

# Old Santa Cruz

• • • By Ernest Otto

The F. A. Hihn mansion for many years was painted white and then it was given a dress of green which was featured by festoons of roses painted in the natural color of the flower.

The interior woodwork was all of hardwood. From the dining room one looked into the conservatory, rife with tropical plants and ferns. The garden was filled with the choicest of flowers, trees and plants. The first cork oak tree in the city, one of the first banana trees, and orange and lemon trees were growing in it.

Half of the garden was an orchard with all kinds of fruit. In the other half there was a truck garden with always a row of artichokes, and many watermelons, cantaloupes and other melons to tempt the boys of the city. There also were rows of strawberries, blackberries, raspberries and gooseberries.

On the Church street side was a rose hedge with many specimens of the fragrant old Spanish rose, Rose of Castile. On the Lincoln street side was a privet hedge, running almost the full length of the property.

There was a row of locust trees for shade on each side. These later were replaced by the dracena palm, then a very popular tree.

Across from the Church street side was an alley leading to the barnyard where the horses, cows, all kinds of poultry and rare pigeons were kept.

On the north side of the house were large rooms given over to the office where the records were kept. Tables were provided for map making and the draftsmen were busy marking the boundary lines for the property throughout the county.

The Hihn house was the first in the city to be served with gas, except for the home of the gas works owner. The Hihn home chandeliers, hanging from the centers of the ceilings, were beautiful with their early day crystal pendants.

From its location in the residence, the office subsequently was moved to a space on Park street in a two-story building at the lower end of the Southern Pacific lot. The property, once owned by Hihn, became the first holdings of the Santa Cruz and Watsonville railroad.

One of Hihn's first industries was the Hihn Water company. The firm had several reservoirs. One was at the foot of School street, served by a branch of the Tres Ojos creek. Another was just north of the east side of the present Pasatiempo and impounded the waters of Carbonero creek below Rocky Falls in Scotts Valley. The water flowed down a flume and emptied into the reservoir.

Another reservoir was excavated in the hill north of Branciforte avenue and was fed by Branciforte creek, with the water being impounded by a dam not far from the Happy Valley school, and the creek flowing through what was known as Blackburn Gulch.

Before it reached town, the flume with the water from Scotts Valley passed along the hillside in what is now DeLaveaga Park and crossed to the reservoir over a gulch more than 100 feet below.

Among Hihn's holdings were numerous hotels. He owned the Pacific Ocean house, for many years the city's leading hotel. That hotel's property extended from Pacific avenue to Vine street. It first was a two story structure made of red brick, manufactured in local kilns.

On the ground floor was the hotel laundry, the Pacific Ocean House alley and a large room known as "The Rink." This was the site of the largest "grand balls," the Farmers' fair and the Catholic or Orphans fair. Later it became the location of the first Chestnut-woods business college.

The Pacific Ocean House hall also was used by clubs for dances.

In front was the Tait's plumbing shop and across from this was a low building which for years was a cleaning and dyeing establishment.

As Santa Cruz grew, a third story was added to the hotel. This was a framework of wood, covered with wire and stucco. It proved too flimsy so had to be razed.

The only part of this hotel remaining is the Manhattan cafe of which Dennis Cavadias is the owner.

The other section, destroyed by fire, then was occupied by the Walti and Schilling market.

Hihn also owned the Eastern hotel which went through being a church parsonage at the corner of Pacific and Walnut avenues and then a select boarding school, the Quincy Hall seminary, the fore-runner of Miss Hamlin's school in San Francisco. After it became the Eastern hotel, it was operated by Jake Trust and subsequently by Hiram Plaus.

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He also owned the Alta, operated by Mrs. Russell, the mother of Mrs. Elsie Russell, and the Hotel Capitola in Capitola By-The-Sea.

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## **What's To Eat?**

# **'Heavenly' Dessert**