

No jail birds perched here, 12-12-85 but plenty of whales visited Davenport

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Living Section Editor

NOBODY, ever, has been incarcerated there, and other than once providing shelter for unwelcome transients, Davenport Jail has done little that's practical to justify its existence on a plot of ground overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

It's an attractive little building, though; rouses a history-lover's juices. Ah, the stories those four stucco walls could tell, muses the nostalgic wayfarer.

Perhaps. If accounts of California Gray Whales spouting their way up and down the coast with the seasons turns you on. Or, memories of sight-seers gawking their way up and down one of the country's least shabby scenic highways. Sometimes, motorists pull over in Davenport to get gas, maybe have a bite to eat and browse a bit, stroll over to the headlands and take a deep breath of sea air. Sometimes they turn inland and walk the town's few streets. In this case, they may see the jail.

It was built in 1914, according to Alverda Orlando, librarian at Branciforte Library and a member of the County Society for Historical Preservation, which owns the small building. "It was built right along with the village. Actually, it was a township, and they felt they needed government so they built a jail to house the miscreants, people who supposedly would have problems with society," said Orlando who moved to Davenport in 1940, and now is a Soquel resident.

"There wasn't really a government set up, but they had a justice of the peace and a few little things like that. However, nobody ever broke the law, as far as we know."

Only people who ever were held in

the jail, according to Orlando, were two boys who stole a horse in San Mateo County and rode it over the mountains. "They used the jail as a holding place until the San Mateo County sheriff could get over the hill and get them," she added. There were rumors that a few town drunks were put in one of the two cells until they sobered up. "But nobody was kept in before a trial or anything," said Orlando. "Everything was always on a friendly basis."

Thanks to Jim Franks, a Harbor High School student, the jail is in good shape these days. Young Franks earned his Eagle rank in Boy Scouting by making renovation of Davenport Jail his project. So much damage had been done, the project was greater than anticipated and wound up involving many people and spanned six months. Jim's projected cost was \$700; the actual cost was nearly double that.

The 10-foot by 10-foot insides were totally revamped, according to Franks' father, James Franks, who coordinated much of the work. Even the plumbing had to be redone; original plumbing was broken up by the county, to discourage transients. A new paint job was planned, with help from artist Roy Rydell. The electrical system was revamped. Outside, the 20-foot by 25-foot land parcel was landscaped.

Much of the funding came from SCOPE, a community organization that encourages land and home beautification. "It had been half buried under dirt, a real disaster," the elder Franks recalls.

So the little jail, built with funds from Coast Dairies and Land Co., enjoys new life. It changed owners in 1979, when it was purchased by Susan K. Poett of Hillsborough, and Poett presented it in July 1980 to the county Society for Historical Preservation. The society, according to the



Davenport jail with its new look

A chance for gamblers

A guessing game is underway to benefit Santa Cruz County Historical Society and Davenport jail, described by supporters as "a whale of a jail." The challenge is to guess the exact date and time that the first southbound whale will be sighted after midnight, Dec. 20, from Big Creek Lumber Company.

Guesses cost \$1 each or six for \$5 and entry forms are available at the County Historical Museum,

118 Cooper St. First prize will be a weekend for two at Davenport Bed and Breakfast; second prize is candlelight dinner for four served in Davenport jail.

Third prize is a trophy case fitted with Davenport whale buttons dated 1971-85 and donated by Alvin Gregory who will award the prizes Jan. 10 during a 5 p.m. wine tasting party at Davenport Cash Store.

elder Franks, pays a utilities bill of about \$2 a month and pays the taxes. In return, there is pride in the place,

"a two-celler, with outroom containing toilet and sink" he added. "It's really' cute."

Just posing: Joe Franks and Eric Phister

Photos by Bill Lovejoy