

# New Life for 75-Year-Old Santa Cruz Cement Plant

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Davenport, Santa Cruz County

Farmers to the south of this windswept coastal community are of two minds about the \$100 million modernization and expansion of the town's landmark cement plant.

They're delighted that new pollution controls have put an end to the powdery patina that has coated everything downwind of the plant for the last 75 years.

On the other hand, they were not quite prepared for the clean-up's effect on the artichokes and Brussels sprouts that thrive in this often fogbound area.

Instead of relishing their new dust-free environment, the vegetables went into shock. It turns out they missed the tiny wind-borne particles of potash that, unbeknownst to all, had been giving them extra nourishment all these years.

Now the growers are having to pony up the added fertilizer.

In town, the concern is about what the mill's modernization will do to jobs.

At the turn of the century, this was a busy whaling station. Today, the whales parade by uninterrupted in their semiannual migrations just offshore, and about all that's left of downtown Davenport are a general store, a service station and a couple of touristy luncheon spots.

Apart from a small, sometimes active boatyard, an experimental fish hatchery and a new printshop stamping out Medfly T-shirts, the only game in town is cement manufacturing.

The mill used to employ more than 200



Lone Star Industries' Davenport cement plant rises beside Highway 1 — the newly modernized version of the West's oldest mill



Engineer Barbara Bridwell at the plant's computer control panel

Photos by Jerry Telfer

power, other than what is needed for maintenance.

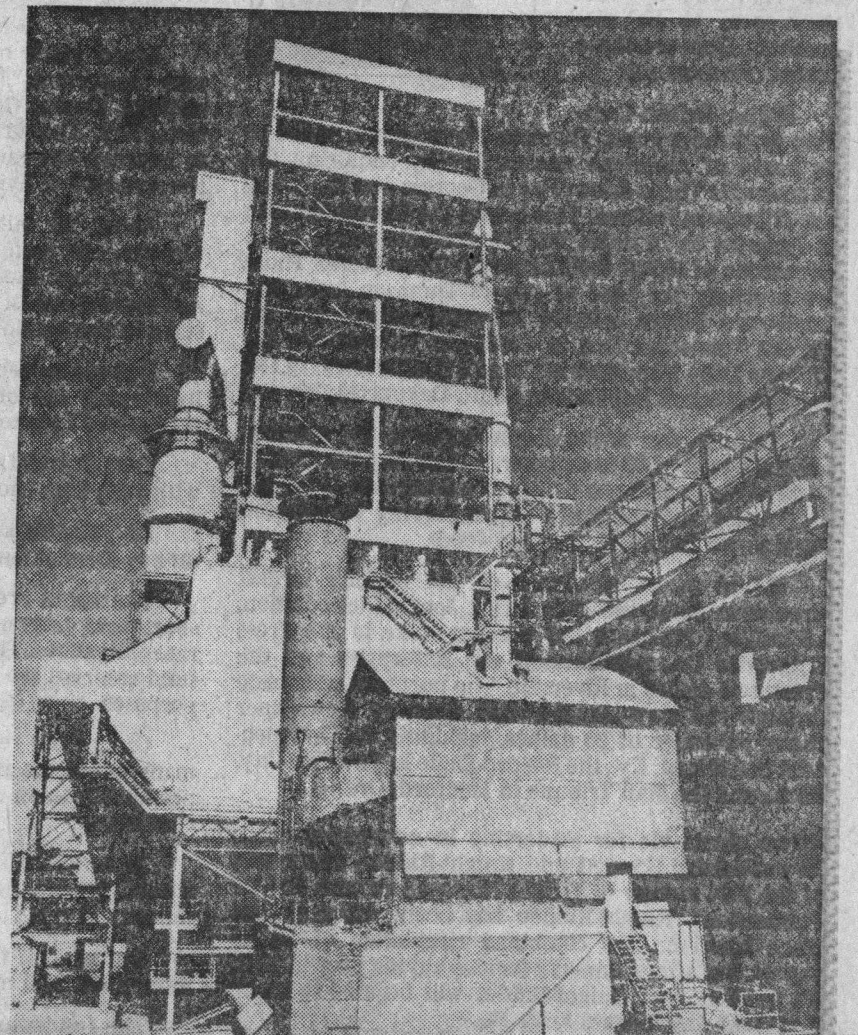
Over the next three to four years, the plant's current 230-person workforce is to be pared to 150. Fortunately, many of the workers

ferred to as "the price of progress."

To the contrary, there's a feeling of pride in the completion of a long and costly project that has transformed what was the West's oldest cement plant into its newest

quake and Fire.

Davenport cement has gone into such San Francisco landmarks as the Golden Gate and Bay bridges, the Twin Peaks and Broadway tunnels, St. Francis Hotel, Bank of



than 300 workers, many of whom lived in neat little frame houses provided by the company.

However, a highly automated cement plant, which Lone Star Industries' Davenport plant now most surely is, requires little man-

are oldtimers with 30 or 40 years on the job and attrition is being counted on to take care of the major part of the cutback.

So there's not that much grumbling among the locals about what in similar situations would be re-

Built in 1906 and operated by the Santa Cruz Portland Cement Co., the Davenport plant — at the time the second largest in the country — provided much of the cement for the rebuilding of San Francisco after the Great Earth-

America Building, Transamerica Pyramid, BART and S.F. International Airport.

