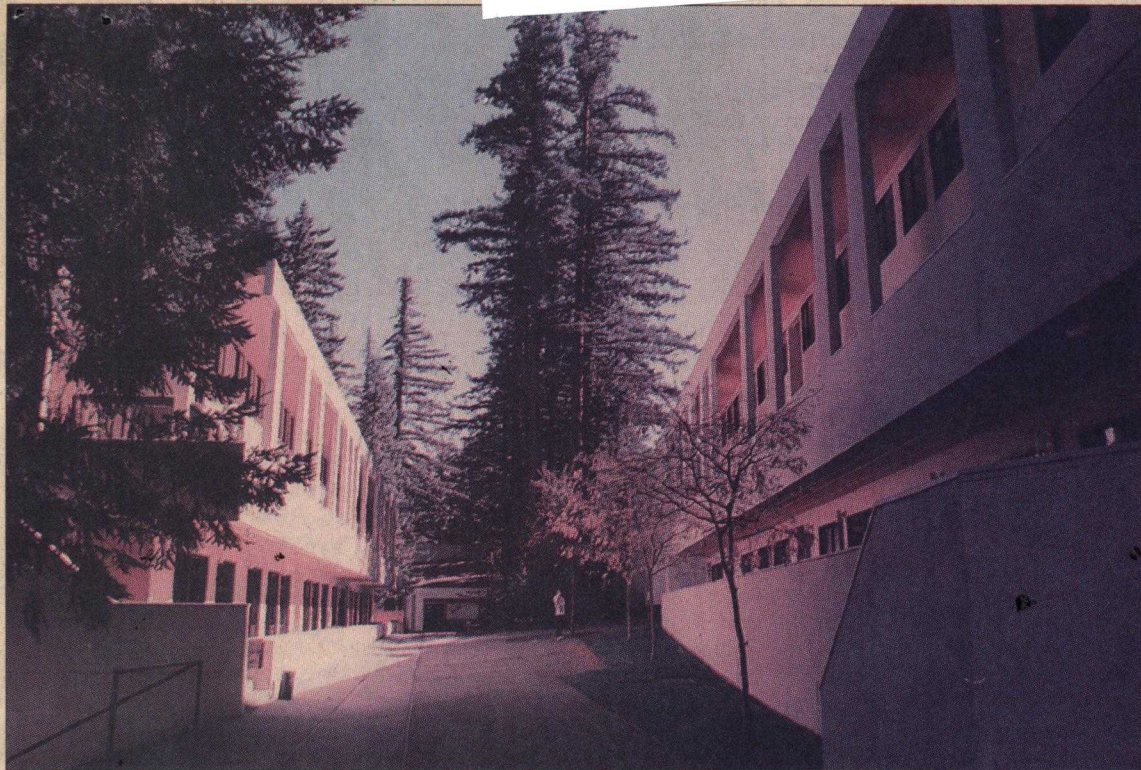


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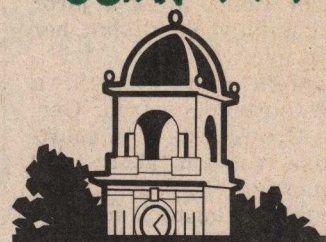
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ROSS ERIC GIBSON COLLECTION

Kresge College at UC-Santa Cruz recalls a stage set for a Mediterranean street scene.



SANTA CRUZ
Historic Perspective

An experiment in architecture and education

BY ROSS ERIC GIBSON
Special to the Mercury News

The University of California, Santa Cruz, known as City on a Hill, is also an excellent example of "City Beautiful" civic planning. That planning science, first introduced at the 1893 Chicago

