

## History of the Carmelita Cottages

*By Rick Hyman*

Rick Hyman chronicled the early history of the Carmelita Cottages in a chapter of *Every Structure Tells a Story: How to Research the History of a Property in Santa Cruz County*. (Santa Cruz Historical Trust, 1990). “The Early History of the Carmelita Cottages” presented here are revised from the original work, copyright 1990 Santa Cruz County Historical Trust. The revised material is copyright 1996 Rick Hyman. Reproduced by permission of the Santa Cruz County Historical Trust and the author. “Saving Carmelita Cottages” was first published in the Winter/Spring 1993 issue of *California Coast and Ocean*, copyright 1993 and is reproduced by permission of California Coast and Ocean and Rick Hyman. Photographs courtesy Ray Sherrod.



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## Early History of the Carmelita Cottages: The Owners, Part 1

Widows, sea captains, relatives, music, jilted wives, and long-tenure describe the famous owners of the Carmelita Cottages. The property is located at 315-321 Main Street in the City of Santa Cruz near the famous Santa Cruz Beach and Boardwalk. The two front houses, constructed circa 1872, are among the oldest surviving buildings on Beach Hill. (1) The complex includes six principal structures, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and being renovated into a hostel. Their history has yet to be fully revealed. The information presented in this article is based on extensive documentary research.

### The First Owners were Prominent Citizens

The property on which the Cottages stand has had thirteen different owners (table) . Ownership has come full circle back to the City of Santa Cruz which, as a town, was also the first recorded owner in 1847.

The initial subdivision of Beach Hill and sale of the Cottages property are interwoven with the history of the fledgling Anglo control of the Town of Santa Cruz. In order to establish the town and gain revenue from land sales, the Town Council (the *Ayuntamiento*, which included an *Alcalde* - similar to today's mayor) hired Jacob Rink Snyder to prepare a survey. The result was the 1847 subdivision map, Town of Santa Cruz. (2)

Historian Leon Rowland noted,

Under their interpretation of Mexican law the *alcalde* made grants of "house lots" and "sowing lots" of the lands about the mission until every man in the village was owner of three or four.(3)

Uniform prices were \$10 and \$20 respectively. The state Supreme Court later ruled that some of these titles were void because they had not been submitted for confirmation by the States Land Commission, created to resolve ownerships granted during Mexican rule. (4) Therefore, in 1866 Santa Cruz persuaded the U. S. Congress to enact special legislation to give the probate court authority to confirm titles.

The Cottages sit on what was designated as Lot 8 of Block 6, which measured 50 by 50 *varas* (137.5 feet by 137.5 feet). It fronted on what was then called Jefferson Street. This, as well as the rest of the Beach Hill streets shown on Snyder's map, was probably a "paper" or undeveloped street. The lot was simply described as being "on the beach." (5) In 1846 the Beach Hill area was the site of construction of the first ship named *Santa Cruz* with timbers being hauled there by oxen. (6)

### Thomas Fallon

The first private owners of the Cottages property were all important figures in the early establishment of Santa Cruz. On May 22, 1848, Thomas Fallon purchased the vacant Lot 8 and the adjoining Lot 7 to the rear from the Santa Cruz Town Trustees, through *Alcalde* William Blackburn, for the standard fee. A native of Ireland, Fallon came to Santa Cruz in 1845 via an army scouting party including Kit Carson and John Fremont. In the summer of 1846, he led a group of Americans who rode to join up with Captain Fremont and capture San Jose from the Mexicans (Blackburn had been a lieutenant in Fremont's California Battalion.) After further fighting in Los Angeles, Fallon returned north, splitting his time between San Jose and Santa Cruz. He was engaged in various enterprises including saddletree making. Fallon also leased the Santa Cruz Mission orchard

and built a combination residence, store and hotel facing the Mission plaza. In 1852 he sold it to the County for \$3,500 for use as the first court house. Fallon married Carmelita Lodge, daughter of Martina Castro Lodge, in 1849. He was involved in various legal disputes, especially over the orchard lease, and decided to leave for Texas.

The properties that Fallon sold before his journey included Lots 7 and 8 on Beach Hill. Subsequently, he returned to the area, settling in San Jose, where he served as mayor.

Fallon was later divorced from Carmelita (and later from a second wife), thus becoming the first of three Cottages property owners to suffer a broken marriage.

### **John Arcan)**

On New Year's Day, 1853, John Baptise Arcan, a Frenchman, became the owner of the Cottages property upon payment of \$75 to Fallon. Arcan and his wife Abigail arrived in Santa Cruz three years earlier by a hot, dry, inhospitable route reportedly dubbed "Death Valley" by the party.<sup>(7)</sup> He established a combination shop and residence on the corner of what is now Pacific Avenue and Soquel Avenue, then known as Arcan Street. Although he owned the Cottages property the shortest amount of time, he influenced future ownerships.

### **Theron R. Per Lee & George W. Crane**

In February 15, 1853, Arcan sold Lots 7 and 8 to Theron R. Per Lee and partner George W. Crane for \$225, making quite a profit.

Per Lee was the first assemblyman from Monterey Bay, elected in 1849, to serve in the new California legislature. From 1851 to 1853, he was Santa Cruz County judge. He later returned to New York to practice law. Crane also fought with Fremont and spent time in the gold mines. He ran for offices several times, apparently winning assembly seats, only to be replaced by opponents who found additional votes to overtake his totals. In the early 1850s, Crane came to Santa Cruz to practice law and was selected County Treasurer in 1853.

### **Joseph Roberts**

In November 13, 1858, Per Lee, through his attorney John Elden, sold Lots 7 and 8 for only \$140. The purchaser was Joseph Roberts, one of the earliest Anglo inhabitants of Beach Hill. Roberts was a sea captain who arrived in Santa Cruz in late 1851 after some harrowing adventures:

In the year 1848 Mr. Roberts was on board an English merchant ship, cruising among the South Sea Islands. The vessel had been at sea a long time, and the captain concluded to go ashore at the first land sighted and obtain fresh water, wild fruits and vegetables, and possibly some game. It was not long before an island was discovered which was not shown on the charts and which was evidently very fertile. Mr. Roberts and five sailors accompanied the captain, but Mr. Roberts was compelled to return to the ship, as he had come away without his shoes, and, therefore, could not walk across the jagged coral reef that lay between the landing-place and the mainland of the island. The lack of his shoes was

doubtless the means of saving his life, for the men who did go ashore were eaten by a tribe of cannibals who inhabited the island. The next year, Mr. Roberts went ashore by himself on another of the South Sea Islands, whose natives he knew to be a peaceful tribe. The ship sailed away and left him, and for eight months he lived among the untutored children of nature. (8)

He then took refuge on a passing American ship which brought him to San Francisco. Coming to Santa Cruz, Roberts purchased a small, one bedroom house overlooking the San Lorenzo River at Alvarado and Polk Streets (now Third Street and Riverside Avenue) in January 1854. By that date, according to the 1854 Coast Survey chart, a rudimentary street pattern with only one access road from town had been developed on Beach Hill. In October 1856, Roberts purchased two lots from William Hardy on Jefferson Street, the half block north of the Cottages property. Here he immediately constructed his house, reported to be the second plastered home in Santa Cruz. It survived a fire in June 1894, only to be razed three years later in October 1897. (9)

After settling on Beach Hill, Roberts was variously described as a contractor, painter and house mover. Moving buildings was a common practice in the late 1800s involving long tedious work. For example, Roberts estimated that it would take seventeen days to move a saloon from Pacific Avenue to Front Street. A house mover's yard typically contained long and short timbers, a roller, jacks and huge ropes and chains. (10) Indeed, the earliest Sanborn maps (1888 and 1892) for the area show the rear portion of Roberts' land adjacent to the Cottages property as "storage-house mover-painter". Roberts died in 1895 and is buried in the Odd Fellows Cemetery (Santa Cruz).

## **Early History of the Carmelita Cottages: The Owners, Part 2**

### **Timothy Dame**

Roberts' ownership tenure of the Cottages property was extremely brief, selling it and Lot 7 behind it to fellow sea captain Timothy Dame on March 5, 1859, for \$145. A month later Dame swapped the inner parcel (Lot 7) for the one adjacent to the Cottages lot to the south (Lot 4). The evenup exchange (\$50 per parcel) was made with Dr. Kittredge, who had a large holding on Beach Hill where the current Hotel McCray was later constructed. This exchange resulted in Dame owning the entire half block south of the Roberts' holdings fronting Jefferson Street.

