

Santa Cruz Yesterdays



LAUREL STREET EXTENSION 60 YEARS AGO

(From The Preston Sawyer Collection)

Laurel Street Extension, carved out of chalk rock and filled in swamp land, was a brave new city street, in 1890. The river crowded the winding dirt road against the Beach Hill bluff. In the distance the new "Cut-Bias" bridge had spanned the San Lorenzo for two years.

To the right was the willow bordered slough where Ernest Otto and other lads of his youthful days found a sequestered swimming hole. The area is now filled in and built to auto courts and trailer camps. For many years an elevated plank walk paralleled the road, here. Bordering the walk to the west was a "jungle" of willows, maples and wild blackberry vines.

Building Bulkhead

Apparently the river bulkhead was in process of construction when the picture was taken. The piling shown was later sheathed

with redwood planks on the inside and a fill was made against it. Much of the bulkhead still remains.

Along the bulkheads and fills at the edge of the river were built the bleachers and grandstands to accommodate the crowds which came to see the renowned Venetian Water Carnivals, held along the river in the middle '90's.

Surveys made a long time ago by today's County Surveyor Arnold M. Baldwin show that this piling was driven on the official west line of the San Lorenzo, as that line was established by act of the legislature in 1872.

Laurel Street Extension from Pacific avenue to Cliff street was deeded to the community by F. A. Hihn in 1888. This was a right of way having a width of 60 feet. It was approximately along the line of the present improved roadbed which was constructed in the early '20s. Hihn wanted a wider street.

It is interesting to note that in 1893 it was proposed to widen the street to 72 feet throughout this area and to make the eastern boundary of the eastern portion coincide with the official river line. Nothing however was done subsequently to accomplish this aim.

"Cut-Bias" Bridge

The steel truss "Cut-Bias" bridge of 1888 was built to give the east side a direct connection to the beach. It acquired its name because, instead of following the street line, it ran at an angle to achieve the shortest span over the river. The present Riverside avenue concrete bridge replaced it in 1930.

Not yet had the stately stream-bank row of eucalyptus trees risen along the border of the Barson orchards. But in the distance faintly visible is the then widely known resort, Ocean Villa, on the hill at the south end of Ocean View avenue.