

Howden's Castle

By Margaret Koch

Robert Howden's Ben Lomond home was his castle, and his stone castle was his home.

He called himself an "everyday Scotsman," but his burning desire was to live in a castle. He did. He built it himself. He selected a beautiful bend on the San Lorenzo River in Ben Lomond, and there, in the early 1920s, with local hired help, he built his castle. He patterned it after castles he remembered from his boyhood days in Scotland.

The castle went together slowly. Every stone was hand-picked and hand set. Howden's regular home and business were located in Oakland, where he operated a tile factory, but his heart was in the "highlands" of Ben Lomond.

The castle was completed in 1926, with only three rooms. Howden had spent his early life in Scotland as a stone carver, and he used his talent to etch the panes of the glass windows in his castle. They depict Scottish scenes and the poems of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns.



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Howden kept his castle until 1937, when he sold it to Dr. and Mrs. Norman Sullivan of Santa Cruz, who enlarged it and modernized a bit. Since then it has changed hands four times and each new owner has added to its comfort and charm without changing the basic appearance. Today [1978] it contains about 15 rooms, some of them quite small, according to Mrs. Ivy Lee Weatherly, who owns it and lives there with her flock of 12 cats. She opens the castle for tours on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

Robert Howden once wrote these lines:

*Ben Lomond, nestling 'mong the heights,
Above fair Santa Cruz,
Your peaceful quiet my soul delights,
Your charm awakes my muse...*

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