

Specializing In The Voice Of Days Gone By

By RICK CHATENEVER
Sentinel Staff Writer

Voices from Santa Cruz' past are ringing out once more, thanks to a new local publishing house that takes its name from a songbird.

The western tanager is a brightly-colored bird that can be seen — and heard — throughout the Western U.S. Western Tanager Press, now located in a warehouse in the Harvey West industrial park on Coral Street, is a business created to preserve and retell local history for now — and Western history on a broader scale in years to come.

Owned by Hal and Barbara Morris, owners of Plaza Books and Paper Vision, the publishing company was "the next step after the bookstore," according to editor Michael S. Gant. "It was an idea Hal had in the back of his mind for several years."

Originally called Paper Vision Press,

the company resulted from several of Morris' "natural interests. He was interested in selling books, and he was interested in the history of the region," Gant explained. "Also, being a bookseller gave him a useful perspective on publishing."

Morris' decision to get into the publishing business also coincided with the realization that "there was a real gap in books on Santa Cruz."

The company got its new name — and its new office and warehouse space earlier this summer, around the same time it released "Santa Cruz: The Early Years," by the late Leon Rowland.

Prior to that, it had re-printed a revised edition of John Chase's "Sidewalk Companion To Santa Cruz Architecture" in June, 1979, followed by "Ghost Towns Of The Santa Cruz Mountains" by John Young in November of that year.

The latter book was compiled from a series of stories on the Santa Cruz Moun-

tains, originally published in the San Jose Mercury. Contact with author Young, then making his home in New Mexico, produced the finished manuscript, which was printed with cloth binding and distributed in the Santa Clara Valley as well as the Santa Cruz area.

Western Tanager has none of its own printing or typesetting equipment, Gant explained, but jobs out production on the various projects. Although the subject matter is very regional, Gant has found that he can get better deals on printing by going out of the area, in fact out of the state.

"Ghost Towns" had been the work of a newspaperman, and "Santa Cruz: The Early Years" was also the work of one. Leon Rowland was a reporter, columnist and Sunday editor for The Sentinel and as a hobby, he pursued local history.

"He did an immense amount of research," said Gant. He had thousands of index cards. He was trying to get a card for everyone in Santa Cruz in the 19th

Century..."

The manuscript for the book combined pamphlets Rowland had written on the Old Santa Cruz Mission, the Villa De Branciforte and Old Soquel with his "Annals of Santa Cruz," which, Gant said, "covered the county on the whole."

The book also contains "Los Fundadores," a listing of the earliest Mexican and Spanish pioneers who came into Northern California.

The next step for Western Tanager was the recent purchase of the Fresno-based Valley Publishers from former owner Charles Clough.

That company also specialized in California regional histories, and had published Margaret Koch's "Santa Cruz County: Parade Of The Past" and Betty Lewis' "Watsonville."

"We bought their existing stock of around 40 titles," Gant recalled. For purposes of shipping, the sale had to be translated into weight — 51,000 pounds, "maybe 40,000 books."

Those books are now housed in the Coral Street warehouse. With the purchase of Valley Gant said that Western Tanager can now expand the scope of its histories into all of Central California.

For the fall, Western Tanager will publish four new titles: "Hot Type And Pony Wire," describing John Young's years as a reporter in the '30s and '40s, primarily in the San Jose area; "Oildorado," a chronicle of the discovery of oil in the Bakersfield-Taft area; "A Tribute To Yesterday," a history of Carmel, the Carmel Valley, Pt. Lobos and Big Sur; and Betty Lewis' "Watsonville Vol. 2."

Incidentally, Western Tanager is temporarily turning away from the usual photo composition, and setting the plates for "Hot Type And Pony Wire" in cast metal.

At the present, Western Tanager is a three-person operation — publisher Hal Morris, editor Gant and bookkeeper Betty Hoffseth.

