



**OLD
LANDMARKS
BRING
HISTORY
TO LIFE**

by Carolyn Swift

Will there ever be a building in the whole county loved and missed more than the Cooper House?

Oh, yes.

To this day, many a Santa Cruzan pines for McHugh and Bianchi, a grand Italianate that years ago graced the top of Pacific Garden Mall. The old cash grocery was named to the National Register of Historic Places just before it was demolished. Ana twenty years later, people are still mad.

The fight to save it, though lost, paved the way for a greater community appreciation of historic architecture and the vigilance needed to protect it. Unfortunately, that insight and progress was blasted to bits after the 1989 earthquake. Buildings that stood as old friends crashed to the ground, their owners compelled to destroy splendid traces of the 19th century. Santa Cruz County learned once again that it can't take its historic resources for granted. Old buildings beg to be revered while they last, because like redwood parks and coastline natural bridges, they can vanish without a trace.

While the sun shines and the fog is at bay, a captivating afternoon can be spent outside in the company of the grand structures we have left to admire. Many are beautiful, dignified by inscribed plaques, while others await the careful attention of preservation. All of them, regardless of their shape, have a story.

In Santa Cruz and Watsonville, whole books have been written about the grand homes of the early pioneers. One of the finest is John Chase's *The Sidewalk Companion* to Santa Cruz Architecture, published in 1975. Although out-of-date since the earthquake, Chase's work still provides one of the best

itineraries for an old-fashioned Sunday drive through North County.

Along West Cliff Drive, for starters, are stately mansions like the Italianate built by John Morrow in 1877. Located at 170 West Cliff, this house was originally built for Sedgewick Lynch, a local contractor.

Chase notes that Lynch, an early California pioneer, had been a member of the San Francisco Vigilance Committee of 1851. (He wasn't, however, the same Lynch that coined the expression for mob hangings.)

Epworth-by-the-Sea, at the northwest corner of West Cliff and Santa Cruz Avenue, was built in 1887 and purchased a year later by the heirs of an early Colorado cattle king. Landscaped grounds around this mansion were designed by R. Ulrich, a gardener for the Del Monte Hotel in Monterey.

The Mission Revival house at 314 West Cliff Drive was drafted in 1907 by William H. Weeks. In his day, the Watsonville and San Francisco architect was said to have designed buildings for every city and town in northern and central California. Many of the Mission Revival school houses in Santa Cruz County were patterned by Weeks. Watsonville historian Betty Lewis has written *W.H. Weeks: Architect*, which documents his achievements locally.

Rutherglen Terrace at 544 West Cliff is an 1893 Colonial Revival designed for James McNeil, president of the Santa Cruz Electric Light and Power Works. Monograms of Rutherglen Terrace enclosed in a wreath of Scottish thistles were engraved on the sidelights of the front door.

A trip along Third Street further presents a view of the city's exceptional houses. Here is a mixture of styles: Stick-Eastlake mansions, Craftsman Bungalow houses, Tudor Revival, Victorian English cottage and simple vernacular. The big attraction, of course, is the Golden

How to Research the History of Property

The history of many historic structures has been detailed by researchers who have spent countless hours hunting through archives and old newspapers for scraps of information about the fate of the buildings and their owners.

But the work is not all done. Many residents are wondering about their own houses and neighborhoods. They see the markers of history but haven't a clue how to go about the process of discovery.

Once begun, investigating the histories of old buildings in Santa Cruz County can become a fascinating pastime all by itself. *Every Structure Tells A Story* by Rick Hyman is a step-by-step guide for those who'd like to know how to get started. It is published by the Santa Cruz County Historical Trust. □

Gate Villa which dominates Beach Hill above downtown.

There's a great story that goes along with this mansion, described more fully in the manuscript by historian Ross Gibson. (The easiest way to find most of these books, by the way, is the Museum Store at the Santa Cruz County History Museum.)

Golden Gate Villa is a rambling Queen Anne with an outsized tower and high pointed roof. Chase noted that it had one of the most lavishly ornamented interiors of any house ever built in Santa Cruz.

"The huge stained-glass window lighting the landing depicts a classically draped female figure reaching up to admire a branch of flowering tree. It supposedly represents Agnes McLaughlin, stepdaughter of Major Frank McLaughlin, who built the house," he wrote.

