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# Historic Landmark For Town Clock?

## Sentinel

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The Town Clock - the city's Bicentennial Year project should be designated a historic landmark, the city Historic Preservation Commission recommended Wednesday.

And the place on which it stands should be named Town Clock Plaza, the commission said.

Both recommendations will go to the Santa Cruz City Council for final action.

The commission suggestions came after a brief discussion of the clock's history by Robert Darrow, who chaired the Citizens Committee on Community Improvement when that group initiated the project in 1974.

Part of the project saw the city of Santa Cruz allocate \$60,000 as a loan to get it moving, with the hope the project would be completed in time for the city's Bicentennial celebration July 4, 1976.

Darrow pledged at the time that the Town Clock Committee would seek contributions from the citizenry to repay this loan, and that pledge has almost been made totally good. Only about \$6,000 is owed, according to the city finance director's office, which is receiving the contributions on behalf of the project.

The clock is embedded deeply in the city's latter day history. Indeed, the history of the Town Clock goes back more than 100 years to the 1870s, when a town clock and tower were constructed atop the Odd Fellows Building on Pacific Avenue.

A fire destroyed the first tower and clock in 1899. Reconstructed in 1900, the tower received a new clock, complete with a very loud bell that marked the hours for the downtown area early in this century and up to the middle 1960s.

In the 1960s the clock and tower were removed so that the Odd Fellows building could be remodeled. They passed into city ownership and were stored by the city until the citizens group conceived the project.

The clock, which was made by the Seth Thomas Clock Co. in 1900, was restored under direction of Dr. Eugene Corriden, head of the Santa Cruz chapter of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors.

A new base was struck at the foundry that caused the original clock.

The clock bell was purchased by the city

from the W. D. Garrett Co. of San Francisco on April 1, 1878 and was transported to the Santa Cruz Wharf by steamship. Housed in a special tower behind City Hall, which was then located on Front Street, the bell was used to summon volunteers to fight fires until it was replaced in the 1930s.

Darrow noted with a smile that "while the clock and tower were in storage they were less appreciated and were not handled correctly. Kids would hit home runs over the nearby fence and then come into the storage yard and run all over the metal pieces of the tower while looking for the baseball," Darrow said.

Some of the original metal of the tower was incorporated into the finished clock tower seen today, "the waffle part," Darrow said.

"The metal workers thought we could use more of the metal parts, but we discovered that metal made in 1900 and left to oxidize doesn't take solder."

The exact appearance of the original clock and tower were preserved, Darrow stressed.

Setting off the clock tower is a base constructed of brick, designed by Kermit L. Darrow, Robert Darrow's brother. Landscaping was designed by Roy Rydell, a landscape architect.

The base encloses the Morris Memorial Fountain.

Commissioner Nancy Kimbro made the motion to designate the Town Clock as a historic landmark, and this was seconded by Nancy McNeal. McNeal then made the motion to designate the site Town Clock Plaza.

The Town Clock Committee that finally got the job completed was headed by Denise Holbert, Darrow said.

Darrow thanked the many hundreds of men, women and children who participated in the project either with work or donations.

Persons wishing to help complete payment for the clock may send checks to the City Finance Department, Room 107, Santa Cruz City Hall, 809 Center St.

For donations of \$50 or more, a person may have his or her name inscribed on a tile plaque and mounted on the base of the clock.