

## SANTA CRUZ LANDMARK

# Original O'Neill Surf Shop site named Point of Historical Interest

History  
Sentinel staff report

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SANTA CRUZ — Take this, Huntington Beach.

The site of the original O'Neill Surf Shop, established near Cowell Beach more than 50 years ago, has been designated a California Point of Historical Interest, Santa Cruz city officials announced Tuesday.

The 1959 surf shop represents the launch of a California-born industry, and the designation recognizes a time when local surf culture was elevated to well beyond Santa Cruz — the birthplace of modern cold water surfing.

A plan for historic signage at the site, next to Dream Inn near the entrance to Cowell Beach, will be developed in the coming months, city official said.

Santa Cruz City Council member David Terrazas spearheaded an effort to obtain the designation.

"The O'Neill story is uniquely Santa Cruz and representative of California's innovative spirit and culture throughout the world," Terrazas said. "Jack and his family are integral to our town and have built something really special here."

Among other notable accomplishments, Jack O'Neill is credited with creating the first viable wetsuit, opening the world of surfing year-round to millions of surfers worldwide. O'Neill is now one of the best-selling wetsuit brands in the world, as well as one of the top sportswear brands, with licensees and distributorships in more than 67 countries.

O'Neill also founded the nonprofit O'Neill Sea Odyssey, which has taught more



JAMES TENSUAN/SENTINEL

The original site of the Santa Cruz O'Neill Surf Shop near Cowell Beach will be declared a point of historical interest by the California State Historical Association.



CONTRIBUTED

Jack O'Neill's original Santa Cruz 'Surf Shop' opened in 1959 near the entrance to Cowell Beach, not far from where the Dream Inn now sits.

than 65,000 students about ocean science and ecology while sailing Monterey Bay.

O'Neill said he was honored by the recognition.

"What started out as a way

to catch as many waves as possible has turned into a life I could not have even dreamed up," O'Neill said. "I am grateful to all of you who have supported us along the way from

our roots through 60 years.

"I am thrilled with the fact that life has given me the opportunity to start the O'Neill Sea Odyssey, a very effective program that brings awareness of the invaluable oceans to the next generation. Follow your bliss!"

The California State Historical Resources Commission voted unanimously earlier this month to approve the site, and it was official Monday, with authorization from State Director of Parks Ruth Coleman.

The city is calling on community members to share photos or fond memories of the original, 500-square-foot Santa Cruz O'Neill Surf Shop for use in a planned interpretative project.

Send them to cityofsantacruz2012@gmail.com.