

# Aptos and Valencia creeks: their story

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The two creeks whose convergence gives the village of Aptos its name are unlike in several respects.

It might be said that the Valencia is a sandy-bottomed stream, while, for most of its length, the Aptos flows over rocks. In part, this is due to the fact that the Valencia and its tributaries flow down a series of converging valleys, while the more generously watered Aptos has cut its way through hills and high ground through the ages. This was noted in Sergeant Ortega's diary in 1769. He speaks of ascending to a high point from which he could descry and an arroyo bordered with great trees, which could only be Valencia Creek, then of following that

arroyo to the sea. Of the Aptos he says that it offers a fine supply of water, but that its steep banks would make that water difficult to reach.

The presence of the giant redwoods, which Ortega correctly identified as a kind of cedar, suggest that the Valencia is the older of the two streams; for though the upper Aptos and its tributaries supplied enough redwood to keep the Loma Prieta Mill and several smaller mills in operation for over forty years, it was from the giants along the Valencia that Hihn and Nichols cut the great bulk of lumber that flowed out of the Aptos area. And along the lower Aptos, sycamores, maples, alders, and other trees were at least as common as redwoods.

Both were good trout streams up to about 1880, when the first

dams were erected on the Valencia. F. A. Hihn dammed the Valencia near its source to supply drinking water for his mill town and to irrigate his big vineyard at the head of Trout Gulch. (His reservoir is still in use as part of the Day Valley-Pleasant Valley water system).

A few years later Claus Speckels dammed the stream on his own property to fill the big reservoir behind his home. Thereafter the Valencia became a dry streambed between the end of May and the first rains, though one can still find water working its way through the sand only a few inches below the surface.

The Aptos, on the other hand, was dammed only to create a millpond, which took nothing from the normal flow of the stream. It remains a good trout

stream, especially at its headwaters, where it is free of pollution from septic-tank seepage. And its waters fill the lagoon beside the Esplanade during the summer and fall.

The Hihn and Spreckels projects were not alone in depleting the waters of the Valencia. Swamps, like the Corralitos Swamp, recently renamed Freedom Lake, were characteristic of this area. Many of them drained into Valencia Creek. But farmers, road and railroad builders, and developers found them a messy nuisance and filled them in.

For instance, Cabrillo Highway (Highway 1) runs through the old Spreckels Lagoon, which lay between the old County Road and the lower fence of The Deer Park; the old Nichols Lagoon was

filled to support the railroad embankment in the valley behind the Loma Linda Lodge; and the big lagoon north of the village that once provided the little creek behind Valencia Street with a year-round trickle had one long arm filled to make a pear orchard, one part filled to stabilize Trout Gulch Road, and its final half acre filled with earth and rocks to provide an entrance to the Aptos Knoll Mobile Homes.

Few are the mid-county men past their middle years who cannot remember the thrill of pulling a steelhead from the tree-lined, deep stretch of water between the beach and the injunction of the two creeks—or from "The Channel," that strange, deep, narrow, cut the Aptos made for itself through a hill of solid rock, less than a mile above the Soquel Drive bridge.

And with pleasure many remember the hikes up the bed of the Valencia to admire the profusion of ferns on the banks, the patches of white violets, jack-in-the-pulpits, and miners lettuce in the clearings, the velvety green moss covering old stumps and logs, and great, glistening amber gobs of sap covering the scars of injured trees.

If the creeks were beautiful in spring and summer, they were awesome in winter. After every storm, the Aptos became a fast-flowing, bank-cutting river; the Valencia became a roaring torrent of mud and logs that made the beach wider and deeper with the new sand it created each winter. The combined floods cut erratically through the sands cast up by winter waves, sometimes flowing for a quarter mile along the base of the cliffs before staining the bay with their yellow mud.

## Founder's works featured

Farren Jensen, one of the founders of the Rob Roy Art Gallery in Aptos Village, will be the gallery's featured artist during July.

His show will open July 4 with a reception at the gallery, located at 8049 Soquel Drive. The event will also mark the fifth birthday of the artist's cooperative that established the Rob Roy Art Gallery. It first opened its doors Aug. 7, 1966, in a building at Rob Roy Junction no longer standing.

Jensen is one of a group of 18 artists that came together for the cooperative venture, and served as the first president. He is just completing his second term as president.

The artist has been a mid-county resident for eight years, coming here from Tracy two years after retiring from Shell Oil Company as superintendent of the pipeline division.

He began painting more than 19 years ago while he and his wife, the late Lucille Cory Jensen, were on a leisurely tour of the West. Although mostly self-taught, he attended during that time several classes given by well-known Bay Area artist Jade Fon in Livermore.

Since moving to Santa Cruz County he has studied under Jon Blanchette and briefly under Carl Martin.

Jensen's acrylic paintings

depict Western landscapes and seascapes of his native Utah and his adopted California. His shore bird paintings have in recent years brought him particular recognition. His July show will include several Mexican scenes based on studies during a trip there last winter.

The reception from 1 to 5 p.m. will be open to the public. Works of all gallery members will also be on display.

The Rob Roy Gallery is open from 1 to 5 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays. As an exception for the holiday weekend, the gallery will also be open Monday, July 5.

## Erick Larson engaged to Illinois girl

Mrs. John Mayers of Rock Island, Ill., recently revealed the August wedding plans of her daughter, Mary Ann Westmoreland, to Erick Norman Larson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Larson of Soquel.

The bride-elect is a second year music major at Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Mo.

A graduate of Soquel High School and California Polytechnic College at San Luis Obispo, the prospective bridegroom was employed as an engineer before enrolling at Baptist Bible College. He is currently a senior majoring in missions.

The couple plan to marry Aug. 7 in the Edgewood Baptist Church in Rock Island.

## WWI Widows meet in SC

