

2-16-58

# SANTA CRUZ YESTERDAYS



**CARNIVAL ON THE RIVER IN '95**

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

It was no such booming river as was so recently seen here, when the above picture was made of a dammed San Lorenzo 63 years ago, in carnival time, down where the stream bends at the base of Beach Hill to pass under the Riverside avenue bridge and on to its mouth in Monterey Bay, at the east end of the majestic strand at the local beachfront.

Barges, gondolas and an infinite variety of water craft took part, some excessively decorated, almost to the point of sinking with the weight, (note the boat immediately to the left of that in center foreground). The latter is modestly trimmed with a few flowers, a flag and a half dozen Japanese lanterns.

## **Fame For Santa Cruz**

It is a typical scene on "La Laguna di Carnevale" of the first of two highly successful "Venetian Water Carnivals" held here in June of 1895-96, which spread the fame of Santa Cruz even to Europe.

Plans were being broached early in the spring and things came to a head on Friday evening, May

3, 1895.

A mass meeting "to discuss the proposition of holding a floral carnival in this city in June," was called by the common council, O. J. Lincoln, city clerk.

Crowds of enthusiastic citizens gathered in the "pavilion" on Soquel avenue, near Front street. The eight-year-old building was moved to the east side of the latter street, facing west, not long afterward, where it stood as the "Armory" for 25 years, until destroyed by fire.

## **Smith Prime Mover**

Popular J. P. Smith, business man of Santa Cruz, New York and Paris, who had transformed the old Kittredge House on Beach Hill into a beautiful estate he called "Sunshine Villa," one of the moving spirits of the project, was made permanent chairman of the committee.

By the middle of May 2000 people were laboring to make the Carnival a success. The opening day was set for June 11. Railroad and steamship companies announced excursion rates to Santa Cruz during the five-day af-

fair.

Voting for a queen was in progress and construction work, including damming of the river, was complete at the beginning of June.

When the Queen contest votes were counted, Miss Anita Gonzales was named the winner. The Queen's coronation robes were made in Paris. The dress was of heavy white satin embroidered in silver. The coronation ceremonies and processions were chief functions of opening day.

## **Floats and Fireworks**

At night floats moved on the river, fireworks burst overhead. And everything was brightly illuminated with the new "incandescent" lights.

The outstanding success of the fiesta gave birth to a similar affair the following summer with Miss Josie Turcot as Queen.

The large Rennie home on Beach Hill (extreme right), still stands, as does the former Barfield place, center, at Third and Leibbrandt. But the old Uhden place, corner of Third and Riverside, behind the pole, left, was torn down last year.