

Beauty Is Just A Word Until You Have Seen Sapphire Valley

★ VOL. 84-NO. 24 THE TRANSYLVANIA TIMES BREVARD, N. C., THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 1971 (SEC. THREE)



STATELY ARCHITECTURE, ROLLING LAWNS — "A gracious, rambling place with the eye-pleasing architecture of a Swiss chalet; with 85 airy, high-ceilinged rooms; with glassed ver-

andas and a broad terrace overlooking rolling lawns . . ." Terrace in background has a magnificent view of Lake Fairfield at the base of towering Bald Rock Mountain. (Times Staff Photo)



DEEP, BLUE MOUNTAIN LAKE — View from the north lawn at Sapphire Valley Inn. Lake Fairfield is in the center and looming mountains overlook the lake. Lake elevation is about 3,200

ft.; surrounding mountains reach nearly 5,000 ft. The famous resort has been called, "a Corner on the Comfort Market." (Times Staff Photo)

Aristocratic Past....Exciting Future

By - Cal Carpenter

It was envisioned as a summer pleasure place for the "carriage trade," a place for a select group of Southern society families who knew how to live elegantly and who could afford to indulge their tastes.

It began in those halcyon days of the last century called the Gay Nineties, when the old Toxaway Company, with the Jennings family in partial control, acquired 12,000 acres of land in the most beautiful part of the Southern Highlands—nearly 20 square miles of the lower but still rugged mountains and verdant valleys at the feet of the Great Smokies.

They built a hotel—a gracious, rambling place with the eye-pleasing architecture of a Swiss chalet; with 85 airy, high-ceilinged rooms; with glassed verandas and a broad terrace overlooking rolling lawns and a deep, blue mountain lake.

It was called the Fairfield Inn, and it grew, in a few short years, to become a mecca for summer living; the transplanted social capital of the eastern mid-south.

It knew the clip of dainty hooves as the spanking equippages of the great and near-

great of Southern society drew up before its hospitable entrance. It was, probably, one of the last gems of antebellum Southern living, isolated here in a jewel-like setting in the mountains of Western North Carolina.

CHANGING TIMES

Years moved on; times changed. The great oaks on the lawns grew larger, and the sturdy Inn took on a patina of well-preserved old age as the last of the gay nineties and the first four decades of the twentieth century slipped by.

But the beauty of the setting never changed. Lake Fairfield remained serene, blue and untroubled, sheltered in its deep valley, almost overhung by the granite cliffs of Bald Rock Mountain. And the beauty of the climate never changed: the 3,200 feet of elevation, the surrounding higher mountains and abundant rainfall kept the summers delightfully cool, the winters sheltered; made Springs and Falls green-gold visions of mountain beauty.

Not so the affairs of men. There were changes. The Jennings family retained their interests until the mid nineteen-forties. At that time the property was sold to Tatum Wofford. Another 10 years, and the property was sold again, this time to Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Howerdd.

CONTINUED TO GROW

But during these years, the fame and facilities of this "Corner on the Comfort

Market," as it has been called, continued to grow.

A golf course was carved out of virgin timber land by Engineer C. D. S. Clarkson, to a design by the famous architect, George W. Cobb. Cottages were carefully located near the Inn, connected by sylvan roads.

In 1966, by this time renamed "Sapphire Valley" by Mr. Howerdd after the gem stones found in the stream beds and along the hiking trails on the property, the resort went into year-around operation. And to provide a winter attraction, a ski facility was added with a double chair lift, ski lodge, pro shop, and 3,400 feet of slopes for all levels of skiers.

Also during these latter years, homesites were sold in areas overlooking the 80-acre Lake Fairfield and adjoining the golf course. Many beautiful and unusual homes were built, summer and year-around, all landscaped into the natural terrain; all on parts of the original 12,000 acres.

But these homes, the 7,000-yard championship golf course, the lake, the ski slopes, stables, the Inn and cottages, used only a small part of the original land. Thousands of acres of the uniquely beautiful setting were still unused.

TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT

The beginning of full use of the land at Sapphire Valley started this month when the Inn, lake, golf course, ski club and 6,000 acres of the surrounding land were purchased by Realtec, Inc., a Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, corporation. Realtec is a subsidiary of Certain-teed Products Corporation, Valley Forge, Pa., one of the world's largest producers of building materials.

