

Capitola 1970-1979

# Saving city's heritage is prime task facing committee

By CAROLYN SWIFT

The Capitola City Planning Commission's Historical Site Preservation Committee is now seeking community support and interest in its efforts to safeguard the city's heritage.

At a meeting Saturday morning in the historic Hihn building, the committee decided it has completed "phase one," with an informal inventory of structures and sites to be marked for preservation, and a study of efforts in other communities toward both legal action and generation of enthusiasm for local history.

Commissioners Lew Deasy and Al Wilder told the group of seven persons that a survey of historic sites is almost concluded, and is receiving assistance from the Octagon through Amy Stateler, a work-study student from Kresge College at UCSC.

Among the areas historically significant to Capitola are Depot Hill and the 15-acre flatlands within the original "Camp Capitola," designed by F. A. Hihn

as a seasonal "waterway," resort in 1874. The committee is also concerned about individual buildings such as "the sisters," along the Esplanade, and neighborhoods such as Fanmar Way.

Wilder has investigated efforts toward protection of cultural heritage by attending a session of the Historical Planners Institute, where workshops dealt with the process of preservation—the study of laws and policies, obtaining of grants and funding for restoration and preservation, and formation of authority to act as a preservation body.

The next steps for Capitola, he said, will be to gather community support, volunteers and to initiate ordinances, changes in zoning and flexibility in the building code to authorize restoration and safekeeping of buildings significant to city history.

The committee plans to contact members of the Depot Hill Association, the Capitola Chamber of Commerce and residents of other neighborhoods

who may be interested in the committee's goals, and to present a public program on Capitola history next month.

Miss Stateler said she is part of an inventory project required by the state for every building in the county. She works about 15 hours per week on Resources Agency inventory forms to be filed at the Octagon and with the State Department of Parks and Recreation.

The project is endless, she said, but inventory work has already been valuable to the county in determining sites worthy of preservation. The files at the Octagon have been made available to county planning staff, and information on Capitola will be provided for Capitola planners as well.

Miss Stateler added that she will assist the Capitola group as long as she is involved with the work-study project. Information compiled in the inventory includes a building's name, historical name, location, owner, present and past uses, descrip-

tion, size, condition, surroundings, and potential threats to the structure.

Committee members will meet in the future with long-time Capitola residents who may remember changes and alterations made to city structures over the years. Tapes of these sessions will be made, and Deasy said the resulting historical information and photographs can be made available to UCSC and Cabrillo College local history programs.

Ways to stop destruction of older homes, work on a legal ordinances and emergency measures will be considered at future meetings. Legal measures will be written to conform with a statement in the Capitola General Plan which calls for conservation rather than massive redevelopment in the downtown city area.

The chore of the committee as it attempts to unweave the many changes over the past 100 years is no simple task. Although Capitola retains much of the



Capitola was a "hot dog town," by the 1940s. It was unincorporated until 1949, and its main attraction was to the tourist seeking a day of sunshine and a few thrills before the trip back home.

shape chosen by Hihn for the summer resort, the buildings have come and gone—often rapidly during the first quarter-century—and those built later have often been altered. The beach itself is unrecognizable from its shape and size a century ago, and one of the city's greatest landmarks — the 160-room hotel constructed by Hihn below the bluffs — can only be seen today in photographs. The hotel burned shortly after the start of the Depression in 1929.

Among those working on the committee are Deasy and Wilder, Larry Veysey, Miss Stateler, Bob Garcia and Jim Reding.



The resort began to brandish a more fashionable appearance about the time the Union Traction Company completed the electric car line to Capi-

tolola in 1904-05. The street that ran along the beach was known then as "Ocean Front Avenue."

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Capitola was as crowded in the summer months of the mid-1920s as it is today, as emergence of the automobile made the village more acces-

sible to the less-affluent tourist. This photo was taken during construction of the Venetian Court — one of the state's first condominium projects

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