

CONTEXT III

INSTITUTIONS IN
THE CITY OF SANTA CRUZ
1850-1950

CHAPTER 5
CONTEXT III
INSTITUTIONS IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY—1850-1950

OVERVIEW

In the development of the West, the transition from frontier outpost to city or town was said to have taken place when schools and churches outnumbered saloons and whorehouses. Santa Cruz started early in its history to reach that goal and from the first days of its existence as a mission settlement, provisions were made for both religious worship and the education of children.

Beginning in 1866 with the construction of the first county courthouse, and through the turn of the century, a number of public buildings were erected in the City of Santa Cruz. With the exception of the smallest, the 1882 octagon shaped Hall of Records, all of them are gone — having fallen to the ravages of fire, earthquake, and demolition. Those built between 1930 and 1950 have fared better and can still be seen in the city core. These include City Hall, the civic auditorium and the old jail which has been remodeled for use as the arts and history museum.

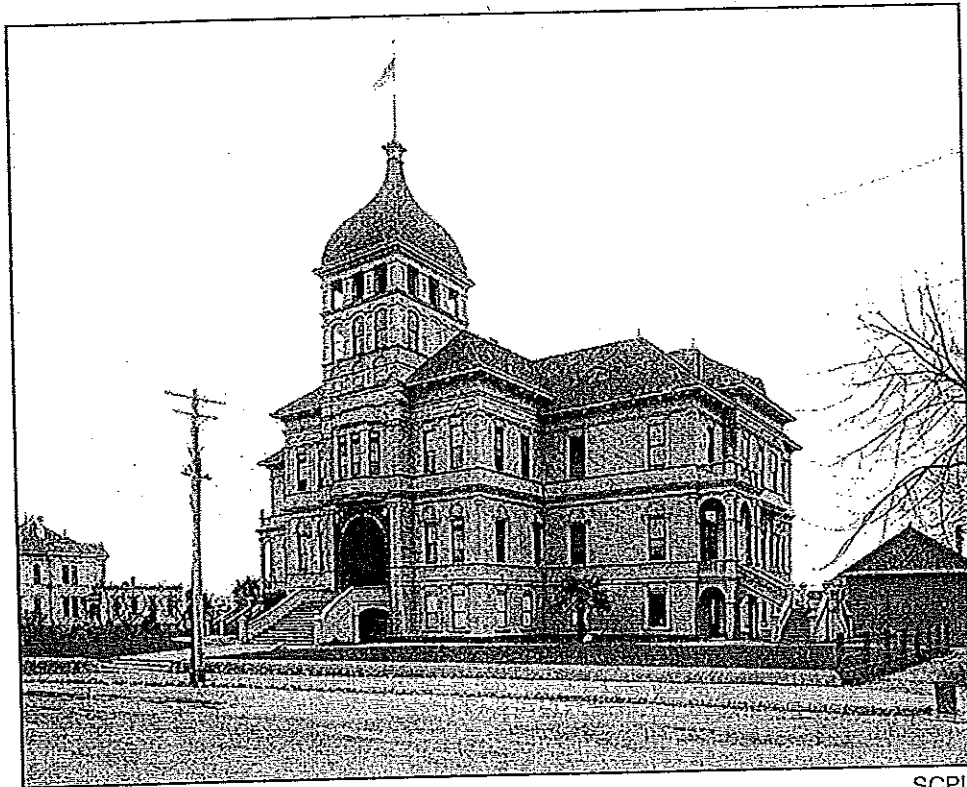
HISTORY

Schools and Libraries

The first educational institution in the County was Santa Cruz Mission where Indian neophytes were taught the Catholic religion and children of Spanish settlers learned to read, write and keep accounts. By 1847, a small contingent of English speaking families had come to Santa Cruz and, although Spanish was still the official language, they wanted their children to learn reading and writing in English. One such settler, Mary Amney Case, who arrived with her husband and child in 1847, held classes in her home in 1848 and 1849, thus becoming the first English school of record in Santa Cruz County. Following California statehood in 1850, more families with school age children came to the area and local churches were pressed into service as school buildings. Methodist churches in the city of Santa Cruz and Watsonville served this purpose until 1857 with teachers being paid by collecting funds from the parents of students. With an ever increasing number of children, residents of the county soon campaigned for a public school with its own school house. According to the history of the Santa Cruz County school system written by Margaret Koch in 1978 and published by the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, the first one room school house in the city was built in 1857 when a \$400 lot was purchased by community subscription on Mission Hill.

Other accounts, including those by researcher Phil Reader and University of California Santa Cruz librarian Donald Clark, credit the opening of the first school to Loudon (or London) Nelson, a black former slave who came to the area in 1842 (Clark) or 1856 (Reader). He bought land on the San Lorenzo River where he made his living as farmer. Although he reportedly could neither read nor write, he appreciated education and enjoyed watching the children tramping to school which was located, according to Clark's account, in a private house on the hill above Nelson's property. He willed his estate to the school children of Santa Cruz to be used for their education and following his death in 1860, the money was used, according to Clark, to purchase land on Mission Hill to build the first school. In 1979, the former Laurel School, built in 1930 and used as a community center was renamed the Loudon Nelson Community Center in his honor.

The site of the Mission Hill school was moved to King Street in 1931, when a new school was built, and it now serves as a junior high school. In 1860, Branciforte School was built on Soquel Avenue and was replaced by the present building constructed in 1915 and located on Branciforte

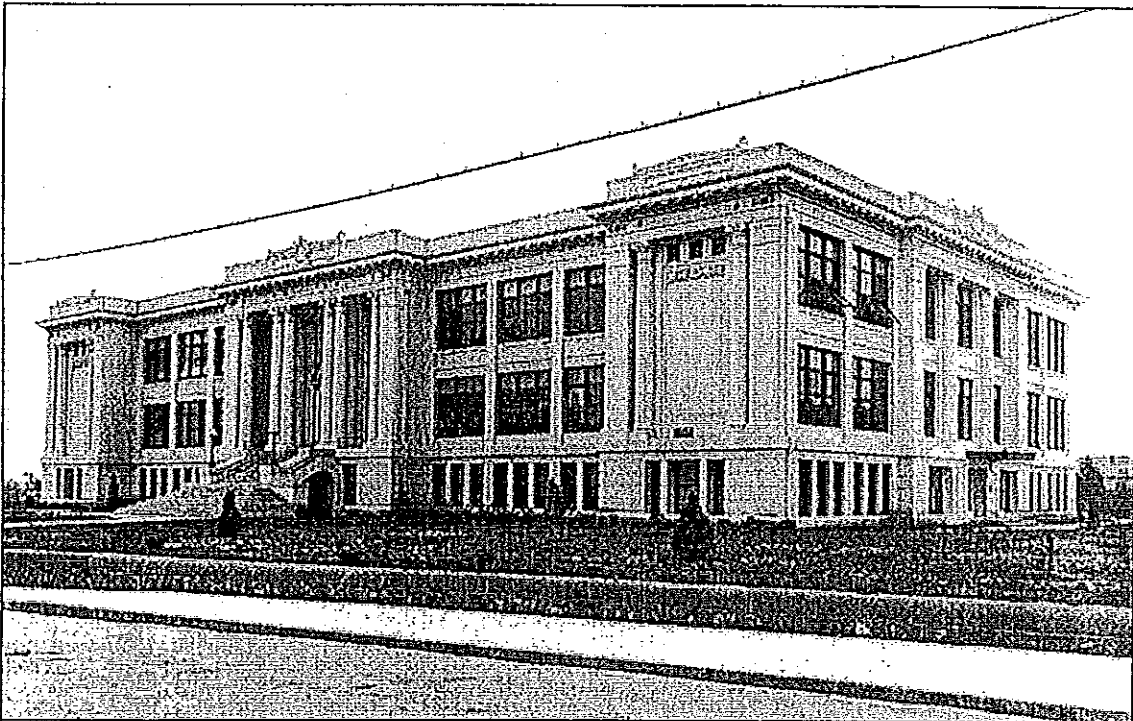


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FIGURES 221 & 222. *The first Santa Cruz High School was built in 1895 and located at 415 Walnut Avenue (above). A fire reduced it to ashes in 1913.*

