

## The Golden Gate Villa

*By Susan Dormanen*

*"He who enters here leaves all cares behind."*

"From any portion of the city can be seen a magnificent villa whose turrets and towers soar above their surroundings." [1] Thus begins an 1891 account in the Santa Cruz Daily Sentinel of the "various architectural beauties of Golden Gate Villa," then under construction on Beach Hill in Santa Cruz.

Today, freshly painted a rich buttery hue accented with orchid, the Villa shimmers like a mirage of days gone by. At times the lightness, the gilt spires on the castle-like roof line, seem to mock the old solemnity of the house. For more than a hundred years, passers-by have paused before it to trade gossip. Many are vaguely aware that some enigmatic tragedy occurred here long ago.

Such lasting curiosity bears witness to the romantic mystery of the Villa. Sole legacy of Major Frank McLaughlin, it stands as a fitting monument to the lavish era in which he flourished and declined. There seems a general perception that just behind the high front hedge, across the shaded porch, inside the beveled-glass doors, must lie a terrific story. Stepping inside, you are not disappointed.

Thick, solid walls shut out the Twentieth Century clamor. The air is cool and still. A graceful vault arches high in the wood-ribbed ceiling; the subtle gloom is enlivened by stained glass prisms. The image of a pearl-like Magdalene gazes mournfully from a wall opposite an old oil of someone's favorite hound. The sense of sanctuary is echoed in the motto Major McLaughlin composed for his house, which hangs framed at the entry: He who enters here leaves all cares behind.

If you are lucky enough to be greeted by today's resident owner, Patricia Sambuck Wilder, she may walk you through the amazing rooms like a little girl bringing out her best dolls: somewhat afraid they might not be properly appreciated. Plaster rosettes hold gold-

plated chandeliers, intricately carved and mirrored mantels of exotic woods frame onyx-faced fireplaces. In one room cherubs flutter on a frieze band high overhead, in another mythological figures pose in gilded bas-relief. The dining, billiard and music rooms are identified by motifs depicted in the jeweled-glass transoms. On first view the opulence can



*Golden Gate Villa: 924 Third Street*

take your breath away, but no one could call it pretentious. The Villa wears her gems with simplicity, under a homey housecoat of dust.

Lighting the broad staircase to the second floor is the masterpiece and soul of the house: a full-length stained glass portrait of a young woman in ancient dress, reaching up to pick an apple-blossomed branch. "That's Agnes," Patricia introduces her, "step-daughter of Major McLaughlin who built the Villa. The legend is he cut some of her own hair to mix the color of that glass."

Patricia resides on the first floor with her family and a pack of rambunctiously affectionate hounds. On the upper floors a few tenants find more of a home than most renters ever know. "I can always tell who belongs here," Pat confides. "The dogs like them." Writers and other visionaries are especially attracted to the house. More than one has attempted to chronicle the spiritual energy often sensed at the Villa, felt to be a lingering emanation of its first residents.

Patricia has owned the Villa since 1967, a longer term than any previous proprietor. It nearly came into her family much earlier. Her grandfather, Stephen Scurich, a prominent Watsonville rancher, considered buying the Villa after McLaughlin's death in 1907. However, his wife, Lucia, refused to occupy a site rumored to be haunted. And so the Major's fellow Elks stood guard at the mansion until it was purchased in 1912 by Lucian Sly, builder of the exclusive Stanford Court apartments on San Francisco's Nob Hill.

Through the early part of the century, the Villa changed hands often, as one after another infatuated purchaser learned the high cost of keeping such an extravagant mistress. After a few apartment companies unsuccessfully tried to make the Villa turn a profit, it opened to the public during the 1940s and '50s as the Palais Monte Carlo, "unrivaled among Pacific resorts."<sup>[2]</sup> One woman who visited during its days as an inn never forgot the enchanting house. Just before she died, Anna Sambuck sent her daughter Patricia to see the Villa, as if she sensed the two were meant for each other.

It was for sale when Pat arrived. Uncared for, painted false colors and humiliated with sagging scrollwork, the Villa stood undefended. Multi-millionaire William Durney had bought it on a whim, then hurried back to Beverly Hills and rarely thought of it again. Patty says her heart sank at what a piece of work she was taking on, but there didn't seem to be a choice. Although she didn't know it at the time, the November day she took possession of the Villa was the exact date the McLaughlin tragedy had left it empty sixty years before.

