

# Tom Majors Recalls Early Days In Old SC

By Margaret Koch  
Sentinel Staff Writer

There are some important "firsts" concerning Santa Cruz county in Tom Majors' family background.

1. His grandfather — Joseph Ladd Majors — was the first alcalde (mayor) of Santa Cruz.

2. His grandfather also built the first flour mill in Santa Cruz county. People used to come over to it from Santa Clara county with their wheat loaded on burros. They returned home with their flour.

"Very little money around in those days," commented Tom. "Grandfather would accept a portion of the wheat as payment for grinding the flour."

The mill had a huge undershot water wheel and a three-story building and stood on what today is West Escalona drive. It was powered by "Tres Ojos de Agua" — three eyes of water — which still run down from the

chalk rock banks above Escalona. Majors street up on the heights is named for the family. The whole of the heights once belonged to Tom's grandmother, Maria De Los Angeles Castro.

3. His grandfather was one of the first settlers in Scotts Valley . . . "He took up land at Camp Evers. My father, Joaquin Majors (Joseph Robert Joaquin Majors) was born there in 1840."

The grandfather, Joseph Ladd Majors, came to Santa Cruz county with Captain Isaac Graham for whom Graham Hill and road are named. Graham built the first powered sawmill in the state at the junction of Bean and Zayante creeks.

Tom himself will be 89 years old one week from next Tuesday. And his own memories of picturesque early days are still vivid.

He claims to be the first scholar in Santa Cruz county to receive a rural diploma. . . "I went to Bald Mountain school and County Superintendent J. W. Linscott presented the diploma to me — it was 1889," he recalled.

He chuckles when he tells about seeing one of Cowell's bull teams stuck in a mudhole in front of what is now the St. George hotel.

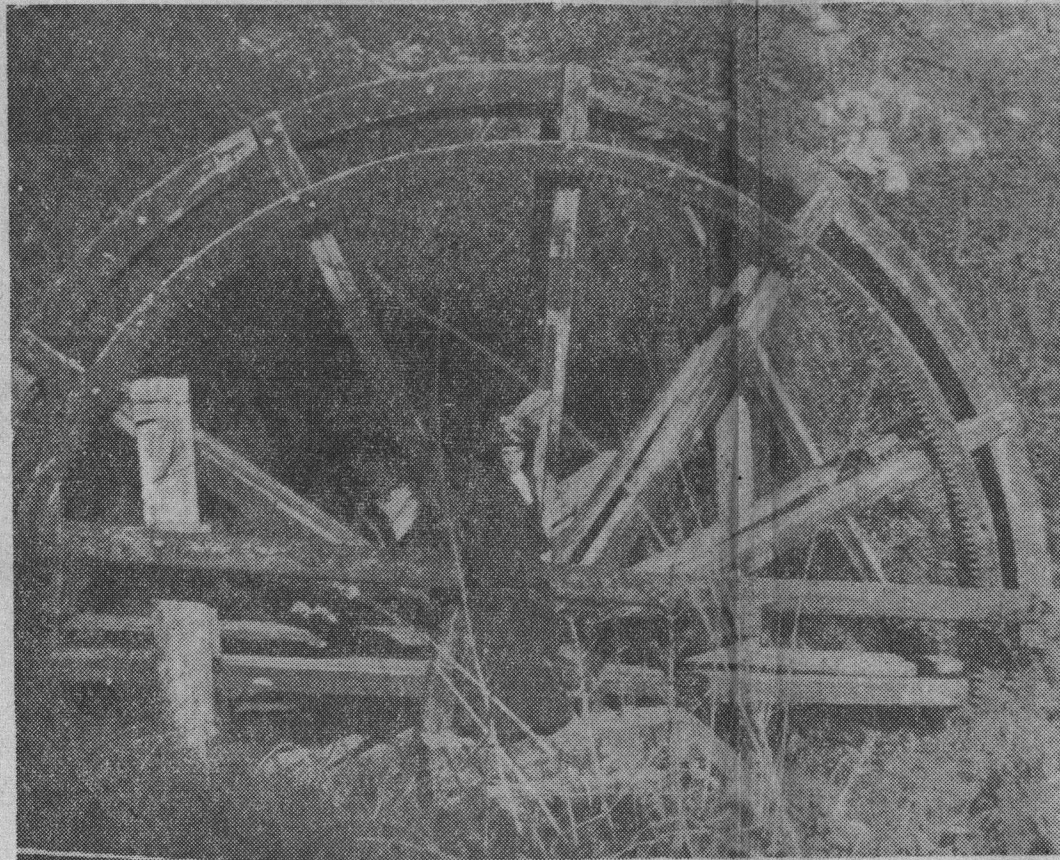
"It was loaded with barrels of lime that were being hauled down to the wharf to be loaded onto the Steamer Gypsy," he noted. Manuel Lima was Cowell's head bull team driver.

