



LIME KILN CHRONICLES

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

Campus Beginnings and the Historic District

By Frank Perry

How the University of California decided to locate a new campus in Santa Cruz is a fascinating story. It took several years of hard work in the late 1950s and very early 1960s on the part of Santa Cruz County citizens. It was one of the few examples from local history where practically everyone in the county, from Watsonville to Boulder Creek to Santa Cruz agreed and were united on an issue. The late William Doyle, in his book, *The Origin of UC Santa Cruz*, failed to find a single letter to the editor of the *Sentinel* or *Pajaronian* during those years that was opposed.

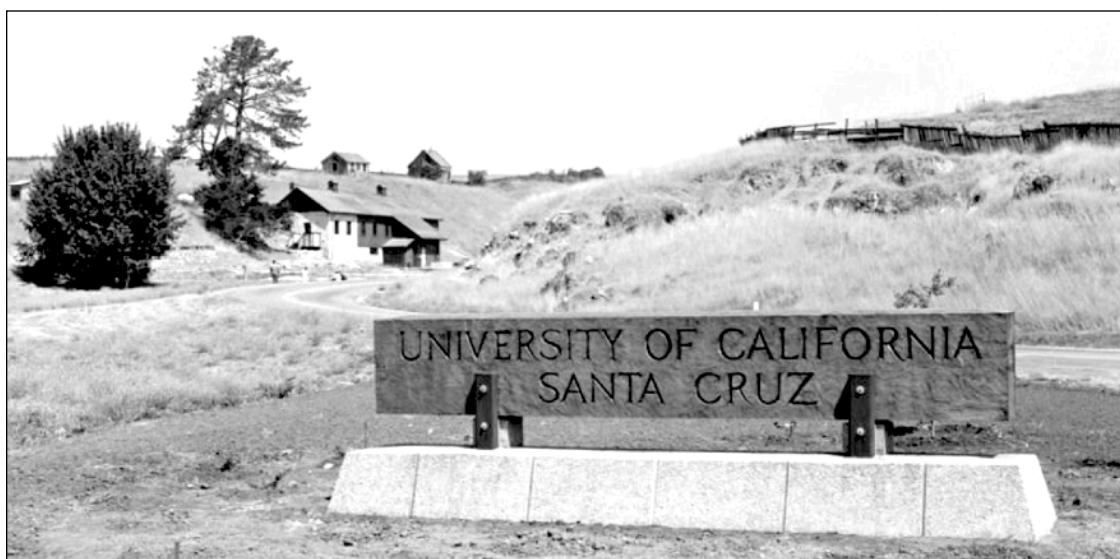
One of the people who helped bring the campus here was Hal Hyde of Watsonville. Hal also served as the UCSC's first business and finance officer and played an important role in the campus's early development. Back in

2009 I sat down with Hal and asked him about the use of the old Cowell Ranch buildings during the first years of the campus and how various decisions were made.

Some of Hal's family arrived in Santa Cruz County as early as 1848. With area roots dating so far back, it is not surprising that he even had a family connection to the Cowells, albeit circuitous. "My grandfather came to California in 1868 and lived with his uncle, George Treat, in San Francisco." According to Hal, Treat was a rather colorful character who, among things, owned Rancho Zayante. "Treat's daughter married Alexander Morrison, who started a major law firm in San Francisco," he said. Morrison, it turned out, attended UC Berkeley with Ernest Cowell (class of 1880) and later persuaded Cowell to leave part of his estate for construction of a hospital at the university. "So we had family stories about the Cowells," said Hal.

Hal was on the local committee to try to entice the University to locate here. One of the other committee members was Tom Williams, a local surveyor. Together they looked at possible sites, eventually settling on the Cowell Ranch as the best choice.

The Regents had announced they were looking for a central coast site in either Santa Clara, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Monterey, or San Benito County. The Regents hired a consultant, Larry Livingston, to examine potential sites in person, and Hal toured the area with Livingston. The



Entrance sign for the new campus, early 1960s. The Cook House is in the distance.

