

# Famed Santa Cruz Plunge To Close Doors

## Seaside Company In Process Of Converting Huge Natatorium Into Indoor Golf Course

It's now official . . .

The Santa Cruz Beach plunge is closed forever.

Laurence Canfield, president of the Seaside company, has announced that the huge natatorium is in the process of conversion into an all-weather, indoor golf course.

The company head said the new venture signals the start of the second phase of a long range master plan to rebuild and modernize the entire boardwalk.

Last season witnessed the completion of the initial phase—the project at the lower end of the boardwalk, centering on the Autorama and the Cave Train to The Lost World.

Current studies indicate a multiple-story structure eventually will replace the old plunge building. Present policy calls for continued use of the plunge dressing rooms and shower facilities as a public bath house.

Reasons advanced for the closing of the pool were:

1—The tank was 57 years old and had developed many leaks and cracks. All mechanical equipment needed replacing. Re-conditioning did not merit the costs involved.

2—Loss of salt water pumping lines when the pleasure pier was dismantled last winter.

3—Gradual loss of patronage during the past 15 years, making it an unprofitable business.

Design for the indoor golf course was created by Tom Cutting, general manager of the seashore enterprise. It features a full 18-hole unit. Reflecting the locale—the theme leans heavily on nautical effects.

Cutting stated that the golfing addition required 2000 yards of fill to cover the former pool. Size of the layout will approximate a space 44 yards by 65 feet.

A convenient new entry to the premises is being established dead-center of the building opposite Beach street. The boardwalk entry will service golfers, bath house patrons and spectators.

Seaside company officials have pointed out that the installation will provide a pleasant and relaxing "indoor cover" for visitors in all kinds of weather. A spectator's gallery will seat upwards of 300 people in the present balcony.

Target date for the grand opening of the Casino Indoor Golf course has been set for the week-end of May 30th.

## Giant Plunge Was Part Of S C Seashore Development Program

The Santa Cruz Beach plunge and natatorium has joined the passing parade of pioneer promotions at the shoreline.

Erected during the winter and spring of 1906-07, the pool had operated, mostly on a seasonal basis, for 57 years.

It was part of the great seashore development program instituted by Fred W. Swanton and John Martin which brought into being the casino, boardwalk and pleasure pier.

With exception of San Francisco's Sutro Baths, it was the largest and most ornate indoor salt-water swimming pool ever to grace the Pacific coast.

During the late Victorian era and splashing into the mauve decade - indoor pools became a prime adjunct of popular watering and vacation locales.

Anzac natator to enthrall seashore spectators. The year: 1910.

At its inception, the plunge was decorated inside and out with replicas of Grecian statuary. The art was fashioned by Michael Angelo Garibaldi, noted Italian sculptor.

Scotsman John McLaren, father of Golden Gate park, hung scores of tropical ferns and plants from the 50-foot girders.

Pool illumination was provided by 500 incandescent globes. They ringed the contour of the eight structural girders. Just in case the power failed, the balcony and lobby sported gas-light fixtures.

One mile of neon tubular lighting replaced the incandescent and gas system in 1946.

The pool was constructed with two tanks. They operate

—many years ago.

Hot salt water was generally looked upon with favor as a therapy for many ailments by the medical profession. This thinking was revived with the advent of the Santa Cruz Naval Convalescent hospital at the Casa del Rey hotel in 1943.