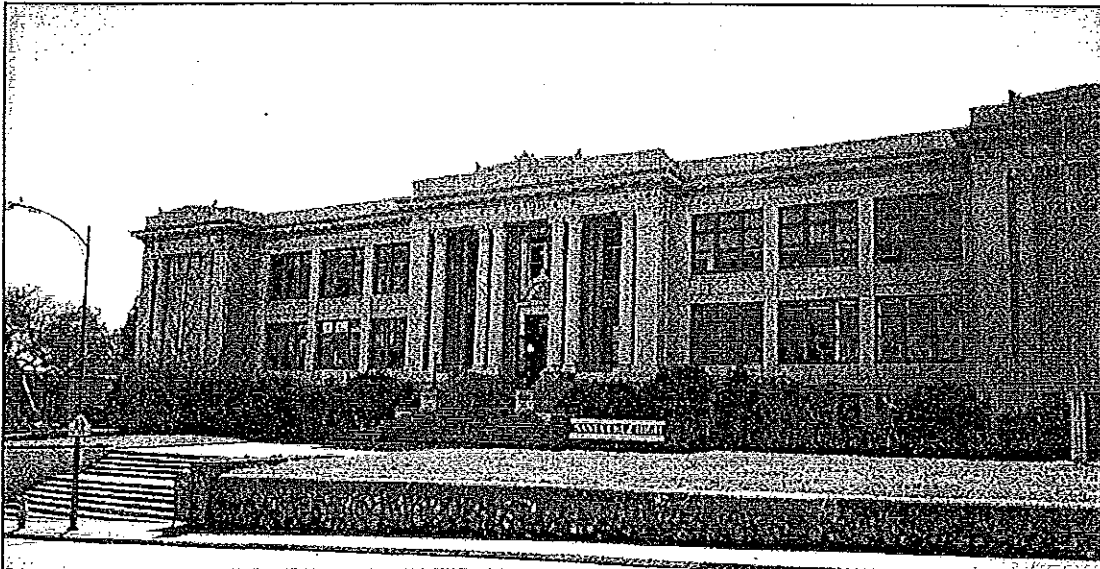


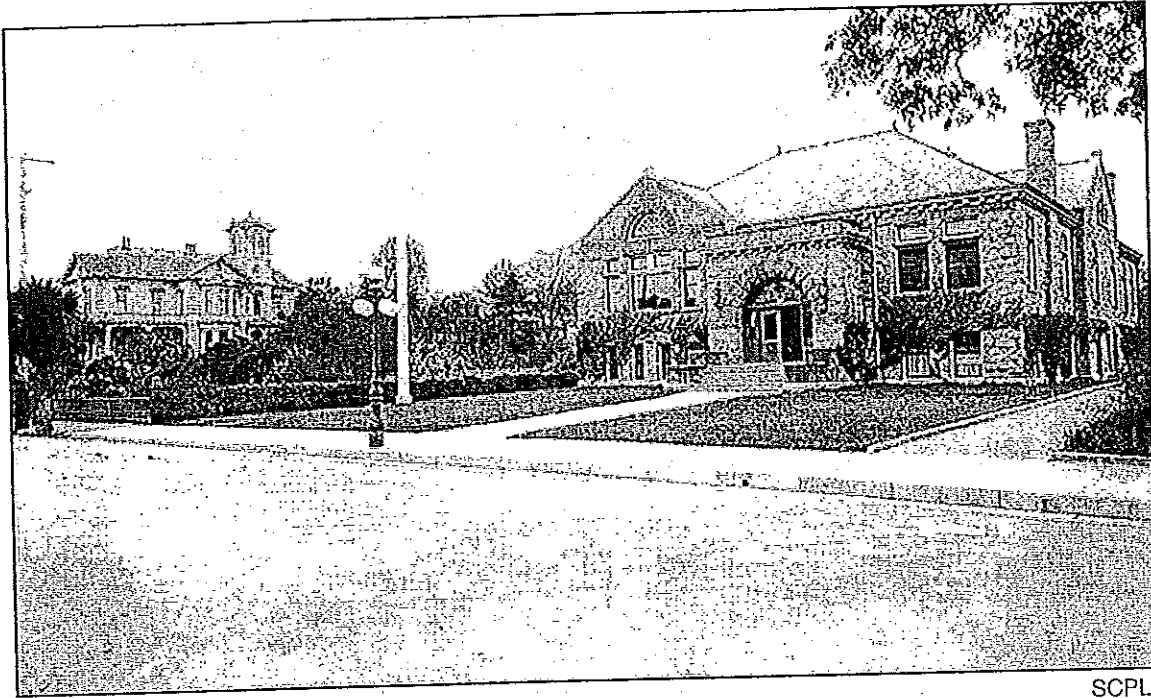
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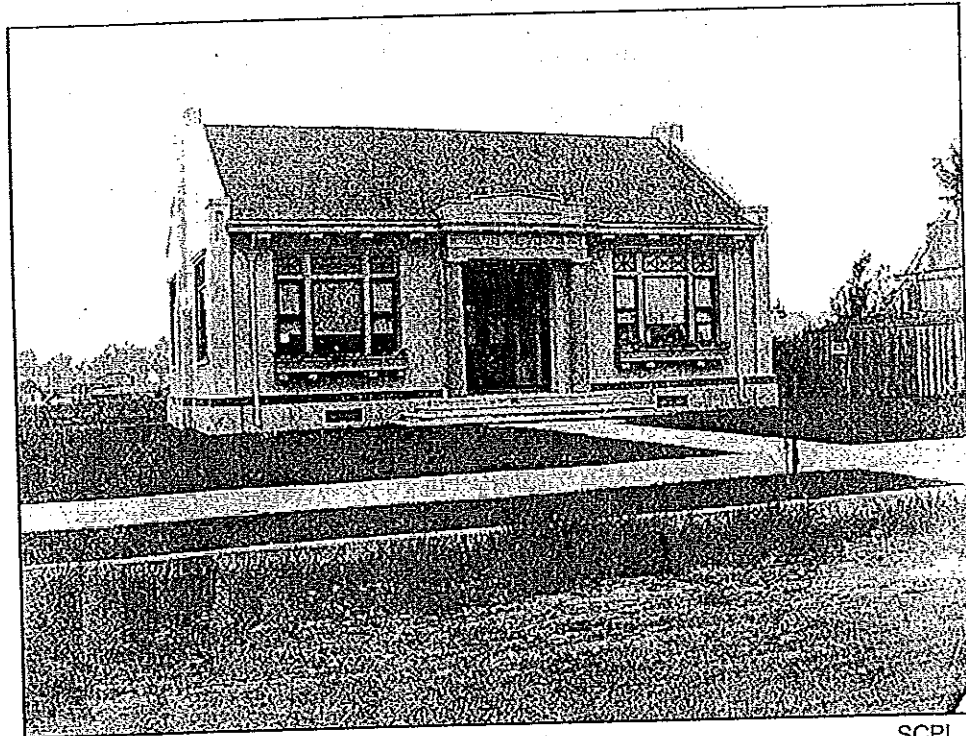
FIGURES 223 & 224. A replacement for the destroyed high school was constructed in 1914 (above). Few changes have been made to the exterior of the building which was designed by William Weeks.





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FIGURES 225 & 226 *The first Santa Cruz Carnegie Library (above) was designed by William Weeks and constructed in 1904. It was demolished in 1966 to make way for the present library. Other Carnegie libraries, such as Garfield Park Branch Library on Woodrow Street, have survived.*



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Avenue. Bayview School was added in 1865 at Mission and Bay Streets where the original building was demolished to make way for the modern structure presently on the site.

Being a teacher in Santa Cruz County in the 1860s was not an easy life. According to a report issued by the superintendent of schools in 1861: "It does not pay very well in this county to teach School, and those who have followed no other occupation do not intend to continue teaching any longer than they can help." The superintendent's suggestions for improvement in those early years included: uniformity of textbooks, the grading of all schools, libraries available to all schools and the adoption of a plan that would, "compel the attendance of children who are idling their time around the streets, without occupation." In spite of the problems of too little funding, the number of schools in the County continued to increase. By 1865 there were sixteen and by 1870 there were twenty five.

By the late 1880s, Santa Cruz County had over 50 schools scattered through the area, most of which were one room or shared space with churches or other buildings. Within the city, high school classes were originally conducted on the fourth floor of the Mission Hill Grammar School. The first Santa Cruz High School was constructed on Walnut Avenue in 1895. It burned to the ground on October 1, 1913 and was replaced on the same site by the present building in 1915. Garfield Park had its own school, constructed in 1915. It was closed, however, in 1965 and the building no longer exists. It is indeed fortunate that a number of the large, elegant schools built in the early to middle part of the 20th century including the High School, Branciforte School and Gault School are still used for their original purpose. Another, Laurel School, has been put to use as a community center.

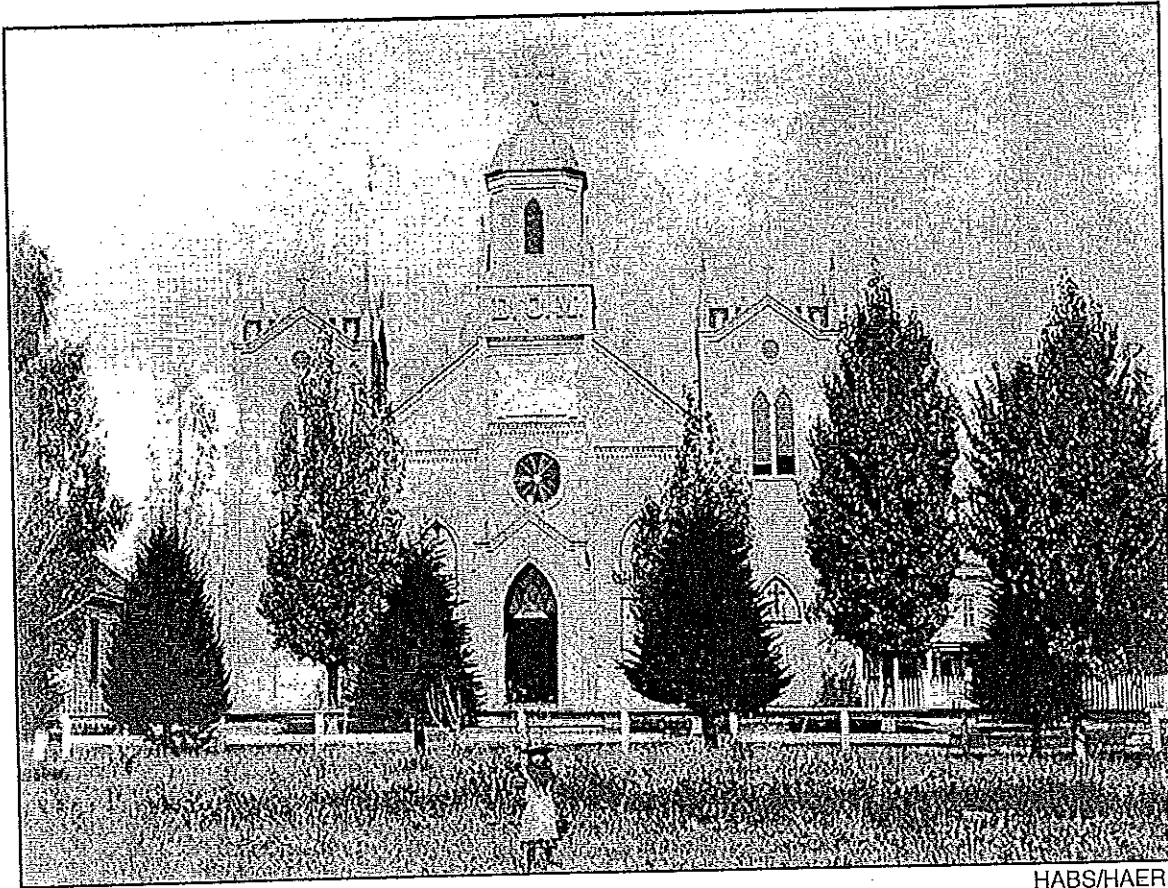
The original libraries have not fared as well. The main library, an imposing edifice designed by architect William Weeks, was demolished to make way for a modern building as were several branch libraries. Only the Garfield Park Library, built in 1914, and the Seabright library, which now serves as the Natural History museum, are still in existence.

Churches

The first church in the county was Mission Santa Cruz established in 1791. The church was used until 1857 when part of it collapsed during an earthquake. A replacement was dedicated in 1858 which served the needs of the Catholic community until 1889 when a new church was built. Constructed of brick at a cost of \$35,000, the new church was designed by San Francisco architect Thomas J. Welch and served about 1,500 parishioners. The church, considered a city landmark, was heavily damaged in the Loma Prieta earthquake and extensive repairs were needed to make it usable again.

