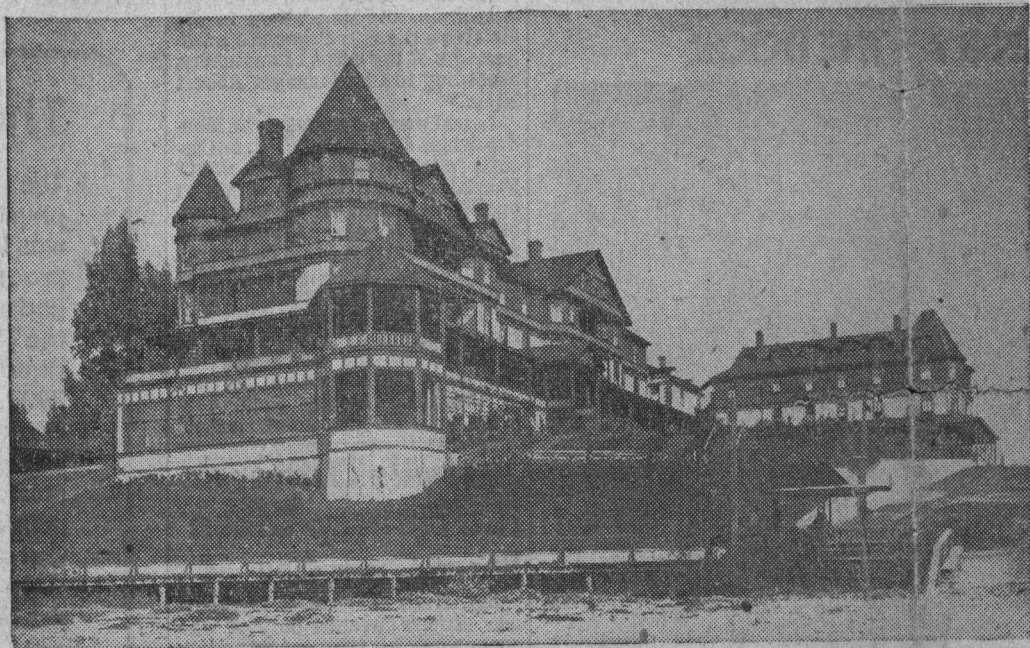


X Sawyer Preston

# SANTA CRUZ YESTERDAYS



THE SEA BEACH—FAMED HOSTELRY OF OLD

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

A foremost landmark of the local beachfront for a quarter of a century was the sprawling Sea Beach hotel, in its day one of the greatest on the Pacific coast.

Of wooden construction, it was one of several extending from San Rafael to Coronado, the latter being about the only survivor of an era.

The brilliant flower garden of the hostelry which housed visitors from 1888 to 1912 was an object of admiration for the hundreds who came each summer to fill the L-shaped building. The main entrance and office were located on Main street, opposite First.

John T. Sullivan, a cavalry soldier in the Civil War, became the first lessee. D. K. Abeel, an ex-newspaper publisher from Kansas City, had been instrumental in its building.

The Ocean View House, huge and barn-like in its lack of architectural ornamentation, was a structure of the Seventies, built for Thomas V. Johnson and a losing venture for that pioneer of the resort industry.

It had been closed for three years when an artist, A. H. Douglas, and his wife, bought it in 1883 and gave it his name. Four years later Abeel made it the nucleus about which he built the Sea Beach.

## Historical Material

Part of the material for its construction came from the old Beach Hill warehouse of the California Powder Werke, erected in sailing vessel days at the shore end of the powder mill wharf and abandoned after the railroads came.

Sullivan, who elaborated the hotel into a famous many-roomed landmark, was succeeded as lessee by J. J. C. Leonard in 1901. Leonard came of an oldtime Santa Cruz county family.

Until the hotel burned on the morning of June 12, 1912, he made it the center of social activities for the town as well as a mecca for tourists. In it high school classes held their dances. Clubs and lodges came for banquets.

Back of the glass-enclosed front

porch, overlooking the beach and bay, were ~~sun parlors~~. Beneath was a bar. The dining room was located about the center of the main wing. For some time the hotel maintained a string orchestra, one of the last survivors of which was Emil Cohen.

## Great Floral Attraction

The ballroom was in a separate building to the north. It and the laundry, also a separate building, were all that remained after the fire. At that time the hotel grounds and gardens were still a great floral attraction. This was the especial pride of Fritz Heinze, German gardener. Oldtimers tell of his profound grief at the destruction of his beloved plants, which he saw withered by the heat and trampled down in the fight against the fire.

At the height of the conflagration heat from the disaster warmed the cheeks of onlookers watching from the front entrance of the then new Casa del Rey on Cliff street, two blocks away.

Note horsecar in the picture's foreground—indicating the photo was made about 1890