



Captain Fletcher and the Navarro Inn

Navarro River Redwoods State Park • National Register of Historic Places

DID YOU KNOW?

At the turn of the 20th century there was a population that grew to several hundred people living and working around the mill, forming the town called Navarro.

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BEFORE 1850

Before European settlement, the Pomo peoples occupied much of the North Coast of California. The Navarro River formed the boundary between the Northern and Central Pomo. Navarro Beach was seasonally occupied as a place to gather shellfish, fish, seaweed, game, and salt. Sedges, roots and other vegetation, along with shells, feathers and magnesite beads were used to create beautiful and practical baskets.

1850 - 1902

The Scottish sailor Captain Charles Fletcher arrived in 1851, the first European settler on the Navarro Estuary. In 1860, Fletcher sold most of his land and a lumber mill was built here in 1861. Milled wood was transported by train on the north bank of the river, where it was loaded by pier onto waiting schooners.

In 1865 Captain Fletcher built and ran the Navarro Inn as a boarding facility for sailors whose cargo vessels anchored at the "doghole" of the Navarro River to take on timber shipments. The front porch of the Inn was considered a safe haven for Pomos passing through the rough mill town. Fletcher variously operated a ferry and built ships for the lumber coasting trade. The first mill operated until a devastating fire destroyed it and part of the town in 1890. Despite the loss of the mill and its employees, Fletcher continued to operate the Inn as a stage stop until his death in 1902.

1902 - 1935

The Inn stayed in the Fletcher family until 1926. It continued to operate as an Inn for travelers along the coast. As automobile travel became more common, the Inn also served as a summer retreat for families from inland who wished to escape the summer heat.

1935 - 1996

Beginning in the late 1930s, cottages, a store and gas station were added to the property. In 1948, part of the front porch of the Inn was enclosed to create a separate bar and it became a popular dinner and roadhouse known as "Navarro-by-the-Sea". This operation continued under a series of owners until the 1980s. The closed and deteriorating Inn was finally obtained by the California Department of Parks and Recreation in 1996.

NOW

In 2000, Navarro-by-the-Sea Center was formed as a non-profit organization to work in partnership with California State Parks to save the Inn and open it as a public visitor center. In 2009, the Navarro Inn and the nearby Mill House were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Inn was stabilized in 2013 after years of planning and fundraising efforts, and work continues on completing the renovations.



1900

1920

1940

1960

1980

2000

2010

2020

CHALLENGE

Do you know of any neglected cultural or natural resource treasures that need to be protected? What can be done to save them?