

## Garfield Park Tabernacle and Garfield Park Christian Church, 30 Errett Circle, Santa Cruz, California

*By Daniel McMahon*

The Northern California Convention of the Disciples of Christ searched for a new place to hold their annual conventions in the late 1880's, and settled on a site on the westside of Santa Cruz. The Tabernacle shown was dedicated on Aug. 31, 1890, and had enough seating inside for 2000 people. The Tabernacle was extremely tall, and was easily visible from the Cliff Drive.

This photo is believed to be from the dedication of the tabernacle on Aug. 31, 1890. Note the absence of all but a few cottages in the surrounding area. The cottages visible had all been built on lots sold after the plans for the tabernacle began.

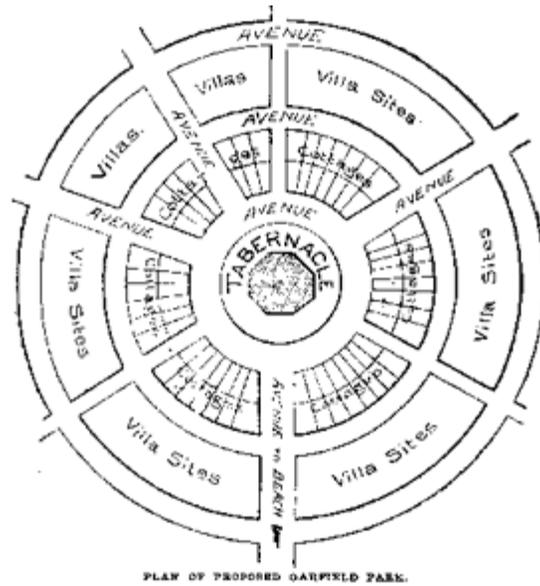
A series of circular streets were laid out around the tabernacle, and the small lots on these streets were sold for houses. Initially, many small cottages were built, and some of these were used by people attending the annual conventions in July or August of each year.

Many of these cottages are still standing today, especially on Errett Circle. When the plan for this entire development was first announced, it was named Garfield Park in honor of James Garfield,

the recently assassinated 19th president of the United States, and a preacher in the Disciples of Christ. The Convention of Christian Churches later announced that the official name of the development was "Christian Park" but the name Garfield Park stuck, and remains in use to this day.

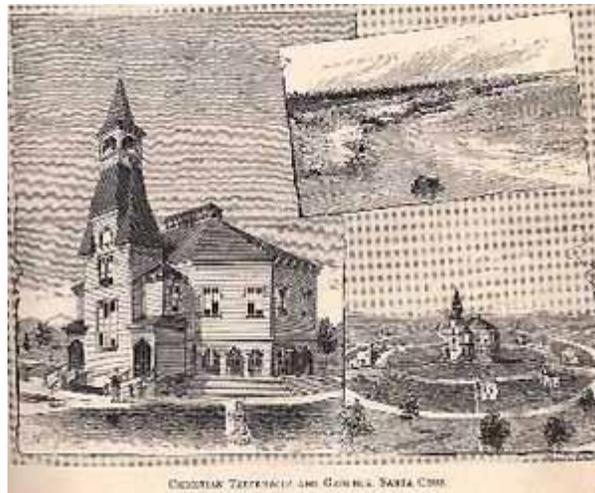


*The Garfield Park Tabernacle. Photo courtesy of Tish Payne.*



Plan for Garfield Park and Circles, 1889

This plan appeared in the *Santa Cruz Surf* on Sept. 19, 1889. Lots in the surrounding area were sold at an auction within the tabernacle in Sept. 1890, for prices of 105 to 135 dollars. At that time there were already seven cottages built in the circles.



Early View of Garfield Park

This early lithograph of the "circles" neighborhood was published in the *Santa Cruz Surf* in September 1890, and reproduced in Harrison's *History of Santa Cruz County* in 1892.

## End of the Tabernacle

The tabernacle burned down on Aug. 5, 1935. The circular lot it sat on lay empty until 1958, when a new Garfield Park Christian Church was built. The congregation met across Errett Circle, in a smaller hall owned by the church, from 1935 to 1958.

The tabernacle was not just an imposing edifice, and the largest auditorium in town for many years. It was the focal point of the circular street design of that Westside neighborhood long known as "the circles."



*This photo is taken from inside Errett Circle, with California Ave. on the left, running into the distance. The Church is on the right, and the three buildings to the left are still standing today (1996). The two in the rear were both church property. The small church, built in 1914, was torn down after construction of today's church in 1958. Photo courtesy of Rev. Ed Muegee.*

## Sources

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