



LIME KILN CHRONICLES

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

Hay Barn Work Begins

A big THANK YOU to all those who contributed to our year-end appeal last December. Due to the generosity of our members, we met our fundraising goal for Phase 1 of the Hay Barn restoration project, which involves recording how the barn was constructed.

Bill Hurley (Dos Osos Timberworks) and Paul Oatman (Sherwood Forest Timber Frames) completed field work for historical drawings and documentation of the interior of the barn. They are now in the process of completing the finished drawings to Historical American Building Survey (HABS) standards and will be submitting them to us shortly. Chris McMorris (JRP Historical Consultants) and photographer Bill Dewey completed large format and digital photography of the barn, and Chris and associates also compiled historical data on the use of the barn. They will be submitting this part of the HABS record to us as well. (Continued on page 2)



Sally Morgan

Hay Barn interior, showing timber framing and roof damage.

150th Birthday Celebration

This past February 17th marked Samuel Henry (Harry) Cowell's 150th birthday. To honor his contribution to Santa Cruz history, the Friends hosted a birthday party on Saturday, February 19. It was held at the UCSC Women's Center, located in the old ranch house (aka Cardiff House) where the Cowell family once lived.

Some 65 people attended, including, Cowell College provost Faye Crosby; Hal Hyde (Friends member and a former assistant chancellor); *Lime Kiln Legacies* co-authors Bob Piwarzyk, Alverda Orlando, and Sierra Ryan; representatives from Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park; plus numerous other Friends and interested members of the general public.

This event would not have been such a success without help from many people. We thank Peg Danielson for generously providing refreshments; Cynthia Mathews for acting as MC and helping with organizing and publicity; Tremain Jones for advertising it on our Facebook page; Don Lauritson, Jenifer Lienau Thompson, and David Subocz for helping with set up and take down; Lisa Rose for serving as event photographer; Lynne Stoops and Sally Morgan for their help with planning and organizing; and Jill Perry for setting up the audiovisuals.

Frank Perry organized and presented a short slide show on Harry Cowell (see also the article on page 3); and UCSC students Lauren Wysham, Christina Powell, Kelsey Knox, and Allie Bender helped with the fine display of artifacts unearthed during archaeological excavations within the Historic District.

For those of you who missed the event, watch a slide show on YouTube (search "Harry Cowell's Birthday").



Historian Geoffrey Dunn shares this photo taken on the old Railroad Wharf in Santa Cruz. The barrels and wagon look very much like those used to haul lime. In the background are some boxcars, and behind them a ship. According to maritime historian Allan Molho, the insignia on the smokestack is from the Hart-Wood Lumber Company. The date may be around 1912. Know more about this photo? Please send us an email: limeworks@ucsc.edu.

(Geoffrey Dunn Collection. Photo originally from the collection of the late George Lee and restored by Barry Brown.)

Tour the Cowell Lime Works!

As part of UCSC's annual Day-by-the-Bay celebration, join historian and Friends President Frank Perry for a fun and educational walking tour of the Historic District.

Date: Saturday, April 30, 2011, 9:30 to 10:30

Location: Meet at the Barn Theater parking lot at the UCSC main entrance. Parking and tour are free.

RSVP: <http://events.ucsc.edu/daybythebay>. Click on "Events around campus," then "Tours." Or call Sally at 831-459-1254.

(Continued from "Hay Barn," page 1)

Phase 1 is a critical first step due to the sad state of this building. Over the past few winters, heavy winds and rain have destroyed the south end and parts of the roof. Even if the building fails, we now have a thorough record of what it looked like so that it can be reconstructed. Ideally, provided we can locate funding, the next step (Phase 2) is to disassemble the barn. This will enable more of the lumber to be salvaged for use in the reconstruction than if the barn breaks up in a storm.

Phase 3 is reconstruction. The Hay Barn is in the perfect location for use by UCSC's Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems (aka "The Farm"). Center representatives are enthusiastic about this possibility.

Our sincere thanks to the following donors to Phase 1: Diane and Donald Cooley; Neal and Lucie Coonerty; Peggy and Paul Danielson; Lee and Emily Duffus; Joe and Marcella Hall; Don and Brenda Lauritson; Michael D. Luther; Edith Perry; M. Brewster and Deborah Smith; Frank Zwart and Julia Armstrong-Zwart. Additional funding came from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Barn Fund, and the Friends of the Cowell Lime Works general fund.

Friends of the Cowell Lime Works Historic District

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Thank you Jim!

