

Architecture 'The Merchant of Towers'

SJMN 9-6-94

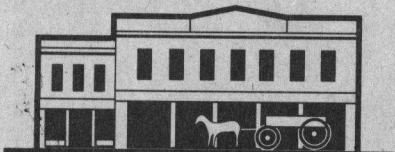
Santa Cruz architect had a rotund style

BY ROSS ERIC GIBSON
Special to the Mercury News

Turn-of-the-century Santa Cruz architect Edward Van Cleeck gained a reputation as "the Merchant of Towers."

That was due to his Queen Anne propensity for adding towers to most of his structures, notably the Leonard Building, the 1894 Santa Cruz High School and the 1904 Boardwalk Casino, which was a veritable chessboard of onion domes.

Van Cleeck, a North Carolinian,



OUT OF THE PAST

began his career as a partner in the Santa Cruz firm of Kayne, Knapp & Co., which produced Italianate, stick and Eastlake designs.

When he started his own firm in 1889, Van Cleeck made a specialty of home designs in the Queen Anne and shingle styles. These styles originated with New

Orleans architect Henry Hobson Richardson, who is best known for developing the Richardsonian Romanesque style of Santa Cruz's 1895 Cooper Street Court House.

Richardson was a solidly built, rotund fellow who designed solidly built, rotund architecture. All three of his styles were essentially the same, only expressed in different mediums.

The Queen Anne used an Eastlake body but replaced the stark angularity with round towers and sometimes rounded corners and with patches of ornamental shingle siding. Shingle style reinter-

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FROM THE COLLECTION OF ROSS ERIC GIBSON

The Lindsay House features a 'drum tower' with a 'witch's hat.'

Santa Cruz architect was 'The Merchant of Towers'

■ QUEEN ANNES

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preted the Queen Anne in barn-like gables and elephantine proportions, entirely cloaked in shingles with minimized decorations. And Richardsonian Romanesque was often a Queen Anne rendered in masonry, though eliminating any neocolonial details.

Richardson was only the second American admitted to the elite *École de Beaux Arts* architectural school in Paris. But unlike his classmates, he didn't come out producing neoclassical "wedding cake" architecture.

He was influenced by William Morris' arts and crafts movement in England, which sought to bring back simple hand craftsmanship in an age of machine-made goods. Richardson mined the architecture of Colonial New England and medieval England and France, then synthesized their features

into his own style, which expressed the natural qualities of his building materials.

Richardson's career lasted only 20 years, ending with his untimely death in 1886. Yet his work was highly respected, and he was regarded as a pioneer in developing America's own architectural identity. Both Louis Sullivan, father of the Chicago School of architecture, and Frank Lloyd Wright, father of the Prairie School, began their careers emulating Richardson's styles and philosophy.

In Santa Cruz, Queen Anne is the most prevalent of these styles. Some of Van Cleeck's best Queen Annes were the 1893 Rutherglen Terrace on West Cliff Drive, the 1893 Haslam House at 304 Walnut and the 1895 Lindsay House at 219 Walnut.

