

Grange Conclave Hears The Story Of Santa Cruz Birth, Growth

Editor's note: This concise history of the city of Santa Cruz was compiled by Susan L. Macdonald, past master of Live Oak Grange 503. It was read as a part of the lecture program at last night's session of the State grange by, Santa Cruz County Pomona Grange Master Agnes Urman. Mrs. Macdonald acknowledges the assistance of Mrs. Grace Wagner, Santa Cruz library and The Sentinel for source material.

By Susan L. Macdonald
Lying between the blue Monterey bay and the mountains with their majestic redwood groves, ideally situated as a vacation land, we owe our name to an early visitor, Don Gaspar de Portola.

Arriving here on October 17, 1769, he named the district Santa Cruz, and as it was St. Laurence's day, called the river San Lorenzo.

Five years later, Father Palou picked the location for the Santa Cruz mission, building around the "upper plaza," bordering what is now Mission street.

By 1794 the mission was completed, and early in the 1800's was at the height of its prosperity, with herds of cattle and large crops, tended by many converts. Vegetable gardens were planted on what is now Pacific avenue.

Earthquakes in the passing years damaged the buildings, secularization of the churches brought trouble to the mission, and in 1886 the chapel was razed.

An old adobe belonging to the original group of buildings on School street, also a replica of the Mission church, with its adjoining reliquary, welcome visitors today.

In 1797, the pueblos of Los Angeles and San Jose having been settled, Spain ordered a third, and Santa Cruz was chosen. Lieutenant de Cordova picked a site across the river from the mission and it was named Branciforte.

Eight families came to settle, and one year later many more, among others the Castros, Rodriguez' and Amayas, with other members of Spanish families.

The records of the old mission, the ink legible after all these years, shows marriages, births and deaths of many families whose descendants live in our city today.

Mrs. Grace Wagner, charter member of Santa Cruz Live Oak Grange 503, is descended from two of the prominent pioneer families, the Amayas and the McCalls.

Her grandfather owned 40 acres in Branciforte villa, spreading over the site of the present Branciforte elementary school, to the library at the corner of Soquel avenue and Morrissey boulevard. In his holdings, Mrs. Wagner was born.

To make a street through his holdings he plowed with ox team the route that is now Water street.

Santa Cruz county is one of the original 27 counties of California, and we were the first community to organize under American rule in California.

This city incorporated in 1866,

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because I feel that it is an attempt to impose a tax on the Roman Catholic Church for discriminatory reasons, and I feel that this is contrary to the Protestant way of life.

The Rev. Madison Western
Santa Venetia Presbyterian, San Rafael

and by election Branciforte villa came into the city in 1907.

In early days freight came here by water. The only facilities for loading were cables from the edge of the cliffs to vessels anchored beyond the surf line. A trace of this operation was found in a huge iron bolt set in the west cliff on the Wilder place.

Several small wharves were privately built and wrecked in various ways. In 1914 the present municipally owned wharf was built.

Ship building flourished. One ship, the "Santa Cruz" was built on what is now Beach Hill, near the Casino. Its timbers were hauled from the mountains by ox team.

In 1848 Mary Amney Case came here from Vermont, and opened a school in her house, located beside Neary's lagoon. She had 15 pupils.

Today we have 4922 children housed in nine schools, city owned.

The school system had its ups and downs, and the first city-owned school, a two room wooden building situated where now the administration buildings stand on Mission Hill, closed for lack of funds.

Loudon Nelson, a colored man, an ex-slave, lived in a cabin on Water street at this time. He cobbled shoes and raised vegetables for a living. From his lot he could see the closed school. It worried him, and he made his mark on his will, leaving all his possessions to Santa Cruz School District 1, for the education of white folks' children. On his death in 1860, his entire estate amounted to about \$370. The children of Mission Hill school, successor to the old district, have made it a tradition each year to clean and decorate his grave in the Evergreen cemetery.

From 1850 onward, the Protestant churches were organizing. Beginning with the first Methodist church, the Congregational, Episcopal, Baptist, First Christian and Unitarian were organized in that order.

The First Christian church built a huge tabernacle in Garfield Park, which was widely used until it burned, 45 years later.

Fords were the only method of crossing the San Lorenzo river until 94 years ago a foot bridge was built at Cooper street ford. Later a traffic bridge was built on Water street.

Santa Cruz' first bank opened in 1870 in one room in a local hotel. The ruling rate of interest on money loaned was 15 per cent per annum.

Santa Cruz had its amusements too. A fair pavilion was built in the present downtown area. This housed autumn fairs, ladies' spring rose fairs, and in it on December 31, 1884, the first electric lights in Santa Cruz were turned on.