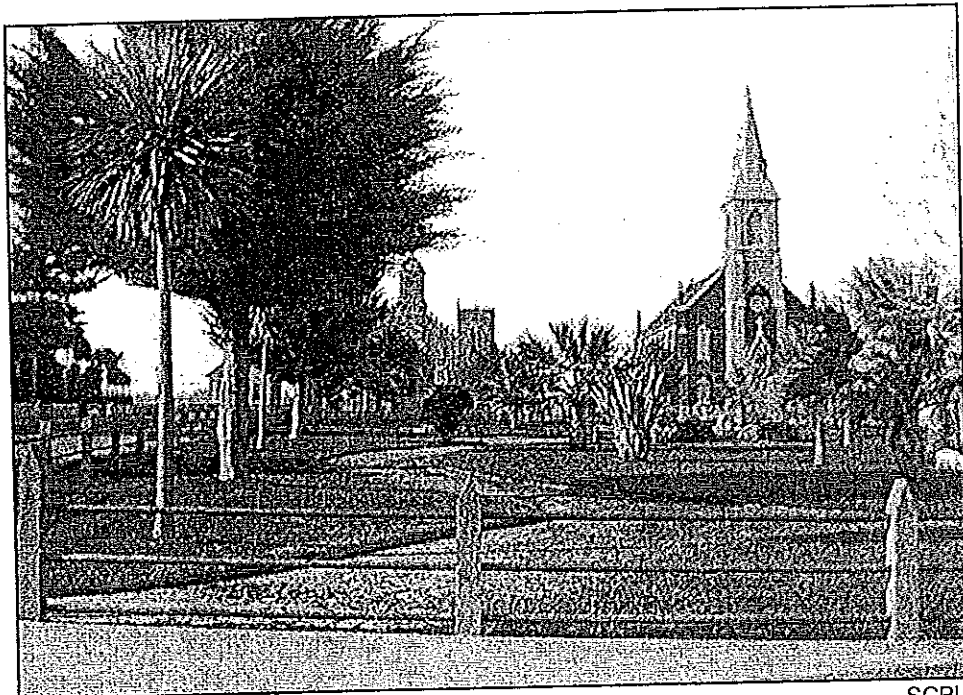
In the 1850s and 1860s five Protestant church groups were organized in Santa Cruz County. A Methodist church was the first, organized by Elihu Anthony in 1848. The group actually built a church, a 20 by 30 foot wooden structure in 1850. The first Congregational church was begun in the city of Santa Cruz in 1852. Others followed, including the church in Soquel which was built in 1870. It was also the Congregational Church that took on the mission of converting the area's Chinese population to Christianity. The Chinese Sunday School begun in 1869, was the oldest recorded Christian institution dedicated to that purpose in the Monterey Bay Region. The Sunday school, conducted in English, was taught by a woman member. Emphasis was on learning the reading, writing and speaking of English and the original twelve students were reported to be industrious and "eager to learn."

In 1881 a full-fledged Chinese mission was organized in Santa Cruz. Adult members of the mission were expected to attend classes, which featured English lessons and Bible study, every week day evening until 9 o'clock. The ability of the congregation to recruit members was aided by the fact that a Chinese minister, Wong Ock, was assigned to the mission from its founding

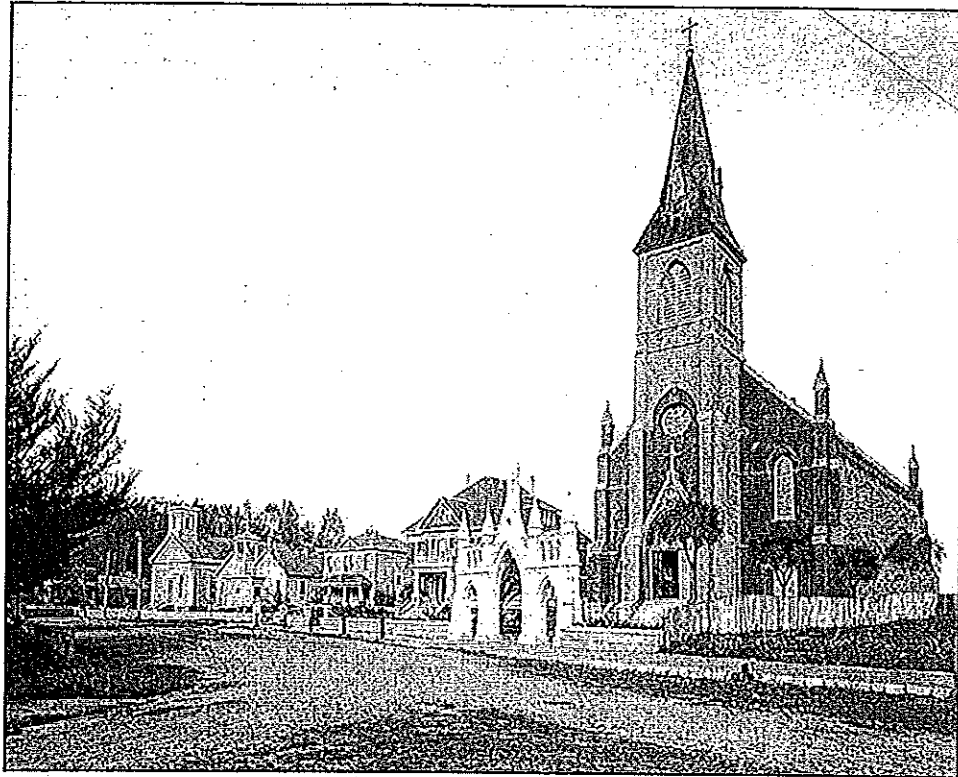


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FIGURES 227 & 228. *Holy Cross (above) was built in 1858 to replace the old Mission church which was damaged by an earthquake. A new Roman Catholic church was built in 1889 and can be seen on the right in the photograph below.*

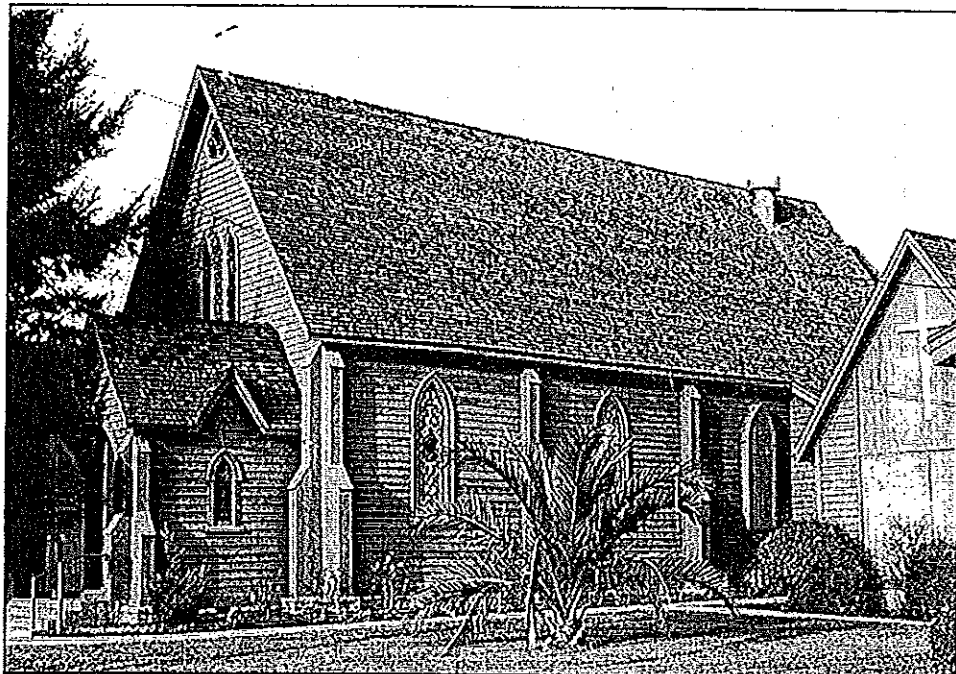


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FIGURES 229 & 230. In 1891 a memorial arch was built in front of the church (above). Holy Cross holds a dominant place on the plaza atop Mission Hill. Below is Calvary Episcopal Church, the City's oldest church building constructed in 1864 and located at 538 Center Street.



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until 1883. Located in the City's Chinatown, the mission held yearly recitals to showcase the progress of its students and to collect funds to defray expenses. The mission remained an active part of the community into the 20th century until the declining Chinese population in Santa Cruz resulted in its eventual closing.

Other denominations followed the Congregationalists to the County including the Baptists in 1858 and the Unity Church in 1866. In 1862, an Episcopal congregation was formed in the city although it had no building of its own. Moving from the Hugo Hihn building to the Temperance Hall on Mission Street and on to a converted school house that had formerly been used by the Methodists, the church finally acquired a permanent home when land was donated for that purpose in 1864. The church building, which was constructed for \$3000 used a modified plan taken from *Upjohn's Rural Architecture* by New York architect Richard Upjohn. Simple in its Gothic style, the main structure is still intact with a belfry that was added in 1874 and a number of additions made in the 20th century. By 1890 there were over 20 Protestant churches in the County representing the Presbyterian, Christian, Adventist and Universalist denominations as well as those previously mentioned. At the turn of the century, Protestants in the County numbered about 2,500.

