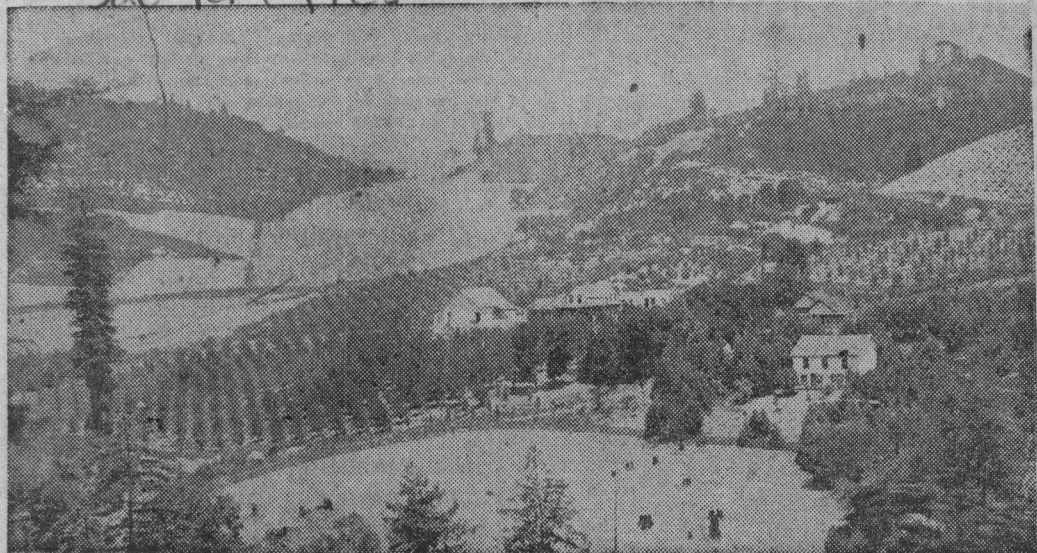


SANTA CRUZ YESTERDAYS

Sawyer, Preston



LAUREL GLEN FRUIT FARM IN THE 80's

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Ever since the earliest explorers sailed along the coast of California and wrote in their records impressions of the forest-crowned mountains adjacent to Monterey bay, the Santa Cruz hinterland has been noted for its verdure and fertility.

With the coming of the early settlers, scattered Indian "rancherías" became the ranchos of the Dons, whose Spanish background was apparent with the picturesque adobe casas, where often grew "roses of Castile."

The interim between the era of Mission life and the advent of Americans and other foreigners was the day of large and influential Californian families, a time of picturesque and romantic life. These families received large grants of land throughout the county. In 1833, Martina Castro, a sister of Don Rafael, who was

granted the Aptos rancho, received the Soquel, and in 1844 the Augmentation.

When the carefree days of the fandango and "los rodeos" finally faded, the American gringos gradually replaced the earlier ranchos with their farms and New England type dwellings.

Over the Grade

Time was when the "old San Jose road," winding up the canyon of Soquel creek, was a main highway to the Santa Clara valley, "over beyond Loma Prieta." Up through the rolling hills there appeared many a vineyard and orchard, with smiling homesteads—houses and barns and orderly rows of orchard trees between.

On the forested slopes of the "hills of Santa Cruz" decayed vegetation had for centuries enriched the soil. To this recurring enrichment is due the marvelous

fertility of the mountain acres.

In succeeding years, the thrifty farmer, where had grown vast forests, developed fruit farms, enriching their owners and improving the country. The mountain slopes and glens had sufficient exposure to the sun and with rich, well moistened soil were adapted to the growth of fruits and vegetables.

Finest Farm Produce

Famous vineyards produced best grapes from which award-winning wines were made. Mountain apples, still on the finest, peaches, prunes, plums, vegetables of all kinds have long come from the adjacent hills.

Ferns still raise their fronds among the crested heights, and intervening patches of redwood forest are diversified with madrone, oak, maple, spruce and many other woodland natives.

Today's picture of the well-ordered acres of the famous Dakin ranch, known for many years as Laurel Glen Fruit Farm, with its neat orchards, buildings and open acreage, was taken about 65 years ago. Located four miles from Soquel, on Laurel Glen road, off the Old San Jose road, it was an outstanding example of the farms thereabouts which heralded the present era. (Note scattered stumps in foreground, indicating recently cleared ground.)

Laurel Glen Farm was founded by Isaac M. Dakin, a native of Maine, who married a Vermont girl and brought a touch of New England to the Soquel region by way of Knight's Ferry, California, where their children were born.