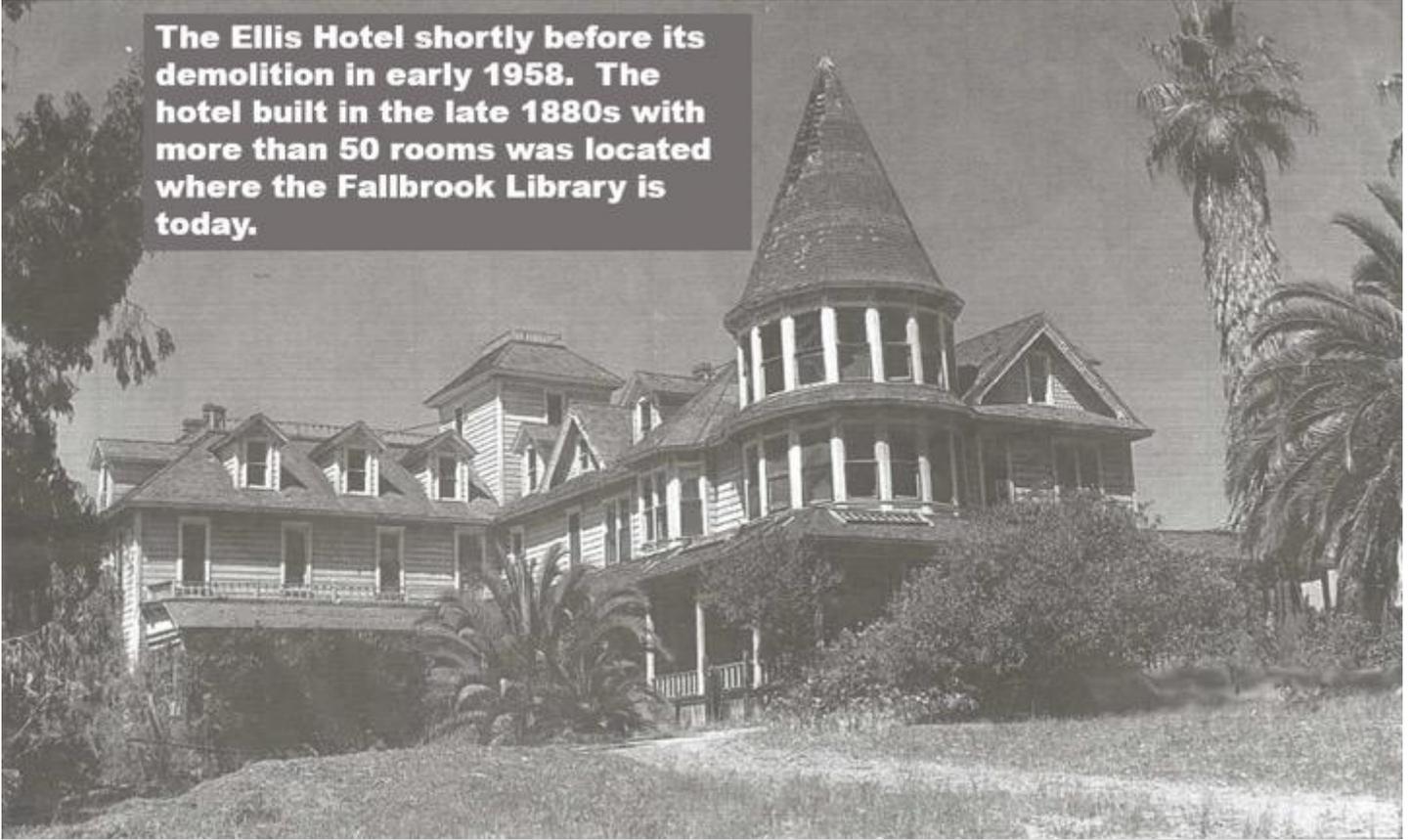


The Historian

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The Ellis Hotel shortly before its demolition in early 1958. The hotel built in the late 1880s with more than 50 rooms was located where the Fallbrook Library is today.



The Grand Hotel of Fallbrook

Because of some similarities with the Hotel Del Coronado, many have supposed the same architect designed both the Fallbrook resort and the Hotel Del Coronado. This is not the case. The architect of the Hotel Del Coronado were the Reid brothers, James Merritt and Watson. (1) Fallbrook's architect had been Sanford White, according to the Ellis family. (2)

In 1885, the original sub-dividers of the township of West Fall Brook, Francis W., and Mary E. Bartlett, set aside a block of property between Alvarado and Fig Streets for a grand hotel they planned to build. The Bartletts selected this central spot because it was at the end of the road that came straight uphill to the hotel from the train depot in the Santa Margarita Canyon. Horse drawn carriages and wagons would carry passengers with their luggage from the train platform. The Bartletts took in multiple partners to raise money for the lumber. Construction began in 1887.



