



# SC Description + Travel

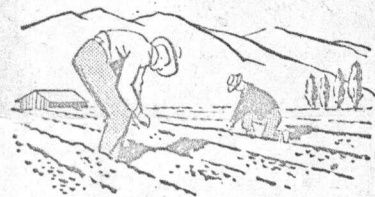
By Richard Demorest

THE MAN from the Chamber of Commerce titled back in his swivel chair, "Well, now," he said, tapping a furrowed brow. "There are probably two things you should know about Santa Cruz county before you can really understand what makes us tick."

He coughed slightly. "Ah-h, you may not realize it, but Santa Cruz, next to San Francisco itself, is the smallest county in California. Only 439 square miles. Or, if you prefer, 280,960 acres. Now keep that in mind for a minute."

Fumbling around in a drawer, the Chamber official dug out a map of Santa Cruz county and spread it on his desk. "The second thing is this," he said. "The county is actually three worlds. You've got your mountain world, which, of course, is the biggest." And his finger traced an imaginary line encompassing about three-fourths of the map. "Then along the coast is your beach world, with the city of Santa Cruz as the hub. And down here, in the Pajaro valley, around Watsonville, you've got the world of agriculture."

"They're all different, every one of them. Different economies. Different flora and fauna. Different living problems. Different so-



cial outlooks. In fact, you might say about the only thing they have in common besides taxes is their local pride. And all this, mind you, compressed into 439 square miles."

This picture has its fuzzy spots. The geography of Santa Cruz being what it is, you would be hard put to fence in the "three worlds": At some points, magnificent redwoods march down to within a few blocks of the beach; green blankets of artichokes, their edges almost touching the sea, spread out all along the county's 40 miles of coastline; apple orchards are tucked away between densely forested hills.

But the analysis seems basically sound. Even a cursory inspection of Santa Cruz county—and it is possible to cover most of it by automobile in a couple of hours—leaves a stranger with the impression that nowhere else in California is he likely to find so many contrasts packed into such a small space.

BEGIN with the mountain "world," which is actually what most visitors to Santa Cruz county usually do. Whether you enter it at the top of the county by Highway 9, in the middle by Highway 17, or at the lower end by Highway 152 (all from Santa Clara county), the scene is much the same.

It is a land of towering red-

## In this, the ninth of its series of articles on the counties of Northern California, This World reports on Santa Cruz county, the second smallest in the State, where the big hunt is under way for the leisure dollar and the lettuce dollar.

woods and fir, pink-barked madrone and gnarled oaks. Of deer and wildcats and foxes and beavers and even a few buffalo. Of gurgling mountain creeks with names like Two Bar, Kings, Zayante, Bean and Love. Of cold, wet winters (some areas get up to 120-inches of rain) and of generally warm, dry summers (some areas get considerable fog).

This wooded region of Santa Cruz county—which covers about 175,000 acres—is largely uninhabited and inaccessible (save by pack trail). Much of it is tied up in huge, undeveloped land holdings, such as the 14,000 acres owned by Henry Cowell, whose fortune was built by lime and cement and who reputedly plans to deed his property to the University of California; it is on this land that buffalo, brought in many years ago by Cowell, still roam. But two mountainous areas in the northwest sector have long felt the impact of man and his machines.

One is the 10,000-acre Big Basin Redwood State Park, which has been doing business since 1902 and is the most popular forest region in the State system. Last year it played host to 461,650 people. Here, for 50 cents a car per night, mountain lovers can stay at 256 campsites equipped with barbecue pits, tables, food lockers, running water and near-by sanitary facilities.

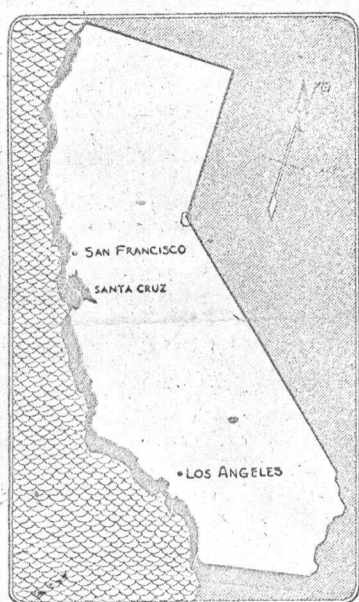
The other well-trod area is the San Lorenzo valley, sweeping down through the redwoods from the vicinity of Boulder creek to the outskirts of Santa Cruz city and paralleling the river from which it took its name. Lumber put it on the map generations ago. For the valley's timber, it is said, was the first to be tapped commercially in California. And as a result Boulder Creek (current population: 1400) was once the State's busiest railroad shipping center.

