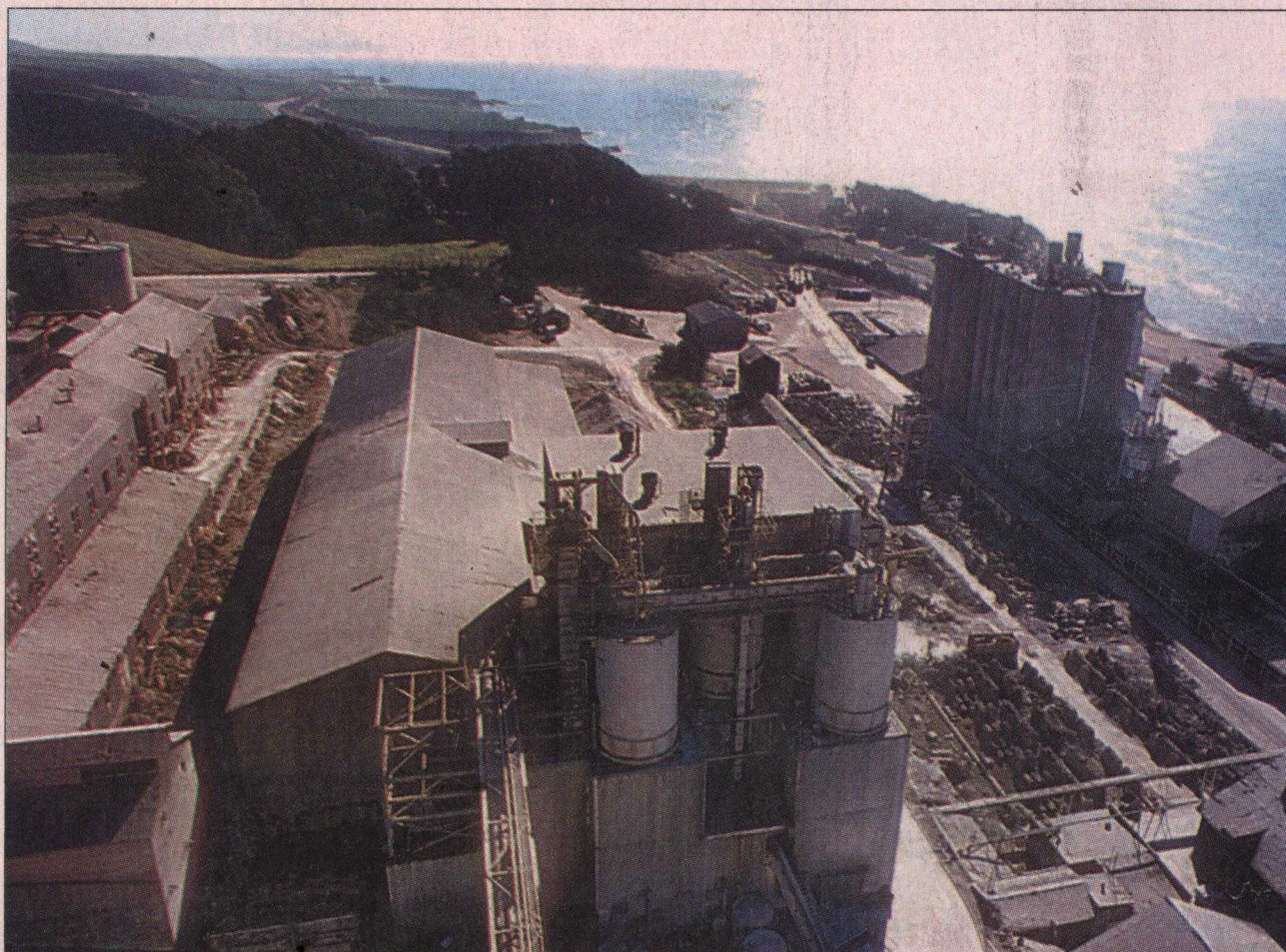


1906 quake cranked up Santa Cruz economy



Dan Coyro/Sentinel file

Business boomed at the Davenport cement plant when San Francisco was rebuilt following the 1906 earthquake.

Earthquakes ✓ S.F. rebuilding spurred demand for county redwoods, cement

By **SHANNA McCORD**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — One hundred years ago today, San Francisco was jolted awake at 5:12 a.m. by a minute-long earthquake that registered 8.25 on the Richter scale — 16 times more powerful than the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989.

The aftermath was devastating; catastrophic fires burned for three days and destroyed more than 500 blocks in the heart of the city. The 1906 quake — one of the worst natural disasters in the nation's history — is estimated to have killed anywhere from 3,000 to 6,000 people, mostly in San Francisco.