About 1889 ready to open. There were delays because the Bartletts owed for the lumber.
It was eventually the lumber company who sold the hotel to William Ellis.

Locals initially called it *Cates' Hotel*, because the contractor and builder, was a man named Cates, who set up his lumber yard just a block away, at the SE corner of Main and Fig Street as he built the hotel. (3)

The Bartletts were strong backers of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). When the hotel was ready, the Bartletts named the resort the *Francis E. Willard Hotel* to honor the national president of the WCTU.

The Bartletts may have been trying to entice the real Francis E. Willard to visit their new town of West Fall Brook during a West Coast lecture tour. Willard never did visit West Fall Brook. By 1890, new owners had changed the name to the *Hotel Naples*. (4)

It would be the *Hotel Naples* until William Ellis, a successful local rancher, bought the hotel from Russ Lumber Company of San Diego in 1911 for about \$6,000. (5) William renamed it the *Hotel Ellis*. He announced his intention to overhaul the hotel and make it one of the best country inns between Los Angeles and San Diego on the new auto boulevard. (6)

The floors were polished. The grounds around the hotel were beautifully landscaped.

William Ellis employed local hunters to supply venison, duck, and quail. Fresh vegetables came from the Ellis Ranch. With his wife Adelle, his daughters, Nellie and Birdie, and a Chinese cook named Yong Sing, they made the dining room famous. Everyone sat family style around a long dining table.

William entertained guests around a large Franklin Stove in the middle of the lobby. The sleeping rooms were comfortable, but there was only one bathroom per floor. (7) Hot or warm water was very limited.



1911-1912 William S. Ellis is standing front and center



1911-1912 Guests leaving after a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of Northern San Diego County

William Ellis died in May 1923 at the age of 71. Joseph Smarr, a Yuma, AZ resident with property in De Luz, bought the old hotel in 1925 and returned to using the name *Hotel Naples*. It was never officially called the Smarr Hotel. (8)

Joe Smarr divided his time in California and Yuma, Arizona where he had other business. (9) When in Fallbrook, Joe Smarr and his wife Rita, used the *Hotel Naples* as their residence. Even before Joe Smarr's death in 1940, the Smarrs appear to have abandoned running the hotel. It fell into disrepair, although Rita Smarr continued to keep a six-room apartment there as a residence until 1955. She refused several attractive offers to sell, because her late husband had instructed her to "never sell the hotel." (10)



Early 1930s. Eastside of Hotel Naples. Looking west from alley behind Main Ave. looking West.

Fallbrook children began to refer to the old ramshackle building as a ‘haunted house’. They threw rocks through the windows for sport. Teenagers ran through the abandoned building on nighttime ‘ghost hunting’ parties. Complaints to the parents resulted in counter-charges that the abandoned derelict was a public nuisance and that the owners should be compelled to protect the place from minors being injured.

In 1958, Mrs. Smarr ordered the building to be razed.

~Tom Frew

Footnotes:

- (1) Heritage architecture.com and the Hotel Del Coronado website.
- (2) *Fallbrook Enterprise*, February 17, 1956.
- (3) Maie Ellis History of Fallbrook.
- (4) *San Francisco Examiner* 30 Aug 1890 pg. 13. Advertisement in San Francisco newspaper calls it the Hotel Naples.
- (5) Don Rivers, Fallbrook Historical Society, biography of William Ellis, published in *Village News*, October 8, 1998.
- (6) *Fallbrook Enterprise* January 12, 1912.
- (7) *Fallbrook in Review*, Vol 5, page 5.
- (8) The 1926 thru 1931 City Directories list Joe and Rita as living in the Hotel Naples at Pico and Fig St, although they spent most of their time in Yuma, AZ. The *Fallbrook Enterprise* either referred to the place as Hotel Naples or simply “the hotel”.
- (9) Joseph Smarr obituary, December 1940.
- (10) *Fallbrook Enterprise* March 30, 1956.



