

A
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AND OTHER
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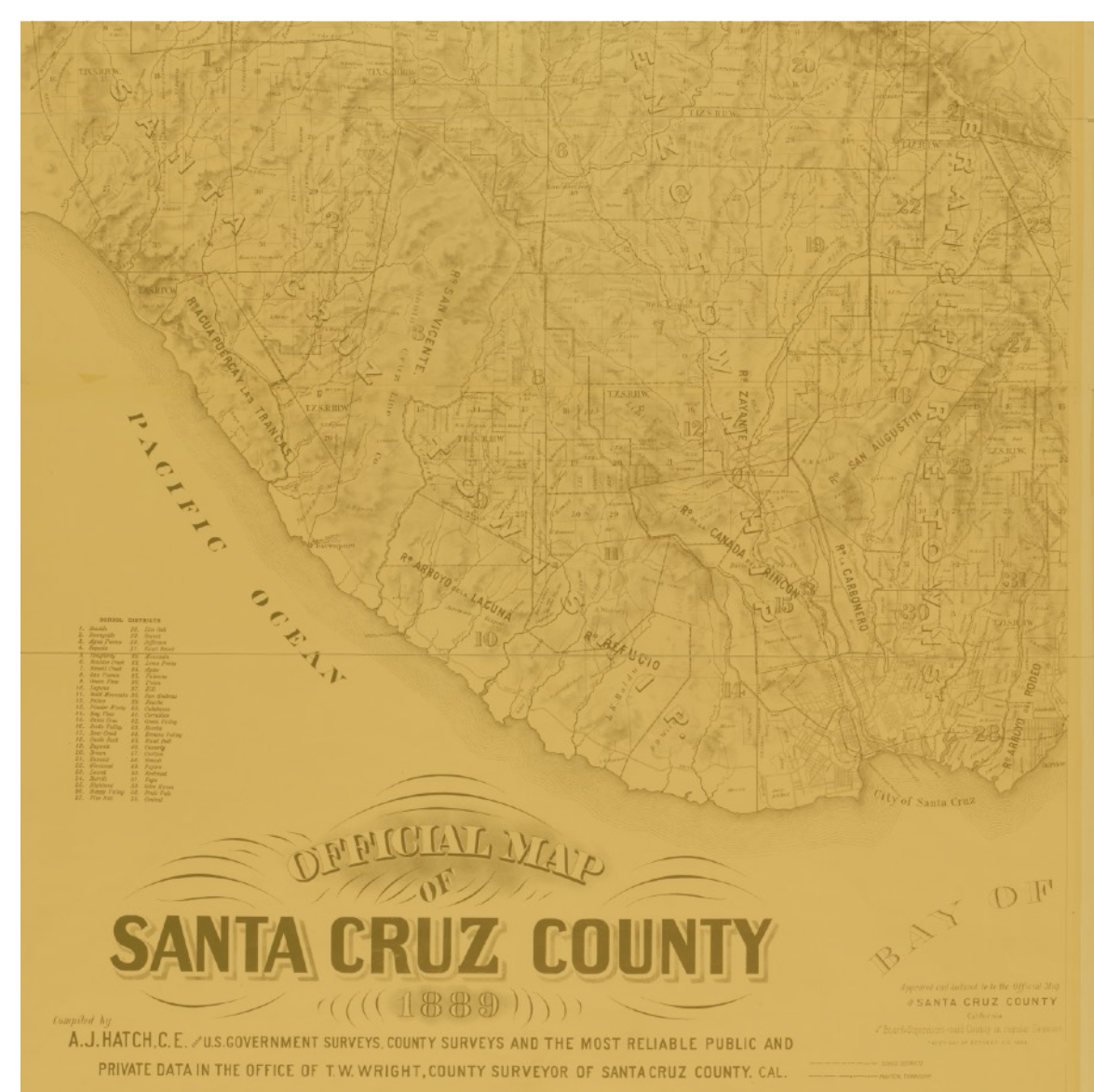
A History of Santa Cruz

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The Unauthorized Biography of a Town in California

Written & Illustrated by Michael Marshall Smith



INTRODUCTION



SANTA CRUZ is a town on the coast of Northern California, situated at the top of the Monterey Bay halfway between Big Sur and San Francisco. With the Pacific Ocean in front, mountains behind, and large swathes of wilderness either side, there a sense of an island isolated from the rest of the state.

The site of one of the missions developed as part of an attempted Spanish conquest, it is now better-known as the birthplace of modern surfing, home to both a famous Boardwalk and a well-regarded branch of the University of California, and the model for Santa Clara in the seminal 1980s vampire movie, *THE LOST BOYS*.

