

# Old Santa Cruz

12-20-53

• • • By Ernest Otto

In the seventies and for quite a while afterward, bathing was much different than it is today.

The beach was not the only place for swimming in those days. There were numerous swimming holes along the San Lorenzo river. Most of the holes along the river were favored by boys and the bathing suits most favored were those provided by nature.

Both sexes went swimming in great numbers at the San Lorenzo and at Barson's hole above the Riverside hotel footbridge. The latter was a long hole which was quite deep at high tide. Lacey's swimming hole also was liked. This was at the mouth of Branciforte creek and reached down to the Harmon place, nearly at the foot of Broadway.

Above the Water street bridge no suits ever were seen at the Clay Banks or Daken. This hole was named for the sticky clay along the bank and after Sheriff Daken. Above the clay banks was a deep hole bordered with large alder trees. Boys from Walnut avenue, the High street section, the Mission orchard and the north side went there in great numbers, not only to swim but to sprawl on the sand in the sun.

If the weather happened to be foggy and cold, they would gather driftwood and build a fire to warm themselves. If the season agreed, they would sneak up a path through the willows, still undressed, and steal potatoes or apples to take back and bake in the coals for a real feed.

Around a couple of bends was the Bias hole, a deep swimming rendezvous which attracted boys from the same areas as the Clay Banks. The high bank here was attractive to divers. Here also there was a beach of sand, and the Bias patch provided corn and potatoes for the boys' meals.

Here also the boys found roots with bored centers which they could light in the fire with some effort and obtain a passable imitation of smoking.

The boys also made hand-rolled cigarettes, using brown butcher's paper and cornsilk, the yerba santa plant or wormwood for tobacco.

Riffles No. 1 and Riffles No. 2 were above and below the intersection of Pogonip creek. Very deep holes, rocky bottom and swift water characterized these swimming sites. They were popular places for ducking newcomers as a sort of christening initiation.

Most of the swimmers who frequented these places were from Mission Orchard, Potrero and the north Santa Cruz section, and they usually came from school to the swimming holes barefoot.

Occasionally the water would be turned red as the water from the tanbark vats of the Kron and Fischer tanneries was poured into it. When the water was white from the treating of hides, the water had such an odor none of the boys stayed long.

Rennie's hole was frequented by boys from the Flat and Beach Hill. It was the deepest hole and was a slough filled with backed up tide-water, beyond what now is Cliff street. Hidden by thickets of trees and the hillsides, the swimmers never needed suits. The water was not clear like the river but roily, and the bottom was muddy. The Jones family had a private bathhouse on the side hill.

Swimmers usually placed their clothes in a pile where they could be watched from the hole so the pockets could not be rifled or their shirts "beefed", a fairly common prank in which shirts were dampened and the sleeves tied into hard knots.

The Lacey hole, further up the river, was favored by girls who wore home made suits, including castoff calico dresses. The girls interlaced leafy willow branches to make several bath houses. Other girls put their suits on at Lacey's, Bells, Harmons and Gafferts, homes which had the river running by their back doors. When the boys swam here, they wore tights, the same as the modern trunks.

Some boys had home made tights of bed ticking and some even used flour sacks with the corners cut out for leg room. Occasionally one would have a gunny sack cut in the same manner.

The bathing apparel at Barson's hotel was about the same.

Rennie's hole now is the site of a number of motels, apartments and trailer courts covering an area where there were dense thickets of willows alders, maples and other trees and the marshes always green with several species of flowering marsh plants.

the  
old  
the  
of  
Roc  
the  
nev  
F  
the  
wit  
me  
go.  
she  
rep  
tion  
and  
the  
dur  
C  
ced  
H  
hav  
fore  
che  
San  
mer  
do  
W  
ing  
Chr  
get  
TB  
aver  
H  
veni  
sary  
L  
who  
the  
Mrs.  
an,  
Sa  
poer  
book  
Vers  
son.  
Sand  
Mrs.  
poer  
TH  
McH  
of t  
Sant  
part  
splas  
last  
out  
Se  
ceiv  
Hug  
the  
just  
back  
but  
Qu  
Fran  
here  
cle?  
An  
sors'  
to ma  
Blake  
Blak  
a nu  
count  
47th  
his pr  
Blak  
sor B  
him th  
for th  
came  
writte  
one, b  
done a  
Road  
sugges  
the ro  
limits  
that h  
do jus  
Sup  
he th  
might  
Ask  
for th  
the h  
\$15,00  
to sc  
\$1000  
Su  
defin  
Bo  
cour  
coun  
prett  
be se  
some  
tegie  
Th  
mosp  
to ea  
non-d  
Th  
the  
than  
No  
repor  
were  
last  
be ta  
activ  
tee.  
Th  
half