



Enjoying Marin's Forests, Mountains and Beaches
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From the early days of statehood, Marin County's forested mountains, pristine beaches and verdant rolling hills catered to those intrepid individuals wishing to escape the fog and teeming environs of San Francisco and Oakland. By 1875 vacationers, picnickers and campers sought out the "scenic treasures of the sylvan glade" at Camp Taylor or the "finest surf bathing and grandest stretch of beach in the world" at Willow Camp (Stinson Beach). Newspaper accounts in the hundreds reported on those notable denizens who spent anywhere from a single day of picnicking to the entire summer camping out in Marin. Whether a single family or many families together, campers often brought along cooking stoves and ovens, China cabinets, clothing wardrobes, beds, chairs and couches. There is even one report of a Camp Taylor family tent that sported a grand piano for evening entertainments. Sites like Camp Taylor, Tocaloma and Willow Camp also offered visitors cottages and hotel rooms for those less rustically inclined.

Starting in the 1870s, the North Pacific Coast Railroad provided vacationers convenient transportation to the Ross and San Geronimo valleys, west to Pt. Reyes and Olema, then north to Marshall and Tomales. There were many smaller campsites along the way that offered visitors fresh running water, shady glens, hiking trails and opportunities to hunt and fish. The photograph above shows a large group of family and friends at Camp Taylor that dates to sometime around 1900. Summer holiday gatherings brought groups together to celebrate The Fourth of July, Memorial Day, Labor Day and many others. An 1892 *Marin Journal* newspaper article for the

4th of July celebration at Camp Taylor promised the “biggest pyrotechnic exhibition ever seen outside of San Francisco” while describing the many “luxurious” camping tents that featured “all the comforts of home.”

Some families returned year after year to their favorite outdoor retreats, often for weeks at a time. The family of San Franciscans, John and Louisa Kraeger, created a well-stocked, family campsite along the San Anselmo Creek and named it Camp Leisore, a Hindi word for leisure. Sig Herzog, a San Rafael businessman and former mayor, often brought his family to the Sleepy Hollow area of San Anselmo to camp during the summer months, before leasing land there from the Hotaling family to establish the Sleepy Hollow Dairy, the first certified dairy in the United States.

Though camping has evolved over time to be of shorter duration and less about surrounding oneself with “all the comforts of home”, Marin County still has many beautiful locations to enjoy the great outdoors. The Golden Gate Recreation Area has four campsites in the Marin Headlands (Haypress, Hawk, Bicentennial and Kirby Cove) and five further north (Sky, Olema, Wildcat, Glen and Coast). Camp Taylor is still the crown jewel of the State Park system along with Pantoll and Alice Eastwood on Mt. Tamalpais, Steep Ravine near Stinson Beach, China Camp State Park on Pt. San Pedro and two campgrounds on Angel Island.

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