

LIME KILN CHRONICLES

Newsletter of the *Friends of the Cowell Lime Works Historic District*
University of California, Santa Cruz

S. H. Cowell Foundation Provides Grant

In the months since our last newsletter, considerable progress has been made towards one of our major goals: saving the district's historic buildings. Earlier this year the S. H. Cowell Foundation generously provided funds to help pay for stabilization of the cooperage. This long, slender building perched on stone pillars and adjacent to the kilns at the campus entrance is critical to interpreting the history of lime-making at the site. Here, coopers built the barrels for shipping the lime to market.

With help from the Cowell Foundation we will be able to shore and stabilize the building to prevent possible collapse while we raise funds for actual restoration. Additional private support will also contribute to installation of a plaque commemorating placement of the Cowell Lime Works Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places, and development of interpretive signs. These will help with public education and, we hope, encourage people in the community to join in this exciting project.

Friends Receive Award

On Saturday, May 2, the City of Santa Cruz Historic Preservation Commission presented the Friends with a "Certificate of Appreciation" for its dedication to the "study and rehabilitation of the Cowell Lime Works." We sincerely thank the Commission for their recognition of our efforts.

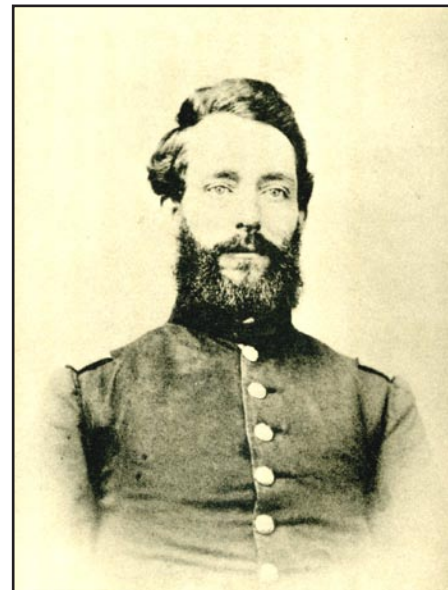
Lime, the Civil War, and More—

The Story of Albert Brown

By Frank Perry

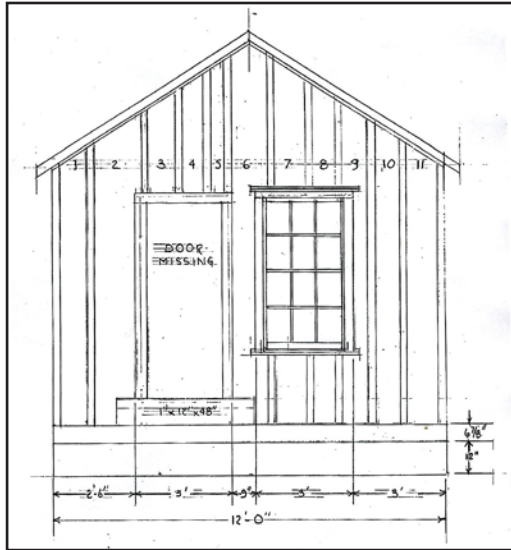
"Albert Brown" is a rather ordinary sounding name, but Albert Brown—the person—had an extraordinary life.

Like most of Santa Cruz's early residents, Brown was a transplant from the East. He was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1834, the son of Elwood and Hannah (Webster) Brown. The Browns were Hicksite Quakers, a religious order that believed strongly in the abolition of slavery and the advancement of women's rights, two issues that would shape the course of Albert Brown's life.



Portrait of Capt. Albert Brown during the Civil War. From *Soldiers of the Overland*, by Fred B. Rogers, 1938.

While still a teenager, Brown sailed to California in search of gold. It is uncertain just when he arrived, or if he had much success as a miner. In December of 1852, (continued on p. 3)



Scale drawing by Jan Dekema of the cabin's west end.