Tom likes to recall the horse races down Pacific avenue — 50c per race — through the mud and dust — lickety split!

And he knows why Cojo creek got its name. Cojo means "lame." It seems an Indian boy got partially crushed by a horse that fell on him while fording the creek.

"The boy was lamed there and the creek — which runs into Majors creek — was named that," he said.

He remembers well the bitumin mines from which early-day Santa Cruz sidewalks and streets were "black-topped." In fact he still owns most of the un-mined bitumin which is in a deposit on



The big undershot water wheel which powered the Majors' flour mill remained in place for many years after the

mill was gone. The three-story mill, which stood at the head of Walnut avenue, blew down

in a storm in 1906. This old-time photo of the wheel is from The collection of Roy Boekenogen.

his 160-acre ranch between Santa Cruz and Davenport.

"When the bitumin was being mined they had 50 or 60 teams hauling it down to box cars and flat cars. It was shipped to San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles."

His uncle, Ben Majors, started mining it about 1880. Later, Henry Majors helped start operations on Cowell's bitumin mine.

"Gold was found on Cowell property," he said. "One place is said to have produced about \$40,000 but that was before my

time."

He particularly likes to tell the eagle story.

It seems a pair of eagles had nested for years on his ranch. He liked to know they were there . . . "You know, the eagle mates for life," he noted.

Then, one dark day, a hunter shot one of the great birds. The other sat at the nest mourning and the sight got Tom down. He wrote a letter to the Santa Cruz Sentinel.

"Josephine McCracken took it up — she was a woman reporter

and killed the Bandit, Tiburecio Vasquez.

"Bob was chief of police in Santa Cruz and Charlie Lincoln was sheriff," he said.

Word came that Vasquez was holed up sleeping in a barn near Watsonville. Lincoln and Majors made up a posse and cornered the bandit in the barn.

"It was night — he was sleeping in the hayloft and no one wanted to climb up to scare him down," Tom said with a grin.

Vasquez apparently heard the men outside because he suddenly jumped down from the loft on the other side.

"Lincoln shot — his gun misfired and Vasquez turned and fired a shot that grazed the side of my Uncle Bob's head. He wasn't hurt bad — and he fired a shot right through Vasquez' heart."

Tom has been on his present ranch for 67 years. . . "Only time I ever went away from Santa Cruz county was for two years to San Pedro."

He and his late brother, Joe Majors, came to work the place in 1897 when it was part of the Margaret D. Enright estate. Before that it had been the Gurshee property, and originally it comprised more than 1000 acres.

In 1917 the two brothers bought the ranch and continued to work it as a dairy ranch and to run beef cattle while they paid off the mortgage.

