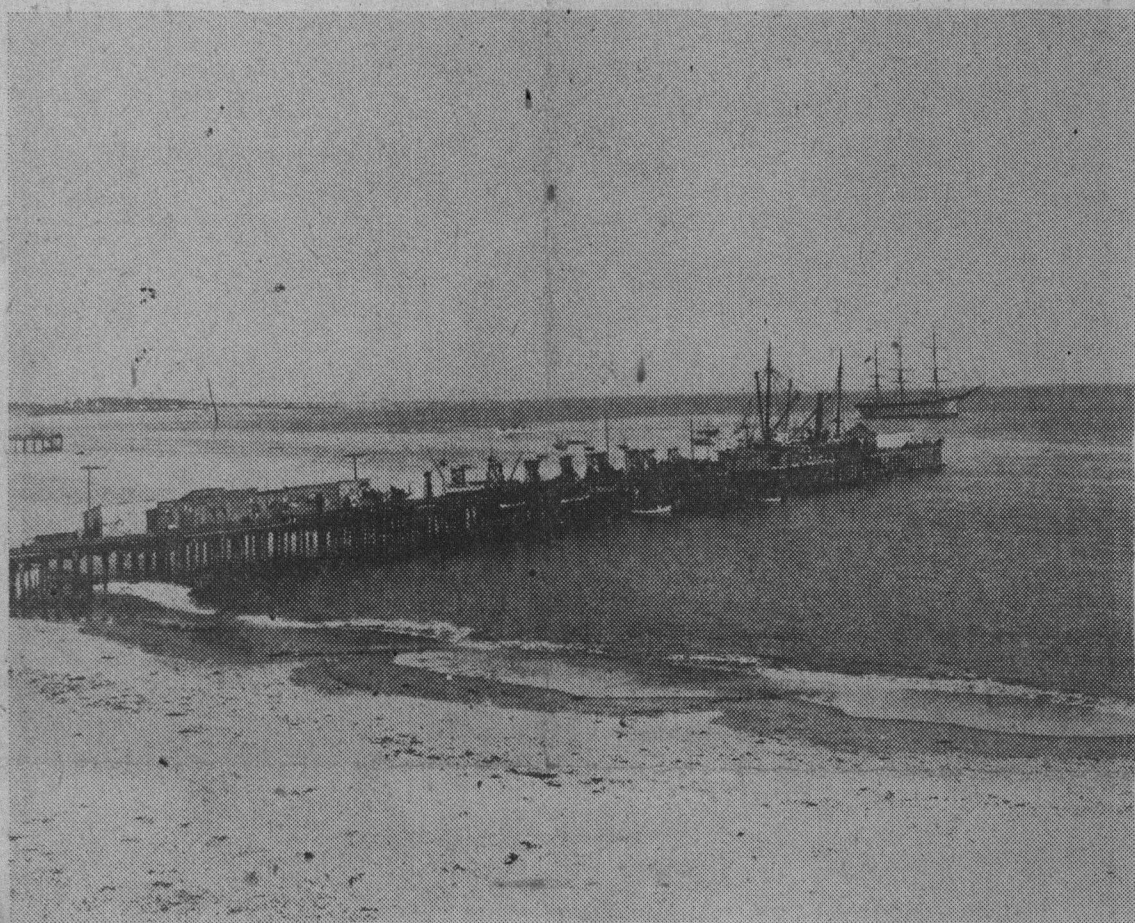


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Santa Cruz Yesterdays



PLEASURE SHIP BALBOA AT THE BEACH, 1907-8 (From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

For at least two seasons down at the beachfront, just over forty years ago, there was an extra added attraction the "Pleasure Ship" Balboa.

Above, it is viewed beyond the end of the old railroad wharf, at its summer anchorage opposite the Casino, about 2000 feet out. To the left can be seen the end of the Pleasure pier (built in 1904 and called originally the "electric" pier).

The old railroad wharf had been built some time prior to 1875. In that year it was sold by David Gharkey to the Santa Cruz and Felton Railroad. These holdings were taken over by the South Pacific Coast when the latter road sent its rails over the hills from Alameda via Los Gatos, in 1880. The boat at the wharf is probably the little freight steamer "Santa Cruz" (Capt. J. J. Meany), out of San Francisco.

Came First In 1907

Viewed from the beach, the 207-foot, three-masted Balboa loomed large in the bay. It was first brought down from Oakland creek, near Alameda, in April, 1907, through the

efforts of Fred W. Swanton and his cohorts of the new Casino. By May 1, held in place by two huge mushroom anchors and in electrical contact with the shore by means of a submarine cable, the Balboa was ready for its dedication. At night, outlined by 1500 electric lights, the Third Artillery band concertizing on its upper deck, fireworks bursting from its bow, it was a stunning picture.

Launches plying across the water between the Pleasure pier and the vessel were in constant demand to care for the throngs of visitors and dancers who attended the ball in the 180x40 shipboard ballroom. The large steam launch Sinaloa, with a mooring at the Pleasure pier, became one of the chief carriers for the Balboa.

Returns Second Summer

In May of 1908 the Balboa, stationed in San Francisco bay, was, during the visit there of "the great white fleet" of Admiral Robley D. (Fighting Bob) Evans, serving as a "grandstand" for any comers who wished to view the fleet from her decks (for a fee). But early in June she was back in front of the

Casino here, ready to entertain visiting throngs with music, dancing, dining, refreshments, or leisurely fishing from her bow. Beach Electrical Superintendent Dave Barrett, during 1908, provided successful illumination for the Balboa, the intricate task by means of the bay floor cable having been subjected to some failures during the previous season.

Was Clipper Ship

Built in Bath, Maine, in 1874, the old clipper ship was known as the J. B. Brown, which had a long career as a merchant vessel. Her gross tonnage was 1551. She was 207 feet, 5 inches in length; had a breadth of 40 feet, 5 inches; was 24 feet deep. She was said to have sailed 25 times around the Horn, and carried many a pioneer to California. It had been re-christened the Balboa in honor of the great discoverer.

After everything of value had been removed, the last owners of the historic craft disposed of the hulk by burning it, in San Francisco bay, Sunday, March 15, 1914.