

'Lost adobe' uncovered in

Santa Cruz

By GUY LASNIER

Up on Mission Hill in Santa Cruz, under Ruby Tefertiller's back yard, lie the remains of an adobe building perhaps 280 feet long. Rob Edwards, an anthropology professor at Cabrillo College, calls it the "lost adobe."

No records of the building exist, but Edwards estimates it stood sometime between 1790 and 1820, which would make it the oldest structure on Mission Hill.

Edwards has been digging in Mrs. Tefertiller's back yard for two summers now. With members of his four-week-long Archeology Summer Field Class he has uncovered large portions of the building's foundation and has found evidence that suggests a strong earthquake jolted the area maybe 180 years ago and caused much of the building to collapse.

Edwards and his class held an "open hole" (the digger's equivalent of an open house) last Wednesday, the last day of their excavation, to show off the foundations, tiles, and walls they have uncovered. The next day, the trenches were filled again, but not before heavy sheets of plastic were placed around the exposed artifacts. The students then packed the earth around the plastic until the trench is full. "After all," Edwards said, "a truck has to park here most of the year."

Next year another group will pick up where this one left off.

Edwards and his crew, armed with trowels and whisk brooms, have found roof tiles and adobe bricks lying in positions that look like the result of a strong earthquake. On the sides of the precisely dug trenches, adobe bricks are visible lying where they fell.

"We didn't expect the collapsed walls and tiles," Edwards said. "The earthquake find is serendipitous."

The excavation consists of a series of trenches crisscrossing an area roughly 30 feet square. Edwards explained that the first trench dug last summer was a cross section dug in a north-south direction with the hope it would run into something.

A condominium project down the street several years ago had unearthed remnants of some adobe structures, but most were destroyed. Edwards spec-

ulated that more materials might lie under the Tefertiller property.

Last year they found evidence that the "lost adobe" existed. This year the class was able to move more quickly and uncover more material. "We're more familiar with the dig this year," Edwards said.

The trenches are divided into "units" for precise measuring and cataloging of the finds. A unit, Edwards says, is a scientific term to describe a hole. One unit is one meter square and extends as deep as the excavation goes.

The excavation has uncovered two massive foundations that supported the exterior walls of the long, narrow building. Several inside foundations have also been uncovered. The foundations were constructed, Edwards said, by digging a trench and filling it with stones. Upon this the adobe bricks would be stacked to form walls.

The students strung plastic tape to demonstrate the length of the walls. The tape extends 50 yards across to the Tefertiller driveway. The length of the foundation was confirmed by vertical holes eight inches in diameter dug every few feet along a straight line.

Before an archeological dig can begin, extensive research must be completed to narrow the target. Holes cannot be dug just anywhere.

Robert Jackson, an expert in the Spanish and Mexican history of the Santa Cruz area, provided much of the research for Edwards. Using information from Mexico and from the mission in Santa Barbara, Jackson has compiled a record of the probable structure that once stood on the hill.

Jackson is waiting to receive missing records covering the years 1799-1809 that may shed more light on the extent of the structures on the hill at that time. The Santa Cruz mission settlement is the least explored in California, Jackson said.

The building was probably one of three things, according to Jackson: an Indian dormitory, a hospital or a workshed — a large workshed.

Mrs. Tefertiller, now a grandmother, is a lifelong resident of Santa Cruz and an active participant in the dig. She provided Edwards with

information based on stories her great-grandmother told her.

Her great-grandmother came to California in 1844, Mrs. Tefertiller said, and the property has remained with her family since 1847.

"There are blanks in the historical record we are trying to fill in," Edwards said. No maps exist before 1848, he said, and he knows of no written records that document buildings on Mission Hill before 1820. Edwards said artifacts removed from the dig might be able to answer questions about the "lost adobe's" age and purpose.

Some of the artifacts were on display last week. A delicate arrowhead with one chipped corner was marked with an eleven-digit number that placed exactly the spot and the day it was unearthed. Tools and beads made by local Indians have been uncovered and will help date other finds.

A translucent blue bottle that once held "Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup" was found in a turn-of-the-century trash pit.

