

## Jeannette & Leon Rowland

This section provides biographies and portraits of Leon Rowland and his wife Jeannette, a bibliography of published works by Leon Rowland and co-authors, and reviews of Rowland's published writings.

Rowland was “motivated by a feeling of responsibility to record history before the event, personage or phenomenon passed from the scene and memory and be forever lost.”

“It was, I believe, in this same spirit that my father did his research and writing.”  
(Alan Wheatley Rowland in Santa Cruz, *The Early Years*. Dedication. Santa Cruz, California: Paper Vision Press, 1980. p. vii)

In his “Introduction” to the same work, Sandy Lydon, Professor of History Emeritus, Cabrillo College, reported his encounter with the Rowland research files:  
“... in the fall of 1979, a pile of musty cardboard boxes at the Special Collections Library at the University of California, Santa Cruz were made available to the public.

Leon Rowland’s wife Jeannette had willed all of Leon’s files and scrapbooks about Santa Cruz to the University Library ...”

The source materials and biographies were compiled by Stanley D. Stevens with the editorial assistance of Joan Gilbert Martin. We are indebted to Jean Rowland Jackson for providing details and corrections to the biographical data about her parents.



Jeannette Rowland as younger and older woman — Leon Rowland

## **Rowland Family History**

**Leon Bangs Rowland was born in Sac City, Iowa, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1884, to Lois Leonora Bangs and William A. Boudinot Rowland. His father was an attorney, and by 1900, the family was located in Harlan, Shelby County, Iowa (Leon was 15). Ten years later, Leon was an editor of a Spokane, Washington, daily-newspaper. He had moved to Los Angeles by 1920, and worked as a newspaper reporter.**

**Jeannette was born on March 12, 1891, the daughter of Christina P. McLaren and William L. Wheatley, at Richfield, Ohio. When they met, Leon was a writer for the Associated Press and Jeannette was a physical education teacher.**

**In February 1922, at St. Paul, Minnesota, Leon Rowland and Jeannette Wheatley were married. She was thirty-one and Leon was thirty-eight. During the next seven-and-one-half years they had three children: Jean, Alan, and Ralph:**

**Jean Rowland Jackson, b. 1923, San Francisco (resident of Port Townsend, WA)**

**Alan Wheatley Rowland, b. 1926, San Francisco (resident of Honolulu, HI)**

**Ralph Burton Rowland, b. 1930, Santa Cruz (resident of Brookings, OR)**

**In 1926, the Rowlands (Leon, Jeannette, and their daughter Jean) lived in San Bruno (San Mateo Co.), where Leon was writing for the Associated Press based in San Francisco. The San Mateo Times of Sept. 17, 1926, reported in its column "Daily Record of Real Estate Transfers," that "Leon Rowland & wf [trans.] to Leonard Holt, lot 21 blk 22, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition to Huntington Park. Filed Sept. 14, 1926."**

**The Rowlands moved to Boulder Creek (Santa Cruz County) in September or October 1926. While they were living in Boulder Creek, Leon was the caretaker of the Edwards property. Jean remembers that her father did have an "office" - "I remember the clack of typewriter keys" — where he probably composed news articles for the Associated Press.**

**Their move to Santa Cruz, in 1929, was recorded the following year in the 1930 U.S. Census for Santa Cruz County and R. L. Polk's Santa Cruz city directory. Leon was identified as the City Editor of the Santa Cruz Evening News.**

**Leon died in Santa Cruz on December 1, 1952. He is buried in Carroll, Iowa, with his mother and grandparents, Martha A. (Hopkins) & Lester G. Bangs. Jeannette died in Santa Cruz on October 25, 1977, and is buried in Evergreen Cemetery, Santa Cruz, California.**

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## Source Material for the Rowland Time Line in Santa Cruz County

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A review of R. L. Polk's Directory for Santa Cruz County tracks the Rowlands presence between 1930 and 1952:

Polk's 1929: [no data in 1929]

Polk's 1930: [Boulder Creek, p. 522:] Rowland Leon editor

Polk's 1930: Rowland, Leon (Jeannette W) city editor Santa Cruz Evening News r41  
Van Ness av

Polk's 1932: Rowland, Leon B (Jeannette) city editor Santa Cruz Evening News h41  
Van Ness av

Polk's 1933: Rowland, Leon B (Jeannette) city editor Santa Cruz Evening News h41  
Van Ness av

Polk's 1934: Rowland, Leon B (Jeannette) city editor Santa Cruz Evening News h41  
Van Ness av

