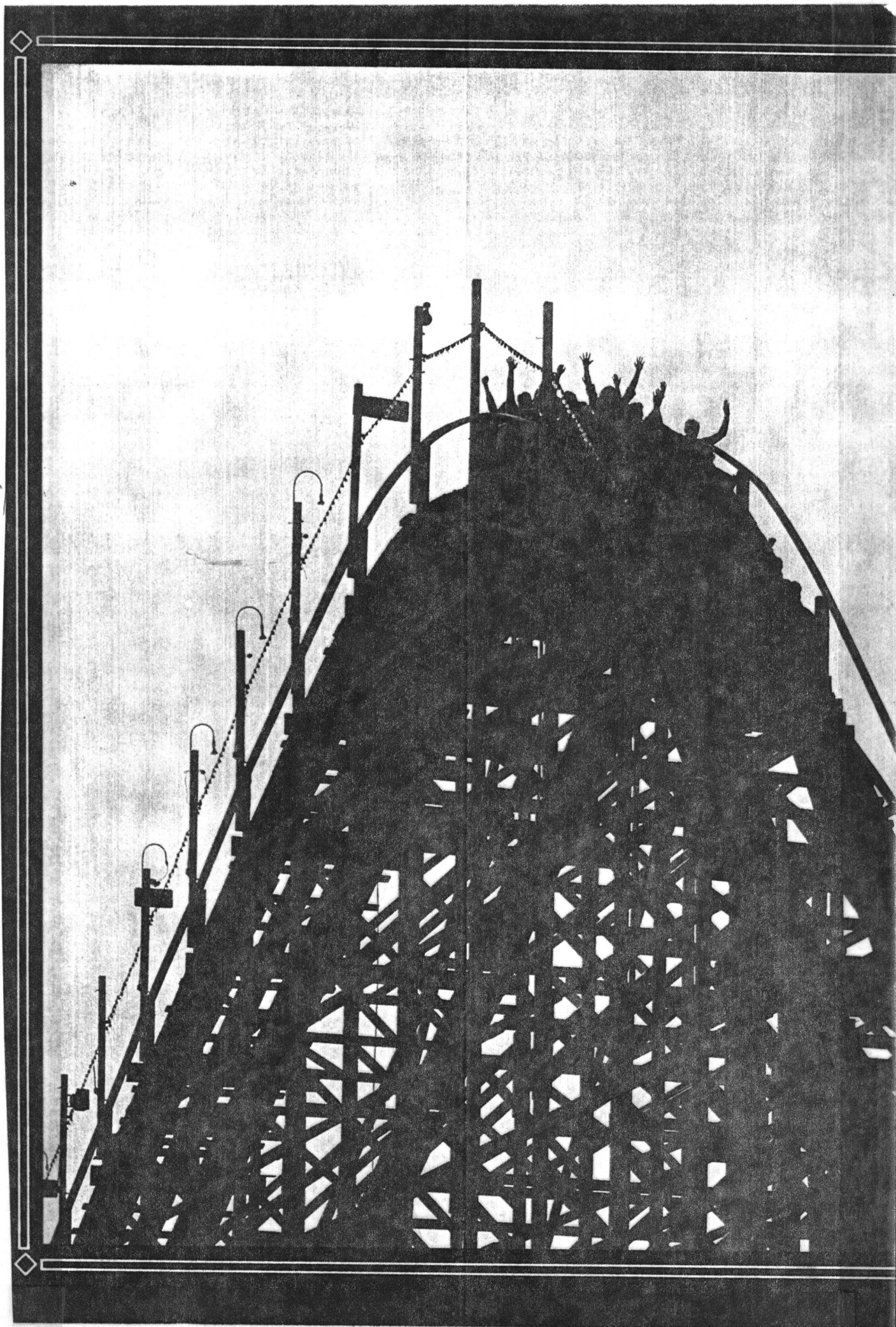
A photograph of a rainbow arching over a pier and buildings at dusk or dawn. The rainbow is the central focus, with its colors clearly visible against the dark sky. Below the rainbow, a pier extends into the water, and several buildings are visible on the shore, some with lights on. The overall scene is dark, suggesting twilight.

