

# Venetian Water Carnival Was SC Highlight Of Last Century

By Laura Rawson

Outstanding events in Santa Cruz through the passing years have been chronicled, but none has equalled the famous Venetian Water Carnival staged in June, 1895, and again in the same month the following year in originality and spectacular beauty. Santa Cruzans living here now who saw it or had a part in it wax eloquent as they recall the fairylake setting on the San Lorenzo river.

In its present condition of rehabilitation it is difficult to visualize the San Lorenzo river as a huge artificial lake at the city's edge, dammed where it empties into Monterey bay.

Miss Anita Gonzales was the beautiful queen of the first carnival. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. Philip Smith, instigators of the water carnival. Seated upon her throne, the queen's barge moved slowly across the illuminated lake, followed by a long train of gondolas and water craft of every sort, fantastically decorated with flowers and banners and lanterns. Bands were playing, guns thundered their salute and the trained chorus lifting voices in songs of welcome.

Out on the bay were anchored the yachts of the San Francisco fleet. They answered a tremendous bombardment from the shore with thousands of rockets and pyrotechnics of every conceivable sort, until the sky and sea were one vast blaze of color and flame.

Great floral parades traversed the streets of the city. The wheels of vehicles twined with flowers and horses harnessed with flowers made a beautiful exhibit of California's chief glory.

Horses had the stage all to themselves, for not a word about automobiles is chronicled by those who saw it or read about it in 1895-96.

Glowing accounts tell of the thousands of visitors who poured into Santa Cruz. The city was a mass of decorations and the beautiful lake was a lovely setting for the most gorgeous spectacle ever seen in Santa Cruz and the laughing merry crowds enjoyed every minute of it.

In June 1896 the carnival was again staged, with Josephine Torrento as queen.

Among attendants to the queens were Mrs. Ida Terry, Miss Mabelle Chase, Miss Daisy Armer, Miss Minnie Cape, Miss Carrie Bias, Miss Matie Patton, Miss Edith Wilbur, Miss Jessie Woodward. There were probably more whose names were not available to the writer at this time.

One chronicler of the carnival era wrote, "Santa Cruz owes more of her progress and prosperity to J. P. Smith than she does to any other 20 men who have ever lived here. It was his generosity and

confidence in the future of the city that built the electric railway, and pushed to completion enterprise after enterprise for the common good.

"It was in April, 1895, that Mrs. Lucy Underwood McCann broached the proposition of the carnival. The project was a dazzling one and staggered most people's confidence in the ultimate realization. But the idea spread and the entire city was in a stew of excitement. General Director was Smith and executive committee members were Judge J. H. Logan, Willis Peck, Senator Bart Burke and O. J. Lincoln. Mrs. Smith was named Dowager Queen, a specially created position as a tribute to her zeal and energy. G. Bowman was named General Director of the 1896 carnival.

Entered according to an Act of Congress A. D. 1896 at the office of the Librarian of Congress Washington D. C. was a beautifully blue bound book, profusely illustrated, bearing on its cover in letter of gold, "Beautiful Santa Cruz County, California." written by W. E. Gilbert. In a prologue, written by Phil Francis, are these words; "God was very gracious when He made the beautiful strip of shore and valley in which almost in the picturesque mountains nestle the county and the city of the Holy Cross. It is a pleasant and fruitful land. With neither extreme heat or cold with warm days tempered by the sea breezes, and the nights delightfully cool, with a climate so even and so mild that the flowers bloom in the doorway through all the months of the year, with the breath of the pines stealing down the mountainsides, the county of Santa Cruz is the most health-giving, strength giving, life giving spot on all the Glorious Pacific slope."

He concludes this prologue with "It is to convey some faint idea of this pleasant and beautiful bit of California, the fairest and loveliest spot which ever swept and waked in the smile of God. It is convey some faint idea of this pleasant bit of California that this book is sent out."

Promably no chamber of commerce publicity story would excel this invitation written 64 years ago by Francis, to entice people to come to Santa Cruz to make their home.

## Burglar Enters Plea Of Guilty

Robert Lee Craft, 21, of 520 Maple street, entered guilty pleas yesterday morning to a two-count superior court burglary charge.

Sentencing was set for November 16. Craft is accused of burglarizing a number of West Cliff drive homes last summer.