Polk's 1935: Rowland, Leon B (Jeannette) city editor Santa Cruz Evening News h41  
Van Ness av

Polk's 1936: Rowland, Leon B (Jeannette) h41 Van Ness av

Polk's 1937: Rowland, Leon B (Jeannette W) h41 Van Ness av

Polk's 1938: Rowland, Leon (Jeannette) editor-publ'r Soquel Weekly Journal h41 Van  
Ness av

Polk's 1938: Soquel Weekly Journal Leon Rowland editor & publ'r 279 Front

Polk's 1939: Rowland Leon (Jeannette) editor San Lorenzo Valley Journal h41 Van  
Ness av

Polk's 1939: San Lorenzo Valley Journal Reed Hayes publ'r Leon Rowland editor 279  
Front

Polk's 1940: Rowland Leon (Jeannette) h41 Van Ness av

Polk's 1940: San Lorenzo Valley Journal Reed Hayes publ'r 279 Front

Polk's 1941: Rowland Leon (Jeannette) h41 Van Ness av

Polk's 1941: Rowland Jean r41 Van Ness av

Polk's 1942-45 [not published]

Polk's 1946: Rowland, Leon B (Jeannette) night editor Sentinel Pub Co h41 Van Ness  
av

Polk's 1946: Rowland, [Alan] Wheatley USN r41 Van Ness av

[Note: 41 Van Ness was changed between April 1946 and January 1948 to 141 Van  
Ness]

Polk's 1948: Rowland, Leon B (Jeannette) night editor Sentinel Pub Co h41 Van Ness  
av

Polk's 1949 [not published]

Polk's 1950: Rowland, Leon B (Jeannette) reporter Sentinel Pub Co h141 Van Ness

Polk's 1950: Rowland Ralph B r141 Van Ness av

Polk's 1950: Rowland Allen[sic] [Wheatley] r141 Van Ness av

Polk's 1951-52 [not published]

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## Rowland Obituaries

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Source: Santa Cruz Sentinel 1952 Dec 1 1:1-2 (with portrait)

### Historian-Writer Leon Rowland Dies Suddenly Today

Ill for less than a day, Leon Rowland, 67, Sentinel-News writer and widely known historian of this area, died suddenly at 5 a.m. today at his home, 141 Van Ness avenue.

Rowland, who came to Santa Cruz in 1929 as city editor of the Santa Cruz Evening News, had been at his desk at this newspaper Saturday night and apparently was in the best of health.

He first complained of a pain in the abdomen yesterday at 2:30 p.m., Mrs. Rowland said. He believed it was an attack of indigestion and a physician was called at 6 o'clock. Death was due to an internal hemorrhage.

Funeral arrangements are pending at Wessendorf's mortuary, awaiting arrival of the Rowlands' daughter from Seattle. She is coming by plane and will arrive tonight.

Born in Sac City, Iowa, December 14, 1884, Rowland would have been 68 in two weeks.

Besides his widow, Jeannette, of the family home, he leaves his daughter [Jean], Mrs. R. C. Jackson [Robert Charles Jackson], Seattle; two sons, Alan Wheatley Rowland, an architect now associated with a firm building air fields on Okinawa, and Ralph B. Rowland, a student at San Jose State college; and three grandchildren, Donald, Catherine and Roger Jackson of Seattle.

He was the author of six books and pamphlets on local history: Old Santa Cruz Mission, published in 1941; The Story of Old Soquel, 1940; Villa de Branciforte (The Village That Vanished), 1941; Brief History of The Santa Cruz Sentinel-News and Newspapers of Santa Cruz County, 1944; Annals of Santa Cruz, 1947; and Los Fundadores (The Founders), 1952. His Circuit Rider column in the Sunday Sentinel-News had wide readership.

Son of the late William Boudinot and Lois Bangs Rowland, he moved from Sac City, his birthplace, at an early age, to Harlan, Iowa, where he attended grade and high schools. Later he attended Lake Forest university in Illinois.

He was an Associated Press correspondent in Seattle, Helena, Montana, and in other northwest cities as well as in San Francisco before coming to Santa Cruz 23 years ago to become city editor of the Evening News.

He was married to the former Jeannette Wheatly at St. Paul, Minnesota, in February 1922.

Rowland became associated with The Sentinel-News as Sunday editor in November 1941.

