

HISTORY OF DAVENPORT

By

Third and Fourth Grades

And

Nancy Divine, teacher

Pacific School 1959-60

Davenport, California

Introduction

Curiosity about an old jail without its guests, abandoned buildings that suggest the hum of bygone days has led us to explore this history of Davenport.

Noting the scarcity of printed material on this subject, we have collected data for this little booklet for our reference as well as for others who might be interested in Davenport.

We wish to thank all who have contributed information and are especially indebted to Mrs. Elvezia Gregory, Mr. Charlie Bella, and Mrs. Hazel Thomson, our principal, for first-hand accounts of the development of this community and to Miss Harriet Stull for suggestions and help with the illustrations.

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Nancy Divine, Teacher

HOW DAVENPORT BEGAN

Our little village of Davenport really began with the building of the cement plant in 1905. But for its name we need to go back in history to 1867, when Captain Joh P. Davenport, a whaling master, living in Soquel, built a 450-foot wharf on the El Jarro Rancho at the mouth of the Agua Puerca Creek for shipping tanbark, lumber, posts, fuel wood and lime.

According to Leon Rowland's "Annals of Santa Cruz", Captain Davenport from Tiverton, Rhode Island, had come around the horn in 1849, gone back by the way of the Isthmus, and in 1851 returned with his wife and the schooner "Ann McKinn".

He organized the Davenport Whaling Company and operated at Monterey and Moss Landing. This has led to the erroneous notion that Davenport Landing started as a whaling station. Whales caught up and down the coast were towed to Moss Landing where

The valuable oil was melted down from the blubber in great iron pots.

An old directory of Santa Cruz County, published in 1875, shows Davenport's Landing (as it was first spelled) to be about fourteen miles northwest of Santa Cruz.

The following names and occupations are listed among the residents:

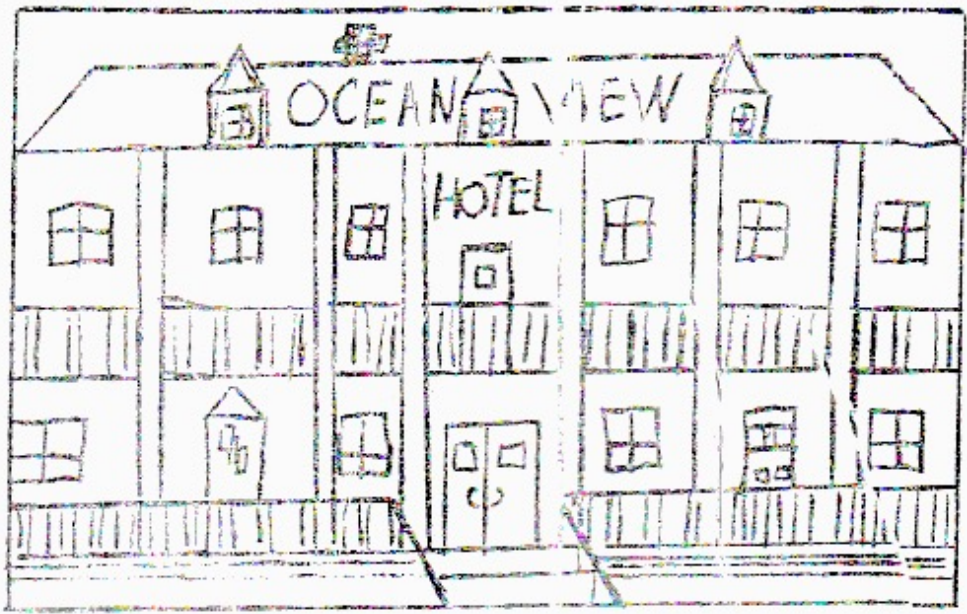
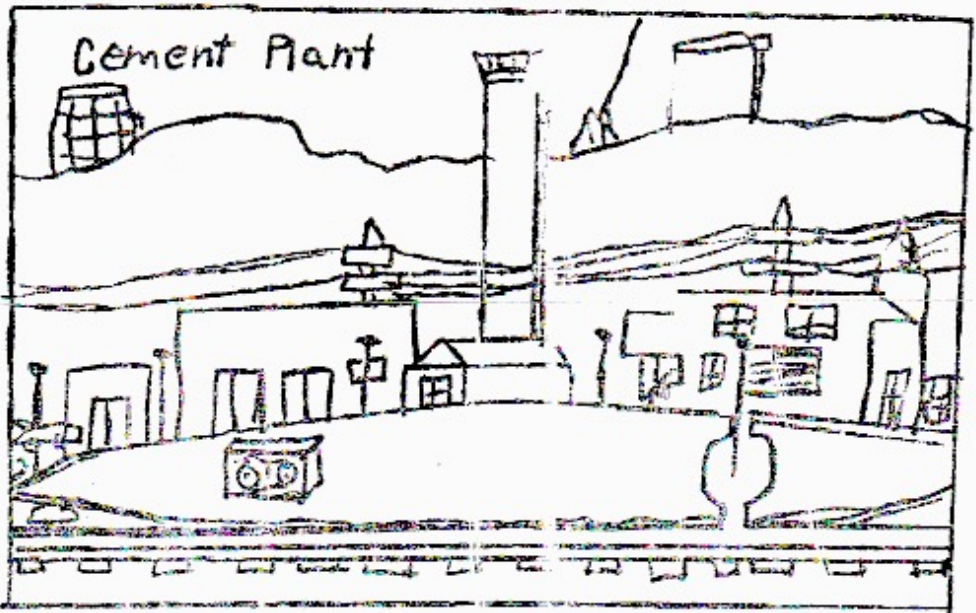
Chandler, Frank	Farmer
Davenport, J.P.	Prop. Dav. Landing
Davenport, J.O.	Teamster
Dingwall, Thomas	Lumber & Grain
Laird, G.P.	Dairyman
Lorenzen, Lawrence	Ship Carpenter
McKindrey, J.	Dairyman
Purdy, William	Gen'l Merchandise
Roques, Auguste	Hotel Proprietor
Spargue, Benj. F.	Blacksmith
Taliaferro, J.W.	Blacksmith
Utt, L. A.	Hotel Proprietor
Waldo, H. P.	Butcher
Wilson, Chas. F.	Farmer