June 1958 “Dismantling of old Hotel Ellis. Another Landmark gone forever!” – Maie Ellis
Fallbrook Historical Society

Memorial Day Ceremony
Saturday, May 27, 2023

Pittenger Camp 21
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

Fallbrook Historical Society
Sgt. Pittenger's Historic Home

**Pictured (L-R)
Jerry Sayre PDC,
John May,
Dimas Lovato**





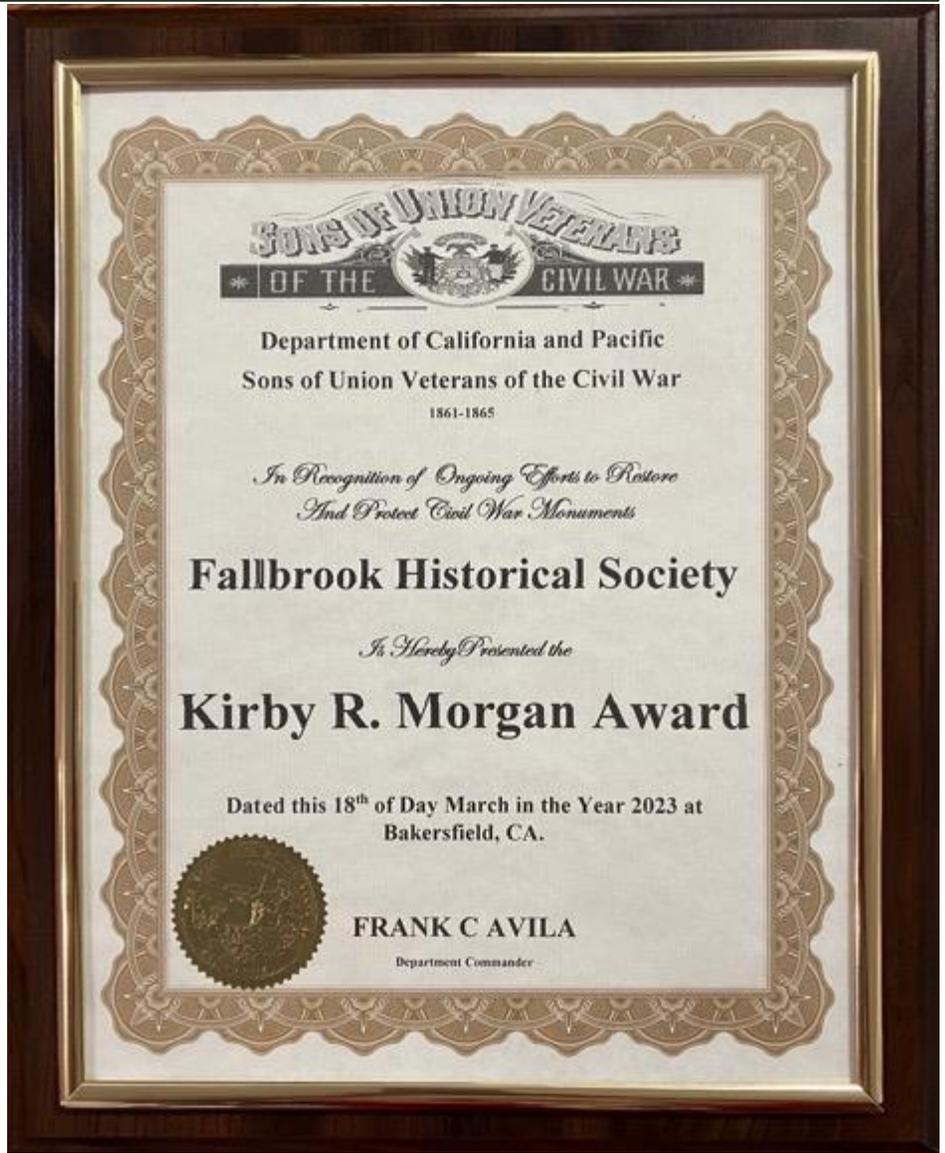
Pictured (L-R)
John May
Secretary/Treasurer,
Jerry Sayre PDC,
Terry Moxley, Dimas
Lovato



After the ceremony at the Pittenger House, the participants moved to the historic Oddfellows Cemetery and placed this new headstone with flowers and U.S. flags on Medal of Honor Recipient, Sgt. William Pittenger's grave.

Following the ceremony, Pittenger Camp 21 honored the Fallbrook Historical Society with the Department of CA & Pacific “Kirby R. Morgan Award”.

This Award is given to the Fallbrook Historical Society for their outstanding dedication for their work in establishing and preserving a Civil War Memorial for Medal of Honor Recipient Sgt. William Pittenger. This award may be conferred by the Department Commander of the Allied Orders, individually or as an organization, for performing outstanding service in the areas of Civil War memorials preservation and/or graves registration for their community.



Accepting from Fallbrook Historical: Tom Sullivan, Rebecca Tindall, Mary Belton, Leo Romero. Presenting from SUVCW: Jerry Sayer PDC Dimas Lovato, John May, Terry Moxley

The Fallbrook Historical Society's mission is to bring history to life by educating the community and others about Fallbrook's rich heritage



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