

## Santa Cruz's Town Clock

*By Carmen Morones and Rechs Ann Pedersen*

### The First Town Clock

The Town Clock, which towers over the convergence of Pacific Avenue and Water and Front Streets, is actually Santa Cruz's second town clock. The first town clock was built as part of the original IOOF building, constructed in 1873.

"It had four faces and was similar, yet a little different from the present clock. The first one escaped the great fire of 1894 which leveled almost everything in the block from Cooper Street north, and which took the brick courthouse. Then another devastating fire struck the down town May of 1899, and the town clock was so badly damaged it was practically destroyed. It had cost \$1000 and was built by public subscription. "[1]



*The Town Clock on Pacific Ave., ca 1916. Photo from the Library's collection.*

### The Second and Current Town Clock

The IOOF building was re-built that same year or early 1900, along with a new clock tower, also atop the building. [1, 2] A brass plate on the clockworks dates the clock at January 22, 1900. [3]

The bell tolled every hour and every half hour for fifty years. [21] In 1929, hotel managers at the St. George and the Palomar complained to the City that the nightly tolling was preventing their guests from sleeping at night. The hour bell was allowed to run down and was not rewound. [4] Many citizens protested the silencing of the Clock and in July 1933, the Odd Fellows found a satisfactory solution. The Clock once again tolled the hours, but only during the hours between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. [22,23]

In July 1964, the IOOF building was remodeled. The Town Clock was removed with no plans to put it back in its original location. The "Santa Cruz County Supervisors offered \$1 for it, but directors of IOOF lodge refused. They sold it to the City of Santa Cruz for \$1.01 because city councilmen promised to 'display it in an appropriate place'" [5]

When the clock was dismantled, the suggested plan was to move the Clock to the Santa Cruz Museum. However, this plan did not materialize. The Clock, in pieces, was stored away in various places and finally at Harvey West Park. [6]

### A New Location

The Clock stayed in storage until the 1970's when it's restoration became the City's United States Bicentennial project. [7]The Town Clock was moved to the area bounded by Knight Street, Water Street and Pacific Avenue, sometimes referred to as lower Plaza. (1) The new base was constructed over the existing Fred Morris Memorial Fountain. [8]

The whole project was overseen by Robert Darrow and The Citizens Committee on Community Improvement. The restoration work was accomplished by many volunteers and was paid for, in part, by public donations. [9] Various local businesses and unions contributed resources and labor to the reconstruction project. The final cost was \$120,000. [10] The base of the tower, built of brick, was designed by Kermit L. Darrow, Robert Darrow's brother. [11]

Although the project was not completely finished until 1977, the dedication of the new structure and the renovated Town Clock took place on July 4, 1976. In October 1979, Santa Cruz City Council Resolution NS-13, 635 designated the Town Clock an historic landmark. [9] On July 4, 1982, another ceremony marked the placement of permanent plaques. [10]

Adjacent to the Town Clock is the sculpture called, "Collateral Damage." The plaque on the sculpture reads,

"Collateral Damage: a reality of war by E.A. Chase

In memory of civilians who have died in all wars.

Dedicated August 5, 1995

by Veterans of Foreign Wars. Bill Moto Post 5888

The Resource Center for Nonviolence

The City of Santa Cruz

and E.A. Chase."

## The Clockworks

The Town Clock's mechanism was originally made by the Seth Thomas Company of Connecticut in 1900, one of about 500. [3] Del Williams maintained the clock until his death in 1948. His son, Stanley Williams, took over the clock's care. He, like his father, recommended repair work. In 1951, it finally got the recommended overhaul and was converted to electric power. [4]



The restoration of the clock mechanism was undertaken under the supervision of Gene Corriden. He cleaned parts; found models for and had cast replacements for missing pieces; and assembled them into a working whole. [3] The restored clock is driven by an 80-pound pendulum and is electronically wound. [11] The Clock began ringing the hours again in 1977, when Edwin Mabie installed an automatic rewind device for the bell mechanism. [12]

## Threats to the Town Clock

The town clock survived the October 17, 1989 earthquake, but stopped running, its hands at 5:04 p.m. It was restarted a few weeks later. [13] During the next few months, Pacific Gas and Electric donated the light bulbs and labor needed to outline

*Town Clock, March 2002. Photo by and courtesy of Bob Smith*

the Clock in lights. There was a lighting ceremony on December 2, 1989, as part of holiday activities. Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt said,

"We've lost a lot in terms of downtown landmarks like the Cooper House. But the Town Clock can be a symbol of downtown. The lighting represents a new birth." [14]

A plaque on the clock tower base reads, "In memory of those who lost their lives in the Loma Prieta Earthquake of Oct 17, 1989. Shawn McCormick, Robin Lynn Ortiz, Catherine Trieman."

As in the past, fire again threatened the Town Clock. In August 1995, an electrical fire started in the junction box in the inside of the tower. While not seriously damaged, smoke and soot gummed its gears and had to be cleaned up. [15, 16]

## **Doug Rand Peace Park**

At the City Council meeting of September 26, 2000, the Council approved the idea of honoring Doug Rand, local peace activist who died March 5, 2000. [17] The City Council Agenda Report by Christopher Krohn mentions the Town Clock as the logical place because of the sculpture, "Collateral Damage," Rand helped to place there and because of the many community activities which he held on that site. [18] The Council directed the Parks and Recreation Committee to establish a committee to recommend an appropriate memorial. [17] Four months later at the February 13, 2001 meeting, the City Council accepted in concept the Committee's design proposal for a Doug Rand Peace Park at the Town Clock site. [19, 20] As of March 2002, a Peace Park is planned for the area where the Town Clock is located. A feature of the park would be the "Wall of Consequence" or "Debris Wall," which would include debris from war and terrorism attacks.

*March 2002*

## Footnotes

1. Santa Cruz Sentinel. September 29, 1974. p.16
2. Ibid. July 19, 1979. p. 13.
3. Ibid. October 24, 1976. p. 1.
4. Ibid. June 28, 1964. p.8.
5. San Jose Mercury News. July 28, 1964. n.p.
6. Santa Cruz Sentinel. July 2, 1978. p. 12
7. Ibid. October 24, 1979. p. 46.
8. Ibid. November 18, 1975. p. 13.
9. Ibid. October 24, 1979. p. 46.
10. Ibid. July 6, 1982. p.17.
11. Ibid. Aug 3, 1977. n.p.
12. Ibid. December 11, 1977. n.p.
13. San Jose Mercury News. Aug 8, 1995. p. 1B.
14. Santa Cruz Sentinel. December 3, 1989. p. A-22.
15. Ibid. August 7, 1995. n.p.
16. Ibid. August 8, 1995. n.p.
17. City of Santa Cruz. City Council Minutes for September 26, 2000.
18. City of Santa Cruz. City Council Agenda Report for September 26, 2000. Subject: Doug Rand Peace Park.
19. City of Santa Cruz. City Council Minutes for February 13, 2001.
20. City Council Agenda Report for February 13, 2002. Subject: Town Clock/ Peace Park Project.
21. Santa Cruz Sentinel. July 17, 1929. p.7.
22. Ibid. July 14, 1933 p. 9.
23. Ibid. July 28, 1933 p. 3.

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