

Robert Garwood Dean

Robert Garwood Dean, an only child, was born in 1831 in New York. Both of his parents died from small pox before he was 15 years old. Robert was an adventurous young man. At age 20, he and a partner bought a top-sail schooner and, with 3 others aboard, sailed from New York bound for California and the gold rush. Off the coast of Brazil, a terrific storm ripped the sail off the ship. The party spent six weeks in Brazil making repairs.

After arriving in California, Robert sought to mine gold in the Central Sierra Mountains. He built a log house, stocked up on provisions and planned to start mining. However when he was away, the Indians raided his property and stole his mules and horses.

Quite the entrepreneur, over the next 8 years, Robert was a store clerk for his uncle in Stockton, a hunter of bear, elk and mustangs, a gold miner in British Columbia, and finally returned to California in pursuit of gold again.

In 1859, Dean entered into a stock-raising venture with the intent to take 100 head of horses from California to Salt Lake to exchange for cattle from emigrants. Alas, this venture failed when winter prevented traversing the Sierras.

About this time the discovery of silver mines caused thousands of new miners to travel to California. Dean saw an opportunity to establish a way station near Cold Creek, a few miles from the southern shores of Lake Tahoe. He built a two-story hotel named Sierra House. Unfortunately, the Central Pacific Railroad built their tracks on the north side of the lake drawing travelers away from his establishment. The body of water was controversially known as Lake Bigler at that time. Robert Dean suggested the name Lake Tahoe which was adopted by California.

Dean and his wife moved to Douglas County, Nevada where they operated a very successful school for 60 students. He also ran for State Senator losing by 5 votes.

In 1870 at age 38, Robert and his wife returned to Brentwood where he enthusiastically became a farmer. Ten years later, he built warehouses in Brentwood and Byron which were eventually sold to Balfour-Guthrie. Dean was employed as that company's superintendent of the Marsh ranch property and retired from farming on his own.

When the Bank of Brentwood opened in 1913, Robert became its President. At age 80, Dean retired from Balfour-Guthrie Company. He died in 1920 at the age of 88 and is buried in Union Cemetery, Brentwood. Mr. Dean led a full and adventurous life!