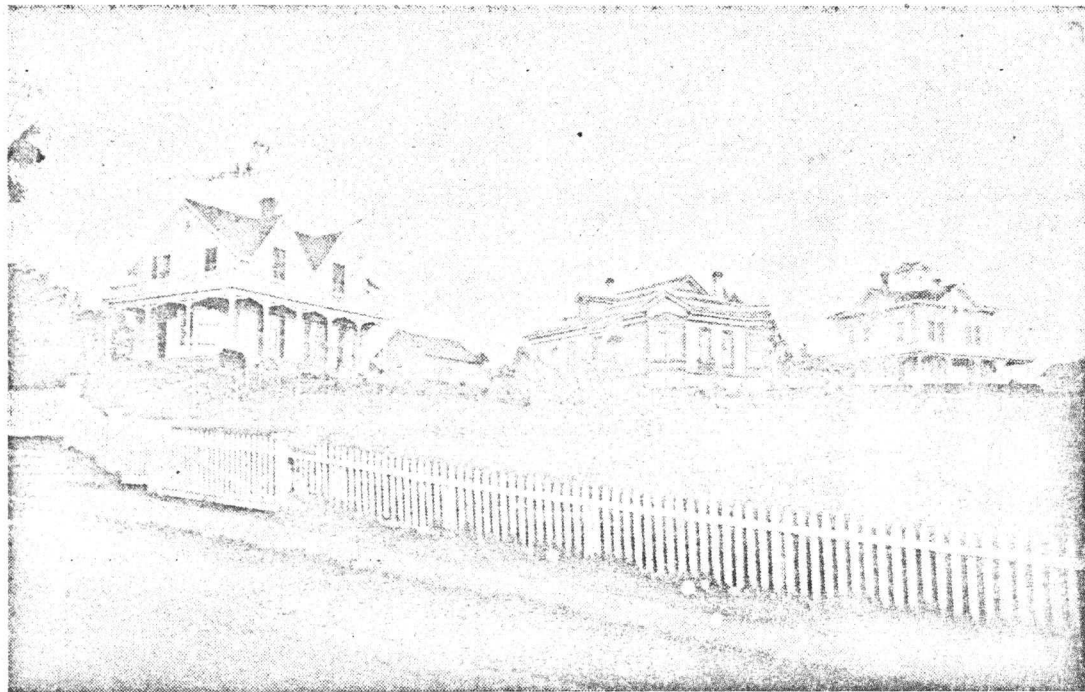


Santa Cruz Yesterdays



HALL'S HILL ON "SOQUEL ROAD," ABOUT 1887

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Perched serenely on a hill, these three imposing residences of the Victorian era, overlooked the city of Santa Cruz. But they, being east of Ocean street, were beyond the city limits—on the "east side" or technically, in Branciforte.

Oldest of the three homes, the near one at left, was erected about 1864, for Richard Harrison Hall, a native of Woodstock, Vermont.

Hall had set out from Boston in 1849 for the California gold fields. By an error in ship's reckoning the vessel he was on made port in Santa Cruz—May 1, 1850. It was said that, still eager to reach the diggings, he walked over the mountains and made his way to San Francisco, thence to Jackson, Calaveras county. (With a later switch of boundaries, Jackson is now in Amador county). After mining a while he engaged in the butcher business.

Santa Cruz Lure

But Hall could never quite forget the bewitching little city by the sea where he first set foot on California soil.

In 1863 he was back in Santa Cruz. He opened a meat market in a brick building on the east side of Front street before the local business center shifted to Pacific avenue. In later years his former location was in the center of Chinatown, occupied by Wong Kee before the fire of '94 wiped out the area.

The ex-Vermonters had sung the praises of this locality. And when his friend from the mining country—E. S. Austin—came here, the home at extreme right was built.

In September, 1888, the Santa Cruz Sentinel told that the "work of cutting down the hill on Soquel road between Ocean street and Ocean View avenue was being rapidly pushed forward." Shortly thereafter it reported that "Hall's hill on the Soquel road is being coated with gravel." Two years later came the Ely horse car line up the same road en route to its first terminus at Lodtman's building opposite Cayuga street.

The picture, taken prior to these improvements, shows the old plank walk up the hill, the quaint white picket fence, the gates and where the hill became steeper

along the walk grew grasses and often, water cress!

Circus Grounds

Down the hill was George Kohl's pasture, across from the Bausch home. At the northeast corner of Ocean and Soquel was the scene of several circus exhibitions (notably the Walter L. Main shows) and there was a time when a merry-go-round was there to entrance children!

In the meantime the Hall interests had increased. He bought 300 acres out the cliff road which included Hall's beach (now a state park) and three natural bridges. The area included the famous old time Natural Bridge dairy. The beach has been known also as Moore's and Swanton Beach. It is now Natural Bridges beach.

When R. H. Hall died in 1889 he left his widow and a foster daughter, Stanley (Mrs. Fred W. Swanton). The latter had married in 1884. They lived in the "cottage", middle and newest house in the trio pictured. By this time "Fabulous Fred" Swanton had already begun his many energetic promotions to the everlasting benefit of Santa Cruz.

First Electric Lights

It was in '89 that Swanton, with Dr. H. H. Clark, established the city's first electric light plant, later forming the Santa Cruz Electric Light & Power company, followed in 1896 by the Big Creek Power company, forerunner of today's Coast Counties Gas & Electric.

In 1892, the "cottage" was sold to Frank Mattison and moved

across Ocean View avenue where it stands today, the home of Velma Parker. The Hall house, little changed, stands also on Ocean View, almost opposite the Parker place. The former Austin home, less cupola and porches, remains on the original site.

Fred Swanton and his bride built their mansion on the "cottage" site, naming it "Villa Perla" for their beloved only daughter Pearl, now Mrs. W. D. Dalton of Anita street.

All of the east side area was incorporated into the city in 1904.

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