

DEC. 17, 1950

Santa Cruz Yesterdays



WILLIAM ELY HOME ON FRONT STREET

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Still standing, on the north side of Short street just back of the Greyhound depot, is a two-story residence which dates back to before Civil War days.

The best record is that it was built in the 1850s. It occupied part of the ground where Hotel Palomar now stands, with trees and gardens and a narrow alley about where the Palomar arcade connects Pacific avenue and Front street.

By external appearance its actual construction was probably by John B. Perry, a Massachusetts carpenter who had come here in 1849 and was joined by his wife and three children in 1850. He constructed many of the residences of the fifties, usually using wooden imitation stone work as at the corners of the building pictured.

Built For Moore Family

The home was built for the family of Eli Moore, the Missouri immigrant of pre-gold-rush days whose first residence here was a log cabin erected in 1847 a little to the north of the site of his large home.

The house faced toward Willow street, which is today's Pacific avenue, standing back from it. Willow was then building up as a residence street well away from the little business district at the upper end of Front street.

The map of city lots drawn in

1866 to show owners approved by the trustees named under special act of congress shows the approximate Palomar location as almost an acre belonging to "Mrs. Moore," the widow of Eli, who had died in 1859. The house, pretentious for those days, was probably built before his death.

North of Mrs. Moore's tract on the map were four smaller lots whose ownership was given as T. W. Moore, her son, and J. Nelson Besse, R. K. Vestal and Ed Bender, all her sons-in-law. They extended to the court house lot given in 1865 by the Moores and Coopers.

W. H. Ely Became Owner

The house became known as the Ed Bender home because of his occupancy before his departure for Oregon, where he finished his days. It was moved around about 1882 to face east on Front street, while Pacific avenue frontage was used for erection of Ely Block No. 2, a two story building erected by William H. Ely, whose Block No. 1, built in 1875, already stood facing Pacific avenue on what is now part of the court house grounds.

Ely, with his wood, hay and grain yard next door, owned and occupied the old Moore home until his death in 1909. It stood on its Front street location until 1928 when it was moved to its Short street loca-

tion. The Ely Block No. 2 was razed to make way for the Palomar hotel.

Ely A Go-Getter

The adventurous Ely had come west during the gold rush and met with some success in the mines and other business pursuits thereabouts. He came to this area in the early 60s, but went on to Monterey county and engaged in the cattle business for several years. He embarked in merchandising here in 1869 and remained from that time, becoming active in community affairs. For a time he served as a city councilman. In 1890 Ely started the East Santa Cruz horse car line.

After the big fire of 1894 the Ely lot adjoining the old court house site was sold for \$15,000 and his three-story business block moved to Front street just north of the feed mill he had built in 1888 adjoining the family home. After 1901 the wood and feed yard was operated for years by A. L. Wright.

When the picture was taken in the late 20s these buildings, at extreme right, were coming down preliminary to the Palomar building project. The hospitable old home, with its massive front gate which moved on a roller, and its great front door marked by a metal door-plate engraved "Ely," was soon to