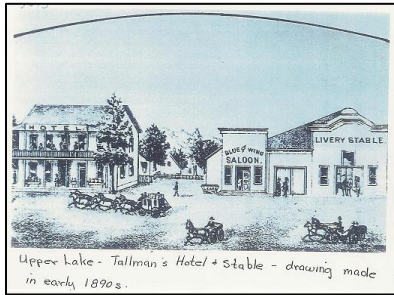


Lake County in the 1860s – The Argentine Connection by Bernie Butcher 1-10-11

In August of 2003, my wife Lynne and I purchased and began restoring a derelict old hotel on the Main Street of the small Lake County town of Upper Lake. The original Tallman Hotel had an interesting part to play in the early development of Lake County but, in researching the history, it is the sidebar connection to the Civil War and to the colonization of Argentina that I found most interesting.



The original Tallman House Hotel was built in the early 1870s by Lake County pioneer Rufus Tallman. The hotel was part of a full-service facility consisting of hotel, livery stable and saloon designed to serve passengers traveling to Clear Lake and the nearby hot springs resorts. By the 1880s, Upper Lake had become the terminus of the Cloverdale and Clear Lake stage line, which brought tourists to resorts such as Witter Springs, Saratoga Springs, Bartlett Springs and Le Trianon at Blue Lakes.

As can be seen from the photos below, the hotel prospered for a while, then entered a period of decline and ceased to be occupied after 1962. After restoration, there are now four rooms with high ceilings, verandas and period plumbing fixtures in the historic hotel, 13 other rooms in surrounding buildings, plus a rebuilt Blue Wing Saloon Restaurant next door.



Rufus Tallman, who built the original hotel, was one of the early Lake County pioneers. He was born in 1834 in Syracuse, N. Y. In 1852, at the age of 18, he left his family and came to the California goldfields through Panama. In 1856, he became one of the first white settlers in Lake County, settling in the agricultural area just north of Clear Lake.



In 1861, Rufus married Mary Ellen Moore, eldest daughter of William Tandy Moore, who had settled his large family in the fertile lands of nearby Scotts Valley. Rufus and Mary subsequently had 13 children, the last of which was born in 1893 when Mary was 46 years old.



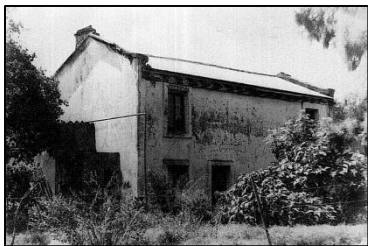
As interesting as I found the life of Rufus, Mary's family was for me even more intriguing. Having recently married, Mary was left behind as father William Moore (at left) packed up the rest of his family in the late 1860s and helped to found a new town in Argentina called Colonia California.

I could understand why the under-populated and recently independent Argentina would provide incentives to immigrants, especially on the Indian frontier, but I couldn't understand why a family with access to free and fertile land in California would pack up and head to the under-side of the world.

This mystery was resolved recently through contact with a Buenos Aires attorney and amateur historian by the name of Javier Maffucci-Moore, great great grandson of William T. Moore. It turns out that the Moore family had come originally from Missouri. They were Southern sympathizers and they were upset by the results of the Civil War. A dark age of Yankee oppression was sure to follow. Moore was therefore tempted to join and help lead a group of Californians, mostly from Sonoma County, on an adventure to Argentina.

Based on material supplied by Javier Maffucci-Moore, the relatives of another expedition member, Franz Benitez, have put up a web site describing the expedition. The group left San Francisco in early 1866 for Valparaiso, Chile. Learning of the pampas of Argentina, they didn't remain long in Chile, crossing the Andes by mule to Mendoza. From there they travelled east to Rosario by stage, then north by river boat up the Paraná River to Santa Fé, where they called upon the provincial governor.

In July of 1866, this group of ten settler families paid \$1.89 per acre for a grant of about 27,000 acres that had been part of the Indian Reservation of San Javier on Río del Rey 150 miles to the north of Santa Fe.



They named their settlement Colonia California, and elected William T. Moore as their Captain, or "military" leader. His house is seen in the photo at left. Though Colonia California was productive agriculturally and the settlers prospered, they suffered from continued depredations by the Indians.

Captain Moore became famous as an Indian fighter but in the end, the colony was not a success. Moore lost his eldest son to an Indian raid in 1875 and eventually returned to Texas in 1877. Many of the other settlers returned with him.

One son decided to remain, Moses Thomas "Tom" Moore. He, and likely the other remaining settlers, sold out and bought land near the British colony of Alejandra. Tom bought land to the west of Alejandra and became a wealthy *estanciero* (rancher).

At left below is Tom and his large family at his *Estancia* in Argentina in 1895. At right is his sister Mary and her family at the Tallman Hotel in Upper Lake about the same time.



So the mystery is solved. Hal and Dorothy Moore Smith, one of the last local descendents of Rufus and Mary, showed me once a 10 foot long Moore Family tree, and the majority of the entrants now have Spanish names. History and politics affect not only personal decisions, but they have ripple effects throughout the ages.