



## SANTA CRUZ

Historic Perspective

Gibson, Ross

# Leading the cause against drinking

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The four-lane road linking Santa Cruz's Upper Plaza to the Lower Plaza was once "Temperance Grade." Today it is no longer a destination in itself, but a means to get somewhere else. The same could have been said of the state's temperance movement, which began in Santa Cruz County in 1848.

It was the same year Elihu Anthony founded downtown, when he built his general store and foundry where the clock tower stands today. He constructed his Gothic cottage on a bluff overlooking downtown, a spot known for nearly a century as "Anthony's Bluff."

### A lofty mansion

The land under the bluff used to extend to what is now Mission Street's center divider. Halfway up the grade, a flight of granite stairs scaled the hillside to an antebellum mansion rising above the trees. Its lofty white Greek Revival porch and cupola glistened against the clouds, like a Victorian vision of heaven. This was the new Temperance Hall of 1861.

The graceful building was exceptional in a town of cheap, utilitarian shacks. The local aversion to permanent architecture was because of the federal government's continuing review of the validity of Spanish-era deeds, giving no one clear title to Santa Cruz lands until 1866.

### Blue-collar saloons

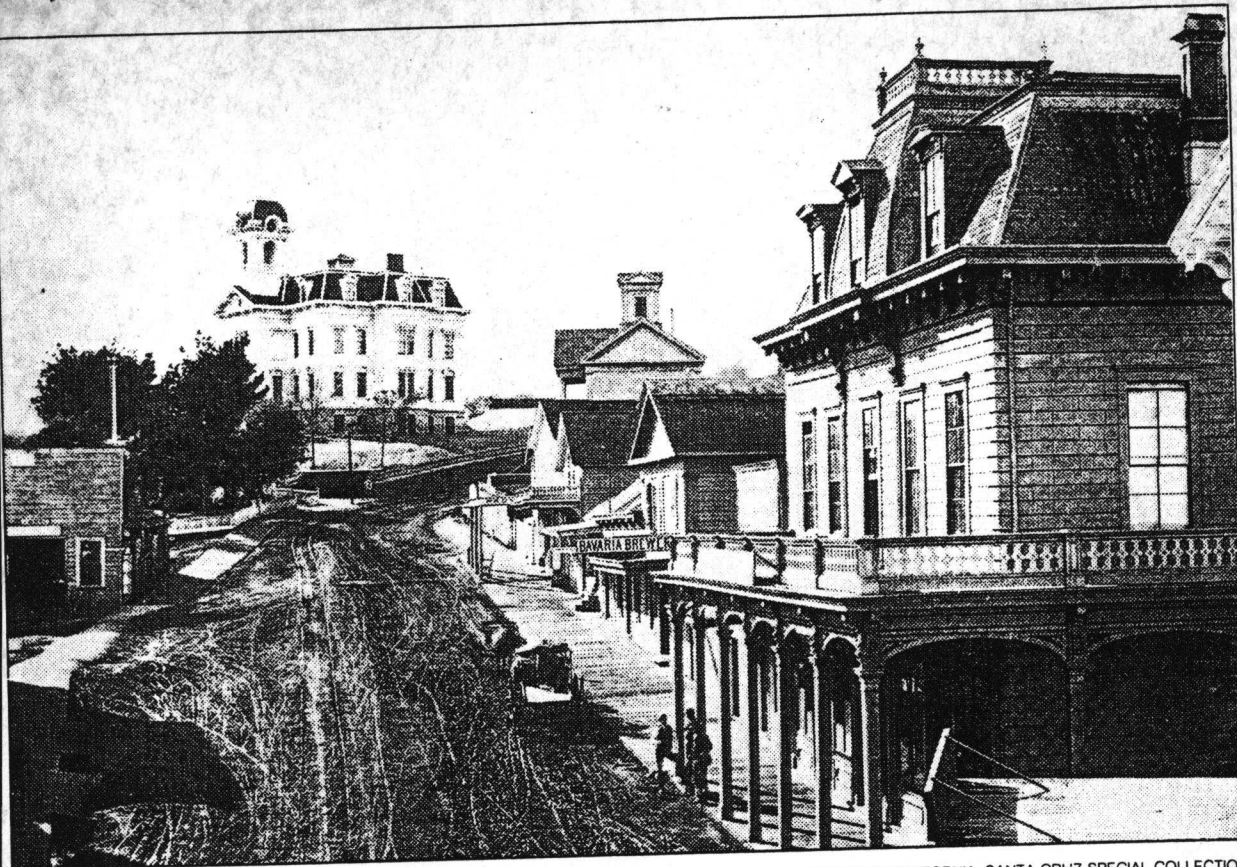
The motivation for temperance may have been stronger in old Santa Cruz, which originated as an industrial city of lumber mills and ship builders, lime works and tanneries. The numerous blue-collar workers were attracted to the famous "40 Saloons" in downtown Santa Cruz, and the majority of arrests were for alcohol-related crimes, mischief or public drunkenness.

Saloon owners deflected criticism by reminding people that, because of the \$15 each saloon paid quarterly for its license, the city made a profit of \$2,400 a year.

This went unchallenged until the Rev. D.A. Dryden, a Methodist, said, "The city reports that it costs Santa Cruz \$2,310 a year to arrest, imprison, feed and process people for public drunkenness, so

See HISTORY, Page 2B

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An 1875 photo shows the newly constructed school, the Temperance Hall tower and the St. Charles Hotel.

## Temperance cause began in Santa Cruz

### ■ HISTORY

from Page 1B

the profit to the city is only \$90."

The local popularity of the temperance movement was enough to support eight to 10 societies, which were originally more along the lines of fraternal orders than the prohibitionists of later years. They acted as support groups for those who took the pledge, and they organized charity drives for families of alcoholics. One junior chapter included a pledge against tobacco use, because of the large number of 8- to 10-year-old boys in Santa Cruz who smoked.

But "Temperance Grade" was hardly an island of temperance itself, overlooking a vineyard along the one-block Vine Street (today's Cedar Street). Yet the grade seemed organized like a perfect object lesson of the society's own "ladder of moral progress."

At the base of the hill were the "fires of hell," belching from Anthony's iron foundry. An "actor's hotel," plus saloons and a brew-



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ery, were on the lower grade. At Temperance Hall, one turned the corner onto a high plain, passing between the public school on the south bluff and the Catholic school on the north bluff, until one reached the heavenly plaza at the top, where the Catholic Church was.

The St. Charles Hotel & Bar near Anthony's Foundry was built as a hardware store in 1855 by Anthony's cousin, William. The 1849 post office in Elihu Anthony's Store moved into its own building west of the hotel in 1867. Next to the store was Otto

Diesing's 1866 Bavaria Brewery and beer hall, which dug "tunnels for pure water" into the side of the bluff.

The Nutter House sat on one lane of the old School Street Extension, as a winemaker's home. The brick Italianate Patrick Neary Grocery was west of the alley. Next came the 1856 home of John McElroy's Pacific Sentinel newspaper (called the Santa Cruz Sentinel after 1862). The L-shaped Bluff Saloon was nestled against the Temperance Hall site.

The upper grade was Bell Tower Heights, named for the bell towers on Temperance Hall, Holy Cross School, the orphanage and the public school. The fifth was a fire bell cupola added atop Leslie's 1857 store, the first brick building in Santa Cruz County.

Now, only an old temperance song recalls its glory:

*Dash-away the demon rum,  
Or you will pay, when you see  
the devil come!  
On that day, you'll be a bum!  
So dash-away the demon rum!*