Dame was born in 1823 (or as late as 1827 according to some sources) in New Hampshire. He was an early '49er, arriving in California in November 1848 in search of gold. Shortly, he returned to the sea, captaining the schooners *Mount Vernon* and *Queen of the West* along the Central Coast. (11) In 1857, Dame ushered in a new era in Santa Cruz as captain of the new steamer *Santa Cruz*. Purchased by his employer, lime magnates Davis and Jordan, this ship reduced travel time between Santa Cruz and San Francisco from what could be thirty or more hours to seven or eight. According to the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*,

Passengers can leave this place [i.e., Santa Cruz] at nine o'clock on Wednesday evening - take breakfast in the city, have all day to transact business and be home on Friday, at Two o'clock P.M. - thus consuming only 32 hours of day time, at a cost of \$10.00 passage there and back. The same journey

per stage will consume 60 hours working time, and the fare, including road expenses at Hotels, will be \$28.00 ...

Not a more careful commander, or one better acquainted with the coast than Captain Dame can scarcely be found on the Pacific - consequently we have no hesitation in saying that a person is in no more danger on board the Santa Cruz than [in] a bed in his own bedroom. (12)

Invited on the maiden voyage was a reporter named Livingston from San Francisco's *Alta California* who wrote glowing accounts of both Santa Cruzes, the ship and the "village." (13) From the wharf at the foot of Washington Street the vessel embarked across the Bay to Monterey with group of soon sea-sick local dignitaries. Regular trips continued to be made among San Francisco, Santa Cruz and Monterey carrying a bounty of raw materials to export, including produce, lumber, leather, and of course lime, as well as passengers. Dame continued to pilot this run through the rest of the year.

But operating the steamer proved expensive, and Davis and Jordan traded it for land near Felton. Dame went on to Captain Davis and Jordan's schooner, the *Alfred Adams*, brother-in-law John Chace's brig, the *Wolcott*, and the schooners *Anna Anderson* and *Equity*. Ready to depart Santa Cruz in March 1858, Dame noticed that lime in the *Alfred Adams'* hold had set fire to some cargo. Faced with a certain major conflagration if an attempt was made to unload the ship, exposing the smoldering cargo to air, Dame decided to head for his San Francisco destination. After two days at sea, keeping the hatches air tight, and one unsuccessful unloading attempt at the San Francisco docks, the cargo was able to be discharged with minimal damage. The *Alta California* reported that "a remarkable instance of intrepidity and decision of character" (13a) as well as skill was displayed by the Captain in bringing this incident to a favorable end.

Dame's first marriage was to fourteen-year old Mary Isabella Liddell on June 1, 1856. (The marriage certificate claimed that she was sixteen.) Mary was the daughter of George and Elizabeth Liddell, born in Stafford, England on March 6, 1842, and one of ten children. Circa 1851 Elizabeth, Mary, and seven siblings followed George to San Francisco, taking six months to sail around the Horn. Mrs. Liddell became very ill on the trip. Mr. Liddell shortly moved to the north coast of Santa Cruz, where he established a lumber mill on what is now Liddell Creek. Later the widowed Mrs. Liddell operated a bath house on the bluff above the main Santa Cruz beach, where Terrace Court is today.

Mary and Timothy Dame lived on Jefferson Street in what was termed a "cabin." Later deeds and court records all suggest that this Dame residence was on Lot 4, at the corner of what is now Second and Main Streets, and below Lot 8 (the Cottages property). But further evidence is necessary to completely rule out the possibility that the Dames lived on Lot 8, perhaps in a building still standing today. Even if the family did not then live on the Cottages property, Dame, as will be seen, was the original inhabitant of one of the current Carmelita Cottages. The Dames had two sons; Charles Elliot on April 1, 1859, and Alfred Herbert on March 30, 1861.

In 1863, Timothy Dame experienced legal problems, both marital and financial. Mrs. Dame complained, in a lawsuit filed on June 18, 1863, that her husband had committed adultery in February. Furthermore, she alleged that he contracted a loathsome venereal disease, and so she stopped cohabitating with him. (14) She requested an annulment, custody of the children, and the homestead and furniture. Dame denied the charges and also claimed that the complaint was defective and ambiguous because it did not say with whom he

committed adultery or when. Mrs. Dame did not file an amended complaint as Judge McKee required, and the case was dismissed on October 17, 1863.

### **Hugo Hihn**

Meanwhile, on July 29, 1863, John Arcan won a case against Dame in Judge W. Pope's court. Sheriff Charles Kemp was authorized to seize Dame's land to pay off the judgement. (15) The Cottages parcel (Lot 8) was sold at a Sheriff's auction on August 24, 1863, to Hugo F. Hihn for \$164, the highest bid. Hihn received final title to Lot 8 on February 26, 1864, when the six months given to Dame to redeem his land lapsed. Hihn, brother to famous entrepreneur Frederick Hihn, is known for the Flatiron Building at Pacific Avenue and Front Street (site of the Plaza Bakery and the Teacup Restaurant, razed after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake), which he acquired from his brother in 1860.

Despite the divorce not being granted, Dame abandoned Mary and at least one son. As a sea captain, Dame alternately bedded down on board ship, in San Francisco, and in Santa Cruz. Where he lived in Santa Cruz immediately after early 1863 is unknown, but it was not at the family residence on Jefferson Street. This information is contained in Mrs. Dame's second filing for divorce on May 2, 1865. She alleged, supported by her mother's testimony, that Dame deserted her on March 12, 1863, and she had supported herself and the boys since then with the help of other family and friends. It may be that by the time of this new complaint the Dames had settled their affairs, since all she requested was a divorce and custody of the younger Alfred. A day earlier, the Dames, appearing together, had sold their land to Charles Williams, the local Wells Fargo agent and husband of Mary's sister Anne Elliot, for \$50. (16) The case was referred to the Court Commissioner to take testimony and report back. Although Judge McKee denied the divorce again, it appears that the marriage remained in name only.

Mary's subsequent whereabouts and what became of the house are not exactly known. A year later, on June 2, 1866, Williams sold Lot 4 back to Captain Dame (solely) for \$50. Perhaps Mary went elsewhere to obtain her divorce, because soon she apparently remarried. Her new partner was a fellow Englishman, Captain George John Fake of San Francisco, born in 1834. He purchased the Main Street lot below Thomas Johnson's Beach House in Santa Cruz on January 2, 1869. The couple had a daughter, Lucy, in 1868, who was evidently raised by her grandmother, Mrs. Elizabeth Liddell, after Mary died shortly thereafter. Captain Fake went on to marry Lena Seegar in 1872 in San Francisco. Lucy eventually married Alexander Cuthill and lived in Duncan Mills on the Russian River for many years. She died in Santa Rosa on November 22, 1959.

### **Alexander McDonald**

On April 5, 1866, Hugo Hihn sold the Cottages parcel (Lot 8) to Alexander McDonald for \$158. McDonald was a carpenter who immigrated to the United States from Canada. Later that year, Dame once again sold the adjoining parcel to the South (Lot 4), also to McDonald, for \$50. The 1866 Foreman and Wright *Official Map of Santa Cruz* reflects McDonald's consolidated ownership of the lower half-block. It reveals new street names, which remain to this day: Jefferson Street became Main Street, and Water Street became Second Street. The Cottages parcel, together with the former "Lot 4", then became identified as No. 4 in Block 24. Measurements

shifted from *varas* (1 *vara* = 33 inches) to chains (1 chain = 66 feet), with the combined lots' dimensions shown as 4.22 by 2.12 chains for an area of .898 acres.

### **George Tait**

McDonald did not own the Cottages property very long. In November 1866, he agreed to sell to George Tait the northernmost 25-foot wide portion that bordered Roberts' property. The transaction was delayed for over a year. Finally, on March 3, 1868, Tait took title to a 50-foot wide lot adjacent to Roberts' for \$100. This date marks the first time that the land which now contains the entire Carmelita Cottage complex (133-foot frontage) was partitioned.

