

Old house getting facelift

By CAROLYN SWIFT

When a Bavarian named John Daubenbiss decided to build a family home in Soquel more than a century ago, he picked a site on a northward hill, both protected from threat of floods and blessed with an impressive view of the surrounding farmlands.

It is something of a tribute to the man's common sense that his house is still there.

Although the home on Soquel Drive has been neglected at times, it has survived since the 1860s as a landmark for both townspeople and historians who often gain a perspective from old references to "the Daubenbiss

place."

The Daubenbiss home has been changing in appearance over the last few months, and at first there was a good deal of concern that it might soon be torn down. Fortunately, the fate of the Daubenbiss house will be the opposite — its owners, Jesse Lee and Christina Case-Gabbard, are

restoring the building so that its outside features will resemble as closely as possible the original facade.

With luck, the couple plans to open a bookstore and gallery in the downstairs portion of the old home by midsummer. The upper story will serve as their residence.

The Case-Gabbards had been looking for an old home as a business and residence site for quite some time before they found the Daubenbiss home. Santa Cruz City had dampened their hopes of finding a home within city limits, and the Soquel property was the last shown to them by a realtor last January.

Although they paid about \$55,000 for the building, its condition was less than ideal. Mrs. Case-Gabbard, an artist, said it was a mixture of old trends and some out-of-date new ones as well. Built of virgin redwood timber, the home had aluminum doors and window frames and was painted inside with various "60's psychedelics," from its days as a half-way house.

"It had taken a lot of wear-and-tear," she said. "We never envisioned a restoration quite this extensive, but one thing led to another." The couple estimates it will cost an additional \$50,000 to bring the home back to the way it looked when John Daubenbiss lived there.

Daubenbiss was one of Santa Cruz County's early pioneers and among the first "Yankee," settlers to obtain a portion of a Mexican land grant. He first came to Soquel in 1845 and took advantage of the potential for lumbering and farming. He served with Fremont's battalion

and later became a member of the Mexican War Veteran's Society, the Society of California Pioneers and the Masonic Fraternity.

In 1847, he had married Sarah C. Laord and in the 1850s he built the first one-story structure on the hill above Soquel. This building was later attached to the two-story home Daubenbiss built when his family grew in the 1860s. The home itself was constructed by a ship's carpenter, although Daubenbiss had been trained in the trade before he left Bavaria.

Today, the restoration of the Daubenbiss home is in the hands of John Cureton and Cureton

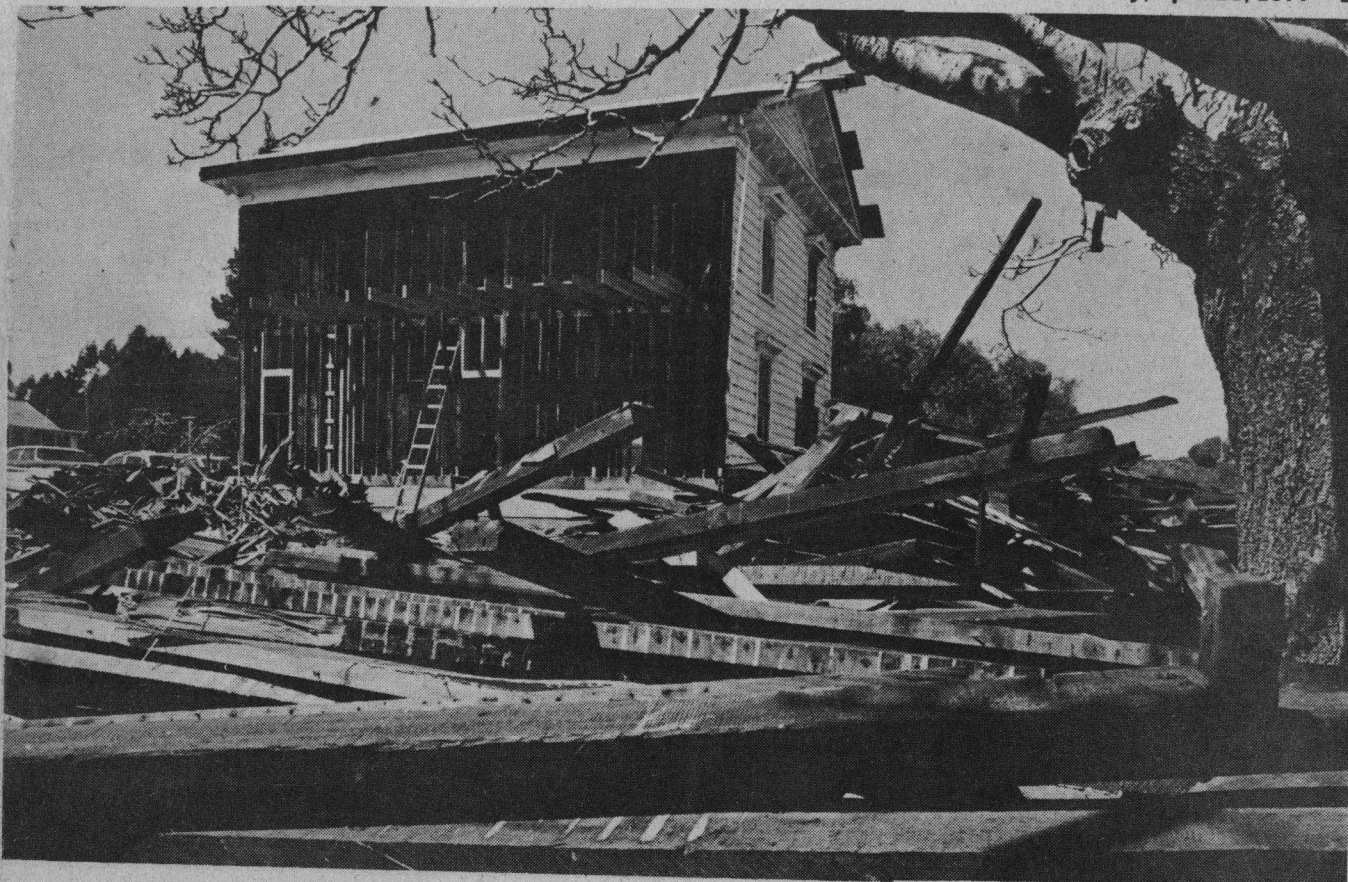
Enterprises, a firm that specializes in restoration of old fireplaces will appear on the buildings.

Cureton said that while the outside will look as it did a century ago, the inside will be designed to accommodate the recommended to the owners by bookstore, gallery and residence Al Schadel of the Santa Cruz County Museum, the Octagon. Schadel has long been interested in the original stairway railing and in possible restoration of the home, and was enthusiastic when the Case-Gabbards came to him for advice.

The contractor said he has found no outstanding difficulties in the restoration, except for a few minor termite problems. His firm has prepared the home for a new foundation, and removed siding which they will restore by

Schadel, Cureton, Mr. and Mrs. Case-Gabbard and Mrs. Gladys Daubenbiss Thorpe, a descendant of John Daubenbiss, met last Friday at the home to compare restoration plans with some memories and an old photograph brought by Mrs. Thorpe and her husband, Albert.

The outstanding feature of the home, Cureton said, is its facade with its rectangular windows, pedimented gables and Italianate construction.



Restoration proved to be king-sized job.



Christina and Jesse Lee Case-Gabbard check a newspaper story on the Daubenbiss house with Mrs. Gladys Daubenbiss Thorpe, a descendant of the builder.



Old photo shows how it looked when new.

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