

Santa Cruz Yesterdays



NEW, BIG, ROOMY LAUREL SCHOOL IN 1895

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Photographer George Webb had been in business in Santa Cruz about eight years when he set up his equipment at Laurel and Washington streets one noonday early in 1895. The city's newest public school was only four blocks away from his studio (400 Pacific avenue).

Nearest the foreground the boys are all lined up single file ready to march in for afternoon studies. At a given signal, the girls, too, over on their side, to the right, will file up the righthand stairway. The corner of a picket fence somewhat obscures the view of the feminine contingent. A teacher is poised at or near the top of each stairway.

The new schoolhouse had been completed late the previous year. But due to severe winter storms opening was delayed. Dedicatory exercises were finally held on Friday, January 25, 1895.

School Bonds Carry

Schools were crowded here, and facilities inadequate for the fast growing community in the early nineties. At an election in March of 1894 local citizens, by a vote of 530 to 175, bonded themselves for \$45,000 for educational improvements.

School trustees, O. J. Lincoln (later postmaster), Lawyer Bart Burke, and Dr. P. B. Fagen, and

Mayor William T. Jeter were jubilant. The favorable vote meant the new Laurel school and also a needed addition to the Branciforte school plus the original high school building (burned 1913) on the Walnut avenue and California street site, now were possible.

When the Laurel school was erected it did not have a full city block as it does today. The original building, of two rooms, built in 1868, was known as the "Beach school," distinguishing it from the "Hill school," otherwise "Mission Hill," then located at Mission street hill overlooking the downtown area.

First Lot From Dreher

John Dreher sold the trustees a lot for \$900, for the original school. The two-room structure was moved to face Washington street, as seen in the picture, when the plant and holdings began to grow. Later the small building was moved to the east side of the main structure, facing Laurel, when the remainder of the Laurel street frontage to Center street was added to the school holdings. It wound up as a kindergarten on the Center street side of the block when that parcel was added to the school grounds. Expansion over the entire block came in the early thirties with development of the present school.

Four Teachers

The teaching staff of Laurel when it opened with 190 pupils,