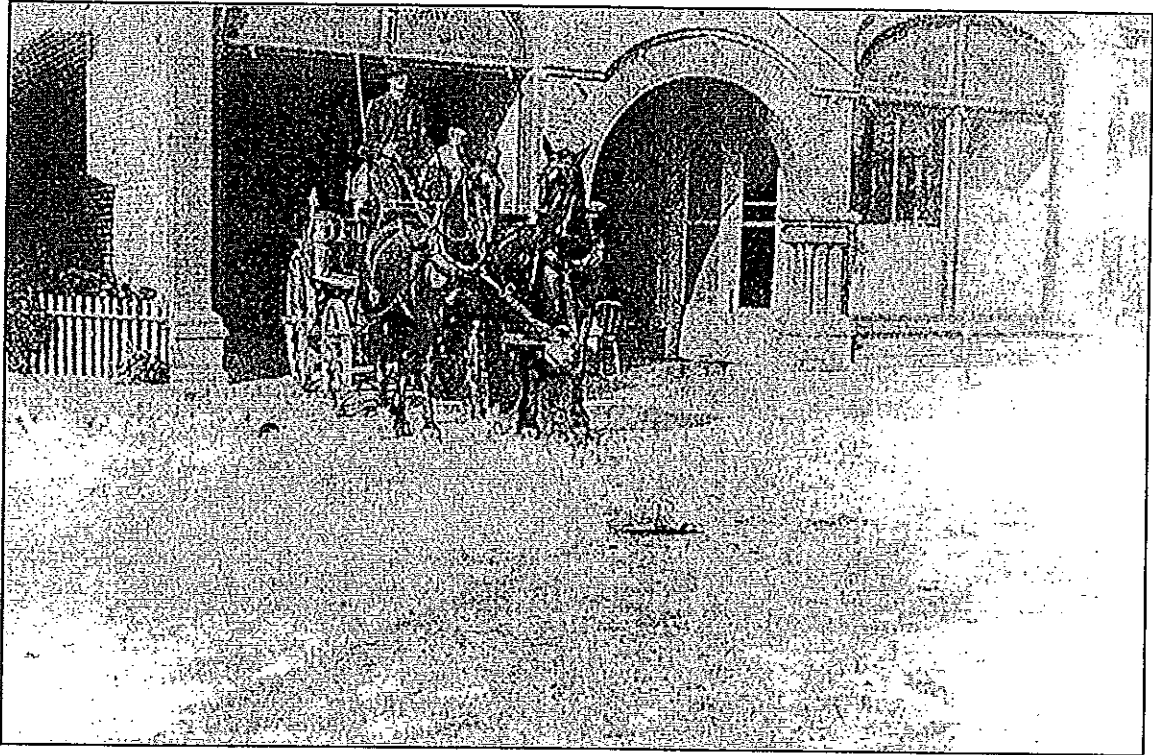
Besides the normal facilities provided by churches, religious groups made an additional contribution to the County by establishing a number of religious retreats and camps, some of which still operate at various locations in the Santa Cruz mountains. Within the city, the most notable was a Garfield Park which was begun in the late 1880s. Built by the Northern California Convention of the Disciples of Christ, its most prominent structure was a large tabernacle dedicated on Aug. 31, 1890 that was large enough for 2000 people. The development around it, planned for a number of cottages and larger "villas" was constructed on streets laid out in a series of circles. Lots were offered at auction within the tabernacle at \$105 to \$135 each. Although not as successful as other religious communities such as Mount Hermon, a number of cottages were built at the time and can still be seen in the area known today as "the Circles." The tabernacle has been torn down and a new church, built in 1958, stands on the site.

Civic and Community buildings

As the county seat and primary population center in the county, the City of Santa Cruz saw the construction of a number of impressive public buildings between 1865 and the turn of the century. The first City Hall was built in 1877 on Cooper and Front Street followed by a jail constructed in 1889. Both were torn down in 1937. A new jail, built in 1936 in Moderne style by San Francisco architect Albert Rolle has been remodeled and is now used as a city museum.

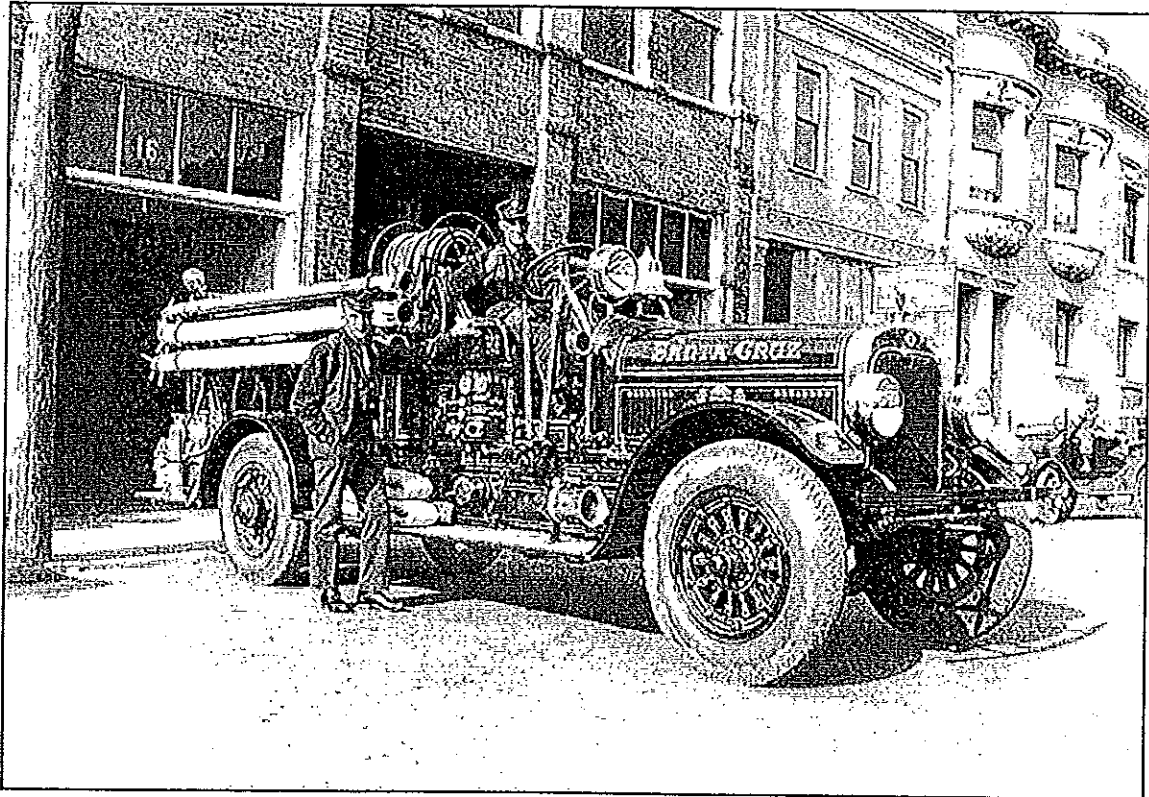
The County Courthouse, later known as the Cooper House was built in 1894 to replace the 1866 courthouse which burned in the downtown fire of that year. The diminutive, octagon shaped Hall of Records, designed by Oakland architect J.W. Newcum, was built in 1882 and is the only government building from the 19th century to survive. It became a historical museum in 1972 and presently serves as the museum gift shop.

Three twentieth century government buildings still survive, after earthquake repairs: the Santa Cruz City Hall located at 809 Center Street, the Civic Auditorium and the Santa Cruz Firehouse at Church and Center Street. City Hall was designed and built in 1937-38 by Monterey architect C.J. Ryland in the Monterey Colonial Revival Style. It occupies the site of F.A. Hihn's mansion built in 1872 which was used as the city hall beginning in 1920. The Hihn house torn down when the present city hall was constructed. Another building lost to demolition was the opera house which opened to great fanfare in 1877. Located at Union and Center Streets it was moved to Capitola in 1921 and eventually torn down in 1961. The Civic Auditorium and Santa Cruz Fire station #1, designed by San Francisco architect Mark Daniels were built in 1939 and are both still used for their original purposes.

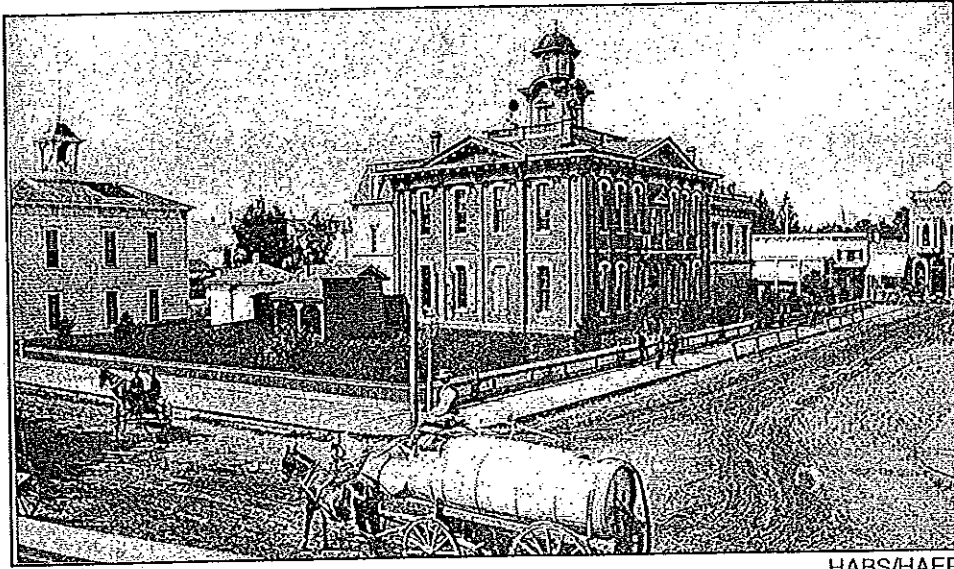


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FIGURES 231 & 232. *The Santa Cruz City Fire Department was established in 1894. The first fire house (seen above in 1895 and below in 1925) was located on Church Street.*

