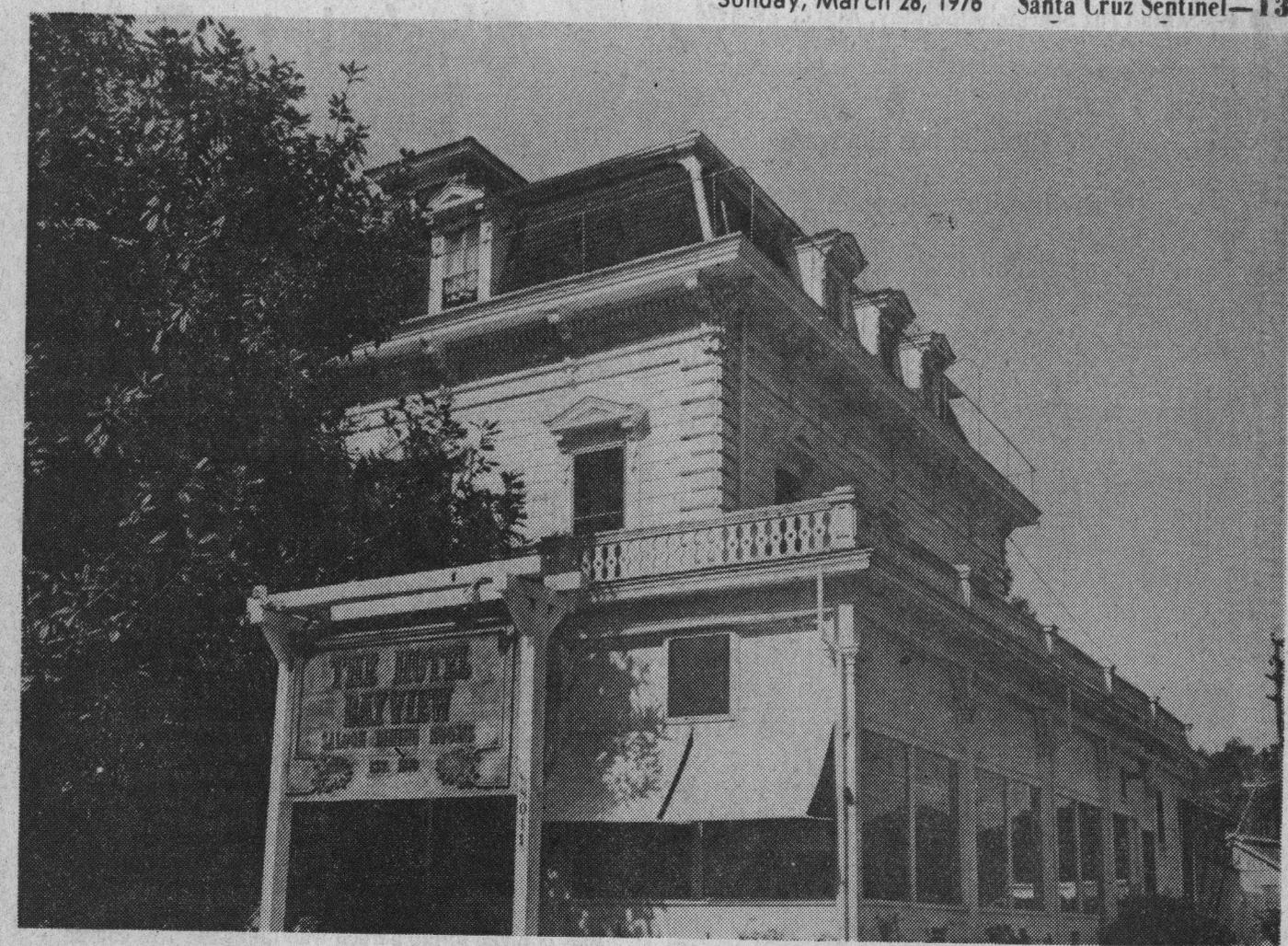


# Aptos Grows Up

Photos  
By  
Pete Amos



The Village That Was...

From Ohlone Indian settlement to Mexican Land Grant to lumber center to resort and antiques-boutique village...

In one sentence that's the story of Aptos, picturesque village in Santa Cruz County's midriff area.

The very word "Aptos" is one of the county's most historic, dating from a Mission Santa Cruz sheep ranch called Rancho de Aptos, mentioned in Archives of 1807.

Don Rafael Castro owned the land for thousands of acres in all directions in Spanish-Mexican days. His daughter married Jose Arano who built the Bay View

Hotel, Aptos landmark, in the early 1870s. The Aranos ran it until about 1914. In 1944 the Fred Toney's purchased it and moved it about 100 feet to its present location. Today it's leased out and the Toney's operate the Village Fair located behind the hotel.

Village Fair is an old apple shed turned antique center, and contains a number of shops.

Liveliest recent development in Aptos is the Rancho del Mar Shopping Center which has everything from soup (grocery store) to entertainment (theater). It's annual Art Show draws thousands of visitors.

Aptos Village actually is the area tidily enclosed between two railroad trestles, with Monte Toyon, Nisene Marks State Park and the Highway 1 freeway providing boundaries of sorts.

But mention the word "Aptos" and peripheral areas leap to mind, among them Cabrillo College, Seacliff State Park, Rio del Mar and Ledyard Acres.

Artifacts of the earliest residents, the Ohlones, have been uncovered down through the years in various places, and an Indian burial ground existed down in the creek flat toward the beach.

