

## *Chapter 1:*

### *The Many Uses and Owners of Paxton Lodge*

Paxton Lodge, named after Elmer E. Paxton, has had a long and colorful life. Nestled among the trees in the secluded Feather River Canyon, it has changed owners and uses numerous times. From its days as a luxury hotel for visiting Western Pacific train riders to its time as a recording studio for musicians such as Jackson Browne, to its current venue as a bed and breakfast, the lodge has always had an unparalleled status in Plumas County.

The first owner of the property which would later be the site of the beautiful lodge was the Feather River Consolidated Mining Company of South Dakota.

On October 27, 1910, John D. Meidinger, a miner in the area, bought the property from the mining company and found it to be very prosperous. He built a stamp mill by the river and had a large gold mining claim. However, 6 years later, on September 21, 1916, after finding that the gold had become less profitable, he sold it to Elmer E. Paxton, General Manager of nearby Engel Copper Mine.

Following the construction of the Indian Valley Railroad to carry copper ore from the mine to the Western Pacific line three miles west of Keddie, Paxton funded the construction of a beautiful 32 room, \$15,000 lodge at the junction of the two railroads in 1917. He sold it to the Indian Valley Railroad Company on April 18, 1918. (For more information on the Indian Valley Railroad and the area during this time, see chapter 2).



**The hotel at Paxton and the surrounding area; 1919**



**The hotel at Paxton and the surrounding area; 1920**

The Indian Valley Railroad Company owned the Lodge until their line was torn up in June, 1940. During this time the building was used primarily as an inn. They called it the “Feather River Villa In the Sierras” and passengers who were riding the Western Pacific Railroad to San Francisco or Sacramento commonly spent the night there, walking down a path to the beautiful lodge. The railroads were the only means of access to the Inn, giving it an extremely secluded feeling. The patrons loved the quiet atmosphere and enjoyed “getting away from it all.” At the time, it was a bargain, as rates ranged from \$2-\$4 per room, per night. There was also a restaurant, a bar, a dance floor, and a small post office in the luxurious building, which was open year round.

The railroad prided itself on the Inn, which offered its guests all of the modern conveniences of the time. Electricity, hot and cold water, bath houses, and a pool which was heated by the nearby hot springs were just a few of the attractions here. Steam heat was furnished by the locomotives which were stationed in the roundhouse 24 hours a day. The steam was piped over 300 feet to

heat the lodge. Also, surrounding the well furnished rooms and large cabins were velvety lawns, beautiful scenery, and opportunities to engage in almost any activity imaginable. Guests could raft, fish, or swim in the section of the Feather River which contained the finest beach in the Feather River Canyon. Gold panning, hunting, hiking, horse back riding, and skiing were also available to guests during this time, and dancing to live music was always a favorite of the guests.



**The Feather River Villa as it appeared in December, 1934**



Flyer advertising the Feather River Villa; 1942

After the rails of the Indian Valley Railroad were torn up in 1940, the company sold the Feather River Villa to Harvey M. Toy. Toy acquired the Villa on June 28, 1940. This was quite a compliment to the area because Toy owned a chain of impressive hotels all across California, including the Hotel Manx in San Francisco and the Hotel Clunie in Sacramento. By buying the Feather River Villa, he included it in California's elite hotels.

This reputation brought people from all across the state. When they arrived, they were by no means disappointed. What Toy had done with the Villa, which he now called "Rainbow's End", was very impressive. In addition to the luxuries already offered, guests could now visit the in-house barber and hair dresser, do their laundry, and even have it dry-cleaned. Swedish massages and steam baths were also available in the bath house by the river. In addition to all of this, rates remained low at about \$3.50 per room per night.

The manager of the hotel was a licensed gold buyer and in 1940, Rainbow's End made it into Ripley's Believe It Or Not as the only hotel in the world that invited its guests to pan for gold to pay for their stay. Over \$11 million worth of gold was mined for this reason.

