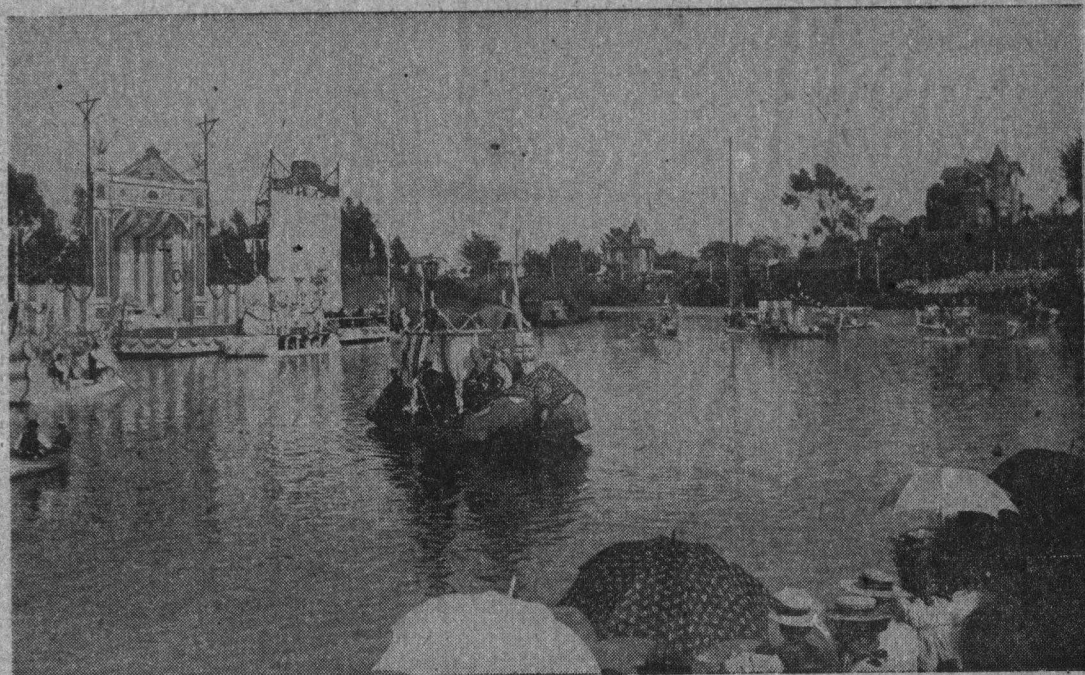


# Santa Cruz Yesterdays



ON THE "LAGUNITA DI CARNIVALE," 1895

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

With June at our doorstep, local oldtimers who can remember back over a period of 59 years, could say, "Yes, June was carnival time on the river. At this time in the middle 90's preparations were in full swing for the first of two festive celebrations that brought Santa Cruz wide fame."

The following material is from "Beautiful Santa Cruz County", published in 1896:

The famous Venetian Water Carnivals . . . have spread the renown of the city wider than anything yet. The liberality and energy of a single man made the first carnival possible. That man is J. P. Smith . . .

## Financier Is Sponsor

It was Mr. Smith's generous confidence in the future of the city

that built electric railways, that pushed to completion other enterprises for the common good, and that, to crown all, inaugurated the splendid carnivals. In all this he found a helper . . . his public-spirited wife, and Mrs. Smith shared with her husband the affectionate regard of the entire community.

In April 1895, Mrs. Lucy Underwood McCann broached the proposition of making a huge artificial lake at the city's edge by damming the San Lorenzo river near its mouth and holding upon its "lake", under the gleam of thousands of electric lamps, a carnival that should rival in splendor the famous scenes of Venetian glory.

The project was a dazzling one for the young city. The very ex-

tent of the proposed achievement staggered most people's confidence in its ultimate realization. The stress of hard times had been felt here, and the common query was, "Where is the money coming from?" The Smiths, realizing the vast benefit which would result to the community, resolved that the fiesta should be held.

## Get Green Light

Said Mr. Smith, "Go ahead. Collect what money the people can afford to give, dam the river, put on such a carnival as the western world has not yet seen. And when all is done I'll draw my check for the amount needed to pay for it."

Preparations began at once. The executive committee met nightly and planned the work the next day saw done. For a month all Santa Cruz was in a stew of excitement. There were unforeseen obstacles, some unfortunate mistakes, but the fiery energy and ready purse of the Smiths triumphed over everything.

When the thousands of visitors began to pour in on the opening day, Santa Cruz was a mass of decorations and the beautiful "lagunita" was a stage for the most gorgeous spectacle yet seen in California. For three days and nights one grand exhibition on the streets or upon the lake succeeded another, while flowers and music rained showers of harmony and fragrance on the laughing, happy throngs.

The Queen of the first Venetian Water Carnival was Miss Anita Gonzales, daughter of Mrs. J. P. Smith. The executive committee was composed of Judge J. H. Logan, Willis E. Peck, Senator Bart Burke and O. J. Lincoln. Director-General was J. P. Smith.

Success of the first Water Carnival was so pronounced that a Santa Cruz Venetian Water Carnival Association was formed, and under its auspices, with G. Bowman as Director-General, the second Carnival was held in June, 1896.