



An American Tour: 105



Vacaville's Nut Tree

Located in Vacaville, California, the Nut Tree opened in 1921 on old U.S. Route 40. It was created by Helen and Ed "Bunny" Power as a small roadside fruit stand, and built near the site of Helen's childhood home. It grew as US 40 became Interstate 80. At its peak, it contained a restaurant, an outdoor eatery, a bakery, a gift shop, a toy shop, the Nut Tree Railroad that gave rides from the toy shop to the airport, and an airport, which is now owned and operated by Solano County. It was a welcome rest stop on the road between Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay Area. Throughout the year, kids enjoyed giant frosted honey cookies (personalized on request), the numerous "Hobby Horses" rocking horses and riding the train.

It welcomed several celebrities, including Gov. Ronald Reagan 1967, Richard Nixon, Danny Kaye, Shirley Temple Black, Peter Marino and Bing Crosby, among others. On March 4, 1983, Nut Tree catered a luncheon hosted by CA Governor George Deukmejian for Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip at the State capitol. Beginning in 1980, Nut Tree was home to a month-long October harvest event called 'Pumpkin Patch'. Attractions included a great scarecrow contest, a giant pumpkin display and weigh-in, and pumpkin carving contests.

The Nut Tree Restaurant was an early pioneer of California cuisine, with fresh fruits and vegetables featured in the recipes. By 1978, it was identified as "the region's most characteristic and influential restaurant." It also featured small loaves of wheat and rye bread, cooked fresh each day on the premises. A notable feature of the restaurant was its large indoor aviary, which had glass walls extending from floor to ceiling. Nut Tree knives and cutting boards, as well as books on aviation, were sold in the gift shop.



The Nut Tree ceased operations in 1996 due to financial issues brought about by a family legal feud. Most of the buildings were demolished in 2003-2005. The old original Harbison house was donated to the Vacaville Museum in 1998 and is being restored in a new location 1000 feet from the original site.

Nut Tree reopened in 2006 as a mixed-use development of Snell and Co. It contains Nut Tree Family Park (children's amusement park), Nut Tree Bocce Grove (bocce ball venue), Nut Tree Village (restaurants and stores) and Nut Tree Complex. Retailers operating at opening were Best Buy, Sport Chalet and BevMo!. The restored Harbison house is a major centerpiece. It opened in October 2009. The Nut Tree Family Park closed due to the lack of attendance. On August 22, 2009, the Grand Opening Celebration was held for the reopening of The Nut Tree, under the new ownership of Westrus. The new Nut Tree adopted some of the original attractions, such as the Nut Tree Railroad, carousel, and other historical elements of the original Nut Tree.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nut_Tree]

