

# Santa Cruz Sen

Sunday, November 30, 1969

Felton

## 76-Year-Old Belfry Glows In Light Of Christmas Joy

By BILL NEUBAUER  
Sentinel Staff Writer

A former church belfry that has graced the Felton skyline for 76 years was lighted up Friday night for the first time in its history to convey Yuletide greetings to the world.

The Christmas decorations include a glowing candle centered in a huge wreath, twinkling bells and strings of multi-colored lights.

The decorations were contributed by the Felton Businessmen's Association, which is leading a community effort to decorate Felton for the holidays as it has not been decorated in its 101 years of existence as "the queen city of San Lorenzo Valley."

The decorations were put up by a local firm that donated a 50-foot boom and the services of skilled workmen for the project.

"They tried using a 35-foot boom first," a spokesman for the Felton business group said. "It just wasn't long enough. So they called in a 50-foot boom, and workers Charlie Perkins, Manny Ferreira, Jerry Silaughter and John Baran got the job done."

The belfry will shine out its Christmas message from now until New Year's Day, the spokesman added.

Throughout old Felton town other decorations are going up or are in the planning stage. Business organizations are putting up candles and other decorations in their shop windows and on the facades of their buildings. Wreaths are being strung on wires above Felton's main street.

A huge Christmas Greetings sign will be mounted on the roofs of Smiley's and the Village Kitchen near the main intersection. The Felton Fire Department will decorate its fire

hall, as in the past, to provide a blaze of color on Kirby Street.

Many of the decorations to be used throughout the town were made by men, women and children last week during a community work session under leadership of Leo Woods and Les George.

"It's been a fine community project," the business group spokesman said. "There have been many volunteer workers. The Christmas spirit has been seen everywhere."

Decoration of the old church belfry seemed for a time almost impossible, though, because of its towering height on the corner of Gushee and Bennett Streets.

"But this local firm came to our rescue warmly and in a big way," the spokesman said. "They don't want any publicity, so please don't name them in your article. They heard of our desires and they decided to help out. No one wants publicity for any of this, which is why I'm asking not to be identified, either."

A Felton oldtimer commented: "That old church belfry is one of this town's real links with the past. It's wonderful that all eyes will be turned toward it again during the Christmas season."

The church building is one of three churches which were conceived in San Lorenzo Valley in the 1890s by the Rev. Alex Eakin, a young Presbyterian missionary who loomed large in pioneer history.

But it was the only church the Rev. Mr. Eakin ever had any luck with. The other two churches, which were built in Boulder Creek, were burned to the ground—some say "accidentally," and others say "accidentally on purpose."

The Rev. Mr. Eakin conceived the church in 1891, when many of Felton's hills had been logged bare, and quarries and lime kilns "were visible from every

point of view on the near hill-sides."

Actual church construction was done under leadership of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, however while the Rev. Mr. Eakin was wrestling with unregenerate woodsmen in the Boulder Creek area and also acting as pastor of the Ben Lomond church that has since come to be called the Wee Kirk of Ben Lomond.

While the Rev. Mr. Eakin was losing two churches to fires in Boulder Creek, the Felton church, called the Felton Community Church, was completed in 1893 and developing into a force for good that was destined to influence life in Felton for 62 years.

In 1955 the old building fell into disuse after a new Presbyterian church had been built on Highway 9 in midtown Felton. But a year later the building was reopened as the Faye G. Belardi Memorial Library.

Today, in its 76th year, as in its first, it is still one of the most used community structures in town.

Indeed, it is the only building still in use that the Rev. Mr. Eakin was associated with back in the days when all the world was younger and greener.

The Wee Kirk of Ben Lomond ended its long history as a church a couple of years ago after its congregation merged with that of Felton to form the Felton United Presbyterian Church.

Sold to contractor Edwin Peterson, the Wee Kirk stands empty and idle now.

But in Felton town this Christmas the Yuletide message preached in olden days by the Rev. Mr. Eakin will shine forth to all the world from the belfry of the church he conceived when "the queen city of San Lorenzo Valley" burned lime and shipped lumber to the world markets.

PUBLIC NOTICE