

ROMANCE OF ITS SETTLEMENT

The future of the city of Santa Cruz, California, located in Santa Cruz County, one of the twenty-seven original counties of the state, was foreseen at an early date. In 1774, Father Francisco Palou selected this beautiful spot on the northern shore of Monterey Bay along the San Lorenzo River as a desirable site for a Mission.

Father Palou, chaplain of an expedition with Governor Rivera, wrote in his diary describing the San Lorenzo River "Which is quite large and has a wide bed, the waters reaching the stirrups. The banks are well covered with cottonwoods, willows, alders, little poplars and other trees, and near the crossing, close to the mountains, there is much redwood timber."

"This site is suitable, not only for a pueblo, but even for a city, for it lacks nothing that is necessary, having good land, water, pasture, firewood and timber, all at hand and in abundance, and close to the beach of Monterey Bay. In fact, the settlement could be placed a quarter of a league distant from the bay and still have all the advantages mentioned."

However, Father Palou was not among the first group of white men to see the site which is now Santa Cruz. The members of the famous expedition of Gaspar de Portola first camped on the west bank of a large river which they called the San Lorenzo. It was on October 17, 1769, that they spent the night there. Only a few days before this, on October 10, 1769, Father Crespi, in his diary made the first recorded mention of the coast redwoods, or, sequoia sempervirens, which abound in the Santa Cruz area. Father Crespi wrote "After going over three miles, over plains and extensive hills, well covered with high trees of a red-colored wood, trees not known by us...we gave it a name from its color, redwood (Palo Colorado)."

Of the San Lorenzo River, and a creek near by, which they named Santa Cruz (meaning holy cross), Father Crespi wrote: "...we came to a river of much water, which we crossed. It was about fifty-four feet wide. It is the largest stream we have seen in all the journey. It gave us pleasure to see the grasses and the variety of the herbage, and the roses of Castile."

After resting at the site of present day Santa Cruz, the Portola party proceeded northward following the coast, in sight of the sea, and explorers sent over the mountains to the northeast returned firing muskets and shouting the news of a great discovery. Portola's party had seen the bay of San Francisco. In July, 1769, the expedition had set out to rediscover the bay of Monterey, which had been discovered 166 years before by Vizcaino. Portola started out with a party of about fifty, but somehow missed the harbor at Monterey and proceeded northward, entering what is now Santa Cruz County on October 7, 1769.

In 1789, the viceroy of Mexico decided to establish a Mission on the spot called Santa Cruz. It was on August 28, 1791, in the presence of many Indians that Father Francisco de Lasuen raised a cross at the site. On Sunday morning, September 25, 1791, Father Alonzo Isidro Salazar and Father Baldomero Lopez pitched their tents on the hill and the formal ceremony for the founding of Mission la Exaltacion de la Santa Cruz was celebrated. This was the twelfth Mission to be founded in Alta California. From the neighboring Missions came donations of horses, cows, oxen, mules and sheep, and two bushels of barley for seed. The first stone of Santa Cruz Mission was laid on February 27, 1793, and the completed structure was dedicated in the spring of 1794. The lower part of the walls was made of native rock and the upper part of adobe. Other buildings were erected as needed, forming an open square which is now a park which faces the Holy Cross church. The original Mission building was weakened by earthquakes, and was totally destroyed on January 9, 1857. In 1931 a replica of the original Mission was built about 75 yards from the original site, where the Holy Cross Church now stands. One or two trees now standing are said to be of the original planting of the old Mission orchard. The old graveyard lies on the brow of the hill in back of the present church. Two or three adobe buildings are still standing nearby, and are in good condition and in daily use.

The pueblo Branciforte was established across the river from Mission Santa Cruz, not long after the Mission was started. Although the establishment of a pueblo within a league of an Indian Mission was contrary to royal decrees, the viceroy ordered this pueblo, one of three, independent of the Missions, established by Spain in California, begun on July 24, 1797. The Pueblo Branciforte was named in honor of the Marquis de Branciforte, viceroy of Mexico. This was to be a

planned community. An adobe house was to be built for each settler; public offices were to be built near the chapel and hospital. The Village was to be centered about a plaza, with general shelters to accommodate 15 or 20 families temporarily. Equipment was to be supplied to each settler, so he could be self-supporting at once, having a market for his products at Monterey and San Francisco.

