

11-18-56

Old Santa Cruz

● ● By Ernest Otto

(Editor's Note: The late Ernest Otto, famed and beloved waterfront correspondent for The Sentinel, and writer of the "Old Santa Cruz" column, left a number of columns written before his death. They will be published weekly by The Sentinel.)

The butcher's shop in the old days was far different from the streamlined efficiency one finds today.

In those times there were hooks on the walls carrying links of sausage, long pieces of bologna and other types of meat.

Outside the enclosed room in which these items were displayed were locations for the display of special meats. The writer recalls seeing bears which had been killed out in the county hanging on the outside walls of the butcher shop.

The butcher had his office at the side and kept his books there.

The butcher's patrons in those days all had what were called "butcher's books." The majority of the people had credit and used it at the butcher's shop. They always brought their little books along to the butcher's shop, made their purchase and had the type of purchase entered in their little personal ledgers.

The amounts represented by the books would be presented sometimes at the end of the month or occasionally after a longer period depending on the patron.

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In the rear of the building would be the sausage machinery where the butcher made sausage as occasion arose. The butcher also rendered lard here, and had lard available for sale.

The butcher shop of that day always was decorated with tissue paper of varied hues which was draped from the ceiling in perforated form.

With the coming of Thanksgiving and Christmas, the butcher usually made more elaborate decorations for his shop, but in general, the theme still was varicolored tissue paper.

The replacing of kerosene lamps and candles with electricity resulted in one of the big changes this writer saw in Santa Cruz over the years.

The arrival of electricity meant the replacing of the old doorbells for one thing.

Many still can remember the old type doorbell—a regular bell usually hung in the center of the front door. The bell would be on the inside of the door and it would be rung by a visitor giving several twists to an S-shaped handle which was on the outside. After several turns, the bell would ring.

In the larger houses of this period, at the side of the front door was a regular doorknob. To this was connected a wire which stretched to the rear of the house. There it was attached to a bell. A pull on the doorknob at the front door would bring the ringing of the bell at the rear of the house.

Other bells attached to the front door were rung by twisting a knob.

After this time, the doorbells were operated on batteries for awhile, but there usually was a drawback to these. Frequently a visitor would find a card saying: "Bell Out Of Order."

This signified that the battery was dead and that the visitor had better knock loudly.