*Santa Cruz Beach and Boardwalk*  
*The Diamond Anniversary*

*Photo by Keith Kelsen*





Once the Pacific Coast sported a whole string of boardwalks and amusement facilities. Then, one by one, The Pike in Long Beach, Playland San Francisco, Ocean Park, Venice, Santa Monica, Portland, San Diego, and the roller coasters that these parks featured all folded.

Some were lost to housing developments, some to the ravages of time and wear.

The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, one of the first amusement parks right on the beach, is the only one remaining.

The current Boardwalk, built in 1907, is celebrating its seventy-fifth Anniversary this year.

Santa Cruz became a tourist attraction in 1865, when John Leibrandt built a public bathhouse near the mouth of the San Lorenzo River.

Shortly thereafter, several concessions sprang up nearby, including restaurants, curio shops and photo stands.

Toward the end of the century, Fred W. Swanton, considered one of the greatest promoters of his time, laid plans for a casino and boardwalk patterned after the ones at Atlantic City.

The casino opened in 1904, but on June 22, 1906, it was destroyed, uninsured, by a fire that began in the kitchen.

Before the last wisps of smoke had drifted away, Swanton was on the phone ordering materials to rebuild. By the end of summer, architect William H. Weeks was drawing up the plans, and by October the foundation was being laid on the new casino building, along with an indoor swimming pool, a pleasure pier, and a boardwalk. These attractions opened in June 1907.

A huge inaugural ball was held to celebrate the opening of the facilities. Congratulatory

*Background photo by Steve Kurtz. Inset photos clockwise from top left: Dian Duchin, Paul Schraub, Alfredo Pereyra.*

messages were received from governors of three western states as well as from President Theodore Roosevelt. Music for the gala was provided by three brass bands and the Royal Hawaiian Orchestra, while two military bands supplied the dance music.

Later in the year construction began on the Boardwalk's first thrill ride, the L.A. Thompson Scenic Railway, which opened in 1908.

In 1911, world-renowned Danish woodcarver Charles I.D. Looff delivered a new merry-go-round with seventy hand-carved horses. The carousel still operates today, along with its original 342-pipe Ruth band organ, which was built in 1897.

After convincing the Boardwalk owners to replace the Scenic Railway ride, Arthur Looff (son of Charles, the carousel carver) constructed the Giant Dipper roller coaster in 1924.

Since its opening, the Dipper has carried more than 24 million riders, and is still the most popular ride at the park.

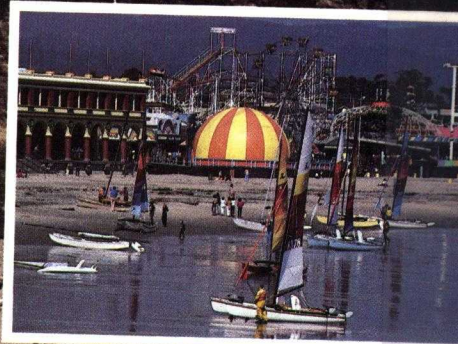
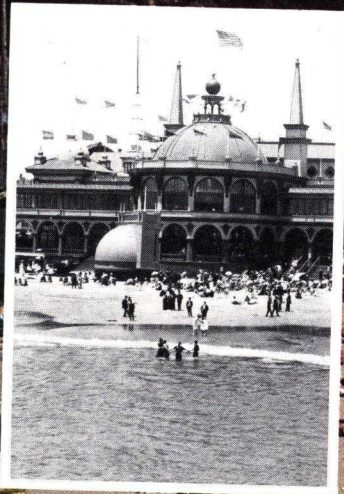
Also in 1924, the first Miss California Pageant was held at the Boardwalk. Winner Faye Lanphier went on to become Miss America.