The Friends sincerely thank Jim MacKenzie for his service on the Friends Board of Directors. As a professional photographer and graphic artist, Jim set the highest standards for excellence and quality in the design of our announcements, posters, and the walking tour brochure. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors.



Samuel Henry (Harry) Cowell, circa 1908.

Harry Cowell and the Cowell Family Legacy

By Frank Perry

Because the year 2011 marks the 150th anniversary of Harry Cowell's birth, this is an appropriate occasion to take a look back at the role of the Cowell family in Santa Cruz County history. How might the Santa Cruz of today be different if the Cowells had never been part of the story?

The Cowells are not an easy family to investigate. Although very wealthy and among the most influential people in County annals, they were a very private family and shunned publicity. It would also appear that they were camera shy, as only a few photographs of just some of the family members have survived.

Originally, the authors of the book *Lime Kiln Legacies* (including myself) naïvely planned to devote a separate chapter to the Cowells. We soon discovered what an immense task that would be. Henry Cowell was involved in everything from lime making to harvesting seal pelts and had economic interests from California to Alaska. To do justice to the topic would have taken more time than was available, and many of the likely sources of information are not very accessible. Over the past four years, with the proliferation of online resources and investigations by several other historians, a more detailed picture of the Cowells can now be painted.

The full Cowell story is probably still beyond reach, but perhaps someday an ambitious investigator with the necessary time and fortitude will tackle it. In the meantime, here is a brief look back at the Cowells, especially Harry, on the occasion of his sesquicentennial.

Harry's father, Henry Cowell, came to California during the Gold Rush and developed a very successful warehousing and drayage (hauling) business in San Francisco. His was the equivalent of a modern day trucking company, but with horse and wagon.

In 1865 Cowell bought A. P. Jordan's half interest in the lime-manufacturing firm of Davis and Jordan. A. P. Jordan had supervised the company's lime works in Santa Cruz, while his partner, I. E. Davis, sold the product out of the company office and warehouse in San Francisco.

After the purchase, Cowell moved with his wife, Harriet, and five children from San Francisco to Santa Cruz and assumed Jordan's role as resident owner of the manufacturing plant. Mrs. Cowell and the children arrived in early July, with Henry coming down a short time later after settling affairs in the City. The transfer of ownership had been rather hurried as Jordan was very ill and decided to sell on short notice. Cowell had lent the company a substantial sum of money, so he was in an ideal position to now become a partner.

Cowell soon focused his business interests on lime. Over the years he bought up other lime companies whenever possible in an effort to dominate the central and northern California lime market. The business climate in California after the Gold Rush was not unlike that of Silicon Valley today. A new market opened up (in this case, California), and major players jockeyed for control. Cowell was too wise however, to sink all his income back into lime. He diversified by dabbling in banking, mortgages, railroads, a hotel, road paving



The house where the Cowell family lived was built in 1864 and is now used as the UCSC Women's Center.

materials, etc. Mostly he invested in land, much of it grazing land for livestock. By the time of his death in 1903, he owned property in 23 counties in California, including some 12,000 acres in Santa Cruz County.

When the family arrived in Santa Cruz, the oldest child, Ernest, was 7, Isabella 6, Harry 4, Sarah 2, and Helen just a few months old. Santa Cruz would be the Cowell family's permanent home for the next 14 years.

The children attended Bay View School, located at the corner of Lime Kiln Road and Coast Road (today's Bay and Mission Streets, respectively). At that time, Bay View was its own school district, separate from Santa Cruz, and their father served on the school board. Sarah was apparently the most studious, showing up several times on the honor roll.



Bay View School in 1879.

Henry Cowell clearly valued education. Ernest went on to attend the University of California, graduating in 1880, and remained active with alumni matters. Harry and Sarah show up in University records as having attended but not graduating.

Growing up on a ranch, Harry became a skilled horseman and roper. When he was young, his father would give him a year-old pair of oxen to break. He

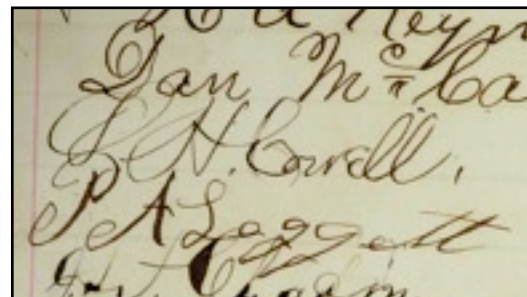
would train them to work as a team, pulling a plow. It was quite a job, but his father would pay him \$200 when he was all done. "That was the only spending money I had when I was a boy," said Cowell.