"Where will you dig next?" Edwards was asked.

"I'd like to dig up the whole place," he said with a chuckle. "Under the workshed. Under that pink house. All over."

REFERENCE



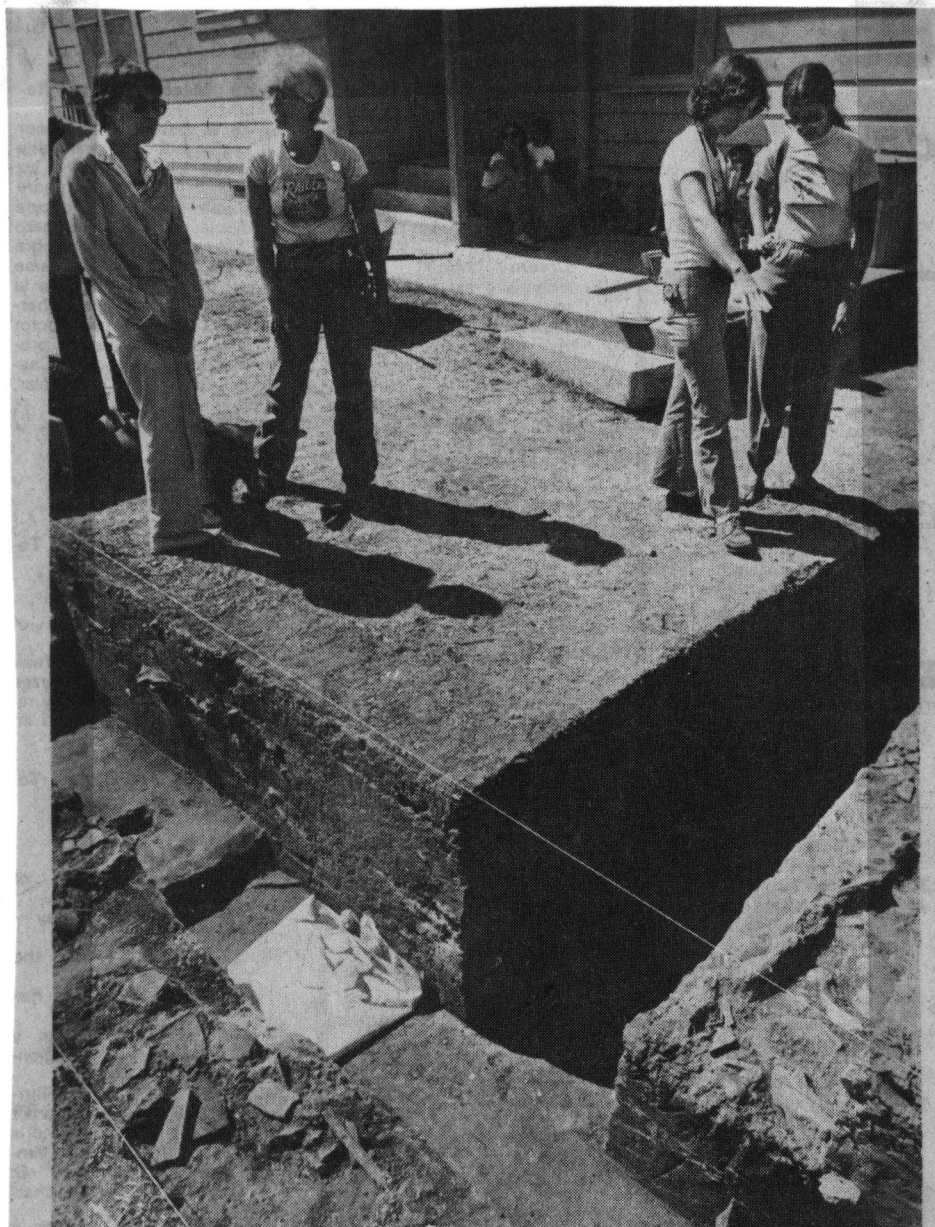


Photo by Mark DuFrene

Diggers admire the excavation, which was then covered for the winter.