

Chapter Six

THE MALIBU MOVIE COLONY

No history of Malibu would be complete without the story of the Malibu Movie Colony.

The development of Malibu was started with the sale of the La Costa area for \$6,000,000 in 1928. To set the tone for the upcoming sales the Malibu Colony was leased to the movie stars.

This exclusive beach soon became a hideaway for the famous actors and entertainment personalities of the time. Art Jones, real estate developer, was prominent in this promotion and undertook the leasing project. Thirty-foot lots were offered on ten-year leases at \$1.00 per ocean-front foot per month.

The motion picture personalities quickly responded. Anna Q. Nielson was the first to sign up. Others soon followed including: Clara Bow, Ronald Colman, Harold Lloyd, Delores del Rio, Warner Baxter, Constance Bennett, Jack Warner, Mervyn Leroy, John Gilbert, Gloria Swanson, Gary Cooper, Barbara Stanwyck and many others. Soon small beach cottages were constructed, the average cost of which was \$2600. Rapidly, the area became known as the Malibu Movie Colony.

Ten years later, a portion of the Rindge's land including these leased properties, then managed under their company name, Marblehead Land Company, was offered for sale. These were quickly purchased by the celebrity occupants. From then to the present day the Malibu Movie Colony has been world famous as the playground of the movie stars, rock concert artists, writers, producers, and all types of personalities from the entertainment and business world.

Today, The Colony is a gated community with 24-hour security guards. Present residents include a veritable "who's who" of notables from the entertainment, arts, and business worlds.

Homes sell for prices from \$1,600,000 to \$6,000,000 and small vacant lots for as much as \$1,000,000.

And so it happened, in the irony of history, that the woman who wished to lead a very private life, away from publicity on her isolated ranch by the sea, ended up selling her land to the very people whose presence and lifestyles were to make Malibu famous throughout the world.

THE SURFRIDERS

The sport of Hawaii's ancient kings was surfriding- sliding down the slope of a breaking wave. Long before Captain Cook sailed into Kealakekua Bay, Hawaiians had mastered the sport of standing erect on a speeding surfboard. In the first accounts of early island life, Cook described the exotic beauty of a princess who paddled her board through heavy surf to catch and ride the cresting waves. According to legend, King Kamehameha and his Queen Kaahumanu, surfed side by side on the great waves of Hawaiian history.

Surfing was first introduced to California at Redondo Beach by George Freeth of Hawaii in 1907; but it was another famed Hawaiian-Duke Kahanamoku-who in 1927 taught the sport to early Malibu surfers.

The Duke was a great friend of Ronald Colman and had starred with him in motion pictures. He was often seen, in the late 20s, at #16 Malibu Colony with his board heading for Malibu Point. Colman had built #16 in 1926-27, one of the first of The Colony beach cottages.

It was at the Santa Monica Swim Club that young Californians, whose names were Bob Butt, Wally Burton, Pete Peterson, Johnny McMahon, and Chauncey Granstrom, were taught the fine points of surfing by The Duke and his co-worker, Tony Guerrero. Once they passed the tough and rigorous check-out, they would head up the Pacific Coast Highway to the recently opened Rancho Malibu. The lads with their boards would crawl through a "friendly" hole in the fence at Malibu Potteries to hit the surf and paddle out to Malibu Point. They had found one of the three most notable surfing spots in the United States.

Malibu is a south facing beach with a point curved out to sea at the mouth of Malibu Creek. The waves have a very well-shaped curl, sometimes up to 10 to 12 feet, more often 2 to 4 feet. Even small waves give good rides. Where the waves peak near The Point, good surfers can get a 1/4-mile ride.

If today you should walk along the ocean's edge and ask a young surfer what he likes about the Malibu surf, he would likely say, "It's perfect; it starts as a barrel, then a wall, and then a barrel again It's just perfect."

"Oh, the happy vaquero! Who would be a banker when he could ride the smiling hills and hide himself and horse in the tall mustard! Who would be a slave to desk and electric light darkness in a back room, when sunshine is free to all? Aye, a liberal competence is splendid, but slavery is often it's price. But then we cannot all be vaqueros" . . .

Frederick Hastings Rindge, 1898