

CAPITOLA AVERON MANSION AWARDED LANDMARK STATUS

by Carolyn Swift

Hidden behind an apartment complex, the mansion of Capitola Mansion Apartments has nearly been forgotten these last 20 years. Yet it is the most visible symbol of an entire era of Santa Cruz County history.

This two-story, French mansard style home perfectly represents the moment the balance of power shifted at the start of the American period of California history. This home is where La Senora Martina Castro de Lodge—owner of more land than anyone else at any period of county history—spent her last days.

Known as the Averon House, the mansion was built by Frenchman Jose Averon and his wife Maria Guadalupe, one of the daughters of Dona Martina who helped care for her at the end of her tragic life.

When Martina died there in the late 1890s, the house was still fairly new. But the titles to the Rancho Soquel and Soquel Augmentation were long gone into

the hands of those at the helm of the new American culture.

Fortunately, the Averon house has escaped a tragic fate of its own. It was moved once, when Highway 1 put a divider between Soquel and Capitola in 1948. It was saved a second time in the 1970s, when the Mid-County Historical Society lobbied to the City of Capitola for its preservation. When the Capitola Mansion Apartments were completed, the home was to be community center. Today, it is used as an office; few people remember its former life, or even know of its existence at 919 Capitola Avenue.

On May 12, the Santa Cruz County Historical Trust took action to rekindle awareness of the Averon mansion and its importance to Mid-County history. The 1884 structure was among four buildings and a number of individuals honored during a recognition ceremony held in the Atrium at the McPherson Center for Art and History in Santa Cruz.

One of the familiar blue

oval plaques signifying landmark status now belongs to each of the following, in addition to Capitola's mansion: Lincoln Court, 317-321 and 323 Lincoln St., Santa Cruz; Watsonville Woman's Club, 12 Brennan St., Watsonville; and Riverwood Manor, 10580 Highway 9, Ben Lomond.

During the ceremony, Patrick Orozco performed several songs of the Ohlone culture, and was honored for his work and longstanding dedication toward the revival and preservation of the Ohlone songs, dances, ceremonial observances and way of life. The Ohlone people were the earliest inhabitants of this region.

Others recognized for their preservation work were Mike and Bonnie Sinnott, for the Rubottom Blacksmith Shop in Felton; Tom and Mardi Kisling, rehabilitation of the Leonard building, downtown Santa Cruz; Burt Rees and Marta Gaines, rehabilitation of the Compass Rose building, Santa Cruz; and Jim and Diane Cook, Paradise Park Powder House rehabilitation. □



The historically significant Averon House, a two-story home with mansard roof, sits behind the Capitola Mansion Apartments on Capitola Avenue.