We have learned that in addition to several homes there were three hotels, two

Stores, a post office, school, three saloons, and a blacksmith shop. One of the remaining buildings is the old Pinkham home which belonged to the blacksmith. On this property, now owned by Douglas DeJesus, the old Agua Puerca school can still be seen.

About fifty people lived in this little settlement and many made their living by hauling lumber and posts down from the hills to the wharf where they were loaded for shipment. The San Francisco and Oakland area used great quantities of wood for fuel that were shipped from Davenport Landing. Shipping tanbark and lime as well as calves, butter and cheese from nearby dairies provided other employment.

Due to the decline of the lumber industry and to a great fire in 1915 and again in 1924 which destroyed many of the buildings, the British captain's little village finally became a "ghost town".



CEMENT PLANT IS BUILT

The Santa Cruz Portland Cement Company (presently owned by Pacific Cement & Aggregates, Inc.) first bought eleven acres in Santa Cruz near where the Linda Vista Market on Mission Street is located, with the intention of building the plant there. But further consideration of the dust problem and probably distance from the supply of raw materials led to the location near San Vicente Creek.

Mr. Bella, in a talk at our school, gives an interesting account of Davenport's beginnings. On December 21, 1905 at 8:30 A.M. he left Santa Cruz by a horse drawn stage which carried four passengers and started for what is now known as Davenport. He had come from Boulder Creek, where, at 15 years of age and recently arrived from Italy, he had learned something about logging and work at a sawmill. His purchase of a ticket and a blanket cost him \$2.25 and the journey lasted until 5:00 P.M.

At this time the Southern Pacific and Ocean Shore Railroads were being built, the dirt roads were torn up and early rains had made the ground so soft that passengers had to get out and pry the stage up only to sink in the mud twenty feet farther on.

