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MRS. J. PHILIP SMITH

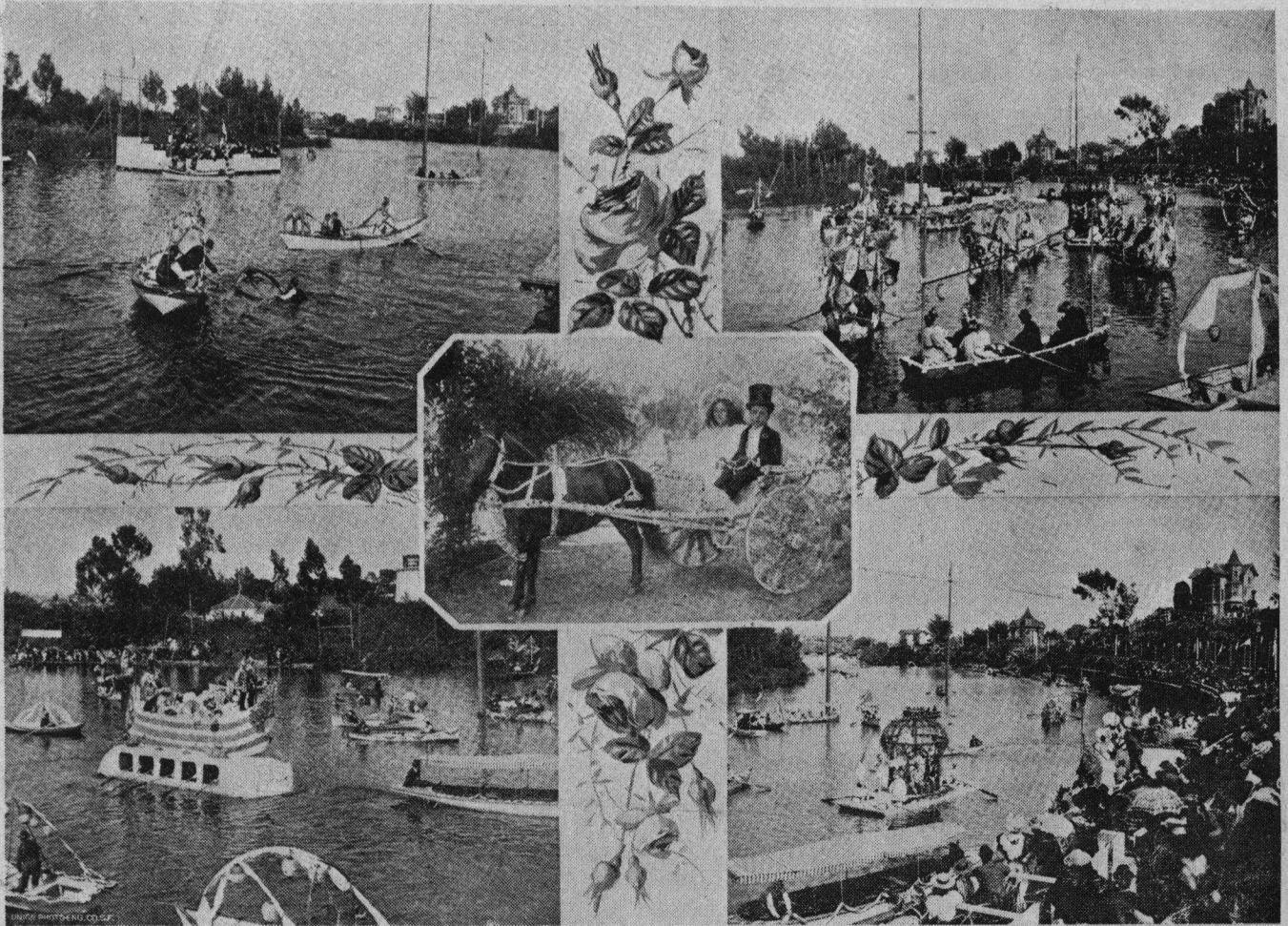
**They  
started  
it all**



J. PHILIP SMITH



3. 15. 73



Scenes on the Lagunita di Carnivale, Santa Cruz, 1895.

## Venetian Water Carnival

By VINCENT T. LEONARD

June, 1895, saw the start of the famous Venetian Water Carnivals, which were, for the next 27 years, to give Santa Cruz spectacular annual events that rivaled in color and excitement the Portland Rose Festival and the Pasadena Tournament of Roses.

The idea for the carnivals was advanced by Mrs. Lucy Underwood McCann, who wished to model them on celebrations she had seen in Venice. She called for damming the San Lorenzo at its mouth to produce a lake upon which could be staged a "car-

nival of beauty."

The magnitude of her plans frightened most of the civic leaders she approached, but she found an enthusiastic backer in J. Philip Smith, a Santa Cruzan whose considerable means and belief in the future of his city had not been lessened by the rising financial panic. He underwrote the venture and called on his fellow Santa Cruzans to donate generously. The press at the time termed his contribution "princely."

The entire lagoon was roofed over with strings of electric lights and, on opening night, a long

train of boats covered with flowers, flags and lights followed the Queen's Barge down the lagoon. While bands and choirs, afloat and ashore filled the air with music.

And all this was a sequel to a flower-bedecked parade down Pacific Avenue and along the beach front. Bug guns roared salutes to the Queen as she passed.

The horns of the yachts of wealthy San Francisco bay residents, anchored line on line in the bay, added their whistles to the final furor and broke out lights and banners.

Each carnival until 1912 was more spectacular than its predecessor, each produced its own thrilling, novel addition.

It should be noted that the great white mansions in a setting of rolling lawns that then ornamented the east bank of the San Lorenzo were a priceless background to the beauty of the carnival. Just maybe the recent re-beautification of the east bank may inspire some Santa Cruzans to receive the pageant in modern dress. But the cost would be staggering and it is hard to find an "angel" with the big purse and bigger heart of a J. Phillip Smith.



Queen of the Carnivale, Josie Turcot, and her maids of honor, 1895.