

Historic Rainbow Lodge to get new lease on life

By Hudson Sangree, Sacramento Bee

The historic, storybook Rainbow Lodge, made from native granite and heavy timber, fell on hard times in recent years after its prior owners defaulted on their loan and a court-appointed receiver took over. In late December, the venerable inn near Donner Summit was purchased out of receivership by a family from Rocklin, which plans to reopen it in February and restore some of its century-old grandeur.

The lodge, with its steeply pitched green-metal roof and stone walls, sits on the banks of the South Yuba River, not far from Interstate 80 in Soda Springs. For many years, cross country skiers warmed up there with a drink, a hot meal and a soft bed after long days on the trails. A pair of skis hang over its knotty-pine bar beneath thick wooden rafters. Historic photographs of the snow-covered lodge and trans-Sierra railroad adorn its walls. Threadbare carpet, tattered curtains and dated floral bedspreads detract from its rugged mountain charm. The worn items will be the first to be replaced, Mitchell said.

The 33-room lodge was originally built as a stagecoach stop in the 1800s. It was converted to a tavern in the 1920s and became a popular spot for gambling and fishing, said Craig Mitchell, who bought the lodge with his wife and parents and will oversee day-to-day operations.

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