

# Stuck on Santa Cruz

## Our city name becomes a worldwide brand

By Terri Morgan

**S**anta Cruz is in the heart of most local residents and on T-shirts and car windows around the world. Those of us who are lucky enough to call this unique seaside community home know its appeal and its history as a surfing and skateboarding mecca. And NHS, a uniquely Santa Cruz skateboard manufacturing company, sells its products in so many different countries that the Santa Cruz logo has universal appeal.

"It's a global brand," said Terry Campion, owner of Santa Cruz Boardroom on 41st Avenue. The skateboard shop is just up the street from where Richard Novak, Doug Haut, and Jay Shuirman launched NHS in 1969 to build surfboards and sell materials used in making them and other watercraft. They soon began creating skateboards that quickly became popular worldwide, the company, incorporated in 1973, introducing the Santa Cruz logo to the world.

"Our first logo was a strip logo," said Novak, now the sole owner of NHS. Local artist Jimmy Phillips did the first stylized lettering that read Santa Cruz. About eight years later Phillips took the lettering and came up with the red dot logo.

That now iconic logo has become so internationally popular that many people outside of the county think Santa Cruz is the company's brand name, not a city.

"We get people from foreign countries walking into the store all the time who don't know that Santa Cruz is a town," Campion said.





Despite cyclic ups and downs, as skateboarding goes in and out of popularity, NHS has thrived and its products are currently sold in 80 different countries. Demand for products emblazoned with the distinctive Santa Cruz logo is currently skyrocketing.

"Right now we're experiencing the largest growth in 25 years," Campion said. "It's nuts. The Santa Cruz brand is having phenomenal growth."

The logo is found on skateboards, T-shirts, hats, socks, and of course stickers. Adhesive backed decals are nothing new. Invented by a French engraver, they became the rage in Europe in the late 19th century. The colorful, stick-on images remained universally popular among kids, and were especially in demand by surfers and skateboarders. Phillips began collecting decals as a young surfer during the early 1960s, little knowing that the humble logos would eventually lead to a highly successful career as a graphic artist.

"Shortly after *Surfer* magazine started, I sent away to each surfboard maker for their sticker," Phillips recalled. "I didn't have a woody or a car yet, so I stuck them on my bedroom window as sort of a symbol of stoked gremmiehood."

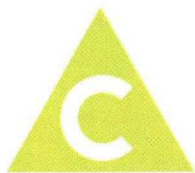
About 15 years later Phillips began working at NHS. One of his first assignments was to create a logo for the company's Road Rider Wheels to be used on stickers.

"I made the now-famous winged wheel design, and when our order arrived I was so excited to get them," Phillips remembers. "I finally had what I thought of as my own sticker. I remember driving around with a 100-pack, and whenever I saw skateboarders I would fling them out of my window, where they were received with hoots and hollers."

Phillips has designed many recognizable designs since then, including his screaming hand design

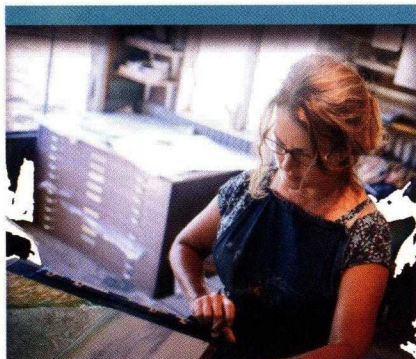
(Spread) A Santa Cruz surfer's woody wagon proudly displays a collection of Santa Cruz stickers.





