

LEO DOUGLASS REMEMBERS... PALOMAR MOUNTAIN

Excerpted From handwritten memoirs of Leo Douglass, April 20, 1979



The Douglass family, Orange, California, 1928. Left to right, back row are Leo Douglass, Don Douglass and Herb Douglass; front row Ted Douglass, Bill Douglass and Gertrude Perry Douglass.

“I was born in Dudley, Iowa Oct. 26, 1892. My parents Bert and Lillie and my sister Daisy Douglass and I came to California in 1900; landed in West Orange on S[outhern] P[acific] Railroad. My Father rented a house on Cambridge Street in Orange, and got a job as harness maker for W. F. Lutz Co. in Santa Ana. We lived there a short while and my parents bought the El Modena store, it was a two-story building, and we lived upstairs over the store. My Mother was the postmaster. My Father sold the store and bought some lots and a house one block north of the store.”

“We lived there for a time until my Father and my uncle Marion Smith bought 160 acres with a house on it about 1902, on the West end of Palomar Mountain. The men ran a summer resort there. We would stay on the mountain in the summer and move to El Modena in the winter. Daisy and I would go to a little school house on the mountain in summer and El Modena School in winter. The school house on the mountain had only six scholars. The trips back and forth were made by horse and wagon; it took 2 1/2 days each way.”



“We had some important people as guests on the mountain. U.S. Grant the 2nd and party came in a tourist automobile at 2 a.m. It was the first car to come up the mountain. That was 1904. We found the resort business meant too much work for my Father and Mother, as they did all the work while my Uncle Marion drove the

stage. He made two trips a week to Escondido with a four horse stage. ... [A mountain] lion I caught was a 65 lb female on Palomar Mountain. My Uncle Roy, while deer hunting, got a shot at the lion early in a.m., but missed her. He called me at noon. I took one dog, "Brandy", and drove 120 miles. Got there at 3 p.m. I found a drag mark where the lion had made a kill and soon found the kill, a black calf. I turned Brandy loose. He treed her 3 times, but she jumped each time. The 4th tree I was able to get a shot at her with a Luger pistol. I shot her in the heart and she was able to run 50 yards before dying. ...”

Herbert Douglass, Leo’s son: interview by Peter Brueggeman, 2006

Smith and Douglass Hotel put up its guests in canvas tent houses, and the Douglass family lived in the wooden house, a two story building, with bedrooms upstairs for the family. Herbert Douglass’ understanding is that the house was standing when his grandparents purchased the property. Bert Douglass, his grandfather, hunted deer for meals at the hotel. When venison was insufficient, Bert purchased goat meat for the hotel, from Fraziers at the east end of Palomar. Bert brought his family including his children Leo and Daisy Douglass to Palomar Mountain in early spring to open the hotel. Since this was before school was out, the children attended school on the Mountain, and then spent the summer there including searching for Indian arrowheads. In the fall, the hotel would close and the Douglass family would go back to Orange County, with the children then attending school in El Modena [Leo graduated from eighth grade in 1907]. Leo and Daisy Douglass gave up their beds when Ulysses S. Grant, Jr., [second] visited the Smith & Douglass Hotel; Leo remembered that the men wore white dusters.

Marion Smith was referred to as an uncle by Leo Douglass, but Asher says Smith’s first wife was a sister of Mrs. Lillie May Douglass, Bertrand’s wife.