

# Reaching out into the briney



Monterey Bay salmon fishing was good around 1910.

## Wharfs on Santa Cruz beach have long history of service

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**O**NE OF THE earliest Yankee "tourists" to arrive on the Santa Cruz Beach scene actually lived for a time in the wreck of a beached boat. Hard to imagine today. That was about 150 years ago. There was no wharf to welcome the hardy sailors who came to Monterey Bay.

Since 1914, the Municipal Wharf has curved out into the bay with its wooden toes buried deep in the sand beneath the waves — like a black-topped sea-going centipede.

Periodically over the years, and following severe storms, the wharf has undergone minor facelifts and major repairs. The latest major cosmetic job is underway at present and

Powdermill wharf which changed its name to the Steamship wharf. And there was a Cross wharf built in 1877 to connect the Railroad and Steamship wharves. Then there was Cowell's wharf, built for the shipping of barrels of lime.

From old accounts, the wharf situation must have been confusing with all the changes going on.

The Railroad wharf, which was located very near today's Municipal, was torn down in 1922.

By the 1880s and 1890s, we had a thriving Italian colony of commercial fishermen who had first started settling here in the 1860s and 1870s. A sturdy Municipal wharf was long overdue by 1914 when it was constructed with a bond issue of \$172,000. The pilings were driven 21 feet into the sand and 2,000 Douglas fir logs were used.

The Bregantes, Loeros, Carniglias, Faradas, Perez's, Garbones, Castagnolas, Ghios, Zolezzis and others, parked their fishing boats at the wharf during storms and between seasons.

The Italians had first used boats with lateen sails, customary in Italy. But the years brought changes to the waterfront with sails giving way to gasoline and diesel engines.

"Parking" a good-sized fishing boat was a fascinating thing to watch. One entire section of the Municipal wharf was devoted to a series of husky davits and huge iron winches. In bad weather, or for repairs, the boats were winched up out of the water to swing high and dry in the frameworks.

We once had another wharf — really more of a pier — which extended out from the boardwalk a short distance. It was the Pleasure Pier, known first as the Electric Pier.

### A glance at history

hopefully will be completed before the hordes of summer tourists descend on the Santa Cruz beach.

There has been a series of wharves reaching out into the briny. The earliest one was a crude chute built in the 1840s. Sacks of potatoes were pushed down it to waiting rowboats which ferried them out to sailing ships offshore. It was known as the Elihu Anthony wharf. The last vestiges of it collapsed in 1907.

At one time, we had the Gharky wharf which, in 1875, became known as the Railroad wharf. We had a



Commercial fishing was big business in 1916.



Even grandpa got into the act — at the wharf photo gallery!

built in 1904. In addition to its strings of electric lights — quite a novelty in that day — it had benches so ladies with ruffled parasols could sit and view the beach scene restfully.

The Electric pier also gave shelter to a wheeled tintype gallery, a horse-drawn wagon, where tourists could pose with assorted painted backdrops of mermaids and giant fish, capturing a vacation fantasy for posterity. (And the family scrap-

book.)

The Electric pier was torn down in 1962, having outlived the days of parasols and high button shoes, but for years it was headquarters for Stagnaro's speedboat. That was a ride! With a member of the Stagnaro family at the wheel, the high-powered boat would curve through the waters of the bay, sending plumes of spray high and leaving a foamy wake.