On arrival he found two-men tents, without floors, one round tent for a cookhouse, where a Chinese cook prepared the meals on a small stove, tended the fire, and washed the dishes.

Mr. Bella's new job was at Cox's sawmill which was just at the foot of the quarry camp near the San Vicente Creek. When he arrived, the machinery was out in the open and their first task was to cover it. This took two weeks for he tells us that in those days they were having 50 – 60 – 70 inches of rain.

After that an office was built, followed by one cabin, a cookhouse, then more cabins. By the spring of 1906 they had started to operate on a heavy scale. The bigger timber went for building at the plant while smaller stuff was

used to build the town of Davenport. Two groups of tents were put up where Newtown is, one for the iron workers, the other for the carpenters. Two big dormitories were built near San Vicente Creek. Men made excavations then with picks and shovels. Toward the last part of 1906 the Italia or “lower” Hotel was built, providing 64 beds. Wages were \$2.00 per day or 20¢ per hour.

The earthquake on the 18th of April 1906 caused a delay in getting machinery which had to be shipped from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Two of the railroad bridges between Santa Cruz and Davenport had not been completed at the time. It was the first part of April 1907 before the kiln was fired at the plant.

When the plant started operating on a full scale as many as 300 men worked at the quarry. A hotel was built there to house the workers. Today less than 40 men do the same work with modern machinery.

Growth of the Village

In October of 1906 when the plant still had not started full scale operations, Mrs. Elvezia Gregory arrived in Davenport to work as a bookkeeper at the new general merchandise store, managed by her uncle, D. Morelli, who still resides in Davenport. She was a young girl just out of business college and relates that she was very disappointed to find the little village of tents where she had expected a town. A dirt road wound through the coastal hills and tules grew where homes were later built.

Having spent most of her life here she has been able to furnish us much of the information collected for this history.

The first home built was for her uncle, Mr. Morelli; the next for a Mr. Davis, the plant superintendent. By 1907 Coast Dairies and Land Company began building the town.

Some of the people waiting in tents had come here from Napa, California and others from the far away city of Allentown,

Pennsylvania, where they had been connected with plants at these places. To provide living quarters for some of the 800 workers, another hotel, the Ocean View, was built in 1907. George Beard was the first manager. In 1919 Charles Bella, who now lives in Santa Cruz, took over this hotel.

Mrs. Coolidge as post mistress until the post office was moved to the Davenport Cash Store, where Mr. Morelli was post master. Here Mrs. Gregory served as assistant. A bakery built in 1907, was first managed by Mr. Iacopetti and later sold to Mr. G. Caiocca. About half way between Cox's mill and Davenport was the slaughter house operated by Joe Bourque, who supplied the store, hotels and farmers with meat. After the store burned in 1953, the slaughter house was moved to Santa Cruz. Opposite the butcher shop was Alex Luttrell's blacksmith shop. Later Mr. Libua became the village blacksmith.

About 1909 – 1910 sixteen cottages for plant foremen were built on the north side of

the plant. It was believed less dust blew in that direction. About this time foremen were required to live here to hold their jobs as better transportation made it possible to commute to Santa Cruz.

An emergency hospital with six beds was constructed for company employees. Accidents were quite frequent in the plant's early history. Dr. Nittler was the company doctor.

From our school yard we can look over the roof of the old jail which was built in 1914. Mr. Pete Garaventa was the first constable. Mrs. Gregory tells us that the jail has had little use. A few who had spent too much time in the saloons needed a place to sober up overnight. Davenport was not noted as a place of violence.

The Catholic Church was erected in 1915. Sometime later a protestant church was built.

Other construction, some of which still stands, was a Brussel Sprouts packing shed about 1920, operated by Mr. Lewis Poletti.

The Phyffer Brothers had a plant opposite Newtown, but it was later moved to Santa Cruz. A barrel factory also operated in Davenport, making barrels for packing sprouts. This went out of business about twenty years ago.

In 1925, about the time the highway was paved through Davenport, Gregory's new store was built. The Gregory sons, Francis and Alvin, are in charge of the store now. Since that time, it has been enlarged and remodeled and just recently a new lunch room was opened next to the store.

