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Monday, March 26, 2007

[The Nut Tree Lives Again](#)

The Nut Tree Lives Again -- Vacaville Landmark Experiences Rebirth With Families, Shoppers

By Amy Maginnis-Honey



At the Nut Tree Family Park in Vacaville, you can ride the Nut Tree Railroad Train, which was introduced in 1956 and received a \$100,000 renovation in 2006. (2006 file photo)

VACAVILLE - First, Vacaville resident Doug Garcia sat on a bench, drenched in sunshine, near the Nut Tree Family Park Railroad tracks. Later, he sought shade in a small picnic area closer to the front entrance.

This was the first time Garcia, who was there with his two grandchildren, had been at the reborn Nut Tree. "It's nice," he said. " I like the shopping center."

Garcia thought the Family Park was a little expensive, however. The train ride is \$3.40 per person. One ride ticket costs 85 cents and each rides take two, three or four tickets.

When Garcia lived in San Lorenzo, he often stopped at the Nut Tree to eat on his way to Reno. Two-and-a-half years ago he moved to Vacaville.

He estimated it had been about 20 years since he had been there. The Nut Tree closed in 1996 after more than seven decades in operation.

After a series of fits and starts, including being home to the Renaissance Pleasure Faire a few years, the buildings were leveled and everything began anew.

Garcia is pleased things have turned out this way. "I'm very happy to see something here," he said. "I'd like to see a restaurant, too."

The amusement park, vineyard, bocce grove and shopping center, called Nut Tree Village, are complete. The shopping area includes major retailers like Best Buy and Border's.

The second phase will include a 200-room hotel, 20,000 square foot conference center, 156 townhouses and 200,000 square feet of office space.

Ground should be broken on it this year.

On Saturday, the bocce grove was officially dedicated with 32 teams from all over northern California expected to be on hand to compete.

Fairfield resident Joe Ragusa planned on being there. He's pleased to see more bocce courts being built because it means the sport is growing in popularity.

"I hope they have success," he said of the new courts.

Developers are hoping for 3 million visitors annually.

The Powell family of Suisun City did their best to help those numbers as Kathi and Jerry Powell were there on a recent Saturday afternoon with three of their four daughters (they also have a son) and two grandchildren.

Kathi Powell joked the visit made her "feel old."

"I remember the hobby horses and the train," she said. "We used to bring our children here several times a year."

"I only remember riding the horses," daughter Kara Powell interjected.

"I remember the horses and the shop with crystals," daughter Anna Connaughton said. "I remember the rock candy and the mirrors that made you look taller and shorter."

Now, she's bringing her 4-year-old daughter Madison and 1-year-old son Ian to the park. It was her second visit.

"I like it very much," she said. "It's very cute. It's a place where toddlers can come. Some theme parks are geared toward teens."

Connaughton lives in Napa.

Jerry Powell made an important decision at the Nut Tree. After giving a talk in the main dining room to a group of special education directors, he was approached and offered a job.

Kathi and Jerry Powell sat out in the Nut Tree main area and talked about it. That was about 15 years ago and Jerry Powell took the job. He still works in the same field.

Jerry Powell also remembered the annual pumpkin patch and scarecrow contest at the Nut Tree.

"I thought it was just going to be stores," he said, watching his grandchildren enjoy their rides on the hobby horses.

"I was really sad when it closed," Kathi Powell said. "I remember thinking, 'I hope they do something with it.'"

The Nut Tree started as a fruit stand in the 1920s, eventually adding a restaurant, gift shop, train ride and other family activities that were popular with travelers on the old U.S. Highway 40 which is now Interstate 80.

Ground on the family park and shopping area was broken in 2005. Both opened in fall 2006.

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Posted by Michael at 8:38 AM 

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