He served on the Santa Cruz museum board of directors and was secretary of the Santa Cruz Historical Society. Last March he testified as historian in the master's hearing in Los Angeles on the tidelands issue in connection with the Monterey bay region. He was a member of E Clampus Vitus, a California organization devoted to study of Californiana, historical highlights of the state.

Rowland's "Annals of Santa Cruz" was the result of years of research and countless conversations with old-time residents. His sources were newspaper files, county recorder's files, records of Holy Cross mission, records of the state library at Sacramento, the State Historical Society, secretary of state, and Bancroft library. Much data was obtained from Sentinel files dating back to 1855.

The book contains such information as the time Santa Cruzans made a "great outcry" when it was learned San Mateo county had annexed Pescadero and Half Moon bay in 1857; the rule of the American alcaldes; choosing members of the first legislature; Santa Cruz being the birthplace of the temperance movement in the state; when Davenport Landing was a small town; the vigorous history of Boulder Creek; and many other facts of interest.

In "Los Fundadores," Rowland listed the names of the men who came from Mexico to northern California in the first 15 years of its settlement, most of them to remain in the area. The book is copyrighted by the Academy of California Church History (1951) of Fresno.

The popular historian, student of old Spanish and newspaperman, put his hobby of genealogy to good use in his last historical volume.

In his constant search for accurate historical facts, Rowland was constantly searching through old Mission records. In a trip to Mexico early this year, he found considerable material on early Californians.

His files on Monterey bay area history and early Californians have long been acknowledged as some of the best sources of historical data in the state.

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Source: Santa Cruz Sentinel      1952 Dec 2 1:2

### **Private Services Tomorrow For Leon B. Rowland**

Private services for Leon Bangs Rowland, 67, newspaperman and historian who died yesterday, will be conducted at 10 a.m. tomorrow at Wessendorf chapel. Rev. Norman H. Snow [Calvary Episcopal Church] will officiate, and friends are requested to omit flowers. Private inurnment will be in IOOF crematory.

Survivors include his widow, Jeannette W. Rowland of Santa Cruz; and his children, Mrs. R. C. Jackson of Seattle, Alan Wheatley Rowland of Okinawa and Ralph B. Rowland of Santa Cruz.

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Source: Santa Cruz Sentinel 1952 Dec 2 8:4

ROWLAND — In Santa Cruz, December 1, 1952, Leon Bangs Rowland; aged 67

years; native of Sac City, Iowa. Husband of Jennette[sic] of Santa Cruz; father of Mrs. R. C. Jackson of Seattle, Washington, Alan Wheatley Rowland of Okinawa and Ralph B. Rowland of Santa Cruz.

Strictly private services conducted by Rev. Norman H. Snow [Calvary Episcopal Church] will be held in the Wessendorf Chapel, Wed., December 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 10 a.m.

Friends are requested to omit flowers.

Private inurnment will follow in I.O.O.F. Crematory.

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Source: Santa Cruz Sentinel 1952 Dec 3 14:1 FUNERALS

#### LEON BANGS ROWLAND

Private rites for Leon Bangs Rowland were conducted by Rev. Norman H. Snow [Calvary Episcopal Church] at 10 a.m. today at Wessendorf chapel. Mrs. Ethel Schultz played organ selections. Private inurnment followed in IOOF crematory.

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Source: Santa Cruz Sentinel 1952 Dec 3 15:1

Editorial by Fred D. McPherson Jr.

#### Leon B. Rowland

Central California lost one of her most able students of early California history this week when Leon B. Rowland died suddenly at his home.

With the keen instincts of a newspaperman, Leon Rowland searched through thousands of sources of historical data, seeking the true facts and discarding the popularized fiction distortions of events in the lives of Californians and the history of our commonwealth.

As a member of The Sentinel-News staff for more than a decade, Leon was constantly checking data in the old files of The Sentinel and the many other papers which were published at one time or another in the county.

In checking the genealogy of Monterey bay area families, he perused records of old missions, both in California and in Mexico, hunting for facts and figures.

His personal files traced hundreds of central California families back for generation after generation. He probably knew more about old Spanish-Mexican families in this part of the state than any other individual.

His latest book, "Los Fundadores," lists the names of the men who came to northern California from Mexico in the first 15 years of the settlement. In 1944 he compiled an excellent report on the history of newspapers in Santa Cruz county.

We will miss Leon Rowland, both as a friend and a co-worker, but fortunately his skill as a historian will provide us with true facts about the yesterdays for the days of tomorrow.

