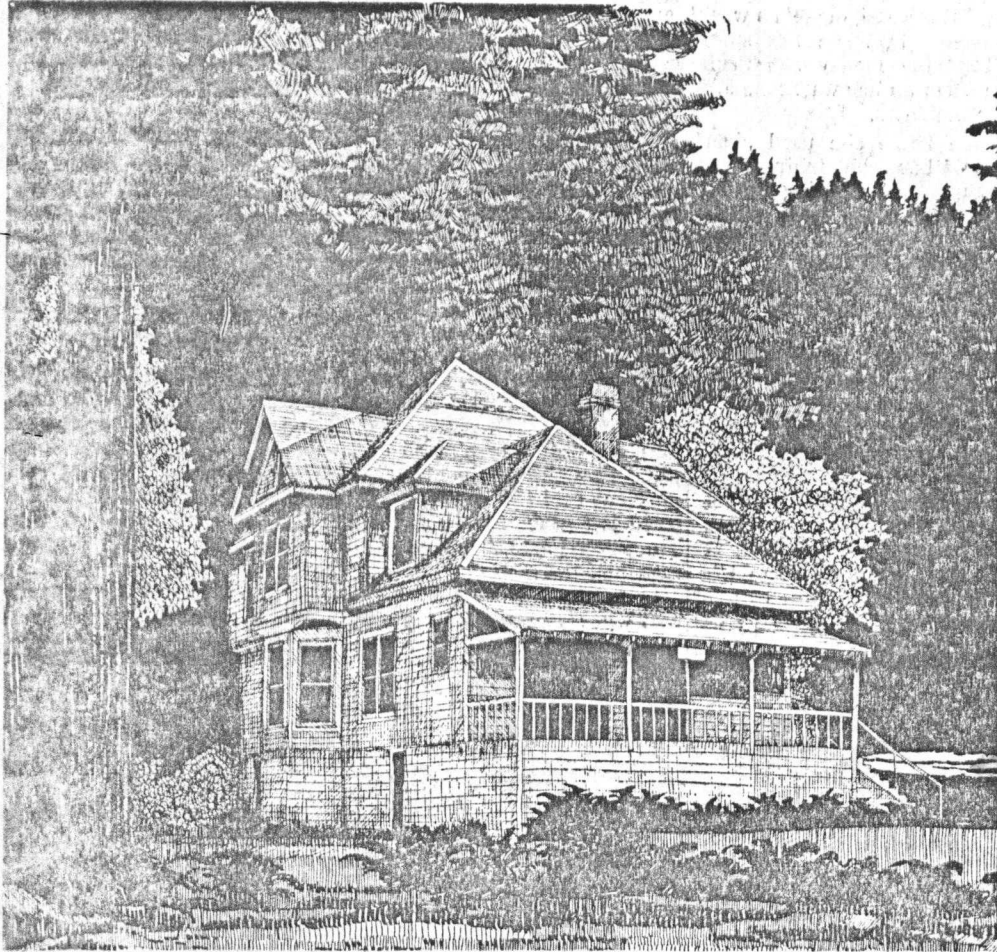


## Here Today; Gone Tomorrow?



Artist Will Shepherd has drawn one of several remaining buildings of powder works days at Paradise Park. Once

a powder works official's home, it is now the Paradise Park office. The park site,

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originally a Mexican land grant, first held a paper mill, then a powder mill.

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**Editor's Note:** This is the last in a series of articles on Santa Cruz' old homes and buildings. The series has appeared in conjunction with efforts by SCOPE and the Santa Cruz Historical Society to encourage interest in local history.

By Margaret Koch  
Sentinel Staff Writer

Once, men walked there in nailless shoes, treading lightly with a fear of sudden death always with them.

Today the men and machinery are gone. Bluejays chatter in the redwood trees. Homes stand in redwood groves as quiet as cathedrals.

This is Paradise Park.

Back in 1863 it was Powder Mill Flat. Before that, briefly, it was part of the San Lorenzo Paper Company. The paper mill went bankrupt after the San Lorenzo River flooded it in 1861, and the California Powder Works acquired its holdings for \$20,000.

In this peaceful spot, among the Sequoia sempervirens, beside the river whose fury had spent itself for a time, the famous "smokeless powder" was born. Santa Cruz blasting powder and smokeless powder became famous. They were shipped all over the world, first for mining purposes, then for transcontinental railroad build-

ing, then for war.

And when Adm. George Dewey, hero of Manila Bay, gave his famous command: "You may fire when ready, Gridley," it was Santa Cruz powder that thundered from his guns to blast the Spanish fleet.

The plant layout at Powder Mill Flat was constructed mainly of corrugated sheet metal buildings, placed at some distance from each other to prevent an explosion from spreading to the entire plant.

Some of the old concrete wheel mill foundations remain today. They have been adapted as part of garages or homes of the Masons who purchased the property for a residential park in 1924.

One of three powder works buildings that survive is now the park office. It was the home of a company official named Ord. A worker's cottage stands across the road from it and the old powder magazine, also standing, has been converted into a home.

Bernard Peyton, for whom Peyton street is named, came here from the East to take the position of superintendent of the powder works. His son, William C. Peyton, was assistant superintendent. The two Peytons did not live down by the river; they built fine large homes up on the eastern rim of the San Lorenzo River can-

yon, on Graham Hill road. In 1872 the Peytons had the now-famous covered bridge built to facilitate river crossing traffic. A village with workers' cottages and a "tin" school house developed around Powder Mill Flat.

The very first civilized man to own Paradise Park was Pierre Sainsevain; he acquired it in 1843 as part of the Canada del Rincon Mexican land grant.

Most of the virgin redwoods were logged off the property in early days. Today it is said that only seven of these most ancient trees remain. And the Masons enforce strict rules in regard to trimming or cutting trees.

The present entrance and exit roads were originally the roadbed for the powder work's narrow gauge railroad line. However, no steam engine ever pulled the cars on powder works property; horses were hitched up to pull them. A steam engine would have presented too great a danger of setting off an explosion.

Biggest explosion in the plant occurred in 1898 when 13 men were killed and 25 were injured. Old-time Santa Cruzans recall that the shock waves from the blasts shook every house in town (two miles away) and even cracked a few windows.

It was a tragic time with families left fatherless, long

lines of funeral vehicles draped in black and sorrowing mourners following on foot.

In 1917 the powder works merged with DuPont interests and all local equipment was moved to Hercules. Many families moved there too.

In 1924 the Masons purchased the property for \$100,000. Paradise Park Masonic Club was incorporated as a non-profit organization with William Soden as president.

The park was named informally by Mrs. Carlotta B. Scott who also has compiled a booklet on its history. During an early-day fund-raising rally someone asked her how she liked the park.

"It's paradise!" she said. One of the Masons immediately said "That's it!"

The park started with about 100 tents and summer cabins; lots sold for \$100 apiece at first. Most of the first cabins were built by R. F. Sinclair, late father of The Sentinel's managing editor, Gordon Sinclair. Sinclair Sr. had managed a portion of Phoebe Hearst's ranch interests at Pleasanton for many years. He came to Santa Cruz with his family in 1925 and established a contracting business. The Sinclair family lived in the park for several years.

The idea for the park was conceived before Depression days, but the first building and development took place during

the Depression. The early structure was walled, built of

By 1935 there were cabins and summer homes. Many of them

**RED CROSS**

Persons who are enrolling in Red Cross station class are asked to attend the Ben Lomond Tuesday before class, scheduled time under the the Red Cross' ter, will be inst

President W. first U.S. pres. Europe. He wen cember of 1918.

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