



The Carmel Pine Cone

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TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

Traffic stop yields impressive haul



PHOTO/CARMEL POLICE DEPARTMENT

A table at Carmel P.D. covered with pot and cash after a what seemed like a routine traffic stop on Junipero Street. See page 13A

Downtown vacancies not so numerous after all

■ Six percent of commercial spaces empty

By MARY SCHLEY

OF THE 427 street-level storefronts downtown, 29 are empty — including some that have been for years — according to a survey conducted earlier this month by planning director Marc Wiener and his staff. Despite a lot of recent consternation over the perception that vacancies were burgeoning, the rate is just 6 percent, compared with a national rate of just over 10 percent in the third quarter of last year, according to a real estate research firm.

“So far, my interpretation is the vacancies are kind of dispersed throughout the commercial district,” Wiener said. “We collected the data — the next step will be doing some analysis

on it.”

According to the March 8 survey of ground-floor retail space in the 19 blocks in the core commercial area, the block with the most empty spaces is Carmel Plaza, where there are five. The survey included all three floors of the Plaza — 48 total spaces.

Recently several more

The block bordered by Ocean, Dolores, Lincoln and Seventh contains four vacancies, though one of them — the Ocean Avenue space recently vacated by Talbott — will soon be occupied by an Italian men’s clothing store, Luciano Barbera. A few months ago, the city’s main shopping street had four empty stores.

See **VACANCIES** page 15A

‘We need your help,’ Big Sur tells coastal commish

■ Locals disagree about ‘overtourism’

By CHRIS COUNTS

SEVEN YEARS after she became their representative on the California Coastal Commission, Carole Groom hosted her first “listening session” with Big Sur residents, who packed a meeting room at the Big Sur Lodge March 22 — and gave her an earful.

The tone of the dialogue was civil, but many residents spoke with a sense of urgency.

“We need your help, Carole,” said Butch Kronlund, “Overtourism and overuse are challenging Big Sur. The results are a measurable decline in the health of the environment and the safety of residents and visitors. Current county, state and federal staff are overwhelmed and unable to address these mounting issues.”

Kronlund narrated a slide show depicting scenes of traffic congestion at Bixby Bridge and along Sycamore Canyon Road, where public safety hazards abound.

‘Extreme changes’

Several members of the business community pushed back against blaming “overtourism” for Big Sur troubles, including Kirk Gafill, the general manager of Nepenthe restaurant.

“With all due respect, I challenge this term, ‘overtourism,’” Gafill said. “I think that suggests there are too many people to be accommodated along the Big Sur coast, and I don’t think that has yet to be demonstrated. What I do think though is that we have seen extreme changes in behavior due to social media and different cultural influences.”

After supporting Gafill’s views, Big Sur River Inn general manager Rick Aldinger brought up the need for more public restrooms in Big Sur — and told Groom that the resources of local businesses are being strained by visitors as a result.

“They are coming in to use our private restrooms,” Aldinger reported. “Then they get back into the car and move on — that is not a sustainable business model.”

See **HELP** page 14A

SAND & SEA HOME CALLED ‘LIKE CORPORATE RETREAT’

■ Planners seek ‘simplicity and modesty’

By MARY SCHLEY

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS didn’t think much of the design for a new home in the Sand & Sea development on San Antonio Avenue, asking architect Braden Sterling to come back with something smaller, lower profile, and more like a “beach house” than a “corporate retreat.”

The commission’s March 13 meeting was the second public hearing on the 3,431-square-foot, two-story, modern-style home proposed to replace one of the beachside houses in the small group of homes. Last October, commissioners told Ster-

ling they were concerned about light intrusion and reflection from the large windows proposed for the west and south sides of the residence, as well as its overall mass looming over the beach, along with its height, lack of natural materials, and inability to blend in with the dunes and the beach.

‘Not responsive’

But after that meeting, Sterling and his client, a San Francisco-based LLC managed by Franklin Loffer, didn’t make many changes, according to senior planner Marnie Waffle, who said she thought the revised application was “not responsive to the comments provided during the preliminary review.”

