

100 years of history threatened



OWNERS FIGHT to save their Victorian home, preserved outside as well as inside in a high degree of its original elegance. — Photos by Allen Grasso.



By Allen Grasso

The 100 year old Hagemann House is a protected pocket of time within the Santa Cruz city limits. Its seven acres of trees and shrubs draw a curtain between this century and the last.

Now the City of Santa Cruz wants to put a road through the property, which would call for the removal of a 100 year old barn and which would pass near the house.

Property owners Janet and Charles Gunn have spent eight years and \$10,000 trying to stop the road.

"The problem," says Gunn, "is that the city purchased the right-of-way all around us and made their plans for the road without having purchased this piece of property. By then the money had been spent and they were committed to bring the road through here."

Gunn attorney Joe Ritchey points out that all the pro-

perty surrounding the Gunn property is vacant. "The only reason the road is going through the Gunn property," he says "is that the engineers failed to check the significance of the Gunn home. The engineers did their planning by looking at a map!"

Both the Santa Cruz Historical Association and the National Register of Historical Places join with the Gunns in recognizing the uniqueness of the house. The Gunns have stated their willingness to open the land to hikers and bicyclists, but they feel a road would be detrimental to the site.

Attorney Ritchey has tried to remind the city that it has an historical preservation ordinance. "And what more of an historical site exists," he says, "then one that has been given historical recognition by local, state and federal agencies?"

When the city first tried to

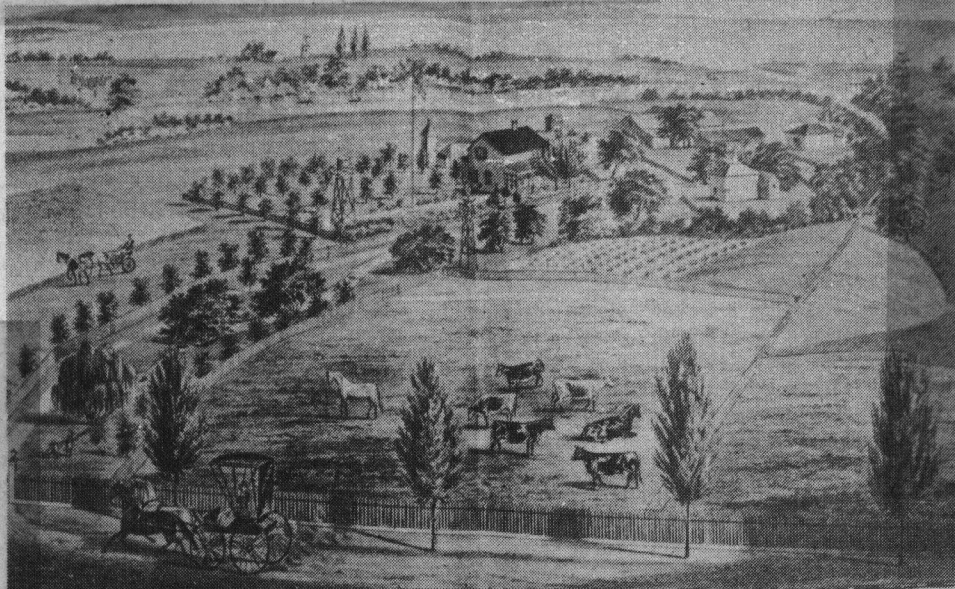
bring the road through, the Gunns say they tried to compromise. "We offered to give them another part of our property," says Charles Gunn, "if they would build the road in a slightly different direction away from the house. But they didn't take any action on that and within a few years homes were built blocking that route."

"There's been some mistakes made," continued Gunn, "but they have all been made by the City. Unfortunately, no one likes to admit they made a mistake so they continue to try to put the road through our place. And this has forced us to keep going to court to prevent it."

The center of the controversy is one of those indescribably ornate gingerbread houses so typical of the Victorian era. The Gunns have furnished the home in the style of the last century and preserved the original wallpaper. The surrounding gar-



TWIN TOWERS grace the view from the front of the historic Hagemann Home, now owned by Janet and Charles Gunn. Only 7 acres remain of the original 110-acre estate, which is endangered by a road proposed by the City of Santa Cruz in spite of its status as a designated historical landmark.



"LIVE OAK RANCH" RESIDENCE OF F. HAGEMANN, SANTA CRUZ CAL.

dens and grounds demand constant work, and the Gunns seem more like caretakers rather than owners of the property.

But to walk up the garden path and enter the house, is to walk into the 1870s. Officially the house is called the Hagemann Home. Construction began in 1871, with parts of the house being added on in the 1880s. It stands as a monument to the endurance of German emigrant Fredrich Hagemann.

Hagemann left Germany for California in 1852, was shipwrecked at Cape Horn, and arrived in San Francisco in 1853. He slowly got some money together by working in the Placerville mines; then lost it all by investing in the mines.

Hagemann started all over again in the retail shoe business in San Francisco. Luckily he was able to find more gold in shoes than in the Placerville mines. Eventually he was able to establish himself in Santa Cruz with a hotel and several other businesses. Hagemann Street in Santa Cruz is named for him.

In those days, many people believed that Santa Cruz was going to be a larger, greater city than San Francisco. Hagemann may have believed it also because he decided to build a home here in which he could spend the rest of his life. As a setting for the house, he purchased 110 acres. He could never have imagined the battle that would be going

on more than 100 years later to preserve the house and the last seven acres.

There will be major changes for the site if the Gunns lose their fight to keep the road off their property. The City plans to fill in four acres and a creek, then put the road directly through where a 100 year old barn stands today. And the house, which has been in a tranquil setting for more than a century, will have cars and motorcycles passing a few feet from its front door.

The Coastal Commission, the Fish and Game Department, and various historical groups are supporting the Gunns--but not financially. Ritchey points out the injustice of a couple having to spend their time and money to preserve an official histori-

cal spot.

The Gunns say they realize that the battle will probably be won by whomever has the most endurance, but they fear they can not outspend the City in this dispute. So while they would prefer to see the city stay off the property all together, they have formulated a compromise plan.

They will give the city land and right-away, if the City will agree to bridge the creek rather than fill it in; and if the City will spare the barn and the huge tree that grows along side it. But various supporters of the Gunns feel the City isn't even entitled to that.

Gunn sums up his opinion of what the fight is all about: "They want to give Santa Cruz to the automobile rather than the people."