Tait was born in Scotland sometime between 1831 and 1835 and was naturalized in Santa Cruz on October 5, 1868. He was also a seaman. The day after purchasing the property, he mortgaged it to Josiah Green in return for borrowing \$230 at one-half percent interest per month. He then built his house on what is now 321 Main Street (the site of the front two-story Carmelita Cottage). According to the Census, on June 17, 1870, he was residing there with his wife Elizabeth and their four children. Also, shown at the same address is another sea captain and his family: Levi Hannah, his wife (Agnes) Margaret, and two-year old son. (17) Margaret was Mary Dame's sister.

On July 27, 1870, the house completely burned down. Discovered at one a.m, the fire originated from a candle left burning on a serving table. The house was covered by insurance and so the mortgage was paid back. A subscription was immediately taken up and over \$200 raised for the benefit of the homeless Tait family. (18)

### **Thomas V. Johnson**

Soon afterward, Tait sold the charred property to Thomas Varley Johnson. The transaction was initially recorded on November 22, 1870, and rerecorded on January 4, 1871. The price was \$800, \$700 more than Tait paid, possibly indicating that some structure remained or was rebuilt on the lot after the fire. Johnson took out a mortgage on the property for \$300 from the Santa Cruz Bank of Savings and Loan on that date and repaid it six months later.

Johnson, was born some fifty years earlier in England (reported dates of birth range from 1822 to 1826). He arrived in Santa Cruz with his son Charles W. and daughter Evalena in the late 1860s and worked as a tavern keeper at the San Lorenzo Saloon on Pacific Avenue. It advertised the choicest kinds of liquors, good billiard tables, and a "house for gentlemen." (19) In early 1873, Johnson sold the business to Mr. C.H. Bury, but was again listed as proprietor when it reopened as the Grand Central Saloon. Also, in 1869 Johnson purchased a building in which he apparently resided from Abel Mann for \$1,225. It was located on a very small parcel on Main Street above the beach and Captain Fake's lot, adjacent to the Liddell House and opposite what is now First Street. The following year his daughter Evalena married Abel's son Albert. During their brief marriage, a son Charles was born. In August 1872, Johnson began running an advertisement to sell his well-known "Beach House" at a reasonable price as "the proprietor wishes to engage in other business." (20) On January 22, 1873, Johnson briefly sold this property to Mary Peck for \$3,000, \$500 of which he loaned her by taking a mortgage

on it. He soon repurchased it for \$2,800 on September 10, 1873. The Beach House burned down shortly thereafter in December 1873. According to the *Sentinel*,

The building was entirely burned. Mr. Johnson estimates his loss in building, furniture and fixtures at \$2,500. The property had been insured up to a few days before the fire, when the policy was allowed to lapse. Mr. William Elliot, who had kept a liquor saloon in the building, suspended business the day before the fire. The place had been robbed several times recently and the fire is justly believed to be the work of incendiaries and thieves. (21)

The building was rebuilt as the Ocean View Hotel, which apparently closed down around 1880. (22) On October 15, 1881, the Johnsons mortgaged the property for \$2,345 to Michael Leonard. On January 9, 1883, Johnson sold the structure to Alfred Henry Douglas, an artist from San Francisco, for \$3,100 and paid off the mortgage. The Hotel became known as the Douglas House. It was later slightly moved and incorporated into the grand Sea Beach Hotel, which then burned down in 1912.

### **May Anne (Hutchinson) Johnson**

T. V. Johnson married the much younger Mary Anne Hutchinson, (who later became a relation to Captain Dame). The wedding occurred at Thomas Week's residence on May 6, 1873, officiated by Reverend P. Y. Cool. This celebration followed a month after daughter Evalena's second marriage, to John M. Matthews. The Matthews had three boys; the youngest was named Varley.

Mary was born in Monstreven, Ireland, in 1839 (or as late as 1846 depending on source). In her youth she was a choir singer. She came to Santa Cruz with her brother Thomas Hutchinson. According to her obituary, she was a woman of strong character and personality and frankness. (23) In the 1880 Census she was listed as a dressmaker. Either she was not much of a writer, mail got lost, or T.V. kept tight reins over her because he received a frantic letter from her sister inquiring about Mary's well-being. Written on July 12, 1878, from Margaret Barton of Boonton, New Jersey, the letter refers to Mary's poor health. It queries whether she was even still alive, because Mary had not written since New Year's. (24) Obviously, Mary recovered nicely as she lived another forty-two years at the Cottages. She did suffer an accident on December 2, 1890, when she fell from a step of her house. She sustained a very painful shoulder dislocation, which was ably attended to by Dr. F. E. Morgan, assisted by Dr. C. L. Anderson. (25)



*Current View of 321 Main Street - Note oval landmark plaque to the left of the door*

In 1872 or 1873 Johnson built the 22 (now 321) Main Street home that still stands. It was offered for sale in 1874, "cheap, for cash," but was not purchased. By 1888 (the year that the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps first covered Beach Hill) the house had been doubled to its present size of approximately 960 square feet. On April 28, 1877, Mary Anne had claimed the property as her homestead, citing a value of \$3,500. The document also suggested that there could have been more than one dwelling unit on the property, as the term "dwelling houses" was used. (26) On December 3, 1878, the Johnsons mortgaged the property to a Mrs. Perkins in order to borrow \$400.

Terms were one-and-a-quarter percent interest per month for five years, but the money was repaid by November 19, 1879. Then shortly thereafter, on January 16, 1880, they borrowed \$200 from Martha Wilson, again secured by the cottages property. Also at one-and-a-quarter percent interest, the loan was repaid on January 11, 1883, right after the hotel was sold.

T.V. Johnson continued on as a barkeeper, working for Michael Leonard, who owned a liquor store on the corner of Pacific Avenue and Cooper Street, across from the Courthouse. By 1896, T. V. had likely retired, being listed by the Voting Registrar simply as a "Gentleman." He died on January 2, 1903. He was reported to have gone outside of his home to the outhouse when he fell to the ground, "stricken by death." (27) He is buried at the Odd Fellows Cemetery (Santa Cruz).

Upon her husband's passing, Mary Anne gained sole title to the property at 22 Main Street by virtue of her homestead. She lived in their house until her death in 1920. She inherited half of T.V.'s estate, worth \$1305.16, with his son Charles and his by-then-deceased daughter's four sons and husband sharing the other \$652.58.

### **Timothy Dame (Retired and Remarried)**

Meanwhile, returning to Timothy Dame's story, accounts indicate that he retired from the sea in the 1860s. On July 15, 1868, he purchased the remainder of McDonald's holdings on Main Street for \$208. On March 21, 1870, he borrowed \$200 from Jose Beltancourt by mortgaging the property. At year's end, Dame sold the portion of his property at the corner of Second and Main Streets for the third and final time (what had been mapped as Lot 4 on the old Snyder survey). John Ingalls paid him \$500 for the property and homestead considerations, and Dame in turn paid off his loan from Beltancourt. In selling off only the corner lot, Dame retained possession of the entire remainder of the property that would house the Carmelita Cottages.



*Garden Party Guests Posing at the Dame Cottage, 315 Main Street - Photo courtesy of Jack Howe*

He soon built the one-story, 625 square foot house that still stands at 315 Main Street. Newspapers found during renovation pasted to the inside of the single rough redwood walls have early 1872 dates. However, assuming Dame had once more been living on the corner lot (#4), the precise date of his relocation next door to the Carmelita Cottages property remains unknown. (28) Also undiscovered is when the rear house on the property (the Pine Cottage) was constructed, but

a structure was there by 1888. The summer 1870 Census shows Dame with son Charles residing at an unspecified location on Beach Hill and possessing \$150 worth of real estate. The former captain was employed loading and unloading cargo at the Powder Mill wharf at the foot of Main Street. Also, for a period in early 1875, Dame lived at Año Nuevo working as a "wharfinger" (wharf manager). He also worked in the 1870s and 1880s at the IXL lime quarry in Felton, living there on a "ranch" part, but not all, of the time until his death. (29)

Dame made a memorable appearance at Lehmkuhl's bath house on the Santa Cruz beach on June 25, 1875. Imagine sixty or so people feasting on 150 pounds of fish chowder listening to tales of four grizzled sea

captains. Dame recounted skippering the first vessel to dock at Cowell's wharf and stories of shipwrecks on the beach twenty years earlier. (30)

In 1877, Dame was once again faced with the possibility of losing the Cottages property. On April 27, 1875, he had borrowed \$150 plus interest from the local chapter (Madrona Grove #21) of the United Ancient Order of Druids. This loan was due in one year and secured by the Cottages property. When he failed to repay, the Madrona Grove trustees filed suit. However, he then paid and the case was dismissed.

