

Santa Cruz Yesterdays

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main span was dropped, marking the climax of the project. Soon after the first of April,

Contractor Miglierini had preliminary stages of the new construction under way.



WATER ST. BRIDGES 40 YEARS AGO

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

The Union Traction company's reinforced concrete arched bridge across the San Lorenzo at Water street was only a few months old when the picture was taken late in 1908. Trolley cars rolled across the concrete structure while horse-drawn traffic still used the older city bridge which paralleled it to the north.

Five years later a city bond issue provided \$17,000 and in 1914 a contract was let to G. Miglierini

of Santa Cruz for \$15,175 for a municipal concrete bridge. The two spans were physically united, but a solid concrete guard rail kept ordinary traffic from the trolley track. When the Union Traction company ended its effort to maintain a street car system in Santa Cruz the city took over the company's part of the bridge and removed the barrier, to make the bridge as it is today.

With the exception of a little bridge near the beach, from Beach Hill to connect with the "Road to the Redwoods" which is today's Bay street, a span at Water street was the first bridge in the county.

Near Old Ford

The old ford was practically at the site of the present Water street bridge. The first foot bridge was put across the river in 1866 by private donations solicited by A. R. Meserve, the merchant. Washed out that winter, it was replaced, again by private funds, in 1867.

The little foot bridges could not withstand the winter high water and in 1868 the county decided on a structure strong enough not only to withstand the floods but to carry

horse-drawn traffic. For \$10,900, Tom Beck took the contract. The money was raised by county contribution, private donation and by proceeds of a "Calico Ball" in Otto's hall on Front street. It had a 100-foot span, a width of 20 feet and was 14 feet above the water.

Withstood Floods

Although damaged by the high waters of 1871-72 and reconstructed by the county the following summer, the wooden bridge stood for ten years. By 1882 the problem was for the city, which put in the more modern span still serving when the picture was made 26 years later.

Water street crossings were called the "upper bridge" after erection, in 1874, of the San Lorenzo covered bridge on what is now Soquel avenue.

Santa Cruzans voted decisively in favor of bridge bonds in the December 4, 1913, election, with 3400 for and only 79 against. At the same time bonds were voted by a large majority for the present municipal wharf. Demolition of the old bridge was under way a couple of months after the election. Monday morning, March 23, 1914, the