Patricia has since discovered what many life-savers learn to their dismay - that once reclaimed, the saved one continues to require daily heroic efforts. For more than a quarter of a century, with painstaking research and an intuition born of love, she has worked to preserve the fragile grandeur of a bygone era. The house was entered into the national Registry of historical landmarks in 1975 and has also been recognized by the California Heritage Council.

In her own apartment Patricia may show you a remnant of the dining room's historic wall covering, said to be African elephant hide bagged by Teddy Roosevelt and presented to the Major in gratitude for his political exertions. The fragile old leather had to be removed after the 1989 earthquake loosened the underlying plaster. Watching Patty strip it from the walls was like seeing her peel off her own skin.

A guest room on the second floor is named for Roosevelt, one of McLaughlin's many celebrated visitors at the Villa.<sup>[3]</sup>

During a house tour, Patricia sometimes shows her collection of old photographs, beginning with a portrait of the Major.

### **King of the Feather**

Dapper to the point of foppishness, McLaughlin poses on a construction site scaffold, sporting a black handlebar mustache, wide-brimmed hat and knee length patent leather boots. A dominant figure in the state's mining industry, he became known as the "King of the Feather" for his engineering exploits on that California river and in the surrounding gold fields, where he made and lost several fortunes.

McLaughlin was born about 1840. As a young man, he served on the police force in Newark, New Jersey, and began a life-long friendship with Thomas Edison. After a short stint in the Union Army, he was, by 1864, an engineer on the Union Pacific Railroad, helping push tracks across the Plains. His military title most likely stemmed from later activity in the California state militia rather than his brief Civil War record.

He acquired an impressive reputation with the six-gun, driving stage coach through the Wild West, and as a Dodge City deputy to Marshall Bat Masterson, who called him "one of the quickest men on the frontier."<sup>[4]</sup> McLaughlin earned fame as one of the few men to publicly challenge Wyatt Earp and live to tell the tale. Sources vary as to the time and place of their falling out over a decision Earp made while refereeing a prize fight. The Sentinel told the story thus:

#### Always a Foe of Earp

Major McLaughlin was unsparing in his denunciations of the rascality of Wyatt Earp, and it was said up and down Market St. that Earp had vowed to shoot McLaughlin on sight... When the two encountered one another at Johnny Farley's Peerless saloon, Earp and the little Major had a staring match for a thrilling instant in which the petulant pop of the pistol was expected by all. But the Arizona gun man saw that he could not intimidate through many a gun play on the western frontier, and so he said with a tone smacking something of an apology: 'I know, Major McLaughlin, that you would not have made such remarks unless you believed them to be true,' and left the saloon while the man he was supposed to kill on sight took his time over his drink, uttered a few jocular remarks for the benefit of the bystanders, and went his own way with a nerve seemingly shaken not at all.<sup>[5]</sup>

McLaughlin returned East in 1877, to court a buxom New Jersey widow who loomed as large as her suitor's ideas. It was said McLaughlin "never settled for the petite when the mammoth was available."<sup>[6]</sup> During this time, the Major renewed his friendship with the century's most famous inventor. Edison was developing the incandescent light bulb, needing only a dependable source of platinum for filaments in order to market his discovery. He commissioned McLaughlin to prospect for the mineral in California, where the Major had heard of a find on the Feather River.

Before his second departure for the West in 1879, McLaughlin married the widow Margaret Loomis and adopted her young daughter Agnes.

In California, the partners' mining interest soon turned toward gold. The Major eventually controlled some of the richest properties on the Feather, yet rarely invested his own money. Rather, he organized stock companies which he managed for a hefty salary. This unusual arrangement later led to ugly rumors among his detractors, of which the ever-controversial McLaughlin had as many as any successful, flamboyant entrepreneur.

The Major promoted several impressive projects in Butte County during the 1880s - a nine-mile tunnel at Big Bend, a 30-mile flume at the Miocene hydraulic mine. Some, not all, were marked successes. He was also involved in large orange and olive orchards around Oroville and in developing the Thermalito Land Colony with its impressive Bella Vista Hotel. By 1890, the large-thinking Major had conceived his biggest project: a great wall to divert the Feather from its bed so placer gold could be mined from the bottom.

