

But the real trouble came about ten minutes later. Trudy and I kept chatting with our business associates, talking about this or that, when suddenly one became awkward. She stayed silent for a minute or two, perhaps thinking before she spoke.

“You’ve got a button undone on your shirt,” she finally blurted out.

I quickly looked down, and sure enough, all that pasta had caused me to burst, not one, but two buttons on what had been a loose shirt an hour ago. Yup, there was my stomach, sticking out and letting everyone know that I hadn’t sinned, at least according to Julie’s childhood priest. However, I pretty sure I bumped into gluttony. I quickly buttoned my shirt and tried not to act embarrassed, but the damage had been done, and Julie had done it; she popped me. But at least I’m not going to hell for not eating pasta.



Italian Village today.

Back at our dinner table, Madelyn’s moved on to a new page of her scrapbook. “Here’s one of the old Loch Lomond resort before it burned. Did you know we had our own post office?” Next to the photo is a postmark dated October 16, 1960, listing Mrs. Ruth Moody as the first Postmaster. The post office shut down in 1990, leaving room for Madelyn to start her business and keep a community mail service in Loch Lomond.

“And will you just look at this one,” she says, flipping the page again. Photographs sit on a faded yellow construction paper page. “Here’s the pool, and here’s one of a bocce tournament. We had lots of those. And this one’s of Biggi’s Resort.”

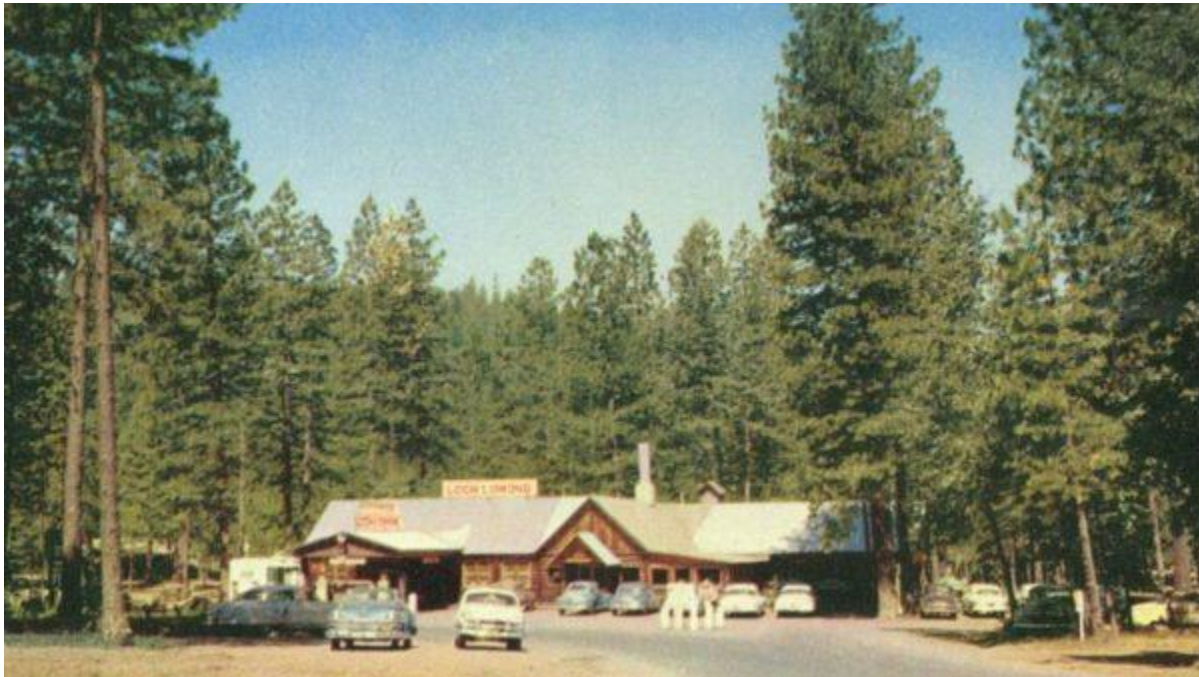
Evening twilight has turned to dark; the lights above the patio shine on the table now, creating glares on the plastic covering the photographs. We’ve chatted for several hours, and it’s time to say our goodbyes.

“Thank you for coming,” Trudy says, rising from her chair. Deanna stands up, kisses her on both cheeks and thanks her, then comes over to kiss mine. As Madelyn packs up her binder and turns to go, a thought pops into her head.

“I’ve got all kinds of other things I can show you,” She said. “I’ll let you take a look at them when you come for the mail.”

“Have a happy birthday week,” I say as the ladies walk down the steps.

