

An Etching, A Mural — And Memories Of Yesterday

By DON RIGHETTI
Sentinel Staff Writer

Mrs. Vera Casalegno doesn't have to rely on memory to picture the way things used to be—she only has to look at her kitchen wall. A large mural painted there reminds her of the beauty almost a century ago of the property she owns now at the intersection of Old San Jose and Laurel Glen roads.

The mural shows a 17-room mansion built in 1874 by the late Benjamin Cahoon, a sea captain who came around the horn in the gold rush days of 1849.

Cahoon later ran his big home as a resort hotel and it served as a popular stagecoach stop for travelers between Monterey, then the state capital, and San Jose. The route also was the only way open to travelers between San Jose and the Santa Cruz area.

Shortly after the turn of the century a portion of the big home was used as classrooms while the present Mountain School was being built. Mrs. Casalegno, 71, attended class in what is now her own back yard.

In 1914 the resort hotel and surrounding 65 acres was purchased by Mrs. Casalegno and her late husband, George, in partnership with George's brother, Matteo Casalegno, now a resident of Long Beach.

Five years later George and Vera Casalegno assumed outright ownership and settled down to raise four of their six children in the large home, while the adjacent acreage was converted to orchards.

It was during these years that Mrs. Casalegno, while looking through some steamer trunks left behind on the property, came across an etching which depicted the property exactly as it had been in years past.

The identity of the artist remains a mystery, but the scene was recreated by Mary Keeley, a talented Soquel High School senior.

Tackling the job as an after-school project, she devoted more than 150 hours during the past two months to reproducing the scene as a mural on Mrs. Casalegno's kitchen wall. Miss Keeley plans to pursue an art major in college.

The picturesque area of the old resort has served as the location of two movies, one of them starring Wallace and Noah Beery and the other featuring an up-and-coming young star named Mickey Rooney.

Today, the "old house", as

it is commonly called, still stands behind the present Casalegno service station and home. It is among the most photographed and painted objects in Santa Cruz county.

Children in the area like to spice its history with imaginary reports of hangings, ghosts, witches and buried treasure.

Although there are no present plans for restoring the old structure, neither are there any plans to tear it down. It will remain to remind not only Mrs. Casalegno, but travelers of all ages along the Old San Jose Road of the way things used to be.

Two Odets' Plays Slated By MPC

MONTEREY — Two short plays — Clifford Odets' "Waiting for Lefty" and Dave Allen's "War Games" — will be staged by the Monterey Peninsula College drama department March 12-14 and 19-21 in the Green Room in MPC's new little theater.

Curtain time each evening is 8:30. Tickets will be sold at the door. Students will be admitted free.

Aptos High Boosters Plan Family Potluck, Carnival

Plans for a family potluck and carnival, the Aptos High School Boosters Club's major fund-raising event, were reviewed at Tuesday night's meeting of the group.

Vice President Bill Brown reported the event is scheduled April 5. A number of prizes will be awarded, including a used car donated by Al Cheney Ford and a weekend for two at the Nugget Club in Sparks, Nev.

Carnival booths will be manned by members of student clubs who will retain their profits.

In other action, Dick Kessel, legal adviser to the boosters club, made a final report on changes in the group's by-laws. The changes were approved by the directors and are slated to be ratified by the general membership in September.

Kessel was named a member of the directors' executive committee. The committee will include an attorney, an accountant and the immediate past

administration building. The office will be manned by volunteers from noon to 2 p.m. on weekdays. The group will attempt to find jobs for students and help prospective employers find the young workers they need. The employment office will open March 30.

