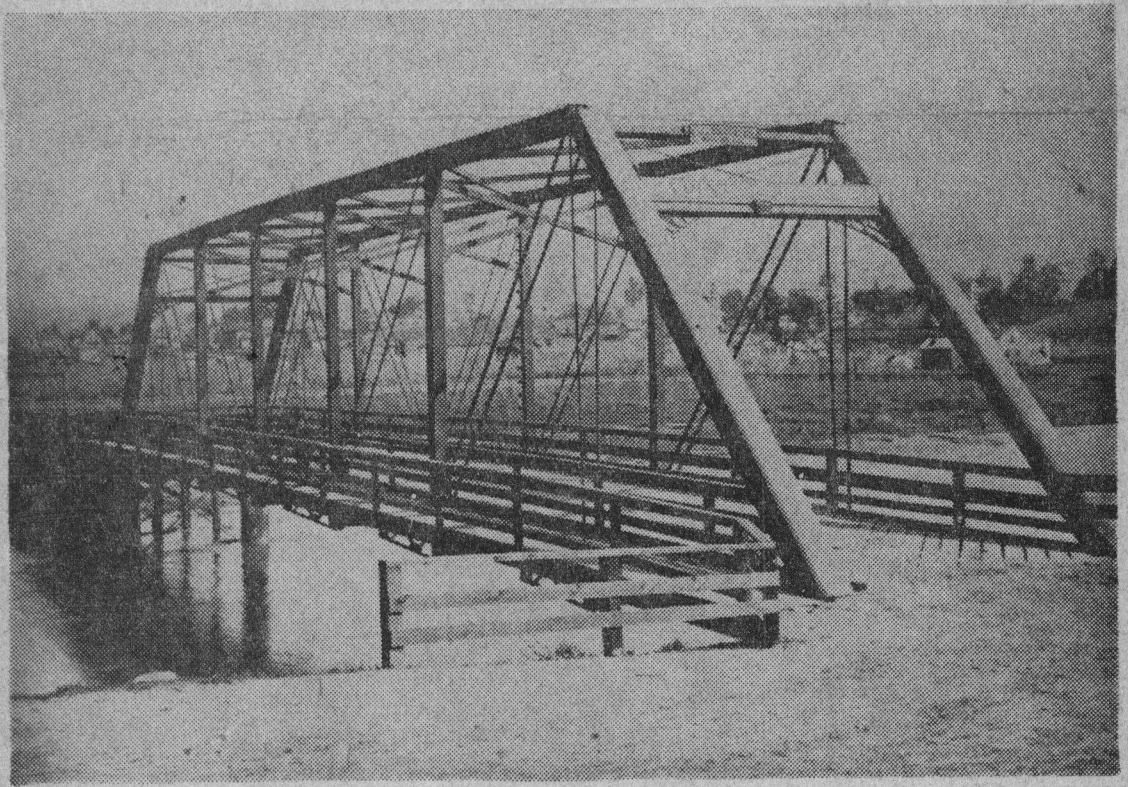


Sawyer, Preston

# Santa Cruz Yesterdays



THE "CUT-BIAS" BRIDGE, 1888—1930

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Until the beginning of 1889, there was no way for Santa Cruzans to cross the San Lorenzo anywhere below the Soquel avenue covered bridge, except by flimsy foot-bridges which were dismantled each autumn and built again each spring. One was about opposite Broadway for awhile, another from the Barson House grounds angling south westward toward Beach Hill. And at times there was a pedestrian crossing of some sort at or near the railroad bridge toward the mouth of the river.

There was a "boom" on hereabouts in 1888 which gave rise to the urgency of a new vehicular crossing of the river serving the East Side with handier access to the beach area and Beach Hill. Consequently, the city council, at a meeting held Saturday evening, March 24 of that year, started the ball rolling.

## Barson Gives Street

In April, Fred Barson deeded to the city sufficient of his orchard land to open a thoroughfare leading from Barson street directly to the proposed new river crossing and bisecting his fertile holdings. After plans and specifications had been tentatively drawn up and discussed, bids were asked.

On Wednesday evening, July 18, the council opened several bids for building of the new bridge. According to specifications, the span was to be 150 feet long between the centers of the piers, with a 16-foot roadway, one sidewalk four feet wide, and a 160-foot approach on the Barson side.

At another meeting on July 30, the young municipality awarded the contract to the California Bridge company of Oakland for a "combination" bridge to be erected at a total cost of \$4769. Hauling of material was started in September. With the first loads came piles and pile-driver, lumber and steel supporting rods, and large cylinders. Five men were then employed.

## Metal Cylinder Supports

By mid-October, 17 men were at work, the supporting hollow metal cylinders were in upright position to be filled with cement, 12 piles had been driven for the northern approach. On the south bank a cemented stone wall was being constructed on which one end of the span was to rest.

A month later the new bridge was nearing completion but road-work at each end was not finished. It was being painted and the stone and cement pier at the southern end was being strengthened by the building of rock wings.

Because the span ran at a small angle from north to south it was early dubbed the "Cut-bias" bridge and the name stuck all through the 40-odd years of its existence.

## Opened On Last Day of 1888

The new bridge was completed, officially, on November 24, 1888. But the street department had not yet completed grading and graveling of the new street through the Barson orchards. It was Monday, December 31 that the "Cut-bias" bridge was finally thrown open for use. There was no special ceremony

— save that members of the city council were the first to pass over it when it was declared officially open.

The picture, looking northeast, was taken shortly after the bridge had become a part of Santa Cruz' late '80's developments which included building a three-story Y.M.-C.A. building on lower Pacific avenue where is now the Moose building.

Horse and buggy drivers were warned by the sign overhead: "\$25 Fine — for Riding or Driving Over This Bridge Faster Than a Walk." In the background are the orchards, and beyond to the left is Ocean street and Broadway. Higher and to the right can be seen large homes along Ocean View avenue.

The bridge was replaced in 1930, during Mayor Fred Swanton's time, with the present concrete structure.