### **Ellen (Hutchinson Thomson) Dame and daughter Lottie**

On July 25, 1881, Dame remarried. His new wife was Mrs. Johnson's sister -- Ellen (Hutchinson) Thomson, also a widow and a mother. Ellen, too, was born in Monstrevan, Ireland, in 1837 (or as late as 1845 according to various sources). She immigrated to the United States when she was about fifteen years old, settled in New York, and married Thomas Thomson. In 1871, they had an only child, Lottie. After her husband's death, sometime around 1877, Ellen moved to Santa Cruz with her young daughter. Aunt Margaret Barton's July 1878 letter mentioned above contained a "Happy Birthday" greeting to young Lottie. Lottie attended Mission Hill School in Santa Cruz. In the 1880 Census, niece Lottie, but not Ellen, is shown as living at the Johnsons'.

On their wedding day, Ellen Thomson Dame purchased from her new husband his Main Street property for \$1,000. The marriage lasted only five years. Captain Dame passed away on May 19, 1886 of apoplexy at the IXL lime works in Felton. The funeral proceeded from the Beach Hill cottage to the burial plot in the Odd Fellows Cemetery (Santa Cruz).

On July 28, 1886, a deed was recorded on behalf of Mrs. Dame in which the City of Santa Cruz quit-claimed title to her a portion of the Cottages property. Thus, twenty years after the Congressional authorization mentioned above, any lingering doubt about the property's title due to the history of transactions dating back to the pre- Statehood era was cleared up. Mother and daughter continued to live at 28 Main Street, presumably in the front house. On September 21, 1889, Ellen deeded to her daughter Lottie a one-half-interest in the property. This transaction marked the beginning of the longest single ownership tenure of the Carmelita Cottages.

Between 1888 and 1892 an addition was built on the back unit.

## **Early History of the Carmelita Cottages: Owners of the Carmelita Cottages Property**

### **OWNERS OF THE CARMELITA COTTAGES PROPERTY**

| <b>Owners</b>                          | <b>Portion</b> | <b>Date Acquired</b> | <b>Years Owned</b> | <b>Amount Paid</b>             |
|--|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Town of Santa Cruz                     | entire         | ----                 | to 1848            | -----                          |
| Thomas Fallon                          | entire         | 05/22/48             | 4 1/2              | \$10.00                        |
| John B. Arcan                          | entire         | 01/11/53             | 0.1                | \$37.50<br>(\$75 for 2 lots)   |
| Theron R. Per Lee<br>& George W. Crane | entire         | 02/15/53             | 5 1/2              | \$112.50<br>(\$225 for 2 lots) |
| Joseph Roberts                         | entire         | 11/13/58             | 1/3                | \$70.00<br>(\$140 for 2 lots)  |
| Timothy Herbert Dame                   | entire         | 03/05/59             | 5                  | \$72.50<br>(\$145 for 2 lots)  |
| Hugo F. Hihn                           | entire         | 02/26/64             | 2                  | \$164.00                       |
| Alexander McDonald                     | entire         | 04/05/66             | 2                  | \$158.00                       |

|                         |              |                                  |     |                                |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| George & Elizabeth Tait | northern 3/8 | 03/03/68                         | 3   | \$100.00                       |
| Timothy Herbert Dame    | southern 5/8 | 07/15/68                         | 13  | \$150.00<br>(\$208 for 2 lots) |
| Thomas Varley Johnson   | northern 3/8 | 01/04/71                         | 32  | \$800.00                       |
| Ellen Dame              | southern 5/8 | 07/25/81                         | 18  | \$1000.00                      |
| Lottie Thompson Sly     | southern 5/8 | 09/21/89<br>(1/2 interest)       | 66  | \$00.00                        |
| Lottie Thompson Sly     | southern 5/8 | 01/24/99<br>(other 1/2 interest) | --  | --                             |
| Mary Ann Johnson        | northern 3/8 | 03/28/03                         | 8   | \$00.00                        |
| Lottie Thompson Sly     | northern 3/8 | 09/21/11                         | 44  | \$00.00                        |
| City of Santa Cruz      | entire       | 04/30/55                         | 40+ | Gift                           |

## Early History of the Carmelita Cottages: The Tenants

### Early Tenants of the Carmelita Cottages

Why and exactly when the name *Carmelita Cottages* emerged has not yet been discovered. The name was first applied in the singular to the Dame property. An undated turn of the century (no earlier than 1890) photograph shows the *Carmelita Cottage* name plates on the fence posts at the front of the Main Street site, which remained until renovation. The earliest mention of the *Carmelita* name found in print - from 1890 - coincides with the earliest indications of visitor rentals. (31) That summer (and actually into December) and the following one, Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin Marshall of San Francisco rented Carmelita Cottage.

The *Surf* reported that they made their summer home "so picturesque and tasteful and surround themselves with such a pleasant coterie that they are always welcome visitors." (32) Incandescent lights were installed in their cottage in June 1890. It would follow that the referenced Carmelita Cottage would be the remodeled rear unit, although it is possible that the Marshalls occupied the front house (solely or sharing it with the Dame women). The 1890 City Directory (possibly reflecting a period before summer) shows the rear unit rented out to W. T. Morton, an assistant bookkeeper for the F. A. Hihn Company.

The Marshalls, often independently, travelled frequently between San Francisco and Santa Cruz. Mrs. Marshall was usually accompanied by her friend Mrs. Batt (Jeanette) Queenan, who stayed with her on Beach Hill. Other visitors included J.W. Husband of the Modesto firm of Husband and Turner for a few days in mid-September 1890 and Mrs. Lizzie Verden, Mrs. John Cosgrave, Miss Millicent Cosgrave, and Miss Irene Cosgrave of San Francisco. The latter's visit ended tragically as the 14 year old took ill at the Cottage and died shortly after returning to the City.

Despite their visitor status, the Marshalls appeared to be well ingrained in the Santa Cruz community. In addition to their remaining in town during the off-season, newspaper accounts describe them as being "of Carmelita Cottage," note their local friends, and report the gratitude that Mrs. Marshall received for assisting the local Catholic Ladies Aid Society. (33)

Nevertheless, the Marshalls were also world travellers. They were ill in New York in October 1891, but returned to Carmelita Cottage in better health for Thanksgiving. Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Queenan continued to frequent the Cottage in early 1892, and the Marshalls were reported to have again rented it for the summer.

Instead, they embarked on a European cruise, and the Cottage was rented by Evan C. Evans. In April 1900, Mrs. Queenan was reported back visiting Santa Cruz after a six-year stay in England.

### **Beach Hill Spruces Up**

In the late 1880s other construction was also occurring in the neighborhood, transforming Beach Hill into a prestigious address. Previously, the Powder Mill Wharf extended from the warehouse behind Johnson's Ocean View House to the Bay. Thus, it was hard work to get to the beach from the vicinity of the Dame and Johnson homes. According to a newspaper account, one either had to take circuitous route or "climb fences, open gates, scramble down a dusty hillside, well grown with wild grasses that 'stick closer than a brother,' cross a field that was a foot deep with either dust or mud, and sometimes both in spots, and finally emerge through an opening in the fence" at the beach. (34)

This adventure became unnecessary at mid-decade with the removal of the wharf (1883) and the extension of Main Street to the beach. As a result several new attractive homes, as well as the aforementioned Sea Beach Hotel, were constructed on Main Street.

Behind the Cottages property, the former Kittredge estate was being remodelled into the Sunshine Villa (later the Hotel McCray). The *Surf* reported in October 1890 that, due to the road improvements being made fronting the Villa, "it is expected that all the property owners of the entire block bounded by Main, Second, Third, and Pacific will straighten boundary fences and lay bituminous sidewalks so that the whole will be uniform." (35) Not specifically mentioning Carmelita Cottages, the article continued, "with two handsome houses added by Joseph Roberts and the possibility of still further improvements to the fine property of Mrs. Martha Wilson, the block bids fair to be one of the most attractive of the City of Santa Cruz." The prediction for sidewalks soon was realized, but it was several years before Main Street was paved.