Work on Cabin Begins

Restoring an old building, especially one at a nationally-recognized historic site, requires careful planning. The Friends are pleased to report that the first steps in this process have begun for a key building in the District. Late last year Jan Dekema, proprietor of History Remade and an authority on the repair and restoration of old and historic architectural woodwork, generously volunteered to help restore the smaller of the two worker cabins still standing. This cabin was originally the second in a row of five and, for the purposes of documentation, has come to be called Cabin B. In the early 1900s all five cabins were residences for unmarried Portuguese workers.

The cabin is very simple in construction, yet with some intriguing architectural subtleties. It measures 12 by 14 feet and has one door and one window, both facing toward the heart of the lime works. The cabin is of single-wall construction, each exterior wall consisting of one-inch-thick vertical redwood boards up to 20 inches wide. Smaller strips (battens) were nailed over the cracks between boards on both the exterior and interior. There are no studs, so the ceiling and roof are supported entirely by the siding. The floor is also redwood, nailed to 2x6-inch floor joists which are attached to larger redwood beams.

Because the cabin walls are only an inch thick, the double-hung window was set in a frame that extends an additional 2 1/2 inches outward from the side of the building. This provided space for the two sashes to slide up and down. Some of the wooden parts of the window frame and sashes were discovered on the floor inside the cabin and will enable complete and accurate restoration of this feature.

Step one in the restoration process is to make measured drawings of the building. Every board is measured

and scale drawings made of all four cabin sides, the roof, ceiling, floor, and framing. More detailed drawings are made of complex features such as the window. Step two is to document damage such as missing boards, dry rot, termite holes, cracks, and checking. Surprisingly, much of the wood is quite sound—testimony to the durability of first-growth redwood. Step three is to prepare a restoration plan, indicating how each board is to be repaired



Jan Dekema examines the cabin window.

and what materials are to be used (such as type of wood, epoxy, glues, nails, etc.). Because the cabin is an element of a district on the National Register, strict standards apply to its restoration. The cabin must be made sound, yet done so in a way that preserves its historical integrity, including details of materials and construction.

Steps one and two have been completed for most of the building and, as of this writing, step three is well underway. Soon the most exciting part—actual restoration—will begin.



Members of the Santa Cruz Archaeological Society conduct excavations around the cabin perimeter.

The Friends have received funds for cabin restoration from the Cabrillo Civic Clubs of California, but additional funds will be needed, especially in the future as we begin work on the other cabins. ✱

(Albert Brown, continued from p. 1)

however, heavy snows and lack of provisions drove Brown and many other gold-seekers out of the mines and back to San Francisco. From there he walked to San Jose and then over the mountains to Santa Cruz, seeking a job at Richard Kirby's tannery. Kirby's wife, Georgiana, had known the Brown family back in Pennsylvania where Brown's father had assisted slaves escaping from the South. "He is only nineteen, . . . but possesses the energy, firmness, and self-respect of a much older person," she wrote. Lime manufacturers Isaac Davis and Albion P. Jordan must have also been impressed with the lanky teenager, for later in 1853 they hired him to help open their first quarry. This would have been in the Jordan Gulch area, just north of the present Cowell Lime Works Historic District.

In those days steady employment was hard to find, so people changed jobs often. Brown did farm work, built fences, and even hauled lumber with an ox team. Davis and Jordan later placed Brown in charge of the company wharf at the foot of Bay Street. As wharfinger, Brown kept a record of all freight (both imports and exports) and sold tickets to passengers. There were no railroads yet, so Santa Cruz's waterfront was a busy transportation hub for shipping and travel by sea.

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[apr4 '61-tf.]

Newspaper advertisement from April 4, 1861, listing Albert Brown as an agent for the ship *Salinas* (which later took his company of soldiers to San Francisco).

In the summer of 1861 news reached Santa Cruz that the Union Army had been soundly defeated at the Civil War's first Battle of Bull Run. Brown vowed to take up the Union cause. He informed his boss, Albion P. Jordan, that he was going East to enlist in the army. Jordan, a

Maine native, encouraged Brown, saying that he would enlist, too, if he could leave his lime business. Brown went to San Francisco where he met with General Sumner, then in command of the Pacific Division. "Young man, go back to your town, raise a company, and join the Second California Cavalry," said the general. "I'm going to take that regiment East with me."