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## Jeannette Wheatley Rowland

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Source: Santa Cruz Sentinel 1977 Oct 26 20:5

### Jeanette [sic] W. Rowland, 86, Died Tuesday

Mrs. Jeanette [sic] W. Rowland, 86, retired Sentinel proofreader and wife of the late Leon Rowland, newsman and historian, died Tuesday in Santa Cruz.

Born in Ohio, she is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Jean Jackson of Port Townsend, Wash.; two sons, Alan Wheatley Rowland of Honolulu and Ralph Rowland of Addison, Ill.; two sisters, Mrs. Elizabeth Harris of San Jose and Mrs. Miriam Ott of Salem, Ore.; and six grandchildren.

Services are pending at Wessendorf and Holmes Funeral Home.

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Source: Santa Cruz Sentinel 1977 Oct 26 20:7 (Wessendorf-Holmes announcement)

ROWLAND — In Santa Cruz, California, October 25, 1977, Mrs. Jeanette W. Rowland. Survived by one daughter, Mrs. Jean R. Jackson of Port Townsend, Washington; two sons, Alan Wheatley Rowland of Honolulu, Hawaii and Ralph B. Rowland of Addison, Ill. Also two sisters, Mrs. Elizabeth Harris of San Jose and Mrs. Miriam Ott of Salem, Oregon and six grandchildren. Native of Ohio, aged 86 years. A resident of the area for the past 48 years, Mrs. Rowland had been employed as a proof reader with the Santa Cruz Sentinel.

Private family services will be held later. Wessendorf and Holmes Funeral Home, 223 Church St., Santa Cruz in charge of arrangements. Private interment in Evergreen Cemetery. Contributions to the Y.W.C.A., 303 Walnut Ave., Santa Cruz, preferred.

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Source: Santa Cruz Sentinel 1977 Oct 27 22:4-5

### Jeanette [sic] W. Rowland Services Saturday

Private memorial services for Jeanette [sic] W. Rowland, 86, who died Tuesday, will be held Saturday at 11 a.m. the First Congregational Church, 900 High Street.

Born in Richfield, Ohio, she later moved to La Grande, Ore. Following her graduation from the University of Oregon, she returned to La Grande and taught physical education in the public high school, establishing a reputation for moral courage in teaching and a sensitivity for building self esteem as well as physical fitness in her students.

Forty-eight years ago she moved to Santa Cruz. She was the wife of the late Leon Rowland, former editor of the Morning News and Sentinel and a well-known historian.

Mrs. Rowland worked with her husband, helping with records. He wrote the

popular "Annals of Santa Cruz," and other history publications.

Mrs. Rowland was a board member of the Santa Cruz County Society for Historical Preservation and founding member of the Santa Cruz Historical Society, serving as archivist, secretary and museum volunteer.

She was a life member of the PTA and a member of the American University Women, First Congregational Church, Robinson Guild, YWCA and for many years was a proof-reader for the Sentinel.

She is survived by her daughter, Jean Rowland Jackson of Port Townsend, Wash.; two sons, Alan Wheatley Rowland of Honolulu and Ralph Rowland of Addison, Ill.; two sisters, Mrs. Elizabeth Harris of San Jose and Mrs. Miriam Ott of Salem, Ore.; and eight grand-children.

Services will be conducted by the Rev. Bernard Corneliusen. Interment will be in Evergreen Cemetery.

Contributions may be sent to the YWCA, 303 Walnut St., or to your favorite charity.

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**Bibliography of Published Work by Leon Rowland & Co-Authors,  
held by the University Libraries of UC Santa Cruz**

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- **TITLE** *Early Santa Cruz history and Los fundadores.*  
**IMPRINT** [19--]  
**NOTE(S)** Five pamphlets bound in one volume. Contents were later  
republished in one volume titled Santa Cruz, the early years:  
the collected historical works of Leon Rowland.
  - Los fundadores
  - Villa de Branciforte, the village that vanished
  - The story of old Soquel
  - Old Santa Cruz Mission
  - Annals of Santa Cruz
- LOCATIONS** SpecColl NRLF F868.S3R683 1900z
  
- **TITLE** *Annals of Santa Cruz.*  
**IMPRINT** Santa Cruz, Calif. [Branson Pub. Co., 1947]  
**LOCATIONS** SpecColl F868.S3E442 1984
  
- **TITLE** *Boulder Creek historic walking tour / information*  
collected and researched by Faye Ellis and Leon Rowland.  
**IMPRINT** [s.l. : s.n.], c1984.  
**LOCATIONS** SpecColl F868.S3R68 & F869.S48R65
  
- **TITLE** *Brief history of newspapers in Santa Cruz California /*  
by Leon Rowland.  
**IMPRINT** Santa Cruz, Calif. : Santa Cruz Sentinel-News, [1947?]