Beyond that lies a history of fishing, limestone quarrying, forestry and counter-culture. More turbulent undercurrents, too: from a string of unexplained disappearances to the calamitous

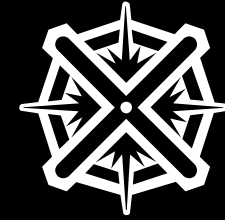


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Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989 which leveled much of downtown. It is probably a co-coincidence that Santa Cruz was the only mission in California in which the Native Americans rose up and slew one of their oppressors; also houses the building upon which Alfred Hitchcock was said to have based the Bates Motel; and furthermore is uniquely distinguished by having been the hunting ground of two serial killers simultaneously — Herb Mullins and Ed “The Co-ed Killer” Mullins. The “murder capital of the world”, no less.

These are all verifiable facts. Less easily ascertained is the veracity of the accounts that follow, but as anyone who has spent time in Santa Cruz will testify... you just never know.



VERY LOCAL HISTORY



The last Fictucrix, captured in the Santa Cruz mountains on December 21st, 1921. Seen here with members of the MJ Epicurean Society, who selected members based on height and organized the successful expedition before sampling the flesh at a banquet that evening. No member of the Society survived the experience.





John Hihn's cabin. During its construction, voices from the river told Hihn that being inside any man-built structure was unsafe and so after completion he slept on the roof. He was rightly convinced that the mountains held deposits of gold, though personally never found any. He died of exposure during the winter of 1864.





At the age of fifteen it was proven that Martha Cunningham was possessed of absolutely no supernatural abilities. She was subsequently known as the Not Witch of Santa Cruz, shunned by the townspeople, and died of old age alone in a tree.





A juvenile example of the now extinct Santosaur, pictured here in 1920 with the crew of the *Midjourney*, the Monterey Bay fishing boat that dredged it from the depths and later disappeared without trace. It is said that the island of Crete is the fossilized remains of an adult form of the species.





Jed Reynolds is the only known example of a man who grew from the top down. He was born as an adult head and extended groundwards, only achieving legs in early middle age. After a successful career as an importer of fog he became unwell in his seventies and was eventually reduced to only a pair of feet. He vanished in 1927.





Long-described as Santa Cruz County's first house, the title was eventually stripped on the grounds the area had self-evidently been inhabited for hundreds of years prior to this style of architecture. Recent carbon-dating of the remains however convincingly suggests that the dwelling's construction pre-dates the discovery of America.





In 1894 it was established that this small patch of ground had never been trodden upon by humankind. In the following years people were discouraged from even glancing at it. A wall was eventually built around the space in 1922 to protect its integrity.

This is the last known photograph.





On the morning of August 17, 1923, a man appeared in the shallow waters of the bay just off Cowell Beach. Attempts to provide aid or communicate with him were frustrated by the fact he could only be seen from behind. He remained there for two years but vanished during a storm.





The only known picture of the Mullins Gang, a notorious crew of former loggers who lived in the mountains near Santa Cruz and were responsible for robberies on travelers until their sudden disappearance in November, 1907. As a fact of curious note, it is said some people are unable to see the five men pictured in this photograph.





Santa Cruz originally had two rivers running through the downtown area. Sometime during the early hours of February 29th, 1920, the San Natana was stolen. It was speculated the watercourse had been returned to the sea by pioneering environmentalists, but an extensive investigation was never able to confirm the theory.





For three days in March 1917, language ceased to function in most of Santa Cruz county. The Santa Cruz Sentinel continued to print in hopes this would improve the situation. This is the only known surviving copy of an edition produced during that period. The text has never been deciphered, and the identities of the people in the photographs remain unknown.





The ballroom of the former Sacramento Hotel in Santa Cruz.
It is forbidden to speak of what happened here.





Halloween has long been Santa Cruz's preferred holiday, and for several years an annual competition was held for best costume. The joint winners in 1919 are shown in this photograph from the early evening. Nobody came forward to claim the well-advertised and valuable prize, however, and so the competition was afterward suspended indefinitely out of an abundance of caution.





Life in early Santa Cruz was challenging, and illness and premature death were common. Thomas Hudson lost both parents when still an infant, and was subsequently raised by trees. This photograph of 1919 shows him in middle age, walking with his brother. It is said the latter mourns Thomas to this day.