### **The Musical Thompson Family**

In June 22, 1892, Lottie Paulina Thomson, approaching her twenty-first birthday, married James Henry Thompson, then thirty-four years old. She was described as "tall, slender, chataine, blue-eyed and fair." (36) Over eight-hundred guests crowded the Calvary Episcopal Church for the "stylish" celebration. The details of the wedding are described in a lengthy *Surf* article. (37) And, according to the *Sentinel*, it "will always rank as among the most elaborate in the city." (38)

The groom, with a fine bass voice, was born on August 8, 1857 to Mr. and Mrs. Uriah Thompson, who owned a 180-acre ranch on the Lower Soquel Road (now Capitola Road) at Rodeo Gulch. Mrs. Charlotte Thompson's father was Judge Henry Rice and her mother was a professional singer. Henry attended public school in Soquel and then St. Augustine's College in Benicia. He began to study law and secured a clerk's job in the Secretary of State's office in Sacramento in 1879. "But a musical inspiration, added to a phenomenal voice, made it [law] distasteful to him, and he left for studies in Italy under the famous Lamperti." (39)

Thompson became an international opera figure. He spent most of the first seven years of the 1880s in Italy and other European countries. He performed under the names Enrico (sometimes di or de) Tomaso, and Enrico Branciforte. Several letters from and tales of his European adventures appeared in the papers. (40) For

example, in October 1883, a platform on which he was performing in Milan collapsed. He suffered a broken leg and two broken ribs. Earlier that year he refused offers to tour in the Far East and South America. Later he travelled to various cities in the United States with Haverly's Minstrels and the McCaull Opera Company.

After his return home to Santa Cruz, in 1889, Thompson enjoyed popularity and admiration not only for his performing fame, but for extensive civic activism. He was a respected leader in musical aspects of the church, politics, social events and cultural promotion. "Hardly a church or a public project in this city but has profited by his musical talent and fine voice, given without money and without price." (41) Among his volunteer activities, Thompson led the Calvary Church choir. One of his attractive choir members, herself a fledgling music teacher, had an almost identical last name, Lottie Thomson. They found themselves together at many other musically-related events.

Thompson was the honored guest at two functions in 1890. On June 24 the Santa Cruz Choral Society staged a reception for him at the Lincoln Street home of Mrs. Jesse Cope. Over seventy-five Society members and friends attended, including Lottie Thomson who performed "Take A Letter to My Love," and two other numbers. Henry used the occasion to promote musical culture:

I want to see societies like these all over this grandcountry.

I want to see more conservatories of music,

I want to see opera at popular prices.

I want to see a greater disposition on the part of the people to contribute toward the support of institutions such as this. (42)

Then, on September 19, a great number of leading citizens arranged a testimonial in Henry's honor at the Opera House, showering him with floral arrangements. Among the well-received musical selections were "Who's at My Window?" sung by Lottie and "Tomaso and I," an original laudatory composition by J. H. Bailey. (43)

In addition to continuing his professional performances, such as concerts in Hollister and San Jose, Thompson engaged in public service by directing a Glee Club, which performed at Democratic Party political rallies. Newspaper accounts suggest that his singing of such ditties as "Mariner's Grave," "Larboard Watch," and "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep" - and his speech making, too, were tremendous hits, overshadowing the other political messages. (44) Indeed, despite the popularity of these free October, 1890 gatherings at Soquel, Sandy's Corner (Five Mile House), Loma Prieta, Corralitos, Felton, and Santa Cruz, the Democrats were badly shut out in all their local election day contests. Responding to another cause, Henry and Lottie lent their musical talents to a free, packed meeting in favor of reducing hours that stores were open. Sponsored by the Clerks' Association, the rally was not entirely successful in securing its objectives. (45)

Thompson continued to be instrumental in promoting music culture. He presented a Kindersymphony concert and lecture in Santa Cruz and Capitola. His speech promoted better music teaching in the schools, better stage performances, and voice training. (46) He also wrote a lengthy eulogy of opera star Emma Abbott for the newspaper. (47) He helped establish Philharmonic Societies in Watsonville, Soquel, and Santa Cruz in 1892. The latter presented a well-attended social session in early February where Lottie and Henry both sang. (48) In June 1892, he organized a three day musical festival at the Opera House featuring all three county Societies. Thompson was praised for their progress. (49) Part of the bill featured a comic opera, "Doctor of Alcantara"

with spirited Tomaso in impressive costume playing Don Pomposo and Lottie as Isabella (who objects to an arranged marriage).

In addition to these appearances at her future husband's events, Lottie's name was prominent in accounts of other musical and social events in the early 1890s. At a benefit for the Women's Aid Society, her vocal rendition of "The Maid of Dundee" was encored. At neighbor Joseph Roberts' daughter Anita's wedding, Lottie played the "Wedding March of Mendelssohn." At a grand concert at the "Y" on September 29, 1890, admission 25 cents, she sang a solo number. Lottie received a number of votes for the prettiest lady at the County Rose Fair in May 1891, but not the highest total. On August 26, 1891, she presented a most "delightful" garden party for the St. Agnes Guild.

It was the unanimous opinion that it was one of the very prettiest parties given this year in Santa Cruz. Strings of Japanese lanterns made the garden all aglow, hammocks and marquees furnished cozy seats and plenty of flirtation corners, while the [Carmelita] cottage was profusely garnished with flowers ablaze with lights. (50)

Mrs. Marshall assisted and, of course, future husband Henry was part of the musical program.

After their June 1892 wedding, the newlyweds honeymooned at Paraiso Springs and then resided at 28 Main Street. For a time they also lived in Sacramento, where Henry taught voice. Ellen Dame visited them in the capitol city for several months in early 1896. Shortly thereafter, they moved back to Carmelita Cottage, sharing #28 with the elder Mrs. Dame. They had no children. After an illness for several months, Thompson died on August 18, 1900, of consumption, leaving Lottie, like her mother previously, a young widow. Funeral services were at his parents' Rodeo Gulch home and burial was at Evergreen Cemetery. The newly formed Tomaso Male Quartet sang music written by Henry Thompson.

### **The Three Widows and Cottage Rentals**

Mother Ellen and daughter Lottie continued to reside at 28 Main Street, with sister/aunt Mary Ann Johnson living next door at 22 Main Street. On May 8, 1897, Ellen and Lottie (and Henry) had sold the lower (southerly) five foot strip of their property for \$5 to A.H. Wilbur, the adjacent property owner who was remodeling his home. This left their Cottages parcel with an approximately 83 foot frontage on Main Street (by 140 feet deep). On January 24, 1899, out of love and affection for her daughter, Ellen deeded her remaining interest in the Cottages property, along with all her possessions, to her daughter. The document is not explicit that this transfer should occur after Ellen's death, but it was not recorded until then.

### **The Cottages Are Completed**

Additional construction occurred on the Cottages properties in the early 1900s. The progression of changes in the structures is shown on sequential Sanborn Maps. The rear Dame/Thompson cottage (26 Main Street - now #317, the Pine Cottage) was rebuilt or further expanded before 1905. In 1897, Fred Evans, a butcher, lived

there. In 1900, William Stevenson, his wife, and her brother occupied it. In 1910 Mr. and Mrs. William Coburn are listed as its inhabitants.

Additional construction also occurred by 1905 at the site of an earlier shed on the north property line. Here a rectangular cottage, 24 Main Street, was built. (Now 319 Main Street, pictured to the right.) In 1914, Perry Chamberlin, a telephone manager, was living there. Later the rear portion was remodeled into a two-story apartment, known as the "Crow's Nest" (24 1/2 Main Street, later # 319b). This addition was razed in the early 1990's.

Around 1894 the middle cottage on the Johnson property was constructed (22c Main Street - now #321c). (51) It was 609 square-feet with "very little articulation other than the gable roof." It was described as being "perhaps the most prototypical vernacular beach-cottage on the site." (52). It was razed and rebuilt in 1995.

Between 1909 and 1917 the rear cottage was constructed (22d Main Street - now #321d). Similar to the middle one, it is 674 square feet with a summer porch and simple gable roof. (53) This completed the Carmelita Cottages as we know them today. In 1921 Lottie undertook some unspecified renovations worth \$800.

