

A Committee Preserving SC County History

BY DON RIGHETTI
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It may not make you gasp in astonishment to learn that abolitionist John Brown's son once lived here.

But it's an interesting little tidbit, and the county would be the poorer if such facts ever became lost.

It's good to have somebody dredge them up and preserve them. That's the stock in trade of the Santa Cruz County Society for Historical Preservation, which doubles, incidentally, as the Historical Landmark Advisory Committee for Santa Cruz County.

The group has noted that Jason Brown, son of the famous assailant of Harper's Ferry, lived in a cabin in Ben Lomond. Alice Earl Wilder, the county's "sixth supervisor," as a child once visited Brown, although he was a recluse who climbed into a treehouse when approached by other persons.

That's the kind of information the committee is uncovering as it performs a county-wide inventory of historic resources. The inventory has been mandated by the state and will become part of the California History Plan. That plan, in turn, was mandated under the terms of the federal government's National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

The states, faced with the federal edict of coming up with state history plans, turned to the counties to do the grassroots work.

But in California, at any rate, it didn't give them any money to do it with. All 19 members of the committee serve as volunteers.

In addition to the chore of inventorying the county's historic significance, the group has launched a program of honoring local persons and institutions who have furthered the cause of historic preservation.

It already has presented awards in six categories which have been adopted by county supervisors.

Posthumous awards were made to Leon Rowland "for his inspiring work in collecting and recording the history of Santa Cruz County," and to Chuck Abbott "for the leadership he provided during his lifetime and the vision he left as his legacy."

The individual award went to Hubert Wyckoff "for the many years of resolute leadership he has given to the cause of historic preservation in Santa Cruz County."

Leftist Peron Leader Assassinated

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — The leader of the leftist Peronists in the House of Representatives, Rodolfo Ortega Pena, was machine-gunned to death Wednesday night in the third political assassination since President Juan D. Peron died June 29 and his widow succeeded him.

Ortega Pena and his wife were riding in a taxi on a main street of Buenos Aires when three young men drove past and sprayed the taxi with bullets. The woman was seriously injured.

The congressman was a prominent lawyer and editor of the left-wing Peronist magazine Militancia. Peron after returning to power sided with the conservatives in the split in the Peronist movement, and the government closed the magazine several months ago.

Awards in the residential category went to Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey Haan and Peter Haan "for their outstanding renovation of Cliff - Crest, the home of early Santa Cruz' most distinguished citizen, Lt. Gov. William T. Jeter."

Another residential award was bestowed on Mr. and Mrs. David Potter "for their exacting restoration of the Castro Adobe, one of the county's earliest and most historic dwellings."

The organizational award went to the Santa Cruz Historical Society "For its landmark designation program, which has served to alert the community to the importance of its architectural heritage."

The City of Santa Cruz won a governmental category award "for demonstrating through its renovation of the Heiner - Bowen House that the past can enhance and serve the present."

Another governmental award went to UCSC "which has demonstrated its awareness of the county's invaluable

heritage through thoughtful development and preservation of the land and buildings comprising the Cowell Ranch, as well as through its encouraging support of the regional history project and special collections of the university library."

Awards in the commercial category were made to Max Walden, "whose preservation and adaptation of existing buildings have served to encourage interest in downtown Santa Cruz;" and to Larry Bourriague, Jerry Neilsen and Warren Penniman of The Depot restaurant "for preserving a significant part of the transportation history of Santa Cruz County through their adaptation of the former Southern Pacific Depot."

Al Schadel, curator of the county museum and county staff liaison to the history group, said the unit now plans to make similar awards on an annual basis. They will be presented to county supervisors for adoption each May during "National Historic Preservation Week."

The Santa Cruz County

Society for Historical Preservation was established by interested citizens as a non-profit organization in 1968.

That same year, the board of supervisors designated the group as the county's historical landmark advisory committee.

In the beginning, the organization was active in the preservation of the old hall of records, now the county museum, on Cooper Street. It continues to advise on the operation of the museum, as well as preservation matters throughout the county. But the organization's primary task now is the county-wide inventory of historic sites, places and objects to become part of the state history plan.

The group already has listed 400 historically significant residential sites in the City of Santa Cruz alone. Another 100 historic sites throughout the county have been submitted or are ready for submittal.

All the sites are in a continuing process of research.

"It doesn't happen overnight," Schadel said. The task of seeking out and documenting

historical sites is an on-going long-range program, with research on one site frequently uncovering leads on another.

Schadel calls the organization's activities an effort "to encourage people to preserve what we have remaining and an education program to let people know these things exist in our midst."

The group currently is working on the formation of a historical preservation ordinance to aid in its effort.

The history unit also is involved in acquiring landmark status for sites and objects in the county on either a state or national basis.

Entering historical sites in a local registry is no guarantee of their preservation, Schadel explained, but landmark status is a decided help.

Among the organization's prime projects at present is preservation of the School Street Adobe, the sole remaining structure of the original Mission Santa Cruz and among the oldest structures of this area.

Although the building dates from at least 1810, the state maintains it is of only local interest and has offered little assistance to the Santa Cruz history group.

Schadel said he thinks the local resurgence of historical interest is only part of a movement sweeping the entire nation. It is inspired, in his opinion, by the disappearance of many landmarks through such projects as urban renewal.

Although the history group is not directly connected with the county's bicentennial committee, Schadel says it hopes to tie in its historical inventory with the celebration of the nation's 200th birthday.

"We hope to have a more complete inventory of our historical heritage by 1976."

The committee is chaired by Elizabeth Spedding Calciano. Roy Rydell is vice chairman.

The group relies heavily on the public for information in making its historical finds. Persons with information on historically significant sites and objects are asked to call Schadel at 425-2540.

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