Extreme luxury was the hotel's theme, but there was also a darker side to it. It was rumored that the upstairs rooms were being kept as bordellos and illegal gambling houses. The local sheriff was thought to have been paid to ignore these occurrences.

Wayne Batchelor told of times when guests would hire him to catch fish for them:

*"There used to be a bunch of wild ladies up there. Dance hall, band every night, ladies upstairs. In the thirties, when I was in high school, I used to sell them fish. The fishermen used to come up on the train and they would decide not to go fishing down at the river, so they would buy trout from me and take them back to their wives. They never got out of the bar. Doctors, Lawyers. One guy even paid me \$20 to put mud on his boots. I was too young at the time to know why."*



RAINBOWS END - PAXTON, CALIFORNIA

**The Rainbows End Hotel as it appeared in 1940.**

FROM G. M. CHARLES,  
1106 RISS BLDG,  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.  
"END" PRICE



**PAN AND PAY!** THERE'S ONLY ONE HOTEL IN THE WORLD THAT INVITES GUESTS TO PAY FOR THEIR FOOD AND LODGING WITH GOLD DUST AND GOLD NUGGETS THEY CAN PAN FROM THE HOSTELRY'S OWN GOLD HOLDINGS. RAINBOW'S END HOTEL, PAXTON, CALIFORNIA, INVITES GUESTS TO "PAN THEIR OWN GOLD AT RICH BAR (ONE SECTION OF THEIR PROPERTY) AND PAY FOR THEIR VACATION IN A LEISURELY WAY"

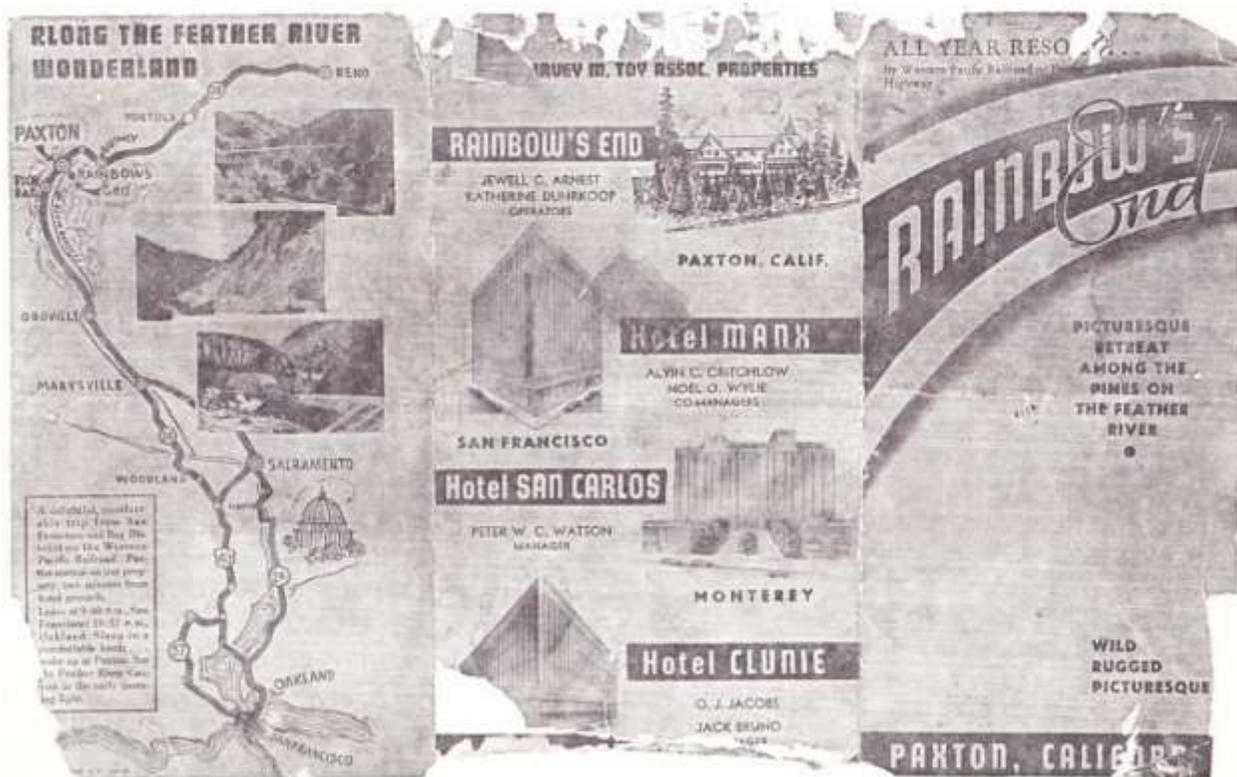
Article from Ripley's Believe It Or Not magazine in 1940.



