

Number five in a series of Historical Vignettes from the files of County Bank of Santa Cruz — by Jim Hammond

# Historical Vignettes



This 1949 photo typifies the roles of women in post-war, pre-computer, behind-the-scenes banking. In the far corner Helen Hamber is supervising, front to rear, left: Nellie Michel, Jayne White, Marilyn Burrows, and Lorraine Erta; seated along the wall, from rear: Patsy-Ruth Marion, Lora Pedemonte, Carla Pfyffer, Jeanne Stagnaro, and Helen Busenbart. Jeanne Stagnaro returned as Jeanne Barilati to the Pacific-Cooper office as Hostess a few years ago. Lorraine Erta Millang returned in 1967 and is now Soquel's Senior Teller. The others also left banking for the usual reasons of that day: marriage and children. Maternity benefits were yet to come. Computers and their like supplanted the old machines, and the check-sorting bin went out with the coming of magnetic ink. Skirt lengths were about as now.

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**M**McCaskill is a familiar name to the Santa Cruz area, made so particularly in the business community by the presence these many years of Miss Annie McCasill, now retired as a principal in Santa Cruz Land Title Company (now Western Title), corner of Cooper and Front streets. That site, as well as County Bank's, belonged to Mike and Grace Leonard at the time of the 1894 fire. They replaced their burned building with the one that stands there today. (More to come on the Leonards.)

The point of the McCaskill reference is that it is Frances McCaskill, Annie's younger sister, who was the first woman employee in County Bank's history, listed as a stenographer along with the five male employees of the bank in January, 1918. We were in the thick of World War I then, and within the year Frances had been joined on the payroll by Lydia E. Emmons and Clementine Hubbard, both clerks. The fact that the Bank's first three female employees began during "the Great War" was prophetic; World War II was the real force that impelled women into banking jobs.



County Bank is celebrating its 110th anniversary, and we invite you to share a few historical vignettes in the bright light of today's events and participants. —Jim Hammond

Not only was WWII a much longer and far-reaching conflict — requiring many more millions in uniform — but it brought the end to the decade of the Depression during which whatever jobs were available were usually reserved for men. In the mid-thirties bank clerks started at from \$65 to \$75 per month, depending upon their levels of education.

There were plenty of applicants. The main emphasis for those hired was on learning to run adding and bookkeeping machines. Big branch banks trained about forty at a time in classes that seldom if ever included a woman, although some of the banks' smaller branches had an occasional woman teller or bookkeeper. Generally those women ran the machines better and faster.

But it took another global war to open widely the doors of banks to women.

Women themselves — collectively through the feminist movement, to be

sure, but principally through their demonstration of competence as individuals — have been the forces that brought to executive suites the high heels and nylons of other than stenographers and secretaries. The photo above was made twelve years before County Bank appointed its first woman officer in 1960. That appointee is Connie Blake, long since retired, who headed the New Business Department. Audrey Johnson, still with County Bank, moved up later in the 'sixties to manage credit card systems, followed shortly thereafter by Bea Lynn, as a trust officer, and Cathy Aune, as a real estate lending officer. Distaff assignments to general responsibilities and decision making had finally begun in earnest, but the latter half of the 'seventies brought acceleration during these years under Reese Davis's leadership.

No one is claiming attainment of ultimate goals, but there are now 32 officers among the 312 women employees of County Bank; and how many bank Senior V.P.-Controllers have names like Bonnie?

The California State Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW) evidently thinks County Bank has "come a long way, baby." The BPW last year named the Bank recipient of its Top Hat Award, an honor that required the Bank's meeting all of nine separate criteria: among them, promotions to executive positions; encouragement toward business and professional education; training programs for women; reimbursement for job-related courses; and financial support of educational and training efforts.

The Top Hat Award was received for County Bank by Bonnie G. Scarduzio, Senior Vice President and Controller and the first woman in California to become a "Chartered Bank Auditor." The Santa Cruz Sentinel carried a picture of Bonnie Scarduzio and a headlined story in what used to be called "the women's section." Now it's "Tree 'n Sea Living."

Indeed, you have come a long way, Baby!

