

The Wonders of Natural Bridges



FEATURED PROPERTY

By **AARON LIEBEN**

In 1925, Charles Moore was passing a remote beach several miles north of the Santa Cruz Boardwalk when he observed sea lions battling something in the ocean. Days later, a sea creature described as having a duck-like head, a twenty foot long neck, and two short feet washed ashore. At the time it was determined to be a Plesiosaurus that had been preserved in a glacier for millions of years. While it is now thought to be a rare species of whale, the Moore's Beach Monster has become one of the world's favorite sea monster mysteries.

Moore's Beach, as it came to be called, was acquired by California in 1933 and renamed Natural Bridges State Beach. The name was inspired by the famous sandstone formation

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containing several archways that the ocean waves had gently carved. Families used to drive horses and buggies onto the arches to picnic; and families still come, now in SUVs and Minivans, to picnic and enjoy the wonders. While sea monsters are seldom seen, it is easy to spot seals and otters, urchins in the tide pools, spring wildflowers along the grassland trail, various birds at the Moore Creek estuary, and clusters of Monarch butterflies.

One of nature's epic phenomena is the migration of the Monarch butterfly. Santa Cruz Monarchs fly nearly 2,500 miles to the only Monarch Preserve in California in the eucalyptus grove at Natural Bridges. Monarchs, the only insect to migrate such a great distance, are drawn to this majestic setting just as people are who come from miles away to see this magnificent area.

The great visionary and promoter, Fred Swanton, who gave Santa Cruz electricity, the Boardwalk, movie studios, a golf course, and a major league baseball team, saw the potential to develop a housing community near Natural

Bridges. At that time, Natural Bridges was a hidden paradise, and coincidentally was transformed into Tahiti in 1923 for a silent film; complete with a hut village and sixty foot palm trees mechanized to blow in the breeze. The estates along West Cliff, referred to as Millionaires' Row, only went as far as the lighthouse. Everything beyond was undeveloped.

Swanton's vision came to fruition in the 1970s when beach homes were constructed on Swanton Boulevard and other streets neighboring Natural Bridges. This area, with its many natural wonders, rapidly became one of the most desirable places in Santa Cruz.

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