Flyer advertising Rainbows End; 1940.



Harvey M. Toy's hotels in 1941.



Rainbows End pamphlet; 1942.

BADMINTON · CROQUET · ARCHERY · HORSEBACK RIDING · SWIMMING

FISHING · HUNTING · SKIING · GOLF

An opportunity to relax and enjoy the best of the Sierras  
at the Feather River Canyon

Rainbow's End is especially created for your pleasure, health and enjoyment. Our charming cottages will give you the best of both worlds of home, but not a care nor worry.

Live in the heart of a domain presented by the Sierras Forest, abundant with wild life and the gifts of nature.

Cozy cottages with soft rocking chairs, screens, writing tables and bookshelves, or explore the hidden recesses for ferns and wildflowers, and gloriously colored autumn wreaths with natural ferns—a find for your rock garden!

Within our grounds are hot springs, soda springs and new springs for the use of guests.

An outdoor Bath Hut, also on our property, those who wish may themselves join for gold. Eleven million dollars has been taken out of the most famous of known gold-bearing districts.

Each day's End is open the entire year and fine accommodations and incomparable cuisine will bring you back year after year.

An eminent physician and frequent visitor, Dr. James E. Morrison of San Francisco, says the climate—about 6000 feet—and the pure lakes are good for asthma, and sinus ailments.

We are especially proud of the beautiful surroundings of our lakes and dining room, our ski resort and dishes of local delicacies.

One of our principal attractions is our sandy beach where every facility is available for the swimmer. We have been told it is the finest beach in the Feather River Canyon.

A few miles away are two splendid golf courses where arrangements can be made for guests to play.

Toboggan and ski slides are being developed. Other Winter sports.

LUNCHEONS - - - - - 65c - 75c Also a la carte  
DINNERS - - - - - 75c - \$1.00 Also a la carte

ACCOMMODATIONS

Rooms—  
\$2.00 to \$3.00 single - \$3.00 to \$4.00 double  
De Luxe Rooms—\$4.00 single; \$5.00 double  
Cottages—\$3.00 to \$4.00

(We make these rates a little on the Winter, although you need about the same for a room of this high caliber.)

DANCING EVERY NIGHT



THE JEWEL OF THE SIERRA

Rainbows End pamphlet; 1944.

# LODGING

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# ROOM AND BOARD

FAMILY STYLE

## Rates \$3.50 per day

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Inquire at RAINBOW'S END, Paxton  
or SORSOLI HOTEL, Crescent Mills

### **Rainbows End rate sheet; 1940's.**

While Toy owned the hotel, business boomed until April 25, 1950, shortly after automobile access was made easy to the lodge by the opening of the highway. Toy then decided to sell it to Katherine Beverage and Arthur Irons. Arthur Irons later, on March 20, 1951, sold his share of the lodge to Katherine Beverage's husband, Robert. They renamed the hotel Paxton Resort. They also thought that they could charge guests significantly more and raised rates to \$5 - \$5.50 per room per night. However, without Toy's reputation behind it, guests were not willing to pay these rates and the Beverages were forced to sell the resort.

