

THE TRIBUNE

Sunny Acres, built for saving children or Satanic rituals

by [David Middlecamp](#), Tribune,



San Luis Obispo firefighters reached Friday's fire in the old juvenile hall by knocking down plywood covering second-story windows. ©Wayne Nicholls/Telegram-Tribune 11-24-1989

A fixer upper is coming on the market. Vacant windows stare, unblinking, over one of the best views in the county. Below Cerro San Luis and Bishop Peak are bookends to San Luis Obispo. Before Dan De Vault called his ranch Sunny Acres the name was associated with the brick building off of Johnson Ave.

According to a history written by Robert Vessely the brick building was constructed behind General Hospital in 1931 as a children's home for orphans and wards of the court. The William Mooser Company of San Francisco designed it. The building was remodeled in 1947 and 1959 as it evolved into the juvenile hall. Veselly was a civil engineer who campaigned to get the building restored in the late 1980s.

A February 5, 1965 article by Gilbert Moore said the facility housed as many as 18 youngsters from age 10 to 17. On the day he visited there were less than 10 youths in the facility. He describes the facility as Spartan and clean but limited.

Hard core offenders were sent to county jail because Sunnyacres [as Moore spelled it] was not a high security facility. The facility was used to house youths awaiting placement in foster homes, in trouble with the law or in trouble with life.

A Charles Dickens novel setting brought to life, funding was anemic, books were old, sports facilities were few.

Superior Court Judge and former mayor [Tim O'Reilly](#) voiced the opinion that he did not like to send anyone there if he could find an alternative.

At this point voters had rejected two bond issues for a new juvenile hall. It was hoped that a new facility would be built on Camp San Luis property as well as a youth camp.

The photos in the 1965 story featured models standing in for the actual residents. Something The Tribune would not do today.

The Sunny Acres building was abandoned in 1974 as new facilities opened and has been a magnet for vandalism since.

In 1986 the building was slated for demolition but at some point the effort to demolish the abandoned building was abandoned.

In an August 12 1986 Telegram-Tribune article, the police reported they responded as often as twice a week to break up drinking and drug parties. They said they had a call on a night with a full moon and found an altar used to burn animals.

Said Capt. C.L. Chelquist of the San Luis Obispo Police Department, "Satanic worship is becoming a serious concern among law enforcement agencies nationwide. It is here, but it's minor in nature. I think it's a few teen-age students who are sacrificing cats and dogs. We have no proof. It kind of reminds you of something out of 'Friday the 13th.'"

Fire struck November 24, 1989 and firefighters had to contend with metal screens on the windows and the hazardous cancer causing asbestos construction materials. The article mentioned candles found in the building and satanic drawings on the walls. Sunny Acres was then known as a hang out for drinking teens and the homeless.

Today the county now wants to [declare the building surplus](#). In about 6 years the building will have sat abandoned as long as it was in use.



February 5, 1965 Telegram-Tribune article on Sunny Acres.

Read more here: <http://sloblogs.thetribunenews.com/slovault/2011/08/sunny-acres-built-for-saving-children-or-satanic-rituals/#storylink=cpy>