

Think GINGERBREAD

By MARGARET KOCH
Sentinel Correspondent

ALL SANTA CRUZ gingerbread isn't baked in pans and glued together with colored frostings to create miniature houses.

The real gingerbread bakers will be displaying their talents Saturday in the annual contest-show sponsored by Santa Cruz County Historical Trust.

But look around you. Santa Cruz is rich in life-size gingerbread houses still standing on many of the older streets in town. They are cherished today as a heritage of our New England and Victorian past.

Santa Cruz never had the wealth of adobes like Monterey. After all, Monterey was the capital of Spanish Alta California. Here, we had Yankee sailors, ex-gold miners, farmers, businessmen, lumber and lime barons who made fortunes and sometimes built houses to match their wealth. Even the more modest houses had their share of fancy scrollwork, bargeboards, towers, cornices and fishscale shingles.

Take the charming house at 127 Green St. Oldtimers knew it as the home of Otis Longley, built by him about 1868. When the late Geraldine Work came to Santa Cruz as county librarian, she fell in love with the house, purchased it and lived there the rest of her life.

The clapboard story-and-a-half house with its central gable and balustraded porch, are high gingerbread style today. For a time in the 1870s and 1880s, the house was home to the



Photos by Bill Lovejoy

Layers of gingerbread remind Santa Cruz population of its New England roots.

Fanciful trim decorates Santa Cruz, past and present

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Farnham family. Alice Farnham, the only child, scratched her initials — A.E.F. — on one of the old bubbled window panes. She also planted a Belle of Portugal rosebush, which thrived and created much comment and drew visitors just to see it in bloom.

MODEST twin cottages at 240 and 244 Walnut Ave., built in the 1870s, have their own turrets, fancy shingles and lacy spindle trim above curving porches. Walnut Avenue was a stylish address when three sisters came to live in one of the cottages. Anita, Pearl and Mabel Triplett bought the house in 1945 and lived there until they died, one by one.

Pearl ruled the roost with an iron hand. She and Anita outlived Mabel. Anita, a meek, sweet little old lady who never married, worked at Leask's glove and ribbon counter for years. (Fine leather gloves and ribbons were big fashion in those days.) Anita's main

source of entertainment and friends was found in Santa Cruz Parlor, Native Daughters of the Golden West, which met on Monday nights, weekly, for years.

The Triplett "girls" were the granddaughters of Simon and Petra Perez, a proud Spanish family. But the girls never referred to their Spanish blood. Why? Old-fashioned nonsense.

The girls' uncle, James Perez, was a college-educated man who worked as an executive for Wells Fargo for years. The Perez family adobe and acreage were where Dominican Hospital is today.

ABOARD and batten cottage with intriguing trim stands at 114 Escalona Drive. That portion of Escalona was originally Davis Street, named for the Davis of Davis and Jordan Lime Company. The house was built in the early 1850s by John B. Perry. His daughter was Mary Jordan, the wife of Albion Jordan of the lime firm. She conducted an early school in her front parlor for a time.

Perry was architect and carpenter, a talented man responsible for the 1868 McPherson Building at the southwest corner of Pacific and Locust. The Perry house originally stood at the corner of Mission and Union Streets, but was moved to Davis (Escalona today) in 1885. Its bargeboard design below the eaves is much admired as are its fancy curlicue, sawn-wood trim.

Today, the house is home to the J.A. Steens. Judy Steen is research librarian at UCSC, a history buff and co-editor of the book just out on Georgiana Bruce.

HENRY WILLEY got a little grander when he had his home at 105 Sylvar St. built in 1887 for \$5,000. Henry was a nephew of the Rev. Samuel Hopkins Willey, one of the founders of University of California. The reverend also lived here and was minister at the First Congregational Church.

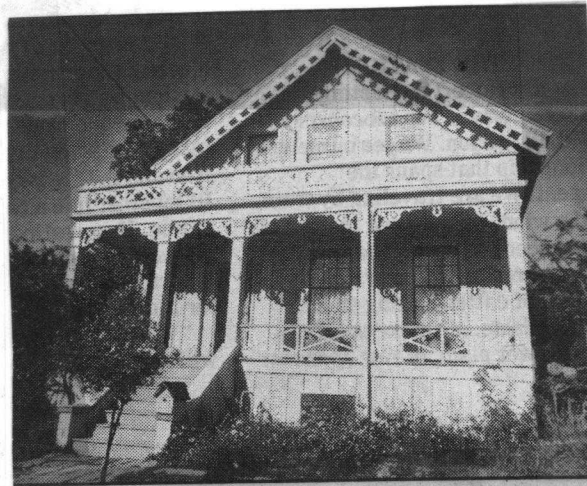
Henry's planned education for the ministry was canceled due to financial reverses. He came to Santa Cruz to visit his uncle, liked what he saw and stayed to open a hardware business which thrived. He married Mary Sinnott and built the house for

her.

When Mary and their infant son died in childbirth, Henry was alone for seven years before he married Frances Lockhart. In 1926, the Willeys sold the house and moved to Monterey.

The next owner, Mrs. G.W. Cooper, rented the house to Helen Mowry, who established her hand-made lampshade business there for a few years. In 1943, the Daughters (Sisters) of Charity purchased the house for less than \$3,000 and lived in it briefly until the Dominican Sisters arrived to replace them as teachers at Holy Cross School. Twelve Dominican nuns lived there until 1954 when the Catholic Church sold it and it has changed hands several times since.

The Willey house is noted for its Chinese porch railings, its ornate porch brackets, and the carved



Along Escalona Drive.

flowers and foliage under the front attic dormer.

GOLDEN GATE Villa, also known as the Palaise Monte Carlo, is one of the finest examples of Queen Anne architectural style in Santa Cruz. Much of its gingerbread is on the inside in the form of fine wood wainscoting, a large carved staircase, gold plated chandeliers and ornate stained glass windows. The tower is eye-catching.

The house was built in 1891 for Major Frank McLaughlin, with Thomas J. Welsh as architect. McLaughlin was a wealthy mining engineer.

One of Santa Cruz' most notorious murders and suicides took place there when the Major shot his stepdaughter, then drank poison on Nov. 16, 1907, the second anniversary of his wife's death (of natural causes).

The incident was attributed to his grief, also to financial reverses resulting from his over-extending himself on a Feather River mining project.

The case has always remained something of a mystery; the close friends and legal advisors who knew the inside story are gone now.

MANY OF Santa Cruz's gingerbread houses have fascinating stories behind them ... too many stories and too many houses to write about here. There is Alice Halsey's tall Stick Victorian at 207 Mission ... the twin cottages a little further up Mission at 214 and 218, built in 1867 ... Louis Schwartze's house at 222 Mission with its fancy-cut bargeboard trim, now painted pink ... and so many more. Think gingerbread! And look gingerbread! We've got it.