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In the Newspapers, 100 Years Ago . . .

July 19, 1921. "On the Santa Cruz end of the road between Rincon and the toll house, . . . work of pouring concrete will be in progress before the week is out. The big concrete mixer is located close to the patent burner kilns of the Henry Cowell Company at Rincon."

August 18, 1921. "The sandbar formed around the Cowell Point last winter is still in evidence and makes a delightful spot for those seeking a change of surroundings." [This is at Cowell Beach.]

August 30, 1921. "Following his usual custom, S. H. Cowell of this city [Santa Cruz] will enter a number of his horses in the track events that will feature in the state fair at Sacramento. Horses entered include the following: La Pana, Sequoia, Quien Sabe, and Zeta Lucile; pacers: Butt Hale and Sacramento Boy."

August 31, 1921. "At the request of other organizations, the Native Sons [of the Golden West] are going to head a movement to make every effort to induce the national government to purchase both the Cowell and Welch Big Trees. A prominent native put it this way: 'This is one of the finest groves in the state and the only one that can be reached by just stepping off a train. It is a measly shame that anybody should have to pay to see those trees.'"

November 26, 1921. "Scarcity of small fish in the bay at the present time has caused the seagull population to migrate to different parts of the residence sections about Santa Cruz, and it is a common sight to even see them in the back hills of the Cowell property. The birds are exceedingly tame and can be approached very close without disturbing them in the least."

December 13, 1921. "The Cowell Company, through the courtesy of A. S. T. Johnson, have selected an excellent Christmas tree on the their land to be used as a community Christmas tree during homecoming week. The tree will be cut and delivered to the city free of charge, and the work of putting it in position on the plaza will be done by the city street department."

Dennis Diego Steps Down from Board

Recently Santa Cruz architect Dennis Diego retired from the Friends board after seven years of service. We were most fortunate to have Dennis generously sharing his knowledge and expertise with the Friends.

Dennis wrote an article about the remodeling of the Cardiff House for the Fall/Winter 2014-2015 issue of the *Lime Kiln Chronicles*. He also assisted with the 2016 Santa Cruz County History Fair, which the Friends held at the Louden (now London) Nelson Community Center as part of the City of Santa Cruz sesquicentennial.

Dennis's biggest contribution was to the Cardiff Shed project. He drew up the plans for restoration of the shed, helped secure donations and funding, and helped shepherd it through the planning process.



Cardiff Shed restoration, 2019.

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Cowell, Fires, and the Road to Big Basin

In 1865, when Henry Cowell purchased Albion P. Jordan's half interest in the Santa Cruz lime business of Davis & Jordan, there was still plenty of nearby timber to fuel the company lime kilns. As the years rolled by, however, the firm had to tap timber resources farther and farther up the San Lorenzo Valley. Some of the cordwood was supplied by other landowners, who sold it to make money. Davis and Cowell also bought additional tracts of redwood forest specifically for harvesting the wood. This is where Big Basin comes into the story.

Sometime in the 1870s or 1880s, Davis and Cowell purchased several large parcels at the headwaters of the San Lorenzo River and Waddell Creek.

In 1902 the State of California purchased 3,800 acres to create the California Redwood Park, now called Big Basin Redwoods State Park. Citizens in Santa Cruz and Santa Clara Counties and elsewhere lobbied hard to save this forest of remarkably large old-growth redwoods from the lumberman's axe. Today it is California's oldest state park.

The area was very isolated at that time, with not even wagon roads to provide access. By the time the park opened to the public in 1906, a road had been built between the park and Boulder Creek at a cost of \$12,000. There was not yet, however, a direct route from the Santa Clara County side of the mountains. Such a road would have to pass through the 2,400 acres owned by the Henry Cowell Lime and Cement Company. Ernest Cowell, who had recently assumed management of the company after the death of his father, Henry, was very much opposed to this.

