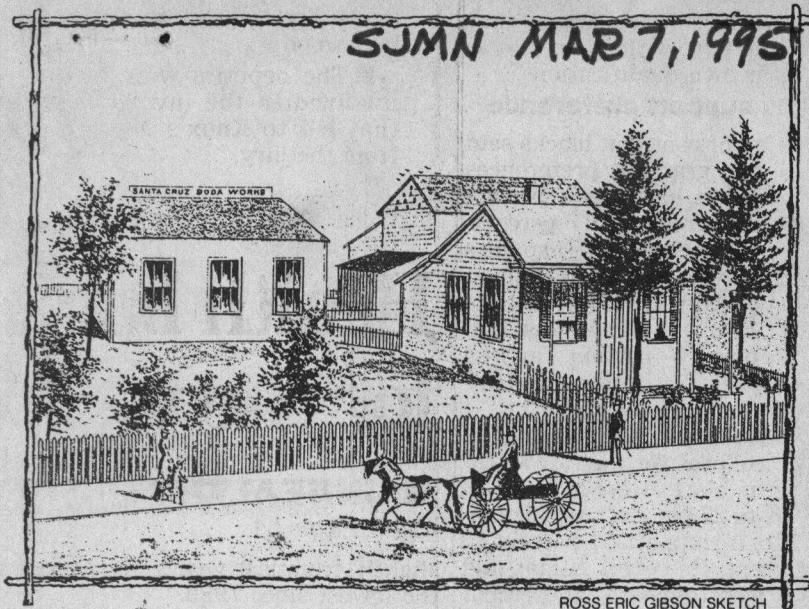


SJMN MAR 7, 1995



The Soda Works was a popular spot for travelers in the 1880s.

A refreshing chapter in city's history

BY ROSS ERIC GIBSON
Special to the Mercury News

"Soda Junction" was the name of the place on Soquel Avenue where Doyle, Benito and Cayuga streets meet. It was named for the Santa Cruz Soda Works, which once marked the east end of Branciforte's Victorian downtown.

The pioneers of Soda Junction



SANTA CRUZ
Historic Perspective

were the Loddman brothers of Germany: Gustav, Ernest and Justus.

Ernest came to California with
See **HISTORY**, Page 2B

2B

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A refreshing chapter in Santa Cruz history

