



The Jolly Daubers

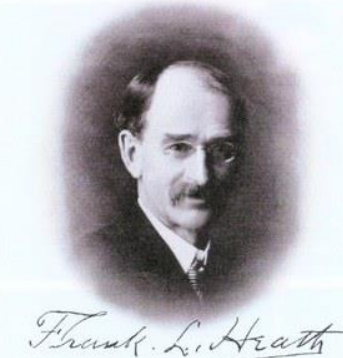
Santa Cruz has everything — ocean, hills, lagoons, open fields, blue skies, blue water, its wonderful redwood and eucalyptus groves...an ideal spot in which to live and paint. — *Cor de Gavere, Santa Cruz artist*

By Geoffrey Dunn

It has become something of an historical aphorism that the birth of the plein air art movement in California — with its implicit nod to both the Barbizon school and French Impressionism — can be traced directly to the legendary Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, which opened in San Francisco in February of that year and which featured 4,500 paintings on display by artists from around the world, including significant landscapes by Monet, Pissarro, Millet, Renoir and Corot.

In fact, the birth of the California plein air movement — possessed of a more intimate and immediate naturalism, and with softened forms and more colorful, imaginative palettes — actually began much earlier, in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

While Santa Cruz never assumed the cultural gravitas of either San Francisco or Monterey in the Golden State's burgeoning arts environment, it did develop a small yet



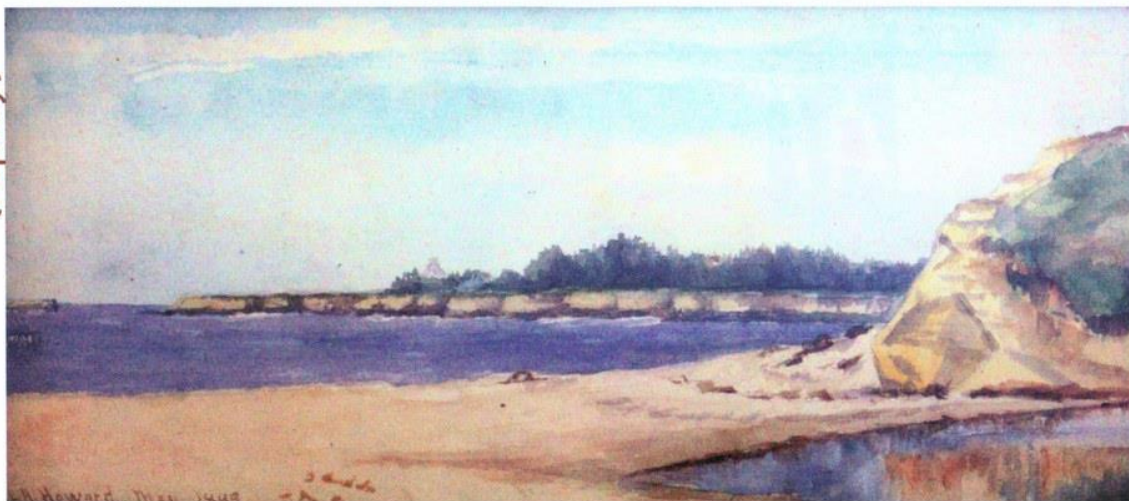
vibrant community of artists that fed off the energies of its two neighboring arts colonies.

At the center of the Santa Cruz art world was Frank Lucien Heath, a native of Oregon, but who was raised in Santa Cruz and trained at the San Francisco School of Design, where he studied under the famed landscape painter Raymond Dabb Yelland. The son of Lucien

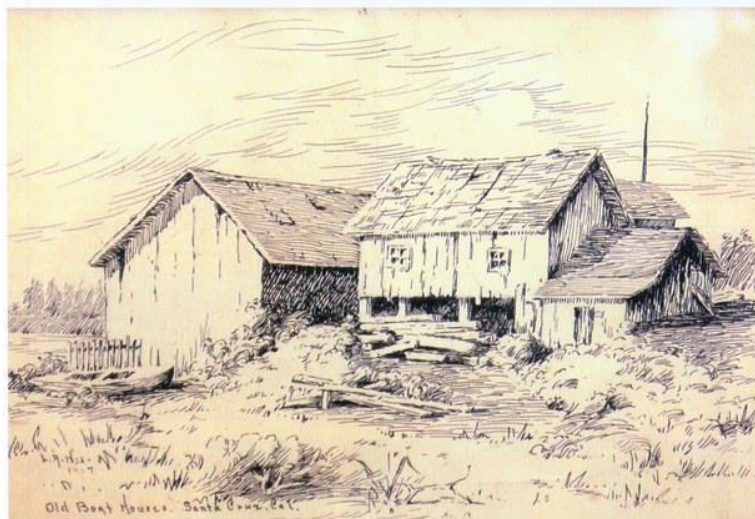
Jolly Daubers at the beach. Famed California artist Lorenzo P. Latimer oversees the work of Winnie Chamberlain and Alma Keser.

Heath — a prominent local businessman, banker and politician — Frank Heath lived and worked in San Francisco for more than a decade, before returning to Santa Cruz and eventually opening a palatial studio on Beach Hill.

In 1885, with the financial support of wealthy Santa Cruz businessman and landholder Frederick A. Hihn, Heath founded the Society of Decorative Art of Santa Cruz, which operated an art gallery on Pacific Avenue until 1891. Both he and his friend from the School of Design, Lorenzo Palmer Latimer, began teaching art classes in Santa Cruz County in the early 1890s, mostly to young women from upper middle-class backgrounds. These groups of students became known as "The Jolly Daubers" — and they would often



The view from Seabright Beach looking across the Santa Cruz waterfront to Lighthouse Point by Lillian Howard, circa 1899.