Cowell stated several reasons for his opposition. The company had sustained a loss of over \$100,000 in the timber fires of 1904. He worried that campers building campfires and visitors smoking tobacco might accidentally start another fire.



Park Entrance, circa 1915.

Frank Perry collection



The Cowell lands were mostly northeast of the California Redwood Park, as shown on this 1906 map.

He also argued that Boulder Creek was the natural starting point for travel to the new park just as Santa Cruz was the natural gateway to the Big Trees. A more direct route from the San Jose side would divert tourists away from Boulder Creek. Cowell and his wife, Alice, visited their Santa Cruz ranch often by then and he was becoming increasingly involved in Santa Cruz civic matters. He vowed to fight the construction of the road by every legal means available.

Other prominent Santa Cruzans sided with Cowell, including newspaper editor Arthur A. Taylor, and businessman F. A. Hihn. It took nearly a decade of lobbying by park boosters to finally get the road built. In 1913 the State Legislature appropriated \$70,000 for construction, but this did not include funds to purchase the right-of-way.

Earlier, in 1911, Ernest Cowell died and the job of running the company fell to his younger brother, Samuel Henry (Harry) Cowell. Harry was eventually persuaded to sell the right-of-way for \$7,600. He even donated \$500 to the purchase fund. Other prominent contributors were James Flood, James Phelan, A. B. Spreckels, and William Crocker of San Francisco.

The completed road was dedicated in 1915, just in time to welcome that new mode of travel: the automobile. Thanks to the shorter route, Big Basin was now just a three-and-a-half-hour drive from San Francisco (compared to two hours today). But it was enough to prompt many more Bay Area residents to make the trek and enjoy the park's spectacular Coast Redwoods.

Setting Goals for 2022 and Beyond

On August 7, 2021, several board members (Don Lauritson, Emmy Mitchell-Lynn, Frank Zwart, Cynthia Mathews, and Frank Perry) walked the Historic District. After over a year of inactivity due to the pandemic, it was time to survey the district structures and reprioritize our list of potential restoration and educational projects. There are many projects that need doing—some small, some large. Below is a working list. The Friends welcome members' suggestions on which should have priority. Some are Friends projects; others are collaborations with UCSC departments such as the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems and the Campus Reserve. If you have suggestions, feel free to contact us (limeworks@ucsc.edu).

Add more interpretive signs

Remove vegetation invading the lime kiln area

Rebuild Cooperage pillar that was hit by a car

Restore Cooperage

Repair damage to middle kiln

Build shelter for the wagon

Restore Trestle

Continue work on cabins

Restore Slaughter House

Repair Cardiff Gate

Resume offering public programs

Resume involving students in district projects

Create an online museum as part of website

Create an all-color guidebook to the district

Continue historical research



Emmy Mitchell-Lynn

Lime was first made here in the 1840s or 1850s. The surviving kilns date from the 1860s and 1890s.



Emmy Mitchell-Lynn

Interior of the Slaughterhouse. This building is located at the UCSC "Farm."



Ron Kustek

Several of the Friends board members pose at the Cardiff Gate during the August 7 survey.

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consultant soon decided that the Almaden Valley in Santa Clara County was the best location. Hal and the rest of the Santa Cruz committee then worked, as Hal described it, "on the unselling of Almaden."

After the University purchased 2,000 acres of the Cowell Ranch in 1961, founding chancellor Dean McHenry, campus architect Jack Wagstaff, Hal Hyde, and others set about creating a campus. It is hard to imagine the huge task they faced, it was like building a small city from scratch. Not only did staff and faculty have to be hired, but they had to work out where the buildings, roads, and even the city limits would be. Originally the city provided fire protection, but after the first students arrived the campus decided to have its own fire department.

At first, Hal, Chancellor McHenry, and librarian Donald Clark had offices at Cabrillo College in the chemistry labs. Cabrillo was so new that not all the rooms were in use yet.