In 1879 Henry Cowell took up residence in San Francisco, but he and other family members frequently returned to Santa Cruz and the "home ranch." In the 1880s and early 1890s, Harry in particular must have spent a good deal of time here. An 1891 directory lists him as Santa Cruz manager of what was then Henry Cowell & Co.

There are only a few known photographs of Harry Cowell, the earliest showing him as a member of Alert Hose Company No. 1, better known simply as The Alerts. In the 1880s The Alerts were one of six fire fighting companies in Santa Cruz—five hose companies and a hook and ladder company. When an alarm rang, the men sprang into action, pulling the giant hose cart to the fire,

unrolling the hose, and hooking it up to the city water supply. Ten or more men, arranged in pairs, pulled the cart, responding as fast as they could to the alarm. Hose companies from different cities would sometimes hold competitions to see who was the fastest. The best sprinters, like Harry, were always in one of the two lead positions.

It is not known just how many fires Harry helped fight, but his signature appears under active members of the company.



Harry's signature (as S. H. Cowell) in the record book for The Alerts.

After Henry died, Ernest, being the oldest son, took over the daily operation of the business, though all four children owned an equal number of shares.

Like his father, Ernest was a "lime guy," and the early 1900s was an especially busy period for the company. He supervised the building of a new plant for Santa Cruz, located at Rincon. The plant depended on oil for fuel, so was situated beside the railroad tracks where the oil could be easily delivered. The site is marked today by a pullout on Highway 9 at the southern edge of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. Lime rock for this plant came from the upper quarry at UCSC, then known as the "Rincon Quarry."

Ernest also continued a trade dispute with the Tacoma and Roche Harbor Lime Company. Known as the "Lime War," it pitted the Henry Cowell Lime and Cement Co. against its nemesis in Washington. The firms feuded for years.

During this same period, Portland cement was beginning to replace lime in many types of construction. To remain competitive, Ernest Cowell built a cement plant in Contra Costa County. It was a huge operation with its own company town, appropriately called "Cowell."

There were also setbacks. The 1906 earthquake destroyed the company's office, rental, and warehouse buildings in San Francisco, but Ernest remained optimistic. None of the Cowell family members were injured, and huge quantities of lime and cement were now needed for rebuilding.

Henry Cowell was not known for philanthropy, though there is some evidence that he occasionally



Harry Cowell was more comfortable in the saddle than the office. In the majority of the known photos of him, he is on or next to a horse.

supported various charities. He helped with construction in 1890 of the Congregational Church (located where the Boys and Girls Club is now). An article written in 1950 says that the senior Cowell also donated to the YMCA.

In the early 1900s the Cowell children began to distinguish themselves for their generosity towards various educational and charitable causes. In 1903 Ernest established a scholarship at Santa Cruz High School for students wishing to attend the University of California. The scholarship still exists and is today administered by the Greater Santa Cruz County Community Foundation. In 1904 Ernest also made a donation to the new Public Library in Santa Cruz. He later bequeathed a considerable slice of his fortune to the University of California.

Prior to her death in 1903, Sarah Cowell had served on the board and been a contributor to the San Francisco Nursery for Homeless Children. Helen Cowell is on record as helping with the relief effort for flood victims in Mexico. Later, in 1924, Harry, Helen, and Isabella purchased land and constructed a building to house the San Francisco Association for the Blind (now the LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired).

In 1911 Ernest Cowell died rather suddenly from meningitis. It was so sudden that his sisters, away on a trip through Europe, did not learn of his passing until

they returned. This left Harry, then age 50, in charge of the company.

Under Harry, the lime and cement business continued to prosper, and in 1925 the company opened up a retail building-supply business in Santa Cruz, located on lower Pacific Avenue.

Harry's real passion, however, was cattle—both beef cattle and oxen. Both had been raised at the ranch in Santa Cruz since the days of Davis and Jordan. According to George Cardiff, who managed the Santa Cruz ranch, Harry raised cattle on nearly all his ranches.

When trucks began to replace wagons, Harry was reluctant to make the change. Not until Cardiff demonstrated that the trucks would actually save money did Cowell finally say goodbye to the horse teams.

There were also goats and some exotic animals, such as peacocks, elk, and buffalo at the ranch in Santa Cruz. According to Wilbert Patten, who grew up in Santa Cruz during The Depression, the buffalo were kept in the pasture near the ranch house (east of the UCSC main entrance). "They were there a long time," he recalls. A 1926 newspaper account placed the elk in the same area, but Patten remembers elk being at Pogonip. He spent many happy hours playing on the Cowell lands as a kid and recalls elk being penned near the watering trough along what is today called Spring Trail.