- LOCATIONS** SpecColl F868.S3E444 1984
- **TITLE** *Felton historic walking tour / information collected and researched by Faye Ellis, Tom McHugh and Leon Rowland.*
  - IMPRINT** [S.l. : s.n.], c1984.
  - LOCATIONS** Spec Coll NRLF PN4899.S45 S2 1947
- **TITLE** *Los fundadores ... the first families of California and also all other persons with family names that were in California 1769-1785 except those who died at San Diego in 1769.*
  - IMPRINT** Fresno, Academy of California Church History 1951.
  - LOCATIONS** SpecColl F864.R684 McH Stacks F864.R684 c.2
- **TITLE** *Old Santa Cruz mission.*
  - IMPRINT** [S.l. : s.n.] ; 1941.
  - LOCATIONS** Spec Coll & McH Stacks F864.R68
- **TITLE** *Santa Cruz chronology, 1791-1846.*
  - NOTE(S)** A chronology of Santa Cruz Mission from its inception in 1791 to 1846.
- **TITLE** *Santa Cruz sentinel-news, eighty-nine years old. Brief history of newspapers of Santa Cruz County.*
  - IMPRINT** Santa Cruz, Calif.] Santa Cruz sentinel-news, 1944.
  - LOCATIONS** SpecColl F869.S48 R6529 1940z & F869.S48 R6529 1940za
- **TITLE** *Santa Cruz, the early years : the collected historical writings of Leon Rowland.*
  - IMPRINT** Santa Cruz, Calif. : Paper Vision Press, 1980.
  - NOTE(S)** Reprint of 5 works published by various publishers between 1940-1951.  
-- Old Santa Cruz Mission. -- Los fundadores.  
-- Villa de Branciforte. -- The annals of Santa Cruz.  
-- The story of old Soquel.
  - LOCATIONS** McH Stacks F868.S3R68 1980 c.5  
McH Ref F868.S3R68 1980 c.3  
SpecColl F868.S3R68 1980 c.2
- **TITLE** *The story of old Soquel.*
  - IMPRINT** [Soquel, Calif., Soquel print shop] c1940.
  - LOCATIONS** SpecColl F869.S723R6 McH Stacks F869.S723R6
- **TITLE** *Villa de Branciforte : the village that vanished.*
  - IMPRINT** [S.l.] : L. Rowland, 1941.
  - LOCATIONS** Spec Coll F869.S48R653 & McH Stacks F869.S48R653 c.2

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## Reviews of Rowland's Annals of Santa Cruz

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Source: Santa Cruz Sentinel-News      Thursday, April 24, 1947 5:4-5.  
[accompanied by a portrait of Leon Rowland]

Leon Rowland Author Of Book On History Of Santa Cruz Co.

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After more than three years of research and countless conversations with old-time residents, Leon Rowland, Sentinel-News Sunday editor, has completed a 169-page history of Santa Cruz county. It is entitled, "Annals of Santa Cruz."

The volume covers the history of Santa Cruz county from the days of Explorer Jose Ortega about 1769, to the present time. Rowland is the author of several historical pamphlets which he published before the war, and is secretary of the Santa Cruz Historical Society.

The author has such an interest in the history of this part of California he spends his vacations doing research in libraries. His sources were newspaper files, county recorder's files, records of Holy Cross mission, records of the state library at Sacramento, the State Historical Society, secretary of state, and Bancroft library.

Much data was secured from Sentinel files and for the past several years the writer went over all issues since 1856 culling out material.

The book contains such fascinating information as the time Santa Cruzans made a "great outcry" when it was learned San Mateo county had annexed Pescadero and Half Moon bay in 1857; the rule of the American alcaldes; choosing members of the first legislature; Santa Cruz being the birthplace of the temperance movement in the state; when Davenport Landing was a small town and many other facts of interest.

A chapter goes thoroughly into the vigorous history of Boulder Creek telling of the time early in this century when it was the third incorporated town in the county. Incorporation was abandoned in 1905.