Brown returned to Santa Cruz and within ten days had rounded up over seventy volunteers, many of them from Davis & Jordan's lime works. Brown sent word for General Sumner to send an officer who would take command of the company. To Brown's surprise, Sumner replied, "Captain Brown, your company is accepted. Report forthwith." Brown was suddenly a captain, yet had no military experience. He took command nonetheless and figured he would learn along the way.

On Sunday evening, September 22, the steamer *Salinas* departed Santa Cruz with the volunteers as a large crowd cheered from the wharf. The seventy-three men arrived the next morning in San Francisco and, after being treated to breakfast by Albion P. Jordan and Elihu Anthony, marched to Camp Alert where they took the oath, were mustered (inducted) into service, and quickly began drilling practice. They were now Company L, Second Cavalry, California Volunteers.

By the time the company was ready to head East, however, plans had changed. The Civil War had left western forts empty or with only a few soldiers. Various Indian nations, on learning of the soldiers' departure, saw this as an opportunity to reclaim land. There was also the fear among Union forces that the Confederate Army might try to capture territory in the West if it were left unguarded. So it became the duty of the California Cavalry and others to "police" the West, keeping trails and lines of communication open, protecting settlers, guarding government facilities, and settling skirmishes with Indians. The assignment change was a big disappointment for some of the men. They wanted to fight the South. A number of soldiers deserted, though some of these later rejoined.

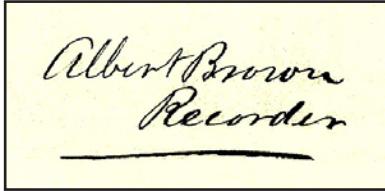
Brown served on the western frontier for two three-year tours of duty, resigning in September, 1866. According to military historian Robert Nelson, Captain Brown's years in the cavalry encompassed literally "one heroic story after another." He rescued an army survey unit about to be attacked by Indians; he rescued a girl who had been kidnapped, her nanny murdered; he escaped after being kidnapped himself and thrown into a river with a bag over his head; and so on. "If he did not have to compete with all the other Civil War heroes for press," says Nelson, "Brown would have become much more famous." Indeed, in Santa Cruz he WAS famous. Throughout the war, the local newspaper regaled read-

(continued on next page)

(Albert Brown, continued)

ers with tales of Brown's exploits, many of which would be judged politically incorrect today.

Brown returned to Santa Cruz in 1868 and in 1870 was elected County Clerk, Auditor, and Recorder. He helped establish the local Republican Party and a local Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) post—an organization for Union veterans.



The early 1870s brought to light another interesting facet of Brown's life. At that time Santa Cruz was a hotbed of women's rights advocates, with Mrs. Georgiana Bruce Kirby leading the way. Kirby headed a local society of suffragists, which petitioned the State Legislature to give women the right to vote. One of those who signed the petition was Albert Brown.

Soon, his involvement in women's suffrage grew even deeper. Kirby's society wanted to take the issue to court, but needed a case. So, one of its members, Mrs. Ellen Van Valkenburg, went to the County Clerk's office and demanded to sign the voter register. Brown, who was in on the plan, formally refused, thus setting up the test case of Van Valkenburg vs. Brown. The case came on the heels of the 14th and 15th Amendments, which extended equal rights, including citizenship and voting rights, to all people, regardless of race or color. It was argued that these rights were extended to women also, even though women were not specifically mentioned. The case was cleverly timed to coincide with lectures in Santa Cruz by famed suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Both drew large audiences, with Captain Brown introducing the latter. The publicity and public support had little effect on the judge, however, who ruled that special legislation would be needed for women to vote.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have the pleasure of introducing to you Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton. She needs no encomiums from me. Her name is as familiar to you as house-hold words and what ever may have been said unjustly of other women who have spoken in public, she has always commanded the respect of even the enemies of the cause she has so much at heart, and to which she has devoted her life with a heroism and womanly dignity than but make us all bow in homage to her sincerity. [Applause]

Albert Brown's introduction to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, August, 19, 1871.