During the 1930s and 1940s, business at the Boardwalk tapered off, but the Coconut Grove was in its prime, featuring dancing with some of the biggest names of the big band era.

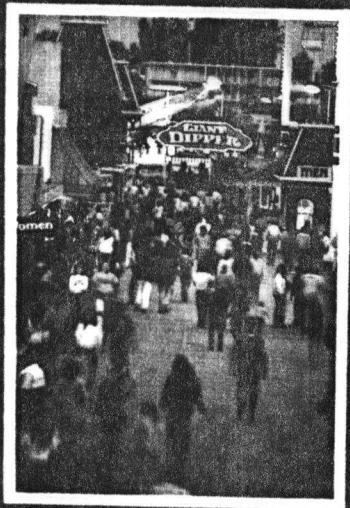
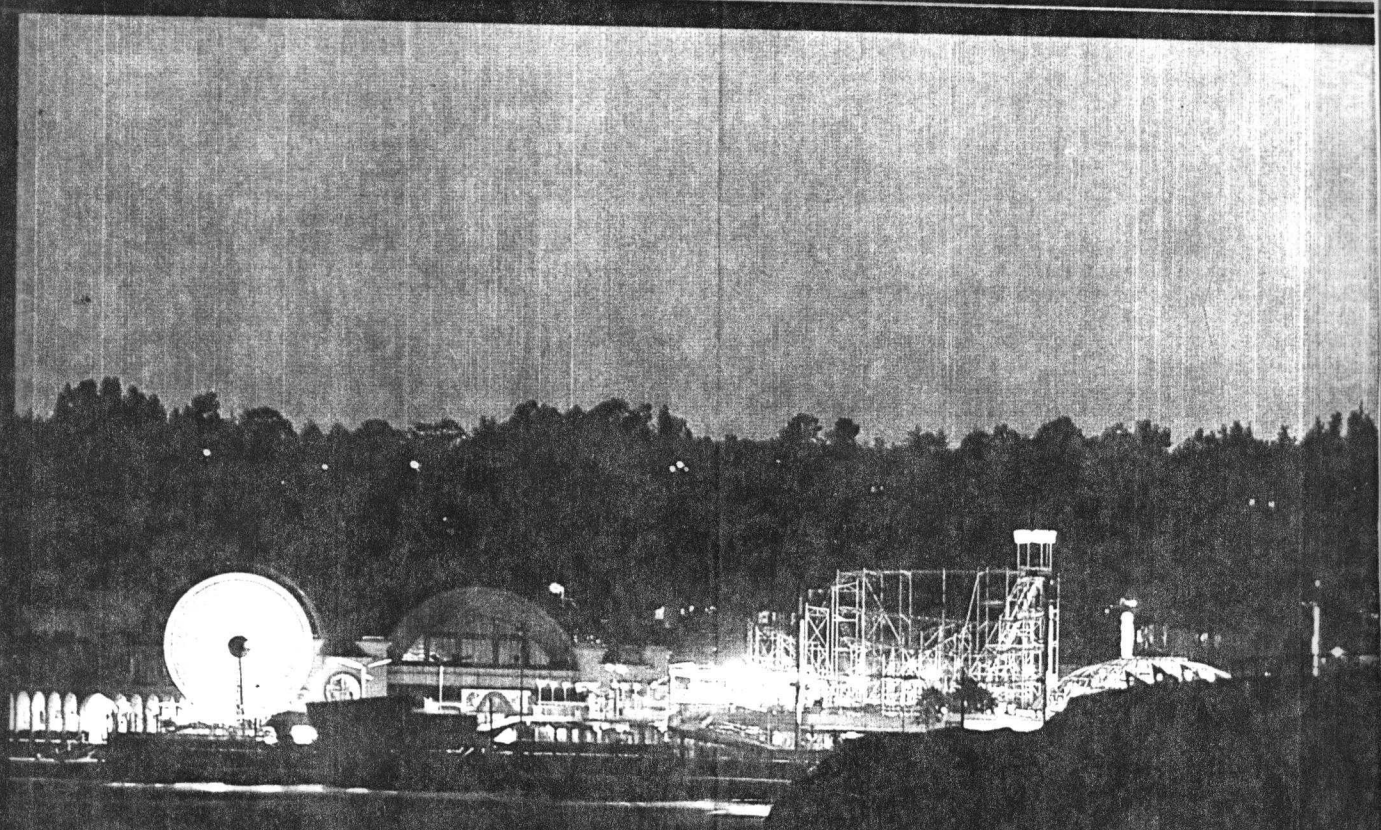
Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Xavier Cugat, Lawrence Welk and Merv Griffin all performed in the ballroom during these years.

