

# Historic Capitola home demolished



Contributed photos

The Lent House, ridden with termites and rot, overlooks Soquel Creek and Monterey Bay.

By AL ZAGOFSKY

SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

The Lent House is no more.

Workers have demolished the historic home overlooking Soquel Creek and Capitola's beachfront to make way for a "replica" home on the Prospect Avenue property.

After demolition cleanup is completed and improvements made to the retaining walls of the cliff, a 7,144-square-foot residence will be built with an exterior design reminiscent of the original's Swiss chalet construction.

The 88-year-old home at 1570 Prospect Ave., described as a "significant historical resource" by the 1986 Capitola Architectural Survey, also was regarded as having one of the best views in the county.

Outside the cordoned-off construction area, neighbors gathered last week to watch Lee Steinberg of F.M. Genk Construction alternately ram a backhoe's bucket into the building's supports and pull the supports apart with a heavy chain.

Darcy Horton, a neighbor living across the street from the Lent House for five years, was delighted it was being torn down.

"I would be the first person standing in line to champion saving the house if I felt it could be saved," she said. "But I don't believe this is possible. This house doesn't have a foundation, and it is filled with rot and termites."

Hers was typical of the neighbors' mixed emotions. One joyful neigh-



A backhoe finishes off the historic house last week.

bor said, "I never thought that it would happen. It is an eyesore and a termite nest and a fire hazard." Others silently watched as part of a community's and a family's history was torn to the ground.

The home was built in 1916 for Al and Harriet Lent, who had moved to Capitola four years earlier. Al Lent had received a large inheritance from an uncle, which had allowed him to pursue a career in minor league baseball and a lifelong interest in hunting and fishing. He is reported to have enjoyed horseback riding in the surf along Capitola beaches.

The original house was rectangular and built of wood. On the property, a three-story water tower was constructed. The lower floor stabled horses.

In 1927, a distinctive octagon-shaped one-story bay overlooking Wharf Road and Soquel Creek was added, and in the 1930s, the octagon-shaped bay was expanded to a second story. The water tower was removed, allowing the upper floors to become living space, and the stable was converted to a garage.

After the 1940 death of his first wife, with whom he had raised two children, Lent remarried and had two daughters. He died in 1969; his second wife and a daughter lived in the house until a few years ago.

The sale of the property and approval of the new design have been handled by Ann L. Butler, a county real estate and land-use attorney. She has worked on the project since 1999 — first as a representative of the seller, and now representing new owners Jeffrey and Catherine Thermond.

"It took us a long time to meet the requirements to demolish the home," Butler said. "There was no foundation and there was no structural support. Half of the house was fronting on the ocean bluff."

She noted the house had deteriorated further in the last year and would have been red-tagged as uninhabitable if anyone had tried to live in it.

The Lent House had been eligible for inclusion in National and California Register of Historic Homes, but never had been listed.

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