Author Rowland acknowledges the aid of the "infallible" memory of Ernest F. Otto of the Sentinel News; H. O. Heiner, and Warren Penniman. The following loaned old-time pictures: Mrs. Robert Rodriguez, Supervisor Mrs. Rose Rostron, George Otto, Dr. A. T. Leonard, A. G. Finn, Robert S. Tait, Harry Tait, Preston Sawyer, Bob Willey and Peter Jansse. Sketches are by Marge Hamilton.

"Annals of Santa Cruz" was printed by the Branson Publishing company at 342 Pacific avenue. It is for sale at the Seven Seas bookshop in the Palomar arcade.

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Source: Rowland Scrapbook, volume 2, p. 379.  
[Original source: possibly Valley Press, ca. 1946?]

Rowland Book Is Local History  
By Jim Martin

Here is a thumb-nail biographical sketch of Leon Rowland, author. Jim Martin, author of "Peaceful Valley," wrote the sketch by special request — Editor.)

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One has only to search the shelves of the public library for even a meager record of local history to become convinced of the need and inestimable value of Leon Rowland's latest book, "Annals of Santa Cruz," the first authentic history of Santa Cruz County ever published.

Rowland began collecting material and searching out historical facts 21 years ago.

In the beginning, during a sojourn of roughing it in a mountain cabin on Bear Creek in the upper San Lorenzo Valley, he used his findings for feature articles for magazines and newspapers. Continuing to gather data, he became more and more interested in the historical background of Santa Cruz County and conceived the idea of preserving facts and records in a book.

#### HISTORICAL PAMPHLETS

About 10 years ago he published some of them in pamphlet form. These little booklets have been widely read in the public libraries of the county and have received much favorable comment.

No night editor of the Santa Cruz Sentinel-News, Rowland was born in Iowa and was graduated from what he fondly terms a "freshwater" college in Illinois. Following his graduation he started on a newspaper career, which led him to many different cities and towns from coast to coast. From New York he came west and continued his newspaper work in several of the larger cities along the coast.

In San Francisco he was affiliated with the Associated Press, and it was from there that he moved to the cabin in the hills where he lived more than two years.

Eventually he took up residence in Santa Cruz and became associated with the Santa Cruz News, which was later combined with the Santa Cruz Sentinel, forming the present daily Sentinel-News.

#### COLUMNIST

Rowland is the author of a current column entitled "The Circuit Rider," published weekly in the Sentinel-News as a Sunday feature.

It is hoped that his plans for a new book will mature in the near future. He is keenly interested in the history of the old Spanish families who settled in Santa Cruz County and has already done extensive research on the subject, which necessitates translation from the original Spanish records and documents. As a result he has a wealth of interesting material on hand.

(Seven Seas Bookshop, Palomar Arcade. Exclusive distributors.)

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**Introduction to Leon Rowland's *Santa Cruz, The Early Years*  
by Sandy Lydon**  
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**Editor's Note:** The best analysis of Leon Rowland's Card Files, his research on local history topics, and his place in relation to other local historians, is that of Sandy Lydon, Emeritus Professor of History, Cabrillo College.

The following Introduction by Lydon is reprinted from Leon Rowland's Santa Cruz, The Early Years: The collected historical writings of Leon Rowland — including— "Old Santa Cruz Mission", "Villa de Branciforte", "The Story of Old Soquel", The Annals of Santa Cruz", "Los Fundadores." Santa Cruz, California: Paper Vision Press, 1980, pp. xi-xvi [Out of Print, 2005].

The Introduction is used with the kind permissions of the author and Alan Rowland, the Copyright owner of his father's work.

Sandy Lydon's web-site: <[www.historydude.com](http://www.historydude.com)>

## INTRODUCTION

I FIRST CAME ACROSS Leon Rowland's five slim books ten years ago while looking for secondary material on the history of Santa Cruz County. The books occupied less than three inches of my bookshelf, and several of them had rust spots where their bindings had been stapled. The absence of footnotes and bibliographies combined with the fact that all but one had been privately published led me to conclude that the books were vanity publications by a local antiquarian. I set them aside and continued my search for reliable source books on the history of Santa Cruz.

When Margaret Koch's Santa Cruz County: Parade of the Past was first published in 1973, I was delighted to have a history of the County with footnotes. But, when following Margaret's citations back into her bibliography, I found that often her source was one of those five skinny books by Leon Rowland which I had put in an unfrequented corner of my bookshelf. My skepticism spread and I dutifully continued my own research, reading nineteenth-century Santa Cruz County newspapers and searching through County records. The staples in the Rowland books rusted further.

