

Photographs of the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk Area: The 1904 Casino and Boardwalk

By Library Staff

Fred W. Swanton grew up in Santa Cruz and attended Heald's Business College in San Francisco. His career was that of promoter, entrepreneur, and developer. (He was also a three-term mayor of Santa Cruz.) One of his enterprises was the development of the beach area. In 1903 he organized the Santa Cruz Beach, Cottage and Tent City Corporation to build the casino and other structures. He was the director-general of the corporation. To the right is a photograph of Mr. Swanton from the "Program of Events" of the Santa Cruz Marine Pageant of 1912. He was the Director-General of the Santa Cruz Water Pageant.

In the summer of 1904, Neptune's Casino opened with 500 dressing rooms, a plunge, a cafe and a grill, a ballroom and two roof gardens. It had been built for \$33,276, exclusive of plumbing, hardware, painting and wiring. In addition, a pier was built at a labor cost of \$1000—the Corporation had supplied the building materials.

Below is a segment of a large, panoramic photograph taken in 1904 and titled, "Beach and Bathing Casino, Santa Cruz, California."



View of the Casino from the ocean

Here is another segment of that panoramic photograph. It shows the "Electric Pier," later to be known as the "pleasure pier." Electric wiring was run through the tubing of the railing and electric lights were mounted on poles which ran the 400-foot length of the pier.



The Electric Pier



Fred Swanton

This photograph, dated September 1904, shows the casino from the street. The number 11 street car is approaching the casino on Beach Street.



View of the Casino from the street

On June 22, 1906, the casino burned down. The fire had begun in the kitchen and destroyed the casino, plunge and much of Tent City. The cause of the fire is not known. Mr. Swanton reacted quickly. He rented a circus tent to serve as the casino for the summer and erected smaller tents on the beach as changing rooms.



The Casino on fire

It is the library's intent to provide accurate information, however, it is not possible for the library to completely verify the accuracy of all information. If you believe that factual statements in a local history article are incorrect and can provide documentation, please contact the library.