The site for the pueblo Branciforte was chosen because good building material was close at hand, a plentiful supply of fish was available in the waters of the bay, while facilities for shipping could easily be developed. Governor Borica called for farmers, mechanics, artisans, and sailors as settlers for this early community. Each colonist was to receive from the government a musket, a plow, a few necessary animals, and a subsidy of 116 pesos on a plan of easy repayment. The observance of religious duties was to be enforced. The original document, containing the signature of Governor Borica, dated May 26, 1797, and ordering Sergeant Moraga to proceed with this work, is preserved in the Hall of Records in Santa Cruz.

On May 12, 1797, the schooner "Concepcion" arrived in Monterey Bay with colonists from Guadalajara, but no houses were ready for them. They were forced to build makeshift shelters. Don Alberto Cordaba, lieutenant of engineers in the Spanish Army, who had visited there the previous year, arrived in August with instructions to follow a plan that had been drawn up in Mexico. He began a canal for irrigation, erected a few temporary houses, and sent estimates for further work to the governor and viceroy, before work was suspended in October. Among the passengers on the "Concepcion", most of whom were exiled from their country for various reasons, were three men who became alcaldes. Passengers including two farmers, two tailors, one carpenter, one engraver. Some of these later played an important part in affairs of their time, while their descendants are now widely scattered throughout the state.

However, the village at Branciforte attracted many persons who were not wanted in other settlements, and the Mexican government did not continue its support as promised. The Mission authorities were of the opinion that the settlers were a "lazy, good-for-nothing lot." The Mexican governor ordered "punishment for those who fraudulantly make excuses not to work, or who do not apply themselves to their labor." The prospects were not very bright for the community. Many concerned had come to the conclusion that the founding of the Villa Branciforte had been a mistake. "The only grandeur was in its name." One writer decided that "The settlers are a scandal to their country by their immorality. They detest their exile and render no service."

Santa Cruz Mission, like the others, was actually a military establishment under orders from the viceroy and the governor and turned over to the priests. The Mission started its work at once. The first baptism was of an Indian girl, on October 9, 1791, soon after the founding of the Mission. As each Indian was baptized, careful entry was made of his rancharia. The names of Soquel, Aptos, Zayante, and others no longer extant are mentioned in the Mission books. The autumn of 1794 saw a harvest of wheat, corn, beans and lentils.. By 1800 a total of 949 persons had been baptized, almost all of them Indians. Two hundred and seventy-two couples had been married, and 477 burials had been made. There were more than 4,000 head of livestock at this time, and the crops were good. With the secularization of the Mission in 1834, the administration of Santa Cruz was given over to the authorities of Branciforte and the two communities were merged until American days.

Almost from the beginning the new Mission had trouble, the primitive Indians being forced to live and work at the Mission. An account given by an old Indian who lived at the Santa Cruz Mission tells of the capture of the Indians, the military style in which they were governed, and the severe punishment given offenders. He said that the Indian tribes in the area were not at peace with one another and had no chieftains who could bring the tribes into the Missions. They made their huts of branches. They had acorns to eat and shellfish. Their meat was deer, killed by the bow and arrow. They also hunted for rabbits, rats, elk and antelope. Bears were plentiful and killed by the Indians with bows and arrows and clubs.

Under the direction of the Mission Fathers, the Indians cultivated the fields and planted an orchard. "The surplus products were sold to vessels that came to buy. The Russian vessels carried away wheat and barley, Spanish vessels taking beans, corn, dried peas and horse beans, English vessels carried away hides and tallow."