The Santa Cruz baseball team in 1889 finished second in the Pacific Coast league.

The years 1895-96 brought the Venetian carnivals. A dam was put in near the mouth of the San Lorenzo river, and contemporary reports describe beautifully decorated and illuminated floats gliding up and down river at night, drawing hundreds of visitors.

De Laveaga park offered band concerts, dancing, a small zoo, a collection of caged birds, lovely flowers and a picnic area.

A party was held to celebrate the 162nd birthday of Santa Cruz in October, 1931. A parade of floats, a pet parade for children, and dancing marked the occasion. Hundreds appeared on the streets in Spanish costume.

The first beauty contest, which has grown over the years into the elaborate Miss California pageant, was held in 1924. The indoor contest was in the Santa Cruz theater, and the outdoor pageant

at Front and Laurel streets. Its winner was Miss Faye Lamphier, Miss Alameda.

As to industry, one of the earliest foundries in the state was located here in 1848. Grist mills, flour mills, lime works and tanneries found good profits. Lumbering flourished. Fish canneries were located here.

A powder works, built in what is now the residential Paradise park, furnished blasting powder which built the first transcontinental railroad across the Sierras and Rockies, and made the powder for Dewey's guns at Manila.

The year 1905 saw the opening of the Portland Cement company plant at Davenport, making an impression on this city both financially and in employment figures.

The Wrigley Gum company opened its big plant on Mission street in July 1953.

Many smaller businesses are opening, giving employment to our increasing population.

The Sentinel newspaper was first published in 1856. After passing through the hands of several owners, an interest was bought by Duncan McPherson, who had come to Santa Cruz as a young man, with his family. It is still in the hands of the McPherson family.

Santa Cruz Live Oak Grange 503 meets in its hall outside the city limits, but many of its members live in the city, and much of its community work has been done for the city. A number of city organizations are using its Grange hall.

At one time a large chicken-raising district occupied the land lying between the new Watsonville freeway and De Laveaga park. Berry and truck farming was profitable. Dairy businesses operated in the city limits.

Little agriculture could find room in the city now, for the land it used to occupy is built over with modern homes.

Flowers grow well here and we

Chicken Prices Mighty Low Today

The price of chicken is mighty low nowadays, and preparing a chicken dinner is no longer any sort of a chore with already cut-up and pre-packaged fresh chickens readily available. So no wonder chicken is such a favorite with everybody.

If the chicken is bought in a vacuum sealed plastic package, it need not be rewrapped before you put it into the refrigerator or freezer. If you plan on freezing the chicken do so immediately.

Chicken a la Mexico
Southern fried chicken may be the most popular way of fixing chicken, but we think you'll find this Mexican type chicken at least a close second. Plan on 1/2 pound chicken per serving.

2 1/2 to 3 pound frying chicken, cut up, OR comparable weight of favorite pieces

- 1/4 cup flour
- Salt and pepper
- 1/2 cup salad oil (or olive oil)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/2 green pepper, sliced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 carrot, scraped and sliced
- 2 or 3 stalks celery, chopped
- 1 can mushroom stems and pieces
- 2 cans tomato sauce

Shake pieces of chicken in paper bag with flour, salt and pepper. Heat oil in skillet, add chicken pieces and brown. When well browned, place in a casserole. Add chopped vegetables to frying pan and saute until limp. Pour over chicken in casserole. Combine mushrooms, including liquor, with tomato sauce and add to casserole. Bake in moderate, 325 degree, oven for one hour or until tender. The gravy is excellent for serving over rice.

have many florists, and in the county, begonia growing is big business.

The city has seen many floods, but undoubtedly the worst was in 1955, flood year for all of California.

Late on the night of December 22nd, what started as a flash flood in the mountains, reached the city and brought muddy water from four to 14 feet deep in the downtown business district and low-lying residence district. Debris covered streets and beaches.

Heroic work by police, sheriff and fire departments, together with their auxiliaries, the phone and power company employes, the Red Cross, and hundreds of volunteer workers, resulted in holding loss of life to the minimum, safe evacuation of endangered families, rapid restoration of phone and power service, assistance in housing, and in the general clean-up of the city.

The building of river levees goes on rapidly, and we hope the threat of further floods is gone.

The climate makes this an ideal vacation spot, we have a backdrop of beautifully wooded mountains, and the bay at our feet offers all that the sea-minded could wish.

If Lieutenant De Cordova came back today, he could truthfully report, as he did in 1797, "the site has a good climate, good soil, a bay for anchorage of ships, and everything for a center of population."

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