“You, too,” Deanna says, heading down the stairs her father built, then down the mountainside to the cabin, also built by her father. “Ciao.”



Loch Lomond Resort in its heyday. Photo Courtesy Douglas Prather.

## **THE SUMMER OF LOVE**

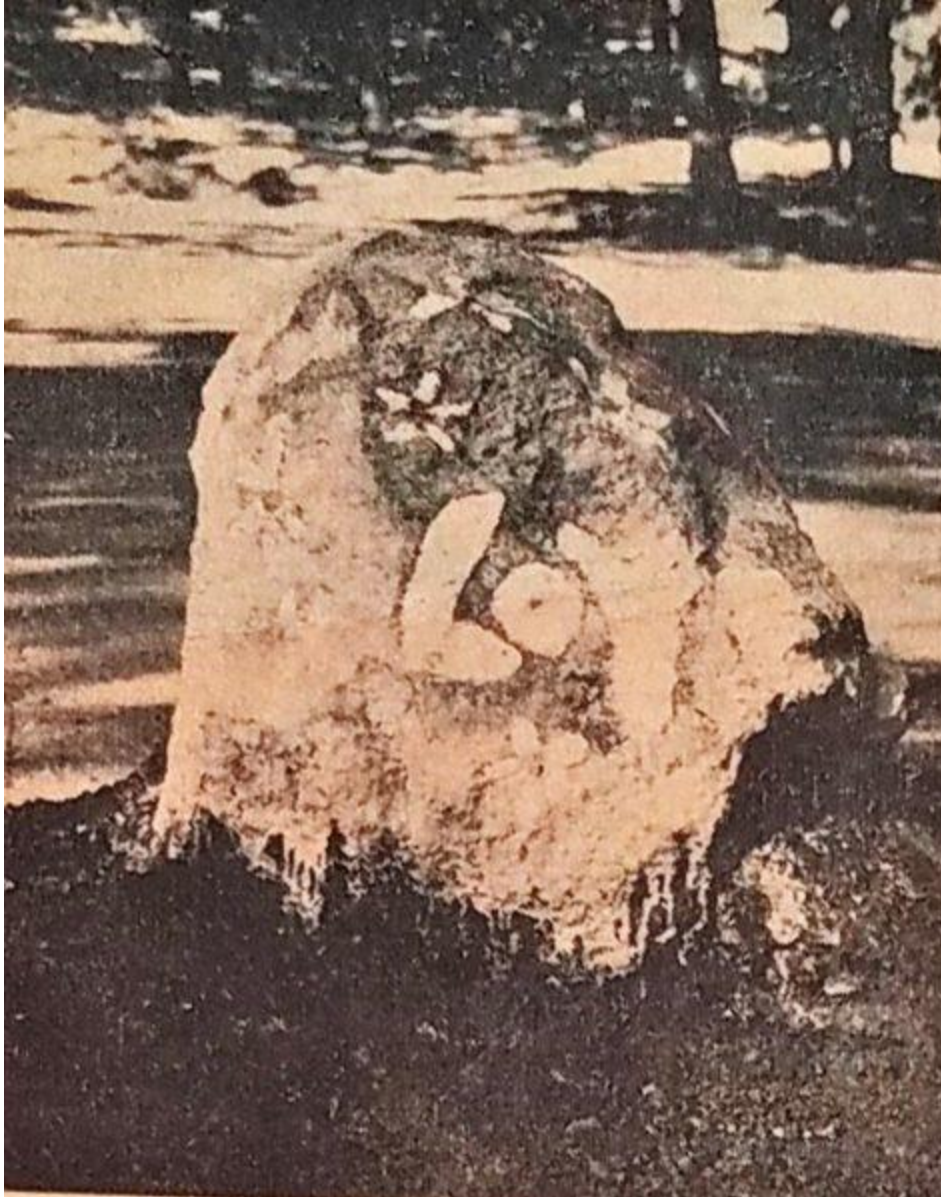
For decades, Loch Lomond Resort ran on a predictable routine, filling each year from Memorial Day to Labor Day, then emptying each winter, leaving boarded-up cabins and a few hearty year-round residents.

The summer of 1967, known in San Francisco as The Summer of Love, was an eventful year for Loch Lomond. Not only did the resort have its own hippie crisis, but it also changed forever.

### **July 27, 1967: The Hippies Come to Loch Lomond**

One day, out of nowhere, what used to be a large rock at an intersection of two Loch Lomond Roads became Daisy Love Rock. Described as “a red rock with an adornment of painted daisies and the magic word, ‘Love’,” it benevolently presided over the resort.





Daisy Love Rock.

Photo Courtesy Judy Cortesi.