1912 Visitor's Guide contains the first discovered mention in this century of the Carmelita Cottages (plural) as rentals. They are listed under "Furnished Cottages" at 22 Main Street for a monthly rent of \$30 to \$75.

A 1920s era postcard shows a "Carmelita Cottages" sign on a post in the current driveway between the two front residences. By this time, as seen on the postcard caption, the complex had become known as Carmelita Court. The sign was subsequently changed to read "Court" as well.

### **Ownership Passes to Lottie**

Ellen Dame died on January 9, 1918, following a slight stroke, listed as eighty years old. Services were at the Calvary Episcopal Church and burial was at the Odd Fellows Cemetery (Santa Cruz) next to Captain Dame. Lottie then cared for Aunt Mary Ann. On September 21, 1911, Mary Ann had prepared a deed transferring to her niece, for love and affection, her property. This document was not recorded until January 6, 1920. It



*26 Main Street, now #317, Pine Cottage*



*The Cottage at 319 Main Street*



*The Middle Cottage*



*Rear Cottage at 22d, now 321d Main Street*

resulted in singular ownership of the entire Carmelita Cottages property, for the first time since McDonald's sales in 1868. Mary Ann Johnson passed away on Sunday evening November 28, 1920, then in her eighties and suffering from senility, according to her death certificate. The newspaper more kindly reported, "She had been ill for only three weeks, almost recovering when, the day before Thanksgiving she had a severe stroke of paralysis, from which she never rallied.", (54) Funeral services were held at the Cottages. She, like husband Thomas, was also buried in an unmarked grave in the Dame plot at the Odd Fellows Cemetery (Santa Cruz).

### **The Lottie Sly Legacy**

The name most associated with the Carmelita Cottages is Lottie Sly. In order to discover the name's connection, it is necessary to return to 1912. Then, Lucian Heath Sly, an extremely wealthy San Franciscan, purchased Golden Gate Villa. This most ornate Santa Cruz mansion is located a few doors away from the Cottages at 924 (then 56) Third Street. Built by Major Frank McLaughlin, Golden Gate Villa was the scene of McLaughlin's double suicide--stepdaughter's murder in 1907. Lucian Sly "was reported to have had the largest income of any apartment building owner in the State." (55) For example, after the 1906 earthquake Sly had purchased Leland Stanford's burned mansion property in San Francisco and erected the plush Stanford Court Apartments.

In a front page special of December 3, 1921 the *Santa Cruz News* reported:

A veritable host of Santa Cruzans will start with surprise at the news that Mrs. Lottie Thompson of Carmelita Court, Beach Hill, is reported to have been married at noon today in Sacramento to Lucien [sic] H. Sly of Santa Cruz and San Francisco... The couple are going on a European wedding tour, France being the chief objective. (56)

The city directories of 1924 show Lottie living with her new husband at the Villa and then at the 22 Main Street cottage. In reality the legacy of her step-father Captain Dame proved these entries untrue. For as the extended honeymooners landed in New York on July 7, 1923, Sly bid Lottie a permanent farewell:

Well, thank goodness, we have at last reach[ed] land, where I can get rid of you; you can go your own way, for I certainly have made up my mind to go my own way. Goodbye forever. (57)

She first sued for separate maintenance asking \$1,500 a month. Then in January 1924, she filed for divorce on grounds of cruelty and desertion. Accounts indicate that she was locked out of their San Francisco townhouse, Sly sold their Santa Cruz villa, and he left the state to avoid judgement against him. (58) Lottie quickly received her divorce. She was awarded \$100,000 in cash and title to the King Edward Apartments in San Francisco, with an estimated monthly rental income of \$1,600. Lucian, divorced four times in total, had other legal dealings as well. One case he lost was before the U. S. Supreme Court in 1937 over payment received when he defaulted

on a \$85,000 note to the Prudential Insurance Company. He died at the age of 82 on October 9, 1944, in Palo Alto.

Lottie Sly remained at Carmelita Court as owner and manager and continued to be active in music until her death in 1955. By the end of World War II, the cottages were being permanently occupied. Some of the tenants of long-term included Mrs. Mary Fowle, Mrs. Helen Bracamonte, Mrs. Ada R. Lewis, and Mrs. G. Homer (Alice) Sigsby. Also living at the cottages for many years were Charles Hamilton, his three sisters -- Mrs. H. S. (Ida) Northridge, Lois McCurdy, and Minnie Hamilton, and their cousin Mrs. Abra Budworth. Abra was once a music student of Lottie's who helped manage the cottages as Mrs. Sly aged. Although Lottie willed her property to the City for eventual use as a park, she granted a life estate, along with the contents and rental profits, to Mrs. Budworth. The bulk of the remainder of her estate went to Stanford University, musical and religious institutions, and several friends and relatives, including the children of her Barton cousins in New Jersey. Abra moved from the "Crow's Nest" to the Johnson house (#321 Main Street), where Lottie had lived. Mrs. Budworth's brother and sister-in-law, Del and Matilda Bachelder, moved into 317 Main Street in 1962. When Abra died in 1976, ownership of the Carmelita Cottages property came full circle back to the City of Santa Cruz, 128 years after the town fathers had originally disposed of it. Initially continuing to rent the cottages, the City had other plans for the site, as recounted in "Saving Carmelita Cottages."

## Early History of the Carmelita Cottages: Notes and Bibliography

### NOTES

1. According to the dates given in John Chase's *Sidewalk Companion* only 917-919 Third Street (1870-71) and possibly the Terrace Court office and one or two other structures on Beach Hill pre-date the front cottages.
2. Stanley Stevens to Rick Hyman, personal conversation. [Stevens, Map Librarian, University of California-Santa Cruz, has made a study of the Jacob Rink Snyder 1847 map, *Town of Santa Cruz* (see Maps, below), and the controversy surrounding land ownership of Santa Cruz, 1847-1866.] Snyder was an early resident of Santa Cruz, later he was an elected delegate from the Sacramento District to the 1849 Constitutional Convention in Monterey (the only surveyor, having served as the Surveyor-General of the Middle District of California; he also held several important posts in the early years of California, including that of State Senator from San Francisco in 1851).
3. Leon Rowland. *Santa Cruz: The Early Years* (Santa Cruz: Paper Vision Press, 1980), 114.
4. See Jonathan D. Stevenson vs. James Bennett, et al. Case # 889, Supreme Court, State of California. 1866. [35 Cal 424]
5. Roberts to Dame, [Santa Cruz County Book of] Deeds, 5 March 1859, 4:286, for example.
6. For an account of this activity see "Early Ship-Building," *Santa Cruz Sentinel* 31 July 1875 3:3.
7. Renie Leaman, "Abigal Arcan," talk at Santa Cruz Historical Trust, September 9, 1987.
8. Edward Harrison, *History of Santa Cruz County California* (San Francisco: History Co., 1890) 308-9.

