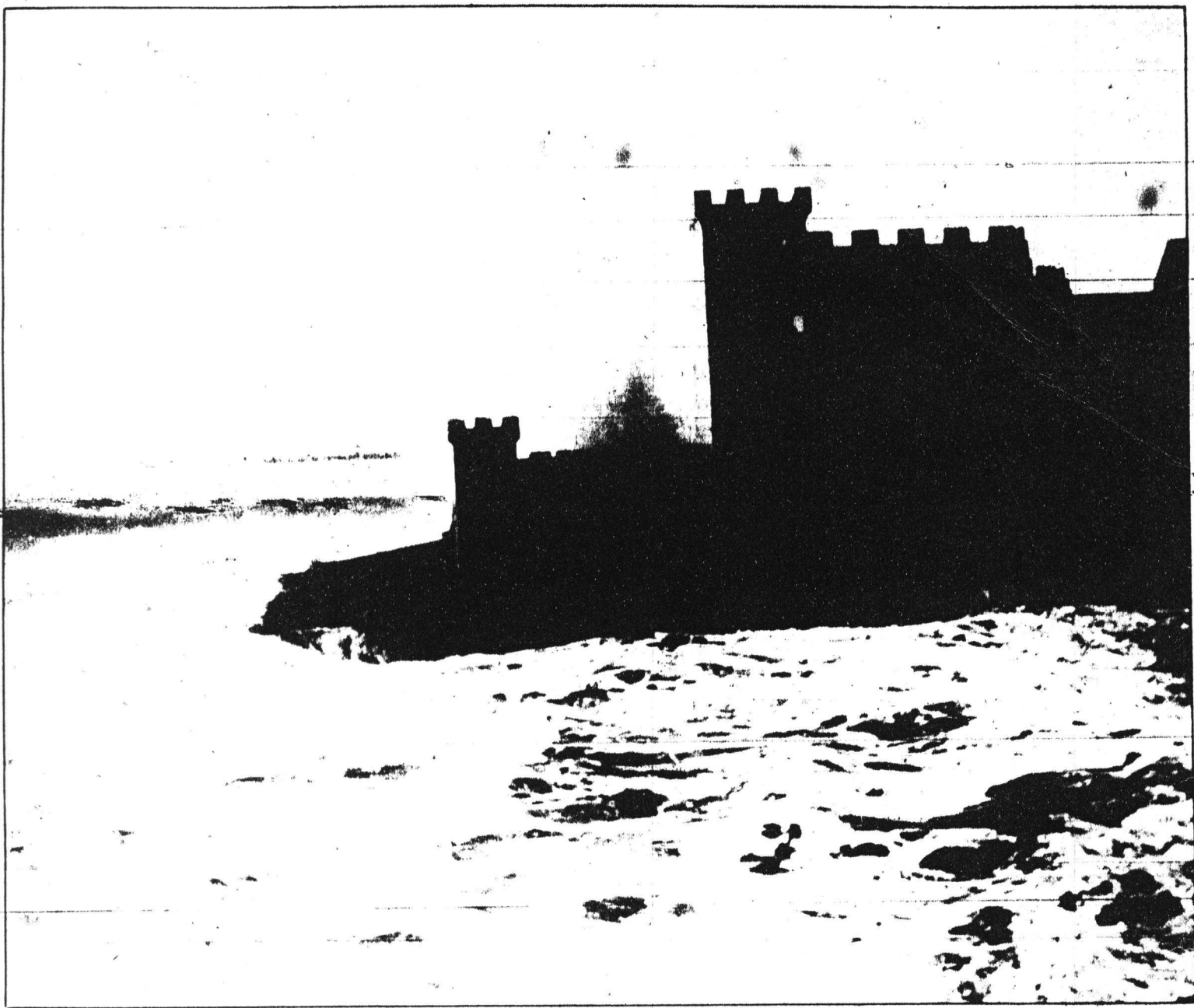


*to Cruz Sentinel*  
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The waves crashed over it at times.



Dorothy Miller collection

Winter storms brought the sea around, and sometimes over, the storybook castle that guarded Seabright Cove until the late 1950s.

# Seabright's sand castle

By MARGARET KOCH  
Sentinel correspondent

ONCE A castle stood at Seabright Cove beach. ...

It was built over the skeleton of an old bathhouse and it had a turret and pie-crust roof edges, just like storybook castles. It was located on the west side of the cove, right above the sand. And when high waves came rushing in, they broke against and sometimes up over it.