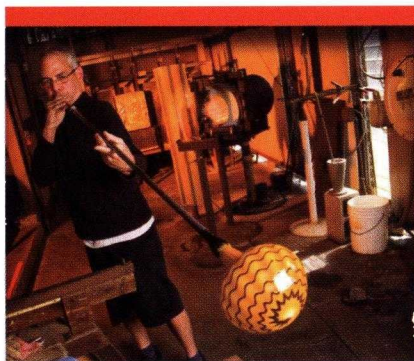
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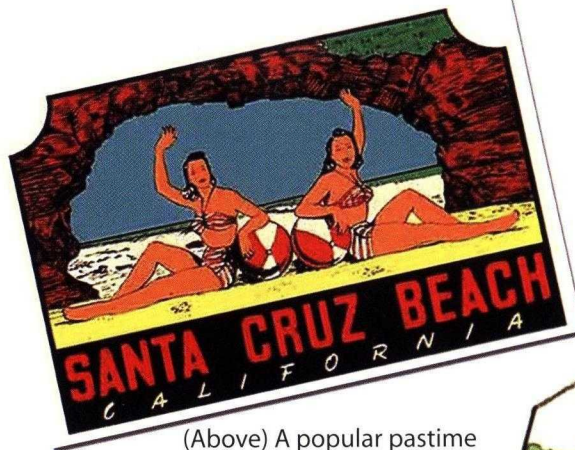
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(Above) A popular pastime with travelers visiting Santa Cruz was to attach auto decals to their cars.



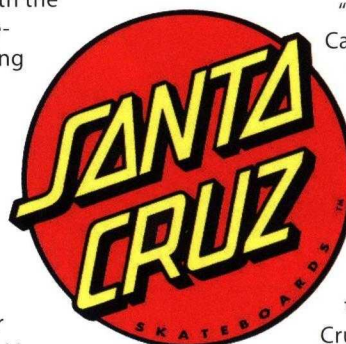
that was the focal point of an entire exhibit at Santa Cruz MAH earlier this year celebrating the hand's 30th anniversary.

Dohna Lee Dunderdale, owner of Made In Santa Cruz located on the Municipal Wharf since 1995, agrees with the popularity of Jim Phillips' designs, especially his screaming hand design.

"Talk about a generational icon and what people will do to make a statement, in the shop on the wharf I have seen over 50 tattoos of the (Phillips') screaming hand, mostly on the back of the calf or upper arm," said Dunderdale. "One Marine told me that a large banner of the screaming hand was hanging at the airport in Afghanistan when he was serving," she added.

Stores like the Boardroom and Made in Santa Cruz carry a wide variety of decals that allow locals to share their pride with their hometown on their cars, trucks, vans, bikes, skateboards, and windows. Decals,

which are an inexpensive way to connect with this unique part of the planet, are very popular.

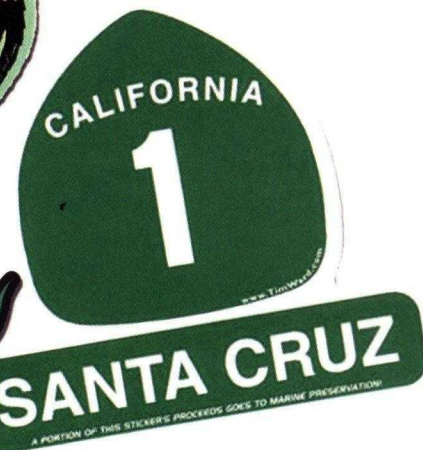


"We sell lots of stickers," said Campion, gesturing to the large display case holding dozens of different decals bearing the Santa Cruz name, including many designed by Phillips, his son Jimbo, and his grandson Colby.

"If someone comes in and buys a Santa Cruz T-shirt, they'll buy a sticker. Santa Cruz is a very unique place, and there's a lot of pride in this town.

The brand Santa Cruz is affiliated with surf-

(Above) Santa Cruz Skateboard's red dot logo, designed by Jim Phillips, has become one of the largest sellers. (Left) Tim Ward's stickers have become some of the favorites with a portion of each sale is donated to marine preservation.



Images Courtesy WWD

Image: © Santa Cruz Skateboards

Images: © Tim Ward Art Studios



ing and skateboarding, and everyone has a little spot in their heart for Santa Cruz."

The biggest seller, Champion notes, is decal with the famous red dot logo.

Pride in his hometown, along with a love for surfing and the ocean, prompted local artist Tim Ward to launch his own line of stickers celebrating Santa Cruz and marine life nine years ago. Ward, who grew up at Pleasure Point and began drawing, and painting as a kid, worked as a commercial artist for years before combining his two passions into his own commercial project. He launched the widely popular Life at Sea line in 2008 with his red shark decal, which locals began snatching up after it went on the market. One design led to another and eventually Ward had created so many new designs that today he has trouble keeping track of how many different decals he's launched over the past nine years.



