

San Lorenzo Tannery (1896)

The manufacture of a superior quality of leather has long been one of the specialties of Santa Cruz County. At present the principal representative of this industry is the San Lorenzo Tannery, owned and operated by the Kron Tanning Company. The tannery is located on River Street, near the city limits, on the direct road to the Big Trees, Felton and the Powder Mills. The property extends to the San Lorenzo River, on which stream it has an ample frontage. This location has been the site of a tannery since 1855. During the winter of 1861-62 the buildings stood on a point which jutted into the river, and were washed away by the high water of that year. They were rebuilt, and in 1866 the property was purchased by F. Kron, the founder of the present company. His death occurred in 1879, since which time the business has been conducted by his widow and three sons.

The Kron Tanning Company is a close corporation, of which O. J. Kron is President, H. F. Kron, Vice-President, and Mrs. A. K. Kron and F. R. Kron are the remaining members. C.W. Purrington is Secretary. The manufactory, in Santa Cruz, is managed by Henry F. Kron; the wholesale commission house and principal place of business, in San Francisco, is in charge of Oscar J. Kron; Frank R. Kron, of Sydney, Australia, handles a large portion of the output and ships to the tannery from that country a part of the hides used in manufacture.

The commodious and well-arranged buildings which form the present plant of the tannery are the center of quite a busy and populous little village. Standing in the pretty valley, known from old mission days the "Potrero," it is so environed by half-wooded hills as to be quite cut off from the heart of the city so near at hand. The pleasant residences of Mrs. A. K. Kron and H. F. Kron, with their home grounds and orchards, are supplemented by the neat cottages of the married employees of the tannery, the boarding house provided for the unmarried men, and the tidy little hose house of Pogonip Hose Company, an organization formed entirely of tannery men.

The beam house of the tannery is 40x120 feet in dimensions: the yard is 120 feet square; there are 140 double and single vats (20 "stringers" and 120 "lay--aways"); the leach house, 16x120, contains ten six-cord square leaches and two eight-cord round leaches.

Steam is generated by a furnace furnished with a brick stack 110 feet in height, having a four-foot flue. The fuel used is wet tan bark, which is delivered to the furnace by elevators. The engine is 110 horse-power in capacity.

A 150-light Edison electric dynamo supplies the tannery with incandescent lights, and both the family residences will soon be illuminated also from the same source.

Fifty men are employed in the tannery, while a large number of men and teams are engaged during the year hauling the 2,500 cords of tan bark used from the forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

The capacity of the works is 250 sides per day, and the product is a superior quality of sole leather. The manufactory runs throughout the year. The finished product is shipped to San Francisco, Chicago, New York and Boston in the United States, as well as to Japan and Australia. California furnishes the major portion of the hides used at the tannery, and Australia and the Hawaiian Islands the balance.

The founder of this establishment, J. F. Kron, was one of the solid and leading citizens of Santa Cruz, known and honored by the community in which he lived for his integrity, his industry, his business ability, and his generosity. These sterling virtues he bequeathed to his sons, and the large business which they have continued to carry on successfully is a living evidence of what may be accomplished by applying intelligence, energy and business ability to a thorough knowledge of the manufacture of a widely used commodity. Such industries build up a community far more solidly than more speculative ventures, no matter how brilliant they may appear.

Sources

- *This is an excerpt from "Santa Cruz County; a faithful reproduction in print and photography of its climate, capabilities, and beauties." 1896. pp. 131-132. RAP-ed.*

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