See **CORPORATE** page 16A

Visalia, Merced — and on to the Monterey Peninsula

Last week, a young S.F.B. Morse graduated from Yale and headed west to seek his fortune. It was 1907, and California was a blossoming land of miners, ranchers and land speculators. Morse’s first job, thanks to contacts he made in school, was with a power company in Visalia. After that, he was hired by William H. Crocker, son of railroad baron Charles Crocker, to manage his ranch in Merced

PART II

AFTER ARRIVING in Merced and taking over management of the Crocker Ranch, the first thing I did was to double the charge for water, which was being sold for the ridiculous price of \$1 an acre, making the irrigation system a source of continual and substantial loss.

Naturally there was great resistance on the part of the farmers who used the water, and we were one of the early cases that came before the newly appointed so-called railroad commission, or Public Utilities Commission, appointed by Hiram Johnson. They sustained our charge for water; they could hardly do otherwise. After that, it was a question of putting water on all of the land we owned that was susceptible to irrigation and either selling the land, or using it ourselves to produce cattle feed.

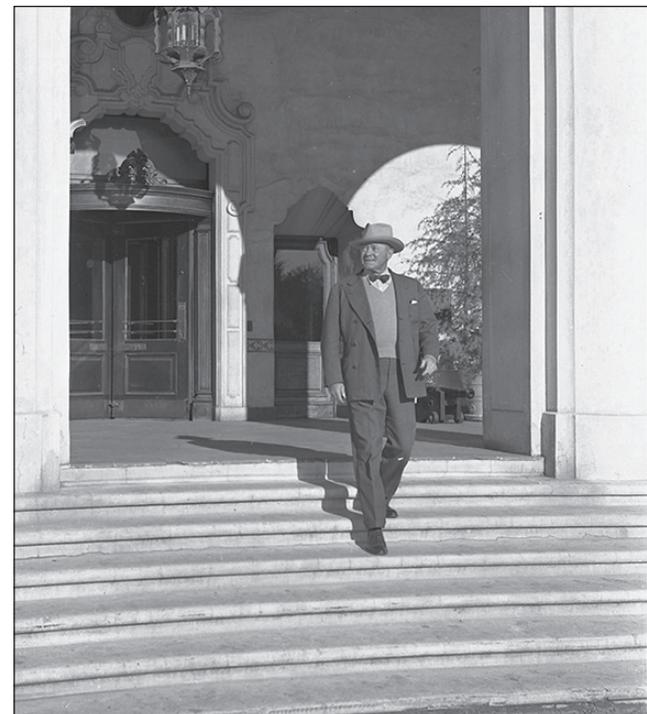
As we put more land under irrigation, we needed more range land, and I purchased a substantial amount, the largest single purchase being from Henry Miller — 25,000 acres for \$10 an acre. When we sold what was left of the ranch a few years ago, this particular area was valued at something over \$60 an acre.

Also, under my management, the Merced City Water System, which we owned, was completely rebuilt, and though the Crocker Estate has sold everything else, they still own the wa-

The Morse memoirs

ter works, which is one of the best small utility companies in the state.

We made an attempt to buy more land and develop it, but failing in this, the obvious thing was to sell the water works to the people. I think I can say without contradiction that I had more to do with the formation of the Merced Irrigation District than any other one person.



PHOTO/JULIAN P. GRAHAM, LOON HILL STUDIOS

Samuel F.B. Morse at the Hotel del Monte in Monterey in the 1920s.

See **MORSE** page 19A

MORSE

From page 1A

There is one interesting thing which perhaps I should mention. The revolutions in Mexico made cattle in Northern Mexico very cheap. One particular shipment of long-horn cattle from Northern Mexico we bought in Mexico and took a chance in getting them across.

They were aged steers and stags, and we paid \$12 a head for them. We got them across before Pancho Villa arrived, and if he had arrived first, he would have charged us \$5-a-head duty, as he considered himself the government in that part of Mexico. That particular purchase was probably the best we ever made, but for years we purchased from 2,000 to 3,000 head each year and fattened them for market. Most of them were purchased in Arizona and Nevada.