On August 15, 1955 Wigo and Thelma Robertson bought the lodge. Seeing that the interest was no longer there to the tourists, they had a different idea to attract people. They leased the building to Gene and Mary Duffy, who were appointed owner-managers of the new alcoholic rehabilitation and recreation facility. Since this place would not be a "mental house" or a "hospital" in any way, they thought many suffering alcoholics would be more willing to try to break their habit here. Unlike other rehabilitation centers, this secluded facility worked very

hard at maintaining a “casual family atmosphere” where “drunks helped drunks.” The entire staff was made up of either recovered alcoholics or their spouses. During this time, they called the facility Paxton Lodge. People came from as far away as New York and Chicago to try this new approach at beating their addiction. The Robertsons charged \$75-\$125 per week and people who gave it a try found it to be a bargain. Strangely enough, the bar still existed and guests were allowed to “sneak a few drinks now and then.” Soon, however, interest in this facility dwindled and they were forced to sell the lodge again.



**Paxton Lodge as it appeared in 1950.**

# PAXTON RESORT

## Rate Sheet

### AMERICAN PLAN (*with Meals*)

#### SLEEPING CABINS (*with bath*)

	Day	Week
Single	\$10.00	\$ 65.00
Double	15.00	100.00

#### LODGE (*with private bath*)

Single	12.00	113.00
Double	17.00	148.00

#### LODGE (*with adjoining bath*)

Single	10.00	65.00
Double	15.00	100.00

### EUROPEAN PLAN

CABINS	Day	Week
Single or Double	5.00	30.00

LODGE ( <i>private bath</i> )		
Single or double	7.00	45.00

LODGE ( <i>with adjoining bath</i> )		
Single or Double	5.00	30.00

Paxton Lodge rate sheet; 1950's.

**About Our Rates-**

1st week	\$125.00
2nd week	100.00
3rd week	75.00
4th week	75.00
Men's dormitory	85.00
	per week

Cabin rentals and arrangements furnished upon request.

**About Transportation-**

Paxton Lodge is located 65 miles east of Oroville on Highway 70 . . . 10 miles west of Quincy on Highway 70 . . . 1 mile west of the Junction of Highways 89 and 70 on Highway 70. Daily service to Quincy or Paxton via Greyhound Bus. Daily service to Keddie, California, via Western Pacific Railroad. Transportation to the Lodge is furnished from any of the aforementioned points at no extra charge.

**Facilities Available-**

Barber Shop	Steam Baths
Hairdresser	Swedish Massage
Laundry	
Dry Cleaning	

**Unique Coffee Bar**

**Honey-Like Atmosphere**

**Large Comfortable Rooms**

**PAXTON LODGE**

*Alcoholic Rehabilitation & Recreation Facility*

**Box 9**  
*Keddie, California*  
Phone: Paxton One

*Gene & Mary Duffy*  
Owner-Operators

*"Dedicated to Recovery For The Alcoholic Who Will Suffer"*

**Pamphlet advertising Paxton lodge during it's time as an alcoholic Rehabilitation Center**

On July 2, 1956, the lodge was sold to Edward F. and Eva M. McBrearty. They had heard of the success that Harvey Toy had at attracting people to the area and they thought that they were going to get rich by duplicating his idea. This proved not to be the case, however. Whether it was the recent use of the building that scared people away, or whether it was simply the lack of status that had been present with Toy, people did not come in nearly the numbers that they once had. Once again, the lodge changed hands.

Two more owners followed. Francis "Hira" Hall (Jan. 16, 1964) and William J. and Marie Lang (Dec. 2, 1964).

Francis Hall was determined to revive the luxury the hotel had once flaunted. He was, however, extremely unsuccessful at doing so and sold it to the Lands, who once again tried the same thing.

After 4 years of moderate success they were approached by Frazier Mohawk of Elektra Records. Inspired by an album entitled "Music From Big Pink" which has been recorded by "The Band" at a large pink house in New York, he and twelve others were going to conduct an experiment as to how nature affected music and he found the lodge to be the perfect place to do so.

The Langs leased the building to Elektra Records in 1968 for one year and Frazier Mohawk became the resident manager. His goal was to get away from the “city rat race” and create a happier, more productive environment. He called it an “experiment in living.”