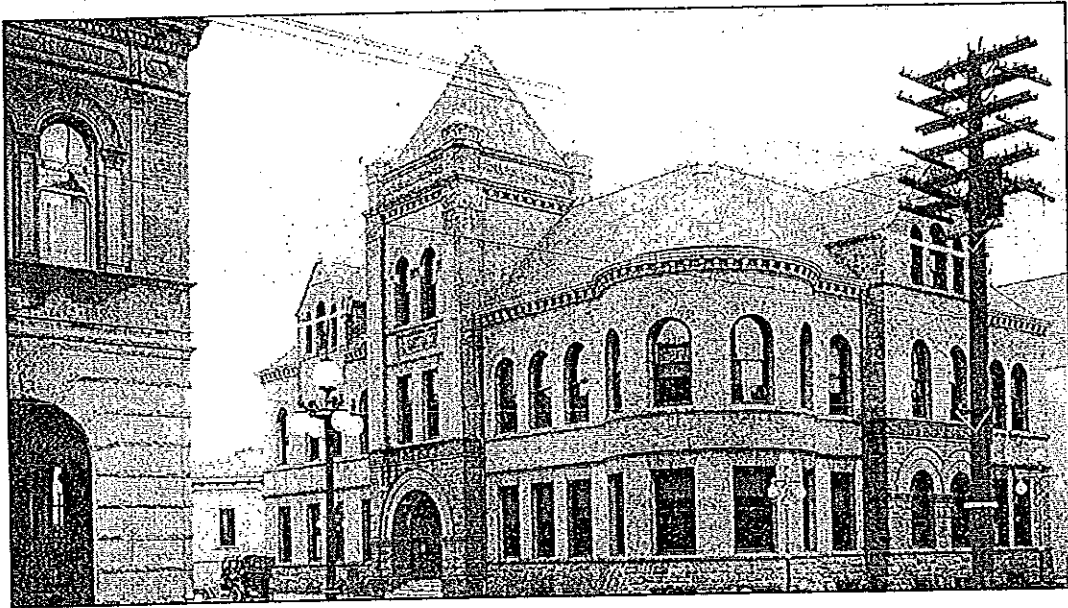


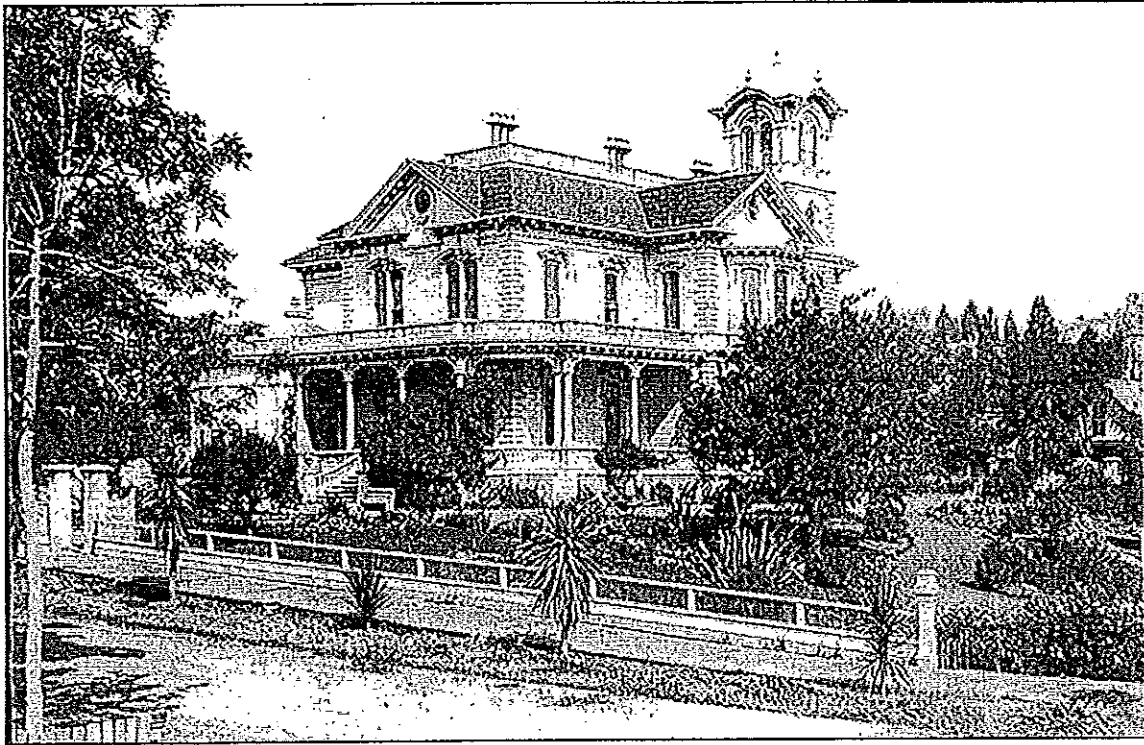
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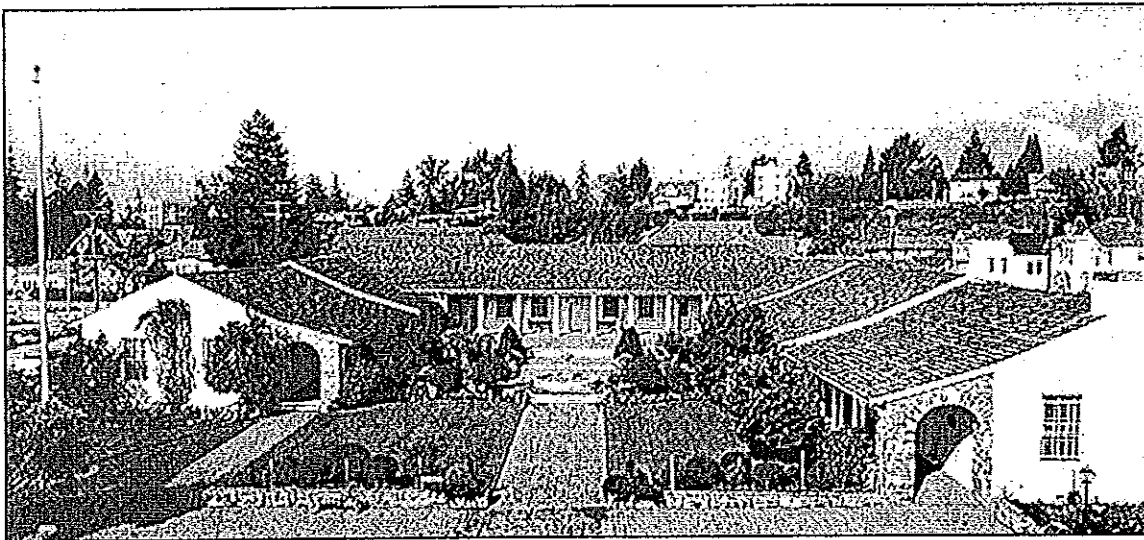
FIGURES 233 & 234. A courthouse was constructed on Cooper Street in 1866 (above) and destroyed by fire in 1894. It was replaced on the site the same year by a new structure that was later known as Cooper House (below). It was demolished as the result of damage caused by the 1989 earthquake.





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FIGURES 235 & 236. *The 1872 Hihn mansion, pictured above served as City Hall beginning in 1920. It was demolished to make way for the present City Hall (below) located on Center Street which was built in 1937.*



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PROPERTY TYPES

Identification

Within the context of: **Institutions in Santa Cruz County—1850-1940**, the following have been identified:

1. school and library buildings
2. church buildings
3. civic and community buildings

Description

School and Library Buildings

The county of Santa Cruz is fortunate to have a number of school houses and buildings that date from the 1880s and '90s and represent every type, from the one room school house to a two story, architect designed grade school. In the city, all of the schools from this early period have been replaced. Early 20th century examples of large, handsome, architect-designed schools, however, are well represented and fortunately, Santa Cruz High School, Branciforte Elementary School, Gault Elementary School and the former Laurel School have all been preserved and are currently in use. They are important additions to their neighborhoods and the community in general.

Church Buildings

In spite of considerable earthquake damage, the congregation of Holy Cross Church, has restored and reopened this important city landmark. The City's oldest church building, Calvary Episcopal Church located at 532 Center Street, has some modern additions, but the well kept original structure is still intact. Other buildings, including the 1925 Grace Methodist Church at 1024 Soquel Avenue, and the unadorned, vernacular Missionary Baptist Church at 714 Woodrow Avenue, built about 1900, show the wide range of styles that characterize Santa Cruz houses of worship.

Civic and Community Buildings

The only government building from the 19th century to survive is the Hall of Records, now serving as the Museum of Art and History gift shop. Its unique octagon shape and the fact that it has been restored to its original size and condition makes it one of the most important of the city's institutional landmarks.

The three twentieth century city government buildings : Santa Cruz City Hall, the Civic Auditorium and Santa Cruz Firehouse #1, with their complementary styles and location, make them especially important as part of the City's core. Although the housing located on adjacent streets may be in danger from encroaching commercialization, these three government buildings provide an anchor that denotes an earlier sense of size and scale appropriate to the neighborhood in which they are located.

Two other notable civic buildings include the Post Office at 850 Front Street, built in 1911, and the Veterans Memorial Building, at 844 Front, completed in 1931. Though unrelated in period or style, they are important because they are excellent representatives of their types as well as being two of the last surviving public buildings in the city.

Significance

As a result of the 1989 earthquake, the City of Santa Cruz lost most of its remaining 19th century community buildings. Perhaps the greatest loss was the old courthouse, known as the Cooper House, which had continued to have a prominent place in the city's modern life. After it was converted to use for shops and restaurants it had become a central gathering place for the community with outdoor dining, concerts and other entertainment. It is hoped that the loss of such an important landmark will bring a sense appreciation and protectiveness to those buildings that remain, including the only 19th century survivor, the Hall of Records. Although newer, the present city hall, along with the nearby civic auditorium and fire station are among the few historic civic buildings to survive and therefore take on added importance in preserving some sense of the past within the city's core. The remaining schools and libraries, the Post Office and Veteran's Memorial Building are likewise essential to maintain a sense of institutional memory in a city that has lost so much.

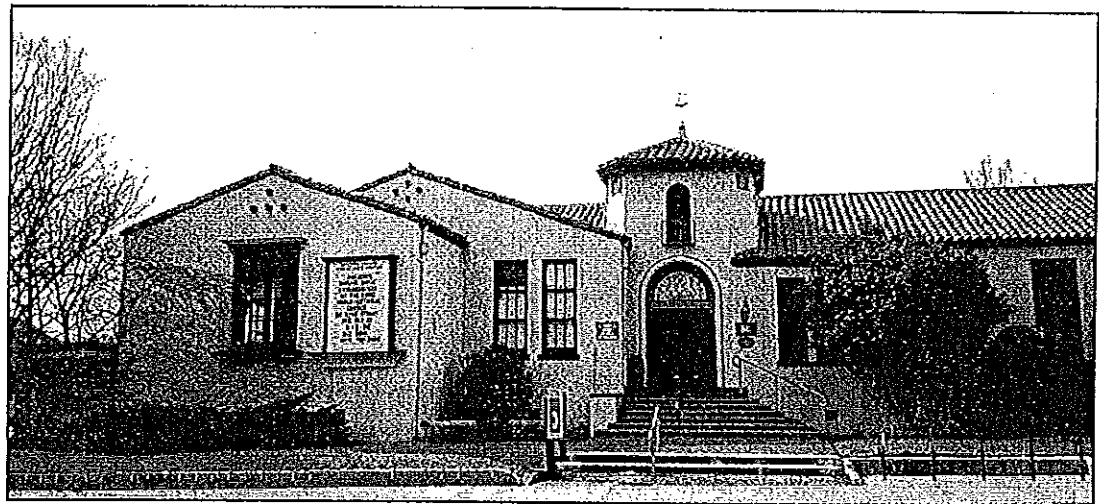
In spite of devastating and expensive damage brought about by the earthquake, the various congregations within the city have made a heroic effort to retain their historic churches and restore them to full use. They are significant both for their historical and architectural value and as examples of the way in which communal will can rescue even the most damaged structures after a natural disaster.