George D. Crest, who started out in Boulder Creek 47 years ago with a livery stable then switched to the garage business, recalls the old days with unabashed nostalgia. "Why, it was nothing then for a mill to cut 240,000 board feet of lumber a week," he says. "The men had staggered pay days, you know, so they couldn't pour in to spend their money all at the same time and tear the town apart. Pretty rugged, that era."

But lumbering in Santa Cruz county is now negligible, and in the San Lorenzo valley business has long since yielded to pleasure. There are an estimated 7000 summer homes scattered through the valley, about half of them owned by Bay Area residents. There's the slick little resort town of Ben Lomond. There's Brookdale, where a mountain creek runs right through the dining room of the lodge. And, just below Felton,

there's the Santa Cruz County Big Trees Park, where one of the centuries-old redwoods (called, appropriately enough, the Giant) spears 285 feet into the sky.

IF YOU'RE on Highway 9 going downstream, you hit the city limits of Santa Cruz some five miles south of Felton—and with a considerable shock. One moment you're in a forest so dense and wild that a timid motorist would probably think twice before leaving the safety of his car; the next, just around a bend, you're on a suburban city street, blinking in the sunlight and gawking at the shimmering waters of Monterey bay off in the distance. You've arrived—you hardly need to be told—in the bustling world



of sand and surf, of stuffy motels and the Giant Dipper and rock cod and the strapless bathing suit.

The city of Santa Cruz, which literally means "Holy Cross," has been called many things in its time. But one title has hung on longer than any other: "The Coney Island of the West."

It's a slogan bitterly resented by the city's uptown residents, many of whom rarely go to the beach more than twice a year. "Makes us sound like a cheap, tawdry, sort of fly-by-night city," they complain. "When actually, outside of the small beach area itself, Santa Cruz is like any other home-loving, church-going community. Coney Island, indeed!"

There is something in the argument, all right. In this city of 21,848 people, there are 33 churches of all denominations, another 23 in the immediate vicinity, and a galaxy of religious camps. During the past four years alone, some \$15,000,000 has been spent in new construction, 60 per cent of it residential. The city has a fine high school, two junior highs, six grammar schools and no juvenile


delinquency to speak of. It boasts one of the most modern and beautifully landscaped city halls in the State, and a voting record that would be hard to beat anywhere (a turnout of 85 per cent in most State and national elections).

But even the most conservative Santa Cruzan has to admit that his city is founded on the "leisure" dollar. That, without the green and silver tide that flows in every year just as regularly as the blue waters of Monterey bay, his kids might be learning the three R's in shabby buildings, his churches might be crumbling away, his streets might be lined with shacks and his handsome City Hall might never have been built at all.

What does the tourist and vacation trade mean to Santa Cruz? Roughly, \$18,000,000 a year. It is reflected in nearly every commercial activity of the city—not only in its hotel and auto court business, but in its bars and groceries, its restaurants and theaters, its drugstores and service stations, its apparel shops and hardware stores and garages and cleaning establishments.

From Memorial Day to Labor Day, which is the official season at Santa Cruz, the city's population swells by at least 35 per cent; and another 10-20,000 people, nearly all from the Bay Area, will flood in on any good Sunday. During the off-season, moreover, Santa Cruz realizes something like \$2,000,000 from conventions (last year the city had 50 of them).

THERE IS, of course, nothing new about this preoccupation with the "leisure" dollar in Santa Cruz. You have to go a long way back in the city's history before you shake it. For the basic ingredients of the area's tourist lure—a mild climate, sparkling white beaches, safe surf, picturesque coastline, close proximity to the Bay Area and inland



towns—have always been there.

The first group of white men to arrive at the site of what is now Santa Cruz were members of Gaspar de Portola's expedition. They camped on the west bank of a large river they named the San Lorenzo on Oct. 17, 1769. But it was Father Francisco Palou, chaplain of an expedition with Governor Rivera, who called the shot on Santa Cruz's future. Selecting it as a desirable spot for a Mission, Father Palou recorded in his diary in 1774:

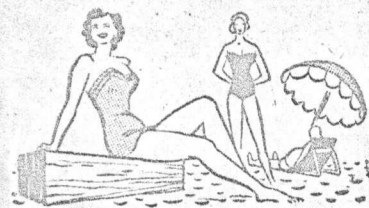


Santa Cruz Beach Co. and set about constructing the gaudiest casino California had ever known. The casino was finished in June of 1906, but a few days after the doors were thrown open the big building was gutted by fire.

Swanton called a hasty conference that tragic day with his stricken angel Martin, on a hill above the beach. In describing the scene to a friend later, Swanton remarked: "If you can show a man a million dollars going up in smoke, then turn around and wheedle another million out of him—then you can call yourself a promoter."

That, of course, is what Swanton did, and it is said that ships loaded with building materials from San Francisco put in at Santa Cruz while the beach palace was still smoldering. Swanton's second casino, built to resemble the Alhambra in Spain, was even fancier than his first.