Armed with letters of recommendation from Thomas Edison, two senators and California's governor, McLaughlin's trip to London to attract financing for his new project was so successful that newspapers noted: "not since Benjamin Franklin had an American made such an impression on English society."<sup>[7]</sup> Due to a misunderstanding about currency (while he was talking dollars, his British investors were thinking pounds) McLaughlin came home with \$12 million, more than even he had envisioned. The error seems characteristic of the brash, reckless Major.

The work, which would take a thousand men four years of labor, was underway by 1892. A canal forty feet wide and 6,000 feet long was dug alongside the river. The stone retaining wall, twelve feet wide at its base and up to twenty feet high in places, was said to resemble the Great Wall of China. By 1896, it was known as one of the West's greatest mining feats and visited by engineers from around the world. Edison provided the first electric lights ever used on a

construction site, and work continued around the clock. The expansive Major was a genius at self-promotion and the press was highly attentive, building suspense throughout the country.

When the wall reached 7,000 feet in length, a dam was built which threw the river from its bed into the canal on the other side. A crowd cheered as McLaughlin himself stepped into the drained bed to lift the first shovelful of gravel. A return of at least \$100 million was expected on the \$12 million investment. Yet within a year, the great undertaking had collapsed in bankruptcy.

McLaughlin's miners found rusted picks and buckets instead of gold nuggets on the Feather's bed, evidence of an earlier raid. Half a century before, with little fanfare, the forty-niners had diverted the river with a wooden flume at the same site, harvesting a fortune. What they'd left behind wasn't worth the taking. Old-timers in Oroville, knowing the Major's grandiose enterprise was doomed to failure, had kept the secret for years to enjoy a last laugh on the Easterner who had been too successful on their home turf.

The \$12 million loss was a heavy blow to the English stockholders. They were enraged to learn that, McLaughlin, true to his habit, was not an investor. He had suffered no losses, but had drawn a handsome salary over the years. So unhappy were the British backers that Queen Victoria asked Scotland Yard to investigate. Upon arrival in Oroville, the evidently somewhat timid investigator was promptly scared off by the pistol-packing McLaughlin.

In frustration and indignation, perhaps trying to drown out the chortles of the old-timers, McLaughlin dynamited his dam, returning the river to its original bed. For years the great wall remained as a memorial to perhaps the cruelest disappointment of California's fickle gold country, where disappointments were said to be "as common as hangings." In 1963 the completion of the Oroville dam submerged the last traces of one of the West's great mining adventures and one of its most spectacular failures.

### **Leaving Cares Behind**

Upon his departure from Oroville, the resilient Major devoted himself to politics. On his management of the Senate campaign of Colonel Burns, the Santa Cruz Sentinel reported:

No Fear of a "Bad Gun"

There was never any doubt of his physical courage or his willingness to accept a challenge from any bad gun man. When he was managing the campaign of D.M. Burns for the United States Senate there were many threats that he would be killed, and one day in the corridor of the Golden Eagle Hotel in Sacramento he met Major Goucher of San Diego, who was supposed to have a particular grudge against him. Major McLaughlin calmly spat in Major Goucher's face and pushed him with his left hand. Goucher made no effort to resent the insult and afterwards said: "I was too wise to be taken in by that old frontier trick. He spat in my pistol eye, and pushed me off with his left hand, so that he was free to draw on me with his right."<sup>[8]</sup>

So effective was McLaughlin, who was chair of California's Republican State Central Committee during the 1896 presidential campaign, he was personally credited with carrying the state for McKinley. McLaughlin attended inaugural events at the invitation of the new president, but he declined the offer of a seat in McKinley's cabinet, as he refused requests to run for governor in California.

Hailing him as "in some respects a bigger man than Caesar, whose refusal of a crown was very feeble,"<sup>[9]</sup> the Sentinel concluded that, "the happy man is the contented man, and the contented man does not want anything. Major McLaughlin, who does not want state or federal office - refuses to accept an appointment brought to him on a stick - must be a happy man."<sup>[10]</sup>

It seems the Major would have agreed, at least during his first years at Golden Gate Villa when he composed his carefree epigram for the house.