Frazier Mohawk’s real name was Barry Friedman, but during his stay at Paxton, American Express caught up with him and was trying to make him pay his charges. This is when he decided to change his name in order to elude them. Joining him in this experiment were Rolf Kempf, a guitarist, Stephen Solberg, a poet and singer, Sandy Konikoff, a drummer, Pete Hodson, bass, Ken Zenking, cello and zither, Ned Doheny, Jack Wilce, Jackson Browne, three housekeepers and dancers named Janice, Connie, and Lottie (better known as the three graces of Paxton Lodge), and T. Hoover, a MIT graduate and handyman.

During their stay at the lodge, these musicians created many things, probably the most interesting of which was the sphincterphone. A musician recording at Paxton during this time remembers this:

*“We used a narrow microphone in a plastic bag. I put the corn huskers lotion on and found the masking tape, and got Sandy to take his clothes off and go out in the middle of the studio and play hand jive while we recorded him with the microphone up his rear end. “Los Stimulatos” we called it.”*

Together they remodeled the lodge to accommodate an echo chamber, a recording room and studio, a photo lab, and dance and art studios. They tore down the pink neon sign which ran the entire length of the building, as well as painting the beams inside psychedelic colors and decorating the walls with painted flowers. Many groups played here during the year that they leased it and they were able to produce two records, which were entitled “Running, Jumping, Standing Still” (with Willie Murphy and Spider John Koerner) and “Bamboo” (with Davie Ray and Bamboo). Overall, though, they considered their stay there a failure and called it “The Baby Browning Album” after a stillborn baby’s headstone they had seen at the local cemetery.

It was also during the one year lease that the famed Paxton ghost was first noticed. (For more information on the ghost, see chapter 3).

When the one year experiment was over, they had spent over \$75,000 and produced only 2 albums. They were not reluctant to leave the lodge behind. They were sent a \$10,000 bill for damages that the lodge had sustained during their stay there. A musician at the time remembers:

*“There was a bill for \$10,000 in damages. I thought we had colored some of the rooms in quite a unique and colorful manner. One of the colors was Hashish Green. Truly. Imagine finding that in a store in Quincy. But I supposed for a hotel, an old hotel, they didn’t think that was appropriate. That was part of the bill. And we sawed their big pink neon sign down. The guy was really upset about that.”*

# Historic Feather River Villa Is Transformed Into Creative Colony

By Richard Kellman  
The staff writer

PAXTON, Plumas Co. — On a hill overlooking a stretch of the Feather River stands the 400-sq.-ft. Paxton lodge which was entered in national preservation and now serves as headquarters for an experiment in living.

Known variously as the Feather River Villa, Paxton's First and Paxton Lodge in the past, a few hundred years ago, the lodge was built in 1817 by James E. Paxton for \$12,000. The lodge, as it was then called, was a stately 30-ft. and overnight site at the junction of the rail line of the WESTERN Pacific, heading east and the Union Valley Railroad, bearing north to the area productive Xanth Mine to the north.

Its ruins on the grounds served as faculty homes for men employed by the FVER.

After years as a mount, restaurant, alcoholic retreat and a patterned into residential use, the lodge today is the dwelling and working place of an eclectic group of young recording artists.

**Experimental living**  
Frazier Mohawk, resident manager of the colony-styled haven, describes the undertaking as an experiment in living.

Several years ago Mohawk, a Los Angeles native, one of a number, part of the Bay Area Community Group Valley and the area east near that, Plumas County, and a former recording producer, began a search to



ON STAGE AT THE LODGE, Frazier Mohawk, right foreground, poses with other occupants who have joined him in an "experiment in living" at Paxton, Plumas County. (The Plumas)

new meaning in life and in his own's happening," recalled his "invention of things I've learned" and other creative acts would.

"The kind of music I wanted. From what he called 'not an of the moment retreat, when artists from the superfluous' of his own wasn't in the city . . . original thought . . . just a out-he and encounters in the amount the city had room. The goal was

to create a happier environment.