"We look to expand," said Gant. "Noth-

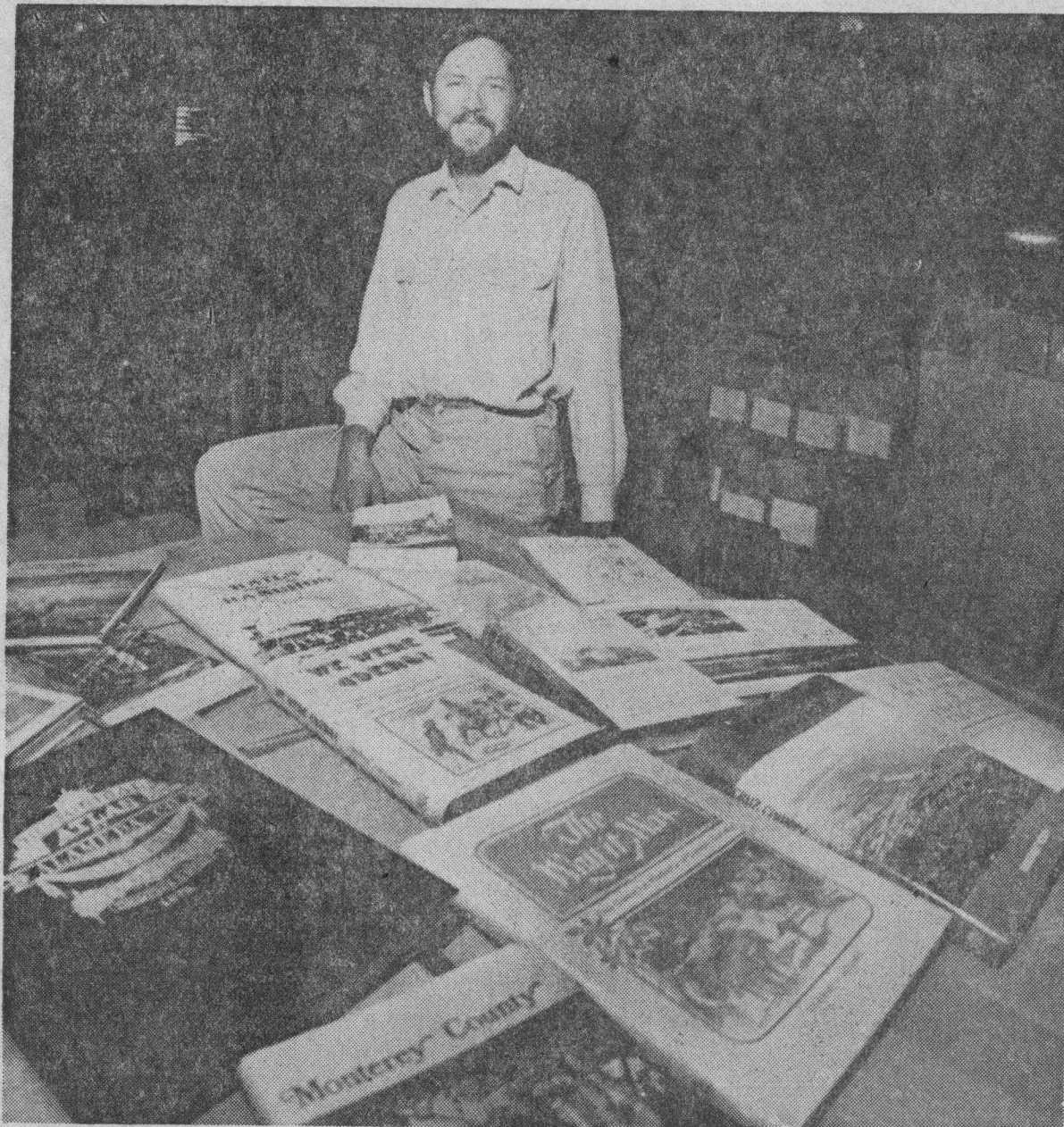
ing spectacular or enormous — just solid steady growth."

That expansion also extends to subject matter. "We plan to do not only regional history, but also books about California and Western America."

Gant said the company is looking for manuscripts on those subjects, and also continuing to search for books on related subjects by other publishers now out of print.

For now, Western Tanager is letting the subject matter of the books influence the plans for marketing and distribution. Local books are marketed locally, regional ones regionally and so on. Unlike the multi-million dollar deals and print runs in the hundreds of thousands, Western Tanager retains a friendly, comfortable scale, even in its big projects.

"We hope that 'Hot Type And Pony Wire' generates wide interest," concluded Gant. "We're going to try to get it into bookstores all over Northern California."



Editor Michael S. Gant with books from the Western Tanager Press

Raincheetahs!

A coat's too essential a part of your wardrobe, so don't wait for the foul weather to catch up with you.

An important investment...the handsomely tailored allweather Raincheetah in lightweight Qiana® nylon. Treated with Dupont Ze Pel® rain/stain repeller for unsurpassed water repellency and new