Transportation

Harvey's Stage ran from San Francisco to Santa Cruz. Jim Harvey and George McCroy were drivers. Mrs. Thomson, our principal, tells us that it often stopped at the Mocettini Ranch, where, as a little girl, she spent her summer vacations.

The Ocean Shore Railroad Company made a survey for a coast route from Santa Cruz to

San Francisco and began building on each end of the line in 1905. The earthquake of 1906 and the fire which followed caused so much damage that it broke many of the stockholders. On the San Francisco end of the line, part of the roadbed slid into the ocean, taking with it much of the construction equipment.

However, by May 1906, the tracks were laid from Santa Cruz to Swanton, and by the end of 1908, on the north end, from San Francisco to Tunitas Glen. A gap of only twenty-six miles separating the two ends of the tracks was never closed with rails. Passengers transferred to a Stanley steamer bus between Swanton and Tunitas Glen.

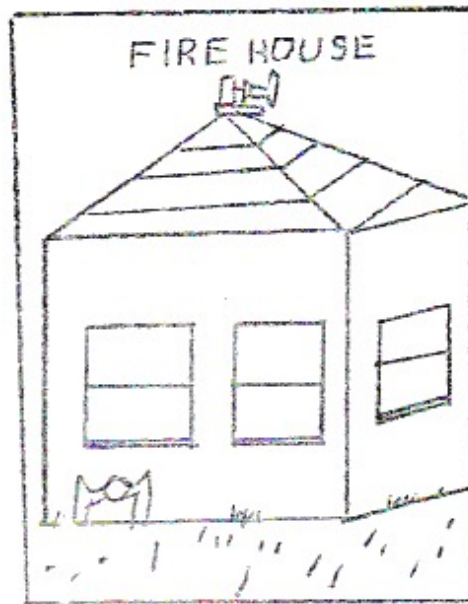
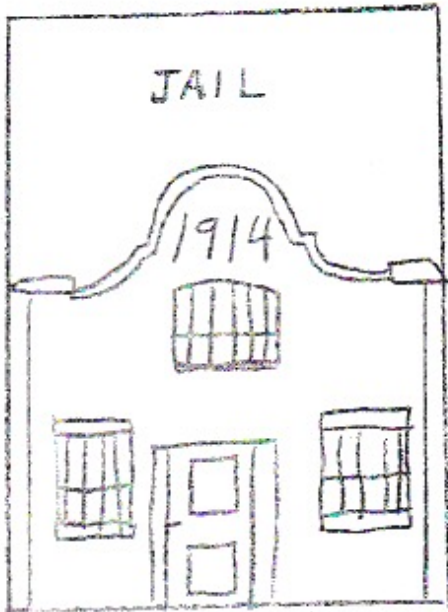
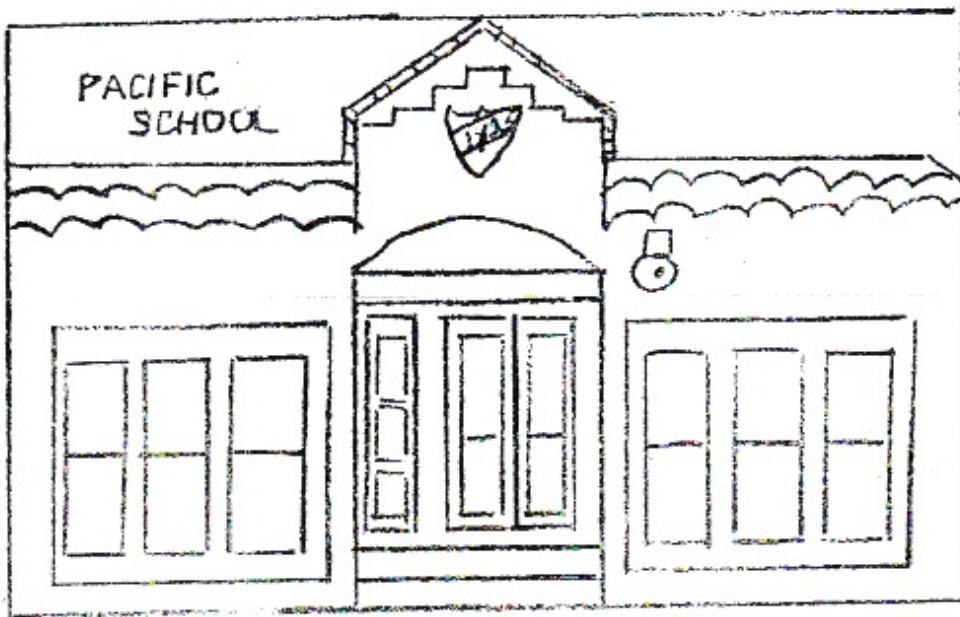
Two trains ran daily in each direction and the cement plant was responsible for much of the traffic on the south end.