## **The Showplace of Santa Cruz**

While still engaged on the Feather River, the Major retained San Francisco architect Thomas J. Welsh to design a mansion in the seaside resort of Santa Cruz, where Mrs. McLaughlin and Miss Agnes often escaped the brutal summer heat of Oroville. Welsh, best known for his cathedrals, was the architect of Holy Cross, locally, and many significant San Francisco churches destroyed in the 1906 earthquake, including the first St. Mary's. His illustrious career, once nearly forgotten, has recently been lovingly documented by his great-granddaughter, Patricia Welsh.<sup>[11]</sup>

The Major instructed his architect to "spare no expense in making Golden Gate Villa the showplace of Santa Cruz."<sup>[12]</sup> McLaughlin evidently named the house after his profitable Golden Gate Mining Company, which provided the funds.

Contemporary accounts praised the lightness and variety of the design, incorporating veranda and balconies particularly suited to Santa Cruz's mild climate. On the top floor an airy belvedere between the two large towers, later enclosed, was a favorite retreat of the young Agnes. The rear façade, made up almost equally of glass, wall and roof space, descends the steep slope of Beach Hill. An ivy-draped walkway to the town below winds through the terraces supported by fortress-like stone walls; they were built by Italian masons McLaughlin brought over to supervise work on his Great Wall in Oroville. "A decided ornament to Santa Cruz," was the verdict of the local press.<sup>[13]</sup>

The Villa was wired for the new luxury of electricity, but the original chandeliers still in place are fitted with gas jets in addition to electric sockets, as a foil to the frequent outages of the Swanton power plant. Throughout the house, redwood wainscoting is meticulously hand "combed" with an artistic grain. A turreted carriage house, in keeping with the style of the Villa, contains a turntable for carriages; this was akin to the cable-car turn-arounds the Major had admired in San Francisco.

Seven boxcars of solid, dignified furnishings arrived from the city, down stuffed Spanish leather armchairs, carved mahogany settees, curved sleigh beds a bit too short for today's physique. A handsome bronze representing Goethe's Marguerite seems to have been particularly admired, as much for its weight, requiring three men to lift, as for taking first prize at the Vienna Exposition. Despite the Villa's eventful history, some of the original furnishings remain in use today, just as Welsh's original floor plan is preserved remarkably intact.

By the time the McLaughlins took up residence in 1892, it was clear that the Villa had been created to delight and entertain. The cream of Santa Cruz society left visiting cards and awaited a return invitation. It transpired, however, that the family largely ignored their neighbors, preferring to mix with San Francisco, San Jose, and East Coast millionaires. Locally, the aura of mystery evolved around the McLaughlins. The town's curiosity had to make do with glimpses of mother and daughter attending Holy Cross Church or arriving and departing the Southern Pacific depot with all the fuss of well-to-do women on their travels and with newspaper accounts of entertainments hosted at the Villa, to which few Santa Cruzans were invited.

## **Hospitality in the Grand Style**

Nearly every January during the family's years in Santa Cruz, front-page Sentinel columns covered festivities at the mansion on Beach Hill: "New Year's Eve is always an important event at Golden Gate Villa, for it is celebrated with all the magnificent hospitality for which Major and Mrs. Frank McLaughlin are noted."<sup>[14]</sup> Fancy dress balls, tableaux vivants, magic shows, musicals, fireworks displays and the first moving picture ever shown in Santa Cruz varied the formal dinners and midnight suppers where the Major himself sometimes acted as chef, mixing his famous tea punch. The profound Victorian menus might start with terrapin, canvasback duck and pheasant, on through exotically prepared seafood and wild boar bagged by McLaughlin himself.

The regular company included Con Edison, nephew of the famous inventor; Lieutenant Governor of California William T. Jeter, the Mayor's banker; newspaper publisher M. H. de Young, before he and the Major clashed over the Chronicle's coverage of a hot election; San Francisco politico "Boss" Abe Ruef. But the most frequently mentioned house guest in



those years was Sam Rucker, a former mayor of San Jose, said to be courting the blond debutante who presided at the Villa.

