

Santa Cruz Yesterdays



PACIFIC OCEAN HOUSE

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Amasa Pray and William H. Moore gave Santa Cruz its first big hotel, constructing the brick Pacific Ocean House on the west side of the upper end of Pacific avenue.

The old San Lorenzo Exchange of 1852, on the same site, burned July 20, 1865, and by April 2, 1866, the new hotel was ready to open. It was two stories high; the third floor of frame construction was added in 1892, five years after F. A. Hihn had become its owner.

Amasa Pray was a state of Maine man who had come up from Santa Barbara in 1864 and was, with his son-in-law, H. H. Hobbs, running a store. Moore was a son of Eli Moore, the North Carolinian who had arrived in Santa Cruz in 1847 and built a log house near the present courthouse site.

Opened In 1866

George T. Bromley, "a veteran club man," opened the hotel as a lessee. The grand ball had to be postponed until April 11 for final work on the dining room and office. Bromley, who later was U.S. consul to Tientsin, China, was succeeded by J. H. Hoadley, who ran the hotel 10 years, when he was succeeded by Elias J. Swift, after whom J. B. Peakes took the lease.

Like its predecessor, the San Lorenzo Exchange, the Pacific Ocean House was terminus of the stage line from Santa Clara. Names of state and national importance appeared on its registers, one of which is in the possession of Dr. A. T. Leonard of San Francisco.

In one of the street front rooms Pray & Hobbs had their store. In the southeast corner was started in 1870 the Santa Cruz Bank of Savings & Loan, first bank in the county.

The year after Hihn made the building three stories high, John T. Sullivan, who had been running the Sea Beach hotel, took the lease. He was Irish-born, had been a Union soldier and 15 years superintendent of the New York City post office. In the late nineties Enoch Bemus Pixley, whose wife was a sister of Jesse and William Cope, was running the hotel.

Burned In 1907

The fire that ended the Pacific Ocean House' days as the city's leading hostelry came the morning of Sunday, November 3, 1907, when a defective flue over the kitchen overheated a tank of fuel oil. Hihn's loss was put at \$40,000 and the top floor was torn down.

Part of the building still stands, occupied on its ground floor by the Manhattan Tavern restaurant.

The north end was razed to make way for the offices of the Coast Counties Gas and Electric company.

Barley Motors

Different types of vehicles of the "gay nineties" horse-and-buggy days show in the picture a lack of concern in the matter of "parking." Note that some horses are headed south and some north. On the broad porch, over the sidewalk a group of feminine guests, as well as the gay blades on the sidewalk below, appear quite interested in the camera.

The hotel bus is backed up in front of the main entrance partly concealing the entrance to "Ocean House Alley" at the south end of the building. This was the shortest route to the "narrow gauge" depot at Park street near the south end of the Mission Hill tunnel.