In the fall of 1906, the Coastline Railway built a line from Santa Cruz to Davenport. When it was completed in 1907, this line was purchased by Southern Pacific. Trains on this line still haul cement from the plant.

The Ocean Shore Railroad was purchased by the San Vicente Lumber Company in 1920 for the purpose of hauling logs from Swanton to its lumber mill in Santa Cruz. When this company discontinued lumbering operations, the (rail)road was dismantled.

The Greyhound Bus was put on the route for a while. In recent years it has made runs only during the summer months.

The old winding dirt road the stage coach drivers knew has undergone considerable improvement and is even now picking up a noticeable increase in traffic since the recent construction project started north of Santa Cruz.



Pacific School

The first school in Davenport was built near where the Catholic Church now stands. Mrs. Hayes from Boulder Creek taught about 40 to 50 pupils in this one room school.

According to Mr. Bella, Davenport also boasted an evening school for adults at that time. Several nationalities were represented in the growing village and a need for better communication with their fellowmen was felt among these newcomers. Mrs. Hayes was the instructor for this group also.

The next teacher was a Mr. Ensign, who was also a lumber teller.

Mr. Bella, in a talk to our class, pointed out how little attention was given to safety of the occupants in case of fire, when the building was constructed. Probably to avoid any outside distractions from lessons the windows were placed high on the walls so that it would have been very difficult to vacate the building during an emergency. Making it even more hazardous was a wood

stove standing near the outside door. Sanitation facilities would be deplored today but were probably on a par with schools of that day.

Mr. Bella was on the school board at the time the present school was built in 1925. He says this location was chosen as the largest level spot suitable for the building and playground space. At that time there was an enrollment of 105 children.

Mrs. Anna M. Cook served as principal and teacher of Pacific School for twenty-four years, from 1926 to 1950. This year marks the twenty-sixth year of teaching at Pacific for our principal, Mrs. Hazel Thomson. She has been principal since Mrs. Cook's retirement in 1950.

Present members of the school board are:

Francis Gregory

Julius J. Giovannoni

Josephine DiTano – Clerk

Theresa Rodriquez – Treasurer

How Davenport Has Changed

Improved roads, faster cars, new inventions and production methods have reduced the population of Davenport. The Ocean View Hotel is no longer in operation. The Italia Hotel and a number of other buildings were destroyed by fire in December of 1946 and were not rebuilt. Businesses that once flourished have declined. The plant and quarry employ only about 300 men since modern machines have replaced manpower. Only about 30% of the employees live in Davenport. The cement dust keeps many people from choosing homesites here. However, according to reports, it has not been found to be injurious to the health of Davenport's inhabitants. Tests of samples of air near the school are taken periodically. Housekeepers, more than anyone else, regard it as a constant nuisance.

The Davenport Improvement Club has been organized to make Davenport a more desirable place for its people. Among other

projects the organization attends to such things as cleaning the reservoir and water pipes and general sanitation. It has also endeavored to secure a regular Greyhound bus run on the Ocean Shore route.

