



Snow-capped Tamalpais Tavern
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Last week's storm brought snow to Mt. Tamalpais, and although not rare, it is an uncommon sight to see the summit of our mountain blanketed in winter white. The January 1913 storm not only covered the summit of Mt. Tamalpais but dropped six inches of snow in most of the towns at the foot of the mountain.

The Tamalpais Tavern, built by the Mill Valley & Mt. Tamalpais Scenic Railway, opened for business in 1896 on land owned by the Tamalpais Land and Water Company. The Tavern offered visitors comfortable accommodations and spectacular views overlooking the beaches west to the Farallon Islands, and east to Mt. Diablo. A columnist for the Petaluma Morning Daily Courier wrote that the location provided, "... a sight terrestrial and celestial that men have travelled hundreds of miles to see." Within weeks of its opening, California Governor James H. Budd and his entire staff rented the Tavern and according to the the San Francisco Call, "will view the sunset and sunrise and will discuss State affairs from a high standpoint."

The 'Scenic Railway' ran two trains a day up to the tavern from downtown Mill Valley. The Tavern expanded its overnight accommodations in 1900 and added a dance pavilion. After a spur line was added in 1907, visitors could also travel from the Tavern to Muir Woods. The famous 'gravity cars' were added at this time for a ride down the mountain on what was called "The Crookedest Railroad in the World." For many years, local and out-of-state guests along with luminaries of the political and cultural world visited the mountaintop and stayed at the Tavern.

In 1916 the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) purchased the land the tavern was on, along with all three peaks of the mountain. In 1923 a small kitchen fire spread to the

surrounding buildings and destroyed most of the structure. It was rebuilt a year later as a smaller, one-story building which did not offer overnight accommodations. With the opening of Ridgecrest Blvd. to automobiles in 1925, the Tavern and Muir Woods became accessible by automobile and in 1930 the 'Scenic Railroad' ceased operation. The Tavern became the property of MMWD but was still a favorite spot for organizations to hold their meetings, luncheons and dinners. A 1933 Mill Valley Record article noted that the Tavern, "has become popular as a place of entertainment for organizations when they desire to provide an event of unusual interest."

By the early 1940's the Tavern had changed hands and in 1943 the Army Air Force was quartered there for the duration of the war. The Tavern reopened to guests after the war, but its heyday was over. The MMWD eventually sold a portion of the East Peak and the Tavern to the State of California, which made it a State Park. One of the last public events at the Tavern was a 1949 New Year's Dance hosted by *Don's Sequoians*, a 7-piece orchestra led by Don Urquhart. The Tavern closed down within a few months and was razed in 1950 by MMWD.

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