The new corporation is renovating the Inn—modernizing but not changing it; will continue operation of all the resort facilities; and in addition, will build some 400 condominium apartments where many more people will be able to live and enjoy the beauty and gracious living that has long been the privilege of only a few.

"But we do not intend to change the character of the Inn nor of Sapphire Valley," stresses Colonel Merrit G. "Jerry" Garner, retired Air Force officer and Director of Corporate Affairs for Realtec; who, as senior representative for Realtec here, is in charge of putting the Inn and its multitudinous activities under a permanent, year-around management.

"We shall keep all the 'Corner on the Comfort Market' activities — actually we'll add several more. But we'll not dispense with one bit of the old-time elegance and leisurely comfort for which the Inn is famous.

We'll build the condominiums with the least amount of disruption possible, they will not be crowded together—each will have a view; the roads will be carefully laid out so as to blend with the terrain and woods; all power and utility lines will be underground; we shall go to every length to protect the ecology and the beauty of the environment.

"Our primary intention, foremost in every construction activity, will be to leave undisturbed the beauty of this wonderful property. Our primary intention in every activity afforded our guests and residents will be to maintain the gracious pace and elegant serv-

ices that have made Sapphire Valley so well known in the past," he says.

Included in the building program, according to Colonel Garner, is a new, 40 by 80 foot, heated swimming pool near the Inn (there is already a pool at the Golf Club); two new tennis courts nearer the Inn (there's now two courts at the Golf Club); and several more shuffleboards. These, and many other renovations, improvements and added conveniences are in the plans according to Colonel Garner.

EVERYTHING FOR GUESTS, RESIDENTS

Says Mrs. Kathryn "Kathy" Garner, Jerry Garner's attractive wife who is here with her husband and assisting with the management of the Inn: "We don't want to act like outsiders who've come to change things. We want to keep the charm and elegance of the old Fairfield Inn."

Mrs. Garner, who will have a lot to say about guest entertainment, will work closely with the Inn's Social Director and its Hostess and Dining Room Manager, Mrs. Sarah McNamee.

"In addition to many golf and skiing activities at the Golf and Ski Clubs, we'll have Table Tennis, Archery (with a top-flight instructor); Badminton, Horseshoe Pitching, Basketball, Shuffleboard, Croquet, Bicycling, Tennis, Swimming, Fishing Excursions, Gem Hunting, Scenic Tours (to places of interest in Western North Carolina); Horseback Riding, Outdoor Cookouts, and Side Tours for special events," says Mrs. Garner.

"Oh, yes, and art displays, craft displays, book reviews, music recitals, bridge tournaments . . ." she adds.

In a word, everything guests and residents might like or want will be a part of the hospitality at Sapphire Valley.

HAS TO BE SEEN

Sapphire Valley, with its historic past and exciting future, is a subject difficult to cover in a newspaper feature.

It can be simply described as a year-around Country Club, Golf Club, Ski Club, and Inn, which will soon be a Condominium development also. Its location can be given as just off U. S. Highway 64, some 28 miles west of Brevard and two miles east of Cashiers and the intersection of U. S. 64 and State Highway 107.

But there's much more to it than that. It is a very special place of natural beauty that is unexcelled—beauty of such perfection as to seem almost unreal. You have to see it to believe it.

"Beauty is just a word until you've seen Sapphire Valley," it says on one of the Inn's colorful brochures. That says it pretty well.

Perhaps it was said even better by a young visitor last week as he stood on the Inn terrace and looked over the blue waters of Lake Fairfield at the looming height of Bald Rock Mountain:

"Man!" he exclaimed seriously. "Is that mountain real?"

GOLF COURSE CARVED OUT OF VIRGIN TIMBER LAND — View of the Sapphire Valley Golf Course from the clubhouse lawn. The 7,000 yard, championship course, is at a mean elevation of 3,200 feet, yet has no more than a 12-foot climb

anywhere on the 18 holes. It was designed by the famous architect, George W. Cobb, and constructed by Engineer C. D. S. Clarkson.

(Times Staff Photo)