Promoter Swanton, however, was just getting started. To ballyhoo his new casino, he talked the Southern Pacific into giving him an entire train—on which he loaded brass bands and top entertainers, and proceeded to tour the whole State. From Italy, he imported Sculptor Michaelangelo Garibaldi to dress up the casino's interior. From Australia he brought over the Brothers Cavill, originators of the then new Australian crawl, to lure swimmers into his salt water plunge. And across the street from the casino he put up a \$500,000 hotel—the Casa del Rey, still the largest and plushiest hotel in Santa Cruz county—and hired San Fran-

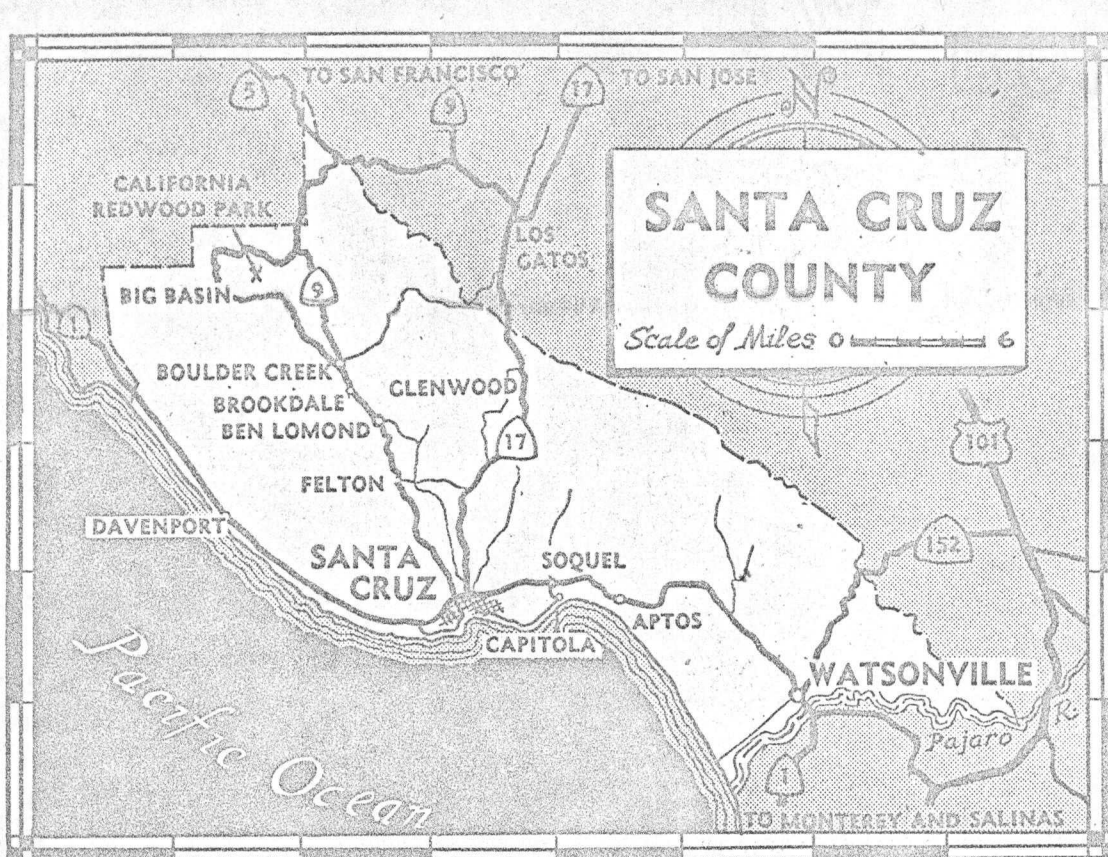


cisco's John McLaren to do the landscaping.

But in 1912, a year after the Casa del Rey opened, Magnate Martin finally went broke, and Swanton's empire collapsed. The casino eventually passed into the hands of San Francisco financier S. Waldo Coleman, who kept it alive through the depression and finally sold out, in 1943, to the establishment's current operators, the Seaside Corp. (98 per cent locally owned).

Fred Swanton, whose fabulous activities had earned him the name of "Swantacruz," died in 1939 at the age of 77, but not before he had managed to serve six turbulent years as Mayor of Santa Cruz. His name is still on the land—in the Swanton Natural Arches State Park, and in the little town of Swanton itself. But the great gaudy casino and boardwalk on Monterey bay, which have changed very little over the decades, live on as Swanton's most fitting memorial.

