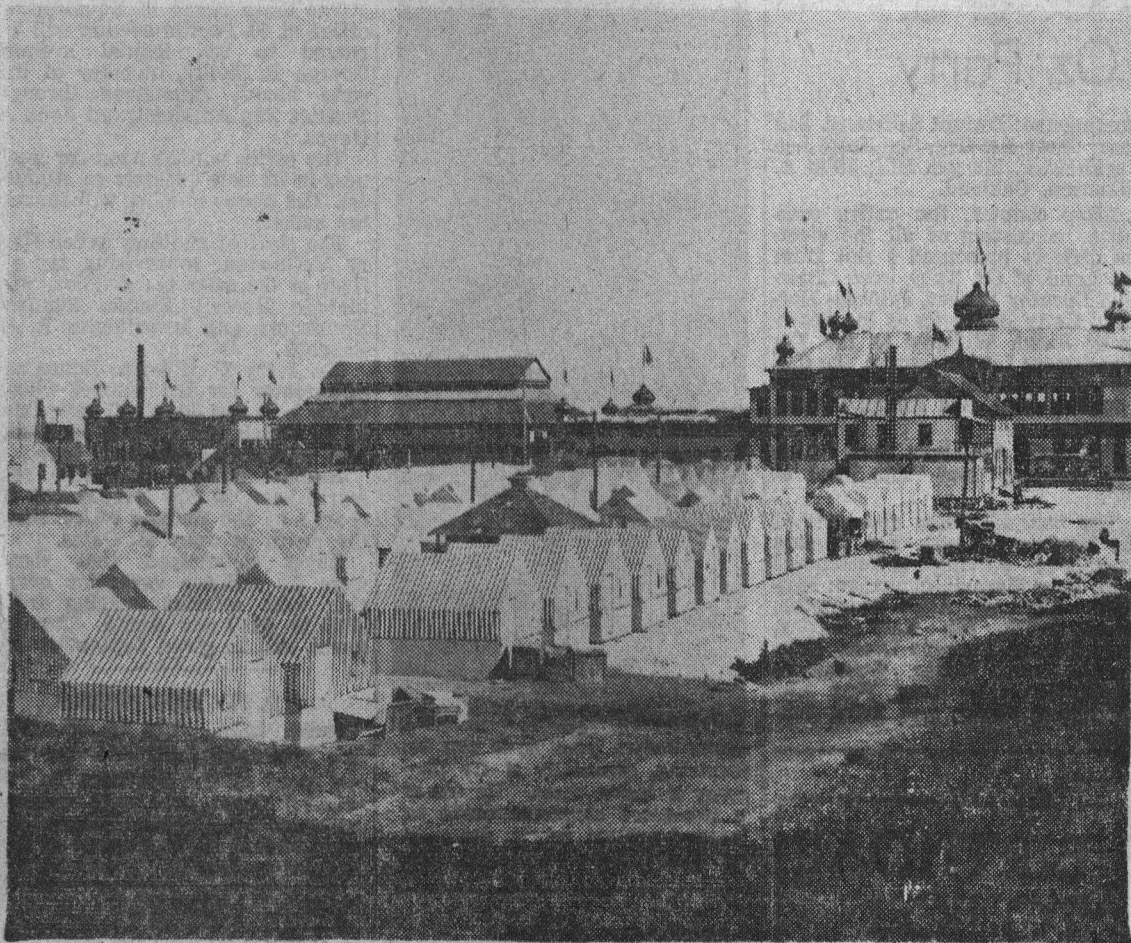


JULY 11, 1948

Santa Cruz Yesterdays



TENT CITY NEARING COMPLETION

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

This is the site of the Casa del Rey hotel today, but in the spring of 1904, when the picture was taken, another product of the promoting genius of Fred W. Swanton, the Tent City, was rapidly nearing completion there. Along with it had developed what proved even bigger than the original concept, a "bathing casino" which came to be the far-famed Neptune Casino and plunge baths, forerunner of today's large beach resort center.

Prior to the fall of 1903, the level tract had been the Dolphin baseball park. Still earlier it was the Leibbrandt wheat field.

Santa Cruz Beach, Cottage and Tent City Corporation, a stock company, was formed in 1903, with Fred W. Swanton, H. E. Irish, Henry Willey, F. R. Walti and Thomas W. Kelly prominently identified. Thousands of dollars worth of shares were sold at \$25 each.

Feared Poor Season

Santa Cruz faced the prospect of a slack summer season in 1904 with the expected hegira of tourists to the St. Louis World's Fair. The time was ripe to plug for needed improvements on the beach front.

The old ball park had to be filled in by several feet before the tents could be erected.

To George C. Pratchner, later a city commissioner, went, in December, 1903, the contract for bulkheading and filling in the tract.

A pumping system drawing from the bay near the rising Casino, was devised. Eighty per cent water and only 20 per cent sand for the fill resulted when operations were at their smoothest. Later, with the pumping equipment on a barge, a try was made at drawing from the San Lorenzo near the "Cut-bias" bridge. When this proved less satisfactory, the operations were shifted back to the beach.

Pumping was resumed with operations centered at the new "pleasure pier". Difficulty with seaweed clogging the pipes finally stopped this method and the job was ultimately finished by the more laborious process of hauling by team.

Neat Rows Of Tents

The original tent city here pictured was composed of 200 or more striped tent houses arranged in neat rows. The uniform canvas tops and sides were over wooden frames. Each place had a wooden floor, light and water, and a key. A sewer system was laid out to serve the area.

Tent City Corporation paid \$32,500 for the Mills and Miller properties involved in the project. General construction contract went to F. R. Cummings on his bid of \$33,276. This did not include plumbing, hardware, painting or wiring. George N. Root had the painting contract and Whitney Brothers did the plumbing.

Cliff street, cutting across the

foreground, is low and unimproved. The large building at the corner near the Casino is the Tent City Restaurant where the street car lines had their beach terminus. Just to the left of center in the background is the large plunge building on the site of today's natatorium.

Burned In 1906

To the left of this is the building housing the "hot baths" of that day and now the only survivor of everything visible. The rest of the buildings, including the Tent City Restaurant, burned in the fire of June 22, 1906. Tents were later replaced by cottages that were moved eastward when Casa del Rey was built.

Remainder of the cottage city faded during the last war when the hotel was a naval special hospital.