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4/26/42

Ola Santa Cruz By Ernest Otto

Building Boom Which Hit Pacific Avenue In Middle Seventies Ended Business On Front St.

Between 1875 and 1880 a building boom struck Pacific avenue. It was the last days of Front street as a business street, when Chinatown moved from Pacific avenue below Walnut avenue to occupy a large share of the east side of Front street. Front street then, outside of Chinatown, became a place for saloons, although hotels and boarding houses remained: Santa Cruz House, Franklin House, Kelly's, What-Cher House, Garibaldi Hotel and Pratchner's at the corner. This was the period also of the building of the first large school house, Mission Hill, on Mission street hill, three stories and basement, the top story with mansard roof. The covered bridge was built during the same period.

I. O. O. F. BUILT

One of the largest buildings erected about 1876 was the first Odd Fellows' building, three stories high. One other three-story block was the St. Charles hotel at Mission and River streets, kept by a Mr. Block, a fine Jewish citizen. For years the Odd Fellows' building on the lower floor was a grocery given over to S. W. Fields and a stationery store and post office by John Brazier, the highest type of Easterners.

Only two business blocks of any importance stood on Pacific avenue below Locust street, when the Odd Fellows' building was constructed, the then long two-story brick structure now the Alexander block, then called the McPherson block, the home on the second floor, for many years of the Santa Cruz Sentinel. On the lower floor in those days Bias and Moulton had a grocery on the corner, followed by Jesse Cope, the leading clothing store. Then followed A. Cohen, who for years had a cigar and tobacco stand. Adjoining was the Heath & Byrne hardware and tinware store. The next place for a long time was a grocery operated by Frank D. Scott, his wife a cousin of Charles E. Towne. The other building was the Health, at the corner of Church.

MANY RESIDENSES

Even at the upper end on the east side were few stores. Two residences and a barn yard faced Pacific avenue where the Hotel St. George now stands. Where the Otto Broga residence and garden stood, George Jarvis, who had a vineyard on Vine Hill, erected a two-story structure and a section of it was his grocery and sales place for wines, mainly made at the Jarvis ranch. The other section of the lower floor of the block was for many years a saloon. On the second floor the Weekly Courier-Item was published by the late A. A. Taylor for many years.

John Werner who had a harness shop on Front street, lived in his residence in the rear, which faced Pacific avenue. It was dismantled and another brick structure was erected. On the lower floor, kindly John had his harness store and shop. The other section for years was occupied by A. C. Snyder and his drygoods store. The second floor was for many years known as the Harris house, a lodging house.

THE ELY BLOCK

Another block erected in the late seventies on that side of the street was Ely Block, to the north of the Odd Fellows' building.

A house, the Moore, later Ely home, was moved from Pacific avenue to the rear and faced Front street to make room for Ely Block.

No. 2. It now adjoins the Greyhound depot and faces Short street. The Ely block was a lodging house on the second floor and below Frank Ely for many years had a furniture store and occupied most of the lower floor.

When A. Jones moved his residence from Pacific avenue up Walnut avenue to where the Parr residence now stands the "City Stables" was erected.

DWELLINGS MOVED

The house which stands around the corner on Church street, occupied as a restaurant at present, gave way for the Bernheim block, now the Rittenhouse block. This meant the largest firm in the city moved to Pacific avenue from Front street and with few exceptions all business houses had moved from Front street, which was for over 20 years the main business street of the city.

Santa Cruz was justly proud of Bernheim's Hall, where all the plays were presented until the erection of the Opera House on Park street. Below Bernheim's, Cooper's lot remained vacant for a long time and then three more brick buildings were erected. Even then the Cooper's lot was a circus and playground. All these structures were a part of the late seventies building boom.

When Chinatown moved, for some years there was just a row of shacks that one by one disappeared and finally were replaced by the Hihn buildings. Plans called for a building to occupy the entire lot between Walnut avenue and Lincoln street, but the center part of it was never built.

In those days the only store below Lincoln street was the Hodgdon building at the corner of Maple, and frequently it was occupied in those days but the greater part of the time it was empty.

BELOW LINCOLN

For years there were no business blocks below Lincoln street, with the exception of the Duncan House on the corner, the Effey Block, the Wilkins House and finally the two-story structure at the corner of Maple street.