

Salz Leathers History

Longtime Tannery Survived Flood, Fire

- 1856: Tannery built by James Duncan and William Warren.
- 1862: Tannery washed away by winter storms that flooded the San Lorenzo River.
- 1865: The 8-acre property is purchased by Anton Fischer and Wygand A. Mathew.
- 1866: Rebuilt San Lorenzo Tannery purchased by Prussian immigrant Jacob Kron.
- 1870: San Lorenzo Tannery is one of 10 in Santa Cruz County, which supplied more than 50 percent of all the saddle leather produced in the state.
- 1879: Kron dies; his eldest son manages the Kron Tannery Company.
- 1880s: Tannery begins relationship with Kullman-Salz and Company.
- 1917: Tannery sold to Kullman-Salz and Company.
- 1919 to 1929: The firm runs tanneries in Santa Cruz, Benecia and San Francisco.
- 1929: Ansley K. Salz partners with Stuart Miller and Joseph Bellas, longtime plant managers.
- 1934: Plant catches fire that results in \$200,000 damage.
- 1946: The tannery makes a traveling case for President Harry S. Truman.
- 1948: Norman Lezin marries Margaret Salz, daughter of Ansley K. Salz. Lezin joins the company as an apprentice.
- 1954: Lezin named tannery president at age 29. He is one of the youngest tannery executives in the country. In the same year, photographer Ansel Adams photographs the tannery and the tanning process at work. (Pictures available at the Local History Photograph Collection.) The same year, Salz Tannery gives a leather purse to each contestant in the Miss California pageant, then held in Santa Cruz. Lee Meriweather tours the plant during the pageant.
- 1970s: Company merges with Beck Industries, a New York-based conglomerate.
- 1976: Tannery employee Larry Ramirez, 28, dies in toxic hydrogen-sulfide gas leak.
- 1977: A fire causes \$10,000 damage. The same year, Lezin and a group of key tannery employees purchase the plant back from Beck Industries, which had filed for bankruptcy.

2001: Salz Leathers to close.

Sources

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