

Buo-K

Here Today; Gone Tomorrow?

Beach Hill's Hotel McCray Once Was Imposing Home

He arrived in Santa Cruz in 1851 and here he served only as a consulting physician. On the side he also quietly took care of a brood of indigents who were unable to pay.

He was termed a "fearless speaker and writer, never pausing to curry favor, and the sharpness of his words gave him a seeming severity . . . however he possesses a truly tender heart . . ."

Dr. Kittredge built the present-day hotel as an elaborate home for his wife who was a daughter of Judge William Blackburn.

Early accounts differ. One source claims the house was built in the early 1860s, another says the 1870s. In either case the doctor did not have long to enjoy his 30-room home. He died in 1879.

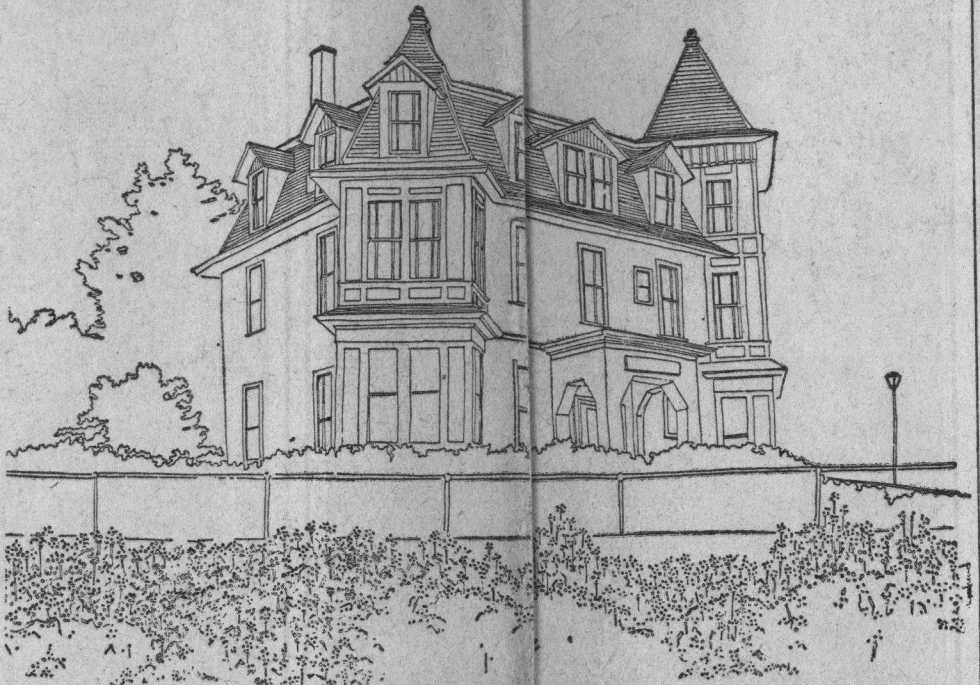
For a few years the big structure at the corner of Third and Front streets was run as a hotel by J. B. Peeks, who also operated the Sea Beach Hotel for awhile.

Then J. Philip Smith came to town about 1890. Smith was a wealthy food distributor with offices in New York and Paris. His wife was the former Susan Crooks, member of a Santa Cruz family.

Smith bought the mansion and turned it into an imposing summer home for himself, his wife, and her daughter, Anita Gonzales. A head of iron deer and other statuary—a sure sign of culture in those days—stood about the spacious lawns. Tea parties, formal dinners, musicales—Mr. and Mrs. Smith played the full social scale. They named their home Sunshine Villa.

This age of elegance came into full flower in 1895 with the first of two Venetian Water Carnivals. At the instigation of Mrs. Lucy Underwood McCann, who was a close friend of Mrs. Smith, the San Lorenzo river was dammed and a spectacular water show was staged.

This gigantic and expensive project was plotted down to the final oar, during preliminary sessions at the Smith home. Mrs.



Hotel McCray, nee Sunshine Villa, didn't get its present name until the 1920s when a

portion of it also was remodeled into apartments. Originally the home of a distinguished physician, it has changed

hands many times in its 100-year plus. Pen and ink drawing by artist Will Shepherd.

Smith was named Dowager Queen and her daughter, Miss Anita Gonzales, was crowned queen of the extravagant affair. J. Philip, as director-general of the Water Carnival, got to pick up the tab.

He is described as a person of "fierce energy and ready purse." He needed both.

The Smiths lived in the fine old house on the hill until about 1920 when a group of Santa Cruz men bought the place.

Then, in 1926, it was sold

to Mr. and Mrs. John McCray, who operated a hotel in Paso Robles as well as a smaller hostelry, the La Dora.

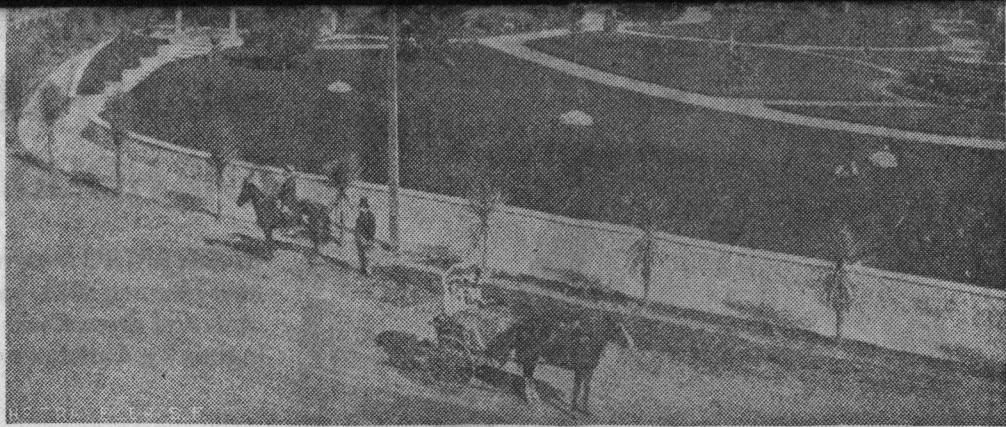
The McCrays named their new acquisition the Hotel McCray and operated it as a commercial hotel for about 17 years. They remodeled a portion into apartments.

In October, 1943, the McCrays sold the hotel and its two-acre grounds to C. B. Bender, a Santa Cruz jeweler. The hotel has changed hands several times

again in the past 20 years. Since 1954 it has been owned by Mr. and Mrs. Porter Kilpatrick, who operate it as a hotel-apartment house. Mrs. Kilpatrick says the structure was built in 1862-63 and is more than 100 years old.

It stands on its hill today, slightly aloof and very regal. The iron deer are gone. And the hotel grounds have shrunk to the point where the patriarchal McCray now rubs elbows with several mere "upstarts" of the 20th century.





Sunshine Villa, the way it looked in the 1895 horse and buggy days, when it served as headquarters for the Venetian Water Carnival staff, as well as the elegant home of J. Phil-

ip Smith, director-general. Smith is shown on horseback out front; his wife and daughter are in the pony cart. (Photo from the Roy Boekenoogen collection.)

Development Of Rio On Antos Bill