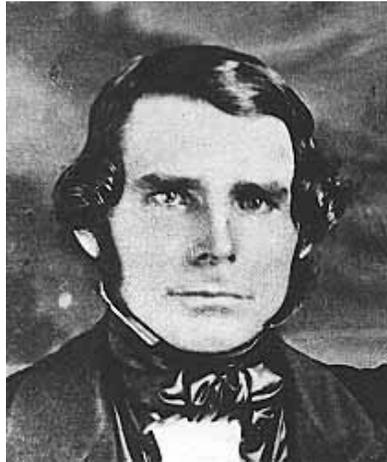


Our Ocean Backyard — *Santa Cruz Sentinel* columns by Gary Griggs, Director, Institute of Marine Sciences, UC Santa Cruz.

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Captain Davenport's Landing



Captain John Davenport.

As a kid heading north from southern California in the 1950s on summer camping trips in an old station wagon, I recall passing through a small town on the coast somewhere south of San Francisco that seemed completely enveloped in gray dust. After arriving in Santa Cruz at the newly opened UCSC campus in 1968 and while exploring the coast to the north, I rediscovered Davenport, still covered in gray cement dust.

There's a lot of history in Davenport, including how it got its name. Davenport's Landing, at the mouth of Aqua Puerca Creek (muddy or dirty water) about a mile and a half north of the present town, was named after Captain John Davenport, a sailor who arrived in California from Rhode Island in 1849.

Originally settling in Monterey, Captain Davenport is recognized for being one of the first, if not the first, to begin shore-based whaling. From Monterey he moved north to Moss Landing, where he helped establish a major whaling station. In 1867 he moved his family to Soquel Landing (Capitola), helping F.A. Hihn build the Capitola wharf. He then headed farther north to El Jarro Point, where he constructed a 450-foot long wharf.

Lumber, tanbark and cordwood seem to have been the main products shipped from Davenport's Landing. A small community developed around the small cove and at its peak in the 1870s and 1880s had three hotels (the Bannister, the Davenport Landing Exchange and La Stella del Mar), two general stores, a blacksmith and butcher shop, a shipyard and several houses.

The town of Davenport actually came along several decades later and acquired its name in 1905. The large deposits of marble and shale in the adjacent mountains led William Dingee, an eastern cement entrepreneur, to develop the Santa Cruz Lime Company along the Coast Road at San Vicente Creek. Perhaps the community is fortunate that it was named after a whaler rather than a cement baron.

For a little over a century, cement was produced at Davenport and shipped out by rail, truck and for a while, even by sea from a pier directly opposite the cement plant. The CEMEX plant was closed a few years ago for economic reasons.

One mile south of Davenport, Liddell Creek has eroded a canyon through the marine terrace to the ocean and formed a large pocket beach known as Bonny Doon Beach. Higher in the hills, Liddell Spring feeds the creek and has provided an important source of very high quality drinking water for the city of Santa Cruz for over a century.

George Liddell was an English contractor and civil engineer who arrived in California in 1850, like so many others. Within a year he had settled in the Santa Cruz Mountains and built both a water mill and a steam-powered sawmill on the creek, which is named after him.

Today Bonny Doon Road leaves Highway 1 at the mouth of Liddell Creek and winds its way up the mountain to an area known historically as Battle Mountain, because "...the rocks are piled in confused splendor and the imagination easily conjures up ancient castles..." (written in 1875).

Liddell Creek, like virtually all of the other north coast streams between Santa Cruz and Davenport, no longer flows freely to the shoreline, but passes through a hand-dug tunnel that crosses under both the railway and Highway 1 to the beach.

One of the most spectacular and geologically fascinating beaches along the entire north coast lies a little less than a mile farther south, known historically as Yellow Bank Beach. Since the 1960s, however, some people with enhanced visual acuity have recognized the outline of a large cat-like creature in the cliff face as you

descend to the beach and refer to the area as Panther Beach. Next column, why Yellow Bank Beach?