It's the ghost of Agnes that

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walks the stairs in local lore, since she was murdered by McLaughlin on November 16, 1907. He shot her during the night on the second anniversary of his wife's death. After he killed Agnes, McLaughlin ended his own life with "a potion of cyanide potassium." They said he did it in grief, over either his wife or the loss of his extensive fortune.

Aside from McLaughlin's murder/suicide, the mansion also played a role in an infamous moment in California history.

McLaughlin, it seems, was a personal friend of Teddy Roosevelt and Thomas Edison, and was a significant figure in state politics, serving as chairman of the Republican state central committee.

Because of the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, the Republican state convention was held that September in a huge tent at the Santa Cruz Boardwalk. The details make a long story, but during the competition for the nomination for governor, San Francisco's "Boss" Abe Ruef connived with the leaders of the Southern Pacific political machine to manipulate the outcome. As a result, James G. Gillette won the nomination for governor, with Warren R. Porter of

Watsonville as the railroad's candidate for lieutenant governor.

After the convention, McLaughlin threw a dinner party at his home. A photographer was summoned to capture the moment of triumph for Ruef, who posed at the center of the party's inner circle. Opposition newspapers used the photograph under the famed heading of "The Shame of California."

Down the block from Golden Gate Villa is a streamlined Moderne house that was built in the 1930s for state Senator and Mrs. H. Ray Judah. Chase said the house, with porthole windows and pipe railing, is "The offspring of a toaster and an ocean liner."

Nearby at 321 Main Street, the Carmelita Cottages have gained distinction in recent years since their restoration by the Santa Cruz Hostel Society. The cottages date back to the 1870s. Their story is detailed in full by Rick Hyman in the publication, Every Structure Tells A Story.

While there are dozens of other magnificent homes and neighborhoods throughout Santa Cruz, Oceanview Avenue, with its huge lots and old gardens, has long held title as the prime residential street on the East side. It overlooks the cliff with what at one time was an expansive, majestic view of the bay. Oceanview was opened for

development in 1871. At the head is Fred Swanton's Villa Perla, a large two-story Colonial Revival built in 1893 at 520 Soquel Avenue.

Swanton was one of the most controversial characters in Santa Cruz County's history. He was the Boardwalk developer, Santa Cruz booster, business owner and eventual city mayor. Swanton is known for many things — Venetian water carnivals, beauty pageants, movie-making, electric lights, and so on. He was also one of those enterprising types who could slide right up to bankruptcy without completely falling in.

Swanton named his house in honor of his daughter, Pearl. Chase notes that when she married, Swanton had the tracks of his trolley company roll up to the front door. Guests from San Francisco were picked up at the train station and delivered by rail right to the doorstep.

Supposedly, President Teddy Roosevelt also slept in the two front rooms. He was Swanton's guest at the time he visited Santa Cruz to dedicate a tree in Cowell State Redwood Park.

The original home designed for Swanton was later moved to 540 Oceanview Avenue. This Stick-Italianate was designed in 1888 by Daniel Damkroeger. It was moved to its new site in 1892, when Swanton sold it to Frank Mattison.

Most of the other large homes along Oceanview Avenue were built in the 1880s. The majority are Stick-Eastlake or Eastlake in style, some remodeled extensively while others retain an untarnished original appearance.

Of all the avenues in Santa Cruz, this one gives the greatest impression of actually visiting the past.

The house at 412 Oceanview Avenue has a Swiss Chalet trim. The Santa Cruz Historic Building Survey describes it as "a well proportioned Stick-Eastlake house marred by a paved yard. It has a hip roof with flaring eaves and finials over gabled bays and dormers. There are balconies under vertically proportioned windows on the front bay. An irregularly shaped porch is molded to the lines of the house."

It was the home of a man with an equally irregular name of Gusbert Bogart Vroom DeLamater. Chase said he was better known as "Initials" and "Alphabet" to his friends.

He also found that DeLamater had crossed the frontier in 1850 on the same wagon train with Eben Bennett and future Big Four magnate Charles Crocker. When they arrived in California, DeLamater and Crocker went into the mercantile business together before Initials decided to move to Michigan Bar, a



With sweeping views and protection from floods, it's easy to guess why mansions were built at their hilltop locations.

gold town on the American River.

