

MYSTERIES OF THE
MASONIC CASTLE

A History of "The Ferrari Bldg."
By Ross Eric Gibson

Although known since 1956 as the "Ferrari Bldg.", the structure was built in 1887 as the Masonic Temple. Its current facade dates from 1912, when a third story was added. It has been occupied continuously up until the Loma Prieta Earthquake of 1989. The story behind this building is a fascinating chapter in Santa Cruz history.

In 1887, a mysterious castle-like building was constructed on Pacific Ave., at the head of Walnut St. The site was chosen so that, like the 1873 Odd Fellows Building at the head of Church St., the towered structure would be prominent from two major approaches.

The architect of the building was Charles Wellington Davis, whose elegant touches graced many a mansion and public hall in Santa Cruz. One could see similar detailing on the tower, as on the castle-like facade of the Armory Building, which stood nearby at the corner of Front St. and Soquel Ave. (now the old Bank of America parking lot). Davis called the style "Crusader Gothic", yet Davis was not the building's designer.

The building was intended to be built of brick, apropos of a group calling itself "masons", but financing dictated it be executed in wood. But Davis' was now in Los Angeles, as demand for his talents had him working on a number of projects down there. So local architect John Williams modified the design for wood construction. But Mr. Williams wasn't the building's designer either.

The building was conceived by Dr. Oscar L. Gordon, who served as Master of the Lodge in 1885 and '86. He laid out the arrangement of interior spaces, and formulated the arrangement of the facade's features. His concept was then given to Davis for polishing, and for detailing the unspecified segments.

This was an age when a building's design was intended to announce what the building was used for; such as: Greek Revival federal buildings to indicate a place of Democracy; Italian Renaissance auditoriums, as a place of culture; or even a Tudor stables, to strike an "Ascot" thoroughbred connection. And unlike the architect, Dr. Gordon was in this instance qualified to infuse in the building's style some of the historic mysteries of the Freemason's origins.

C. W. DAVIS

This is not to say Mr. Davis had no influence on the composition. An architect this "in-demand" would hardly have been sought out to execute the design, if he was not intended to leave his mark.

And what a mark it was! In Santa Cruz, Davis had designed the 1872 F.A. Hihn Mansion (where the city hall now stands), which was the finest Italian Villa even built in town. Its features included the town's first elevator, a glass conservatory, elegant interior woodwork and frescos, and a roller-skating rink in the attic!

Frescos could also be found in his other works, such as the 1877 Knight's Opera House on Union St., with cupids in the clouds on the ceiling, and Atlas supporting the world painted on the asbestos stage curtain. Religious depictions filled his 1884 German Methodist Church on Washington St. The 1883-86 Stick-Eastlake home of his son, Calvin (207 Mission St.), has ceiling murals of a cupid in a snail-drawn chariot on the living room ceiling, and a wolf devouring a lamb on the dining room ceiling. Mayor Gustave Bowman so admired the house, he had one built on Beach Hill with many similar features.

Thus, interior woodworking and frescos were some of the features one expected to find in a Davis-styled building.

THE GRAND UNVEILING

Saturday, March 26th, 1887, began in a dim overcast, as Mason's waited at the Uptown Station (remodeled as today's Goodwill Building), which stood on Union St. across from Knight's Opera House. But as visiting Masons and Knights from Watsonville, Gilroy, Holister, San Jose, Salinas, Monterey, and other places arrived by train, the clouds lifted, bringing brilliant sunshine to the rest of the day.

A grand procession formed, headed by the Pythian Band in cross-shaped formation, with the Knights Templar escorting the grand officers, and the Master Mason's following. Upon arriving at the Temple, they filed upstairs into the lodge room, followed by a large audience of women. It was the first chance to see the new Temple, and the impression was of entering an exotic opera house.

Downstairs, a drugstore dominated the street frontage. On the south side, a Moorish arch led to a small lobby. To the left of the lobby was the entrance to the Ballroom, which could seat over 200 during banquets. It was lavishly decorated in Moorish Gothic decor, with a frescoed ceiling, Moorish stage arch on the back wall, and over \$600. worth of oak tables and chairs.

Upstairs, two office suites occupy the front portion, each lit by a large commodious bay windows. One office was occupied by the Santa Cruz Development Association, of which Dr. Gordon was a director. The Lodge Room is against the back wall, and would be in use every evening in the week, as it was rented out to six-other orders. The space was truly grand, measuring 55' long and 34' wide, with an 18' ceiling. It was lit

by four large windows against the back wall, and "ventilated by the Cottier system". Fine wood paneling was combined with stenciled walls, and a frescoed ceiling, which like the stain glass touches, depicted Masonic symbols. The room was furnished with "richly patterned" furniture and desks, fine Brussels carpeting, and a silver-plated fountain with a marble base, designed by Dr. Gordon. Four anterooms adjoined this hall, for robing and other uses.

Lighting throughout the building was gas or oil, in Moorish or Byzantine style chandeliers.

