

Santa Cruz Yesterdays



SCHOOL OF THE HOLY CROSS

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

The wooden building in which Holy Cross school grew up was razed in 1944 after 54 years of service. The smaller building, showing at the left, was almost 80 years old when it shared in the demolition.

The school was founded in a two-story-and-a-half adobe of the Franciscan mission period which stood just beyond the two wooden structures shown, fronting on the upper plaza just south of what is today known as School street.

It was established in December, 1862, by Father Angelo Casinova and Sister Corsina of the order of Sisters of Charity. By 1865 the smaller wooden building was erected for the order by Tom Beck, the Santa Cruz carpenter who later became California's secretary of state.

The old adobe, with its three-foot-thick walls, was torn down in 1890.

Built In 1890

In the spring and summer of the same year the larger, main building of Sisters' school was erected, fronting on Mission street hill and the surviving rock retaining wall

and steps installed. L. B. McCornick was the general contractor, with E. L. Van Cleeck as construction superintendent. Masonry work was done by W. I. Thurber, A. M. Britt, D. Butterfield, G. and G. Lease. A. S. Davies had charge of the plumbing work.

T. J. Welch of San Francisco, who designed the present Catholic church, built a short time before, was the architect.

The three-story building also had an attic for storage. The ornamental tower and steeple rose 38 feet above the main roof. Overall construction costs ran more than \$20,000. The edifice served not only as a school for children of Holy Cross parish but was a boarding

school and home for orphans of the Catholic faith.

Broad Curriculum

By the middle nineties the school was in charge of 10 Sisters, with 100 day scholars and 100 resident pupils, including the orphans. The building had spacious halls, reception rooms, school rooms, chapel and dormitories. The school's curriculum embraced a thorough English course, with music, drawing, painting, fine needle work and the languages.

Demolition of the structures shown came four years ago, during wartime, when demand was great for fine building materials, lumber and fixtures. Previously the Sisters of the teaching order had taken up residence in the former Henry Willey home across the plaza, at Sylvar and Mission streets. Principal school activities had gradually centered in the present Holy Cross school on High street, erected in 1926.

The Dominican Sisters now in charge here, followed the Sisters of Charity when the latter closed their long and faithful work in this parish.