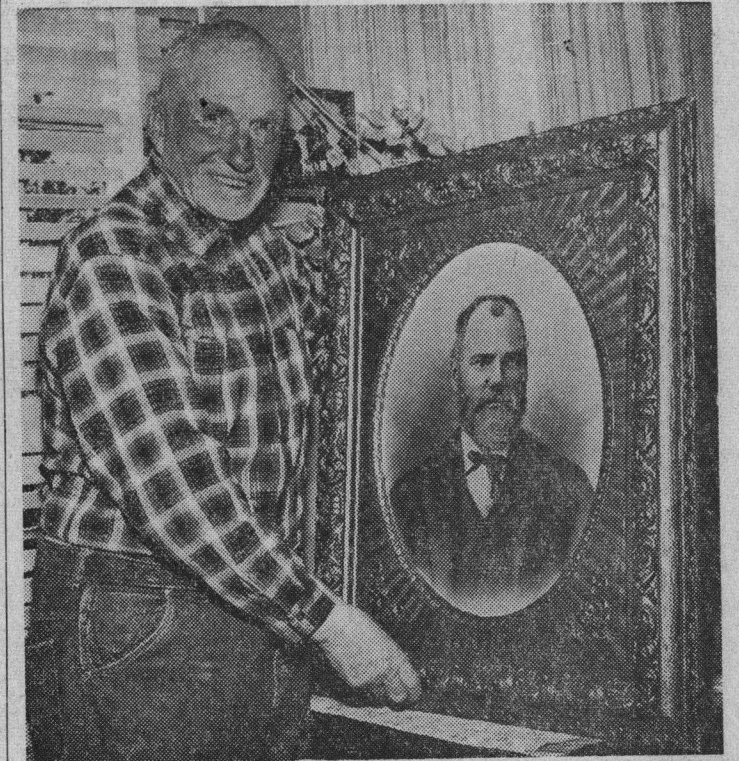
Tom's latest interest is oil. He feels sure there is oil under his ranch and he "witches" it with a divining rod. The rod writhes and whips in his hands like something alive. . . "It's there but it's deep," he explained following a demonstration.

As I left the ranch house he and his wife built in 1927, the cliff swallows were noisily nesting under its eaves.

"Been coming here for years — they're used to me," he said.

**Salvation Army  
Pick-Up Service**

The Salvation Army announced yesterday that it will have Red Shield Truck service in the Santa



Tom Majors, who was born in Santa Cruz county 89 years ago June 23, shows an old portrait photograph of his father, Joaquin Majors. Joaquin built and operated one of the first

flour mills in the county just below Escalona heights. Tom's grandfather, Joseph Ladd Majors, was Santa Cruz' first alcalde (mayor). ♦ ♦ ♦

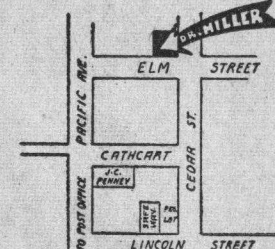
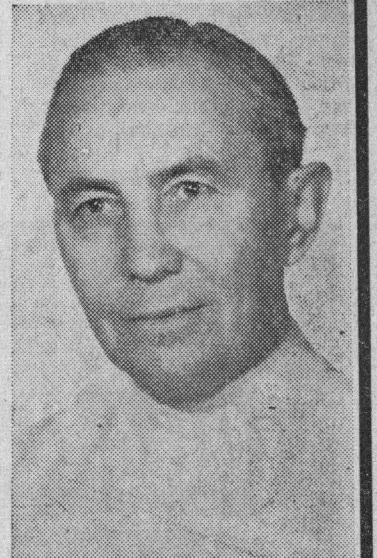
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A mother came pleading the other day for her youngster who she would like to send to summer camp for a week. We will call him Johnny.

Johnny had not had an easy time in life and many obstacles had come into his pathway. Johnny's mother would have liked to send Johnny to camp all summer but she could not even send him for one week.

Johnny is an average boy, one that does fairly well in school, attends church but Johnny does have his problems.

Johnny needs your help to send him to camp!

The Salvation Army has had numerous requests like this because of the lovely Camp Grounds in the Santa Cruz Mountains, located on Bean Creek Road, Camp Redwood

**Public Hearings On County's 1964-65**

**Zoners Okay**