

✓ Natives add to the layers of historical tales

9-9-90
N OW THAT official summer is over it's time to catch up on some old business before we get too far into September. Our six-part summer walk series generated a number of comments and suggestions. The walk through the Circles on Santa Cruz's west side elicited by far the most mail, and I would like to share some reminiscences from two native Santa Cruzans who took the time to write.

Ted McEwen wrote a lively letter filled with 80 years' worth of historical tidbits about the west side. His father was the section foreman for the Ocean Shore Railroad at the Santa Cruz end until the railroad ceased to operate in 1922, and Ted was born on Gharkey Street. He remembers his boyhood days playing on the Norris and Rowe Circus grounds between Woodrow and Columbia as the pavement where the lions cages had been set up remained for years.

McEwen points out that Woodrow Avenue was originally called Garfield Avenue (confirmed by the fire insurance maps for the neighborhood), but the name was changed because folks were always getting the avenue confused with Garfield Street, which was located between Dakota and Water on a site now occupied by the County Government Center. He also notes

Hindsight



Sandy Lydon

that the National Guard unit which moved to West Cliff with six 155 millimeter guns was from Arizona and New Mexico, and agrees that the black members of this unit formed the nucleus of Santa Cruz's modern black community.

Finally, McEwen helped fill out the fascinating story of the Kitchen brothers who built those whimsical buildings along Fair Avenue. He notes that the brothers "had no use for each other" and avoided personal contact for years. Among the lasting monuments to Raymond Kitchen's skill is the stone wall along the Civic Auditorium parking lot.

A NOTHER reader telephoned an interesting anecdote about the Kitchen brothers to Nikki Silva, a latter-day Kitchen Sister. When this Kitchen brother was unable to work out a problem, he poured a bucket of water on his mattress, soaking the bed and rendering it completely uncomfortable. Then, while tossing and turning on his soggy mattress throughout the sleepless night, he would think the problem through and have it solved by morning.

I also received a long, lovely letter from Daisy Trefts who now lives with her daughter in Astoria, Ore. Daisy was born in Santa Cruz in 1899 and lived much of her life on Dake Avenue. She describes the "blow holes" along West Cliff that spouted spray when the waves surged against the cliffs, and remembers watching storms through the windows of the Vue de l'Eau. Her father, Loren T. Hill, was one of the early settlers on Gharkey Street, and after the Ocean Shore Railroad bought the family home, her father moved the family to the corner of Bay and Laguna, where they were neighbors with the Stagnaro family. In 1924, Daisy married Emil Trefts, who later worked at Leask's for many years. In 1988,

✦ Please see LYDON — E2



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Ted McEwen remembers squabbling between whimsy builders, the Kitchen brothers.

Lydon

Continued from Page E1

following the death of her husband, Daisy moved to Astoria to be with her family, but the distance has not affected her ability to take mental walks through 90 years of Santa Cruz history.

An Opportunity to See the Historic Town of Swanton — On most days, a drive along Swanton Road rewards the motorist with glimpses of pastoral nook-and-cranny Santa Cruz County at its best. The road slides through fields of brussels sprouts, crosses Scotts Creek and then winds up to a ridge top with some magnificent views of the north coast before dropping back to Highway 1 near Big Creek Lumber.

The casual drive does not give a clue, however, to the historic treasures hidden in the greenery beside the road. Swanton's bucolic facade masks a fascinating history of industry and development. The Ocean Shore railroad from Santa Cruz ended here, and passengers climbed into Stanley Steamers for the 26-mile trip to the railhead at

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Tunitas to continue on to San Francisco.

Fred Swanton built one of Santa Cruz's first hydro-electric plants here, and Santa Cruz continues to capture some of its precious water in these canyons.

Recently, Al Smith, a Swanton resident and the former president and major stockholder of the Orchard Supply Hardware chain, built a one-third scale railroad along the creek. The steam locomotive (first used at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in 1915) chugs across land which once heard the rumble of the Ocean Shore Railroad.

Once each year, Smith, the McCrary family (owners of Big Creek Lumber), and all of Swanton throw open their historical doors to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County for their annual Swanton Pacific Country Picnic. The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County is dedicated to preserving, for public benefit, lands with historic value.

This year, the Swanton Pacific Country Picnic will be Sept. 23 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Adult admission is \$15 and children under 13 will be admitted for \$6. Admission includes a hefty barbecue lunch, train rides, walking tours of the old power plant and tours of the trout and salmon breeding facilities. Call the Land Trust at 476-6116 for further information, but be warned that the event usually sells out.

I am a sucker for the sound of old steam locomotives, so I'll be there riding the train through history. I'm easy to spot. I'm the one with the silly grin.

Sandy Lydon is a lecturer, teacher and author on matters historical. He can be seen nightly on KCBA, Channel 35, at 5:30 and 10 p.m. discussing the region's weather and history.