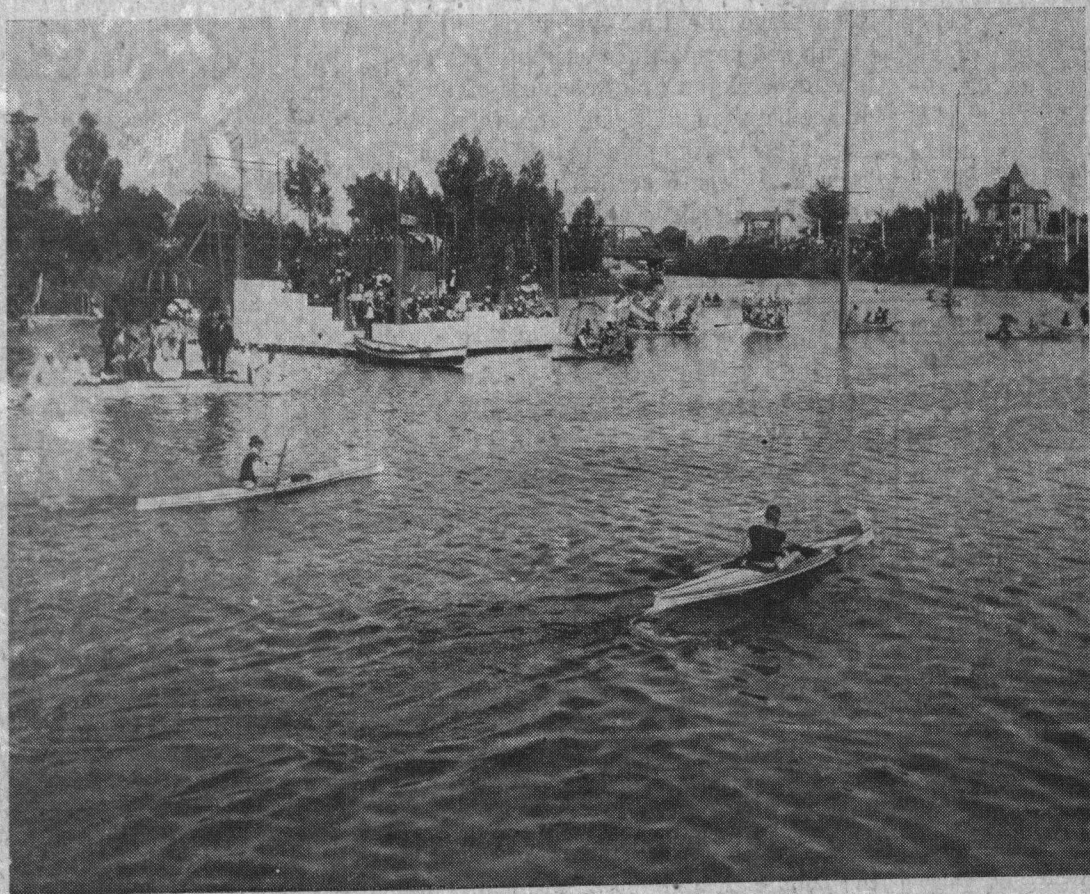


Venetian water carnival

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Santa Cruz Yesterdays



AQUATIC SPORTS AT 1895 WATER CARNIVAL

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Long to be remembered was the name and fame of the Santa Cruz Venetian Water Carnivals of the middle Nineties, along the San Lorenzo. The spectacle was held at the great bend of the river where it flows close to the base of Beach hill.

By damming the river near the mouth, a veritable lagoon was formed at the bend, where grandstands and bleachers lined the stream.

Excursion trains brought vast

throngs to Santa Cruz. Special trains ran between here and all neighboring communities. Southern Pacific ran a roundtrip special at \$2.50, good for eight days, from San Francisco.

Western Venice

Our town was hailed as the Venice of the West! The theme was European, rather than the far west fiesta such as that so popular these days. For the duration, both in June, 1895 and '96, the local water carnivals were the central attraction of the state.

Popular J. P. Smith, businessman of Santa Cruz, New York and Paris, who had transformed the former Kittredge House on Beach Hill into his large residence and center of social activity, was made permanent chairman of the committee. Queen of the Carnival in 1895 was Anita Gonzales; the following year Queen Josie Turcot presided over the festivities.

Both affairs were named successful beyond the fondest hopes of their creators. Certainly some of the widest publicity was broadcast because of the events — so much so that the name of Santa Cruz traveled 'round the world, wherever readers were, either by newspapers or personal letters sent by enthusiastic visitors here. Ambrose Bierce, provocative California writer of the period, was a visitor here during the first carnival.

Canoe Race

The picture, taken during the 4th and next-to-last day of carnival in '95, was made during the canoe

races, a part of the afternoon aquatic sports program.

In the background is the music stand, over the water. The band seen in action is either that of Prof. Alfred Roncovieri, from San Francisco, or Prof. Geo. W. Hastings of Santa Cruz. Many decorated boats were on the river, a number of which can here be seen.

Winner of the canoe race was Frank Washburn, who won \$5 for coming in ahead of George King in the one mile stretch. Clyde Hawthorne, son of Mrs. John Leibbrandt, earned a gold medal for winning the thrilling 100-yard swimming race.

Back of the band is the Barson property and Riverside Hotel. The old Cut-bias bridge is seen in the background, also the Uhden family home and near the extreme right is the Barfield residence, which, like the former, still stands. ■