Beside the many difficulties and problems relating to the Indians, there was much bitterness between the two settlements -- the Mission and the pueblo -- causing a series of quarrels and bickering. In 1812, Father Andres Quintana was killed by Indians. Then, in 1818, the pirate Hippolyte de Bouchard, flying the insurgent flag of Buenos Aires, threatened an attack from the sea. Though the attack never materialized at Santa Cruz, the settlers could see the battle going on across the bay at Monterey. Only disorder and damage resulted at the Mission when the terrorized settlers attempted to save some of the valuable Mission properties. A great deal of destruction was done as the excited people carried off Mission property in an effort to remove it to safety at San Jose.

After the American occupation and the coming of American pioneers, Branciforte became a quiet township of homes, that by a special election of 1907 became part of the city of Santa Cruz. Little remains to reflect the gaiety of the old pueblo of Branciforte - the singing, dancing, horse racing, gambling and bull fights. Only the mile-long race track, which is now Branciforte Avenue remains. The arena of the Spanish and Mexican sport, the bull fight, was located on the flat land between Branciforte creek and the San Lorenzo. As late as July 13, 1867, four bulls "from the Gabiland and Taurian mountains" fought here. "Admission and seats - \$1.00. Standing room on the sunny side - 50 cents!" The intersection of Branciforte Avenue - the racetrack laid out by Cordoba - and Water Street was the center of the old Villa de Branciforte.

An exciting error in history occurred in October, 1842, when an American flag was raised at the plaza four years before California was occupied by the Americans. Commodore Thomas A. Catesby Jones had received word from the East coast indicating that the United States and Mexico were at war. He sailed north along the California coast, and on October 19, 1842, sent word to Governor Juan Alvarado at Monterey that he would land forces the next morning, whereupon the Mexican official formally surrendered. Two men in a sailing boat hurried across the bay to Santa Cruz, notified Josiah Belden, who was running a branch of Thomas O. Larkin's Monterey store, of possession by the United States. Belden produced an American flag which was flown for two or three days until word was received of the error, and Monterey was turned back to Alvarado and the Mexicans on October 21st. A day later, the word was received at Santa Cruz and the flag lowered.

A period of disintegration followed the secularization of the Missions; but, before the gold rush, several dependable men were carrying on industries in the town of Santa Cruz. Thomas Fallon, who had arrived in Branciforte in 1845, put up a building on the plaza, which served as a residence and saddlery shop. It was later purchased by the county and used as County Courthouse. William Blackburn, a Virginia cabinet maker who came overland to California with the Swasey-Todd company of 1845, began work as a lumberman in the Santa Cruz mountains. Later he became the first alcalde under American rule. His orchards were one of the chief attractions of Santa Cruz during his life. Richard C. Kirby, born in England in 1817, came to California in 1846 to become associated with Paul Sweet in a tannery business. In the fall of 1850, he put up a small establishment for tanning leather in "Squabble Hollow", now Laurel Street below California Street. Kirby leather soon became famous. He tanned hides not only from the local ranches, but also those shipped from South America. Other important early settlers were Georgiana Bruce, a schoolteacher, who became Mrs. Richard C. Kirby; Adna A. Hecox, a native of Michigan, who came across the plains with his wife and three children in 1846, preached the first Protestant sermon in Santa Cruz in 1847; Elihu Anthony, who had been a circuit-riding pastor for a few years in Indiana, assisted with early religious activities. Elihu Anthony, a native of New York, also established a foundry where he made the first cast iron plows produced in California. During the gold rush, he supplied iron picks to the miners. He also served as Santa Cruz's first postmaster. The first mill in Santa Cruz County was erected on Zayante Creek by Isaac Graham in 1842.

During the pioneer days, with no railroads and few wagon roads, and with the products of kilns, tanneries and mills too great for local needs, the residents of the region depended upon water transportation almost exclusively. Inlets at the mouths of streams were used as landing places for schooners, and loading was sometimes done through the surf before wharves were built. A wharf

was built at Santa Cruz in 1849 by Elihu Anthony, and was purchased two years later by Isaac E. Davis and Albion P. Jordan, who maintained a fleet of small schooners to haul lime to San Francisco. In 1855, they had the \$150,000 schooner "Santa Cruz" built in the East and brought around the Horn. The largest industry in Santa Cruz in the '50's was that of these two men, Davis and Jordan, who had become engineers on a Sacramento River boat before coming to this region. They built warehouses, operated a lime kiln at the upper end of Bay Street and shipped from the wharf. Other kilns were operating in the vicinity at the same time.