THE GRAND DEDICATION

The ladies of the Eastern Star had decorated the building for its dedication. At the entrance to the ballroom was an arch of brake ferns and callas, amid other floral arrangements. In the main hall, a compass over the Grand Master's chair was made of violets, with a mason's square of scarlet geraniums enclosing the letter G made of acacia blossoms. Floral spheres hung from the chandeliers.

The throng sat on padded couches against the walls, leaving the center of the floor around the alter, open for the ceremony. The proceedings were gaveled to order by Orlando J. Lincoln, a distant cousin of Abraham Lincoln, and brother of Charlie Lincoln, the former "boy-sheriff" of Santa Cruz who captured the bandit Tiburcio Vasquez. In 1884, Orlando had joined Fred Swanton in one of the west's pioneer telephone services in Santa Cruz. He also served as post master until 1918, and helped establish the bulb growing business in the county.

The men and women of the choir opened the program with "Father, O Hear Us", accompanied by M.A. Boulevard on the Temple's new organ. The instrument had been donated by the Masonic Senior Grand Warden of California, M.M. Estee. Louisa Hastings (wife of boardwalk bandleader George Hastings) sang the solo passage.

C.D. Folsom then presented the new lodge to the Masons, and Santa Cruz Grand Master Atkinson formally accepted it. Then he dedicated the temple, as via place that many a character might be formed upon the principles of Masonry, of virtue and universal benevolence." Then the offerings of corn, wine, and oil were brought and placed on the alter, as the officers gathered around it, and recited the rendering of the Grand office, the prayers, and the benediction.

HISTORY OF SANTA CRUZ MASONS

Dr. Gordon, past Grand Master, was currently serving as Grand Architect pro-tem, as he stepped forward-to give a brief history of the Freemasons in Santa Cruz, and the circumstances that brought about the decision to build a new hall.

It was 1853 when 16 men met in the Filipe Armas Adobe on School St. Armas was a former soldier with the San Francisco Presidio, and had helped subdue the wild cattle that were plaguing the Hawaiian Islands. In 1842, Armas bought this former mission adobe from its Indian occupants, and added a second floor meeting room, where the Temperance Society held some of their meetings.

Their first treasurer was Frenchman John Baptist Arcan, who with his wife, were survivors of the 1850 party that named Death Valley. He built a combination store and home on Pacific Ave., at the corner of Soquel Ave., which was then known as Arcan St. (This is where the old Bank of America bldg. stands). Above his store was Arcan Hall, which became the meeting place for the masons in 1854, when their enrollment grew to 27 members.

In 1868, G.B.V. DeLamater (called "Alphabet DeLamater" due to all his initials), helped construct the Hihn/ DeLamater Building on Pacific Ave., three doors north of Locust St. Downstairs was the new "Bank of Santa Cruz County", and upstairs was Masonic Hall.

The "Idlewild Chapter" of the Eastern Star was established at the hall in 1876 in order to give the women a more active roll in the Masonic order. DeLamater Hall was outgrown as annual attendance reached 150-200 members.

In 1887, half of a vacant lot formerly owned by Wm. F. Cooper, was purchased for from \$2,500-\$3,000. The two story building placed on it was 35' wide and 110' deep, at a cost of \$9,000. Davis did the woodwork, Charles Van Wagner did the plastering, and the painting was by Frank Becker.

Another song from the choir closed the ceremony, and the assembly retired downstairs to the ballroom, where a grand banquet was held.

MASONIC MYSTERIES

The after dinner orator was visiting Mason, John Ellis Young. He complimented the architecture, which hinted at the origins of the order. He said, "Those who trace its founding only to its London revival in 1717, have but entered on the threshold of presume to its history. But I do not know whether it was during the Renaissance, or the Crusades, or earlier; nor whether its was founded by Bonnie Prince Charlie, Alfred the Great King Arthur, or in the court of King Solomon. How much of it is true, and how much is merely wishful thinking?"

Additional speeches were given by visiting members, such as Mr. Estee, and then Dr. Knight (of Knight's Opera House) said, "I'd now like to call on the shortest man in Santa Cruz who can make the biggest speech on nothing, the chief engineer of this banquet -and the Generalissimo in general -- Louis Schwartz; to provide the closing comments". The Schwartz & Brownstone Grocery" was only a few doors north of the

Masonic Temple, and had provided the food. Moreover, Mr. Schwartz was also the president of County Bank, and had provided part of the financing!

He thanked the ladies of the Eastern Star for preparing the food, and said a ball would be given in the ballroom that evening.

VENETIAN ERA

The Great Fire of 1894 destroyed the Front St. Chinatown, leveled much of the Tricorner Block (bordered by Pacific, Front, & Cooper streets), and gutted the 1866 court house. In the major rebuilding effort that followed, an emphasis was placed on architecture inspired by the Renaissance, giving us a Romanesque court house and library, Renaissance County Bank building, and Florentine post office, etc.

To help celebrate and publicize the recovery, philanthropist James Philip Smith created a lagoon on the lower San Lorenzo River, and sponsored the week-long Venetian Water Carnival. It featured parades on Pacific Ave., Floral Boat Parades on the lagoon, water sports, entertainment from the River Stage, masked balls, and elaborate fireworks displays. --The water-fair was so popular, it became an annual event. And the new downtown was soon promoting itself as 'The Florence of the West'.