Photo: Mickey Carroll

(Above) Some of the earliest Santa Cruz branding attempts were the cardboard Mystery Spot signs which were attached to every bumper during the visitors tour.

"At present, my local line of creatures and lifeforms includes 25 to 30 designs," Ward said. "It's been fortunate how this line has taken off."

The most popular sticker is his mermaid design. "The octopus also does really well, along with the monarch butterfly and the otter," he said.

Ward has created a different line of decals that he sells up and down the state. He said 95 percent of the designs on the stickers he sells in other areas are different from the ones he markets locally.

"My Santa Cruz designs don't get shared in other areas," he said. "I wanted to keep my designs exclusive to my beloved hometown."

Ward's stickers also help support his love for the ocean. A portion of each sale is donated to marine preservation and sustainable water clean-up technologies. A brief description of how the sales support

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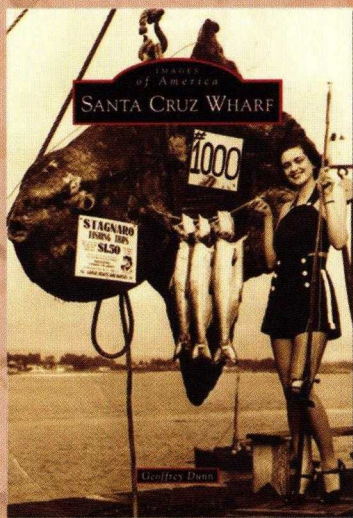
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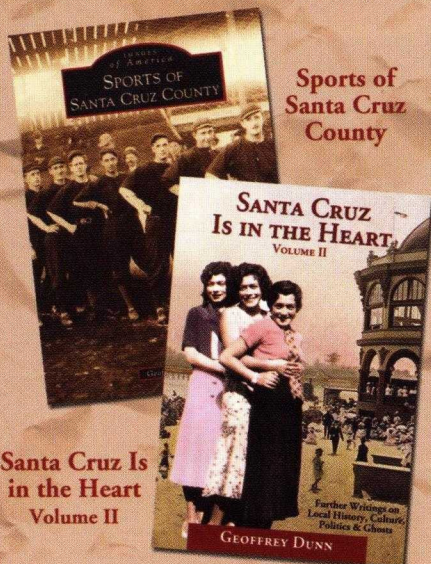


## SANTA CRUZ WHARF (IMAGES OF AMERICA)



### A new book by Geoffrey Dunn

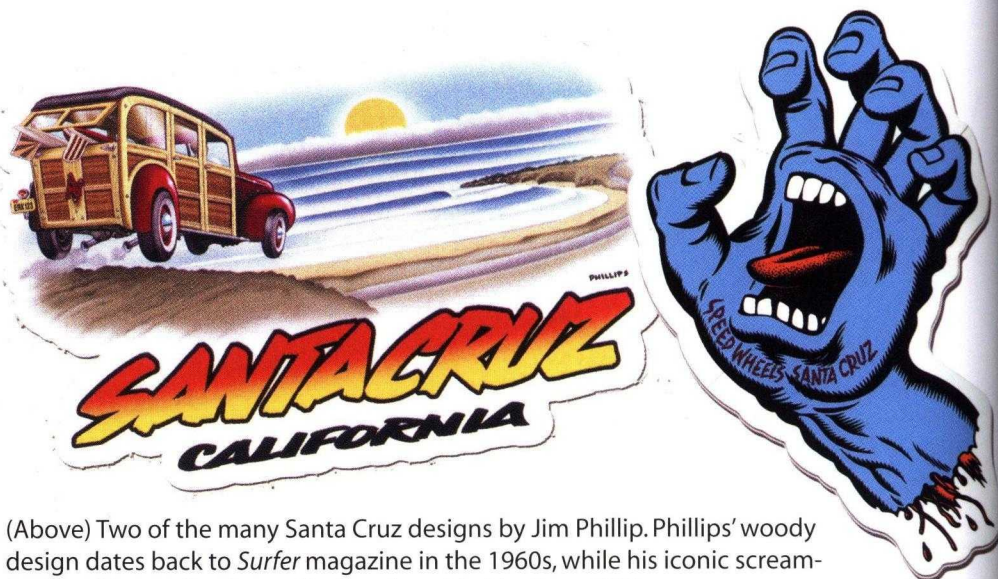
*The Santa Cruz Wharf has shone as one of the crown jewels of the Pacific Coast, and today it serves as a gateway to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. What began as a shipping pier quickly morphed into the home of the colorful and fabled Santa Cruz Italian fishing colony. Since the time of the California Gold Rush in the late 1840s the Santa Cruz waterfront has continually evolved and remains a place for contemplation, reflection, and quietude.*