PROPERTY TYPES
CONTEXT III

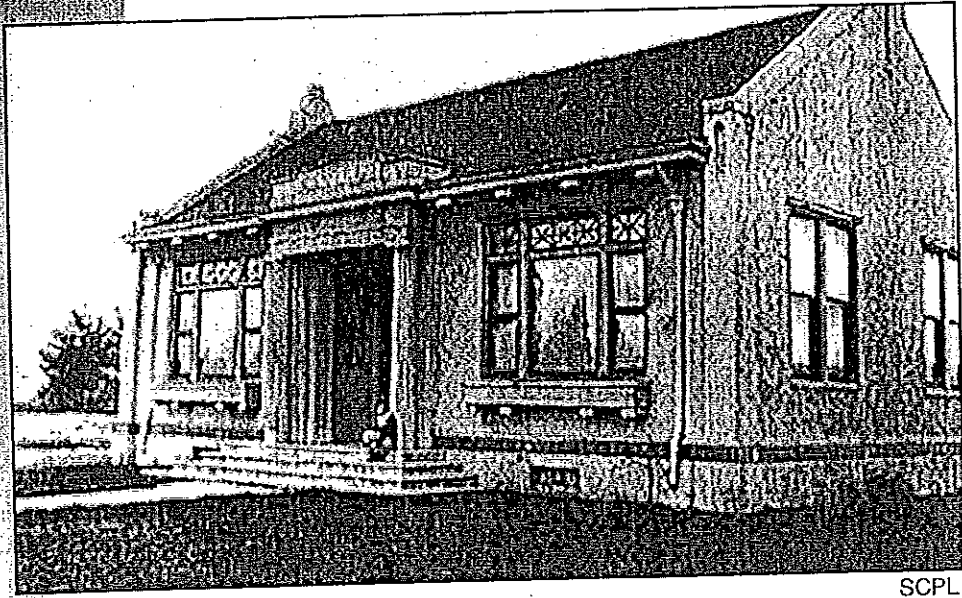
Context III
Property type:
schools



FIGURES 237 & 238. *The City of Santa Cruz has a number of early and mid-twentieth century schools that are still in use. Santa Cruz High School (above) was built in 1914 and Laurel School (below) was constructed in 1930. The building has been converted into the Louden Nelson Community Center.*

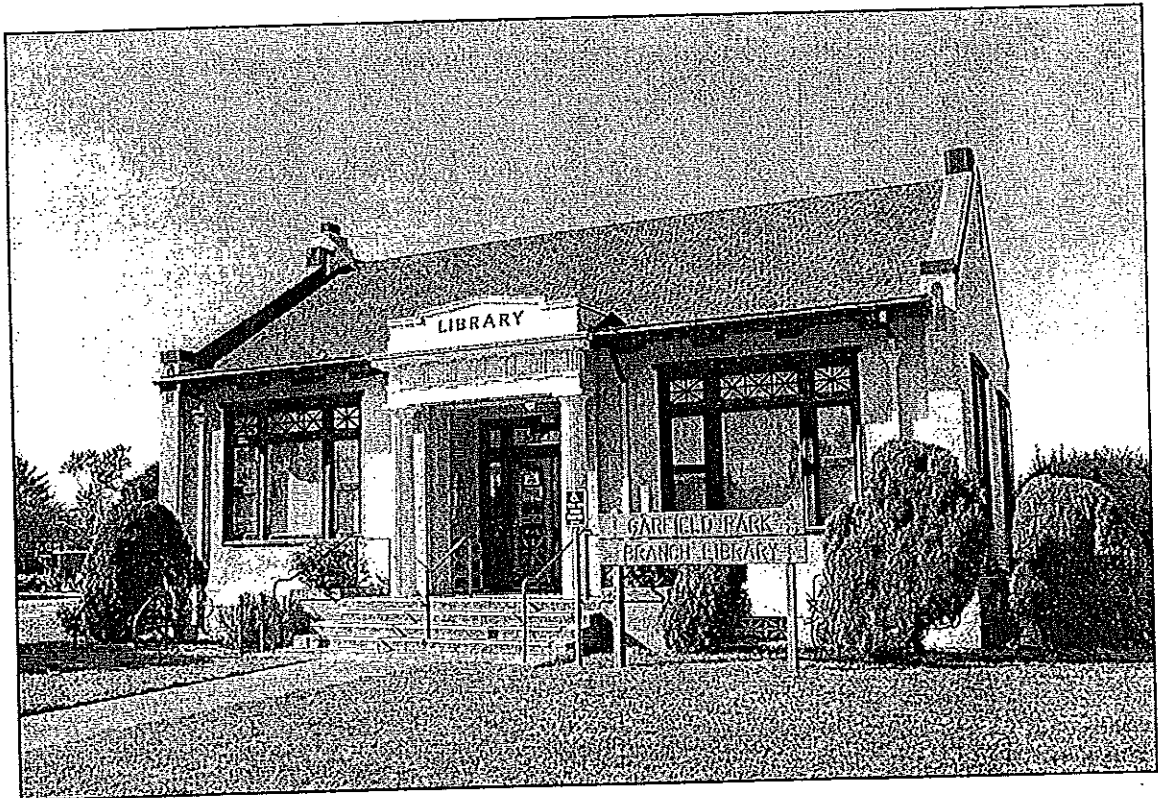


Context III
Property type:
libraries

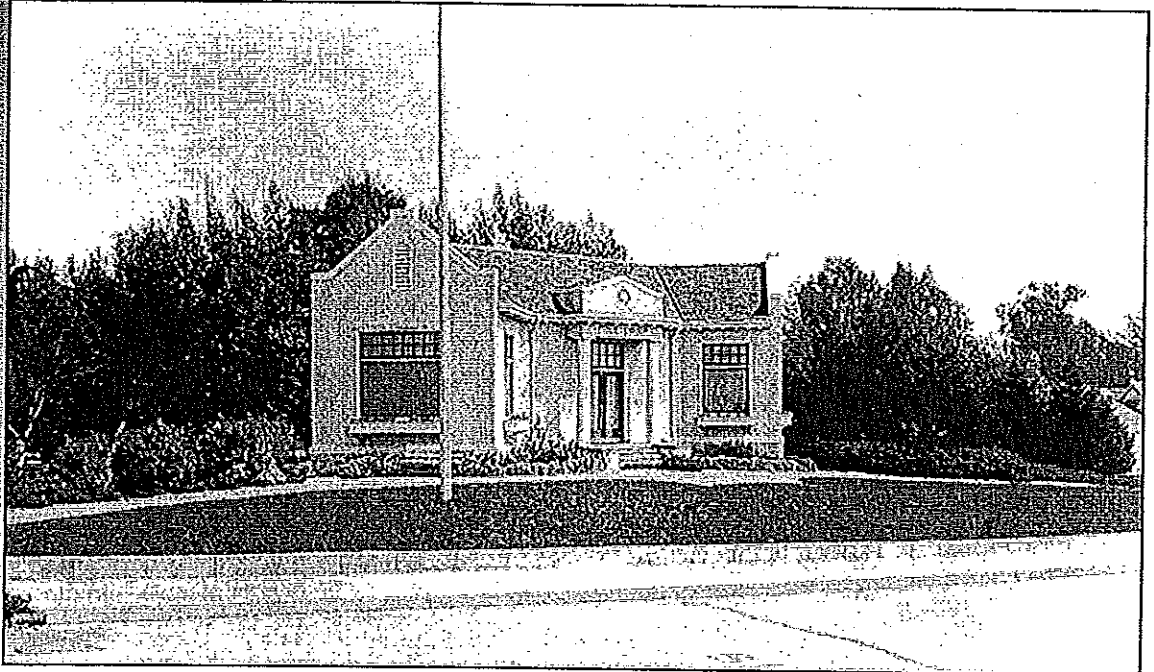


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FIGURES 239 & 240 Libraries have paid an important part in community development. Two of the small Carnegie Branch libraries are still in use. Pictured here is the Garfield Park Library on Woodrow Avenue.

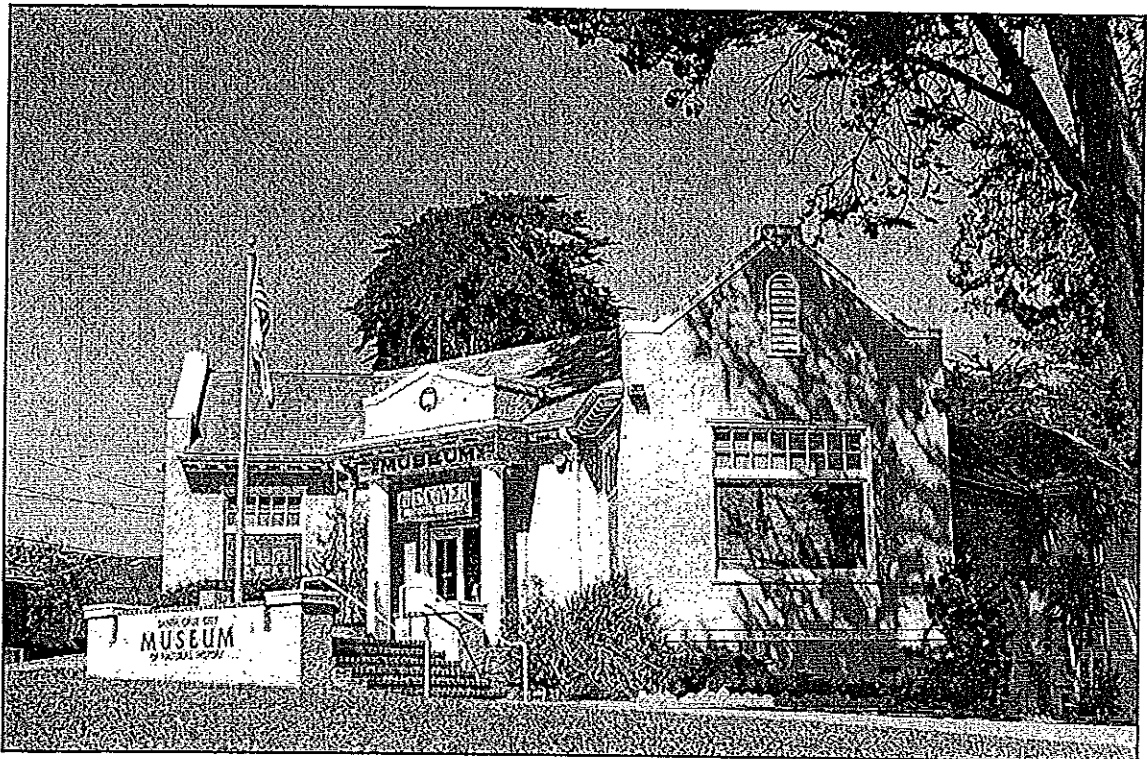


Context III
Property type:
libraries
(community buildings)