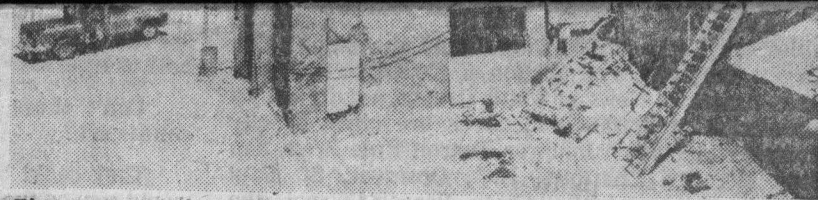
After a half century supplying the burgeoning Western construction market, the mill changed hands in 1956 when it was acquired by Pacific Coast Aggregates and again in 1965 when that company was acquired by Lone Star Industries of Greenwich, Conn.

Lone Star, the largest cement producer in the Western Hemisphere with plants scattered across the United States from Hawaii to Florida and on down into Brazil and Argentina, began planning the upgrading of the mill in 1975, but it wasn't until October 1978, that construction got under way.

"It took us over two years to get through the permitting stage," said plant manager David Maars. "Thirty-three government agencies had to be satisfied."

And the way is not clear yet. "We're still dealing with the California Coastal Commission on demolition of the old plant and the landscaping that will replace it," said Maars.

In essence, what Lone Star has done is build a new plant, interfac-



The new pre-heating tower next to a remnant of the old plant

ing each new unit, stage by stage, with its equivalents in the old facility. Consequently, there's been no serious interruption of production.

The end result is a doubling of capacity (from 390,000 to 775,000 tons) and a one-third reduction in energy consumption.

The plant is now fueled by coal, "a far more dependable, less expensive and less volatile fuel," said Maars, than the natural gas and bunker oil used in the past.

The coal is brought in from Utah in 25-car trains that once a week can be seen rattling along in front of the Santa Cruz boardwalk on the final 10-mile leg of their journey up the coast.

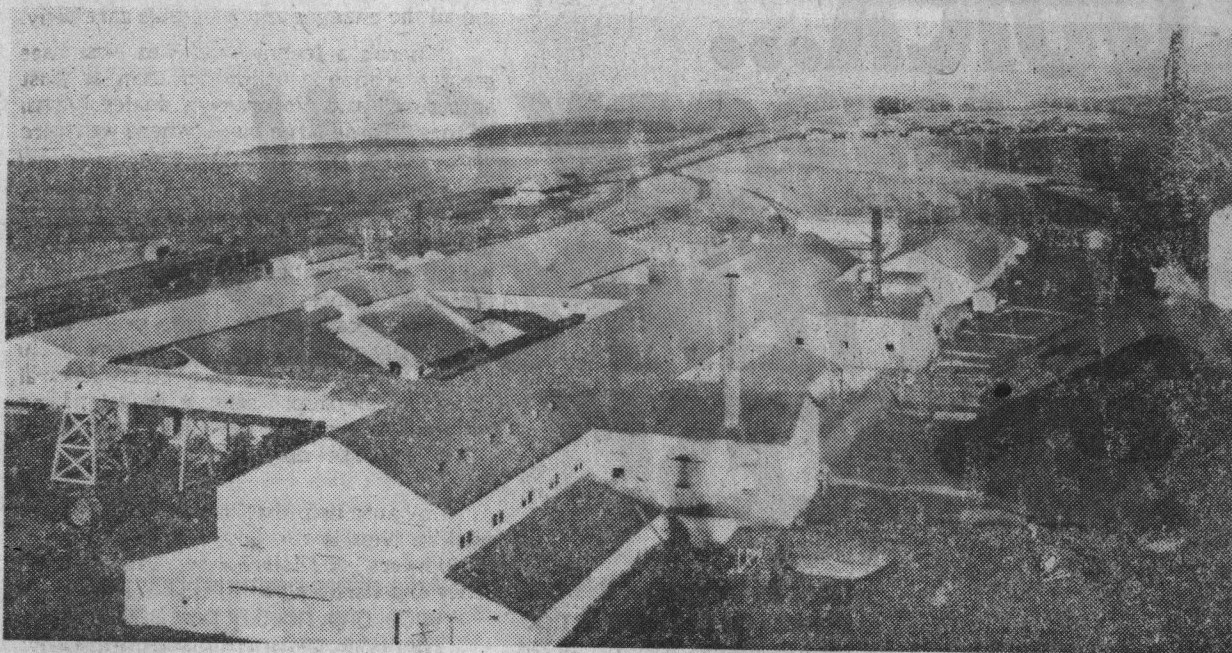
As to the operation of the mill itself, the entire process — from the initial mixing of limestone and

shale from the company's quarries in nearby Bonny Doon to the grinding of the finished product — can be controlled by one person at the computer console in the space-age control room. Television cameras, including two looking directly into the fire in the mill's 185-foot revolving kiln, monitor all aspects of production.

This is probably the cement plant with the most scenic location in the world, certainly far prettier than its three Northern California competitors — Calveras Cement's plants at San Andreas and Redding and Kaiser Cement at Cupertino.

The new Lone Star mill will be officially dedicated this Friday. The startup and shakedown phase, however, is far from complete.

"The plan," said plant manager Maars, "is to be at design capacity by 1984."



A photograph from about 1910 of the Santa Cruz Portland Cement Co. situated near the shore