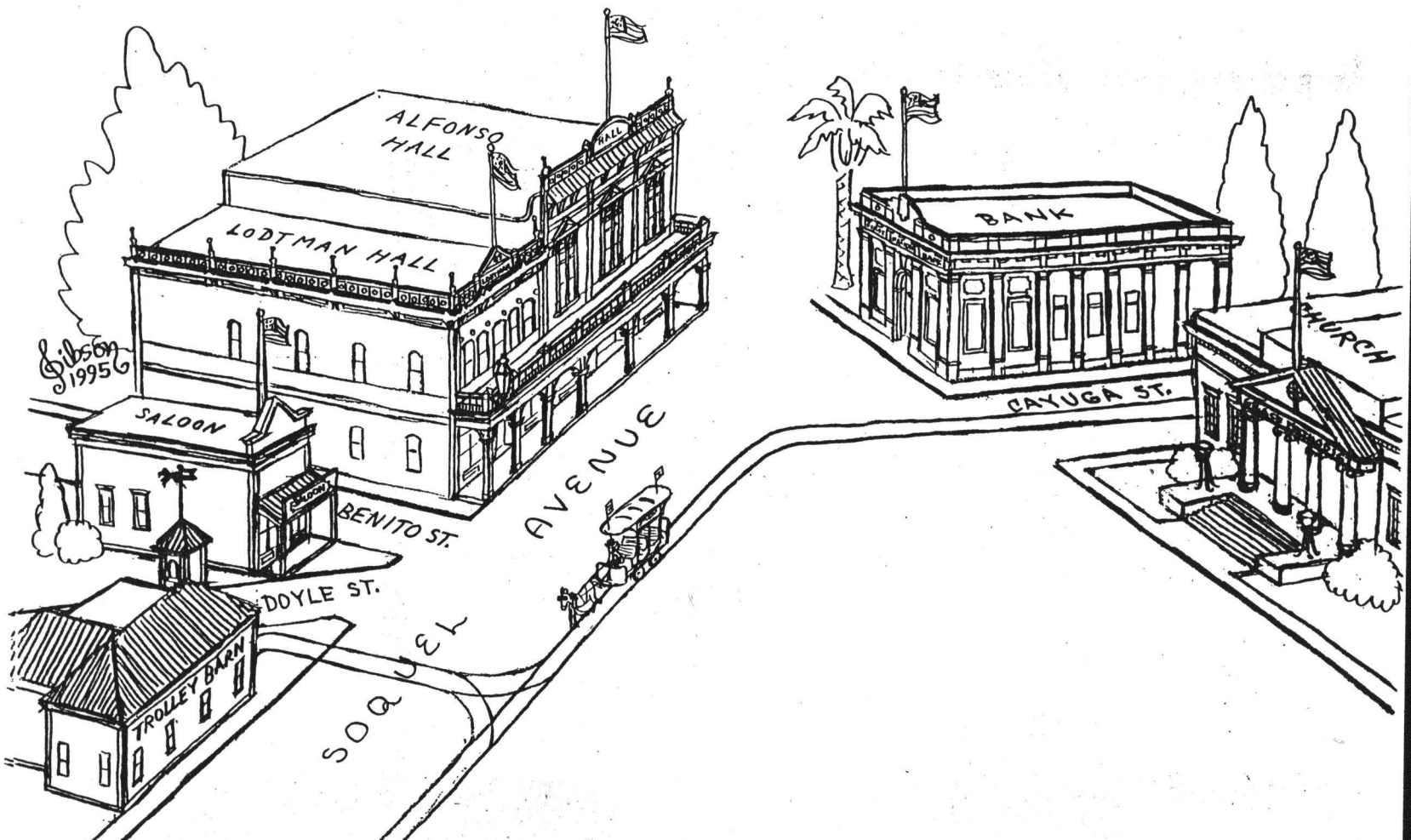
Loddman brothers
served up soft drinks

HISTORY from Page 1B

the Gold Rush in 1849, then went into the brewery business in Stockton, where he eventually grew his own grain for brewing. Justus came to California in 1855 to farm the grain, and their business moved to Stanislaus County. Carbonation was an important additive to the beer they brewed, and their skills expanded to the manufacture of soda as well.

In 1875 they moved to Santa Cruz, and opened the Santa Cruz Soda Works the following year, at what became Soda Junction. In only three years they supplied most of the major establishments in the area, and the Soda Works became a popular refreshment stop for travelers. A saloon and blacksmith took advantage of this gathering point, as did grocer Andrew Doyle. Soda Junction developed into a community center.

Saloons used soda for mixed drinks and soft drinks. Coca Cola and Dr. Pepper began as patent medicines sold only at drug stores, leading to the drug store soda fountain. In the early days all soft drinks were mixed where they were served. A major Soda Works client was "College Corners" at Pacific and Soquel avenues, where five business colleges and three tea-totaling seminaries clustered. Here a dozen soda fountains were popular student hang-outs.



ROSS ERIC GIBSON SKETCH

Loddman Hall had the soda works on the ground floor and Branciforte's civic auditorium upstairs. It became Branciforte's unofficial city hall.

In the 1880s, the top sodas were "Queen Charlotte" (strawberry soda); lemon phosphate; ginger ale; and Sarsaparilla. This derives from the root of the smilax plant, today called "root beer." Watsonville was the birthplace of two carbonated drinks: "Martinelli's Sparkling Cider" and the patent medicine "O-B-D" (One Best Drink). This was a malted celery soda, with ginger and cinnamon. Ice cream sodas became popular in the 1890s.

By 1883, an Eastside building boom was in full force. Seabright, Oceanview Park and Gault Gardens became popular locations for summer homes. And a demand for a convenient nearby shopping area made business development at Soda Junction attractive.

Around this time, the third and eldest of the Lodtman brothers,



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Gustav, came to Santa Cruz. Ernest died in 1884 at the age of 58. Gustav died two years later at the age of 62.

The Soda Works were flourishing, and outgrowing the original factory. In 1889, Justus hired local architect John Williams to design his new building called "Lodtman Hall." It was built at Soquel Avenue and Benito Street, just west of the 1876 plant. It had the Soda Works store and factory on the ground floor and Branciforte's civic auditorium upstairs. Besides hosting dances and

shows, its community forums made it Branciforte's unofficial city hall.

Meetings of interested citizens were held almost as soon as the hall opened, with early priorities to raise money for road improvements and an Eastside trolley. Pacific Avenue businessman William Ely rose to the challenge, motivated in part by his vast real estate holdings that could only profit by greater access. Three months later he had organized the "East Santa Cruz Street Railroad Company," and four months after that, he held the line's grand opening.

The trolley line ran from the Lower Plaza in Santa Cruz out Soquel Avenue to Soda Junction. It turned down Cayuga to Seabright, and out to Twin Lakes. It later extended down Soquel Avenue to Arana Gulch. The trolley barn near Soquel Avenue and Benito Street was electrified, and bought in 1904 by the Union Traction Company.

The line brought a further ex-

SJMN MAR 7, 1995

Meetings of interested citizens were held almost as soon as Lodtman Hall opened, with early priorities to raise money for road improvements and an Eastside trolley.

pansion of the village center, which stretched from Branciforte Hill to Soda Junction. Justus Lodtman died in 1894 at age 57. Grove & Hauselt became the Soda Works proprietors, later moving it to 123 Water St., then in the mid-1920s to 317 Ocean St. in the

Riverside district, between Bascom Street and Broadway.

Local historian, architectural consultant and author Ross Eric Gibbs writes a weekly history column for the Santa Cruz/Monterey edition.