Bison on the Cowell Ranch in Santa Cruz, early 1900s.

Both the buffalo and elk thrived. The 1926 account states that two buffalo calves had been born recently. The Cowell's forbade hunting on the property, fearing that cattle or other livestock might be hit. Nevertheless, in 1895 someone shot and killed a steer. Years later, someone killed one of the elk. "Somebody shot it and took the teeth," remembers Patten.

Given the small size of the ranch house in Santa Cruz, the Cowell children grew up modestly. As adults, however, they lived a life more typical of the financially privileged. Harry had a mansion in San Francisco, while



Harry Cowell with his cousin, Edith Cowell Lane, in front of the ranch house (now the UCSC Women's Center) circa 1908.

his sisters shared a mansion in Atherton. Harry Cowell also had his own private railroad car and bought racehorses. The sisters, besides traveling, collected art (eventually bequeathed to San Francisco Museums). "A couple of awful nice girls," according to George Cardiff. "One thing about the Cowells, they were wonderful linguists, wonderful conversationalists."

Not surprisingly, Santa Cruzans often looked to Harry Cowell for support of various endeavors. Cowell had a certain fondness for the town of his boyhood and accommodated the locals, especially long time friends, when the request was reasonable.

According to a 1950 newspaper article, many of Cowell's contributions to the town often went unpublicized. "Harry Cowell . . . never came to Santa Cruz that he didn't look up his old friends. Many and many a Santa Cruzan was helped over a trying experience by the kindness and generosity of [Harry Cowell]. If a friend or any of his children . . . were sick, Harry Cowell was available to put them in a hospital and pay the expenses of keeping them there; and if they died, of paying the funeral expenses, too."

When entrepreneur Fred Swanton, wanted to establish a golf course, Cowell leased out land at Pogonip. At least 25 local kids earned money caddying there each summer. When Harry's westside neighbors, Philip and Ethel Fridley, wanted to set up an auto camp beside the San Lorenzo River, Harry leased 10-acre Sycamore Grove for just a dollar a month.

In later years, however, Harry became rather irked by people who kept wanting donations. George Cardiff recounted a conversation he once had with Cowell: "You know, George, there's never been a businessman in Santa

Cruz that's ever come up to the house here and paid me a friendly visit.' He said, 'Whenever I come down to Santa Cruz, they call and want to make a date with me, but it doesn't take me long to find out they want something.' He said they always wanted something. 'Give us this. Give us that. Give us something else.' All give. He said there never was a businessman in Santa Cruz that paid him a friendly visit. And he said, 'There's nobody that likes people and likes to talk with people more than I do.'"

The 1950 article described Harry in his later years: "You could tell him as far away as you could see him. He was a big, handsome man . . . who rode like a Centaur and sported a white goatee and mustache that . . . gave him the appearance of Buffalo Bill Cody, the famous frontiersman of Harry Cowell's boyhood."

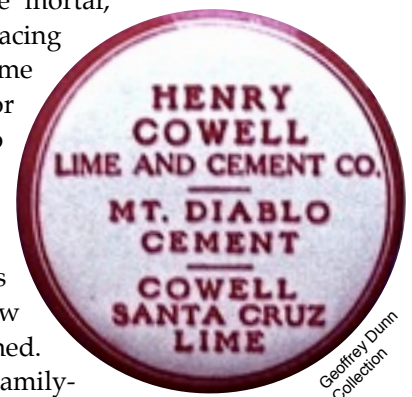
In 1946 Cowell closed both the lime works at Rincon and the cement plant in Contra Costa County. Two of the major uses of lime were diminishing: Portland cement mortar was replacing lime mortar,

and sheetrock was replacing lath and plaster. Lime remained in demand for industrial uses, but to remain competitive, Cowell would have had to modernize the plant. Now, at age 85, Harry's enthusiasm for big new projects had no doubt waned.

It had always been a family-owned business, but only two members remained, Harry and Isabella. There were no heirs, and Isabella died in 1950.

In the early 1950s, Harry (then in his nineties) made two major donations to Santa Cruz: Cowell Beach and Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. Today, they are among nine places in the County bearing the family name. There is also Henry Cowell Drive, Cowell-Wilder Regional Trail, Cowell Street, Cowell College and Cowell Student Health Center at UCSC, Cowell Mountain, and, of course, the Cowell Lime Works Historic District.