This was not the end of Brown's involvement in women's rights. In 1874 he married the recently widowed Catherine (Hecox) Tilden, who had been working as a copyist in his office. An erudite social activist and writer, Tilden made her position on women's rights very public. "A woman should be as free to make her own life as a man [to make his]," she wrote.

Immediately after their marriage that April, the Browns moved to San Francisco where Albert assumed a clerical position in a railroad freight office, a job not unlike that he had carried out at the wharf. Catherine brought into the marriage five children from her first marriage, ranging from age 3 to 15. She and Albert also had two of their own: Albert Webster, born in 1875, and Aaron Hamer, born in 1877. Sadly, it was not a happy union. Albert eventually decided he did not want to support the Tilden children, and relationships between some of the Tilden and Brown children became strained. By the late 1880s or early 1890s Albert and Catherine had apparently separated. In an 1892 letter, Catherine claimed that Albert suffered from "softening of the brain," and that his mind had been "failing for years." In the late 1890s Albert moved to the Veterans Home in Yountville, Napa County. His mind must not have been too far gone, for he spent his last years as postmaster at the Home. He passed away in 1919 at age 84, where upon Catherine promptly filed for a Civil War widow's pension.



Albert Brown's gravestone at the Veterans Home, Yountville, Napa County. (Photo by Robert L. Nelson)

In summary, Albert Brown's life was one of diverse and contrasting activities, including that of bull team driver, cavalryman, miner, tanner, women's rights activist, farmer, County Clerk, quarryman, wharfinger, and political party organizer. Although historians have mostly

written about Brown's military exploits, his pre-Civil War involvement in the local lime industry was not inconsequential. As wharf manager, he played a vital role in lime company operations. By opening Davis and Jordan's first quarry, Brown certainly qualifies as a true pioneer of the Cowell Lime Works Historic District.



(My thanks to Robert L. Nelson, Judith Steen, Stanley D. Stevens, and Marion D. Pokriots for generously sharing research materials on Albert Brown.)

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Cowell's Kiln Quotes

The lime kiln near the upper quarry, like several of the other historic kilns on the UCSC campus, has a rather murky past. Nobody knows for sure who built it, when it was built, or its period of operation.

Just imagine how wonderful it would be if we could go back in time and interview a prominent local citizen like, for example, Henry Cowell, and ask if he knew the history of this kiln. While time travel remains a fantasy, the historians researching the book *Lime Kiln Legacies* discovered something nearly as good.

In the 1870s the lime-making firm of Davis and Cowell was involved in a property dispute with the neighboring California Powder Works. Davis and Cowell argued that the parcel in question was part of the old Rincon Rancho and therefore was land which they owned. The Powder Works claimed it bought the parcel from the owners of another rancho. When the case came before court in San Francisco, various witnesses took to the stand and testified. Particularly enlightening was the testimony of Henry Cowell. Here is the pertinent excerpt:

Question: "Are there places where you burned lime on the Rincon?"

Answer: "Some of them are."

Question: "On what part of it?"

Answer: "Well I cannot tell the distance, but I judge nearly a mile from the southern line; it may not be more than 3/4 of a mile."

Question: "How far from the river?"

Answer: "Over a mile"

Question: "Is that a large place you had for burning lime?"

Answer: "Very large, the largest there is."

Question: "When did you establish that?"

Answer: "In 1866 I was chasing cattle through the woods and came to a large kiln of six arches, and the next year

or that fall, I burned a kiln of lime there."

Question: "You came across a place of what?"

Answer: "A very large kiln—a lime kiln."

Question: "Do you know whose it was?"

Answer: "Yes; it was mine."