For the Christmas of 1911, Santa Cruz resident eight-year-old Mary Perkins finally received the hamster she'd longed for. Unfortunately the animal was of unpredictable temper and when refused the freedom to leave the building, took matters into its own hands. It was never seen again.





The Miramar Grand Hotel, Santa Cruz. This photograph has a handwritten date on the back suggesting it was taken on April 25, 1907. Despite years of dedicated research by local historians, no other mention of the hotel has ever been found, and it has been regrettably concluded that it didn't exist.





Known as “the guardians of the San Lorenzo”, these creatures were sighted by pioneering residents and early visitors to the area over a period of over a hundred and fifty years, until they took to the ocean on a raft. Every year a short ten-minute festival is still held in their honor. They are not cats.





This photograph of 1909 shows Joshua Edwins. A man of strict and implacable moral views, he was attempting to intervene in a local romance. The relationship flourished despite this and the houses eventually married, producing an entire street of dwellings that exists to this day.





Snow is uncommon in the Santa Cruz area, and the last time it fell on the town itself was 1957. This earlier photograph of 1925 shows Edward Schnafel pausing to enjoy the view while on the way to murder his brother.





The Pet Cemetery of Santa Cruz has existed since at least 1873, when mentioned in Angus Dyke's "Mortuary Byways of the Bay". Unlike most examples, this memorial was built by pets, for their owners. By the early 1920s the plot had become over-crowded, and the facility moved to a new and currently unknown location.





A hand-written date on the back of this picture suggests it was taken just north of Santa Cruz in 1915. No explanation for it has ever been offered.





The remnants of the last known coven of Mail Witches, seen here blessing the site of the current Santa Cruz post office just before construction commenced in 1910. In the subsequent 113 years no personal letter mailed at the premises has ever gone missing, except in cases when it was better for it not to arrive.





The lighthouse on Barclay Point was one of the first along the Santa Cruz County coast. Nicknamed "The Darkhouse" by residents, it was associated with an unusual number of shipwrecks for many years and already falling into disrepair by this photo of 1912. After its subsequent demolition, no further maritime accidents occurred.





The early years of Santa Cruz featured rumors of little people who lived in the mountains, after being stranded there after some kind of calamity during a very long journey. Kezlak however always claimed that the preserved curiosities in his Museum of Outlandishness were fakes constructed for his own amusement, and it is doubtless a co-incidence that Lockheed eventually established a seldom-spoken-of facility in those same mountains.





Though notably worse in recent years, forest fires are not a new phenomenon in the Santa Cruz area, and “The Great Burn” of 1896 claimed many hundreds of acres. Its cause is unknown, but when on the first evening a resident attempted to return to his house to save a goat, he captured the above image.





The doorway on Cowell Beach has been there since before records began. It is said that anyone passing through it never returns, and over the years a great many unsuccessful attempts were made to destroy it. It persists to this day, now safely hidden in the basement of The Ideal Grill, a restaurant built to conceal it.





A resident of a nearby mountain town called Felton, “Blessed Mary” discovered she could fly at an early age, though to her disappointment the ability remained limited to simply going up, and then coming down again. Eventually tiring of the experience, she conducted one last flight — captured in this photograph of 1908 — before retiring to become a celebrated painter of chickens.





This postcard of 1906 is captioned “Catch of the Day”. It’s likely this was an ironic reference for the amusement of locals, however, as immediately after the photograph was taken, the sea creature — evidently nowhere near as deceased as the three gentlemen bystanders had assumed — suddenly turned and ate them whole.





Self-tutored in architecture, Santa Cruz resident Isaac Hatcher nonetheless enjoyed brief success in the profession until in his biggest commission, for local politician George Sihm, he forgot to include floors. He moved into the vast open dwelling himself to pursue an equally fleeting career constructing ships from porous materials.





The only known photograph of the priory of the Sisters of Infinite Procrastination, who fell from grace — and were expelled from the county — after the structure was accidentally completed.





This picture shows the junction of Front and Pacific Streets after the flood of 1904. Residents claimed the building on the left had not been present before the inundation, and refused to ever enter it. It remains empty to this day, hidden behind false walls.





When John Trelawny and his family moved into this house in the year 1900 they were terrified by the apparent presence of a ghost and his daughter. They sued the spirits for trespass but the shades, allegedly shown here, were able to prove prior residence and under the laws of the time it was the Trelawnys who were forced to move.





The morning after the Great Storm of 1915, what appeared to be Tom Adams' fishing boat was found a mile inland, complete with possessions proven to be his. Adams however claimed that an identical boat — containing the same possessions — in the harbor was the true version. Eventually the pictured boat was broken for firewood, and the matter never spoken of again.