Ready to calf

The best purchases that we made for years were cows that were ready to calf within a couple of months. We purchased them usually in November and they produced a calf by February, and by June or July we were able to dispose of the calf at almost enough to pay for both the cow and the calf, but those days have gone!

In my years in the San Joaquin, I became intimate with many of the men who had fought Indians, hunted buffalo, and, in one particular incident, a man who had been not only a trail driver but a sheriff and U.S. Marshal from the late 1870s into the 1890s in Northern Wyoming.

Because of the success that I had with operations, through

the influence of William H. Crocker, I was offered the job of manager of the Pacific Improvement Company, a holding company of the Southern Pacific Railroad.

My job was to liquidate the holdings of the company, which included the Hotel Del Monte, the Del Monte Forest, and Monterey County Water Works, and some 12,000 acres of ranch and range land in the Carmel Valley.

I took the job in April 1915, so that in April of 1968 I will have been associated with the operations here for 53 years.

My new job put me in close contact with the business world and was perhaps the most important step in my career, such as it is.

As this record deals specifically with the history of Del Monte, I am not going to mention my other activities. I did get involved in a good many important things, but they have no particular bearing on the Del Monte operation.

History of the Lodge

When the idea of the Lodge was conceived, there was nothing in the Del Monte Forest except the 17 Mile Drive and what was called the "Scenic" drive at the top of the hill. The 17 Mile Drive at that time, in the days of the horse-drawn stagecoaches, started at the Hotel Del Monte, went through historic Monterey, around the waterfront at Pacific Grove, into the Forest, and along the waterfront much as it runs now, then from Pebble Beach to the Carmel Mission, then over the hill and back again to the hotel. Pebble Beach was a convenient

stopping place for luncheon.

The first year that I came to the Monterey Peninsula, bringing my wife and infant child here for the summer, was 1908. There was a picnic served which was given by William H. Crocker, who was my boss for many years, about where the 18th Hole of the Pebble Beach Golf Course is now situated. Shortly after that, the idea was conceived to build a wooden log cabin at this point overlooking the picnic grounds, where meals could be served.

At the same time that the Lodge was built, a feeble attempt was made to develop and sell the adjacent real estate.

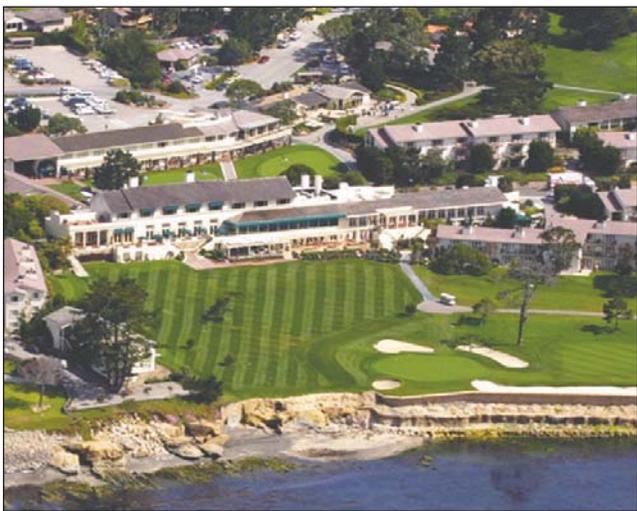
There is some dispute as to the exact date of the opening of the Lodge. It was between 1908 and 1915. My own guess is that it opened in approximately 1912 — and I was quite a constant visitor to the Peninsula in the years that I lived in the San Joaquin Valley.

This is the second installment of the serialization of the memoirs of Pebble Beach Company founder Samuel Finlay Brown Morse, which The Pine Cone is printing in connection with the company's centennial. To learn more about him, read the book, "Boss," written by his grandson, Charles Osborne.



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PHOTO/PINE CONE FILE

The Lodge at Pebble Beach and the 18th Green as they appeared in 2001.

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