I refused to look at Rowland's The Story of Old Soquel when Carolyn Swift and I were working on From Soquel Landing to Capitola-by-the-Sea for fear that I would be influenced by questionable material. After our book was completed, however, I sneaked a peak at Rowland's Soquel book - my heart sank. Much of the factual material and many of the dates and names had a familiar ring, and I matched newspaper references with Leon time and again. He had been through all the archival material too, but had failed to leave a map of his footprints in the form of footnotes.

I reread each of the five volumes with increasing respect, but my training in historiography was difficult to overcome. Obviously, Leon Rowland had done a great deal of research, but there was much information in his books that was beyond the archives and the newspapers. Where did he get his material, I pondered.

Then, in the fall of 1979, a pile of musty cardboard boxes at the Special Collections Library at the University of California, Santa Cruz, were made available to the public. Leon Rowland's wife Jeannette had willed all of Leon's files and scrapbooks about Santa Cruz to the University Library, and as my hands ran through the cross-indexed card files that Leon had kept, much of my skepticism fell away. Leon had used not only the local newspapers but also court records, deeds and Spanish- and Mexican-period documents. The files were the base of the iceberg; Leon Rowland had put forth for public scrutiny only the facts about which he was certain. If he had any doubts, the information stayed in his files with notations about the

conflicting reports. What was finally published was the end result of an elaborate distilling process – no analysis, no speculation, just the straight, pure truth as Leon saw it.

Who was this compulsive researcher who devised the masterful filing system and wrote sentences as spare as telegrams? Born in Sac City, Iowa, in 1884, Leon was by training and profession a newspaperman. After jobs with several newspapers in the Pacific Northwest and a few years with the Associated Press in San Francisco, Leon and Jeannette moved to Santa Cruz in 1929 where he worked as a newspaperman until his death in 1952. For the first decade he worked with the Santa Cruz Evening News, going to the Santa Cruz Sentinel when it absorbed the Evening News in 1941. He was city editor at the Sentinel when he died at age sixty-seven. His collected historical writings are best understood against this background, for though historical and genealogical research occupied his spare time, his professional training influenced everything he wrote.

Leon Rowland's writing style is terse – staccato. The abbreviated line of thought sometimes broadens into descriptive narrative, but more often the dates, names and places line up like fence posts. Some of those who knew him say that Leon had a life-long desire to write novels, to expand his writing style, but was unable to do so. What he finally published was a set of books filled with vignettes – little pieces carefully measured and drawn but presented without interpretation and analysis. The ingredients for richer characterizations and broad analysis are in his files, but apparently his newspaper training would not permit him to venture beyond the Who, What, When and Where. Nor did he inject his personal opinion into his writing. There are few clues in his books about his own feelings, and he rarely took sides in the controversies he described. Leon Rowland always tried to be objective and down-the-middle. His primary purpose was to write as best he could the facts of Santa Cruz's early development.

This objectivity made Leon Rowland one of the first local historians to write about Santa Cruz County's past without an ulterior motive. All the histories of the County published before 1940 had purposes beyond the historical, from the sale of real estate to the fabrication of reputations. The first accounts of the area were published in the 1860's and consisted mainly of personal accounts of early pioneers. Thomas Farnham's journals, for example, promoted the Yankee settlers of the 1840's and belittled their Spanish-speaking precursors. While Isaac Graham was eulogized by Farnham, the Mexicans were portrayed as shiftless and untrustworthy.

In 1879 and 1892 two subscription histories were published about Santa Cruz County, the first by the Wallace W. Elliot Company (History of Santa Cruz County, California), and the second compiled by Edward S. Harrison (History of Santa Cruz County). The biographies included in both books most often reflected the number of pre-publication subscriptions bought by the subjects rather than their actual accomplishments. Since the Spanish-speaking and their descendants did not generally subscribe to these publications, they were mentioned infrequently. In the later 1890's, history-by-subscription gave way to history-to-sell-real-estate when the Southern California land boom caught hold in Santa Cruz County, resulting in the publication of Phil Francis' Beautiful Santa Cruz County in 1896.

After World War II, when Santa Cruz readers were a generation removed from the pioneers, local newspapers began to print historical articles about the area's settlement. Curiosity about local origins, place names, community histories and pioneer biographies was satisfied by F. W. Atkinson in Watsonville and Ernest Otto, Preston Sawyer and Rowland in Santa Cruz. By 1932 this curiosity grew into a modest boom in interest about the Spanish period, a boom represented in Santa Cruz by the erection of the scaled-down Mission Santa Cruz replica and the publication of *Story of the Mission Santa Cruz* by Henry Albert Van Coenen Torchiana a year later.

