

Capitola Santa Cruz Yesterdays



WASHOUT ON CAPITOLA ELECTRIC LINE, 1915

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

One of the handicaps which beset the Union Traction company's trolley line to Capitola was the fact that its route at Twin Lakes sent it over a long trestle, built in 1904, over the beach there, then skirted the east bluff for a short distance before it turned inland.

In winter storms early in 1915, the trestle was damaged. The same storm, with Santa Cruz and San Jose said to be on the northern fringe, was rampaging, particularly from Santa Barbara south. This community's brand new municipal wharf withstood its first big test in fine form.

At San Jose the unique electric light tower at Santa Clara and Market streets was "twisted" by winds of gale proportions. (It fell not long afterward).

Storm Causes Trouble

Out at Twin Lakes the traction company had pile driving equipment on the ground, unerected owing to the strong winds. While the trestle was out of use, patrons transferred to a car on the other end of the beach.

Then, before the storm spent itself, on Sunday evening, February 7, 1915, pounding, wind-driven waves washed away a huge section

of bluff east of the trestle, completely undermining the tracks and leaving them suspended in mid-air, as pictured above.

The 30-foot bluff was swept away for 90 feet under the rails and with it also a section of county road. Weather Observer Springer reported 1.10 inches of rain in 24 hours.

When repairs got under way it was found necessary to build a 100-foot trestle over the washout area. Just beyond, the route headed north toward Schwan station, on what is today 12th avenue, before rolling eastward on Cliff Drive.

Union Traction Co. Born

F. S. Granger, a promoter who had operated at other points in the state, had in 1904 consolidated the Santa Cruz, Capitola & Watsonville Railroad and the Santa Cruz Electric Railway under the name of the Union Traction company. Two years later he sold it to the Coast Counties Power company, predecessor of today's Coast Counties Gas & Electric company, then a property of John Martin and Eugene De Sabla. Granger also had backed the first Unique theater here.

The Capitola line had been completed to Opal, beyond today's Opal Cliffs business district, late in 1903

and the following summer down into the resort itself.

Capitola Loop

There was half hour-service from Santa Cruz Beach to Capitola, where, after crossing Soquel creek on their own bridge, the cars would "ride a short distance ahead, a short block, turn to right past skating rink and office of Frank Reanier, turn again to the right, and on past Capitola hotel, and again a turn to the right and the car glides along the waterfront of Capitola and up to cross the trestle again on the return trip, making a complete loop."

Inbound passengers could transfer to the beach at Soquel and Pacific avenues or to Vue de l'Eau, now the junction of Woodrow avenue and West Cliff drive. Or they could continue beachward via a route long ago abandoned: Lincoln street to Center to the S. P. depot and on to the Casino.

The beautiful new Curt F. Setzer home today crowns the point of land which was the eastern end of the long trestle over Twin Lakes beach sands. And here and there a piling stub still hides in the sand, mute reminder of a transportation phase that has passed.