IN AN OFFICE overlooking the bay, Warren "Skip" Littlefield, an oldtimer with the Seaside Corp., pushed back his hat and glanced out the window. Before



him stretched nearly a half mile of playground: The umbrella-studded beach; the pier, advertising rides (\$1.00) in a speedboat at 45 m.p.h.; and the canvas-lined boardwalk, with its nerve-shattering roller coaster, its merry-go-round (still the biggest money-maker), its fun house and bumping cars, its concessions where accuracy with a baseball or basketball or ring or dart or gun pays off in kewpie dolls, its salt water taffy and popcorn and cotton candy and chocolate-covered bananas.

"I guess the main difference in the place since Swanton's days, and in fact since prewar days, is the type of people that come here now," said Skip Littlefield. "Good family crowd, for the most part. Mom and Dad and all the kids."

"That's because we've probably got the cleanest boardwalk in the State—no drinking allowed, no rough stuff, good quality food, a busy janitor crew. And, of course, no gambling, which wasn't true in the old days. We get about 1,500,000 people here every year, and nearly all of them are looking for good, clean fun. So we give it to 'em."

Parenthetically, it is worth mention that this cleansing process apparently has not been restricted to the beach area. Santa Cruz has reportedly been free of gambling and other rackets since about 1940, when authorities cracked down on several Chinese vice dens. And vivacious, 30-year-old Miss June Borina, only woman District Attorney in California, says the resort city's prime problems add up to little more than burglaries and bad checks.

Even the beauty parades, Littlefield observed, had changed. Santa Cruz was the scene of the first Miss California contest, in 1924 (won by Fay Lanphier, who went on to Atlantic City to become Miss America). After bouncing around in Southern Califor-

nia, the event moved back to Santa Cruz in 1947—"I hope for good," Littlefield remarked. But the emphasis has shifted from sex to personality and talent (though a good set of dimensions has never hurt any candidate).

Littlefield's realm, the realm that once counted Fred Swanton as its No. 1 citizen, is big and turbulent and unforgettable. But beyond it, all within a few miles, are other pleasures for the taking.

There is, for instance, the fishing pier, ruled over by the fabulous Cottardo Stagnaro family (now in its 72nd year at Santa Cruz), where \$4 will buy standing room on a barge, plus bait, tackle and—if you're lucky—about 15 pounds of fish (mostly cod).

Up in the hills above Santa Cruz there's the famed Pasatiempo golf course. Not far away, in a wooded canyon, is another well-trod area—the "Mystery Spot," where for 50 cents you can see a tennis ball apparently rolling uphill, a broom apparently balancing itself at a 20-degree angle, a man apparently shrink 2 to 3 inches by simply moving from one end of an apparently level board to the other, and everybody apparently having a dizzy time of it.

And strung out along the coast below Santa Cruz are the State beaches—New Brighton, Seacliff and Sunset—where last year nearly 800,000 people took advantage of the same camping facilities, at the same small fee, as are offered in Big Basin.

By the very nature of its chief product, pleasure, Santa Cruz is a "fair weather" region, and always has been. But two movements are afoot which could, in time, change all this.

One is the campaign to publi-

branch of Levi Strauss, several packing plants, a boiler factory, a furniture company.

It should be noted, however, that no one in Santa Cruz—least of all members of the Chamber of Commerce—expects industry, either light or heavy, to threaten the position of the "leisure" dollar. That position is unassailable.

**DOWN IN WATSONVILLE**, of course, they'll tell you that if you're looking for sure-enough serious work in Santa Cruz you'll find the bulk of it going on in a 75,000-acre region between the mountains and the sea called the Pajaro valley. And this feeling is not all generated by local prejudice.

For the Pajaro valley is one of the richest agricultural areas in California. And, the "leisure" dollar notwithstanding, agriculture is still the lodestar of Santa Cruz county's economy. In 1950 it meant \$22,776,000.

It is claimed that the hoary slogan, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," originated in Watsonville. If it didn't, it probably should have: "Watsonville" has been synonymous with "apple" for the greater part of this Pajaro river city's 99-year history.

The area produces about one third of all the apples grown in California, chiefly Newtown Pippins and Bellefleurs and Gravensteins. Last year they filled 4,208,000 boxes—some \$4,943,000 worth—and were thereupon fresh-packed, dried, squeezed, dehydrated or canned.

But the apple, actually, is no longer king of the Pajaro valley. It abdicated years ago to a leafy, temperamental vegetable called lettuce. Endless rows of it stretch out for miles around the outskirts of Watsonville, much of it in areas that were once the exclusive domain of apples. Fortunes have been made on the green gold.

Because it is extremely sensitive to weather conditions and its



cize Santa Cruz as an all-year-round "health" resort. In a recent issue of the Santa Cruz Sentinel-News (whose publisher, Fred

**Fantasia**

Last week history was enriched

Will Mandrell of Indianapolis

**Tumult & Shouting**

Last week these intellects shed this light on world affairs:

"If the Republican convention was tomorrow, it