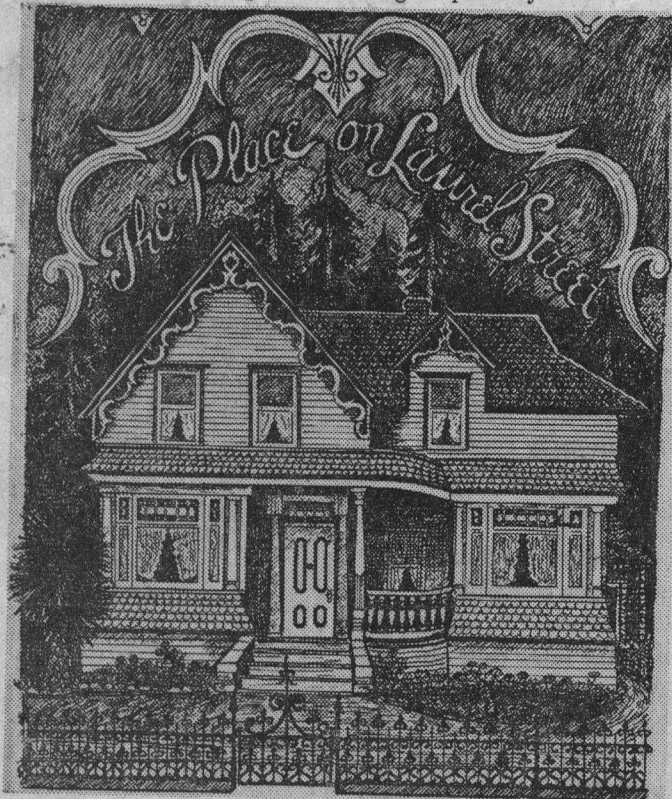


# The House On Laurel Street

By MARGARET KOCH  
Sentinel Staff Writer

There's a new historical booklet out, and it concerns a local house. It's being offered

for sale today at Santa Cruz Museum Boutique: title, THE PLACE ON LAUREL STREET. The Diary of Judge Edgar Spalsbury.



Drawing of house above is from front cover of booklet, however the house looks much the same today, as it did in 1876. Adjoins Ferguson's Mortuary and is owned by the Fergusons. It is now divided into three apartments. Drawing above is by Louise Lovett.

Foreword in the booklet is by Viola (Mrs. Henry) Washburn, who first met Spalsbury descendants here in 1948. And it is mainly through her efforts that the booklet is being sold to benefit the museum.

In the years since 1948, Mrs. Washburn has read the diary of the judge three times.

It's an interesting — and sometimes exasperating collection of events and impressions.

"He was always ill," she said to me when she put a copy of the booklet on my desk.

And he was. Never lived a man who was so plagued with sore throats, colds on the chest, aching teeth, aching head, sleepless nights and other ailments, as Judge Edgar Spalsbury.

To quote: "My throat raw from the blister and I could just mope around the house cross as a bear..."

His diary is peppered with the remark: "I caught a little cold."

Edgar, his wife Sarah and her sister Gora Bennett came to Santa Cruz in 1876 in search of health for him. He was born in 1834 in Jefferson County, N.Y., was admitted to the bar in 1856, and entered the Union Army shortly afterward. He saw some of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War and was discharged in broken health.

After the war he tried to establish a law practice and business in Chicago but the climate was too severe. To Santa Cruz they came, both girls were school teachers, and eventually Edgar served as a justice of the peace, winning his title of "Judge." He also taught in the fashionable girls' school, Quincy Hall, on Walnut Avenue, which in later years moved to San Francisco and became Hamlin School.

Edgar Spalsbury lived here for 22 years, adding much to the well-being of the community and the Congregational Church, in spite of his constant and continuing ailments.

The story of his buying the house on Laurel Street is told in the booklet, as is the story of the Santa Cruz mountain home he helped build near what was once the Hotel de Redwood. The booklet also is rich in medical information of that day: Edgar often took opium drops, chloral, laudanum and sometimes "cupped" himself and packed his throat — those were the days before some medicines were recognized as addicting, of course.

One excerpt about the house on Laurel Street: "We are all feeling better. Spent the afternoon closing up the week's work. In afternoon I was down town a little time and af-

terwards went with Sarah to get sewing machine, then to the beach and, finally, to see Kinney about the house on Laurel Street. Got his lowest figure, \$1900 — offered him \$1800. In the evening Gora went for mail bringing a letter from Mrs. Bennett..."

They bought the house for \$1850 and Edgar went to see the tenant — a Mrs. Holgate, and "told her she could remain until further orders by paying a rental of \$20 per month."

On May 1 Queen's Circus came to town. — "a slim affair," according to Spalsbury...

May 8: "My chest troubling me a little again and I applied castor oil..."

June 5: "...very glad to lie abed for the balance of the day. After school Sarah went to town for sugar of lead and began giving it to me with morphine..."

July 15 in the mountains: "...Were all feeling old and stiff and sore and cross, nevertheless started on our trout fishing ... fished hard before dinner getting 7 trout ... Afterward fished hard and caught 22 more..." (That was Soquel Creek.)

September 4 in Santa Cruz again: "...Monday — Cloudy morning clearing off very pleasant during day. Little puddles of water on the board sidewalk showed a little rain last night..."

November 7: "...Presidential election. SC city cast 1148 votes with a majority of 245 for Hayes which the county increases to about 400..."

Taxes might interest some present-day readers.

Here's Edgar's entry for December 13: "...Went to town in morning and drew Gloria's money from the bank and adding \$50 to it, \$20 of which was mine, deposited it in the new bank on a 6 mo. certificate at 10 per cent. Paid our taxes as follows:

|                  |         |
|------------------|---------|
| State and county | \$27.83 |
| Special school   | \$ 1.60 |
| City             | \$ 2.40 |
| City poll        | \$ 2.50 |

Paid last June  
state poll \$ 2.00

Making a total of \$36.33

Imagine that! This little booklet is fascinating reading.

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