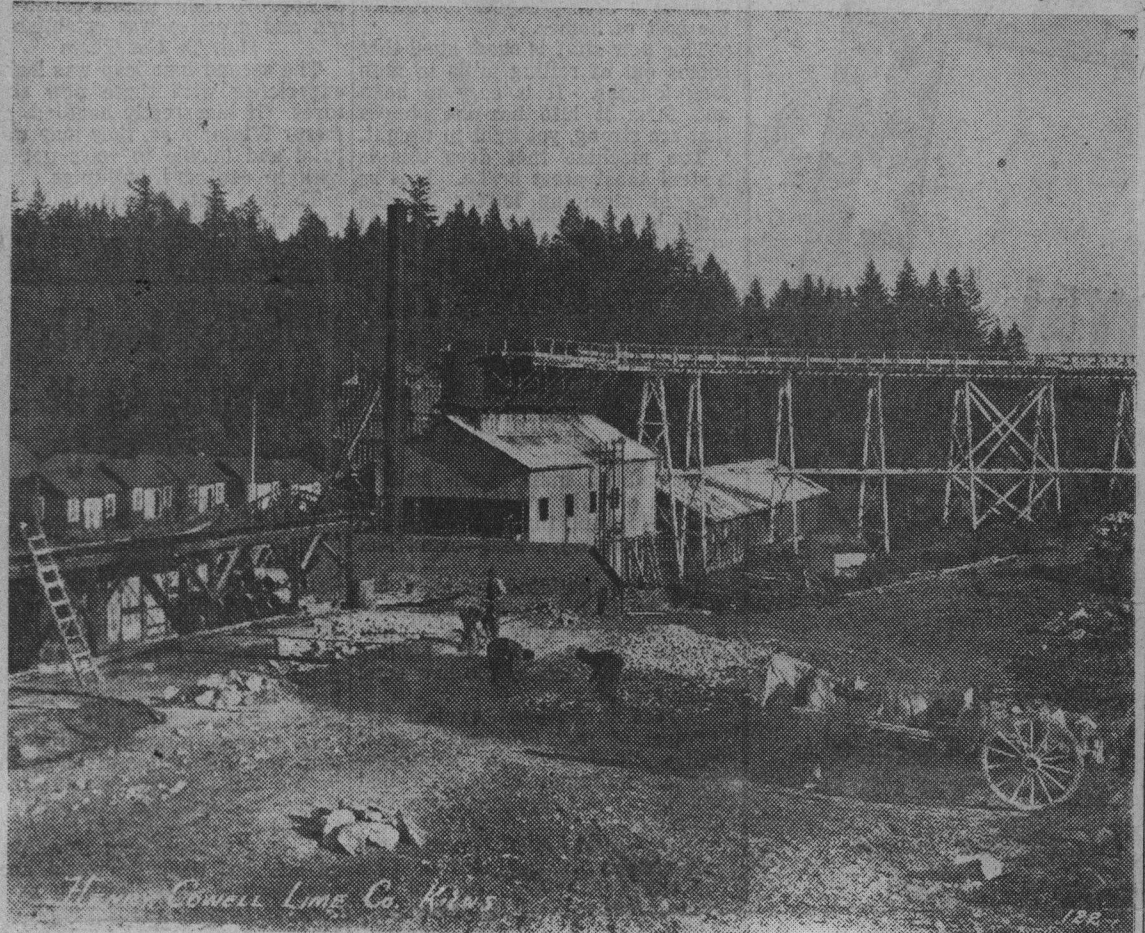


# Santa Cruz Yesterdays



**COWELL LIME KILNS AT RINCON**

(From the Preston-Sawyer Collection)

Santa Cruz county's oldest industrial organization, the Cowell Lime company, was nearly 70 years old when the picture was taken of its plant at Rincon, about 1923.

The company had been founded in 1855 by two young New Englanders, Albion P. Jordan and Isaac E. Davis. They were working as engineer and fireman on a boat on the Sacramento when they saw a sample of lime burned at Santa Cruz by F. R. Brady. Brady's little kiln, which dated from 1849, was on Buena Vista avenue.

Jordan and Davis tried lime burning near Lexington in the Santa Cruz mountains above Los Gatos but found that, although they could get \$12 a barrel in San Francisco the cost of taking it out on muleback was prohibitive. After an experimental kiln near Mount Diablo they concluded Santa Cruz offered their best opportunity.

## First Kilns Out High St.

Near what is known as Meder creek, beyond Bay street and adjacent to upper High street, they put in kilns. The business prospered; they sailed their own schooners to San Francisco and in 1857 paid \$250,000 for a 400 ton steamship which was built in the east and brought around the Horn.

The ship "Santa Cruz" proved too big for economical operation and they traded it to the Sainsevain brothers of San Jose for Rancho Canada del Rincon, a few miles up the San Lorenzo river canyon.

Jordan died in 1866 and his interest in the lime business was bought by Henry Cowell, a 48-year-old New Englander, for \$400,000.

Davis' death came in 1888, after which the firm became the Cowell Lime company. Henry Cowell became the largest land owner in Santa Cruz county.

## Rincon Plant Developed

After the turn of the century Cowell began developing the plant pictured, which was put into operation in 1906, with a long trestle to carry the rock from the hills to the west, across the highway. The railroad, back of the plant, in front of the row of workmen's cottages, gave shipping facilities.

The high trestlework which was long a landmark spanning the Big Tree highway, led directly to the upright kilns in the far building. These had to be loaded from the top. Trucks brought limerock to the groundlevel kilns to the left, after the picturesque horse-carts became outmoded.

Only a few years ago the plant discontinued operation. And all but a fractional part of the trestle has been dismantled.

However the Cowell name lives on in the busy Henry Cowell Lime and Cement company supply house on lower Pacific avenue and ranch out High street.