

LOCAL

Skull and bones banished to Davy Jones's locker

Pacific Ave 4.12.99
California flag may be raised above Flatiron Building instead

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SANTA CRUZ — The disappearance of a pirate flag that once flew over Pacific Avenue may suggest acquiescence, but don't tell that to Kenneth Adelman.

The Jolly Roger came down from atop the Flatiron Building last week at the urging of veterans who argued it violated federal law and good taste, since it flew higher than nearby U.S. flags. But Network Alchemy, the Flatiron tenant of which Adelman is co-founder, isn't ready to raise the white flag of surrender.

The building's owner, former City Councilman Louis Rittenhouse, said nothing will go up in place of the skull and crossbones.

"No flag is going up," Rittenhouse said. "And that's because of me."

But Adelman says the company has other plans, and will fly a California flag over the downtown building.

Adelman says he has ordered the flag and will hoist it as soon as it arrives.

Since the building is on the site of the

city's first courthouse, the California flag seems more appropriate than the pirate flag to Michael Bethke, a member of the city's historical preservation commission and a Vietnam veteran who was against the original flag.

But raising the California flag may also violate a federal law that prohibits any flag from being flown higher than the Stars and Stripes.

The highest flying U.S. flag in the area is at the Town Clock, and that is more than five feet lower than the flagpole on the Rittenhouse building.

Meredith Marquez, the city's zoning manager, said the California flag falls into a gray area but city officials are not likely to pursue any action.

"It's not regulated by our zoning ordinance whereas the pirate flag was," she said.

The issue of other flags overshadowing the nation's flag was raised by Bethke, who lives nearby on Union Street. While he led the fight against the skull and crossbones, he said he has nothing against flying the California flag solo.

"People can have free speech and

burn the flag if they want," Bethke said. "The pirate flag just (crossed) the line."

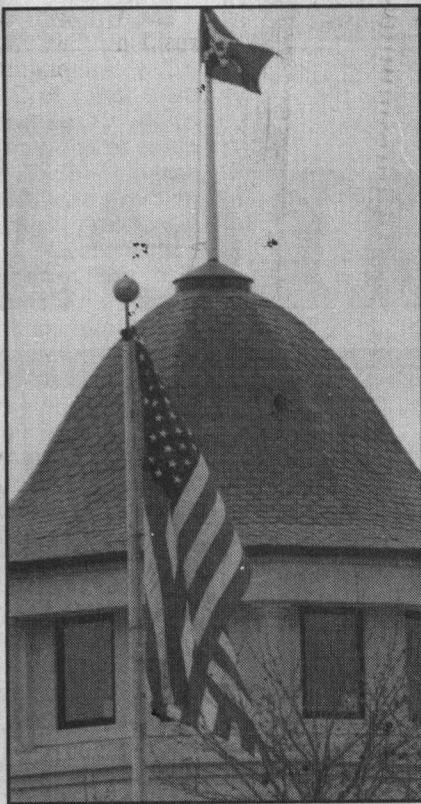
A county memorial honoring veterans who died in battle is in front of the Rittenhouse building, and Bethke said veterans groups expressed concern that the pirate flag seemed to fly over the memorial.

Bethke, who is also a member of the city's Historic Preservation Commission, added that he hopes the building will keep its decorative golden bear sculptures, which have also stirred controversy.

City officials have said Rittenhouse failed to obtain proper permits to add the star and bear sculptures that adorn the building. Marquez said Rittenhouse would be granted one if he would only apply.

"We're waiting for Rittenhouse to submit his application ... then we'll go ahead and process it," Marquez said. "We can't do that, however, before he submits an application."

Rittenhouse has declined to talk about the bears publicly and won't say whether he will seek a permit.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel file

The pirate flag flying above the Flatiron building raised a flap with veterans, who didn't like it raised higher than the U.S. flag on the Town Clock.