

**\*SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS OF SANTA CRUZ MUNICIPAL PIER:** Investment to be made by parties who might lease same for a period of years and pay to the city a rental plus percentage of income derived, RELIEVING CITY OF UPKEEP AND REPAIRS. This would make the pier "A PAYING INVESTMENT."



Fred Swanton's plans for a new Municipal Wharf resulted in this artist's conception.

# There have been other wharves

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Remember the old fashioned "marine" linoleum that lasted for years and years? And that distinctive yellow paint on all the Southern Pacific depots? One application of that paint was good for 20 years or more.

What do linoleum and paint have to do with Santa Cruz's Municipal Wharf? Plenty. It was because of them and other sardine oil by-products that today's Municipal Wharf was built in 1913-14.

The city of Santa Cruz has had other wharves. The very first was built by Elihu Anthony in 1853 as a crude but sturdy wood chute down which sacks of potatoes were slid into waiting rowboats below. It was



The steamship Roanoke was the first to dock at the Municipal Wharf on Dec. 5, 1914.

Warren "Skip" Littlefield Historical File

located at the foot of Bay Street. Davis and Jordan bought it several years later and slid barrels of lime down it. In 1867 Henry Cowell (who bought out Davis and Jordan) acquired it and enlarged it to accommodate small horsecars hauling his lime barrels. It became known as the Cowell Wharf and stood until 1907, when a storm took it.

In 1857 David Gharkey built the wharf which became known as the Railroad Wharf in 1875 when narrow gauge Santa Cruz-to-Felton tracks ran out on it. It lasted until 1922, when it was dismantled, but "died" when the present Municipal wharf was built.

The Powder Mill Wharf was constructed in 1865 off the foot of Main Street, Beach Hill. The California Powder Works shipped out its products and received saltpeter from Chile. In 1877 a connecting link was built between it and the Railroad Wharf; it was torn out in 1882.

The Pleasure Pier, also known as the Electric Pier, was built off the Casino in 1904 by Fred Swanton.

And then, in 1913, the city fathers led by Mayor T.W. Drullard, Fred R. Howe, Duncan McPherson, George A. Montell and others, took a look at the changing world around them. They looked particularly at the lucrative sardine catching and canning going on across the bay. Also, the tourist trade was growing. They decided Santa Cruz needed a Municipal Wharf to replace the old Railroad Wharf, which could no

longer handle large vessels.

The citizens of the town voted to issue \$172,000 in bonds to build "California's finest wharf." An act of Congress empowered them to build and maintain it as a public utility. Plans were drawn and work began with H.J. Brunnier as the engineer.

Douglas Fir pilings — 2,043 of them — brought from Weed, Calif., each one over 70 feet long, were driven in to a depth of 21 feet after first being seasoned and creosoted. The wharf, a half-mile long, was dedicated on December 14, 1914, with Montell in charge of ceremonies. Ferns and flags decorated it, the Santa Cruz Woman's Club served refreshments, and the Steamship Roanoke docked with much excitement and blowing of whistles.

The project was completed, and the city fathers pondered the question of more revenue. They didn't ponder long. They invited the local fishermen to move their operations from the shorter, smaller Railroad Wharf, then more than 50 years old, over to the new Municipal wharf.

The sardine was big business, its value being in its oil which was used in many products. The Southern Pacific depots and buildings were painted once every 20 years, as previously mentioned. The Giant Dipper at the Santa Cruz beach required painting only once every 10 years with the sardine-oil base paint, according to Warren "Skip" Littlefield, who provided the information and pictures for this article.

"Ten years instead of 20 because of its

exposure to salt and weather," he explained.

By 1917, World War I pressures were being felt and 17,000 tons of sardines were netted in Monterey Bay and canned for food by F.E. Booth and K. Hovden of Monterey. The Fish and Game Commission became alarmed.

"So did local fishermen who began to realize what was happening when they saw Japanese fishing boats anchored out beyond the 12 mile limit, processing sardine oil every day of the year," Littlefield recalls.

Another problem began to surface. The sardine was a food fish for the larger commercial fish — the sea bass, halibut and others. When the schools of sardines were depleted, the other fish left Monterey Bay.

In 1942, the U.S. Government restricted fishing in the bay, but re-opened it in 1946, a year when 700,000 tons of sardines were taken. In 1947 when fishermen went out looking for the great schools of sardines, they were no longer in existence. They had been wiped out, and the sardine industry died that year. It was to have an effect on the other fish too, and on the longtime Italian fishing families of Santa Cruz.

"Many of them were forced to go into other businesses," Littlefield says. "Commercial fishing, as enjoyed here for generations, was dead. All through. Today, more than 90 percent of all fish sold in Santa Cruz comes in from Fort Bragg,

Eureka or as far north as British Columbia."

There are few of the oldtimers left today. Littlefield mentions Malio Stagnaro, Cottardo Ghio and Agustino Olivieri as those who are still around.

"Agustino is approaching 90. By the way, he's a national hero of Italy — did you know that?"

It seems that in 1912 when Italy and Turkey were fighting, Agustino was on an Italian warship headed on a military mission into the Dardanelles. A rope became tangled in the ship's propellers and it lay helpless in the water. Agustino dived overboard with a knife and cut the propellers free. Italy later presented him with a gold medal for his act of bravery.

Today, although the sardine is gone and commercial fishing is dead, the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf draws more than a million tourists every year. It has a payroll of about \$500,000, and brings in more than \$1 million annually. Until 1922 Southern Pacific trains ran out to the end of it, and wharf shipping actually ended in 1937 with the last visit of the lumber vessel, "Daisy." It is the only wharf on the west coast that allows autos.

As one of its most memorable events, Littlefield recalls the original "Day on the Bay," founded in 1938 by Skip himself, Malio Stagnaro, Harold Richey and Forrest McDermott, the game warden.

"Those were great days — great events," he says fondly.