**A Year's Lease**  
Inspired by New Yorker Jack Holzman, the president of a recording company, Mohawk and 12 persons leased the lodge for the one-year experiment.

The musicians, most of whom are in their early 20s, took up residence in August. The group included Canadian lyricist, guitarist and guitarist Bill Sings, Jackson Brown, poet and singer; artist Steven Seberg; drummer Sandy Kachoff; Paul Nelson, bass; Kim Jackson, cello in order; Ned Dilling; Jack Wilder; bassist; and others. Jimmy Carter, Connie and Larry; and T. Moore, M.I.T. grad and general handyman, and Mohawk.

Under the direction of engineers John Stone, Nick Zaleski and Sandy in a studio, the lodge was reworked, to accommodate a club, recording room, well studio, guest lab, and dance and art studios.

**People Open Up**  
At the same time members embraced into the life of nearby Quincy. A principle of the experiment called for participation with society. The project was admitted into the Plumas County Chamber of Commerce. Group members played at high school dances, and plans were made with officials of Feather River College for a fine arts program and a recording laboratory project.

Mohawk said he

with the room local residents.

"They are the people I've seen

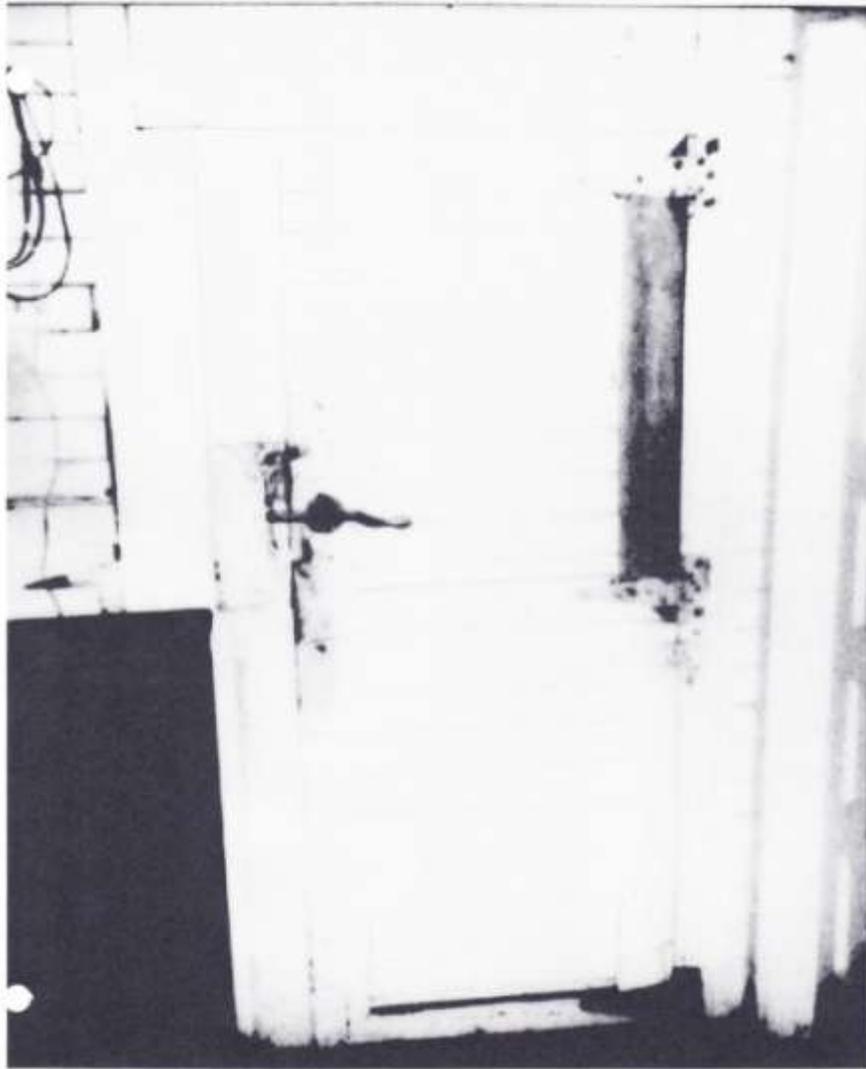
whole life."

