

Twin Lakes 'Indian Tree'

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The "Indian Tree" has been where it is for more than 40 years . . . and maybe a lot longer.

The Indian's "chin" has receded a bit over the years, and his feather topknot is gone. But he still stands — a subtle monument to the human imagination of the observant.

The "Indian" is what's left of a cypress tree at the foot of Seventh Avenue, on the loop of East Cliff Drive. There are natives who have been checking on the tree stump for years, to make sure it was still there and still looked like an Indian's head and shoulders.

Who knows when it was cut down? Or who cut it?

It's a fixture in the Twin Lakes area and it has survived some drastic changes.

In the old days, back 80

or 90 years, grain fields flourished where houses line streets today. Horses and cows grazed in pasturelands among the barley and wheat fields. Few roads led out to the beaches or the cliffs.

Among the first settlers in Twin Lakes was Jacob Schwann, great uncle of Louis Scholl. Schwann settled in 1856 near the Lagoon that still bears his name. The other "twin lake" was Wood's Lagoon, which is now the Small Crafts Harbor.

In between the two lagoons was a charming camel's back of land where Eucalyptus and Cypress trees grew, wild birds nested and paths led through thickets and back around ancient Oaks. The Baptists visited this place in the 1880's in wagons and buggies, and held their annual Northern Conference Camp there. They liked it so well they returned to buy lots and

built summer cabins. In 1890 they built a brown shingled church.

By the time the Twin Lakes Hotel developed out of a Baptist Resort Center, the area bustled with activity all summer. Horses furnished the go-power in those days, but they weren't allowed in Twin Lakes proper. A large corral and barn were built on the beach at the foot of Schwann's lagoon.

A family named Whitmore constructed a cement swimming pool — a real novelty — at the foot of Seventh Avenue, right on the beach, just a war-whoop away from the old Indian Tree.

The train ran by regularly, chugging from Watsonville to Santa Cruz and back again, dropping summer visitors at Aptos, Capitola, Twin Lakes and Seabright, on the way. Picnics and beach bonfires were a way of life in that

era. People had time to visit to take leisurely horse and buggy rides, to just sit and squander a couple of hours if they felt like it.

Boys like Louis Scholl, who grew up in Twin Lakes, had time to go clamming and fishing or looking for birds' eggs (they collected, identified and mounted them).

They had time to pan the beach sands for gold — yes, there is a little there, after storms.

Winters were cold and quiet out at Twin Lakes in those years. Summer people were gone, tents were folded and put away, cabins were empty, the beaches were deserted except for sea birds. The Indian Tree was often drenched with storm spray.

Those were the days when they "rolled up the sidewalks" even in Santa Cruz, in September, not to "roll them out" again until the next tourist season.

A few retired people built year-round homes on Wood's Lagoon and came to love it there. They had wild ducks in their watery front yards and wild raccoons begging handouts at their kitchen doors in the evening.

Twin Lakes became more of a state of mind than a geographical location.

First big step of progress was replacing the old plank bridges that spanned the neck of each lagoon. Culverts and earth fill were put in with Schwann being done about 1930 and Wood's about 1941. Projects were even leisurely paced, in those days.

Things remained about the same at Twin Lakes for the next 20 years. Then in 1962 at Wood's Lagoon, the acid exhaust and roar of bulldozers drove out the wild birds and the little animals . . . for months the mechanical monsters worked, gnawing and chewing out a basin for the Small Crafts Harbor.

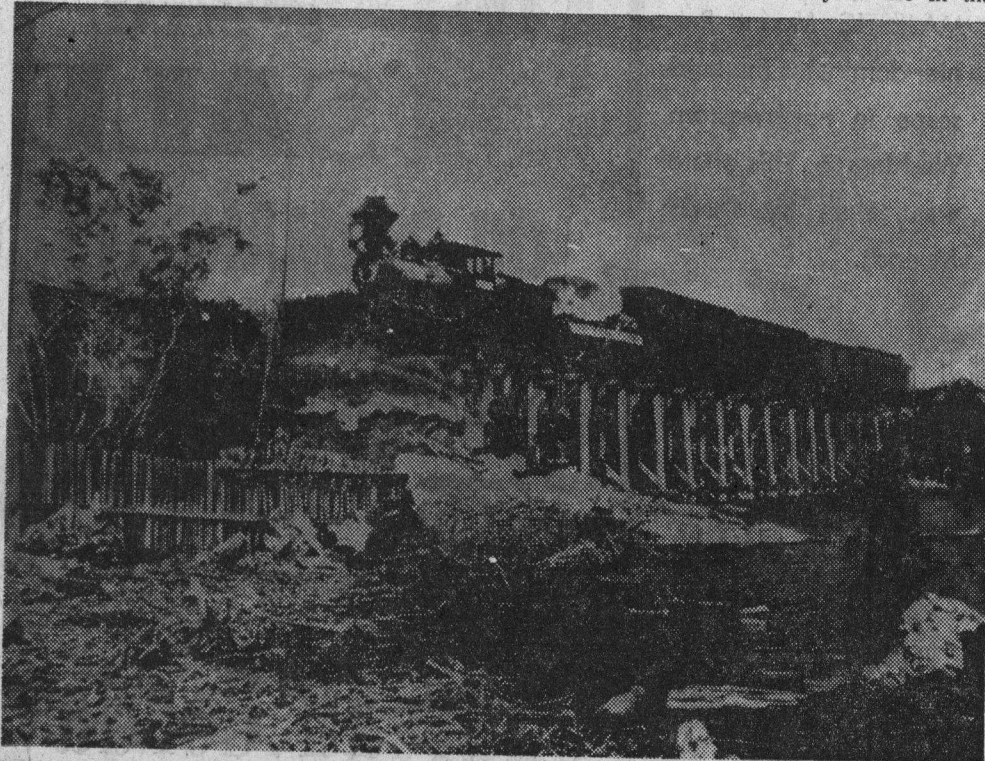
One entire chunk of East Cliff Drive vanished to create the harbor boat entrance and a new and frustrating bridge took its place . . . I say frustrating because it is — you cannot see over or through the sides of it as you cross. And everybody who crosses it wants to be able to look down into the harbor, of course.