Their characteristic round "drum tower," topped with a

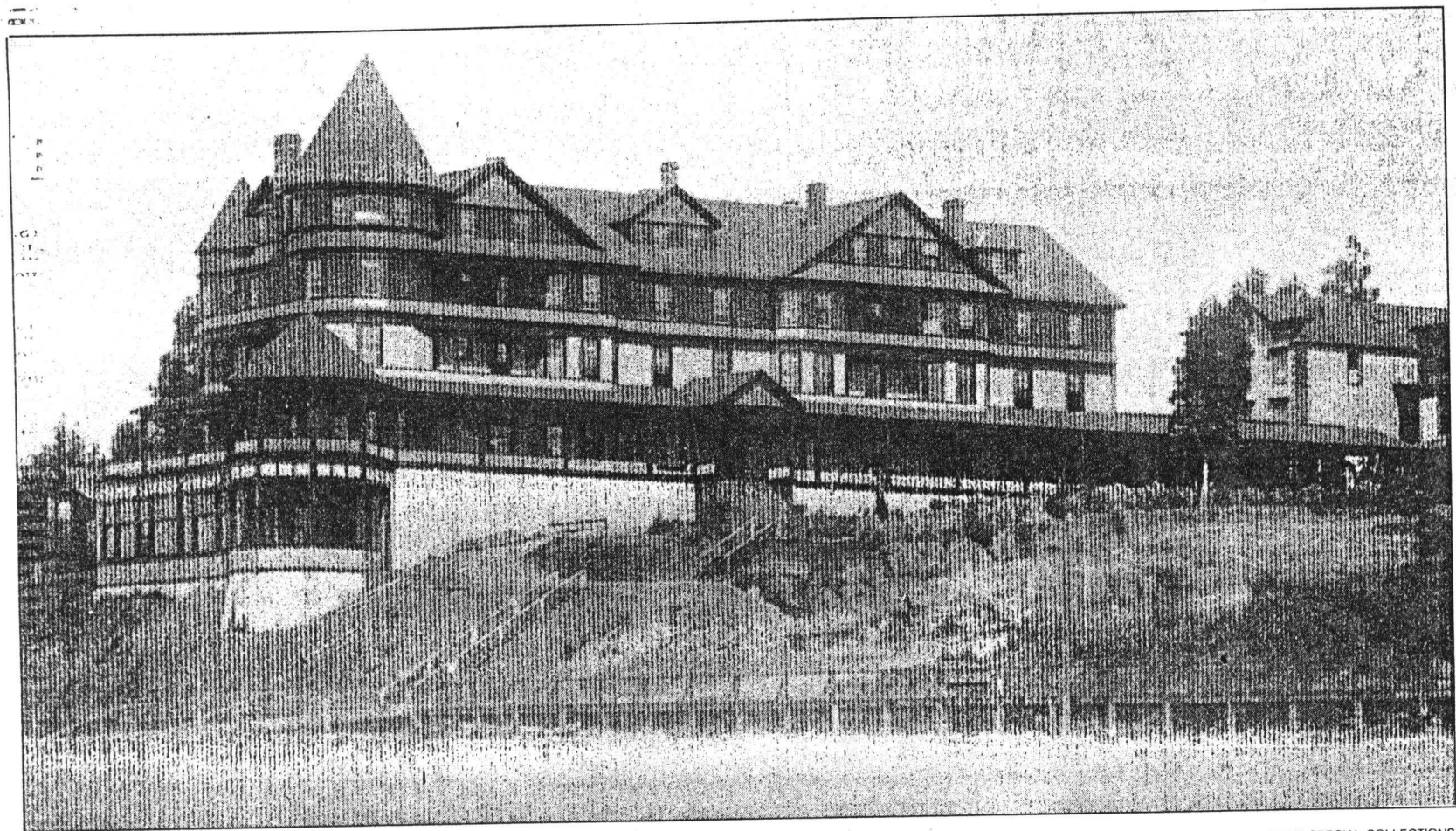
"witch's hat," derives from the Norman castles and farmhouses of the time of William the Conqueror. The style is more aptly neocolonial Norman, but those who found their Queen Anne heirlooms out of place in an Eastlake home dubbed the new style Queen Anne after their furniture.

Yet this rambling American architecture was the antithesis of the Queen Anne of 18th-century England. The English version was a horizontal two-story box with hipped roof and symmetrical features, which became the forerunner of Georgian and Colonial architecture. It introduced dormers, double-hung sliding windows and redbrick facades on classical buildings. The roof line became a continuous cornice, above which a centered neo-Greek gable rose, sometimes with a centered cupola. Yet only the centered front door had elaborate detail.

By contrast, the American Queen Anne was asymmetrical with complex dimensions. Van Cleeck's cope row houses on Lincoln Street show the American trend of lavishing colonial details on a Queen Anne in a manner that would have horrified the colonial Puritans.

Beach Hill Queen Annes, like the 1891 Golden Gate Villa on Third Street or the palatial Sea-Beach Hotel, favored the original manner of finishing Queen Annes in contrasting natural wood tones. Redwood shingles over mustard oak clapboards, with walnut and greenwood accents, were common locally. Others were finished in the Elizabethan style of "Betty chrome" with darker trim on a light body. The English Queen Anne had redbrick with white stone trim, which was translated into "cameo chrome" of a light trim on a dark body.

San Jose Mercury News • Local • Tuesday, September 6, 1994



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The palatial Sea-Beach Hotel favored the original manner of finishing Queen Annes in contrasting natural wood tones.