Other recording artists the lodge

**Paxton Lodge was it appeared in December, 1968 during it's time as a recording studio. Frazier Mohawk; front right.**



**Recording artists at Paxton. Jackson Browne; center.**



**The door to the recording studio used by Frazier Mohawk, Jackson Browne, and others.**



The Paxton "inmates." (back, left to right) Lottie Olcott, Sandy Konikoff, Jack Wilce, Marty Richmond, Jac. (front, left to right) Steven Solberg, Jackson Browne, Ned Doheny, Rolf Kempf, Peter Hodgson. Frazier Mohawk on right holding rifle

**Recording artists on the front steps of the porch at Paxton.**



**Cover of “Running, Jumping, Standing Still.” One of only 2 albums produced at Paxton.**

The lodge remained vacant after the recording artists left. For 2 years, no one stayed at the lodge except for the occasional passer by. On December 15, 1971, Gerald Beck bought the lodge, not knowing the extent of the damages. He failed to pay the bills, however, and on September 27, 1972, less than a year later, the lodge went back to the Langs.

Once again the lodge remained vacant with the exception of the caretaker, Michael Halter and it's status and reputation continually dwindled. On April 13, 1973, two families, composed of Ron and Jane Schwartz and Ron and Doris Pound, bought it. On Jan. 22, 1974, they incorporated into Paxton Lodge Inc. They found the lodge to be in terrible shape still. Every pipe in the plumbing system of 26 rooms and 11 cabins was in dire need of repair. There was no running water or bathroom facilities for the families, who had already moved in from southern California. Also, the entire electrical system needed an overhaul and some of the cabins were off their foundations.

The lodge, after being fixed up wonderfully by the families, served mainly as a hang out for the local residents. The hotel was reinstated, although it was never the same as in it's hay day in the 40's. Also it served as a boarding house for college students at the nearby Feather River College in Quincy. They served lunch to trains passing by on the Western Pacific Railroad on a 24 hour basis although they no longer stopped and had not done so for years.

Riley Burkholder, a former resident at Paxton, remembers this:

*"A normal lunch order would be 4 lunches, although in time of a derailment it may run as high as 200 lunches. The railroad installed a radio telephone. They would call from Oroville, about a half hour before the train was going to arrive at Paxton, 24 hours a day. When the lunches were finished, someone would take them up to the tracks. In a normal 4 lunch order, 2 went on the engine and 2 went on the caboose. The delivery man would stand by the tracks and the people on the train would grab the lunches from him. The train would not stop, just slow down."*

On April 16, 1981, a fire broke out at Paxton and burned the top story, where seven members of the Schwartz family lived and burned the roof off the lodge. (For more information on the fire, see chapter 4.) In the winter and spring of 1986, the Feather River flooded, washing away the beach house where guests of the Rainbow's End Hotel once enjoyed Swedish massages and steam baths.