Question: "That was in 1866 that you established this place here; did you burn lime there afterwards—always?"

Answer: "No, I burned lime there in 1867, 1868, and —"

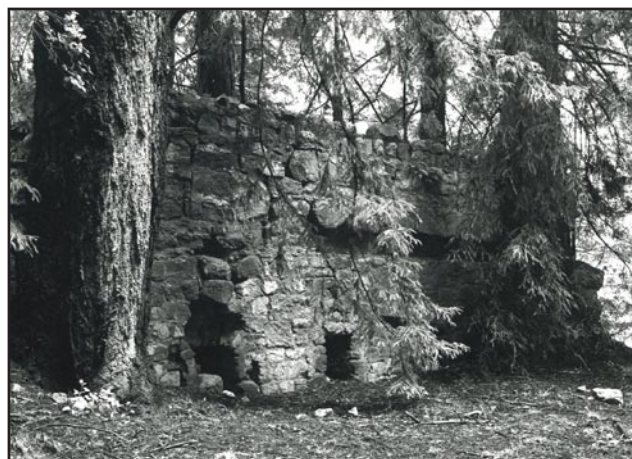
Question: "That will do. How much did you burn in 1867?"

Answer: "I think between 10,000 and 20,000 barrels."

Question: "How much in 1868?"

Answer: "Between 10,000 and 20,000 barrels."

The location and description of the Upper Quarry kiln closely matches the kiln described by Henry Cowell. The Upper Quarry kiln is located in the forest 9/10 of a mile north of the south boundary of the Rincon Rancho (which passes today through the southern part of the campus). The kiln is also over a mile from the San Lorenzo River. It is the largest lime kiln still standing and,



The Upper Quarry kiln. Photo by Clancy Gehrke.

(Cowell's Kiln Quotes, continued from p. 6)

most importantly, is the only one in the region that has six doorways or arches. Given the near perfect match of Cowell's kiln to the Upper Quarry kiln, they are almost certainly the same.

Since Mr. Cowell discovered this kiln for himself, it seems that even he did not know who had built it or when. We also don't know when it was last used, only that Cowell reactivated it in the late 1860s. But thanks to these old court records, we are able to read exactly what Henry Cowell had to say about this kiln.

As for the court case, Davis and Cowell prevailed, but not without twenty-five years of litigation, culminating in a ruling from the United States Supreme Court. ✱

Lime and Lime Kilns in California History

The Friends are proud to host the first-ever conference on the history of lime-making and lime kilns in California. It will be held August 8-9, 2009 at UCSC.

Participants will enjoy talks, displays, demonstrations, and a field trip. The event is also a fundraiser for the Historic District.

See the enclosed flyer and registration information.

Co-sponsored by the Agricultural History Project, City of Santa Cruz Historic Preservation Commission, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks, Mountain Parks Foundation, The Museum of Art & History, Pajaro Valley Historical Association, Santa Cruz Archaeological Society, and the Santa Cruz Museum Association.

Economics: Lime Lessons Learned

The lime industry shaped Santa Cruz history in many ways. It provided jobs, established transportation routes, deforested hillsides, and preserved large tracts of land that later became parks. Lime helped fuel the local economy and, not surprisingly, also served as an economic barometer. During boom times, construction of new homes and businesses increased, prompting greater demand for building materials such as lime and lumber. During hard times, construction decreased and sales of building materials slowed. Not surprisingly, a comparison of the Santa Cruz County lime business with the nation's economic history reveals some close correlations.

In the late 1800s, sharp financial downturns were commonly known

as "panics." As stock plummeted and banks failed, investors scrambled to salvage what they could. In those days bank accounts were not insured, so people had good reason to panic.

Although there have been many slowdowns in the American economy since 1850, five stand out: the panics of 1857, 1873, 1893, 1907, and 1929. Each followed a period of rapid growth with excess borrowing and spending. Sound familiar? Then a series of events, different in each case, triggered a depression. As more and more businesses and banks failed, the economy spiraled downward.