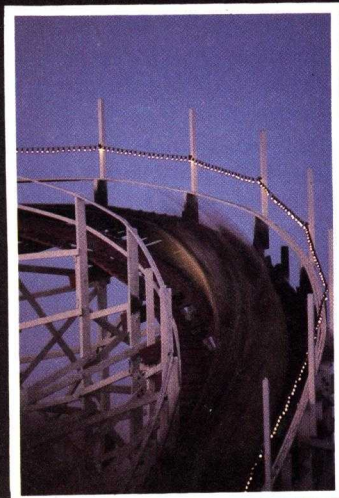
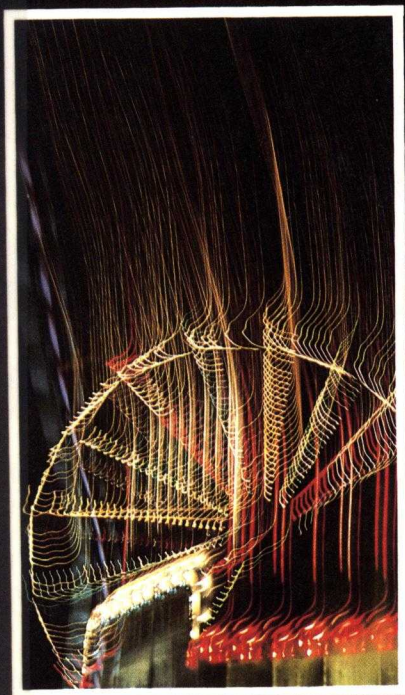
The Grove received a \$200,000 face-lift during the 1950s, along with the addition of an exciting new Boardwalk ride, the Wild Mouse.

*Background photo by Alfredo E. Pereyra. Left inset photo by Warren W. Littlefield, 1912. Right inset by Alfredo E. Pereyra.*









In the 1960s several new rides were added, including the Autorama, miniature gas-powered cars on a kid-sized freeway, the Paratrooper, and the Sky Glider, a scenic overhead ride.

Spelling the end of an era, in 1963 the Plunge indoor swimming pool was filled in with cement and sand, giving way to a new miniature golf course.

More renovation followed in the seventies, with new rides appearing in the park, including the Super Round-Up, the Red Baron kiddie ride, the Bumper Cars and the Jet Star, a mini-coaster ride.

The most extensive project occurred in 1981, with the renovation and restoration of the Cocoanut Grove.

This \$9.5 million undertaking involved the modernization of the Grove kitchen and interior by Kenneth Recker Associates, and restoration of the building's exterior to its 1910 look through extensive decorative plaster work.

The outstanding feature of the project is the brand new Sun Room, a 6,000-square-foot banquet and convention room with a moveable glass ceiling, that allows open-air use.

Downstairs, new gift shops were built, along with a complete new candy store and kitchen, where the Marini's famous salt-water taffy is made.

There's never an admission charge at the Boardwalk, which is open daily from Memorial Day to Labor Day and on weekends the rest of the year. And, of course, there's always the cleaned and sifted white, mile-long beach—the same beach that launched Santa Cruz as a tourist attraction more than a century ago. 🐦

---

*Background photo by Bob Barbour. Left inset photos left to right by Dian Duchin, Philip Miller. Right inset photos clockwise by Jeff Helwig, Dian Duchin, Jeff Helwig.*