Fred Swanton built the boardwalk in 1903, and was making plans to develop Beach Flats near the river-mouth I'll a permanent Water-fair park, with Venetian & Moorish architecture to set the scene for the annual event. In anticipation of its completion, Swanton built a stage on the Opera Island which existed before the 1955 levies made it a part of the boardwalk's far parking lot) . And here he sponsored the most lavish of the Water Carnivals in 1912.

Swanton's architect for the Venetian park was William Weeks, the same man who designed the boardwalk's Casino & Plunge. So when the Masons decided to add a third floor ballroom the following year to replace the one that had become the Jewel Theater, they hired Weeks for the job. He suggested a new facade was needed to accommodate the third story into the design, and proposed "Venetian Italianate Style", which was both in keeping with the Renaissance downtown, and the annual Venetian Water Carnivals.

When Swanton sold the boardwalk, even though the Carnivals continued for nearly 20 more years, his park plans were slowly forgotten, and only a few of Weeks' proposed structures (such as the River Bathhouse) were constructed. Weeks' Masonic Temple design was likewise put on hold, due to war activities in 1914, and later simplified when remodeling began in 1916.

A tower had been called for to replace the old one, to give the Temple some visibility from Pacific Ave. (for the facade disappeared when viewed sideways). But the cupola was never built, and a proposed balcony was replaced with an iron fire escape

balcony. A stain glass lunette with Masonic symbols was placed over the street entrance to the stairway. it was probably recycled from one of the four windows removed from the back wall of the Lodge room, during interior remodeling which left that wall with two side windows and a central alter. Ceiling frescos were also replaced, perhaps due to old plaster fractures from the 1906 quake.

The prominence of the new Masonic facade along the view-corridor of Walnut St., inspired a number of other businesses there to adopt "Venetian Italianate Style", making this the only Venetian street in Santa Cruz. These buildings included the weeks "Pacific Telephone Bldg." (where Shandrydan is now); the Arts & Crafts Bldg. (east corner of Cedar & Walnut); and the Dime Theater at mid-block across the street. Even the 1920s "New Santa Cruz Theater is might be called an art deco interpretation of the genre, as it mixed Moorish & Italian details throughout the structure.

In Dec., 1927, it was decided that the Masons had once-again outgrown their temple, so a committee was appointed to select a new site. Three days later, while conducting ceremonies on the second floor, a fire broke out in the storage room below, and spread before it was noticed. It caused considerable damage, but not as much as it could have if it had gone unnoticed in an empty building. So the Masons found themselves in a new hall overnight, meeting in the Elks Lodge next door until repairs could be made on their own building.

Between repair bills and budget short-falls, the Masons hit on what they thought was a brilliant solution: they would trade the temple for a large vacant lot at the corner of Pacific and Cathcart streets (where "Cat & Canary' is today). Then they would lease their old building until sufficient funds to construct a new temple had materialized. But they made this deal on the eve of the Great Depression, and ended up paying on both sites and never did build at the Cathcart St. address.

BUSINESS HISTORY

Other occupants of the storefront was Becknell's Golden Rule Dept. Store, from 1926 to 1932. After that, the Depression left the shop vacant up to the end of World War II, except for four businesses, which stayed barely a year each. These were Hugh Bollinger's dress shop in 1935; W.W. Wilson confectionery in 1938; Walace & Fitzgerald Jewelers in 1940; and Burns Davis dress shop in 1941.

After the war, the ground floor was divided into two spaces, the larger space to the north. The Pacific Ave. street numbering system was also changed in 1948. Formerly numbered from the Lower Plaza to the wharf (making the shop #161 & the Masonic Hall #163); it was now numbered from the wharf to the Lower Plaza. This made the large shop 1222, the small shop 1220, and the Masonic Hall 1218.1.

Cox Electric, long housed in the Mann Building just north of the Masonic Temple, moved to shop 1222 from 1948 to 1953. In 1953, the Cox store shared space with Post

Office Substation #1. Next door in 1220 were stock brokers from 1948 to 1955. These were Davis & Mejia until 1954, when they changed to Reynolds & Co.

Dave Ferrari had built his florist business in a shop on the Trust Building's Soquel Ave. side, starting in 1942. In 1954, he completely overhauled the interior of the Masonic Building in preparation for moving his business there. He also removed an iron fire escape from the front of the building. After the Flood of 1955, he redid the back section of the structure.

The Masonic Lodge moved out around this time, and Ferrari bought the building from John Sinnhuber on March 23, 1956. Sinnhuber had probably purchased the building from theater owner and developer, Andy Balich, who had purchased it from the Masonic Club. After the Masons abandoned the old hall, it was used for a time as the headquarters of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, then remained vacant up to 1989.

During Ferrarils ownership, and occupancy of shop 1222; the neighboring 1220--was occupied by a hearing aid center, run first by Eddie Orr, then Carl Boppell. They remained from 1956 to 1984, and were afterwards replaced by 'Ambiance' clothing stores All new windows were installed on the third floor in Dec. of 1985, and all new windows on the second floor followed, to improve the Pacific Ave. facade.