Lime production statistics are rather spotty prior to 1894, so yearly changes in county production for most of these panics are unknown. But the success and failure of lime companies

as a whole can also be used to gauge the industry.

The Panic of 1857 followed the economic boom created by the Gold Rush. At least five lime companies were doing business in Santa Cruz County that year. Few details are known about these early companies, except for Davis and Jordan, which operated from 1853 to 1865. In the 1850s they were rapidly becoming the largest lime maker in the state, but even they ran into financial distress when the economy sagged. "There was a time in their business when they were financially oppressed, but at that moment a friend, a true friend, silently gave his check—that check drove the would-be wolf from the door and Davis & Jordan stemmed the tide of tribulation," wrote a friend in October,

(continued on page 8)

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Join the Friends of the Cowell Lime Works Historic District

Your membership donation will help to restore, preserve, and interpret this historic site.

All of our Friends receive invitations to special tours and events, biannual newsletter, opportunities to volunteer on restoration projects, and opportunities to be a docent for historic district tours.

In addition, memberships at the \$100 category or above receive benefits provided by the UC Santa Cruz Foundation, including their names in the annual Honor Roll of Donors, a subscription to UCSC Review, and invitations to campus and Friends Groups events.

Memberships are tax-deductible as allowed by law. UC Santa Cruz Foundation Federal Tax ID #23-7394590. 

Mission Statement

The mission of the Friends of the Cowell Lime Works Historic District is to aid in the documentation, restoration, preservation, and interpretation of the historic lime kilns and related structures and buildings of the Cowell Lime Works Historic District and other historic sites on the campus of the University of California, Santa Cruz.

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(Economics: Lime Lessons..., continued from p. 6)

1888. Although the writer does not mention the timing of this event, it most likely resulted from the Panic of 1857. The writer also does not say who the "true friend" was. There is at least a possibility that it was Henry Cowell. It is known that Cowell loaned Davis and Jordan money sometime prior to his purchase of Jordan's half of the business in 1865.

The Panic of 1873 launched what was known as The Long Depression, which lasted until 1879. This was also an interesting period for local lime companies. In 1873 there were three lime companies in Santa Cruz County: Davis & Cowell near Santa Cruz and the firms of Eben Bennett and Thomas Bull near Felton. Two new companies began operation in 1875: the I.X.L. Lime Company near Felton and the Santa Cruz Lime Company on the North Coast. The I.X.L. Company survived, though one of its principal investors, Abraham Blochman, soon pulled out due to the failure of his other investments. The Santa Cruz Lime Company ceased manufacturing after only one year. The exact reasons for this were not specified, but the economic downturn likely played a role. Both Bennett and Bull were absorbed by H. T. Holmes & Company around this same time.

Felton's I.X.L. Company, which survived a shaky start in the 1870s, went broke a year after the Panic of 1893. This depression was the worst in U.S. history up to that time. According to some estimates, unemployment rose to 18 percent in 1894. Altogether, 15,000 companies and 500 banks went bankrupt before the economy began to turn around in 1896. In 1900 Henry Cowell bought the I.X.L. kilns and resumed production the following year, keeping the I.X.L. name.

In central California the effects of the Panic of 1907 were dampened by the large amounts of lime needed for rebuilding following the 1906 earthquake. Nevertheless, production dipped in 1907 and took an even sharper dip in 1908, according to state records. It rebounded in 1909.

By the time of the Great Depression (1929 to the early 1940s), only two lime companies remained in Santa Cruz County: Cowell and Holmes. The latter ceased operations in 1936.

As work begins on restoring the historic buildings at UCSC, another "panic" is under way. Fortunately, history is on our side. Lime production in what is now the Cowell Lime Works Historic District survived the panics of 1857, 1873, 1893, 1907, and 1929. Surely our restoration efforts can weather the economic forces of 2008/2009.

—F. P.

(Thanks to historian Bob Piwarzyk for contributing information from his "Panic File" to this article.)

Further Reading:

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