See **HISTORY**, Page 2B

Dual experiments at university

HISTORY

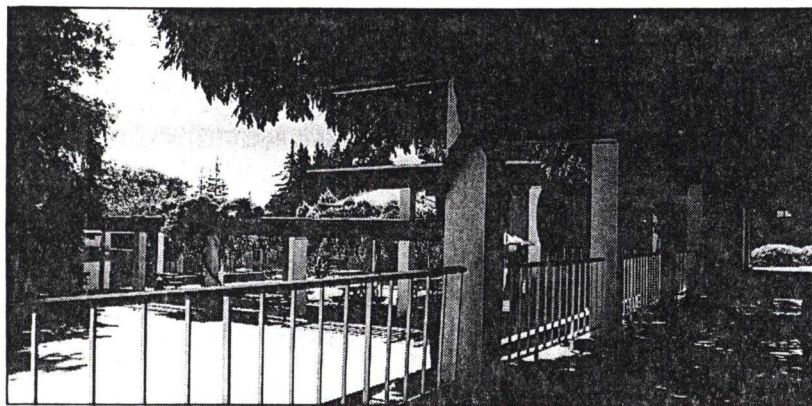
from Page 1B

World's Fair, is surprisingly well incorporated at the university.

The Santa Cruz campus was planned in the 1960s, when other university designers were building institutions that resembled shopping centers, with dormitory rows looking like inner-city housing projects. David Kamen complained in the Daily Californian that while East Coast colleges tried to outdo each other in competing for excellence, California's colleges competed for mediocrity, attempting to build the cheapest facility possible.

The Santa Cruz campus, formerly the site of the state's pioneer lime company, was originally to become part of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. Beginning in 1957, the site was offered for a university. The plan included high-density development overwhelming the natural setting with boxy cinder-block structures. The university acquired the site in 1961. But instead of a traditional institution, Santa Cruz got an experimental campus and counterculture students.

The campus was modeled after Oxford University, as a cluster of colleges grouped around separate courtyards. Guidelines specified protecting the redwoods, building to suit the natural setting, with no construction on the Great Meadow to preserve its coastal views. In the "City Beautiful" manner, the campus is pedestrian-oriented (to the point of originally discouraging cars on campus); has a construction ceiling of



ROSS ERIC GIBSON COLLECTION

Cowell College is one of a cluster grouped around courtyards.

two-thirds the height of a redwood; has a protected historic district; a civic core, with library, performing arts and student services; has "districts" (colleges) encouraged to maintain separate architectural identities and academic specialties.

The first five colleges interpreted old California architecture, under the influence of William Worster's local hacienda-style buildings from the 1940s and '50s. The American Institute of Architects gave an award of merit for McHenry Library, and a first place award to the Natural Science complex, which resembles a lost Incan city in the redwoods. Charles Moore's pasteboard-modern Kresge College recalls a stage set for a Mediterranean street scene. And College 8 raises post-modern farmhouses to Olympian proportions.

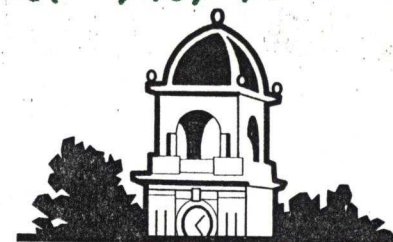
In 1976, Oakes College sought student opinion for its design, replacing the concrete trend with shingles. A student also proposed

a clock tower as a campus landmark. Designed like a shingled redwood, its open cupola showed carved grizzlies that danced on the hour. This was to commemorate the campus' Hotochtak Indian village, a listening post on the forest edge that issued bear alerts to six nearby villages.

An "experimental university" was not what anyone had bargained for. Its "militant egalitarianism" discouraged class distinctions with unsegregated housing,

no fraternities, sororities, hazing, big-time sports or grades (only pass-fail). A "town meeting" type student government had no elected leaders. Round-robin intramural tournaments included everyone. Smaller classes helped professors know their students, eating with them at lunch, and sometimes living in the same housing units.

But Santa Cruz was ahead of its time. Only a few months before it opened in 1965, the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley began an era of campus unrest. Berkeley protesters cited their impersonal assembly-line education and student alienation, with incompetent teaching aides, uninterested paper-graders and unapproachable teachers who seldom knew their students.



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