Before Harry died, at age 93, he provided for the creation of the S. H. Cowell Foundation to receive his estate, valued at over \$12 million. The Foundation continues to this day, making grants primarily for educational and social programs. The Fall Creek, Pogonip, and UCSC properties were acquired by public agencies from the Foundation. Although Harry Cowell



Geoffrey Dunn
Collection

did not directly establish these as public lands, he made possible their later acquisition.

History could just as easily have played out differently. Suppose the Cowells had made their's a publicly traded corporation which could continue after the family members died? Or, Harry Cowell could have sold off the Santa Cruz holdings to developers, who might have subdivided it in the 1950s before the idea for a park, university, or greenbelt area. Or, instead of creating a separate foundation, Harry could have donated his estate to multiple charities which, in turn, might have sold the properties to commercial interests. Or, he could have left his estate to cousins.

Santa Cruzans and the people of California owe a debt of gratitude to Harry Cowell for thousands of acres of park land, much of it blanketed by redwood forest. Indirectly, he made UCSC possible, thereby playing a key role in shaping not only Santa Cruz's history, but also its future for many years yet to come.

The author thanks Bob Piwarzyk, Wilbert Patten, Pat Paramoure, and Sally Morgan for their help.

Further Reading

Cardiff, George. *Santa Cruz and the Cowell Ranch, 1890 to 1964*. Santa Cruz: University Library, University of California, 1965. (Oral history conducted by Elizabeth Spedding Calciano, available on the UCSC Library website. Cardiff worked for Harry Cowell and knew him quite well.)

"Henry Cowell's Family: Contributions to Moral, Physical Well Being of Santa Cruzans Many." *Riptide*, August 30, 1950, p. 1. (Though no byline, this article has been attributed to Tom McHugh. *Riptide* was a Santa Cruz weekly paper.)

MacDougall, Laurie. *Henry Cowell and His Family (1819-1955): A Brief History*. San Francisco: S. H. Cowell Foundation, 1989. (Available on the Santa Cruz Public Library website.)

Martin, Joan, and Colleen McInerney-Meagher. *Pogonip: Jewell of Santa Cruz*. Santa Cruz: Otter B Books, 2007.

Perry, Frank A., Robert W. Piwarzyk, Michael D. Luther, Alverda Orlando, Allan Molho, and Sierra L. Perry. *Lime Kiln Legacies: The History of the Lime Industry in Santa Cruz County*. Santa Cruz: Museum of Art & History, 2007. (Includes more on Harry Cowell and the Cowell family.)

Cardiff Shed Update

With the help of student interns, restoration work has begun on the Cardiff Shed. This small shed was located behind Cardiff House (the Women's Center) and was at the point of near collapse. Several years ago it was carefully documented (photographed, measured, and drawings made) and disassembled. Sadly, the floor and

roof were so rotten that none of that wood was suitable for reuse. However, most of the redwood siding was found to be salvageable.

The siding nails have been removed and each board is being restored. Holes are being filled with wood epoxy and new pieces of old redwood are being spliced into the rotten areas. The building was on a wood foundation, which had gradually sunk into the dirt over the years, causing the lower end of all the siding to deteriorate. Each board must be restored to its original length for the building to return to its original appearance.



F. Perry

The front (south) side of the shed awaits restoration.

Because the shed is so small (12 x 9 feet), we are able to carry out the restoration work indoors. The wood must be dry when using the wood epoxy, so being inside has been a boon during the rainy winter. Many thanks to the UCSC staff for providing access to a dry workspace.

The reconstructed shed will be faithful to the construction details and appearance at the time it was disassembled and will be in the same location as before. So far we have found no historic photographs of this building. If anybody knows of some, we would love to see them.

Although used in recent years as a storage shed, the structure may have at one time been inhabited. This is suggested by a hole in the roof sheathing for a stove pipe, which indicates the building may have been heated at some time. The hole was later covered by shingles.

Archaeological excavations at the site by student interns unearthed a few household items such as pieces of china—further evidence that someone may have lived in the building.

In days past, outbuildings were often used as spare bedrooms, especially in the summer. The building could have been sleeping quarters for guests, a servant, a ranch worker, or even one of the Cowell boys.

Scenes from Harry Cowell's Birthday Celebration, February 19, 2011—



The guests arrive.



Cowell College Provost Faye Crosby with Hal Hyde.



Peg Danielson serves up birthday cake.



L to R: Allie Bender, Jean Dempsey, Christina Powell, and Lauren Wysham.



Frank Perry presents lecture on Harry's life.



Display of artifacts unearthed in the District.

Photos by Lisa Rose

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