A fabulous agricultural enterprise of the gold rush days was the growing of potatoes, which brought high prices in San Francisco. The extraordinary yield and high prices of potatoes in the fall of 1852 started quite a large emigration from the mining to the farming counties. Land was rented at \$100 an acre in Santa Cruz on the flat where a large portion of the city is now built. However, the business was overdone, and before long potatoes were a drug on the market.

After the close of the Mexican rule, former methods of transportation - mainly on foot or on horseback - became inadequate for the Americans. A stage line was established between Santa Cruz, San Jose and San Francisco in 1854. The first railroad connecting Santa Cruz with Watsonville was built in 1876.

In 1850, the population of the town was about 400; the post office was first listed at that time. The first presidential election was recorded in 1852. The city of Santa Cruz was granted a charter by the state legislature in 1866 and was incorporated in 1876. Some adobes were built during this period, while frame houses were built also. One of the first of the frame houses in the town stood on Vine Street. It was made of lumber brought around Cape Horn by Hiram Daniel Scott, purchaser of the San Augustin rancho, for whom Scott's Valley was named.

The town continued to grow, churches were built - the earliest Protestant church being the Methodist, which was dedicated in December, 1850. The first newspaper, the Sentinel, was published on June 14, 1856. It is still one of the leading newspapers in the county. Duncan McPherson became its owner in 1864, and his descendants still own and operate the paper. The first school at the top of Mission Street hill was built in 1857. The library, organized by a private group, was started in 1868, and is one of the oldest in the state. Hotels were built, one of the best known being the Pope House.

The Pope House, with its croquet and tennis lawns, surrounded by elms, became a social center for California society. This hotel, a collection of cottages, the oldest of which was built in 1850, annually housed the Fairs, Sharons, de Youngs and other socially prominent visitors from San Francisco and the East.

The shores of the curving beach soon became a recreation center. Swimming was ideal in the protected bay. The wide beaches made a perfect promenade for the horse-drawn carriages of the resort visitors, while sports and fishing were enjoyed from the wharves. The plying of boats to and from Santa Cruz enhanced the festive activities of the waterfront. Several large hotels were built on Beach Hill, and became headquarters for visitors who returned frequently to enjoy the recreations provided at Santa Cruz. To quote the Pocket Exchange Guide of San Francisco of 1875 on Santa Cruz:

"A beautiful beach stretches out on the water front, where to walk or drive, gather moss and shells, or bathe in the roaring surf, is pleasant and invigorating exercise."

"As a watering place, Santa Cruz is second to none, and yearly do hundred of the pent-up denizens of the cities, and tourists from all parts of the world, gather there to enjoy the healthful climate, find recreation in hunting and fishing in the woods and excellent trout streams, and enjoy that luxurious ease indulged in with such pleasure."

"There are attractions and advantages for the capitalist seeking investment, the man looking for a home for his family, the laborer in search of work,

or the traveler seeking pleasure rarely to be found elsewhere."

Highlights of the social season were balls and dances, often staged in pavillions built expecially for the purpose. For several years, Venetion Water Carnivals were held annually on the San Lorenzo River. These colorful events along the lighted river, brought many visitors to the city and remained an outstanding memory for all those who saw them. Knight's Opera House opened in 1877, and became the center for drama and opera. Even earlier in 1868 at Otto's Hall, an amateur drama group presented Bulwer's popular play "Lady of Lyons" in an effort to raise money for fire fighting apparatus. A nucleus of local musicians gave frequent concerts, and was a beginning of a musical group which has grown with the years.

The town florished with its businesses, active lumber and lime industires, shipping, fishing, agriculture and bulb growing, fine residences and gracious people - the city gradually taking shape and fulfilling the promise envisioned by Father Palou, when he described its site in 1774.

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