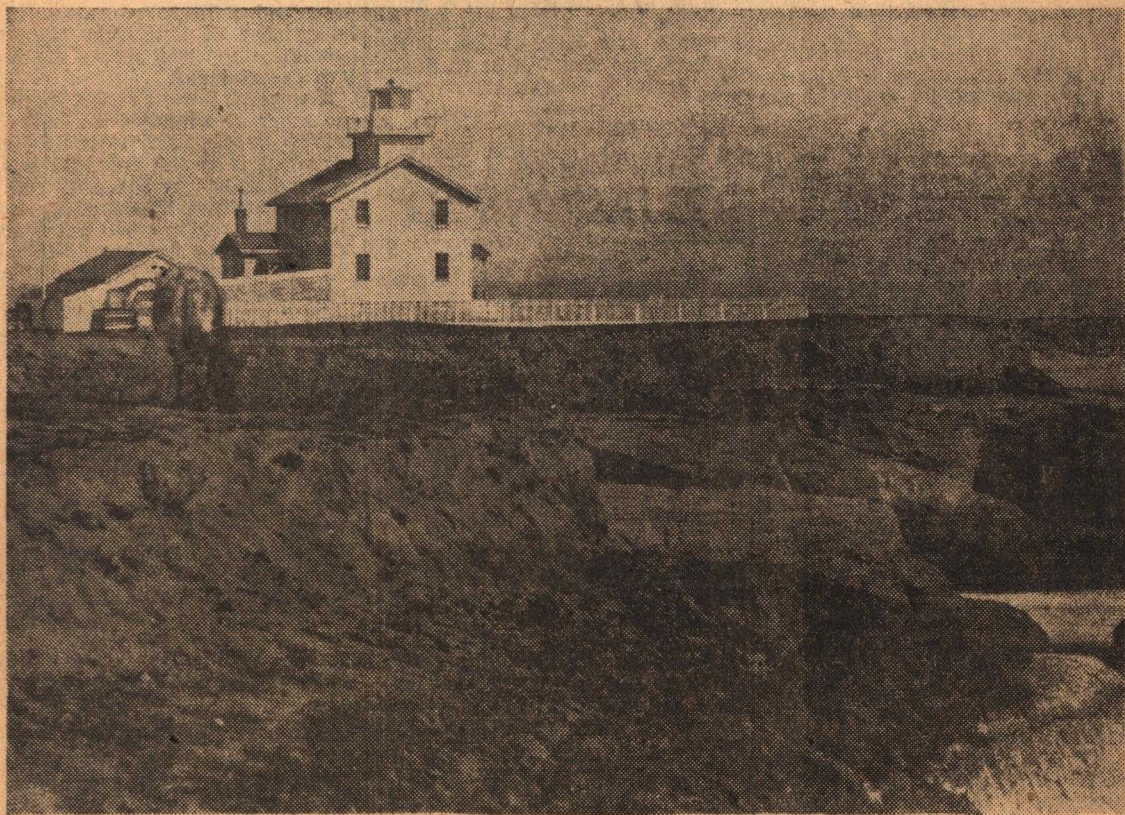


MARCH 12, 1950

Santa Cruz Yesterdays



SANTA CRUZ' FIRST LIGHTHOUSE

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Congress in 1867 appropriated \$10,000 for a lighthouse at Santa Cruz and the following year a lieutenant colonel of army engineers, named Williamson, arrived to buy a site.

His choice was a point owned by A. L. Rountree, a 41-year-old Tennessean who had been here ten years, operating a butcher shop first on Front street and later the San Lorenzo Market at the upper end of Pacific avenue. In his younger days he had been a wagonmaster for the government in Arizona and New Mexico. He married a young widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Ellen Rubottom.

Rountree asked \$3000 for a ten acre tract at Santa Cruz Point but finally accepted \$2000. Presumably construction of the lighthouse did

not begin at once. But at the end of 1869 announcement was made that on New Year's night, 1870, Santa Cruz Lighthouse would be illuminated for the first time.

A. A. Hecox First Keeper

Adna A. Hecox, pioneer of 1847 who had held public offices, was installed as keeper of the new light. His instructions were to have everything in readiness for the first formal illumination, at which time the building, lanterns, lamps and equipment enjoyed government acceptance. In the picture, taken 1877, probably by Laura Hecox, the place looks like a New England farmhouse, with light tower on the roof. The cow grazing near the 40-foot cliff's edge; a buggy near the out-buildings, enhance the form atmosphere.

Members of the Hecox family remained in residence there until 1919 when Laura Hecox died. She had become keeper of the light upon the death of her father in 1883. For many years she took visitors through three days a week, on tours of inspection of the light and its operation, also displaying her collection of shells and marine relics from the world over. Objects of the art of her famous sculptor nephew, California's famous Douglas Tilden, were also shown.

Constant erosion of the cliffs at the point, down through the years, forced moving the buildings back two or three times, before the dismantling about a year ago. Previously, the automatic flasher beacon of today had been installed. Last keeper of the old light was Arthur C. Anderson, who came from San Francisco after the death of Laura Hecox.

The old light used to operate as follows: Flashing white (first flash one second, eclipse two seconds, second flash one second, eclipse two seconds, third flash one second, eclipse eight seconds), 67 feet above high water and visible 14 miles.