The primitive bathhouse that provided its foundation was built by James Pilkington, the son of Thomas Pilkington, one of Seabright's earliest settlers. Salt-water baths were featured as being good for all sorts of ailments.

In 1918, Conrad Scholl purchased the property and enlarged the bathhouse. He added a dining room and lunch counter handy for beachgoers. Those were the days when people came by horse and buggy or railroad to spend the summer in cabins or tents, and everyone went to the beach on sunny afternoons. They didn't go to the cove, they trekked over to the mouth of the San Lorenzo River to swim.

Men and boys wore trunks, not the kind we have today, but more like "union suits," heavy wool knits or perhaps homemade of heavy mattress ticking. Women and girls usually wore navy blue wool flannel with sleeves, skirts, high necks, bloomers and long dark stockings. They topped all that with straw hats.

In 1909, Scholl's son, Louis, had risked his life in a dramatic rescue off Seabright beach and as a result he received the Carnegie Medal for bravery.

The Castle was always at risk during storms; the waves crashed over it at times. When Scholl owned it, he was constantly reinforcing it and repairing it until, oldtimers said, it was a regular fortress of heavy timbers.

In the 1950s, the Castle was operated by Bob and an Pio as an art gallery. In 1958, the 50-year-old picture was sold to Dr. and Mrs. John Ritchey

## A glance at history

who hoped to keep it in some sort of public career, but it was condemned by the city and taken over by the state Parks Department. Today, the site is part of the public beach.

SEABRIGHT, the "dear little place" of Miss Elizabeth M.C. Forbes who wrote a "Reminiscences" booklet, was settled by Pilkingtons, Halls and Scholls, pioneers all. In its earliest days it was a kind of never-never land of lazy summer days, of tents perched among the eucalyptus and cypress trees at Camp Alhambra, of kids and dogs, horse-drawn wagons on dusty lanes that wound through farmyards between gates and fences.

There aren't many today who lived those halcyon days, let alone remember them. Dorothy Miller is one. A private sort of person, she has lived in Seabright for more than 60 years and it is thanks to her that the booklet by Forbes was reprinted and made available to the public.

"Reminiscences of Seabright" is a 40-page love letter to Seabright from Forbes who lived there in her octagon house for a number of years and took an active interest in everything that went on. The booklet was published by her in 1915. Dorothy Miller rescued it from oblivion in 1960, had it reprinted, then reprinted a second time in 1968. Today the booklet is a rarity and threatens to disappear again.

In those early days, Seabright Avenue was Railroad Street and there were farm houses and grain fields along its northern limits. Gradually, visitors from San Jose built summer cottages along Railroad Street and other visitors camped across the ravine at Alhambra. For a time, the two communities were separate but as other streets were laid out, the ravine (behind today's museum) became less of a barrier and it all became one

community, Seabright.

Camp Alhambra had been built by Thomas Pilkington about 1880. He leased it to Capt. Hall for seven years, then decided to divide it and sell lots. Water for early-day campers and cabin dwellers was pumped from a well on Pilkington's farm, barrels were filled, then delivered by horse and wagon. Outhouses stood in every backyard. Life was primitive, easygoing. It was to this community that Forbes, an educated Englishwoman from Canada, came to live.

SEABRIGHT WAS actually laid out by F.M. Mott who had acquired 12 acres in the early 1880s. He named his settlement for Seabright, N.J.

There were beach bonfires with everyone sitting around singing or enjoying amateur theatricals, poetry readings and something Forbes called "stump speeches." Life went on this way until residents, who were growing in numbers and who had organized an Improvement Society, decided they needed more direct access to Santa Cruz. Instead of meandering through Pilkington's farmyard and gated fences, East Cliff Drive was planned with Forbes as one of the leading activists acquiring right of ways.

In her booklet she wrote: "When the road was finished, the county refused to accept it 'till one fortunate day when a washout took place at Arana Gulch." ... At that time, Soquel Drive was the main road to Watsonville. The county was then forced to use the new East Cliff Drive and it became county property.

As a small place considered "out in the sticks" in those days, Seabright has two claims to fame: Santa Cruz Art League and Santa Cruz Museum both got their start there.

Today, those who live on Mott or Pilkington or Forbes or another of the narrow streets that probably began as footpaths or farm lanes 100 years ago, make another claim. They say that changes have occurred, yes. But Seabright has kept its charm. It is still a "dear little place."