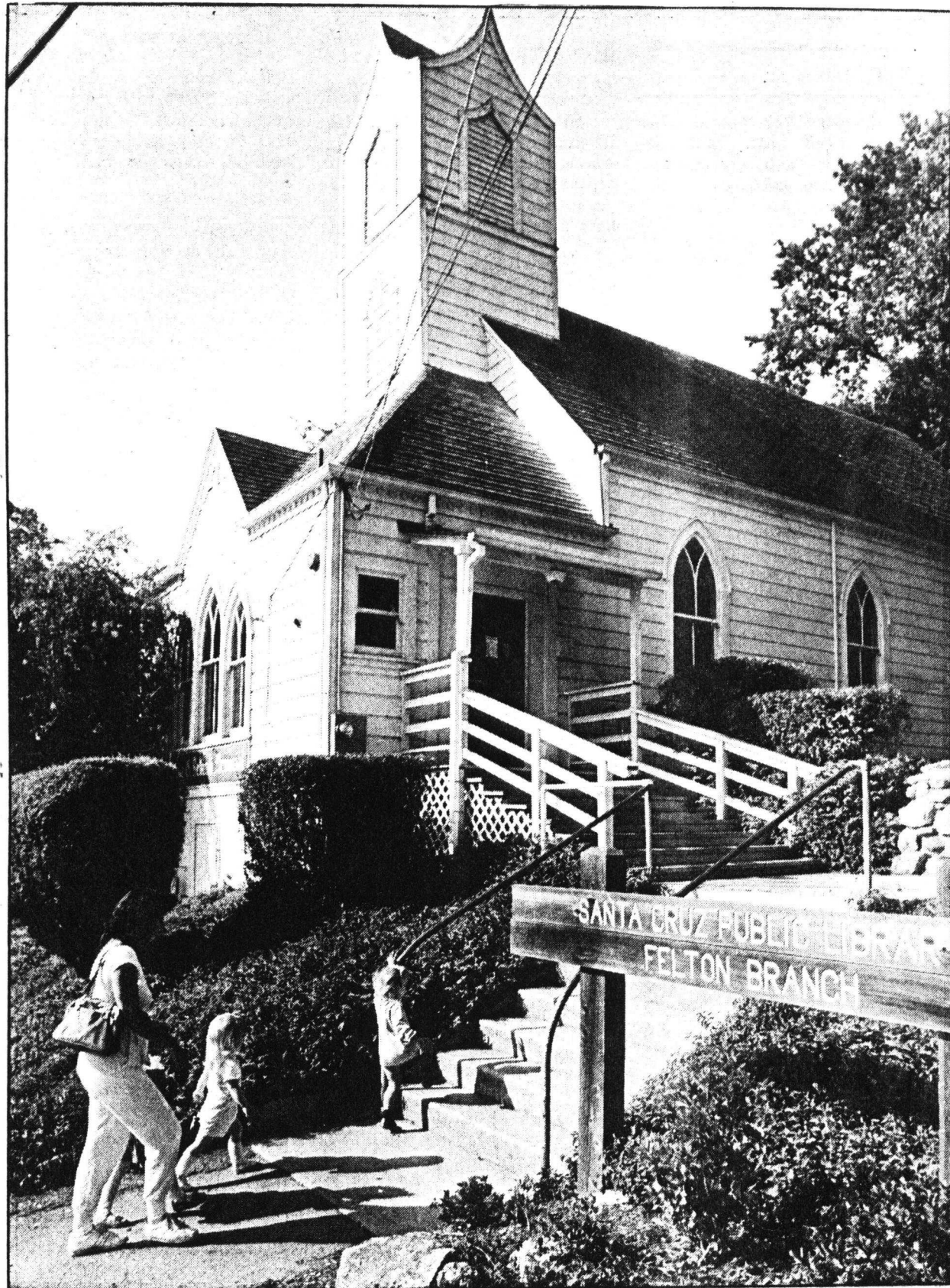


Felton's library links two historic buildings



The Felton Library.

Ron Cockerille



Debbie Bernick of Felton conducts a show and tell class at the Felton Library. Ron Cockerille

Volunteers assist library staff

By Tessie Kennedy

Felton's two old public buildings — the Faye G. Belardi Memorial, home of the Felton branch library, and Felton Community Hall — are linked in history.

Back in June 1942, San Lorenzo Valley residents could visit a closet-sized library four hours a week in a cloakroom at the Felton Community Hall. In 1956 the New England-style white church, formerly the Presbyterian Church, was donated for use as a library.

Built in 1869, the little chapel served as the Presbyterian Church for 63 years. Then the church moved to a bigger site, and the building was purchased by Valley businesspeople Nick and Faye Belardi.

They planned to dismantle the church and build a home on the site. But Faye Belardi was killed in a car accident, and her husband gave the church to residents of Felton to be

used as a library, in memory of his wife.

In this quaint building residents can read old Valley papers: the Mountain Echo, San Lorenzo Valley Sun, San Lorenzo Valley Reporter, and The Valley Press. There are books of National Geographics that go back to 1924. The Californiana section includes history, natural history, travel, railroad books, biographies, and poetry by California authors.

Barbara Kiehl, branch manager, says, "I wish someone would write something on Felton and Lompico history." Patrons who ask about local history are referred to scrapbooks of old newspaper clippings.

Years ago, when Edith Fikes was librarian, Kiehl would visit the library with her three daughters. She never thought she would one day run the library. In July she began her 12th year as Felton librarian. Kiehl, who likes being a student, has taken many Santa Cruz history

classes. She is now working on a degree in American studies at UCSC.

The first library in Felton was run entirely by volunteers, and volunteer assistance is still greatly appreciated by the staff. Besides Kiehl, the staff is made up of Maxine Lathrop, library clerk and Doris Hopper, a regular volunteer. On-call volunteers are Mildred Yarber and Guen Eddy. Also in residence is Pearl Ann. She replaced Priscilla Ann, the library's first cat, who had her picture in The Valley Press.

After Priscilla's demise, Kiehl vowed that the library would not have another cat, but someone left Pearl Ann on the doorstep.

Tuesday mornings, volunteer Debbie Bernick has a well-attended story hour. This summer story hour was held in the Walter Fikes Native Garden under the big oak next to the library. The late Walter Fikes, editor of the San Lorenzo Valley Reporter, worked to preserve the building and was chairman of the board of trustees.

Water battles inside the kingdom of 'Boomeria'