Pen-and-ink of boat house by Lillian Howard at what was then Woods Lagoon, and which is today the southwest entrance of the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor.

spend weeks painting and sketching in the redwoods or along the coastline.

One of Heath's most promising students, Lillian Josephine Dake, recalled that Heath "would rent a horse and carryall, and the livery stable would send it around early in the morning to pick up each member of the art class. Then we'd go to Felton or Scotts Valley or up the coast toward Davenport to spend a day painting." Dake and another young Jolly Dauber, Lillian A. Howard, would also come to play significant roles in the nascent Santa Cruz art scene.

Dake, a native of Milwaukee, arrived here with her widowed mother in 1877. She first began her formal study of art in New

York City, but returned to Santa Cruz, taught art here, and eventually married her mentor Heath in 1897. She was an accomplished watercolorist, her early works showing a strong trace of Barbizon tonalism with a delicate touch.

Like many other married women artists of the era, Lillian Heath opted solely for watercolors, while her husband focused on oils. She would later claim that she abandoned oils because her husband's were "so superior,"

though such a gender-determined fault line was typical of that generation.

Howard, a native of Richmond, Indiana, began her professional career teaching botany at Santa Cruz High. She was an avid naturalist painter and had 400 of her stunning botanical watercolors entered into the World's Colombian Exposition of 1893, in Chicago. An article in the January 11, 1893, Santa Cruz Daily Surf, entitled "A Floral Four Hundred," noted that "Howard's magnificent collection of Pacific Coast flowers painted in watercolors and neatly mounted has been selected for the coming 'dress rehearsal' in San Francisco and at the World's Fair in Chicago. This is a matter for congratulation, not only to Miss Howard but to Santa Cruz, as the exhibit will redound to the credit of both." She was awarded a medal of merit for her efforts.

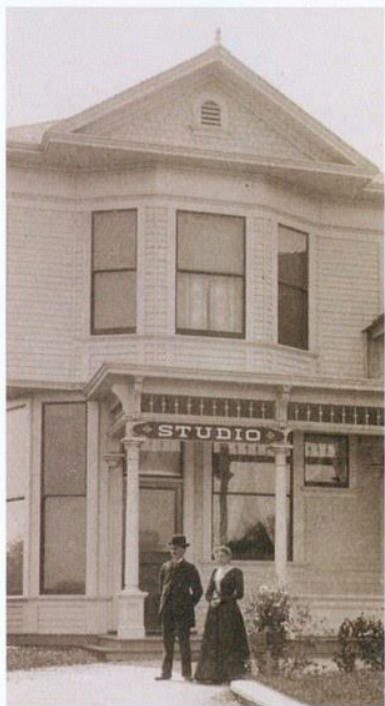
In 1911, Howard commenced teaching art classes at Santa Cruz High. Her superbly crafted pen-and-ink sketches of local scenes served to illustrate early publications of the then-monthly Santa Cruz Trident. She was also a talented landscape watercolorist, painting locations from Alaska to Africa. She was to have a profound impact on a generation of Santa Cruz High art students until she returned to her native Indiana in 1924.

The final piece of the early Santa Cruz art puzzle was provided by Heath's friend, Latimer, who developed a large following of students throughout Northern California and Nevada.

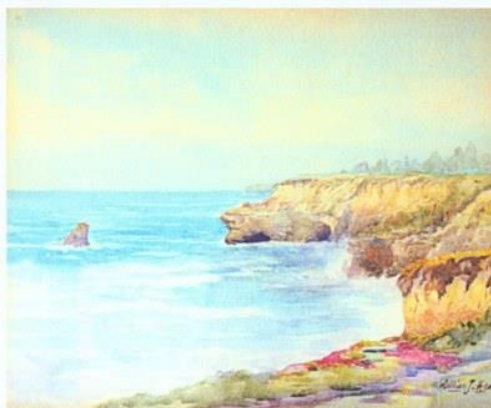
Also the son of wealth (his father was



Inside the Heath Studio, featuring the oil paintings of Frank Heath and the watercolors of Lillian Dake Heath.



The social center of the Santa Cruz art scene. Frank and Lillian Dake Heath in front of their celebrated home and studio on Beach Hill.



West Cliff Drive painted with a light and delicate palette by Lillian Dake Heath, circa 1910.

a prominent attorney and federal judge), Latimer came to Santa Cruz three times each summer, sometimes staying as long as a month, during which time he taught his pupils three days a week and painted on his own the remaining afternoons. He was particularly infatuated with the region's redwood forests, of which he wrote: "We venerate their dignity, we admire their strength and endurance, we love their tenderness and beauty."

The end of World War I — which saw Heath's health failing and Latimer refocusing his energies on the Sierra Nevada — marked

the demise of the Jolly Daubers. Heath and a new generation of artists formed the Santa Cruz Art League, a more structured and ambitious organization than the Daubers had been. Heath served briefly as the organization's founding president, until his death in 1921, when Margaret Rogers, herself a former Dauber and an artistic dynamo in her own right, took the helm.

Heath's widow, Lillian, continued to be active in the local art milieu and painted lovely marine watercolors until her death four decades later in 1961, at the age of 97. ■