Small boats sail in and out of what was Wood's Lagoon today, a restaurant and shops have sprung up at the water's edge, houses have multiplied in all directions, the old cement swim tank has given way to new restrooms on Twin Lakes Beach.

The area bustles all year 'round now. There are no long, quiet winter months. But the wild ducks still come to Schwann's Lagoon, mudhens skitter over its surface, the raccoons live far back in the deepest thickets.

And the Indian Tree is still there, a sentinel between the lakes.

(Second of a Series)



Today it is the Small Crafts Harbor . . . but this is how Wood's Lagoon looked back in the 1880's and 1890's.

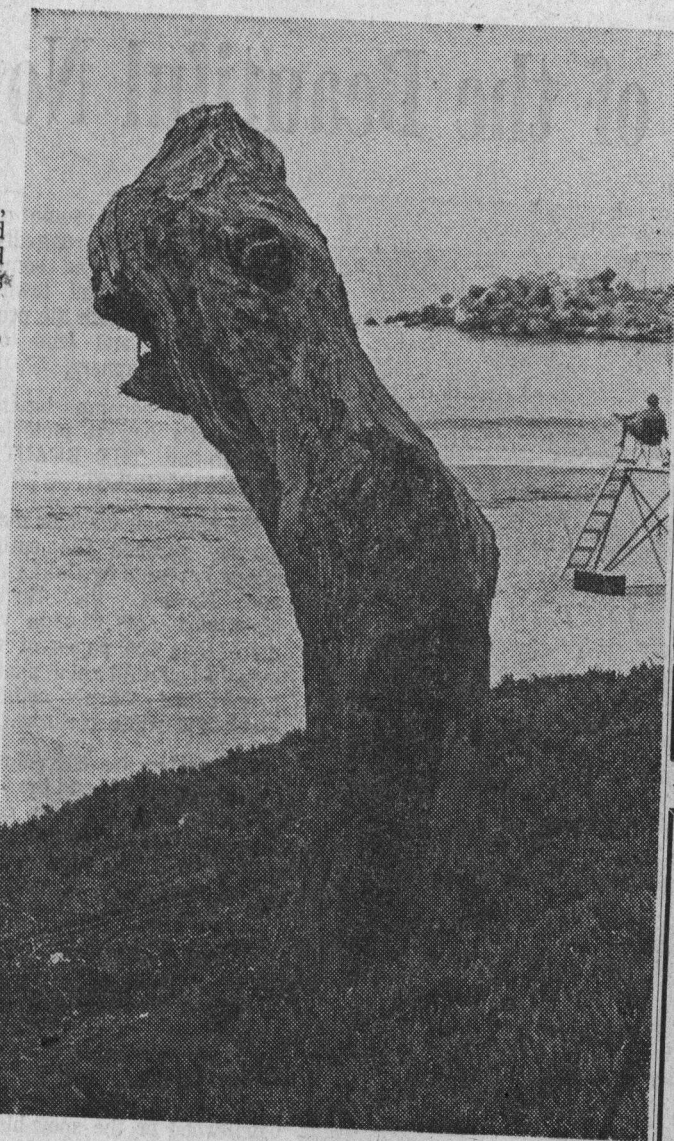
In those years the Twin Lakes area was just beginning to develop as a Baptist Conference Center.

This bustle-clad feminine visitor sat on a log at the water's edge to watch the little train that ran daily between Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

At the Library

Thursday's film program will feature Dag Hammarskjöld, an intimate study of this humanitarian as seen by those who knew him during youth. For more details





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