

Development of schools in Live Oak was slow

(Second of a series)

By CAROLYN SWIFT

While Live Oak had no school until 1872, public education in Santa Cruz County began with the arrival of American settlers that came west with their families about 1848.

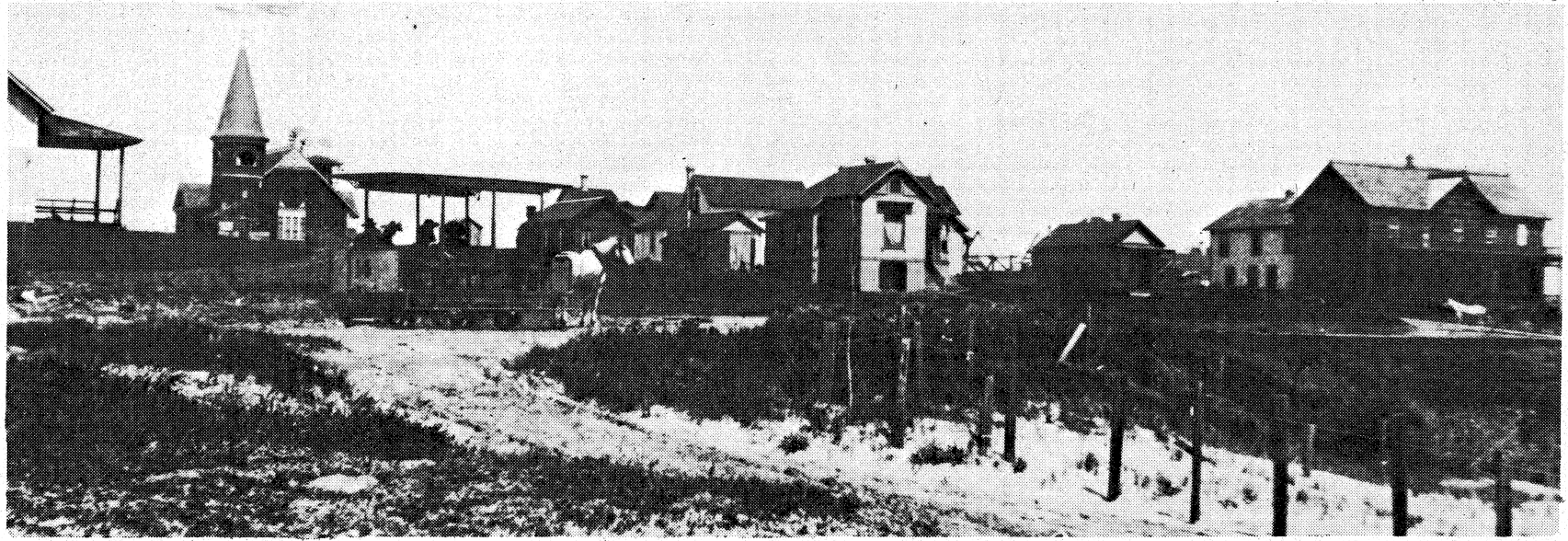
Mary Amney Case is credited with teaching the first school at her home in Santa Cruz during the summers of 1848-49. By 1851 there were about 200 white, English-speaking children of school age in the county.

Schools were supported through subscriptions and rate-bills, and tuition was paid on a basis of the average number of days a pupil attended. Only parents who could afford tuition fees sent children to school regularly.

During the next decade, Santa Cruz County developed as a center for shipping and was known for industries in lime, lumber and agriculture. Commercial centers began to appear in Santa Cruz, Soquel and Watsonville. The number of school-age children increased an average of 200 per year by 1860.

In 1861, there were seven schools in the county — Pescadero (which shortly became a part of San Mateo County;) Santa Cruz School No. 1 and No. 2; Soquel, San Andreas, Oak Grove and Pajaro. Only Santa Cruz No. 1 — with an enrollment of 58 children — was large enough to be a "graded" school.

If Live Oak children went to school at all in the 1860s, they could travel either to the Branciforte District, established in 1860 but without a building



—Photo courtesy of Vester Dick

Twin Lakes Baptist Church, conference grounds and summer resort was established in 1891, and was provided with ser-

vice of a horsecar line from Santa Cruz. The church conference center, right, later became "Hotel Surf."

until 1869; or to Soquel, also established in 1860. By 1870, the districts of Aptos, Hazelbrook, Mountain, Summit, San Andreas and Union had been taken from Soquel boundaries, which had once contained nearly all of midcounty.

In 1870, there were six towns in Santa Cruz County — Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Felton, Corralitos and San Andreas, near Manresa Beach. Total county population was 8,743.

Live Oak farmers could ship their produce from wharves at Santa Cruz or Soquel, but to send it out of the county by rail they first had to haul it southward to the Southern Pacific Depot at Pajaro.

Those who lived close to Soquel could obtain needed supplies in

that town, which was becoming a successful center for shipping and lumbering. Live Oak residents who lived west of Rodeo Gulch more likely chose Santa Cruz for major shopping excursions.

While Martin Linsley was donating land in Live Oak in 1872 to provide a school for his nine children, another father-of-nine, F. A. Hihn, was building a railroad — a narrow gauge line that eventually crossed the southern edge of Kinsley property in the most direct route possible through Live Oak.

F. A. Hihn was a Live Oak neighbor of sorts, although he never took part in the development of that community. Indifference from Hihn is further evidence that Live Oak lands were less-than-best, as Hihn generally managed to take an active and enterprising role in the growth of the county's more prosperous communities, with the exception of the Pajaro Valley.