But soon they were able to occupy some of the old Cowell Ranch buildings. Outside contractors were brought in to do the remodeling. "We moved in to what we could use," he explained. "We started using the Cook House right away and started using the Carriage House." They tried to preserve the important architectural features of those particular buildings. They could not use the old ranch house at first because the Cardiffs were still living there. George Cardiff had been property manager for Harry Cowell and later the Cowell Foundation.

"We had the key to the front gate and we went to the sheriff and got deputized—Dean, myself, and four or five other people—so we had control of the campus. We could legally kick off trespassers or whatever—those kinds of things," he explained. Hal served on the first campus planning committee with the chancellor, architect, librarian, and others.

The Regents did not want the campus "cheek and jowl" up against the city because of problems with that at UCLA and Berkeley. So the main development was put in the center of the 2,000 acres.

Initially, the only buildings on the property were the old Cowell Ranch buildings near the campus south entrance.

At first, the upstairs of the Cook House was mainly used by the chancellor. "He used the cook stove to spread out his papers. We didn't have a fire in it, of course!" The lower floor was used by academic planning people.



Special Collections, University Library

Harold (Hal) Hyde when he worked at UCSC. Hal died in 2020 at the age of 97.

The Carriage House had the campus architects, building inspectors, and purchasing department. Hal was hiring the non-academic personnel, including the first police chief, fire chief, and so on. The fire chief was eventually given an office in the Stonehouse at the base of the campus.

The original entrance road for the ranch ran between the Stonehouse and the Granary, but they soon started building new roads. Bay Street was relocated and Coolidge Drive was cut through the bucolic landscape. Assemblyman Glenn Coolidge had been a strong proponent for selection of the Cowell Ranch site. This road was first called the East Peripheral Road, but it was renamed by the Regents for Coolidge after he died unexpectedly in September of 1962.

Construction of Coolidge Drive necessitated dismantling part of the Cooperage building. This was potentially controversial, but Hal did not think there were other options. "There was not much else we could do." More disturbing was a big cut on the hillside that was clearly visible from town. That caught them off guard. "Dean and I just about cried when we saw it. That was a real shock." Fortunately, it eventually grew over with vegetation.

Chancellor McHenry's policy was, "If we can use it, let's do it. If it was in a place where we could preserve it or hold it for posterity, then don't tear it down."

A little bit later, a few years after the campus opened, some students and faculty wanted a theater. They had been doing performances outside on the loading dock of the Natural Sciences I building—hardly ideal. So the old horse barn at the campus entrance was converted into the "Barn Theater."

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This photo from the early 1960s shows the Carriage House being remodeled for use by the University.

"I stayed until 1975. I didn't get along with Mark Christensen [the new chancellor] and was one of the first to pull out." Hal explained that he "liked Mark as a person," but that he was a poor chancellor. Christensen stayed only a year and a half.

I asked about the old lime kiln near the McLaughlin Drive bridge over Jordan Gulch. He explained that after the East Peripheral Road was built, east-west roads were needed across campus. Before any bulldozing was done, the roads would be walked by the campus architects, and Hal also went along on most of those walks. "We'd see where it [the road] was and that little lime kiln there was one we steered around." They also tried to save trees where possible. "Though you can't build in a forest without taking down trees."

He said there was a heavy-duty power line on poles that came into the upper quarry from the west. It dated to

the Cowell era, but he does not know what it was used for. UCSC never did any quarrying, but they drilled some test wells. The campus had an agreement with the city to provide water, and there was already a city water tank near the arboretum.

The use of the abandoned quarries was another matter of discussion as the campus was developed. Part of the upper quarry was made into an amphitheater (recently refurbished). "The option was always open to put a football stadium in the lower quarry," Hal said. "Dean was unsure he wanted to have major football at this campus." Certainly there were people in Santa Cruz who wanted that. The most vocal proponent was *Sentinel* editor Gordon Sinclair, but football was not to be.

