

The Magic of Seabright



FEATURED COMMUNITY

By Aaron Lieben

People speak of Seabright as being the sunniest beach in the county. Others are enamored by the location and walkability. And for many, it is the eclectic mixture of old and new. Seabright originated in the 1880's as a resort community of small summer cottages. According to literature at the time, these cottages catered to the "finest kind" of people from San Jose and the Central Valley. While the Santa Cruz main beach was a tourist attraction, Seabright Beach was an exclusive resort.

Before being annexed into the city of Santa Cruz in 1904, Seabright (named after the New Jersey beach town) was a separate settlement with its own post office, library, railroad station, and town hall. Elizabeth Forbes, member of the early Seabright Improvement Society, writes in

a 1915 memoir "The Seabright hall in the evening with its cheery open fire, the friends that used to drive over to their cottages from Stockton, Sacramento, Fresno and San Jose and used the hall every evening as a gathering place, are vivid in my mind." The citizens of Seabright took delight in their out of town visitors. Many of these guests brought unique talents and experiences with them that contributed to the Seabright community.

What we now refer to as Seabright Beach was once Castle Beach. Louis Scholl, famous for rescuing people at sea, built a castle at the entrance of Seabright Beach in 1928. The Scholl Marr Castle housed therapeutic salt water baths, a snack bar, and a restaurant upstairs. Clara Jane Lyter, who was freshly out of high school when her parents purchased the castle in 1946, remembers working at the concession stand on the weekends and the lively bonfire gatherings at night. "It was just so wonderful," Clara Jane reminisces.

The castle eventually became an art gallery before being dismantled in 1967. Around that time, the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor was constructed. What was once a small neighborhood beach in Seabright magically became a much larger and deeper beach. This was a completely

unanticipated by-product of the harbor affecting sand deposits.

Clues from the past are sprinkled throughout Seabright. The restaurant La Posta, as the name implies, marks the spot of the post office. The Museum of Natural History is the old library. Several of the original beach cottages exist. The street names Pilkington, Mott, and Forbes reflect the early founders. Alhambra Street was the location of the original camp. Rumor has it that some of the old street names before being annexed by Santa Cruz can be found etched in sidewalks.

Even though the castle has disappeared without a trace, the magic of Seabright still remains. It is no coincidence that during a time when Santa Cruz home prices have substantially dropped, the median price of a single family home in the Seabright area has remarkably risen from \$800,000 in 2005 to \$849,000 in 2009.

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