

# 1987: Santa Cruz has been unique for long time

*History*  
**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The *Sentinel* is celebrating its 150th year in 2006 by reaching into our archives to republish some of the noteworthy stories out of the past. The following column, titled "Our county: always a crucible for people with new ideas," was printed in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* on July 21, 1987.

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When George Washington was declared "first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen," he joined a celebrated and select group of people. George wasn't the first nor was he the last of the innovators, differ-

ent drummers, trodders of new territory who make the history books ring with novel ideas.

Sometimes it's hard to realize that quiet little Santa Cruz has amassed its own little hoard of firsts, especially as the 20th century's homogenization of goods, services and fashions has made all parts of the country seem so much the same. But the fact remains that Santa Cruz was, in bygone days and is, even today a first-rate county.

Perhaps the most easily supported first fact (culled from the reference work "Famous First Facts") is that in 1881, James Logan first introduced the delectable loganberry, an invention few Santa Cruzans have probably ever tasted.

Isaac Graham, that fearless fighter and mountain man has, to his credit, the longest list of firsts. In 1841-42, along with the help of Peter Lassen (of Mt. Lassen fame), he built the first power saw in the West, at the confluence of Bean and Zayante creeks. Graham was also the first litigant in the first jury trial under American law in California. And our Santa Cruz man was responsible for the establishment of the first American colony west of the Rockies.

Graham, nephew of Daniel Boone, continued his list of firsts by importing the first heavy freight wagons into California in 1842. That same year, one of Graham's Indian workers found the first major gold discovery six years before the

official gold rush.

Other significant firsts include the fact that the first Protestant sermon was delivered in California by Santa Cruz' own Adna Hecox in 1846 or '47. Hecox also organized California's first Temperance Society around 1847. To balance work with play, Hecox also is remembered for building the state's first pool table, this one out of redwood.

The Pacific Coast's first paper mill, San Lorenzo Paper Mill, turned into the coast's first powder mill in 1864. And to serve the California Powder Works, the state's first covered bridge, the Paradise Park covered bridge, was built in 1872.

Post-scripting the old century, in 1900,

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Big Basin became California's first state park.

Past the turn of the century and well into the 20th century, Santa Cruz County took plenty of turns at the head of the line.

Built in 1926, Capitola's Venetian Court Motel was California's first beachfront condominium

development.

Jack O'Neill also put Santa Cruz on the map when, in the early '50s, he designed the first commercially produced wetsuits.

Even checking out the last five years of local history, one can cull some first facts.

For instance, in 1982, Sister Josephine Sullivan became the first woman chairwoman-elect of the California Hospital Association.

In 1984, George Ow Sr. became the first Asian president-elect of the 73-year-old national Exchange Club.

In late 1984, UCSC graduate Kathy Sullivan became the first U.S. woman space-walker.

And in 1984, the electronics company Plantronics was the first American company to sell lightweight telephone headsets to Japan's state-controlled telecommunications company.

While the local Bill Motto post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars was only the second post in the country to get thrown out because of members' anti-war sentiment, it proved that coming in second can be just as historically important as being first. The Bill Motto post also proved that Santa Cruz' independent spirit is still alive and kicking 218 years after Don Gaspar de Portola passed this way the first time.