

5/16/48

Santa Cruz Yesterdays

Sawyer, Preston



EARLY BEACH CARAVANSARY

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

The stone retaining wall which extends up the west side of Main street from the beach is the sole remaining trace of the huge Sea Beach hotel which from 1888 to 1912 was Santa Cruz' principal resort, both for visitors and home town folks.

A meager part of it, well to the back of the building, had been erected, a two-story-and-a-half structure, in the seventies and operated for a few years by A. H. Douglas, an artist from Chicago.

In 1886 came to Santa Cruz D. K. Abeel, who had made a moderate fortune as editor and publisher of the Kansas City Journal. The following year he bought the Douglas House, which had been closed for two or three years. Another purchase, of the big California Powder Works warehouse on Beach Hill, gave Abeel a quantity of brick and 50,000 feet of lumber. Construction lasted over a year. In the sum-

mer of 1888, with John T. Sullivan as lessee, the Sea Beach opened.

Sullivan Took Lease

Sullivan was a native of Ireland who had been a Union soldier in the Civil War and 15 years superintendent of the New York post office. He made the new hostelry a gathering place for Santa Cruzans. Its ball room was used for the town dances and for parties by high school classes.

Sullivan, who died at Santa Monica in 1916, was succeeded by James J. C. Leonard, who had been born in Nebraska in 1862 and had come as a baby to Santa Cruz with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Leonard. Michael, the father, was a son of James Leonard, the progenitor of the big Leonard family of Santa Cruz today, who had come from Ireland with six children and come to Santa Cruz with four others born in the United States.

Abeel Retired To Sebastopol

James J. C. Leonard had sold the parental ranch just west of Soquel, bought and operated for a few years the Ben Lomond hotel. In 1901 he bought the big Sea Beach hotel from Abeel who retired first to a ranch near Boulder Creek and then to Sebastopol.

Abeel had only built the part