

## (11) THE IHNKEN HOUSE

### Owned by Mrs. Royal K. Stacey

In 1846, Gerhardt Ihnken, a native of Grosswarm, Javerland, Germany, immigrated to Castroville with a group of colonists under Castro's guidance. He is particularly remembered because he brought the first reaper and the first binder to Castroville. He and his wife, the former Mary Pichot, lived for thirty years in a home about two blocks from the St. Louis Church. Then, in 1876, Mr. Ihnken completed construction on a new home located on the banks of the Medina River in the southern part of Castroville.

The Ihnken house was built according to the German-French style architecture, out of native products for this area. The fireplaces, three in all, were originally made of flagstone found in the bed of the Medina River. The entire kitchen floor was also made of flagstone. The beams, floor joists, and rafters were fashioned from cypress wood milled in the Ihnken sawmill, which was located on the banks of the river below the home. The two-story building had a cellar which was used to keep the milk cool before it was taken to the creamery. It also contained two bedrooms, a living room, dining room, hallway, two kitchens, and a stairway, along with two large porches and a huge attic which was used for drying the pecan crop.

In later years, changes were made as each new owner took over. Miss Louisa Ihnken covered the shingle roof with tin, stuccoed the outside walls, giving them a gold color, white-washed the plastered walls inside, removed the wooden floors of the two long porches and made them concrete. At the time of the Lawler-Lionberger ownership, the outside walls were changed to white and a re-plastering job was done, closets were placed under the stairway, the two kitchen floors made of flagstone were covered with concrete, the fireplaces were re-worked to have a marble look and a kitchen, garage and bathroom were added. The present owners converted the large attic into two bedrooms and a bath.

Just a block to the west is the old Ihnken cemetery which is still maintained by the family. The headstones and old fence are worth a visit.