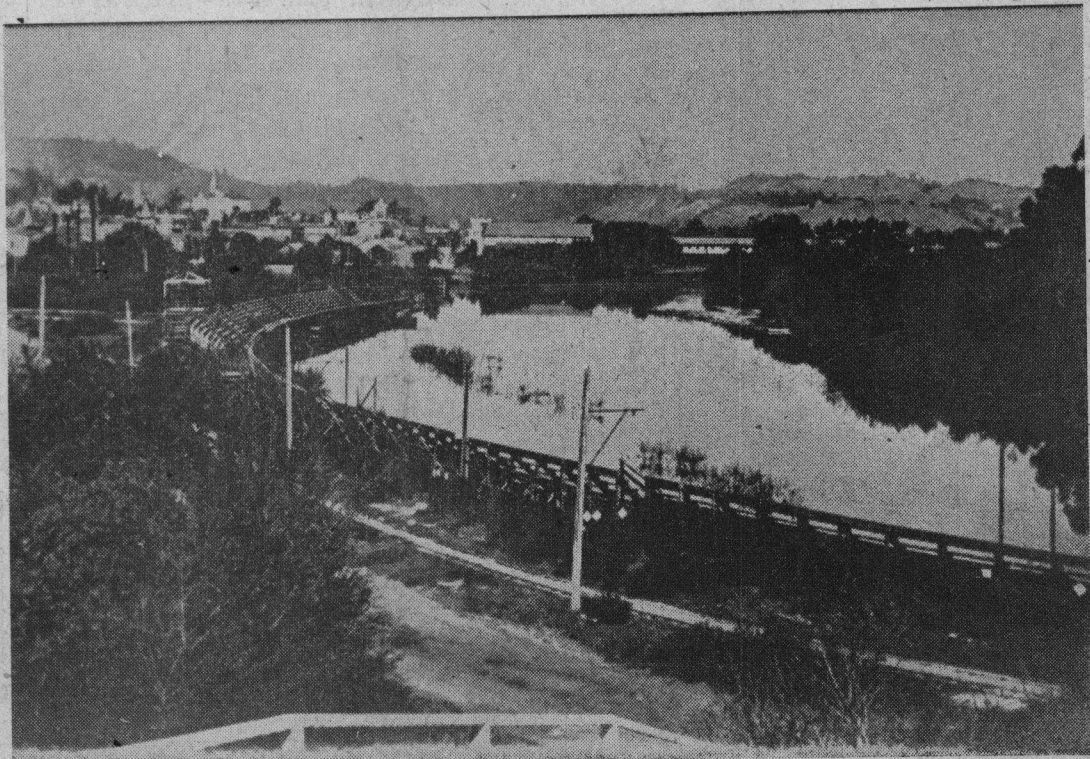


Venetian water carnival

Santa Cruz Yesterdays



VENETIAN WATER CARNIVAL SETUP, MID-90'S

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Viewed from Beach Hill at the head of Cliff street, the placid San Lorenzo of some 57 years ago, here shown at high tide, rounds the next to last bend on its course to Monterey Bay much as it does today.

But a closer study of the picture discloses a group of variations from the scene as it appears now.

Then the fame of the first Santa Cruz Venetian Water Carnival had not yet died down. Stretching along the west bank from the right foreground around the curve to the left and on some distance are the vast river front grandstands built to accommodate the thousands who flocked here to witness this city's first great pageant spectacle—the Venetian Water Carnival of 1895.

Carnival Bleachers

The contract for this work had been let the middle of May to Builder R. M. McCabe for \$1203. McCabe gave bond with T. J. Richardson and C. A. Bixby as sureties. Twenty-seven carpenters were at work on the project a week later. The job, including the throne stand occupied by Queen Anita Gonzalez, was completed in time for the five-day event starting June 11. Mc-

Cabe also won the contract to build the "Floral Pavilion", ballroom and gathering place in connection with Carnival activities. The large wooden structure, later to become a theater known as the "Palm," was created in record time on J. P. Smith property at Laurel and Pacific.

James Philip Smith, one of the main backers of the Carnival, was a wealthy New York and Paris importer who had discovered and fallen in love with Santa Cruz earlier in the 90's. He bought much property here, including the Kittredge House on Beach Hill, which was remodeled into his family home and named "Sunshine Villa." They entertained lavishly. When Smith died in New York in 1921 at age 80, he still had local property holdings.

Early Electric Route

Crossing the foreground of the picture is seen the track, poles and trolley wire of one of the early electric car lines, which operated for a time along Laurel street extension. The terminus was at the beach near Cliff street.

The SC, GP & C left the beach via Beach street and Riverside

avenue, headed around the river to Spruce street, Front street, along a trestle most of the way to Cathcart where it jogged to Pacific avenue, turned on Walnut, traversed Walnut to Mission, to Younglove, to Errett Circle and out Garfield (now Woodrow) to Vue de l'Eau (now Ocean Cliffs).

The above trolley system and the old Santa Cruz Electric were consolidated into the Union Traction company in November, 1904. The U. T. converted to buses later, running its last electric on January 14, 1926.

Spanning the river in the photo background is the old Soquel avenue covered bridge, then past 20 years old. It was to give way to today's concrete structure in 1921.

The large building which seems to rise from an island in the center background actually is on Front street, its back almost on the river bank. The old fair pavilion, built facing north on Soquel avenue, near Front, in 1883, had just been moved to this location, remodeled in front, with turrets added, to become known as the Armory. A quarter-century later it was destroyed by fire.