Santa Cruz Is  
in the Heart  
Volume II

### Also by Geoffrey Dunn

At fine bookstores and gift shops throughout Santa Cruz County, including Bookshop Santa Cruz, Literary Guillotine, Ports of Call, Sanctuary Exploration Center, Stagnaro Bros., and Woodies Cafe and Gift Shop.



(Above) Two of the many Santa Cruz designs by Jim Phillips. Phillips' woody design dates back to *Surfer* magazine in the 1960s, while his iconic screaming hand image has been displayed worldwide since 1985.

marine environments is printed on the back of each decal.

"Our ocean clean-up donations mainly go through the Lawrence Anthony Earth Organization's Clean Waters Programs to organizations that are helping to implement incredible biodegradable oil spill technologies," Ward said. "We've contributed \$30,000 so far, and counting."

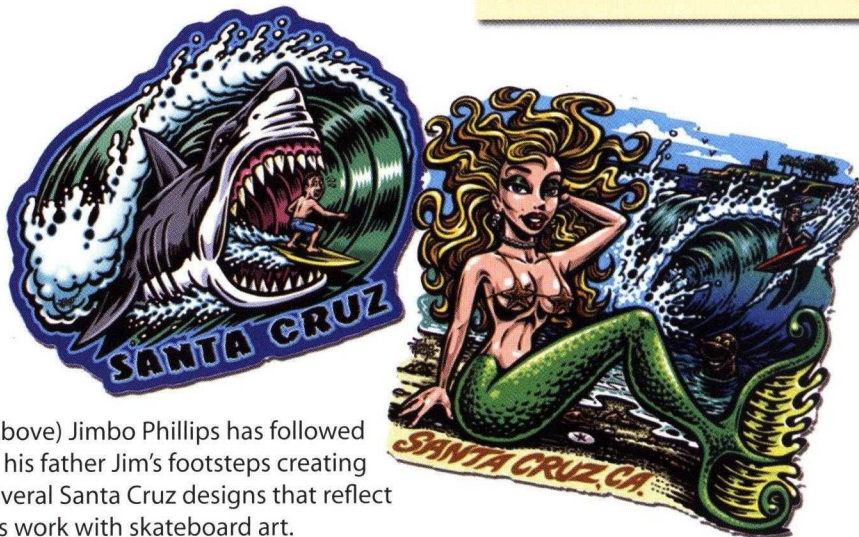
Ward's Santa Cruz stickers are based on a geographic location, while NHS's Santa Cruz logo is an actual brand, Novak said. It's a brand that has a lot of staying power, and has been spotted in some unusual locations. During the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011, news footage from Cairo depicted a Santa Cruz sticker on a wall behind demonstrators. When Santa Cruz Skateboards was launched, and the first decals were sold, Novak said he had no idea it would grow this much.

"You see this stuff somewhere (around the world) and it amazes you," Novak said.

### Where to Find It

- ▲ Made In Santa Cruz  
57 Municipal Wharf, Santa Cruz  
(831) 426-2257  
[www.madeinsantacruz.com](http://www.madeinsantacruz.com)
- ▲ Santa Cruz Boardroom  
825 41st Ave, Santa Cruz  
(831) 464-2500  
[www.santacruzboardroom.com](http://www.santacruzboardroom.com)
- ▲ Pacific Wave  
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Visit the artists online  
Jim Phillips: [www.jimphillips.com](http://www.jimphillips.com)  
Jimbo Phillips: [www.jimbophillips.com](http://www.jimbophillips.com)  
Tim Ward: [timward.com](http://timward.com)



(Above) Jimbo Phillips has followed in his father Jim's footsteps creating several Santa Cruz designs that reflect his work with skateboard art.