

Aptos



Valencia Mill about 1882—production often reached 150,000 board feet a day



Mule-power train at Mill Pond. Line extended to Aptos Village where cars were switched to steam railroad.

Hihn — an important name in the development of the midcounty

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The mid-county youngster just learning to read in the early years of this century must have thought the world was divided between Fred Hihn (pronounced Heen) and Claus Spreckels; for he crawled over a padlocked gate bearing a Spreckels "No Trespassing" sign to get to the beach, and he passed a sign with the words "F.A. Hihn Company" if he hiked toward the mountains.

Lesser mortals existed on tiny enclaves surrounded by the vast holdings of these great men.

Hihn and Spreckels had come to Mexican California as door-to-door peddlers, having fled a revolt-torn German state. Both became wealthy and influential.

Of the two, Hihn had by far the greater part in the development of the Santa Cruz County. Though his fortune was founded on lumber, he was involved in several enterprizes by 1870 and had acquired vast holdings of land in several parts of the county. Most of the major developments in the mid-county area between 1870 and 1900 were financed by F.A. Hihn and a group of Santa Cruz businessmen who joined him in many ventures.

Perhaps the most important of these was the Santa Cruz and Pajaro Railroad, later the Santa Cruz Railroad Company. The rails were in place by 1876, but the locomotives had not arrived. Impatient, Hihn took one of his tiny logging engines, equipped

her with wooden cab and tender, christened her Betsy Jane, hitched her to a string of flatcars and started service.

The first run was a good-will gesture. Rough seats were nailed to the flatcar beds, the Santa Cruz County Band and the railroad's board of directors took over the first car, and the train moved slowly toward Manresa Beach, picking up prospective customers and their families en route. Mr. Pope, the engineer, proceeded to the turntable at Pajaro and returned with a Watsonville contingent.

An elaborate picnic went far into the night on the torch-lit beach, while the band's program of marches was punctuated with fireworks. All too soon, the train was puffing back through mid-

county, her happy passengers singing, "Over the Waves" to the band's accompaniment.

Betsy Jane was soon to be joined by Black Hawk and Jupiter—but that's another story.

That same year, with even greater fanfare, the F.A. Hihn Company opened a town it had created on the shore of the Rancho Soquel. An imposing hotel planned to dominate the town was not completed until 1895, but several attractive shops were offered for lease. A neat beach and a pleasure pier beckoned swimmers and fishermen. Cottages were scattered about. Hihn later used his growing political importance in getting the Santa Cruz Traction Company to build a street-car line to the hotel.

The town was called Camp Capitola. Popular belief at the time held that the name was a hint to the State government, then in the process of choosing a new capital.

In the rugged business competition of the day, F.A. Hihn was not popular with competitors. A long book could be written on the law suits initiated by him and against him. But people in need of steady jobs regarded him with reverent awe. His railroad, his resort, several sawmills, lumber yards in Santa Cruz and Aptos, orchards in the Valencia District, an apple packing house at Aptos, and a host of smaller businesses offered employment to hundreds. And, for his employees he erected good housing, churches, and recreation halls.

One side of Valencia Street in Aptos is still lined with Hihn houses, and the Robert Silvear home is built of the sturdy timbers of the old Aptos Hall, which faced Trout Gulch Road.

To his great credit, Hihn never built a "company town". His employees bought in an open market. They also had the privilege of buying their homes on easy terms.

As his many descendants still living in California can attest, it would take an enormous book to do full credit to this man who made 1876 the year that Santa Cruz County came of age.

Roy Day tells of early days of valley bearing his name

Roy Day gave a talk on "Day Valley Days" Saturday at the luncheon meeting of the Mid-County Historical Association at the Bay View Hotel.

Day and his wife Norma were introduced by Vincent Leonard, Association president. Leonard spoke about Day's grandfather, Dorius Denton Day, who built the first house in the valley in 1862.

Mrs. Day is a member of the Larson family which ran the Aptos Ranch and boarding house owned by Claus Spreckels near the turn of the century.

Day said he was a "born conservationist" because of the struggle to save his land from erosion and lack of water. He was raised in a family of ten children whose income came partially from the boarding of workers from the Valencia Mill.

"The land was never productive until we planted apple orchards," he said. He said most farmers lost their land through erosion when the drainage system wasn't maintained during the 1930's.

Day said neighbors survived in the early days because they

helped each other at harvesting time and shared their surplus foods.

Mrs. Day said that the Aptos Ranch where she was raised was

Motorcyclists injured in two accidents

Two motorcyclists suffered head injuries in solo accidents last week.

David Charles Hartshorn, 20, of 410 Crystal St., Capitola, was taken to Dominican Hospital with critical injuries Friday afternoon. Hartshorn lost control of his motorcycle on East Cliff Dr. east of 33rd Ave. and was thrown off the vehicle, striking a steel fence post with his head.

Alvin Gene Fox, 20, of 725 Santa Cruz Ave., was knocked unconscious when he fell from his cycle and landed on the pavement, on Murray St. east of Seabright Ave.

According to a police report, Fox was making a left turn onto Murray St. when he lost control of the vehicle.

located at the Aptos polo field "which was actually a race track."

When her father retired as foreman of the Spreckels Ranch he built a home at the present location of the Rancho Del Mar Shopping Center. He later sold part of his property to the Ledyard family, which first planted pears and then subdivided the land into Ledyard Acres.

AARP luncheon Monday in SC

The board of directors of the American Association of Retired Persons will hold a luncheon meeting at noon Monday at the Downtowner Restaurant on Cathcart Street in Santa Cruz.

Chapter members planning to attend may make reservations by calling Mrs. Charles Shaffer, 475-6920.

The meeting will be held a week early because of the Labor Day holiday. The club meets regularly on the first Monday of each month.