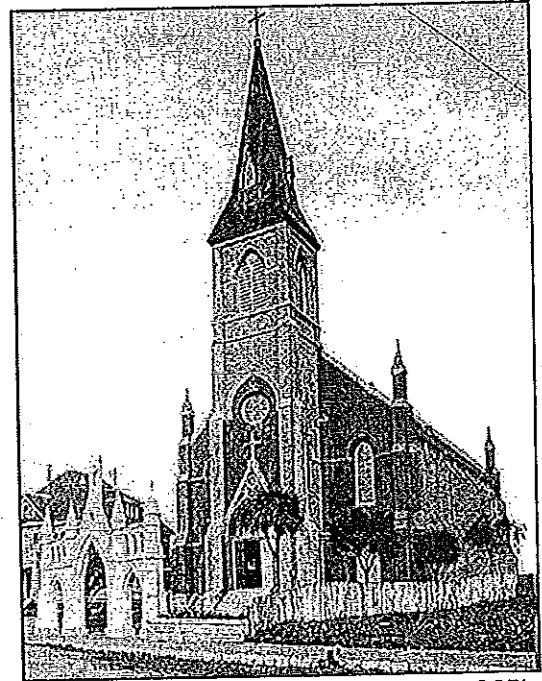
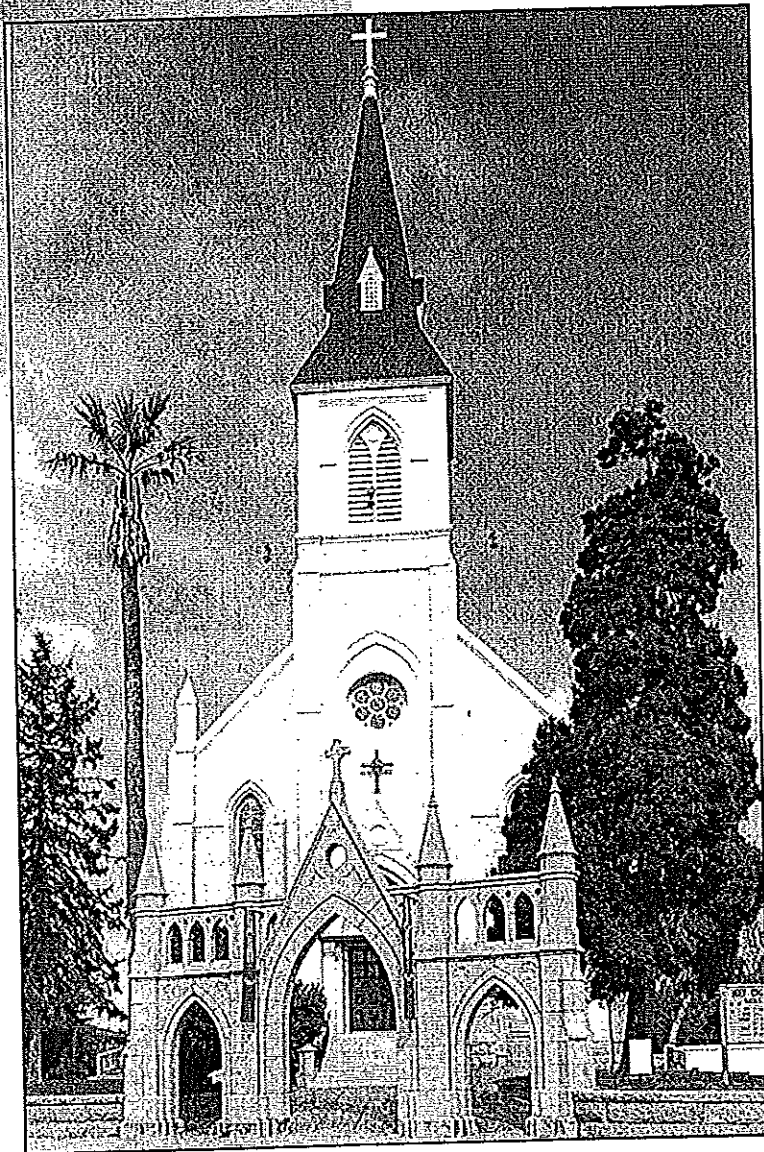


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FIGURES 241 & 242. *The Carnegie Library at 1305 East Cliff Drive in Seabright has been converted for use as the Natural History Museum. The building was constructed in 1920.*



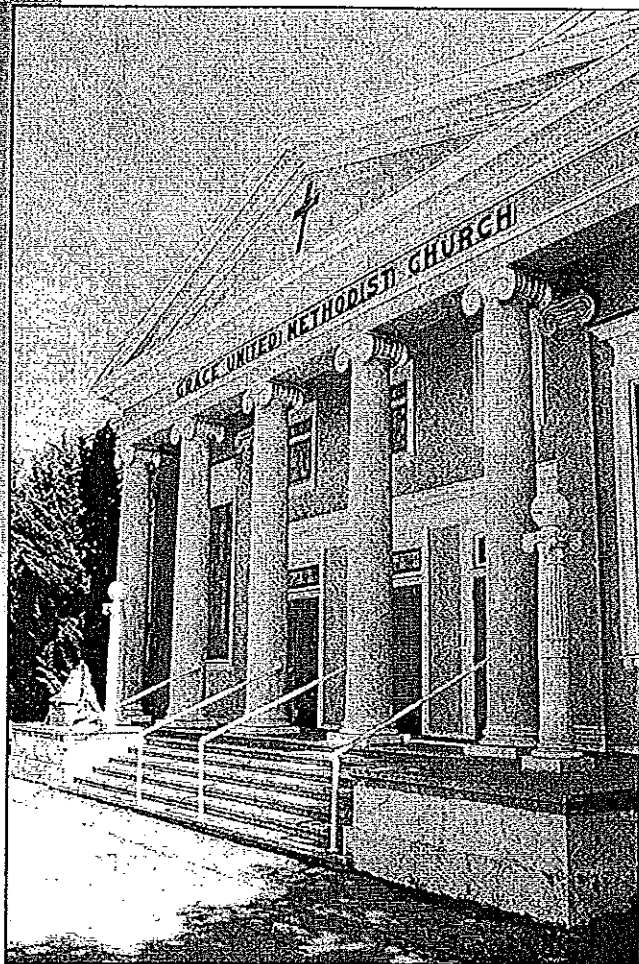
Context III
Property type:
churches



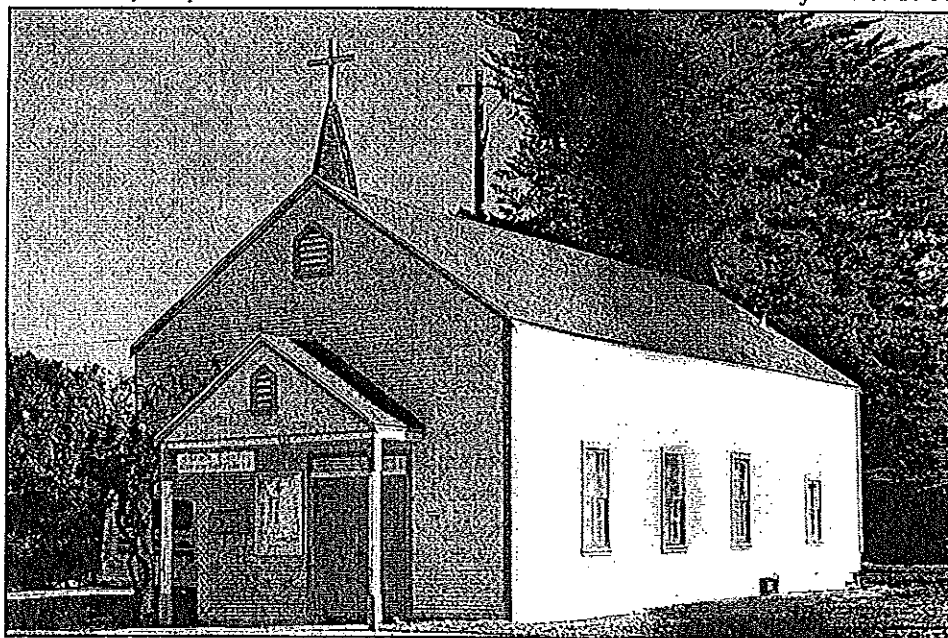
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FIGURES 243 & 244. The existing Holy Cross Church, located on the site of the original Santa Cruz Mission, was completed in 1889. The granite memorial arch in front was built in 1891 to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the Mission. In spite of extensive earthquake damage in 1989, the church has been repaired and continues to serve the needs of the Roman Catholic population.

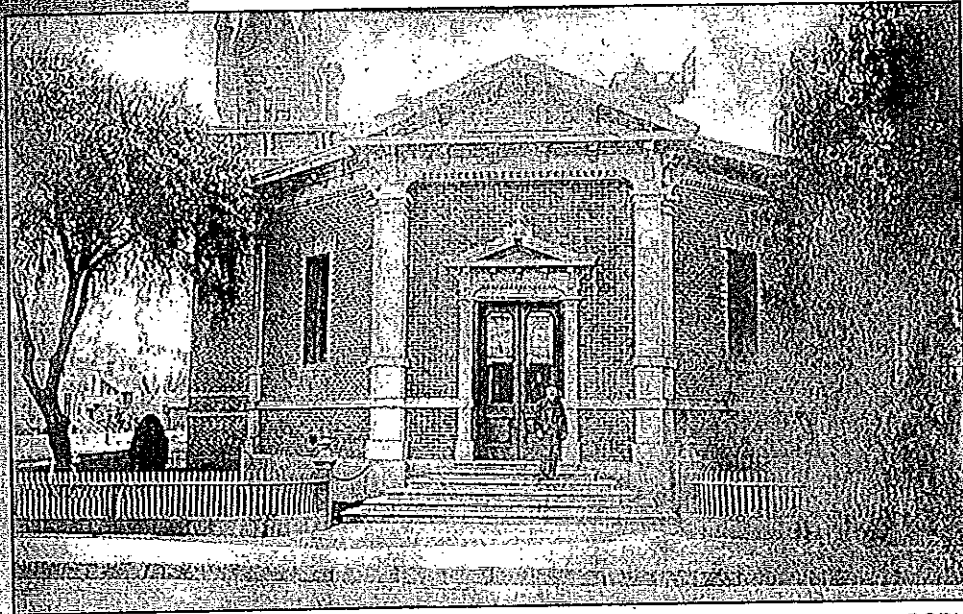
Context III
Property type:
churches



FIGURES 245 & 246. Churches in Santa Cruz were built in a number of various styles and sizes. The elegant Grace Methodist Church at 1024 Soquel Avenue was built in 1925. (Sadly, the church was destroyed by fire on October 8, 2000, while this report was in progress). In contrast is the simple vernacular Missionary Baptist Church at 714 Woodrow Avenue which dates from c. 1900.

