

1976: Hiram Scott jumped ship to name valley

History
EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Sentinel* is celebrating its 150th year in 2006 by reaching into our archives to republish some of the noteworthy stories out of the past. The following story was printed in the Santa Cruz Sentinel on April 25, 1976.

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SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Hiram Scott might have walked here out of the pages of a Rudyard Kipling adventure book.

But real adventurers don't just walk someplace, and neither did Scott; he jumped ship here, the way an adventurer should.

Some of the Kipling stuff he did was hire out while he was a boy as an apprentice seaman; spend several years on the ocean, working his way up to second mate status; make a fortune in the California gold rush; lose it in the succeeding silver rush; give his name to a town, i.e., Scotts Valley; spend some time as a shipbuilder on the beach in the approximate location of the current Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf; ultimately die in Casa Grande, Ariz., while still in search of buried precious metal.

His Scotts Valley house on MacDorsa Way is to be preserved by the Scotts Valley Historical Society as a historical museum, hall of records and

library.

It's 123 years old and still livable.

It will become part of a municipal complex which will include a new city hall and a park.

Agnes Lewis, Scotts Valley city treasurer and president of the historical society, noted the history group had been given the house by owners Arch MacDonald and Steve Dorsa.

The two also gave the city five acres around the house and offered to sell the city more. The city purchased another 4½ acres, with the stipulation it build a city hall on the land within seven years.

That's more land than the city needs for a headquarters, so the rest of it will become a park.

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Location of the proposed city complex once was a portion of the 4,436-acre San Augustine Rancho, which was bought by Scott.

He had slipped away from the boat and been hidden by a Spanish family named Rodriguez until the ship sailed away from Santa Cruz.

That was in 1846, when California was still a Spanish territory. Scott is reputed to have bought the rancho on Sept. 9, 1850, the day California became a state.

It was before buying all the ground that Scott had worked a while as a shipbuilder and then had

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made a fortune in the gold rush.

One he got himself settled here, Scott sent for his whole family in Maine. Scott himself had been born in Pittston, Maine in 1823.

He built his house in 1853. He built it on what now is Scotts Valley Drive, directly down the hill from where it currently is located. The house was moved in 1936 to widen Scotts Valley Drive.

Scott made his fortune in the gold fields with John Doak and Jacob Bonsall from Santa Cruz, who eventually became his partners.

They came away from the gold diggings as far as Stockton, noted Charlene Detless, vice president of the historical society, and founded that town's first hotel, the Stockton House, and operated the first ferry on the San Joaquin River.

After making his way back to this vicinity, Scott married a local girl, Agnes Cummings, in 1861. Her brother, Charles Cummings, was an early editor of the Watsonville Pajaronian and also worked for the Sentinel for a time.

Detless says the new bride never lived in the house that's to become the museum. That house was built for Scotts blood relatives. Agnes Cummings was ensconced in a house in another portion of the vicinity.

At the time Scott built the original house, Lewis thinks, he had only about two dozen white neighbors, and some Ohlone Indians, in the whole area. And the population probably was in Zayante and the upper Glenwood Road area.

Scott's brother, Joseph, wrote an article noting he could stand on the Scott House front porch and see bears cavorting in thick clover so tall it could be tied over the back of a horse.

Nails in the Scott House are square. Lewis said she summoned a builder to the house to get a cost

estimate of restoration. She was told it would take \$25,000 to get the little house back into shape, but its construction was so superior to that used in modern houses it would be impossible to duplicate the lumber and craftsmanship.

Scott never stayed long in the town he gave his name. He was there off and on for about 20 years. Having made a fortune in his search for gold, he decided to try it again with silver.

Sometime after 1864, Detless said, he bought the Silver Mountain Mine and a lot of Alpine County that surrounded it. He lost the money he got from gold.

"He bought property wherever he went," Detless pointed out, "he just didn't keep any of it."

It has been learned he was back in Santa Cruz in 1869 and in the livery stable business.

Sometime after 1879 he moved to Arizona to look for gold again. He died at Casa Grande, Ariz., on March 25, 1879.

Scott had signed the Scott House over to his father and family in 1856, and they lived in it until 1872.

Lewis and Detless say the historical society plans a complete reconstruction of the structure. Plans for the nearby city hall have not yet been drawn.

They noted the history group is gathering material on the entire area, and encouraged anyone with old photographs or historical data to present them to the society.

A look at some of the noteworthy events of November 1990

■ Four sick, older Americans held hostage in Iraq were released, thanks to the Santa Cruz-based Middle Eastern Task Force of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (chaired by Scott Kennedy), which traveled to Baghdad to meet with religious leaders.

■ Vandalism to gravestones at Holy Cross Cemetery was estimated at \$2,000.

■ Raymond Garcia of Rio del Mar received an overdue medal and declaration for distinguished civilian service from the Air Force

for his 1968 work on a logistic system for NASA.

■ The UC Santa Cruz women's soccer team had their fourth tie of the season against the San Francisco State Gators. The score was 0-0.

■ George Mortan, who bought the 118-year-old Thurwachter ranch house on Beach Road for \$1 and put \$200 into renovations, decided to donate it, estimating that it was still a bargain with moving costs of \$24,000 and restoration costs of \$100,000.

■ An unexplained fire caused approximately \$250,000 in damages to Barry Tores' saloon

and restaurant Positively Front Street, an 18-year-old business.

■ Raymond Evans, chairman of Santa Cruz's Affirmative Action Committee, apologized to City Council candidate Louis Rittenhouse for accusing him of once directing a racial slur toward him. Evans' apology came after Louis Rittenhouse's third cousin, Jack Rittenhouse, admitted to insulting Evans in a local bar sometime during the previous year.

■ Santa Cruz's summer water rationing proved a success with 40 percent less water used than during the same period in 1987, the last year with no water restrictions.