Although born in Santa Cruz County, Hal spent much of his childhood in Berkeley. One of his friends there was Peter Wolff. "We would do Boy Scout things together and his [Peter's] father would sometimes come along." His father was Adalbert Wolff—a German immigrant who became a stockbroker in San Francisco. The senior Mr. Wolff said that he loved to be out in the woods on Boy Scout hikes because he had worked on a ranch when he first came to California. Eventually, Hal learned that the ranch was the Cowell Ranch in Santa Cruz. Years later he invited Mr. Wolff to come down and see the campus. Through Hal's encouragement, Mr. Wolff agreed to an oral history with the campus, which is now available on the UCSC Library website. The lime kilns were still in use when Wolff worked here. His memories have proven immensely valuable to historians.

Hal recounted another interesting connection to the campus and property. Hal had known the sisters of

This aerial view of the Historic District dates from the early 1960s, shortly after the new entrance road (soon named Coolidge Drive) was constructed. On the left is the Barn Theater, Cook House, Cooperage, and Hay Barn. On the right is the row of trees below the Cardiff House. At the top is the Lower Quarry and on the far right is the Kalkar Quarry.





Special Collections, University Library

Road construction at UCSC in 1970. The photo was not identified as to which road this is. Anybody know?

founding campus librarian Donald Clark when Hal was growing up in Berkeley. Hal later knew Clark when Hal was at Harvard Business School and Clark was librarian there.

The southeast corner of the Carriage House was used for a time by the library, and Clark had an office there. As more books arrived (collected for UCSC by UC Irvine and UC San Diego), they were stored in the Hahn Student Service building before the library was built. Unfortunately, when the trucks of books arrived, the books and volumes of journals were all out of order. Students and staff had one heck of a time getting them organized.

I asked Hal if there were still buggies in the barns and Carriage House when he arrived. He did not think so. He said that George Cardiff sold off a lot of equipment for the Cowell Foundation before the University bought the property.

Mainly, it was the Cook House, Carriage House, Barn G, and Barn H that were put to use by the University at first. Barn G now houses physical planning and Barn H shipping and receiving. The latter also housed the police in the early years. Hal said they were remodeled for campus use without too much difficulty. The Hay Barn was used mostly for storage.

Hal also recalls when the decision was made to repair the Cardiff Gate. Although that entrance was no longer used, it was thought important to preserve the grand Victorian fencing.

The last building we talked about was the Blacksmith Shop. "That was obviously useable," he

said. In fact it was still in working order, and UCSC did some blacksmithing there. Later it was an art studio.

Hal couldn't resist mentioning one faculty member in the fledgling art department. He was "pretty far out as far as his art was concerned," said Hal. "His idea of art was to take a big hunk of marble and put dynamite around it. Then he would blow the dynamite and the result was his art piece. We'd have to close off the road up there while he blew this. This was out in the bottom there somewhere, could have been the lower quarry. Obviously this was done when the students weren't around."

These were not the only booms heard on campus back then. In addition, the Kalkar Quarry off Spring Street near the base of campus was still removing limestone. "They did their blasting at noon, and once in a while a rock would land on the campus." Hal wrote an article about this for the Fall/Winter 2013-2014 *Lime Kiln Chronicles*. (<https://limeworks.ucsc.edu/newsletter/issues/lkc-2013-fall.pdf>)

Hal said he was generally pleased with the way the historic buildings were put to use. "And I am delighted with what you guys are doing, too," he said of the Friends. He felt it is very important to tell the story of the historic lime industry, and that this is one of the best places in the western United States to tell that story.

Although the historic district was not designated such until 1988, UCSC's efforts to preserve the Cowell Ranch buildings began with the campus founding.

Readers interested in learning more about Hal Hyde may wish to consult this oral history on the UCSC Library website: <https://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/harold-hyde>

New and Renewing Members

Our sincere thanks to these new and renewing members. Your donations enable the Friends to continue its mission of education and historic preservation.

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Main entrance to UCSC shortly after construction of the road in the early 1960s. On the left is the old Horse Barn (now the Barn Theater) and in the distance is the Cook House and Cooperage. Note the lack of trees! (Special Collections, University Library, UCSC)

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