

Historic Buildings

Nine new sites named to local landmark list

By SHANNA MCCORD

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SANTA CRUZ — History is being made.

The Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History plans to add nine buildings and homes to its long list of local landmarks.

Each will be affixed with a blue oval plaque offering historical nuggets — date built, architect's name and style description.

"The plaques make a walking tour of Santa Cruz a lot more interesting," Santa Cruz historian Ross Eric Gibson said.

The museum's local landmark program started in 1973 and has grown to nearly 250 structures.

The new additions are located throughout Santa Cruz County, including the old Alba School House in Ben Lomond and the former Pajaro Valley National Bank in Watsonville.

The 100-year-old Santa Cruz Main Post Office, modeled after a hospital in Florence, Italy, made the list because of its art deco architecture and significance of being Santa Cruz's first federal building.

The post office celebrated its centennial anniversary in March, and is said to be the oldest continually operating post office in California.

Casablanca Inn, across the street from Main Beach, will be adorned with a blue plaque due to its storied past as an upscale hotel that often attracted Hollywood celebrities.

The oceanfront hotel and

restaurant was built nearly a century ago as the summer home of San Francisco Judge Marcel Cerf.

The 6,884-square-foot Cerf mansion, designed by architect George McCrae, was built in a Mediterranean style with elegant arches, fireplaces, private balconies and gardens.

After Cerf died in 1935, the property was acquired by attorney Stanford Smith, commandeered by the military during World War II, then became the Casablanca, named for the 1942 film starring Humphrey Bogart.

More recent celebrity guests at the Casablanca Inn include Hillary Rodham Clinton in 1996, and Betty White in 2004, while filming "Annie's Point."

Others on the latest landmark list include Branciforte Grammar School, the Dr. Frederick P. Shenk Home, Railway Express Agency, Franks Family Home and the Cody House in Ben Lomond.

A nine-member historical landmark committee identify up to 10 new landmarks each year.

"It's really for educational purposes," museum spokeswoman Marla Novo said. "Our program is as much for outstanding aesthetics as it is for history."

A ceremony will be held at 1 p.m. May 5 at the Front Street museum to award the blue plaques.

AT A GLANCE

NEW HISTORIC LANDMARKS

- Branciforte Grammar School, 1915, Santa Cruz
- Dr. Frederick P. Shenk Home, 1932, Santa Cruz
- Railway Express Agency, 1918, Santa Cruz
- Franks Family Home, 1900, Santa Cruz
- Pajaro Valley National Bank (now Wells Fargo), 1939, Watsonville
- Alba School House, 1888, Ben Lomond
- Cody House, 1904, Ben Lomond
- Marcel Cerf Mansion (now Casablanca Inn) 1914-15, Santa Cruz
- Santa Cruz Main Post Office, 1912, Santa Cruz

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IF YOU GO

AWARD CEREMONY

WHEN: 1 p.m. May 5

WHERE: Museum of Art and History, 705 Front St., Santa Cruz

INFORMATION: 429-1964 or www.santacruzmah.org