Maltby cabins reflect the past

by Bob Candiotti

BIG BEAR VALLEY — Have u ever wondered what exly a Maltby cabin is? One ars the term tossed around ite frequently in Big Bear. Still, ere is frequently only a vague derstanding of Maltby cabins hong Big Bear old-timers and wcomers alike.

Many people familiar g Bear are aware that altby cabins were all bui al decades ago, but it mmon knowledge tha ly place in the world al Maltby cabins exist is Big ar Valley, mostly in Big Bear ty.

Guy Sherman Maltby was rn in 1889 in Park Rapids, nn. As a boy, he worked for gging companies in the Park pids area. When he was 22, y married May Belle Mann, o at the time was Park Rap-'s' only telephone switchboard erator.

Guy and May Belle did farming in 1930, Kiener and Maltby started constructing the Peter Pan Woodland Club which was located across the street from where the Big Bear City post office is today. The stone pillars that are seen today are remnants of the club. It had a main lounge, a ladies' lounge, a men's lounge, game room, dining room, bar and recreation room upstairs for dancing and viewing motion pictures. The main-lounge fireplace had a model electric train winding through it. The fireplace was built by Fred P. Humphrey, an artist and sculptor from Hollywood who, over the years, ended up building 150 fireplaces inside Maltby cabins.

The Peter Pan Woodland Club was a retreat preferred by many celebrities of the day — including Clark Gable and John Wayne — so the next step was for Maltby to build more suitable cabins for the affluent people who were eagerly buying memberships at the club. Thus began the start of cabins built with shiplap siding milled by Maltby's Bear Valley Milling and Lumber Company.

Maltby's cabins were fully furnished, and even included pots, pans and linens, so they were totally ready to live in. May Belle Maltby was the interior decorator. When a house was ready, she would go in and get it ready for instant occupancy.

There were approximately of these cabins constructed. cabins with their identifying shiplap siding — some even built with garages — are what today are called Maltby cabins.

In June, 1932, Guy Maltby had a stroke and was partially paralyzed.

Although not in good health, he continued working until his death from an angina attack October 4, 1941. On April 1962, May Belle married Fred Humphrey, the fireplace ator.

He died on Jan. 18, 1 May Belle passed away, at age of 90, on Jan. 29, 1980.

The Peter Pan Woodland Club burned to the ground June 20, 1948.

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This Maltby house in Big Bear City is a perfect example of Guy Maltby's work. (Photo by Lesley Hoffman/ The Voice)