Present officers are:

Alvin Gregory	-	President
Myrtle Garaventa	-	Secretary
Tillman Morelli	-	Treasurer

The Volunteer Fire Department looks after home fires. Its members are: Frank Garaventa, Douglas DeJesus, Elio Orlando, C.H. Celebrado, Alvin Gregory, Pete Pianavilla, Albert Novelli, G. Giovannoni, and Fire Chief, Francis Gregory.

In spite of the cement dust, residents enjoy certain advantages such as free water piped from the head of San Vicente Creek and furnished by the plant, low rental rates, mild weather and a beautiful view of the ocean.

INDUSTRIES
OF
DAVENPORT AREA

Manufacture of Cement

Cement is made from cement rock, limestone, shale, silica, alumina, clay, gypsum and iron dust. Limestone, cement rock, and shale are quarried about five miles from the plant in Davenport and brought to the plant by electric trains. Shale is a hard substance and usually has to be blasted or drilled out of the ground. Clay is a very soft substance and can be dug from a pit. Gypsum and iron dust are brought from outside by trucks or by train. Silica is a material made from limestone and clay.

One of the first steps in manufacturing of cement is the crushing of these materials. It is then dried and burned at a very high temperature. After it is cooled, the gypsum is added. Then it is pulverized to a very fine mixture.

About 6,000 barrels a day (of cement) are produced at the plant. About 20% to 30% of this amount is stored in silos to be used as a reserve.

Lime

The lime industry was among the first developed in Santa Cruz County. Davis and Jordan began burning lime as early as 1853. It was for the shipment of lime, along with tanbark and timber products, that Captain John Davenport saw an opportunity for a livelihood by building the wharf and charging shippers a fee for its use. A lime kiln was located at the quarry.

Limestone was burned in kilns until it became soft and crumbly. This powder-like substance called quicklime, could then be mixed with other materials and used in plaster, mortar, or stucco.

Lime is used in many other ways such as separating metals from the rock in which they are found, manufacture of glass, chemicals, sops, rubber, paper and other products. Sour soils, often called acid soil, can be “sweetened” or made more suitable for raising certain crops by the addition of lime.

Tanbark

The tanoak was at one time abundant in this section of the country and was in great demand in the early days for tanning leather. Leggings, commonly worn then, saddles, and harnesses required a great deal of leather.

As early as 1843 a tannery had been established in the county. Stripping the bark from this tree and shipping it from Davenport Landing provided employment for the settlers. Not much of the tanoak is left today.

For its use in tanning, it was ground to a coarse powder and piled in alternate layers with the skins in deep vats. These vats were then filled with water and the skins were allowed to soak for a few weeks or months. This process made the leather strong and pliable and prevented it from decaying.

Crops and Dairy Industry

Land in the Davenport area and on toward Santa Cruz has been used chiefly for dairying and pasture. Much of the land along the cost side of the highway was in hayfields years ago. One of the largest dairies was known as the Ocean Shore Dairy. Wilder's, another of the larger dairies, used to milk about 200 cows. Some of the others were: Anderson's, Annan's, Scaroni's, and Mocettini's.

Around 1912, the Ocean Shore Dairy was sold to Chris Wiedman for a goat ranch were processing canned milk for infants was undertaken. This was not a successful enterprise and lasted only one year, due to heavy losses in the goat herd.

About 1920, some of the ranchers tried raising artichokes, but they proved to be less successful than in coastal areas farther south. Brussel Sprouts were found to be an ideal crop here and have continued to be one

of the chief agricultural products. Broccoli is also an important crop in this section.

Due to the cement dust, certain vegetables such as lettuce, cabbage, spinach and cauliflower are spoiled for table use, so gardening is somewhat limited, even though the soil produces rank growth and a good quality product.

The “Jennie Thelene”

A ship carpenter, Lawrence Lorenzen is listed in the Santa Cruz directory of 1875. It is very probable that he repaired ships that loaded or unloaded cargo at Davenport Landing.

We are told that two Norwegian brothers by the name of Reed built a boat at Davenport Landing that was eventually purchased by Jack London. They called the boat “Jennie Thelene”, but after it was sold to Mr. London, it was renamed “The Snark”. Thelene was a local name.

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