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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.)

In the older days, when a street was named for a tree, it generally meant more than it has more recently. In those days there was at least a plan that some of the trees honored by being named would be growing on the street.

This was especially true in the case of Locust street. On this street in the days of dirt roads and plank sidewalks, locust trees were on both sides of the street. At times, their spreading boughs met overhead and the fragrant locust blooms hung gracefully over the heads of passersby like a canopy. In the gardens along the street were borders of the old English violets which added their fragrance.

Walnut avenue had a few large black walnut trees, but there were more of the high Normandy poplars.

Elm street, which then reached only as far as Center street, never had an elm tree.

The next street below was Maple street. Its dirt sidewalks on either side were lined with water maples, a native tree. The big trees covered the streets with leafy branches in the summer.

Laurel street also lived up to its name with several of the variety found along its sides stretching from Pacific avenue. The laurel is a native tree of Santa Cruz also, being known variously as the laurel, the bay, the myrtle or the pepperwood. It is one of the most beautiful of the native trees.

Sycamore street had none of these native trees bordering it.

In the Potrero district, neither Madrone nor Cottonwood street had trees of those varieties, but out toward the old racetrack section, Eucalyptus street did have eucalyptus trees.

Catalpa street was planted with rows of the trees and was particularly beautiful with its full bloom of lavender blossoms in the spring.

Poplar street was planted to poplar trees, but Pine street did not have a single pine on it and Palm street, Oak street and Olive street lacked the trees which gave them their names.

Redwood street had a single redwood tree in one of the yards by which it passed.