9. *Santa Cruz Surf* 15 June 1894, 3:2 and 28 October 1897, 4:1. These articles together with the Deeds disprove the popular contention that Roberts lived on the Cottages property. However, since he did live next door, he might have had a hand in the construction of those structures built before his death.
10. McHugh Scrapbook #1, 16 (in UCSC Library, Special Collections).
11. Captain Dame's namesake was a director of three San Francisco Bay Area railroad companies in the early 1860s. Although the *Riptide Centennial Edition* for October 19, 1950 indicates that these two Dames were one and the same, Census information (e.g., railroader Dame was born in New York and was a lawyer), and signature comparison strongly suggest otherwise.
12. "Steamer Santa Cruz," *Pacific Sentinel* 1 August 1857, 2:1.
13. "Editorial Correspondence: Trial Trip of the Santa Cruz...," *Daily Alta California* 27 July 1857, 1:2; and, "Editorial Correspondence: Sea Sickness...," *Daily Alta California* 29 July 1857, 1:2.
  - 13a. "The Schooner Alfred Adams on Fire at Sea," *Pacific Sentinel* 13 March 1858.
14. *M. Dame v T. Dame*, Santa Cruz District Court 437 (1863).
15. "Sheriff's Sale." *Pajaro Times* 8 August 1863 2:5 (legal advertisement).
16. It is possible that this transaction was a legal maneuver that enabled Mary Dame to continue living there, since the transfer was to her sister and husband for a nominal sum.
17. The entry showing the Hannahs living there may be in error, unless it represented a temporary situation, since for many years they lived on Second Street on Beach Hill.
18. "Fire," *Sentinel* 30 July 1870 3:1.
19. "San Lorenzo Saloon," *Sentinel* (advertisement ran from February through October 1869).
20. "Valuable Property for Sale," *Sentinel* (advertisement ran from August 1872 through January 1873).
21. "Johnson's Building Burned," *Sentinel* 20 December 1873, 3:3.
22. Leon Rowland file cards (in University Library, Special Collections, University of California, Santa Cruz).
23. "Pioneer Resident of Beach Hill Called By Death," *Santa Cruz Evening News* 29 November 1920, 5:3.
24. Barton, Margaret letter to T.V. Johnson, July 12, 1878. [The letter was found ca. 1987 by Hostel members during renovation of the Cottages. A photocopy is available in the Historical Trust Archives.]
25. *Surf* 3 December 1890, 3:1.
26. [*Santa Cruz County Book of Homesteads* 28 April 1877, 2:465.
27. "Death of T. V. Johnson," *Morning Sentinel* 3 January 1903 3:1. The official case of death was listed as "apoplexy," *Death Records Santa Cruz City 1891 - 1905*, p. 45.
28. The official deed of November 22, 1870 (Vol.13, p. 252) describes Tait's Cottages property as running 50 feet from Joseph Robert's lot "toward the house where Timothy Dame once lived."

29. *Riptide Centennial Edition* for October 19, 1950 says of Dame, "His fortune subsequently dwindled and he was reduced to laboring in Felton. "More research would be necessary to confirm this economic status contention. Some sources say he owned a ranch in Felton, but the Deeds do not confirm this.
30. "A Jolly Time at the Beach," *Sentinel* 26 June 1875, 4:2.
31. *Sentinel* 17 May 1890, 3:4 (rental of "Dame Cottage" mentioned); *Surf* 16 September 1890 3:5 "Carmelito Cottage" mentioned).
32. *Surf* 14 April 1891 3:4.
33. *Surf* 12 August 1891 3:2.
34. "Beach Hill," *Surf* 9 May 1885 3:2.
35. "Beach Hill That Pleasant Precinct Improving In Appearance Daily," *Surf* (Weekly Edition) 25 October 1890, 7:3.
36. "Wedding Bells," *Surf* 23 June 1892 3:3.
37. *ibid.*
38. "A Stylish Wedding," *Sentinel* 23 June 1892, 3:2.
39. "Death of Henry Thompson," *Surf* 18 August 1900 4:3.
40. *Sentinel* 27 August 1881, 2:4; 22 April 1882, 1:6; 24 June 1882, 3:5; 6 January 1883, 3:7; 14 April 1883, 2:3; *Surf* 14 February 1884, 3:2.
41. "Tomaso's Testimonial," *Surf* 16 September 1890, 3:2.
42. "Tomaso," *Surf* (Weekly Edition) 28 June 1890,7:5. His entire speech is reprinted here. See "Testimonial to Enrico de Tomaso," *Sentinel* 28 June 1890, 3:2 for a list of guests.
43. See "A Popular Vocalist," *Surf* (Weekly Edition) 27 September 1890, 6:4 for the words to this song. See "A Rousing Testimonial," *Sentinel* 20 September 1890, 3:4 for Tomaso's brief thank you speech. Also, see "Correspondence," *Surf* 5 September 1890, 3:4 for a list of the 93 people and businesses requesting the benefit concert and Tomaso's response.
44. "Sandy's Corners An Enthusiastic Old-Time Democratic Pow-Wow," *Surf* 15 October 1 1890,3:3, for example.
45. "The Clerks," *Surf* 20 October 1891, 3:2; "Seven-Thirty," *Surf* 23 October 1891, 3:3.
46. "Kindersymphony," *Surf* 23 June 1891 1:4.
47. [Henry Thompson] Enrico deTomaso, "Emma Abbott," *Surf* 8 January 1891, 3:4.
48. See "Verdi," *Surf* 16 February 1892, 3:3 for a full column transcript of Tomaso's lecture.
49. "Last Evening," *Surf* 10 June 1892, 8:1.
50. "A Guild Garden Party," *Surf* 27 August 1891, 3:4; see also, "A Delightful Garden Party," *Sentinel* 28 August 1891, 2:2.
51. Although the March 28, 1903, deed to Mrs. Johnson does not mention this cottage, the photograph

taken before 1897 appears to show it.

52. [City of Santa Cruz] "National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," 16 December 1983, 3.

53. Ibid.

54. "Pioneer Resident of Beach Hill Called by Death," *Evening News* 29 November 1920, 5:3.

55. Millie Robbins, "Sly the Marrying Millionaire," *San Francisco Chronicle* 19 March 1967, 6:2 (Sunday Punch.)

56. "Wedding of Local Interest At Capital City," *Evening News* 3 December 21, 1:4.

57. "Lottie Sly Seeks Divorce in S.F.," *Sentinel* 25 January 1924, 4:3.

58. Robbins, *ibid* note 55, and "Lottie Sly Seeks Divorce in S.F.," *ibid.* note 57. However, the Official Records do not indicate a sale of the Villa property during this period.

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## Saving Carmelita Cottages

California's newest coastal hostel opens soon [1993] in Santa Cruz, in a Victorian cottage nestled under mature trees in a garden setting. Travelers of all ages and nations will be welcome. Few will hear of the obstacles - bureaucratic, political, financial - that the hostel's sponsors overcame to provide low-cost lodgings while preserving a piece of Santa Cruz history. The cottage, built in 1872 by Timothy Dame, a steamer captain, is one of six in the Carmelita Cottages complex.

*Exterior of the renovated Dame cottage showing retention and accentuation of architectural features including stained glass, double hung windows, stick style gable brace, bay window, and front porches along with heritage plants in a garden setting and refurbished iron fence and wooden gate.*



*Photo by Ray Sherrod*

This is not the first time that the twin causes of historic preservation and low-cost coastal access have been furthered by creation of a hostel. Partly due to financial assistance from the State Coastal Conservancy, Californians can visit four other coastal hostels in historic buildings: a Civil War era building at Fort Mason in San Francisco, a lighthouse on Pigeon Point in San Mateo County, a lighthouse in Montara, farther north, and in a restored farmhouse (DeMartin House) in Redwood National Park in Del Norte County. Each is unique. All bring closer the dream of a 1,100-mile chain of coastal hostels, each no more than a day's bike ride from the next. But none was so plagued with controversy, nor required such perseverance from local sponsors and Conservancy staff, as this charming new one, on Main Street, Beach Hill, two blocks from the Santa Cruz beach and municipal wharf.

### The Gift

The hostel project was made possible by a generous gift. Lottie Thompson Sly, who inherited Carmelita Cottages and lived in them most of her life, bequeathed them to the city of Santa Cruz. In a 1953 handwritten will, two years before she died at age 83, she stipulated that the property was to become a park, "cleared and properly landscaped, making it a restful place for the public to enjoy." Should the city fail to establish the park, the property was to go to Stanford University. Mrs. Sly's will gave life tenancy to her friend Abra Budworth, who survived her for 21 years. After Mrs. Budworth died, also at age 83, the city took possession.

The bequest consisted of close to one-half acre, with six board and bat cottages, with gables and stained glass windows. Two face Main Street, four are behind them, close together in a courtyard, surrounded by trees and flowers. Just three blocks from the noisy, bustling boardwalk, Carmelita Cottages are an island of tranquillity from a more leisurely time.

"A towering deodora cedar with a trunk larger than a person could reach around stands guard at the entrance to the garden," wrote Ida Hills in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* in 1976. "A liquid amber and tulip tree only slightly smaller than the cedar complete the ... canopy." Camellia, pink dogwood, variegated

azalea, rhododendron, and a variety of roses are among the "handsome old plants that have outlasted the generation which planted them," she observed.