### **The Ingenue**

When Governor Markham escorted Miss McLaughlin to a gala given for officers of the state militia encamped at Santa Cruz during August of 1892, the Sentinel commended the Governor's "good taste in selecting such a pretty young lady as his partner for the evening," continuing, "Miss McLaughlin, as usual, was the recipient of much admiration."<sup>[15]</sup>

The adored only child of a rich papa, Agnes did indeed receive much public admiration. At a fancy dress ball deemed "part of the history of the state," the press declared her "indescribably pretty" dressed as May Day, in a costume of pink silk with baby's cap, shepherd's crook and bouquet of sweet peas.<sup>[16]</sup> After an exhibition of "living pictures" at the Villa, a novel entertainment being introduced for the first time in Santa Cruz, Agnes was praised as "the ideal American girl," looking as if she had stepped from one of Gibson's famous posters.<sup>[17]</sup> Her costume for the 1899 inaugural ball of Governor Henry T. Gage was described in the Sacramento Record-Union, which noted that the "petite beauty with rose leaf complexion" had donned her favored black, wearing no jewels but carrying a bunch of violets (as she does in her portrait at the Villa.)<sup>[18]</sup>

Agnes presents a puzzling mixture of the frivolous and the devout. Her adored dog, which one account claimed she bathed in eau de cologne, accompanied her everywhere. Despite the constant round of parties, she was noted to attend mass every morning in a gleaming phaeton pulled by a jet black horse with a stylish way of going. Mrs. Lena MacLachlan of Burlingame, herself a boarder pupil at Holy Cross School around the turn of the century, tells how she would line up with the other little girls to watch Agnes's daily arrival at the church and how they would argue for the role of "Miz McLaughlin" when they played at dressing up.

Agnes had long been betrothed to Sam Rucker;<sup>[19]</sup> a series of dinners given in her honor as far back as February 1893, were thought to have marked her engagement.<sup>[20]</sup> Yet somehow the marriage never came off, and the self-effacing Miss McLaughlin continued to drive herself pensively to church, attended only by her perfumed setter. After Mrs. McLaughlin's death, the Major sometimes introduced his step-daughter as "my charming chatelaine." It seems a complicated relationship for this sometimes bar-room brawler, convoluted in tone like his clipping of her pale hair years ago to mix in the colors of her stained glass portrait.

It was discovered that Agnes was also secretly betrothed to a mysterious New Jersey suitor at the time of her violent death.<sup>[21]</sup>

### **A Gothic Tragedy**

On the morning of November 16, 1907, Agnes attended an early mass at Holy Cross Church in memory of her mother, who had died on that date two years before. Upon returning home she retired to her upstairs tower bedroom, loosened the whalebone corsets that grew ever more punishing as she thickened toward middle age, and laid down to rest on her sleigh bed of girlish bird's-eye maple.

Aware that she was napping, the Major sent her maid out on an errand. Near 11 a.m., he softly entered her room, put a 44 caliber pistol to his beloved daughter's temple, and fired a bullet through her head.

At the inquest, his friend and banker William Jeter recounted receiving a telephone call from McLaughlin between 10 and 11 that morning: "Please come to the house immediately." Jeter replied that he could not come at once, but he would be there as soon as he was at liberty. Then McLaughlin spoke in a changed tone. "You must come at once. I have just killed my Bob (his pet name for Agnes) and I am going to kill myself."<sup>[22]</sup>

True to his word, the Major swallowed a fatal dose of potassium cyanide and drew his last breath as his friends arrived. Incredibly, Agnes was found alive. Doctors could not do anything for her terrible wound and she died at six-thirty that evening.

The news sent shock waves through the state, where it occupied the front pages for days. Evidently one friend of the family offered to kick the chief of the Sentinel downstairs if he didn't remove the unbelievable headline from the street-front bulletin board: TRAGIC DEATH OF MAJOR McLAUGHLIN CONTINUED REVERSES END IN A DOUBLE TRAGEDY.

The November 17, 1907 San Francisco Examiner eulogized McLaughlin as one of the "most hospitable and most popular men in California." In one of his multitudinous last letters the Major composed his own obituary, "During my life I did much good and but little evil..."<sup>[23]</sup>

The welter of farewell letters and instructions left by McLaughlin at his death indicates he had painstakingly planned his desperate act. In an explanation to Jeter he wrote of financial reverses he had hidden from the world, his dread of living in poverty and horror of leaving Agnes unprovided for: "To leave my darling child helpless and penniless would be unnatural and so I take her with me to our loved one. She is the very last one who could face this world alone."<sup>[24]</sup> His long-lost cares had at last come home to roost.

