

Walk in Davenport reveals its charm

By LAURIE SLOTHOWER
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WITH coffeehouses and boutiques popping up in epidemic proportions in Santa Cruz, it's comforting to know there's at least one corner of the county unsullied by consumer culture.

The velvet glove of gentrification has yet to get a chokehold on Davenport, Santa Cruz County's northernmost community.

Oh sure—there are a few new storefronts, and the citizenry recently got together to restore the old jail.

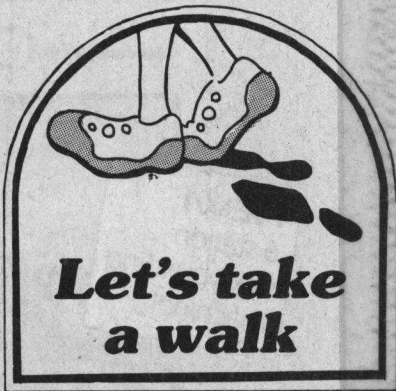
But Davenport, with its ramshackle cabins and barely-paved streets, remains one of those places that looks a lot better when you're walking in it than driving past it.

Much of Davenport's charm has to do with its location, sandwiched in between rolling hills and the Pacific Ocean. It's the residence of agricultural workers, artists and some urban escapees.

In addition, Davenport reveals itself as a treat for the pedestrian willing to drive a little to walk a lot.

OUR trek begins at Cement Plant Road, a mile or two north of town off Highway 1. Coming from Santa Cruz, you'll notice Davenport Landing to your left and Cement Plant Road on your right.

The street turns into a beautiful, tree-lined country road with an old barn about a fourth of a mile up. A



little further along and you'll notice the Lone Star cement plant — the town's economic lifeline — rising like a grey sentinel from the horizon.

About a mile into the walk look to your left for a fine view of golden hills, the grass short and bristly with its summer crewcut. Look to your right and catch a glance of snow-capped waves.

The waves are snow-capped because there is almost always a stiff breeze in Davenport.

Did we mention it would be a good idea to bring a jacket? Or is that as obvious as telling you Davenport is about half an hour outside of Santa Cruz?

But I digress. This part of our walk would be ideal for joggers or bicyclists. The road is wide and relatively untraveled.

Soon you'll pass by First, Second, and Third Streets. The subdivision is

known as New Town, with many of its houses dating back to the early 1900s, according to Alverda Orlando, former resident who is recognized as "the" expert on Davenport history.

New Town was built by the Crocker family, who stepped in to run the cement plant in 1907 after its owner absconded with \$20 million of the company's money.

Shortly after the Crockers (who would later start a chain of banks) took over the plant, all of the employees — including the foremen and supervisors — went on strike. One reason for this unfashionable solidarity was that all of the plant employees lived together in town, according to Orlando.

After the strike was settled, New Town was built to house management employees apart from the rank and file and prevent another strike.

Keep going and soon you'll be walking in front of the cement plant itself. This was my least favorite part of the route, and I found myself hurrying to get to the cluster of businesses near Highway 1 and Coast Road.

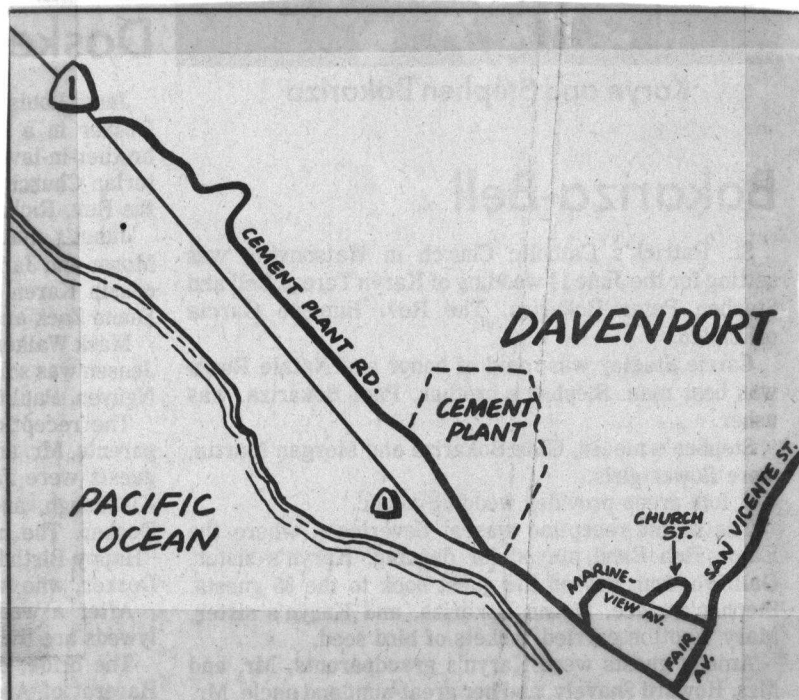
But if you are the type who loved industrial arts filmstrips in elementary school, you might enjoy the sight (and sounds) of the factory.

CEMENT Plant Road ends about a half of a mile from the factory, and you have to walk along Highway 1. Be careful.

On the way you'll pass the Post Office, Arros' Country Store and Service Station, and the Whaler Bar.

Look at the north parking lot to the New Davenport Cash Store and Restaurant. See that old gray building? Look behind it — you'll see a newly painted Davenport Jail. The two-cell hoosegow was built in 1914, when Davenport was incorporated as a township, says Orlando. Nobody was ever incarcerated there, save for the occasional drunk.

Walk to the restaurant and up Church Road to — what else? — a church. The Church of St. Vincent de





Paul was built in 1915 using cement donated by the factory. Services are still held there, said Orlando.

Turn right and go down Marine View Avenue towards San Vicente Street and Fair Avenue. The roads are animated with the sounds of birds, goats, and ... dogs. Lots of dogs.

Some of these dogs are on leashes. Some are not. Many of these dogs are friendly. But some ... well, forewarned is forearmed.

Lundberg Glass Studios are at 121 Marine View Avenue. There's a quaint gift shop with their wares — featured in the Smithsonian Institute magazine, among other publications — next door. Its hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Aeolus Boats, ship-building shop, is a few doors down on the opposite side of the street.

This spot on the road also gives the pedestrian a grand view of one of Davenport's patented hillsides.

Turn around and walk back up Marine View Road to where it ends, just past the elementary school. You may hear chirping and clucking from a house on the right, whose owner raises exotic chickens. An unnamed road lined with eucalyptus trees leads the traveler back to the highway.

The entire walk is close to two hours; you might want to split it in half by separating New Town from the cluster of businesses in Davenport proper.

As a special added attraction: Take note of the factory across the street from the Cash Store restaurant. There's a footpath on the south end of the plant, next to the fence, which leads to Davenport



Photos by Pete Amos

Shadows from overhanging trees dapple Cement Plant Road, above, which leads from New Town to Highway 1. Above left, barn along Cement Plant Road bakes in the sunshine.

Beach. The beach is shielded from the wind, giving it an advantage over many north coast beaches, but the path down is only for the sure-footed. Or you could just walk along the railroad tracks.

A little further south up the road is the car turnout for people to watch the annual whale migration.