



Lime

By Henry G. Hubbard

The burning of lime was one of the earliest industries established in Santa Cruz County, the first kiln having been built in 1851 by I. E. Davis and A. P. Jordan. This afterward became the property of Henry Cowell, and the old pot kilns may still be seen on the Cowell Ranch alongside the road from the limestone quarry to their present kilns at Rincon.

Henry Cowell Lime and Cement Company

Officers: S. H. Cowell, president; M. H. Bresee, secretary; George Cardiff, manager at Santa Cruz; home office, 2 Market Street, San Francisco. The Cowell quarry is in sec. 34, T. 10 S., R. 2 W., M.D., 2 miles northwest of Santa Cruz and 1 mile up the canyon from the old quarry first worked by Davis and Jordan, and later by Henry Cowell. Limestone outcrops in this canyon in many places. The rock is both coarsely crystalline and fine grained, white to bluish-white in color; the coarse-crystalline variety is the most abundant.

The limestone is quarried by dry jackhammers using detachable bits and supplied with air from an assembled portable compressor. Both black powder and dynamite are used. All rock is trucked from the quarry 1.9 miles to the kilns at Rincon station on the Southern Pacific railroad. Formerly the coarse-crystalline limestone was burned in three pot kilns near the ranch house and the dense and fine-grained variety in four 34-foot standard continuous kilns at Rincon. In 1920 three new pot kilns were added to the Rincon plant and the ones near the ranch house were abandoned.

The Standard continuous kilns did not work well except on the dense fine-grained rock. This variety required a greater heat for complete calcination, and the use of the continuous kilns also necessitated selective mining of the limestone to provide a suitable feed. For these reasons they are not now used and all the limestone is now burned at the Rincon plant in three pot kilns. Each kiln has a capacity of 1600 barrels and is provided with four draw doors and four burners. Fuel oil is used with steam atomization. It requires from 4 to 4½ days to burn a charge, 36 to 48 hours for cooling, and 3 days (formerly 2 days when crew was larger) to draw the burned lime. The barrels in which the lime is packed are made in a cooper shop at the Rincon plant. From 12 to 15 men are employed including several at the quarry and the balance at the kilns. In 1926 more than twice this number of men were at work.

I.X.L. Quarry

This quarry, also owned by the above company, is situated in sec. 4, T. 10 S., R. 2 W., M.D., 2½ miles northwest of Felton and half a mile north of the former Holmes Lime and Cement Company's quarry. There are three pot kilns on the property. No limestone has been quarried or burned here for the past 24 years.

Holmes Lime and Cement Company Quarry

This company no longer exists, and its former quarry is now the property of Santa Cruz County Title Company, 22 Cooper Street, Santa Cruz. The quarry is located in sec. 9, T. 10 S., R. 2 W., M.C., 2 miles northwest of Felton. The limestone is exposed along the strike northwestward from the base to the top of the mountains, about 1000 feet. Although idle since 1933 and now stripped of all equipment, this quarry was formerly an important producer. It had been opened on three faces. The considerable overburden was hauled off in dump carts. Air drills were once operated by an electrically driven compressor. The limestone was trammed from the quarry to the kilns and hydrating plant in 8-ton cars which were hauled back by horses. The rock is a white crystallized limestone, both coarse and fine grained. At the plant, which was situated below the quarry near the town of Felton, five pot kilns were in use, one of 1000 barrels capacity and four of 500 barrels. There were also two patented continuous kilns not in use since prior to 1926. Oil with steam atomization was used for burning. In addition to the burned lime, the plant was equipped with a Clyde hydrator which had a capacity of 25 tons of hydrate per day. The hydrate was bagged by a Bates valve-bag sacker. The lime barrels were made at the kiln. The quarry is an old one and had been operated more than 52 years prior to the final shutdown in 1933, when 30 men were employed.

Source

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