**The lodge as it appeared in 1974, shortly after it was bought by Paxton Lodge Inc.**



**The dining room in the lodge as it appeared in 1974.**



**The lodge as it appears during a normal winter snow pack.**

## *The Paxton Beachhouse*



*there it is...*

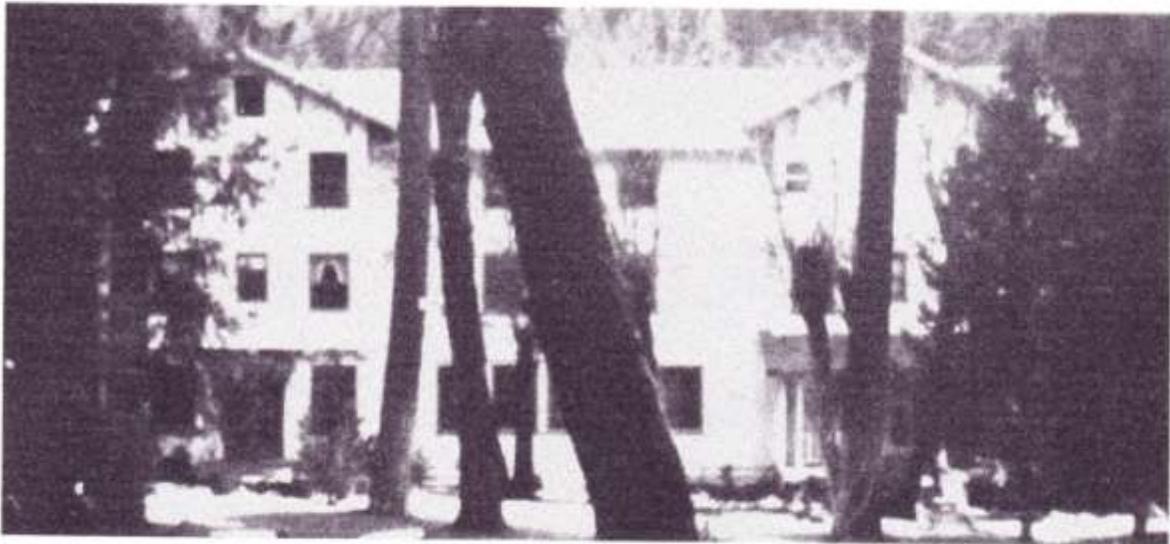


*there it isn't.*

**The beach house, shortly before it was washed down the Feather River.**

**This was where guests once enjoyed Swedish massages and luxurious steam baths.**

Today, the Schwartz family still owns and operates the lodge. Although it no longer has the luxurious reputation that it once did, they are doing a beautiful job of restoring it. The burnt level has yet to be finished. The decaying railroad ties and other remnants of the old turntable are still slightly visible. One can see remnants of the Indian Valley Railroad while driving along the current highway 89. Many past residents of the lodge while it was flourishing can still be contacted, and some are still in the area. The lodge is maybe best known today for it's Boiler Man, the ghost that haunts the guests. Although the beach house, as well as many other trademarks of Paxton's hay day are gone, one can't help but feel the essence of luxury and be reminded of a colorful past every time they set foot inside this historic building.



**Paxton Lodge as it appeared in 1998.**

# Paxton Lodge

— Bed & Breakfast —



An Historic Railroad Inn

**Hosts: Jane & Ron Schwartz**

P.O. Box 3367 (Hwy 70) Quincy, CA 95971 916-283-1141

**Current brochure advertising Paxton Lodge.**



*Paxton Lodge, Inc.*

32160 PAXTON ROAD P.O. BOX 3367  
QUINCY, CALIFORNIA 95971

RON & JANE SCHWARTZ

(916) 283-1141

**Current Paxton Lodge business card.**

## Paxton Owners

- 1910 , October 27 : John D. Meidinger  
Book 40 page 328
- 1916 , September 21 : Elmer E. Paxton  
Book 49 page 140
- 1918 , April 18 : Indian Valley Railroad Company  
Book 51 page 267-8
- 1940 , June 28 : Harvey M. Toy  
Book 75 page 386 and 471
- 1950 , April 25 : Katherine Beverage and Arthur Irons  
Book 75 page 386
- 1951 , March 20 : Robert and Katherine Beverage  
Book 41 page 222
- 1955 , August 15 : Wigo and Thelma Robertson  
Book 87 page 377
- 1956 , July 2 : Edward F. and Eva M. McBresarty  
Book 96 page 240
- 1964 , January 16 : Francis "Hira" Hall  
Book 164 page 794
- 1964 , December 2 : William J. and Marie Laing  
Book 167 page 1557
- 1971 , December 15 : Gerald Beck  
Book 167 page 1557
- 1972 , September 27 : William J. and Marie Laing  
Book 208 page 637
- 1973 , April 13 : Ronald D. and Jane Schwartz / Ronald and Doris Pound  
Book 208 page 637
- 1974 , January 22 : Paxton Lodge Inc.  
Book 221 page 743

**List of all Paxton owners.**