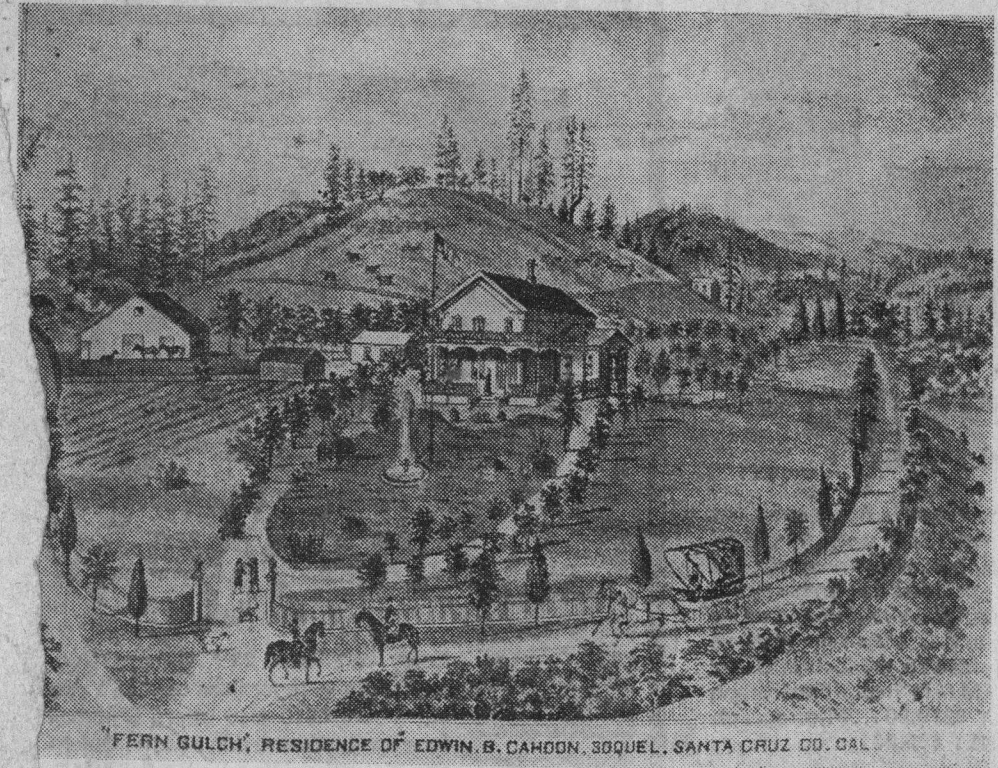
A claim for \$114 was approved to cover transportation of six rooters bus trips to football and basketball games.

It was reported Joyce Carrier has organized a telephone committee to assist the group with its membership drive and generate a good turnout for the potluck and carnival.

Dr. James Runge, Pajaro Unified School District superintendent, will speak on bond and tax issues facing the district at the next booster club general meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the music room on March 31.



Mrs. Vera Casalegno has a whole kitchen wall to remind her of the way things used to be. The creation of Soquel High School senior Mary Keeley, the mural shows the old Benjamin Cahoon home in its days as a resort.



"FERN GULCH", RESIDENCE OF EDWIN B. CAHOON, SOQUEL, SANTA CRUZ CO., CAL.

This is a copy of the old etching found in a forgotten steamer trunk by Mrs. Vera Casalegno. It shows the old Edwin Cahoon residence in its heyday as a resort and

stagecoach way station and served as the guide for the mural which now adorns Mrs. Casalegno's kitchen wall. The tiny building at center-right

is the original Mountain School. The gate at lower-left is the current location of Casalegno service station. Identity of the etching's artist remains a mystery.

Here's how the "old house" looks today. Artists and photographers find inspiration in its weatherbeaten disrepair and have made it one of the most photographed and painted objects in the county.

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DEL MAR SANTA CRUZ
A UNITED ARTISTS THEATRE

MIDNIGHT FRIDAY, 13TH



FRIDAY the 13th JINX SHOW

NOTE! Every 13th person Admitted Free when accompanied by one paid admission
All Seats \$1.50

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— SHOWTIMES: —
"Dunwich" 5:00 - 8:30
"Daddy's" 6:35 - 10:00

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TONIGHT OPEN 6:45
NOMINATED FOR 4 ACADEMY AWARDS