Judy Cortesi's mother provided the paint for the escapade.

"We snuck over there and painted it one night," Deanna Faenzi-Glass, one of the three perpetrators, said. "We thought it was funny." But some people took it as a threat. When cabin-owner Mario Spagna, up from the city, saw the flower-covered rock, he immediately feared that hippies had invaded his peaceful mountain resort and began a one-man campaign to remove the menace. First, he painted the rock red, which the girls splashed with whitewash, leaving it pink. Not satisfied, he had the rock removed, effectively solving Loch Lomond's hippie crisis.

### **August 14, 1967: The Loch Lomond Resort Burns**

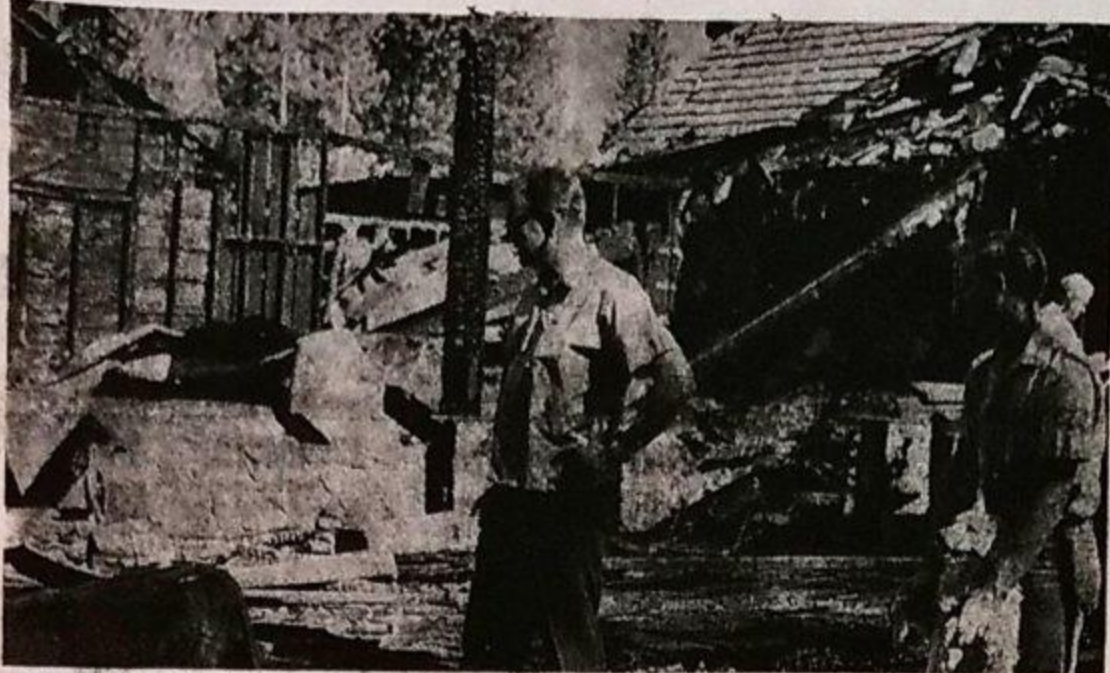
Five years earlier, a child had set a fire in a room next to the resort's kitchen, causing extensive damage before the fire department could arrive. Concerned at how long it took to get help, the community pulled together, bought a fire truck, and began to build a firehouse. Jim Prather designed the plans, and Bob Prather cut all the trusses with a chainsaw mill (If you visit the firehouse today, you can still feel where the chainsaw squared up the huge logs brought from nearby Salmina Meadow.) By 1967, the building had been completed, and all that remained was to install the eight-inch water line.



*Building the firehouse. Photo courtesy Lilburn R. Prather.*

But in the wee hours of the morning, a fire began in the kitchen. A compressor for a refrigerator ignited some cardboard boxes, turning the resort into an inferno. Harry Martin, son of the resort manager Larry, slept in the back of the store. Suddenly, he was awoken by the barking of his dog Cleo, who gave Harry just enough warning to escape. As he rushed out of the building, the roof collapsed behind him. "If it had not been for her insistent barking, Martin would not be alive today," the Record-Bee reported.





AFTERMATH of the blaze that destroyed the main building at Loch Lomond Resort early Monday morning is ruefully surveyed by John Miranda, left, one of the owners of the resort, and Harry Martin, co-owner of

the grocery store with his father, Larry. Harry holds his dog credited with saving his master's life. The dog's barking aroused the young man who was sleeping in his apartment at the rear of the building.