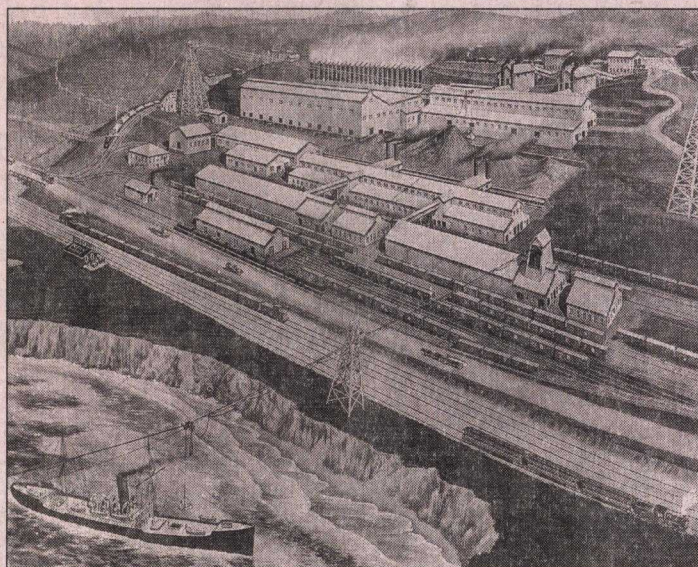
About 90 miles south of San Francisco, Santa Cruz County suffered minor damage compared to San Francisco, which then had a population of 343,000 people.

Twelve people died here and several buildings crumbled. Two railroad tunnels between Los Gatos and Felton collapsed, making transportation in and out of the area difficult until the rails were rebuilt three years later. Heavy rain had saturated Santa Cruz County in February and March of 1906, which historians say wreaked havoc on Soquel forests when the ground shook. More than anything, however, the Big One in 1906 turned on the economic engine

of Santa Cruz County by sparking demand for raw construction materials produced here to be used in rebuilding San Francisco, namely timber and, even more significantly, cement.

"The timing was glorious for cement," local historian and author Sandy Lydon said. "Cement was promoted as the construction material of choice and bricks fell out of favor."

See **QUAKE** on **PAGE A7**



An artist created this rendition of the cement plant in Davenport when it was under construction in 1905.

Contributed photo

Sunday

Santa Cruz families share how the 1906 quake brought them to where they are today.

Monday

A little cottage in Live Oak is an unlikely relic of San Francisco's massive recovery.

Today

Rebuilding the city of San Francisco ignited the economic engine of Santa Cruz County, where the timber and cement industries flourished.

Quake

Continued from Page A1

Most of San Francisco's buildings before the quake were made of brick, mortar and wood, but the San Andreas fault "eats bricks for lunch," Lydon said, and San Francisco realized the stability of its future now depended on concrete and rebar.

Cement is the main ingredient of concrete. Cement is manufactured by combining a blend of raw materials, such as chalk and clay, at a very high temperature in a rotary kiln.

The Santa Cruz Portland Cement Co. plant and quarry 12 miles north of Santa Cruz in Davenport, which is home today to the cement plant known as CEMEX, was under construction when the earthquake hit.

In response to San Francisco's dramatic need for cement, construction crews sped up their work to complete the Davenport plant a year earlier than planned.

The plant was running full speed by mid-1907, employing several hundred men and producing 3,000 barrels of cement a day.

Demand for cement in San Francisco quickly drove the plant to boost production to 10,000 barrels

'Most lumber was shipped by rail out of Boulder Creek. But you couldn't go anywhere with it after the earthquake. A lot of mills had to use wagons and ships.'

LUD McCrARY, BIG CREEK LUMBER

a day. Today the plant produces 5 million barrels each day.

After the quake, barrels of cement were sent to San Francisco by ship and, in some cases, loaded onto rail cars that were forced to take a longer and more circuitous route through Watsonville and Gilroy because the other, more direct, rail line had been wrecked by the earthquake.

Buildings and projects constructed in San Francisco with Davenport cement include the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, San Francisco International Airport, Candlestick Park, the Bay Bridge and the Transamerica pyramid tower, San Francisco's

tallest building.

"The cement company was booming and there was a growth of jobs in this area," historian Ross Eric Gibson said. "The earthquake brought money to this industry."

During the reconstruction of San Francisco, the Henry Cowell Lime and Cement Co., located where UC Santa Cruz is now, was accused of taking advantage of San Francisco's situation by ramping up limestone prices.

Limestone is also an ingredient in cement.

The Santa Cruz company doubled its price at the time for a barrel of lime from \$1.25 to \$2.50 a

barrel, Lydon said.

"Cement became so valuable there was an opportunity to price gouge," he said. "As far as I know they didn't roll back their prices after the accusations."

Redwood from the Santa Cruz Mountains also was needed for rebuilding San Francisco because it's more fire-resistant than other wood.

More than 200 sawmills were located in the Santa Cruz Mountains when the earthquake struck. But most of the accessible trees already had been cut and hauling lumber out of the area was nearly impossible because of the damaged railroads.

"Most lumber was shipped by rail out of Boulder Creek," said Lud McCrary of Big Creek Lumber, which started business after World War II. "But you couldn't go anywhere with it after the earthquake. A lot of mills had to use wagons and ships."

Contact Shanna McCord
at smccord@santacruzsentinel.com.