"O! Why did he do it?" one friend was quoted, echoing the thoughts of all. "His friends were numerous and were willing to pay any indebtedness he owed. He could have asked and thousands, even hundreds of thousands, would have been at his disposal."<sup>[25]</sup> It seemed incredible that a mere change of fortune could drive so resourceful a man to such an act.

McLaughlin's star had set, and risen, several times before. According to Jeter, his friend's resources "were not particularly low" at the time.<sup>[26]</sup> The Sentinel's final epithet for the Major was "the man of mystery," noting, "we know of no one in Santa Cruz who knows as much as the age of either the Major or his daughter at the time of their demise."<sup>[27]</sup>

In his last letters the Major appears pitifully anxious to pay off creditors and provide for family servants. Even the diamond ring he wore was to be sold, to send Agnes's maid back East to her home. But those most familiar with his estate professed that "there was more than sufficient to liquidate all liabilities, with a large surplus." And the demands were substantial. McLaughlin's personal secretary, Anna Busteede, (who claimed the Major once offered to marry her) filed a \$15,000 suit for back salary.<sup>[28]</sup> \$15,000 was about equal, at that time, to the cost of two fine houses in Santa Cruz. Yet there is no mention of the curiously well paid Miss Busteede in the smudgy carbon-paper copy of the inquest proceedings.

Some assumed McLaughlin was shattered by the notoriety of his Feather River failure. Others surmised he was more humiliated than impoverished at being outdone by unscrupulous cohorts in a later Big Bend electric power scheme, which he had counted on to recoup his waning power.

The devastation of San Francisco society in the previous year's earthquake was no doubt another blow to the Major's equilibrium. As in the 1906 quake, the damage to his own Villa was largely superficial, toppled chimneys and fallen plaster. But seeing the lives of powerful friends reduced to shambles in a moment's time must have heightened his own sense of vulnerability. None of the theories seemed to lay the question to rest.

Attempting to answer that resounding "Oh Why," friends recalled that Agnes had lately confided how distraught her father was as the anniversary of his wife's demise approached. Mrs. McLaughlin's death certificate gives the cause of death as "locomotor ataxia," progressive deterioration of the spinal cord. A hushed but persistent rumor echoed through town that the long-suffering lady had at last succumbed to a social disease. A story circulated that the Major entered the receiving vault where his wife's corpse had lain for two years, and made his own investigation of the remains. Mrs. McLaughlin's body had not been buried, as the Major wished it sent East with his own when he died, that they might be laid to rest together at the New Jersey church where they were married. The gossip was that neither had the lady been embalmed.

The envy that had dogged his success and celebrated his failure in the gold fields resurfaced with a vengeance at the Major's death. Resentful Santa Cruz society, still smarting under its exclusion from the Villa, professed itself scandalized. It was questioned why the Major and Agnes, no blood relation, had continued living together after Mrs. McLaughlin died. The sought-after Miss McLaughlin remaining unmarried into her thirties was taken as evidence that her father could not bear to give her to another man. Announcements of Agnes's marriage to Sam Rucker were actually sent, Mrs. Wilder's grandmother, Lucia Scurich, recalled. But the wedding was canceled at the last moment. And no one could account for the mysterious second fiancé who claimed a posthumous engagement with Agnes.

Among the faded news clippings of the tragedy is one disturbingly truncated sidebar:

**NEWARK MAN CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN BETROTHED TO MAJOR'S DAUGHTER**

NEWARK, N.J., NOV. 18. - Agnes McLaughlin was to have married Christian R. Wolters, a prosperous commission merchant of this city. (It is hard to understand how the Major could have felt his daughter unprovided for, if engaged in marriage.)<sup>[29]</sup>

That last timid sentence was set in parentheses, as if one dared not speak the insinuation out loud.

At end, the Major's feelings are not open to speculation, for does any man lie with his last words? In McLaughlin's last words, he wrote: "I love her so and so I take her with me."<sup>[30]</sup> It cannot be known if he harbored a guilty passion for his stepdaughter, or simply could not bear to be left alone and aging in the Villa he had created for the pleasures of society. No autopsy was performed. After his own postmortem investigations of his lady, the Major had the forethought to instruct the family physician, Dr. F. E. Morgan: "Please see that we are not cut up, at least that my pure sweet child is not."<sup>[31]</sup> On the outside of the envelope was scrawled: "Dear Doc. Please do me one last favor and chloroform our poor old cat."<sup>[32]</sup>

Catholicism forbade the remains of a suicide inside the church, but Father P. J. Fisher of Holy Cross consented to perform a requiem mass, because he was convinced the Major was not sane at the time of his death. After private services at the Villa, Sam Rucker accompanied the bodies of all three McLaughlins to New Jersey, to be buried at the church where the couple had wed years before. The haunting epigram McLaughlin composed for his Villa was at end a phrase gone wrong. The words "He who enters here leaves all cares behind" went with him to his tomb.

