

History: From West Shore summer estate to State Park mansion

Publisher's note: *This is from the September 1973 Lake Tahoe Historical Society newsletter.*

Speaker at the August meeting was Joan Benner, Ranger for the California State Parks and Recreation Department at Lake Tahoe. Joan gave a delightful talk on the history of Sugar Pine Point from the development in 1903 of the I.W. Hellman summer estate to its present use as a State Park.



Mr. Hellman's daughter married Mr. Sydney Ehrman and the term "Ehrman Mansion" is still used to describe the large home. The building was designed by Walter Danforth Bliss who also did the Tahoe Tavern. The Ehrman family used the property as a summer residence and employed a large household staff. The grounds were beautifully kept with native plants and large lawn on the lakeshore. Eight gardeners were employed to tend the grounds. Outbuildings include the "Phipps Cabin" near the outlet of General Creek, built in 1870, caretakers cabins, two boat houses, a carriage house, a water tower-residence building, bath houses, and a smaller three bedroom home near the tennis court.

Guests breakfasted in their rooms but dining was served formally. The original table in the large dining room seated 30. The first floor of the home is cold with the only heat originally from fireplaces in the dining room and living room. The second floor had heat only in the two end bedrooms, which have fireplaces. As electricity was installed heaters were used and in later years an elevator was installed from the

first to the second floor for Mrs. Ehrman's use.

The State of California acquired this property in the 1960s with a total of 1,925 acres with 7,700 feet of lakeshore. The property is in two parcels with approximately 235 acres between Highway 89 and the lake and the remainder west of the Highway bordering General Creek. The State recently opened the General Creek campground on the property west of the highway and now maintains the lakeside property as a day use facility. The mansion is open for tours afternoons through the summer with the cooperation of the Advisory Committee to the Tahoe State Parks. The Phipps cabin is open when possible and has been restored to its original condition, furnished with pieces appropriate to its use.

We are fortunate to have this beautiful property available to State Parks visitor and grateful to Joan Benner for her informative talk.