

Save

DAVENPORT WHALE AREA DEDICATION
SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 1961

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PROGRAM

WELCOME: Elio Orlando, Chairman, Whale Dedication

COLOR GUARD: Santa Cruz Naval Reserve

UNVEILING OF SIGN: Glenn Coolidge, Assemblyman

BLESSING: Father Gione, San Vincent de Paul Parish

MUSIC SELECTIONS: Santa Cruz High School Band under direction of Merle Good

DEDICATION SPEECH: Glenn Coolidge, Assemblyman

APPRECIATION: Hulda McLean, Supervisor, Seaside District

MUSIC SELECTIONS: Santa Cruz High School Band

INTRODUCTION OF DIGNITARIES: Alvin Gregory, President, Davenport Improvement Club

SPONSORED BY THE DAVENPORT IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Whaling Area Committee:
Elio Orlando, Chairman
Francis Gregory
Alvin Gregory
Alverda Orlando
Myrtle Garaventa
Charles Bella
Pete Pianavilla

Camera Contest Committee:
Myrtle Garaventa, Chairman
John Monti
Hulda McLean
Elio Orlando

Traffic Committee:
Davenport Volunteer Fire Department
Francis Gregory, Fire Chief
Larry diTano, Chairman

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DAVENPORT

The earliest settler in the Davenport area was Captain John Davenport, a whaler. Whales were exceedingly plentiful off the Monterey and Santa Cruz coasts during the first half of the 19th century and whaling was a lucrative venture as late as the eighties.

Originally Captain Davenport came from Tiverton, Rhode Island. He was living in Soquel when he became interested in the area around Agua Puerca Creek. He built a 450 foot wharf at the mouth of this creek for shipping tanbark, lumber, posts, fuel wood and lime.

While residing in this area he observed the number of whales and devised a scheme whereby he could go out from shore in a whaling boat, capture a whale, and tow it to land where the blubber could be removed and tried-out in great pots instead of following the earlier method of completing the whole operation on board while at sea.

Captain Davenport's new method of capturing whales made it possible for men to live on the shore and hunt whales for a few hours as the opportunity for capturing one of these huge mammals arose. The Portuguese who came from the Azores to settle in this area maintained lookouts with bells and watchmen to sound signals when they sighted whales. As soon as the warning came the men would leave their farms and go forth in their boats looking for the whales.

Among the living pioneers of this area there exists some controversy over the hunting of whales. One group insists that Davenport Landing was never a whaling station. They further note that all whales were towed to Moss Landing where the oil was melted down from the blubber in great iron pots. The other group is just as insistent that the whaling station was at Davenport Landing. The available sources point toward the idea of the second group.

In the year 1888 Captain Davenport moved to Santa Cruz where he became Justice of the Peace and real estate agent. This was when he was 70 years old.

The first Santa Cruz home of John Davenport was where the Santa Cruz Hotel now stands. Later he moved to a California Street home that was situated across from the high school. Here he spent his last days.

Other than the settling of the town of Davenport, he is accredited with establishing Moss Landing and helping F. A. Hinn build up the Capitola wharf.

WHALE AREA

The inscription on the whale sign is just a reminder to the readers that in the past and present centuries the Davenport Area was and still is a scene of whales. It was most known during the 17th, 18th and early part of the 19th centuries. Since the early 19th century this hunting station had been gradually discontinued as the California Whaling Industry faded away.

The reason the whales came to this area is that they feed in the large beds of kelp available and scratch their itchy skins on the rocks along the beaches of Davenport.

The mammals usually migrate in huge groups from January 1 to May 15. The majority are Gray Whales. In these Pacific territories they always migrate at the same time of the year. The best time to see them is on a clear day when the ocean is calm.

Through extensive research it was found that in 1846 and 1875 about 11,000 whales were killed in the Pacific Ocean. It is also known that each whale produces an average of 20 to 70 barrels of good oil. A whale of 113 feet weights 170 tons, the tongue weighs over 3 tons. An average whale weighs a tone and a half per lineal foot. The whales that have already been captured measure in length from 5 feet to 115 feet long. The Gray Whales range from 40 to 60 feet long.

Whaling has been done in these waters by many nations. There were Chinese, Russians, Spaniards, Yankees, San Franciscans, Japanese, Norwegians and many others. We found that they had all been very prosperous. During the height of the whaling period, the Gray Whale was almost extinct but recovered enough to be fished by foreign factory ships in the 1920's and 30's. Since 1938 it has been given complete protection by International agreement.

Davenport is near the migration line of the whales because it extends out into the ocean. This town is one of the few points in California that is so far out in the ocean.

The most successful year of hunting whales was 1862. At this time 1,700 barrels of oil was secured by the whaling company of John Davenport. The usual amount of oil produced was between 600 and 1,000 barrels a year.