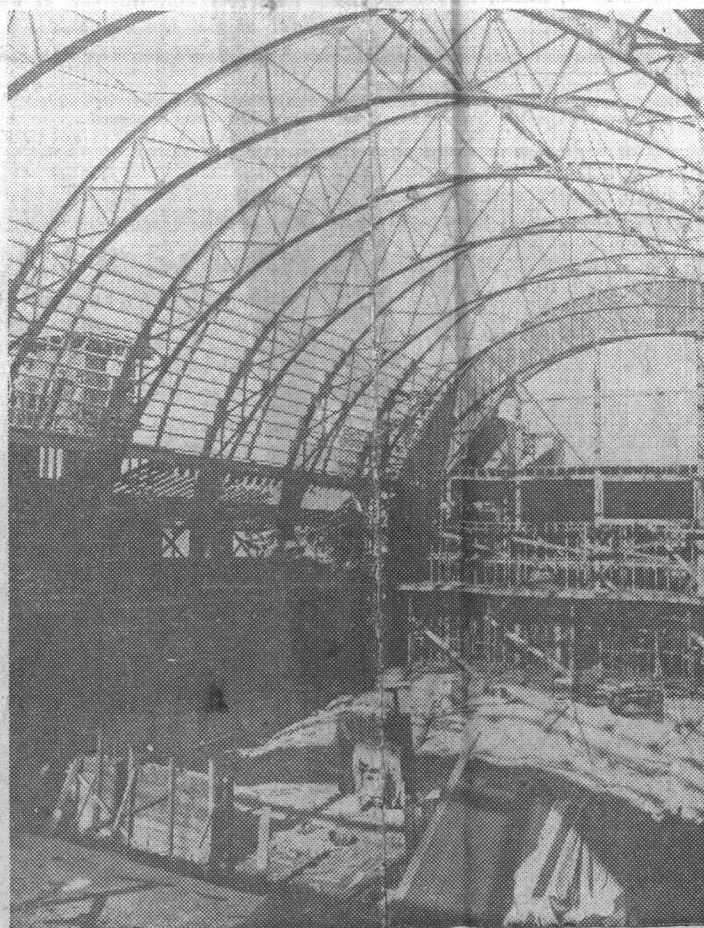
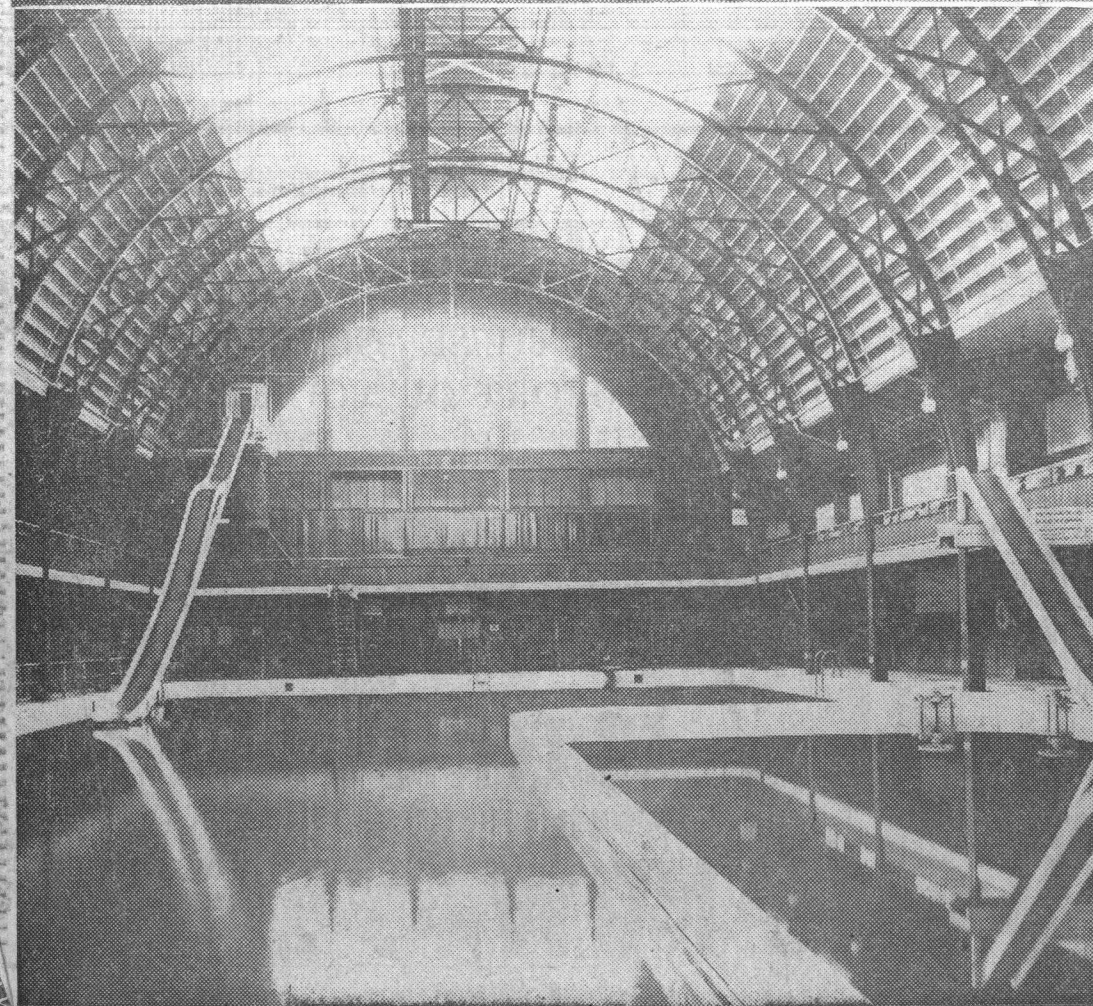
Captain Frederick E. Porter, USN, reserved the use of the plunge for two years for exclusive week-day use of naval personnel from 9 to 12 noon.

