

Aptos

Developers turned Aptos into 'Paradise of land and sea'

By CAROLYN SWIFT

Developers who purchased Aptos lands from the heirs of Claus Spreckels in 1922 had big plans for midcounty—it was to be an irresistible "Paradise of land and sea."

While Seacliff became a cluster of fashionable homes for the well-to-do in 1924-25, the old Spreckels racetrack was the polo field for the Aptos-Santa Cruz Polo Team. Rio del Mar became the am-

bitious project of Monroe, Lyon and Miller. Original plans for Aptos Beach Country Club included a casino, Venetian waterways, hotel, "Spanish Village," and "deCastro Lake," north of Rob Roy Junction, an area now covered by the freeway.

A promotional pamphlet distributed by resort developers in the mid-1920s described Aptos as a dream-come-true for sports lovers and home seekers.

"Search the Pacific shores from end-to-end and nowhere will you find a spot so ideally fashioned by the hand of Nature as at Aptos by-the-sea," the pamphlet read, "Rolling back from the azure waters and white sands of beautiful Monterey Bay to the rugged slopes of the Santa Cruz mountains, this Paradise of land and sea holds it irresistible lure to both sportsmen and home-builder."

Aptos, according to promoters, was to become "the realization of the dream of the city man, a place in the country where he can turn for a weekend or vacation...."

Buyers obtained their homes and rights to sports facilities through an "owner-membership" plan. Eventually, Rio del Mar was developed with golf lodge and links, a bath pavilion along Aptos Creek, home lots, and the impressive Aptos Beach Inn on the bluff overlooking the Rio "flats," and beach esplanade.

The pavilion was destroyed in a flood, and the inn was gutted by fire in the early 1960s. Rio del Mar today is a growing community of increasingly expensive homes.

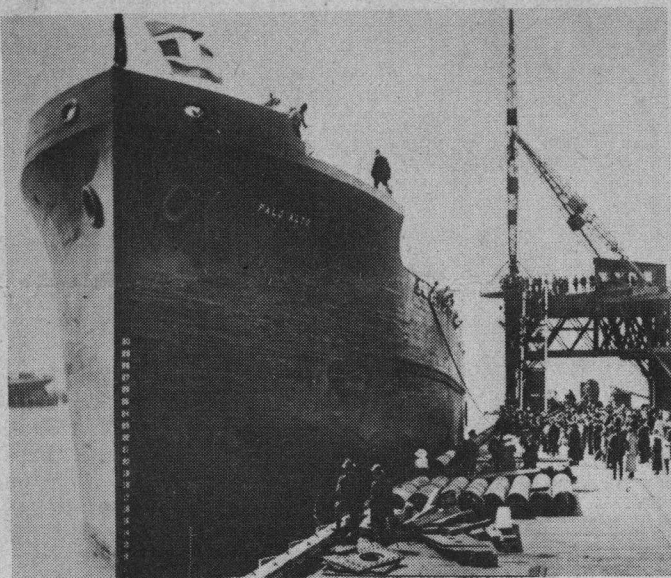
At Seacliff, the main attraction is cracked and aging. The cement

ship, "Palo Alto," was launched sideways at the government concrete shipyards at Oakland on May 29, 1919—too late for service in World War I. It was never given a trial voyage, and was tied in San Francisco Bay for several years before it was purchased by the owners of Seacliff and brought to Monterey Bay by tugs.

The "Palo Alto," was anchored off-shore, originally intended to be a gambling-amusement center. It was grounded on a rock sea bed, and during the winter and spring of 1928-29 more than 80 workers transformed the vessel into a pleasure ship for dancing, swimming and dining.

