

did you know?

The Tannery's Piano Man

The conversion of the old Salz Tannery grounds into a community of artists (see page 11) will not be a complete turnaround for the venerable old plant. One particularly well-known artist, Ansel Adams, was a frequent fixture there in 1955 and made the tannery the subject of his work.

Adams had spent many vacations in a summer home on the banks of the San Lorenzo River. Besides having common interests in Santa Cruz, Adams shared numerous connections in San Francisco with Ansley Salz, owner of the tannery. The two were long-time friends, one of their biggest bonds being a love of music.

Adams was a skilled pianist who very nearly pursued that career before he settled on photography as his life's calling. He was also highly gregarious, inevitably the life of any party he attended. He was often a guest at

Salz family gatherings, where he entertained at the piano by playing marches using an orange he rolled over the keyboard.

Adams was not above accepting commercial commissions as a photographer, but he wasn't enthusiastic about it. "The faithful bend and sprawl and grovel at the ghost of the Almighty \$," he wrote. However, when his friend Salz asked that he document the workings of his plant, Adams readily agreed. The result is a collection of dozens of precious photos chronicling this now-vanished industry, once the economic heart of early Santa Cruz.

Salz was so delighted with the results that he gave his Cadillac to Adams. The car ended up being a recurrent fixture in many of Adams' most famous photos. The Salz Tannery photos now reside in the collections of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries and the Museum of Art & History. ■