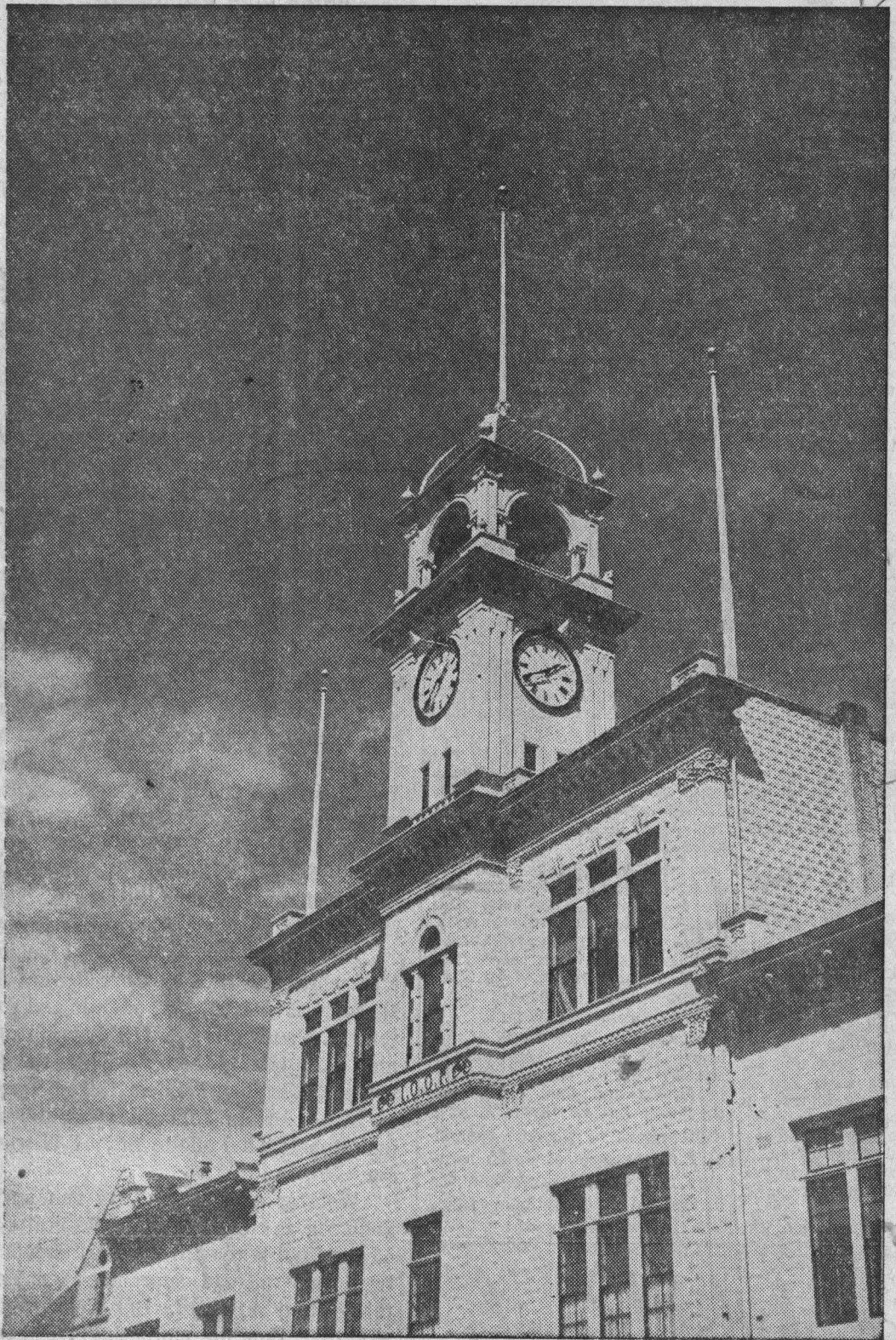


SANTA CRUZ YESTERDAYS



THE OLD TOWN CLOCK—IOOF BUILDING

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Santa Cruz has had a town clock for more years than many realize.

As a matter of fact, the amazing total figures to 83 years. However, the present faithful recorder of the passing hours can count only from 1899, when it replaced the 1874 bell, destroyed by fire exactly 58 years ago tomorrow (May 6).

The Odd Fellows building was erected 1873-74, on a site previously occupied by the blacksmith shop of W. F. Waterman. It escaped the great fire of 1894, which came perilously close when the court house was consumed.

Outlined In Lights

Among the older residents are still those who clearly remember the town clock tower outlined in lights. This actually occurred on

the evening of Monday, June 15, 1896, marking the culmination of a power project whereby the community was given electricity generated at Big Creek, up the coast.

Big Creek Power company, promoted largely by Fred W. Swanton, later a three-times mayor of the town, had been completed in 58 working days that spring. A total of 767 poles supported the 18 miles of wires extending from the plant.

Local folk and crowds of visitors here for the second Venetian Water Carnival, filled the streets to witness the spectacle. It was a truly lavish display for the ambitious little community of that day.

As the city band blared forth with echoing music, 600 incandescent electric bulbs bathed tower and clock with brilliant light. Rows of brilliance followed the lines of front of the building up

past the face of the clock and along the flag pole.

A Sentinel reporter wrote: "The town clock was made as light as day."

The first IOOF building was destroyed in the ruinous fire of 58 years ago, losing also the original clock which had intoned the hours in spite of flame, smoke and water, until it was finally silenced on the night of the fire.

Funds had been raised by public subscription, for the clock, costing around \$1000.

The present clock and building, with lodge halls and stores, were promptly erected after the fire and have served since, although fire has since visited on about two occasions.

Few California communities can point today to an operating tower town clock in the New England tradition. The proud tower pictured, thrusting its silent clock faces into the heavens, has been voiceless for over twenty years. Even the old fire bell no longer tolls, leaving a screeching diaphone in its place.