The will was unambiguous about the grounds. They were to be a public park. But what of the cottages? Did they have to be "cleared?" If not, what could be done with them? The city considered its options under the watchful and covetous eyes of Stanford University attorneys. Under Stanford's pressure, it agreed in 1979 to demolish five dwelling units by July 1, 1984 - two immediately. Two structures fronting the street would be allowed to remain for historical museum purposes.

When tenants and preservationists heard of this plan, they were furious. Vocal among them was Matilda Bachelder, 92.

"I've lived in my home for 25 years and I'm against them wrecking my house to make room for a park," she told the city council in 1979. When a reporter called, she met him at the door and pointed at the elaborately landscaped garden, "I planted everything you see around here."

Others argued that the cottages should be protected for their historic value.

"Preservation must apply not only to prominent civic buildings or impressive major houses, if we are to have any understanding and appreciation of our past,"

argued Sara Holmes Boutelle, of the Santa Cruz County Society for Historical Preservation, in a letter to the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*.

The city backed off and, almost a year later, in 1980, reached a revised agreement with Stanford. As the tenants moved out, the units would not be re-rented, but they would be renovated. The July 1, 1984 deadline was retained for all units to be vacated and the property made into a park.

Attention turned to the cottages' potential use. A committee established for the purpose of considering alternatives persuaded the City Parks and Recreation Commission to support a privately operated bed and breakfast. But the city council was uncomfortable with the idea of evicting low-income tenants for a project that would serve people of greater means.

It was at this point that the Santa Cruz Youth Hostel Society stepped in. This non-profit volunteer organization was looking for a permanent home for a successful summer hostel it operated in rented school space. In canvassing city-owned land, the society became aware of the cottages, decided they would do perfectly, and applied for their use as a 45-bed, European-style hostel. But, at a special city council meeting held just after Christmas 1982, the idea was abruptly nixed.

The council majority supported continuing the affordable housing use by renegotiating the agreement with Stanford. The council did endorse locating a hostel somewhere in town, enabling the society to proceed with an application to the Coastal Conservancy for funding.

With encouragement from Coastal Conservancy staff and from Jim Lang, director of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department, and armed with favorable petitions, the Hostel Society returned to the city council for

support of its application seven months later. This time the council told the society that Carmelita Cottages could be added to the list of possible hostel sites.

## **The Battle**

Thus began - yes, just began - a lengthy battle to actually secure city permission to renovate the cottages as a hostel. The society set about negotiating a lease, securing plans, and applying for permits. On January 24, 1984, the city designated the cottages a historic landmark. (Listing in the *National Register of Historic Places* followed on March 20, 1986.) Ironically, because the cottages - the same cottages that the city had planned to raze - now had city landmark status, the society was required to obtain a special historical alteration permit. The Historical Preservation Commission was supportive. But when the society came before the Zoning Board for a use permit, neighbors, concerned about more traffic and transients, testified against it, bolstered by opposition petitions. The board voted three to two for denial, on the ground that the hostel would be incompatible with the neighborhood's residential character. The Hostel Society appealed to the city council.

In preparation for the meeting, former hostel board member Laurel Wilson recalled

"walking door-to-door to counteract misrepresentations that the hostel would attract disruptive people. It was fun meeting our future neighbors, discovering a wide variety of ages and lifestyles."

The Hostel Society won the petition battle with hundreds of signatures, as well as many supportive letters. Opponents testified that they represented the majority of area property owners concerned about the perceived disruption that the hostel would bring, but the council, in a pivotal four to three decision in October 1984, overturned the Zoning Board and conditionally granted the use permit. Neighbors then sued the city over its decision.

Superior Court Judge Rollie Hall concluded that use of the site for a hostel (by night, with the grounds open to the public during the day) did not violate the terms of Lottie Sly's will. Hostel opponents appealed. Over one year later, the Court of Appeals also ruled for the city.

In April 1985, the city leased the cottages and surrounding grounds to the Hostel Society for ten years at a dollar a year. That same month, the Coastal Conservancy approved a \$75,000 long-term loan for the renovation project. The Hostel Society set about the arduous task of securing the remaining necessary design, landmark alteration, coastal, and finally, building permits. Suffice it to say that they were not routinely and expeditiously approved. As the Hostel Society's plans had to adhere to rigid city earthquake, handicapped access, and energy-efficiency requirements, costs escalated. The estimate for the project skyrocketed from under \$200,000 to over \$500,000. That meant "a lot of bake sales," observed Ken Sievers, then-president of the society. A legal dispute with the first designer, who failed to secure his architectural license, further delayed efforts. Frustrated, the society rented a year-round, 18-bed hostel elsewhere in the city.

Still, it continued to press on with Carmelita Cottages.

"This is just such a natural," said Sievers. "This is a great place for travelers going up or down the coast. Somehow there has to be a way to make it happen."

Efforts to find funding under two state bond acts, Propositions 18 in 1984 and 70 in 1988, were unsuccessful. The society did manage to secure the services of a contractor and youth workers under the county-sponsored Job Training Partnership Program to spruce up the grounds and deteriorating buildings. But efforts to parlay cottage rehabilitation into a job training exercise failed to materialize.

By 1990, cost estimates for the project had risen to \$800,000. Discouraged, the Hostel Society voted to terminate the Carmelita Cottages project, reasoning that it could buy a suitable building that was already up to code for less money. The city again began to explore other options for the property, including a mix of housing and park use.

As the society still had a lease on the Carmelita Cottages, however, the organization continued to maintain the grounds and employ a caretaker. Coastal Conservancy staff approached the Hostel Society about restructuring the restoration by phasing the project over a longer time period. Conservancy staff pledged to seek out additional funding. After more than a year of extensive efforts by the Conservancy and the Hostel Society, the funding was secured, and a new plan was developed.

### **The Victory**

By this time, the Hostel Society's permits had expired and its lease had only five more years to run. The approval process had to be revisited, but this time around, there was comparatively smooth sailing. The Hostel Society again successfully canvassed the neighborhood to ensure that the project had support. In May 1991, the city council agreed to a new 30-year lease. The next month the Conservancy replaced its original loan with a \$375,000 grant to the Hostel Society. Failing to find off-street parking on Beach Hill, the Hostel Society planned that Carmelita Cottages would be operated as an annex to the current hostel. In March 1992 the Zoning Board unanimously approved new permits, stipulating that automobile parking not be available at Carmelita Cottages.

Even with this guarantee, some lingering neighborhood opposition remained. But having previously expended considerable money only to lose in court, the leaders did not mount another aggressive campaign and did not appeal the Zoning Board approval.

So in October 1992, a decade after the society first envisioned a hostel at Carmelita Cottages, construction commenced on what will be the first dormitory at 315 Main Street. Shortly afterward, the adjacent two-story home, built circa 1872 by saloon keeper Thomas V. Johnson, was raised to add a new foundation. It will be the second dormitory, and will open later this summer [1993].



*Exterior side view of the renovated Johnson cottage showing unobtrusive disabled ramp access with wooden railing blended in and retention of historic architectural features including ornamental gable braces.*

*Photo by Ray Sherrod*

While the political battles may now be over, much work remains to complete the project. As visitors enjoy the remodeled 19th century accommodations, they will initially find the rear building off-limits. The society has nine years remaining to raise the funds to renovate these into a manager's unit, a kitchen dining/laundry, and two more dormitories.

If history is any guide, the Hostel Society will succeed, as perseverance has been the organization's trademark. In highlighting historic milestones, this account does injustice to the untold hours that individuals expended on grant applications, lawsuits, and other peripheral matters in addition to designing the new hostel. "We lost a lot of good volunteer people; they got burned out," commented Peter Pethoe, a veteran board member. But new volunteers have stepped in with equal commitment and determination. Although board member Peter Kambas bemoans their lack of political acumen, Laurel Wilson recalls hearing praise from other state hostel leaders about the locals' political sophistication. Kambas believes the society was encouraged to persist with Carmelita Cottages by a sense of broad support from the community and government officials, even in the face of the specific negative decisions mentioned. The society's unselfish mission to provide a needed and rewarding service to world travelers will be apparent to all who will now be able to stay at Carmelita Cottages.

## **Source**

Rick Hyman, a planner with the California Coastal Commission in Santa Cruz, recognized the Carmelita Cottages' potential as a hostel over ten years ago. He chronicled their early history in a chapter of *Every Structure Tells a Story*, (Santa Cruz Historical Trust, 1990).

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