

Society to honor former bull, bear fighting ring

History
Historical group will commemorate landmark that used to be where San Lorenzo Park is now

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SANTA CRUZ — Before the establishment of beachfront homes, before the Boardwalk was a blur of white lights and clanking coasters, before

Pacific and Ocean were jam-packed with businesses and bustling with people, in the heart of Santa Cruz there was a bull and bear fighting ring.

On Saturday, El Viceroy Marques de Branciforte Chapter 1797 — a

historical society established in the early 20th century and collectively known as the Clampers — will be commemorating the bull and bear fighting ring that existed as part of the Villa de Branciforte.

The ring historically would have been in what is now San Lorenzo Park on Dakota Avenue.

The last bull and bear fight to take place in the Villa de Branciforte ring

was on July 13, 1867, said Wayne "Ramrod" Edgin, Noble Grand Humbug of El Viceroy Marques de Branciforte.

To commemorate this little-known slice of Santa Cruz history, the Clampers will be building a concrete monument at the site with an embedded bronze plaque.

SEE **LANDMARK** ON B3

IF YOU GO

BULL & BEAR FIGHTING RING PLAQUE UNVEILING

WHEN: 10 a.m. Saturday

WHERE: San Lorenzo Park, 137 Dakota Ave., Santa Cruz

COST: Free

LANDMARK

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"There will be speechifying, glad-handing and all that," Edgin said.

Edgin explained what El Viceroy Marques de Branciforte Chapter 1797 is and why it has taken a particular interest in the Villa de Branciforte bull and bear fighting ring.

"Our logo, our motto, our trademark has been 'Bull and Bear Fight,'" Edgin said. "Everyone is really excited because it's our namesake."

El Viceroy Marques de Branciforte Chapter 1797 as a group is a spoof on more traditional fraternal organizations — organizations that rough and rowdy blue collar workers, such as miners, did not necessarily fit into.

Edgin said that miners were deemed too "uncool, uncouth and dirty" for traditional fraternal organizations, and as a result sought to establish their own — complete with a humorously false "Latin" name — "E Clampus Vitus."

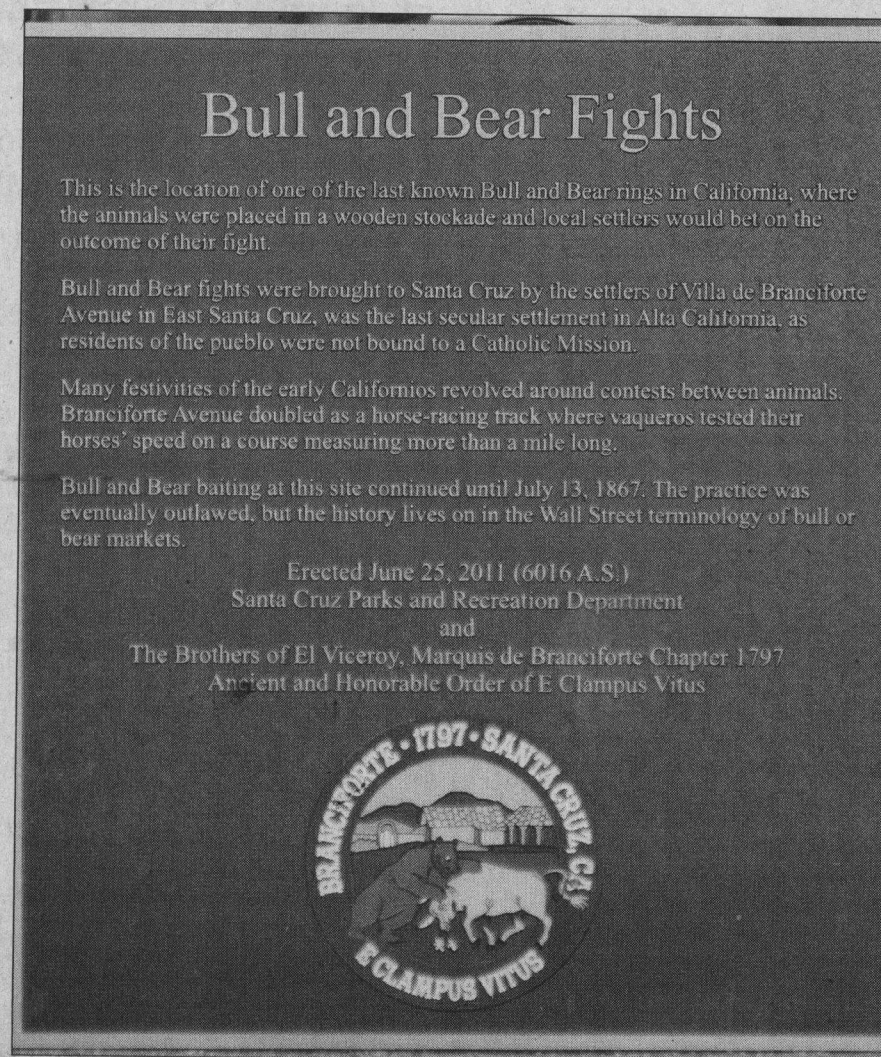
The Clampers are rooted in reviving and maintaining mining culture and folklore, and the overall rough-around-the-edges persona of miners.

The group died out by the latter half of the 19th century, but was revived in the 1930s by several newspapermen from San Francisco as a historical society, Edgin said.

Edgin said that despite the group's love for the somewhat eccentric, they do participate in charitable events, maintaining their original belief in supporting "widows and children."

Since the establishment of the local chapter in 1997, the Clampers have commemorated multiple obscure historical sites and figures.

One notable figure, Charlie Parkhurst, was a female stagecoach driver who



JOHN WILLIAMS/SENTINEL

This plaque will be placed in San Lorenzo Park on Saturday with help from the Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department as well as El Viceroy Marques de Branciforte Chapter 1797. The plaque honors bull and bear fights that occurred in the area until 1867.

posed as a man and as a result of her gender-bending, may have been able to vote in an election in 1868.

"The Clampers have been called the comic section of California history,"

Edgin said. "We live up to it. Our motto is 'Credo Quia Absurdum' — 'I believe because it's absurd.' If it's goofy, we probably have something to do with it."