

Santa Cruz  
Description  
and travel copy

MYSTERY SPOT

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If only crazy people could live in crazy houses, even Harpo Marx would have a time qualifying for residence at Santa Cruz' new Mystery spot off Branciforte drive a couple or three miles out of town.

It's the eeriest thing in this area. It's one of those weird wonders that leaves you feeling like an hour glass which doesn't quite know which end to stand on.

It's this:

A house built on the side of a hill with the floor at a 12-degree slope in an area where the magnetic or gravitational attraction makes you lean toward the southwest at another angle of seven and a half degrees.

Similar in many respects to the famed House of Mystery in Oregon, the peculiarities of the plot of ground were discovered last Labor Day by George W. Prather, a sane and sound Santa Cruzan who has been in business here since 1920. When he felt slightly, inexplicable dizzy while walking around the hillside one day he wondered what was up. He had bought three acres there, and when he made a survey and the compass needle began dancing like a jitterbug on a June night, he quit wondering and began investigating.

The upshot was that he built the crazy house, built it crazy to accentuate what was already there, and Sunday Prather will open it up on a small scale and later on a bigger scale for all to see - at a nominal fee.

The affected area is about 150 feet around. That it is affected seems apparent from some strange things that just a distortion of perspective and the side of a hill wouldn't do. Some of those strange things are:

1. There have been two concrete blocks built at the edge of the area. A carpenter's level shows them to be level and level with each other. Yet stand on one and look at a man your size and he will

look perceptibly taller. Switch blocks and you will have suddenly sprouted.

2. In a similarly level spot, you stand at one side, watch a man walk along a level board and watch him grow shorter with each step.
3. In the crazy house you will not only lean 12 degrees to overcome the inclined floor but you will lean another seven degrees to overcome the so-called push from the southwest. And you'll look terrifically silly leaning.
4. An iron weight hung from the ceiling will push very easily toward the northeast. Push it toward the southwest and it's twice as hard.

You won't find many other houses in the world where you can walk up the side of the wall looking for all the world like a spider without its web.

So far Prather has no real explanation. A geology class from the University of Santa Clara and its two instructors when they stopped by, has no explanation either.

A theory on the leaning is that there is a "gravity disturbance", but your guess on what causes the disturbance is as good as Newton's.

A theory on the differences in size between two men, who you know aren't different, is that the disturbance bends the light rays. Photography is difficult there.

So, when you seem to be leaning in all directions at once, is digesting a large dinner. So would be telling time, if you had to depend on sun dials. A dial in the affected area is between six and 12 minutes behind a similar dial outside.