

# Shark's Visit To Santa Cruz Waters In 1881 Excited City

By Jack Rannells

"Our town was thrown into a high state of excitement on Saturday morning by a report that ran through the streets like wild-fire that a man had been killed by a shark while bathing.

"As the report was traced towards the beach, it lost some of its terror, as it was found the man was only wounded and had escaped with his life."

Thus opened an account in the Santa Cruz Courier of June 30, 1881, which in inimitable narrative style spins a tale of significant contemporary interest.

The attack was the only one recorded in the history of Santa Cruz beaches and one of two in Monterey Bay.

Principal in the episode was Rev. Thomas J. F. Hudson, founder of St. Mary's Catholic church in Gilroy, and, incidentally, a great uncle of Santa Cruz City Clerk Jack Miller.

Father Hudson had joined Father Hawe of Santa Cruz in a swim between 9 and 10 o'clock on the morning of June 25, 1881. Father Hudson swam out to a raft.

The Courier records the eventful return trip as follows:

"He felt a sharp pain in one of his heels. Turning his head, he saw an enormous fish which he supposed to be a shark, apparently intending to make a breakfast of the reverend father.

"He cried for help and swam vigorously, meanwhile, fighting his enemy, as best he could with legs and arms. E. J. Henderson, went to his rescue and by him was assisted to the shore."

Wounds, which permanently hindered Father Hudson, included a deep gash several inches long in his right thigh, numerous lacerations on one leg, and a severe cut along the back of one heel.

"The fact that a bather sustained injury at the beach aroused fears among the timid as it was the first instance of a fighting fish in these waters," the Courier related.

Vindictive fishermen, spurred by a \$100 reward, spread over two miles of nets, The Sentinel of that era reported. Early Sunday morning the fish was landed.

It was described variously as a "thrasher" and a "dog fish," both being popular names of small coastal sharks.

The fish, measuring 8 feet 3 inches, was put on exhibition for 25 cents a head — no mean fee in those days — to raise the reward. Receipts for the first day were nearly \$65.

On Monday afternoon, a doctor dissected the shark and found a small piece of cloth and some small fish in its stomach, the Courier reported.

"The bit of cloth was fully identified as from the bathing suit worn by Father Hudson, thus leaving no doubt that the fish caught was the right one," it continued.

The Courier opined that Father Hudson inadvertently hit the fish with his foot while swimming.

"This unintentional assault maddened the 'thrasher,' since he applied his tail vigorously to the reverend gentleman. As he followed him to shallow water he then bit him."

The tail of the shark was described as a "gigantic file . . . its



Fr. T. J. F. Hudson

immense muscular power is capable of doing great execution, although it does not attack human beings unless molested."

Things quickly returned to normal. The Courier description concluded:

"Confidence in the safety in the bathing grounds was speedily restored as the visit of such a fish to this bay is rarer than the visit of a comet in the heavens."

Reportedly one unscrupulous beach proprietor temporarily took advantage of the situation with a sign: "This Beach Free of Sharks."

Father Hudson was a native of Dublin, Ireland. He came to California in 1864 to take charge of St. Martin's chapel near San Martin.

In 1866, he helped found St. Mary's, where he served until death in 1907.

Miller's father, Thomas Hudson Miller, spent his youth in Gilroy with Father Hudson. Other surviving relatives in the Santa Cruz area include Mrs. Lee Galvin and Mrs. Mattie Rhoades, nieces.

## Wire-Snipper Solves Problem Of Loaded Pound

Kansas City (AP) — The Kansas City Star published a poignant front page story Thursday on hundreds of homeless dogs awaiting death at the municipal animal shelter because no one wants them.

Early Saturday a sympathetic, unobserved intruder snipped two large holes in the pound's wire enclosure, setting the strays free.

Attendants spent the day rounding them up.

# Kitchen