By the 1870s Aptos was a booming lumber center and the cry of "Timberrrr!" echoed in the surrounding canyons as the giant redwoods fell. Loma Prieta Lumber Mill had its own railroad spur which ran down to Aptos to join F.A. Hihn's Santa Cruz-Watsonville railroad line.

In 1872 Claus Spreckels, the sugar king, cast a covetous eye on more than 2000 acres of Rafael Castro's land grant property, bought it and built palatial homes for himself and his two brothers-in-law. Spreckels' home stood on a little knoll opposite today's entrance to Rio del Mar, and his stables and polo field were behind it. The house burned in 1929.

Spreckels entertained royally and royalty — among the latter, King Kalakaua of Hawaii in 1881.

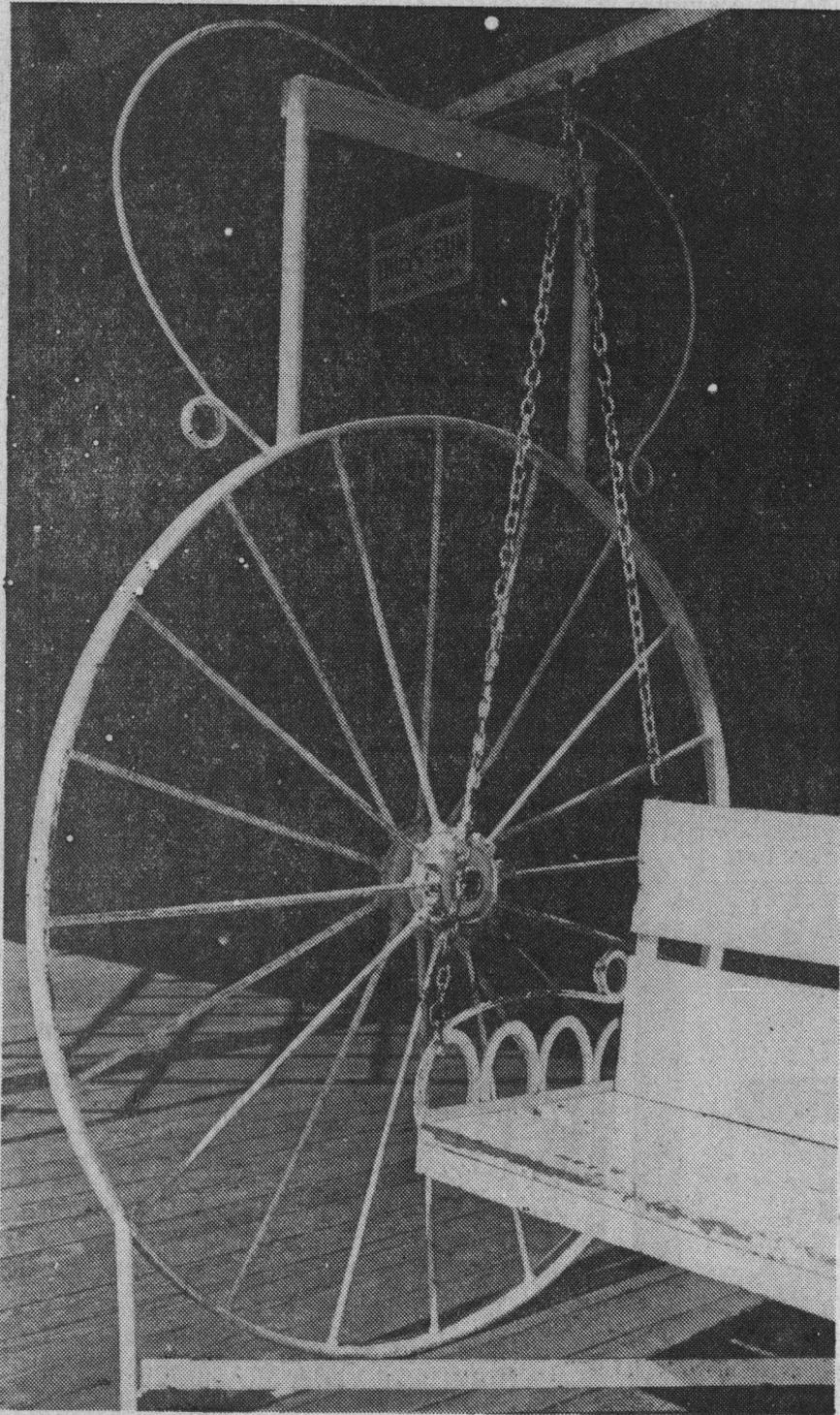
To seekers of local color, Aptos boasts the reputation of being the home of the Aptos Ladies Tuesday Evening Society. In 1968 several members of the society who were involved in a running dispute with Southern Pacific, staged a lie-down strike on the railroad tracks. The Ladies won. The railroad retreated in confusion.

Through all its years of change, Aptos has gradually become what some refer to as a community for the "elite." Quarter-million-dollar homes have sprouted like mushrooms after a rain — and three years ago an uproar arose over inadequate water pipes that had been installed in 1953.

Growing pains erupting from time to time can be expected in this village that is turning into something else. Aptos — oasis in the redwood hills that dip their toes in Monterey Bay, has always attracted people.

Who else is there?

—MARGARET KOCH



Tref'n'Sea Living

From Rafael Castro's tombstone, above left, to the Bay View Hotel, Rancho del Mar Shopping Center and Redwood Village, it's all Aptos. Left, Village Fair, and right, you'll never guess — what the backside of the main street of Aptos looks like.