Not content with the tantalizing but sparse references to Santa Cruz in the journals of the Spanish explorers, which were being translated by historian Herbert Bolton, Leon taught himself to read Spanish, and his search for Spanish-language sources became an obsession. He spent his vacations roaming through archives in Mexico, Santa Barbara, Monterey and Berkeley seeking documents pertaining to the star-crossed Mission Santa Cruz and neighboring Villa de Branciforte. His personal files are replete with not only Spanish-language documents but also lengthy genealogies of the early Spanish and Mexican pioneers. Not surprisingly, the Spanish and Mexican periods are the most fully developed in both Leon Rowland's files and his published works.

Leon broke a century-old pattern of neglect when he wrote extensively and respectfully about the Spanish-speaking pioneers in Santa Cruz County. He continued another tradition, however, when he excluded the story of the poor relations that existed between Yankee pioneers and Spanish-speaking residents of the County. The racism and animosity that accompanied the ethnic diversity of Santa Cruz were unpleasant facts not to be mentioned. Leon does mention the 1877 double lynching in Santa Cruz, but does not place it in the tradition of Mexican-Yankee conflict where it belongs. He reports the lynching in his facts-only style (failing to note that both men were Spanish-speaking) and closes the paragraph as if in a hurry to be done with the unfortunate event. That Santa Cruz mob action was a signal event in the history of Mexican-Yankee relations, however, as it marked the end of twenty-five years of mob violence against the Spanish-speaking in California; to see it in isolation is to miss its significance for both Santa Cruz and California.

At times Leon's tendency to slide over unpleasantness intruded into his genealogical work. Still in his card file is the fascinating account of Soledad Castro and her husband Rafael battling in and out of court until their eventual divorce in 1872. That story helps explain Rafael's taciturn character as well as his willingness to sell most of his property to Claus Speckels in 1872. Although the entire divorce account was in his notes, Leon chose not to speak ill of the pioneer California family of Aptos. Certainly this reluctance to speak directly of divorce is as much a reflection of the 1940's as it is of Leon Rowland.

And, as did most local historians writing in the 1940's (Ernest Otto is a delightful exception), Leon Rowland paid scant attention to the stories of pioneer communities whose members came from Asia. The Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos are not mentioned in Leon's work, and few of his notes deal with them. For example, in his treatment of the 1894 Santa Cruz fire he failed to mention that Chinatown was destroyed along with the county court house, the Leonard building and the People's Bank. Perhaps had his research continued, he might have come to spend more time

on the Asian immigrants, but it is clear that he was just getting into the 1890's period when he died in 1952.

Leon Rowland's work did not stop completely with his death. Leon's wife, Jeannette, kept the spirit of his work alive with her leadership in the Santa Cruz Historical Society and her painstaking index of Leon's bulging scrapbooks of newspaper clippings. Now and then her handwriting appears at the bottom of one of Leon's file cards, revealing her efforts to keep them up to date by noting the demise of historic buildings and people. To Jeannette must go credit both for the forbearance it must have taken to live with a compulsive researcher like Leon as well as for her contribution in making his files useful and available to local historians to follow. (Rowland's research materials not relating to Santa Cruz are at the Bancroft Library).

And, follow they will, for the Santa Cruz County of 1940 (population 45,000), which could not support the commercial publication of Leon Rowland's work, now has a population nearing 200,000 in 1980. Both natives and newcomers once again express a healthy curiosity about local history. Cabrillo College offers courses in local history and the University of California at Santa Cruz maintains a regional history project.

This collection of Leon Rowland's five books should not be seen as a comprehensive analytical history of Santa Cruz County - that history still needs to be written. Rather, it is a valuable research tool for both those fascinated by the area's history and those who research, analyze, and write local and regional history. We all should give Leon Rowland's fence posts a good shake before building on them. However, I believe that when the dust settles we will find Leon's work as sound as two decades of patience and devotion to the County's history could make them.

Recently, a student working on the Spanish-language document inventory at the University came to me to share his excitement in finding Marcelino Bravo living in Soquel thirty years before Martina Castro received the Soquel grant. Leon Rowland wrote of Marcelino in his Story of Old Soquel forty years ago! With an inward smile I informed the student that he might supplement his research by reading Leon Rowland's works. An excellent place to begin, I said. Good advice for us all.

Sandy Lydon  
Department of History  
Cabrillo College

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