On July 6, 1943, Col. Oliver W. Vandenberg, commander of the 763rd amphibious brigade from Ft. Ord, contracted to use the pool from 6 to 9 a.m. Nearly 1000 troops were given special aquatic training for over a month before being shipped to South Pacific action.

During the life span of the

The photograph at top, taken in 1948, shows the crowds





Today, worship of sun-tan and outdoor living have hastened the demise of these rococo relics.

Today-with the passing of the plunge-only two indoor salt water pools remain for public use in the west. They are the Crystal Baths of Victoria, British Columbia, and Mission Beach, San Diego.

Santa Cruz bathing business dates back to 1870, when Stephen Washburn built California's first bath house near the mouth of the San Lorenzo river.

William Liddell, in 1875, built the second aquatic stand. It enhanced the sands of the main beach opposite the present Casa del Rey apartments.

Other structures followed:

1. Headed by Captain Charles Frederick Miller, the family opened their Neptune Baths on June 23, 1883.

2. John Leibbrandt responded with the Dolphin Baths in 1884.

3. Ralph S. and A. E. Miller joined forces with the Leibbrandts to build the first swimming pool (an indoor wooden tank) in 1892-93.

4. Then Director - General Fred Swanton of the Santa Cruz Beach company opened the plunge on June 15, 1907.

A golden age of Santa Cruz promotion came into being.

Swimmers were a curiosity 60 years ago.

From Australia, Arthur Cavill, originator of the Australian crawl stroke, was brought to Santa Cruz beach to spark plunge interest to a blossoming tourist trade.

Hawaii's immortal Duke Kahanamoku, hailed as the "greatest swimmer of all time," followed in the wake of the

independently. The small pool (60x30 feet) was to keep open around the seasons. Spring and summer operation was figured for the "large drink," which measured 135 by 65 feet.

Capacity of the combined pools was 408,000 gallons of water. Depths ran from 2½ to 9½ feet.

Adolph Sutro was unhappy with the "modern" Santa Cruz tank. The slides in the San Francisco bathing palace at the Cliff House were only 20 feet high. Largest of the Santa Cruz beach installations measured 30 feet.

Seaside company directors finally removed their slides in 1919. The copper-plated human chutes were wearing out the seats of their bathing garments.

Until 1920, the pools were drained and cleaned almost every night. High pressure boilers in the Coast Counties sub-station across the street raised average ocean water temperatures from 60 to 85 degrees.

A gigantic steam pump sucked the water through 16-inch lines from the pleasure pier. This ancient pump was bought second-hand from the Salinas Valley Water works in 1906. It finally got tired in 1936.

Subsequently, electric pumps, a low pressure boiler, and a filtration system eliminated dumping the water on a nightly basis.

Attempts to operate the plunge on a year-round schedule met with financial disaster in 1927-28. It was a cold, rainy winter.

Still remaining in the lobby of the plunge is a small balcony-bandstand. During inclement weather, Professor George Hastings offered musical diversion with his Santa Cruz Beach band

plunge, well over seven million people enjoyed its facilities. In its heyday of the 1920's, some 2500 persons could be provided with lockers and dressing rooms at one time. A stock of 4000 towels and 3000 suits were available.

Many times during the roaring 20's there was only one lifeguard on the entire beach front. The lone plunge guard owned a bicycle. He responded to calls of distress from Cowell's beach to the mouth of the river. Years would elapse without a drowning.

Tragedy was not a complete stranger to the plunge. Troubles ran in cycles. It operated from 1936 to 1956 with a perfect record. Then three drownings occurred.

Generations of Santa Cruzans will combine with countless thousands of vacationists to recall the nationally famous Santa Cruz Beach Plunge Water carnivals.

Last of the aquatic presentations was held on Labor Day, 1945. The shows had a proud reputation. They always hung out the SRO sign an hour prior to the opening splash.

No one will dispute the claim that 99 percent of native Santa Cruzans learned their first swim strokes at the pool.

Learn-To-Swim programs and Red Cross Water Safety seminars were annually held in greater number and volume perhaps than any other commercial pool in the state. They were all gratis.

The beach plunge will merit a happy and useful chapter in the "yesterdays" of Santa Cruz.

Its contributions have been considerable.