*Examining the remains of Loch Lomond Resort. Lake County Record-Bee, August 17, 1967.*

By then the lodge was fully engulfed, and having a brand-new fire station next door wasn't much help. "The firemen had been practicing fire drills by pulling the truck out of the firehouse and drinking beer," Bob Prather said. "So, when it came time for a real fire, they didn't know what to do. They were just sitting watching the fire when I got there. They couldn't figure out how to hook up the pumps. It was like the Keystone Cops there."

It was not until the Kelseyville Fire department showed up that they hooked up a pump and drafted water from the swimming pool. None of the trucks could hook up to the brand-new fire hydrant at the station; the cement work wasn't finished, and the water lines had yet to be connected.

### **August 24, 1967: The End**

From the Record-Bee column, "Hill Hopping Cobb Mountain." Written by Harry Martin, recently escaped from a burning building.

*Twenty-five kids poured into six sleeping bags to watch the outdoor movie at Loch Lomond. The chairs in front of Loch Lomond, which were etched and engraved by previous summer kids met their last day with these kids. . . Nothing remains but splinters.*

*With the playing of "Crystal Ship" for the last time on Labor Day, the summer will sail away and the kids will depart, zany as ever, to return again next summer.*

### **September 7, 1967: The Firehouse is Dedicated**





PLAN FUND RAISING DINNER—Ladies auxiliary of the mountain district volunteer fire department will sponsor a St. Patrick's dinner dance March 14 at Loch Lomond resort, cocktails at 6 p.m. followed by delicious food and dancing. Money raised will help build the mountain district fire house to be located on a site donated by Loch Lomond resort. For reservations call Ruth Moody, 928-5224. Left to right—Evelyn Prather, on hood of truck; Jennie Richardson, chairman, in cab; front row, Adrienne Ciardella, Teresa Bussa, Dorothy Thayer, Teresa Ponchione, Anita Schoop, Rose Pozzola, Ester Ciardella and Nicolette Ciardella.

The Ladies' Auxiliary of the Loch Lomond Fire Department. Photo courtesy Madelyn Martinelli.

#### **From The Lake County Record-Bee:**

*Dedication ceremonies were held at 2 pm on Saturday at Loch Lomond for the new \$12,000 firehouse, a unit of the Kelseyville-Big Valley Fire District. Dubbed, "The Ark" by residents of the mountain community, the structure was dedicated in the name of the volunteer fireman. Fire officials from Kelseyville and Lakeport attended the ceremonies, along with a crowd of some 75 or 100 citizens of the area. . . . The event was the culmination of five years of work and struggle on the part of the residents of the 'hill,' plus the cooperation and financial assistance of the fire district. The ceremonies went off as scheduled, despite the loss of the major portion of the business center, destroyed in the August 14 pre-dawn fire less than a block from the firehouse.*

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Thus began the end for Loch Lomond Resort. They rebuilt the lodge across the street from the old one and kept things going. But the times were a'changin, which changed things for the resorts of Lake County. I-80 had opened up, creating easy access from the Bay Area to Lake Tahoe, where the resorts were newer and gambling was legal. The single-earner home changed, and Mom went to work; she no longer had summers to spend away in the mountains. And the vacation home became something for the wealthy. Resort after resort on the mountain closed. A few still remain running, but most have either slowly dissolved into the mountainsides, burned, or had their pools filled with dirt and were turned into long-term rentals.

But, unlike most of the other resorts, Loch Lomond never died. Even though the lodge shut down and is now a convenience store topped by a vacant restaurant, the community still thrives. Today, you can visit the church and fire station that the Prathers and the community built. It's still possible to eat lunch at a picnic table in Prather Plaza, where the dinner bell from Adams Springs resort still hangs. And on a late summer evening, if you listen, you can hear the sound of accordions and laughter rising from the backyards of cabins, where three or four generations get to share the feeling of a cool summer night in the mountains.



The “new” lodge, still standing today. Photo courtesy Madelyn Martinelli.

Even though interrupted by COVID, most summers it’s still possible to enjoy a bingo game, eat Grandma’s Italian food with two hundred other guests under a canopy of pine trees, or enter a bocce tournament. (“I can’t believe we lost,” one team captain complained after last year’s tournament. “Well,” his wife replied. “If you hadn’t started drinking so early, you might have done better.”)

The children who played here in the fifties and sixties have grown up, and now their grandchildren and great-grandchildren splash in the clear, blue pool and ride their minibikes up and down the narrow resort roads. Then, just as it has since 1936, Labor Day weekend comes, and Loch Lomond empties. The parties end. People pack up and head home, leaving behind boarded-up cabins, a few year-round residents, and the Prathers, far up the slopes of the mountain.





Summers at the pool. Photo courtesy Madelyn Martinelli.