

History: Tallac House was the place to stay in its heyday

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Many hotels have been built on the shores of Lake Tahoe in the past one hundred and thirty years. There were good ones and bad ones, rustic and primitive ones and there were also elegant ones. One of the most celebrated of the latter was Tallac House, or the Tallac Hotel, which was situated on a prime site at the southwest corner of the lake. It was in a favorable position and could easily be reached by steamer and later by stage or by automobile from Sacramento or Reno.



The first hotel to operate at this site was a large two-story rectangular building built by Yank Clement when he moved from Meyers in 1875. It offered a store, cabins, complete livery accommodations and even a dance floor mounted on springs. It was a well-established site when Clement sold the northwestern portion of the holdings, and the main hotel building to E.J. "Lucky" Baldwin in the 1880s. Baldwin, the legendary financier of the Comstock, altered the original building and opened the Tallac Hotel. Over the years a veranda and graceful portico were added. Large picture windows in the dining room faced the lake and give guests a spectacular view with their supper. Other buildings were added including a casino on the lake edge. There were paths laid out for leisurely evening strolls through gardens and portions of virgin timber, one of the few stands left in the basin. First class accommodations were offered for 150 guests and a choice of fishing, hiking, horseback riding or trips on the lake in one of the hotel's launches as well as places for solitude and quiet contemplation.

Furnishings were a combination of rustic, in keeping with the setting, and elegant, to retain its flavor of class. Etched glass and polished brass did not seem out of place alongside rustic, twig chairs or tables. The whole place was often described as being "tony" and formal attire was required at all evening affairs.

Baldwin insisted that his managers keep the rates high to attract only the most genteel and affluent patron. The advertising brochure House that Tallac House was called the "Saratoga of the Pacific".

The original building burned down in 1914, but others had been added meantime and Tallac House continued in operation offering excellent accommodations until 1920, when E.J. Baldwin died. His heir, Anita Baldwin, built a private estate on the grounds in the twenties, steadfastly forgoing all commercial operations on the property. What was left of the legendary Tallac Hotel was torn down. Today it survives in memories and in images that continue to draw attention and praise for the elegant Tallac Hotel.