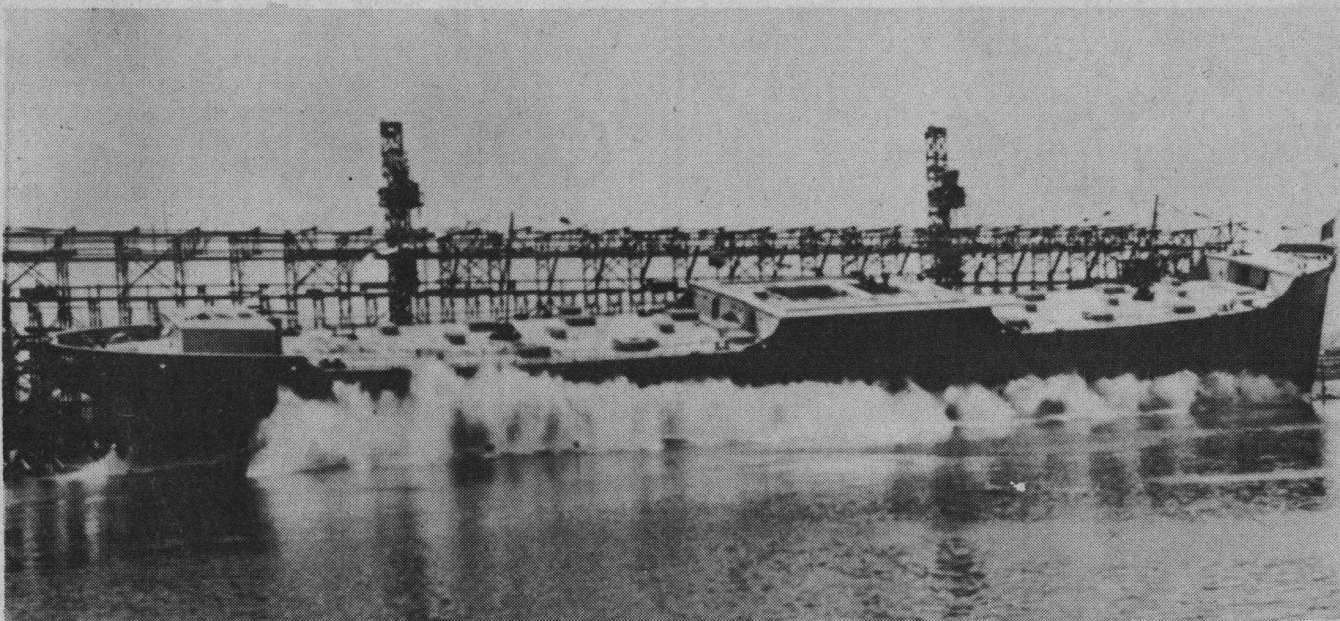
R. Carpenter, business manager for Seacliff enterprises, announced an opening date of June 21, 1929, but steam from hot water in the swimming pool warped the dance floor the day before, and the grand event was delayed until June 22.

Designed as "the most unique amusement enterprise in the Monterey Bay region," the hey-day of the Palo Alto was extremely short. The start of the Depression ended the ambitions of nearly all promotions in mid-county, and Aptos of the 1930's became a village surrounded by artichoke fields, a few suburbs — and several lavish remnants of bankrupt dreams.



Rigging the Palo Alto after launching in Oakland.

State Parks and Recreation Photo



Launching the Palo Alto at the Oakland shipyards, 1919.

State Parks and Recreation Photo



Entrance to the Rio del Mar Country Club.

UCSC Special Collections Photo



The good life—Seacliff beach, the pier and the Palo Alto before it began breaking up.

UCSC Special Collections Photo

Parents unhappy over transfer

Amidst charges they ignore the wishes of parents, Pajaro Valley school trustees last week transferred Mar Vista School principal Geneva Cecil to Hall District School.

The board voted unanimously to approve Miss Cecil's transfer and that of six other school principals in spite of protests from about 50 Mar Vista parents who attended last week's meeting in the city council chambers.

The nine parents who spoke on behalf of

continue without that person. "The real substance to the decision is whether it is fair to people and good for the district," Raynor said.

Tom Allen, a Mar Vista parent, called Raynor's response nothing but "cliche phrases." "It bothers me that parents have not been involved and that the decision has already been made," Allen said.

Earlier in the meeting, Raynor said the

Vista to Hall District, Jean Snyder from MacQuiddy-Linscott School to Freedom, Ted Leach from Hall District to Mar Vista, Ken McCombs from Rio del Mar to MacQuiddy-Linscott, Don Knauf from Freedom to Rolling Hills, Cameron Goode from Rolling Hills to Aptos Junior High School and Ann Soldo from Aptos Junior High School to Mintie White.