The Villa itself stands as the remaining key to mystery. If a man's home reveals his character, it is likely this gracious mansion, where the echo of lighthearted cheer still lingers, was built by a generous soul.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Santa Cruz Daily Sentinel, 9 September 1891, 6:3.

<sup>2</sup> American Drive Guides. Highway 101: The Ocean Route. Seattle: Northwest Mapping, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> Mayor's Proclamation of Historic Landmark for 924 Third Street, City of Santa Cruz. "WHEREAS: this residence has had as its guests Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Edison, and other important persons in the history of the United States;" signed and sealed this fifth day of April 1977, by John G. Mahaney, M.D., Mayor.

<sup>4</sup> San Francisco Chronicle, 19 November 1907, 29:3.

<sup>5</sup> Santa Cruz Sentinel, 19 November 1907, 2:3.

<sup>6</sup> Talbitzer, Bill. Lost Beneath the Feather. 2d ed. Oroville, Calif.: Bill Talbitzer, 1963.

<sup>7</sup> Lenhoff, James. "The Great Chinese Wall Folly," Stone Magazine 82, no. 4 (April, 1962): 21.



- <sup>8</sup> Santa Cruz Sentinel, 19 November 1907, 2:4.
- <sup>9</sup> Santa Cruz Sentinel, 15 November 1898, 1:1.
- <sup>10</sup> Santa Cruz Sentinel, 20 April 1897, 2:1.
- <sup>11</sup> Welsh, Patricia A. Thomas John Welsh, Architect - A Journey of Discovery. San Francisco: PAW Productions, 1993.
- <sup>12</sup> Cannon, Patricia K. The Golden Lady. Unpublished manuscript, 1980, p. 38.
- <sup>13</sup> Santa Cruz Daily Sentinel, 9 September 1891, 6:3.
- <sup>14</sup> Santa Cruz Sentinel, 1 January 1898, 1:1.
- <sup>15</sup> Santa Cruz Sentinel, 11 August 1892, 3:2.
- <sup>16</sup> Santa Cruz Sentinel, 2 May 1897, 1:1.
- <sup>17</sup> Santa Cruz Sentinel, 1 January 1897, 1:3
- <sup>18</sup> Record-Union (Sacramento), 13 January 1899, as reported in the Santa Cruz Sentinel, 16 January 1899, 3:2.
- <sup>19</sup> San Francisco Chronicle, 17 November 1907, 1:2.
- <sup>20</sup> Cannon, Patricia K. The Golden Lady. Unpublished manuscript, 1980, p. 51.
- <sup>21</sup> Santa Cruz Morning Sentinel, 19 November 1907, 1:3.
- <sup>22</sup> Inquest proceedings of Frank McLaughlin and Agnes Loomis McLaughlin. Held in Santa Cruz, 17 November 1907.
- <sup>23</sup> Santa Cruz Morning Sentinel, 17 November 1907, 1:2.
- <sup>24</sup> McLaughlin letter to Jeter read at inquest; see note 22 above.
- <sup>25</sup> San Jose Mercury, 21 November 1907.
- <sup>26</sup> San Francisco Chronicle, 19 November 1907.
- <sup>27</sup> Santa Cruz Morning Sentinel, 22 November 1907, 9:1.
- <sup>28</sup> Chase, John. Sidewalk Companion to Santa Cruz Architecture. Revised Edition. Santa Cruz: Paper Vision Press, 1979, 17.
- <sup>29</sup> Santa Cruz Morning Sentinel, 19 November 1907, 1:3.
- <sup>30</sup> Santa Cruz Sentinel, 20 November 1907, 12:2.
- <sup>31</sup> McLaughlin letter to Morgan read at inquest. See note 22 above.
- <sup>32</sup> Mercury and Herald (San Jose), 17 November 1907, 1.

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