

# EARLY DAYS IN SANTA CRUZ

Essay by James Leask at Mission Hill Grammar School Graduation

Santa Cruz was named after the little creek we now call Minnie Fish creek or Majors' creek, which was given that name by Father Palon, when on his way from San Francisco to Monterey in 1775. Father Palon was very much taken with the country about this little creek and in describing it said that Santa Cruz would not only make a town but a city, for it had a good harbor, plenty of timber, beautiful streams, fine pasture lands, and was near Monterey.

Since the naming of Majors' creek a great many changes have taken place in Santa Cruz. At that time the San Lorenzo river ran along what we now call Cherry St. and emptied into Neary's lagoon. The business part of town at that time was thick with willow, sycamore and cottonwood trees. It was later cultivated and made into an orchard.

The Mission of Santa Cruz was founded in 1791 by Fathers Salazar and Lopez. It was situated where the Catholic church now stands.

The dedication was a great occasion in the history of Santa Cruz.

Father Pena came over from Santa Clara and the commanding officer of the Presidio came down with four or five priests from San Francisco.

The mission began in a very small way, the missions of Monterey, Carmel, San Juan and Santa Clara contributing gifts of horses, mules, oxen and other cattle.

From that date the work of the church has gone on and on and the site of the original mission is now marked by an imposing modern building.

Back of the mission, between the hill and the river, by the mission orchard.

Between the founding of the mission and the annexation of California to the United States many interesting incidents occurred in Santa Cruz.

The fathers were warned not to go away from the mission without the escort of soldiers as some of the Indians were hostile and took advantage of any chance to commit murder. In 1812 the neglect of this wise rule proved fatal to Father Quintana, after whom Quintana St. was later named.

He was called down to the orchard by some Indians to attend one of their number who had suddenly been taken sick at night. The Father did not want to awaken the soldiers so went by himself, and on his way back he was stopped by Indians hidden in the brush and told to prepare for death. His pleas to be allowed to live were unheeded and he was hanged near where the Southern Pacific railway now runs just north of the tunnel.

That same night he was taken back to the mission and put into his bed, the other Father being in Monterey.

His attendant called him at the usual time in the morning, but found him dead and he was buried as if he had died a natural death.

The truth was not known until a few of his friends became suspicious and got a surgeon from Monterey to examine his body. Then the truth was discovered, but how his death occurred remained a mystery.

not feel well and am going down to the beach to take a bath".

After leaving the murderers he soon found a horse he could ride and rode over the mountains to Mission Santa Clara, and there told the story.

Word was soon sent to Monterey and the guilty parties were taken into custody, though their lives were spared through the exertion of the missionaries.

Another story of the old days concerns an old and respected citizen, William Thompson, after whom Thompson's flat was later named. William left his family in London, England and went to sea. He wrote home for only a short time and when the family did not hear from him at all they thought that something must have happened to him, and finally after several years his brother Samuel said that he would go in search of him. This plan was agreed upon, and Samuel went to sea.

He did not know where on the globe his brother might be, and where he sailed nobody now knows, but after several years he came into the harbor of Santa Cruz, where he found another ship at anchor. He hurried ashore and asked the captain if he had a man on board by the name of William Thompson. The captain said he did not know, but pointed to his men, who were carrying hides on the beach and told him to go and see for himself.

The very first man he met was his brother William, and you can imagine the joy they both felt in meeting again after so long a separation.

But instead of William going home with Samuel, they both shipped on a coasting vessel and later settled in Santa Cruz.

Afterwards William was granted a large tract of land including the site of the powder mills and much surrounding property. William also married in Santa Cruz, and later in life he had a fine home where the Holy Cross Sisters' school now stands.

Samuel did not marry, but owned some property on the Branciforte creek just beyond the winery. He died only a short time ago in Santa

business. He understood the language of these Indians but they did not know it and he overheard them say, "this Indian is from the Mission Santa Cruz. Do you remember the Father we killed there? Why not kill this man before he gets away"?

He pretended he was asleep while this was said, and after a time he roused himself very slowly and said, "do not hurry with dinner as I do