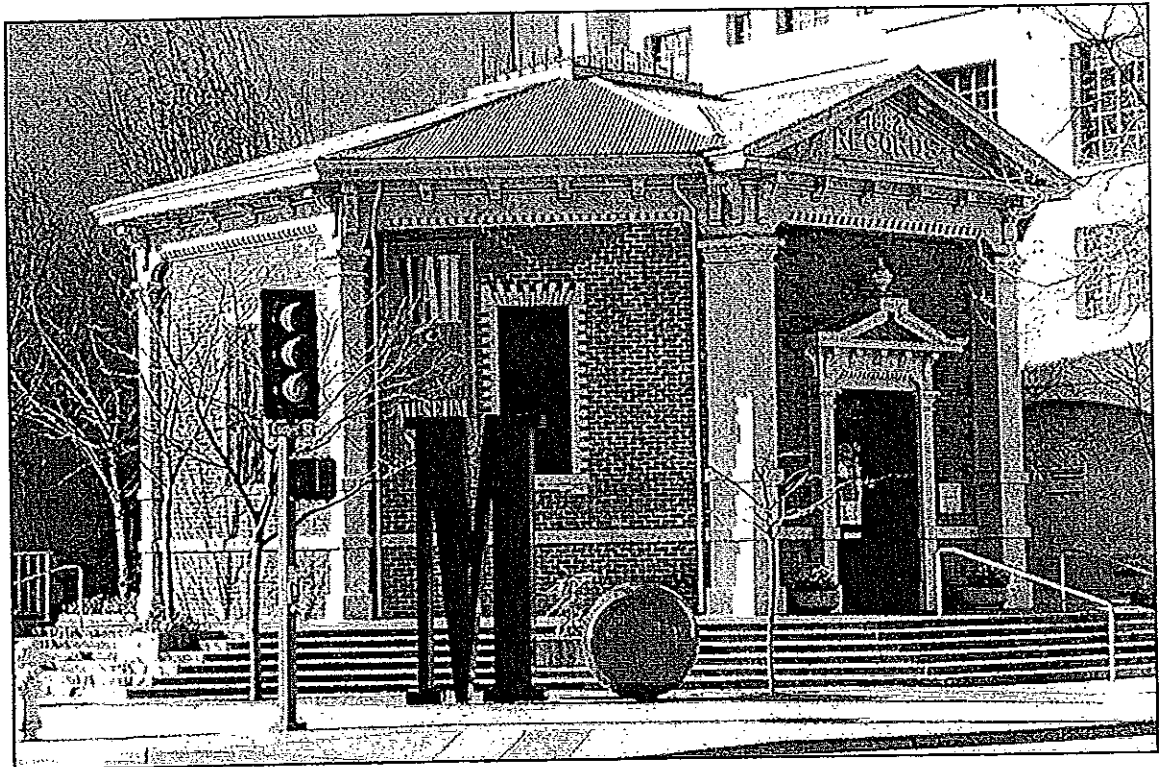


Context III
Property type:
civic and community
buildings

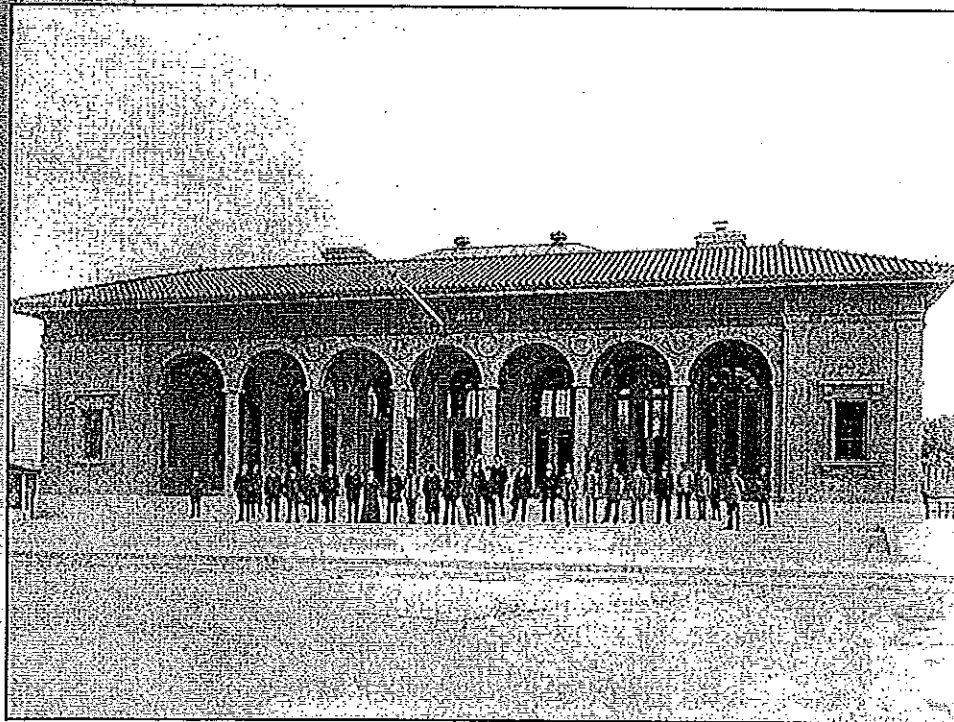


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FIGURES 247 & 248. The only survivor of the City's 19th century civic buildings is the former Hall of Records at 118 Cooper Street which is now the Museum of Art and History Gift Shop.

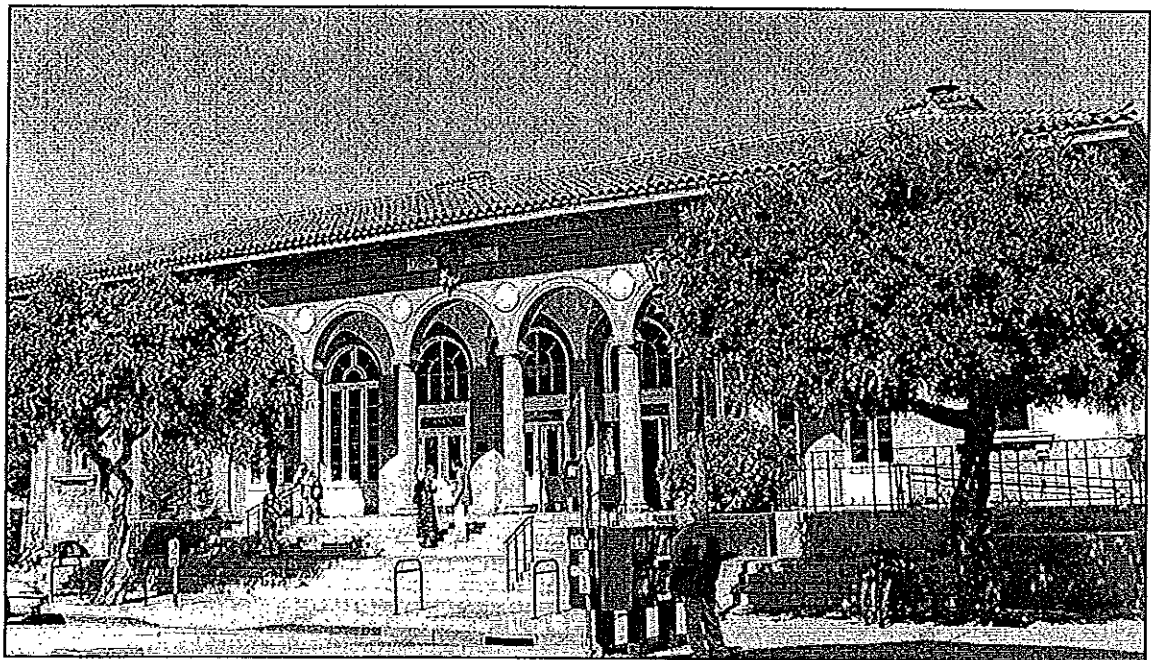


Context III
Property type:
civic and community
buildings

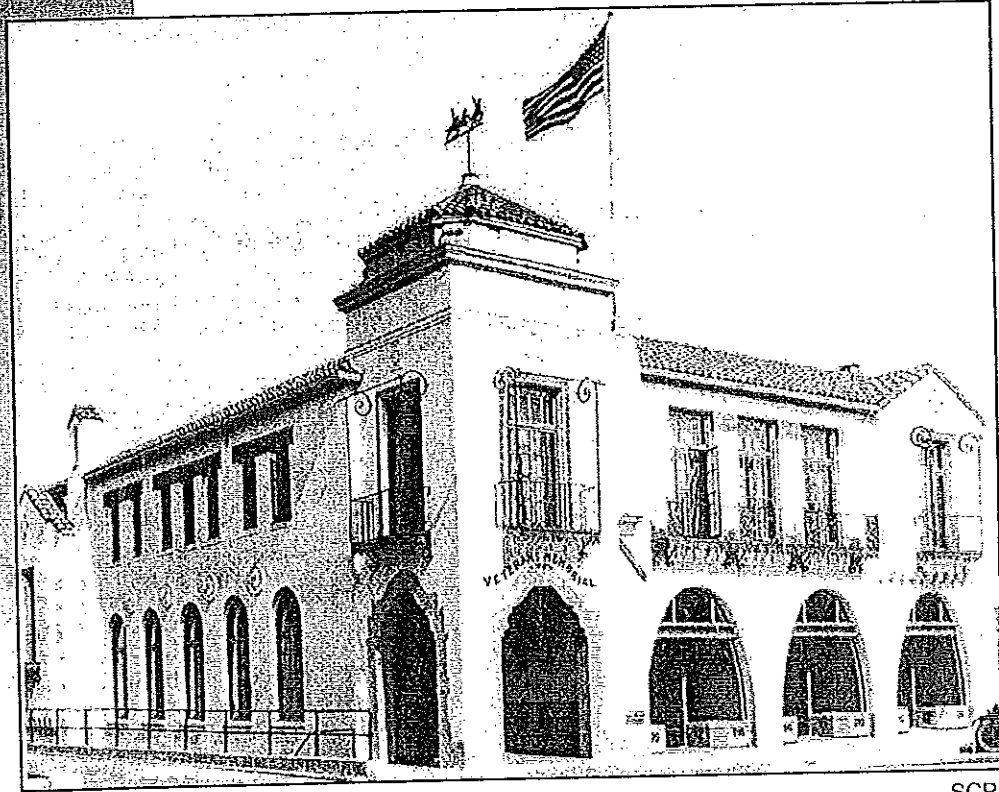


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FIGURES 251 & 252 *The Post Office at 850 Front Street was built in 1911 (above). It was constructed during a time when federal architects attempted to provide models for distinguished civic design.*



Context III
Property type:
civic and community
buildings



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FIGURES 253 & 254. *The Veteran's Memorial Building, located at 844 Front Street was completed in 1931. Its design complements that of the Post Office next door.*