DeLamater moved to Santa Cruz in 1868 and was active in business and real estate, serving as mayor from 1871-72.

Winding up this short tour, one of the most eccentric houses in Santa Cruz can also be found on the East side, at 1205 Broadway.

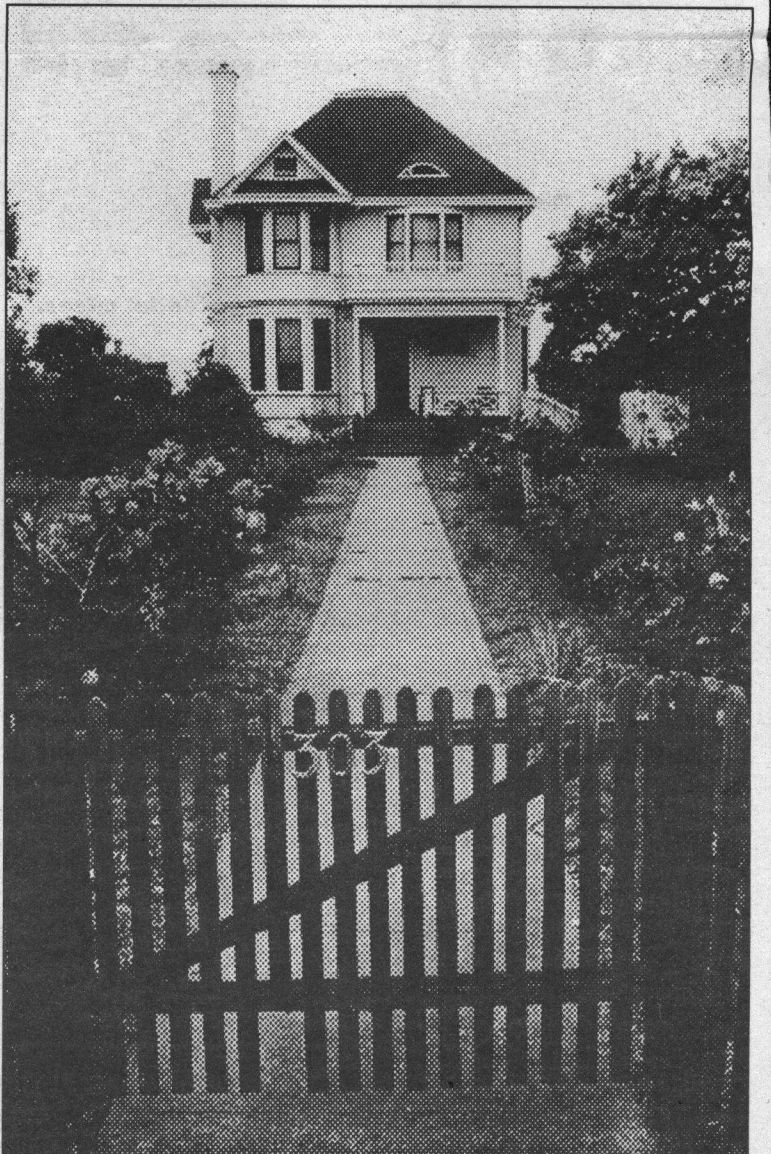
Chase called it a "flashy Barbary Coast Gothic" in design, a Stick-Eastlake typical of the style popular in San Francisco in the 1880s.

The house was built in 1889 by W.W. Brown. A few years later, it was converted to a sanitarium with an enclosed balcony over the entrance porch to allow patients to sit and win back their strength after the "Keeley Cure." Dr. E. V. Jarrett was in charge of administering Dr. Keeley's "bi-chloride of gold."

The sanitarium amounted to a drunk tank. If patient's survived Keeley's "wonderful specific for drunkenness and overindulgence in narcotics," they could no doubt have been quite sober. □



The Golden Gate Villa, the Queen Anne that dominates Beach Hill, was built in 1891 and is filled with history.



Mansions built along Oceanview Ave. in Santa Cruz still have their original large lots and landscaping.