

# Old Santa Cruz

By Ernest Otto

School pupils in the older days often were reminded from the desk of the teacher or the principal that they must be on their best behavior from the time they left home for school until they returned home at night, even if they stopped for a swim before going home.

One principal had a ruling that boys must always tip their hats to teachers as they passed. After school, there always were boys around the Church street corner where the teachers passed by, and when someone would yell a warning, "Here comes a teacher," each boy would scoot into one of the large drygoods boxes alongside Charles Levy's "New York Store" in the Heath building.

The boys were not particularly adverse to being polite to the teachers, but they were afraid of the jollying they would get from the older boys standing some distance away to watch them tip their hats. And of course they knew that failure to tip their headpieces would result in punishment.

For some reason which no one ever determined, that same principal made a rule that no boy could be seen on the school ground or on his way to or from school with his hands in his pockets. The principal made a habit of hiding behind a blind on an upper floor of the school to watch for misbehavior. One day, the class had entered the room and the principal approached a lad whom he had discovered misbehaving in the line, grabbed the boy, turned him over a desk and beat him severely. The teacher, who was extremely fond of her pupils, wept. That boy later became a leading citizen and merchant and was elected mayor.

Another boy, also discovered by the same principal, was stretched over the balustrade outdoors and given a terrific strapping which hurt the watchers for the boy. The latter was wearing only overalls, without underwear.

There were some rewards, too, for the pupils. For a time, in the lower grades, small cards "awards of merit" were handed to deserving pupils. Ten of these earned a large chromo for the pupil.

If the class was particularly good, its reward would be group singing at the end of the day. Another reward was allowing the good pupils to draw on the blackboards with colored chalk. What houses the pupils would draw with those colored chalks—so realistic the furniture on the interior could be seen.

Another award for the class was the reading of stories by the teacher at the close of school. How well one remembers the Zig Zag Travel books, the Boy Travelers, and the Rollo Travel books.

A couple of times collections of impressions of these travel books by the pupils were published in the Weekly Sentinel and the Courier Item, a high honor in the opinion of the pupils.

Sunday, June 27, 1954

I know of no book we liked any better than "Tom Sawyer" by Mark Twain.

The pupils also were happy to have visitors and there were many. They were especially proud when their parents appeared. The principals also often visited the rooms as well as school trustees, now called members of the board of education.

When the trustees appeared, the teachers would welcome them and introduce them to the pupils who would sing or recite poetry from the readers in unison in their honor.

Mrs. E. L. Boston, the first woman school trustee and the first woman to hold office in the county, was one of the most welcome visitors. When the writer was in the high third class, reading from the McGuffey's reader, there was a picture of a slouchily dressed old man leaning against a broken gate, illustrating the phrase, "Go to the ant thou sluggard and consider her ways and be wise."

Mrs. Boston gave the class a talk on the Proverbs and Solomon and left the children much wiser than before her visit.

When the pupils read for Principal W. W. Anderson, with his heavy eyebrows and deep eyes, they also received much background material about the lesson.

The clergy were frequent visitors to the schools, especially Rev. Willett of the Congregational church and Rev. Hugh McNamee, the priest of the Holy Cross church. Both always spoke to the children when they visited.

There was much overcrowding in the schools in those days. Forty was the preferred number of pupils for a room, but when there was an influx of students from Branciforte and Beach schools, there would be sometimes as many as 50 and the children had to be seated on the teachers' platforms or in improvised seats around the rooms.

Once the Mission Hill school was so crowded that an attempt was made to change the dividing line of the district to remove Church street from it and put that street in the Beach school district. But prominent Church street families were successful in bringing enough pressure to bear so that after two days of walking to Laurel street, the children were allowed to return to Mission.

The Mission Hill school became so crowded before a separate high school was built that seven rooms in other buildings were rented and used for school purposes.

These included the auditorium and parlors of the First Methodist church at Mission and Green streets. This church had been abandoned by the congregation in favor of the present location. Two other rooms used for the schools were in the Temperance Hall, which was not the first time this building had been used by the schools. The Southern Pacific railroad passenger depot and agent's rooms on the second floor of the depot also were used.

TERMINATIONS GRANTED