

Friends of Octagon gather

By CAROLYN SWIFT

Santa Cruz—its discovery, rivalry and people — was the dominant topic of historical talks presented Friday evening during the annual dinner meeting of Friends of the Octagon, an event attended by more than 200 persons at Seascope Golf Lodge.

Betty Lewis, Tanner Wilson and Warren "Skip" Littlefield were featured speakers, and each presented a short account of history relating to their home town.

Mrs. Lewis, author of "Watsonville, Memories That Linger," told the audience that as a former Santa Cruz resident, she finds it strange that she is now dedicated to the history of Watsonville—a traditional rival of her home town.

While she attended Mission Hill School and Santa Cruz High School, Mrs. Lewis said, she and her friends thought Watsonville was a good place to go for football

games, "but a place you would not want to live in."

"Now I have come to love Watsonville and its people," she said, "The rivalry I once knew is still there, yet it is nothing like it was in the old days."

Mrs. Lewis then traced the competition and antagonism between the two cities back to the 1870s, and used quotes from old newspapers to illustrate a split in philosophy that still exists. The editorial viewpoints of writers from both towns were humorous, sarcastic and sometimes bitter.

Among the examples given by Mrs. Lewis was a description by a Watsonville editor about his Santa Cruz rival, Duncan McPherson, who was depicted as "a barrel of putty trying to effervesce like keg of beer."

In a Santa Cruz article, editors were quick to observe on one occasion that all six prisoners in the county jail were Watsonville residents.

Tanner Wilson, as master-of-ceremonies, discussed early history of Monterey Bay — from the naming of California after an island in the novel, "Exploits of Esplandian," published in 1510, to distribution of Mexican land grants after secularization was authorized for California missions in 1833.

As a souvenir, guests were given a Santa Cruz County map that illustrates land grant boundaries and parcels of land ownership in 1906.

Littlefield, who is associated with Seaside Company and history of the Boardwalk, presented his personal wit in a eulogy of Mario Stagnaro, "whose life has been patterned in the fabric from which legends are born."

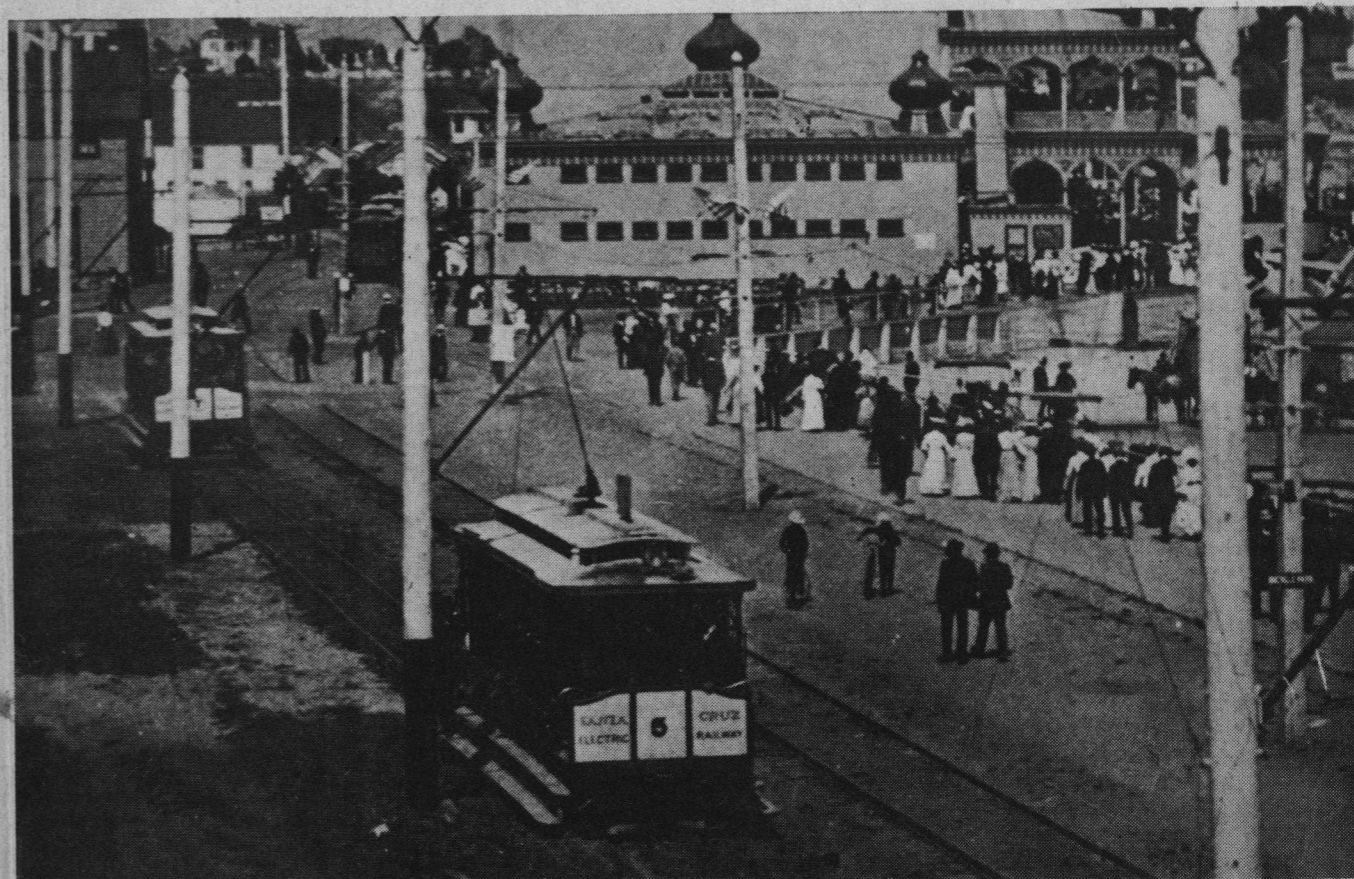
The history of Friends of the Octagon is much briefer than any of the topics discussed Friday evening. The organization was established in 1974 to assist the Octagon Museum, which is located at the former Hall of Records building on Cooper

Street in Santa Cruz. Volunteers work to staff the museum and its shop of historical materials.

Fund-raising activities are held each year to purchase materials, projects and public relations services. Among the past projects are purchase of California history flags now on display at the museum; renovation of an antique desk; a \$500 contribution toward Abbot Square and purchase of a brick in the Town Clock tower.

During a brief business meeting led by Kay Harry, president, Friends of the Octagon added five new members to the board of directors with an amendment to the organization's by-laws. Nominated and accepted as incoming directors were Shirley Gleason, Geri Haden, Margaret Koch and Sandy Lydon. They will all serve for three-year terms.

Photos are from UCSC special collections and the Betty Lewis postcard collection . . .



Santa Cruz Electric Railway traveled down Beach Street in front of the first casino in Santa Cruz, the Neptune, which burned in 1906.



Marine life and natural exhibits were displayed at Cliff Museum off West Cliff Drive at Woodrow Avenue.



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This is a 1914 view of the Santa Cruz wharf and pleasure pier.