This photograph of 1897 shows “The Fury of Santa Cruz”, glimpsed only when a local resident was unusually outraged. Its destructive ire would only be placated by gifts of eggs or coffee. Eventually it retired to the forest, where it is claimed it can still be heard some mornings being openly offensive to squirrels.





This picture of 1879 shows “the old man of the woods”, the last-known bear in Santa Cruz county. Alone for thirty years, after the decades of slaughter of the rest of his brethren, the bear eventually left the area, leaving marks on a tree that local naturalists deciphered as meaning: “This isn’t over”.





The “Great Cloud” of 1917 appeared one Sunday evening and remained over the bay for three days. During that period everybody named “Edward” was gradually replaced by a person who appeared identical but insisted they were called “Gregory”. The latter name is regarded with suspicion locally to this day.





The Bryson family were Santa Cruz's last shadow-hunters. This photograph of 1902 shows them after their successful clearance of the Ellis residence. Paid a bounty for each shadow trapped, the family nonetheless chose on this occasion to let the elder shade on the right leave peacefully, out of professional courtesy.





For a period in 1921 the Santa Cruz Court House was closed due to an infestation of unfriendliness. Citizens were invited to sit in this chair and pronounce judgement instead. Anyone who did so was immediately thrown in jail, and the chair itself remains under active investigation.





The photograph on the left shows “Old Patchy”, an amusement fashioned by local artist John Paine from straw, wasps, old clothes and seal blood, for display in the square on Halloween 1889. The second picture shows it four days later. It was destroyed soon afterwards to forestall further developments.





This picture shows the Salt Fall of January 4th, 1929. Once a semi-regular local phenomenon, it has not occurred since, though the quantities on this occasion were so significant that it is credibly claimed the salt cellars of many Santa Cruz restaurants are being replenished from remaining stocks to this day.





The Santa Cruz School for the Difficult was founded for the benefit of turbulent or unmanageable children. Unfortunately the building eventually developed behavioral challenges in sympathy, making unpredictable noises and seldom staying where it was put, and by this photograph of 1908 had been abandoned.





The Santa Cruz Wives appeared from the forest together on the afternoon of March 27th 1897, and came into town claiming to be looking for their missing husbands. Each left several hours later with an unmarried local man, returning to the woods despite the men's protests. They were never seen again.





Soon after Daniel Rittenhaus claimed he had reached a contract with spirits that enabled his house to float a foot above the ground, he was killed in a skirmish with unnerved locals, and his dwelling destroyed. This picture of 1899 shows the remnants, two years later.





Edward Morey was a respected priest in Santa Cruz until he alleged that God had stolen a small sum of money from him, and turned instead to the worship of bees. He claimed to be able to set them upon people, and after several local deaths appeared to confirm this, was carefully expelled from the county.





Santa Cruz resident Elizabeth Trelawny was an early experimenter with the power of pyramids, claiming the shape enabled her to visit distant planets. These claims were mocked by her neighbors, and one afternoon in 1922 she was observed irritably entering her pyramid with her dog, Buster, never to be seen again.





This photograph of 1931 shows The Fourlorn, the ghosts of four women killed by a flood of the San Lorenzo River on December 5th, 1919. Their judging presence continued to be experienced in town until the Corps of Engineers finally constructed flood barriers in 1955.





As a child, Henry Zorton was plagued by nightmares. His concerned mother eventually consulted a local wise woman, who encouraged Henry to manifest his fears. Unfortunately the process was so successful that Zorton's fears continued to plague local residents for many years after his death in 1901.





This photograph of 1911 shows Returning Mary, who died in 1884. Each year at Christmas she would dig herself out of her grave in the Odd Fellows Cemetery and visit a local family at random. After being fed she returned to the earth for another year. It is said the tradition continues in secret to this day.





The earliest Spanish settlers in Santa Cruz were warned never to interfere with The Sacrifice in The Woods, and told that so long as the location was kept secret, any community sited here would prosper. This image from 1902 is the only known photograph.



BY THE SAME AUTHOR



AS MICHAEL MARSHALL SMITH

Only Forward

Spares

One of Us

The Servants

Hannah Green and her Unfeasibly Mundane Existence

The Best of Michael Marshall Smith (short fiction)

AS MICHAEL MARSHALL

The Straw Men

The Lonely Dead

Blood of Angels

The Intruders

Bad Things

Killer Move

AS MICHAEL RUTGER

The Anomaly

The Possession



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