

REAL ESTATE

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 2003

623



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Built in the mid-19th century by John Daubenbiss, the Daubenbiss House still sits on a hillside above Soquel.

Soquel sentinel

House has stood watch over town for 136 years

By **CAROLYN LEAL**
SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

SOQUEL

The striking, lavender-hued house at 4500 Soquel Drive can be seen from almost anywhere in Soquel. Built by Soquel pioneer John Daubenbiss, it seems to stand sentinel over the town that grew up around it.

Pictures of the two-story house in history books show it surrounded by outbuildings, including a tank house topped by a windmill. In one illustration, two horses prance by in front pulling a carriage.

The outbuildings are gone, along with much of the land, but the house looks remarkably as it did when John Daubenbiss built it on 1,100 acres he purchased from Alexander Rodriguez. (Some accounts say the house was built in 1857, but a Santa Cruz County historical plaque by the front door puts the date at 1867.)

Owner Victoria George put the Daubenbiss House up for sale after

considerable soul-wrenching.

"I love this house, and I really hate to sell it," George said. "It has such a peaceful feeling. People ask if it's inhabited by ghosts. I don't think there are ghosts, but there is definitely a presence here. There is very good energy."

As she speaks, a curtain in the dining room billows open, blown by a stiff breeze. Or is it the wind? Perhaps it's the spirit of Sarah Daubenbiss, a good-natured woman noted for her charity.

"She just took everyone in," George said. "She took people in and fed them. There was a lot of love in this house."

The house has been a home, a book store, an attorney's office and a half-way house, George said. Former residents often visit and talk about what the house has meant to them.

"It's a fabulous house. The views are incredible. You can see over all of Soquel," real estate broker Patti Boe said.

Winter and summer, the house has a light and airy feel to it, due to large

windows on all sides, George said.

The two-story, three-bedroom house, plus office, contains 2,400 square feet and has an adjacent cottage of 800 square feet, currently occupied by Victoria's mother, Liz George. The property is almost ½-acre in size.

George has lived in the house with her two daughters for five years. She has done some restoration, including rebuilding the front porch, rewiring the attic and replumbing with copper pipe. She has added stylish new granite counter tops in the kitchen. But the house retains its historical charm, with original stained glass windows, wooden floors, lighting fixtures and 11½-foot ceilings.

Substantial work was done on the house in the 1970s, when it was raised and a new foundation was added, George said. The style of the house is Italianate, she said. A front balcony looks out over the town and a back deck, which has been added, overlooks the Victorian country

See **HOUSE** on **PAGE E2**

House: Soquel history tied to lavender home built by area pioneer Daubenbiss

Continued from Page E1

garden tended by Victoria's mother. The garden contains apricot, apple and persimmon trees and numerous blooming plants, such as lilies and daisies. It is the site of garden parties and weddings, George said.

During Soquel's Centennial celebration last year, she opened the house to visitors and hundreds trooped through to view firsthand the house that John Daubenbiss built.

Daubenbiss, born in Bavaria, came to America in 1835 when he was 19 and crossed the plains in a wagon train to Oregon in 1842. The next year he arrived in California. He was a soldier with Fremont's battalion during the Mexican-American War.

With John Hames, also a pioneer, he built a flour mill and a sawmill on Soquel Creek. He harvested and sold timber for the Commercial Street pier in San Francisco, and he raised 100 head of cattle purchased from General Vallejo in Mission San Jose for \$7

a head, according to the Santa Cruz History Journal edited by Stanley Stevens.

When Daubenbiss first came to Santa Cruz County, the area was covered with wild animals, which were killed for food and hides, according to the History Journal.

Daubenbiss lived through an exciting era in American history, and he loved to tell stories of his adventures. One story related how he got lost in the Sacramento area looking for water. During the night, he lost his horse and continued on foot, eventually abandoning his shoes and going barefoot. The next day he made a raft by tying logs together with grapevines and made his way down the river. He was rescued by a boat and finally reached Sutter's Fort where he joined the rest of his company.

He married Sarah Lard in 1847 in San Jose, and they moved to Soquel. Sarah had come West with the ill-fated Donner Party, but her family parted company with the party before crossing the Sierra.

John and Sarah had 11 children,

but not all of them survived to adulthood.

When Santa Cruz County was organized, John Daubenbiss was one of the early leaders. He was named Soquel road commissioner in 1850 and in 1858, he was elected county supervisor.

Until his death in 1896, Daubenbiss was a leading citizen of the county and is credited with building one of the first schoolhouses in Soquel, to educate his children. Both he and Sarah are buried in the Soquel Cemetery.

Victoria George heads an organization called Balance4Kids, which raises money for supplements to schools to help special children. Today, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., she will open Daubenbiss House for an exhibition of books and paintings by artist illustrator Julia Cairns with proceeds going to Balance4Kids. The event is open to the public. For information, call 464-8669.

Contact Carolyn Leal at
jcopeland@santa-cruz.com.