In 1874, Hihn designed and completed his "Camp Capitola," a summer resort surrounded in the early days by sugar beat fields that extended into Live Oak. For the next several generations, Live Oak children had a clear view from the school of passing trains that deposited a season's tourists on Capitola beach.

While Santa Cruz and Capitola made money off propaganda that Santa Cruz County was free of the disease and a healthy place to visit, all Live Oak obtained from this reputation was an occasional student sent there from towns like Hollister or Fresno for a stay with relatives during a period of ill-health.

County school enrollments were increasing at a rapid pace by the time Live Oak acquired an additional 1½ acres for school property in 1876.

By then there were 55 county schools, with an enrollment of 2,277 white children, 29 black children and one Indian. Another 257 children attended private schools. That year, a three-story

high school was built in Santa Cruz, with 86 students the first year.

In the next year, the organized anti-Chinese movement spread to Santa Cruz County with the Workingman's Party. Two "Mongolian," children were included in the annual county census report, but neither were allowed to attend public school.

Live Oak School was open for a 10-month term in 1877. School property and all the equipment was worth a total of \$600. The year's expenditures were \$764 and the district had \$500 "cash on hand," at the end of the term in July 1878.

During the year, the school enrollment was 45 pupils — but the average daily attendance (ADA) was only 27 children, about half of those eligible. Throughout the district, there were 53 children of school-age, and 18 more under five-years-old.

Martin Kinsley was a cattle rancher interested in breeding stock. In 1881, he built a new home for his family on Ivy Lane, not far from Live Oak School — which rested on the edge of Kinsley pasture bordering on Lower Soquel Road. Kinsley lands extended from that road (now Capitola Road) to the railroad tracks.

Martin, Johnnie, James, Lettie and Emma Kinsley were all Live Oak pupils in 1885. There were nine children altogether, and in the 1960s two—John and Anna Letitia Kinsley — still lived in the family home, although by then there were only 3½ acres remaining of the original farm. Live Oak School became a center for business and social activity as well as education, and school sessions were sometimes cancelled when other community affairs took priority.

During the 1886-87 school year, for example, there was no school held on Oct. 1 and 2 or May 12, since these were election days and the school house was Live Oak's polling place.

Live Oak was a grammar school that served all school-age children in the community. Of an

average attendance of 32 children, ages ranged from five to 15 years—and it was possible for a five-year-old and an 11-year-old to be placed in the same grade. The children were never dominated by one particular teaching style, nor was there any security of teacher tenure. In 1888, Edna Young was the teacher, but she was replaced in 1889 by Annie E. Kingsbury, who was replaced in 1890 by Flora B. Smith. All three had been paid about \$50 per month, a standard salary for women in rural schools.

In the 1890s, Live Oak farmers suffered along with most county residents when a nationwide depression spread from the east coast in the winter of 1893. The depression closed county lumber and paper mills, slowed the tourist industry and increased competition among laborers. Effects of the depression were avoided in the county only by Watsonville, which was spared through the operation of Claus Spreckels' Western Sugar Beet Mill.

In 1894, Lynsky, Kinsley and Thompson were still Live Oak trustees — and were faced with the district's first pinch for classroom space.

Enrollment records of the early 1890s contained a significant change from previous years. Addresses were no longer divided along only "Upper," and "Lower," Soquel Road. Parents now listed themselves as "H.E. Parker, of Twin Lakes;" "Simon Perez, of Live Oak;" or "Mrs. Gillen, of Del Mar," who sent her daughter to Live Oak School during a summer stay from San Francisco.

Just before 1891, the Baptist Church had purchased Live Oak property owned by J. C. Kimble of Oakland, who donated additional property and a stretch of beach for a total of 22½ acres. Jacob Schwan of Schwan Lagoon gave another seven and one-fifth acres, and the church purchased 12, all for a summer encampment to be known as "Twin Lakes."

The Baptist Religious

Association was formed, and N.W. Beckwith of Los Gatos was hired as superintendent and resident-agent for the sale of 40-by-80 foot lots. Non-church members were allowed to buy church property, although the sale of alcohol was forbidden on the grounds.

Twin Lakes campground and park, with facilities for salt-water bathing, was Live Oak's first church resort. It included Twin Lakes Baptist Church, built with a spire that stood as a surrounding subdivisions. There were tent campgrounds, cabins, an auditorium and conference center built in 1890.

Conference center facilities later became "Twin Lakes Hotel," a summer operation close to the beach and flanked by the church. It eventually was owned by Milton D. and Mary Bardwell as "The Surf Hotel." Karl Kott bought the building in 1926, and a year later — on April 19, 1927, the hotel burned.

There was little Live Oak residents could do about fires then, except watch them burn. The Surf Hotel fire was fought by the Santa Cruz Fire District, with water from Schwan Lagoon. When the Live Oak Volunteer Fire Department was finally organized in 1943, one of its early acts was an inspection of the Twin Lakes resort.

Listed in county tourist publications as a "minor resort," in 1892, Twin Lakes rated a service from Santa Cruz that Live Oak never had before. The "East Santa Cruz Street Railroad," a promotional venture of William Ely, ran from downtown Santa Cruz through the community at Seabright and out to Twin Lakes, where a bridge was built across the lagoons. A six-bench horsecar skirted the beach in front of the hotel.

In 1892, the first electric trolley line in the county was built from Santa Cruz, and eventually extended through Live Oak to Capitola. "Santa Cruz-Garfield Park and Capitola Railway,"

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