

Santa Cruz...

By Ernest Otto

There is a Cooper street and a Cooper subdivision named after remarkable families who settled here in the '50's and had their homes and stores in Santa Cruz likely replicas of stores and homes in their native towns in Pennsylvania.

Cooper street bearing their name and rightly so, was bordered on each side from Pacific avenue to Front street by their property and they had so much the interest of their city at heart that the property from Pacific avenue to Front street was presented to Santa Cruz county for the court house site and on this property ever since has stood the county buildings.

COURTHOUSE BURNED

The first court house, a square red brick structure, was first erected and was destroyed by the big fire in the ninties. It was replaced by the present structure. It formerly had a tower which went down in the earthquake. As the business of the county grew and more space was needed for the keeping of the valuable records and documents, it was necessary to erect another building, the Hall of Records then an octagon shape structure. As more space was needed an addition was built on the Front street side which destroyed the symmetry of the building. In this building one of the Coopers, Harry C., son of William Cooper, served numbers of terms as county recorder. He preceded Mrs. Belle Lindsay.

A third structure erected was the red brick sheriff's office and jail, razed when the present court house annex was built.

WILLIAM COOPER HOME

William Cooper's home was further down the street. It was a bit of New England and other sections of the eastern states. It was in the front of the residence property starting opposite what is Short street.

It was a spacious and attractive story and a half home of about ten rooms in the clapboard finish of the day. Across the front was a wide porch and at the sides and over surrounding the door were small panes of glass, characteristic of the New England home. At the side was a wing, likely the kitchen and dining room. This house was painted a light brownish color. The writer found when in Concord, Mass, including the Louisa Alcott, numbers of homes like this. The garden was typically eastern. The fence was of the first type of picket fences used here, sharply pointed. A wide path led from the dirt walk on Front street to the steps of the main entrance. On each side of the walk were beds of flowers. Iris of the purple and white bloomed in the spring. There were also rows of the more common roses of the day. The fragrant velvety red roses, pink roses, syringa, bridal wreath, the red coral and many other blooms. Cowslips and daisies were border plants and there were the usual fuchsias, mignonette, sweet william and violets.

CHERRY ORCHARD

To the side were huge cherry trees among the largest in the city. The orchard in the rear of the home extended to Pacific avenue where there was a board fence with a gateway at one side opening to a path leading to the rear of the home. Apples of numbers of different varieties were in the orchard with other fruit.

Across the street on Front at the corner of Bridge street was the barn and barnyard. Here was kept the white horse, the delivery method for the store, ridden by Miguel Feliz of one of the early families. Also the cow. This lot extended to the San Lorenzo river.

At the corner of Soquel avenue then Bridge street was the residence of John Cooper. It was a picturesque home. It looked as if it had been removed and set down in the midst of the western town. It was a low rambling one story house, always painted white. It was made very attractive by the porch. It was so built that the roof extended with the eaves over the entire porch. The top of the porch was a tongue and groove ceiling. Between the posts were

the spindles forming a fence-like protection. No pickets were about the place but a not too high board fence always kept good looking by fresh coats of white wash or a deep pink wash. At this end was the always well kept old fashioned and beautiful garden.

LURE FOR SMALL BOY

On the other side was mainly the trees and the small boy, including the writer, was hired as a picker. The property in the rear, a grove of willows and maples, extended to the river and was sometimes used as a camp meeting ground for churches and throughout was pitched many tents. The Free Methodists were there a number of times.

At the corner of Bridge (Soquel avenue) and Ocean street was the Frank Cooper residence. He went in the late seventies to Oakland. This home was not so decidedly eastern as the others. It was white with attractive porches, a walk under a grape arbor led through the garden to the residence. This, like other Cooper gardens, had the lilacs, syringa, coral, roses of those days, lovely and fragrant, seldom seen now, and of course, the iris, only known as "flags" by the children.

OLD COPPER STORE

The outstanding place operated by the Coopers was "Cooper's store." What child would ever forget the Cooper's store! No mother had to ask her small boys twice to go there to purchase goods. Kindly John Cooper loved the children and he always handed them some of the ginger or lemon snaps. The many fancy cookies were not sold with the groceries. The first others to come were Shoofly, a large sweetened cracker, and what a sensation was the raisin crackers and then the coconut taffey.

It is said the Cooper store on the corner of Cooper and Front street was a replica of one in the town in Pennsylvania from which they emigrated. It was a one story gable shingle roof, with windows on each side with green shutters. The entrance was in the center. On one side was the groceries, on the other side cloth in bolts sold by the yard. On tables were dishes, etc., and there was always a display of the oil cloth of many designs. More families used oil cloth than table cloths. There were also linens, then a popular table cloth was red linen with white fringes.

THE BIG BOX STOVE

In the center of the store in the rear was a huge box stove which almost kept a fireman to keep it going. They were hospitable and friendly and during winter days especially around the stove the topics of the day were discussed, especially politics, in this overwhelmingly Republican town as Watsonville was overwhelmingly Democratic. New England, with its background of Republicanism in Santa Cruz and Watsonville with its Democratic background with much of the early settlers from the southern Democratic states. Watsonville then had its separate school for negroes before the word "segregated," now heard on every hand, had yet been coined.

The William Coopers had a post mastership for some time and of this family, Harry Cooper was county recorder for a number of terms preceding Mrs. Belle Lindsay. Harry and Frank for years operated the Cooper stationery store and a small print shop. The store was built in the orchard lot on the Pacific avenue side of their home property.

WENT TO SAN FRANCISCO

As a young man William went to San Francisco and for 50 years or more was in the San Francisco postoffice and had one of the best stamp collections in the west.

The sister, Reta, married a man named Phillips and went to Berkeley. The writer remembers her as always standing before and teaching a large class in the Congregational Sunday school.

John Paxton was the son in the John Cooper family. He had a newspaper mania for news and his early newspaper career was