

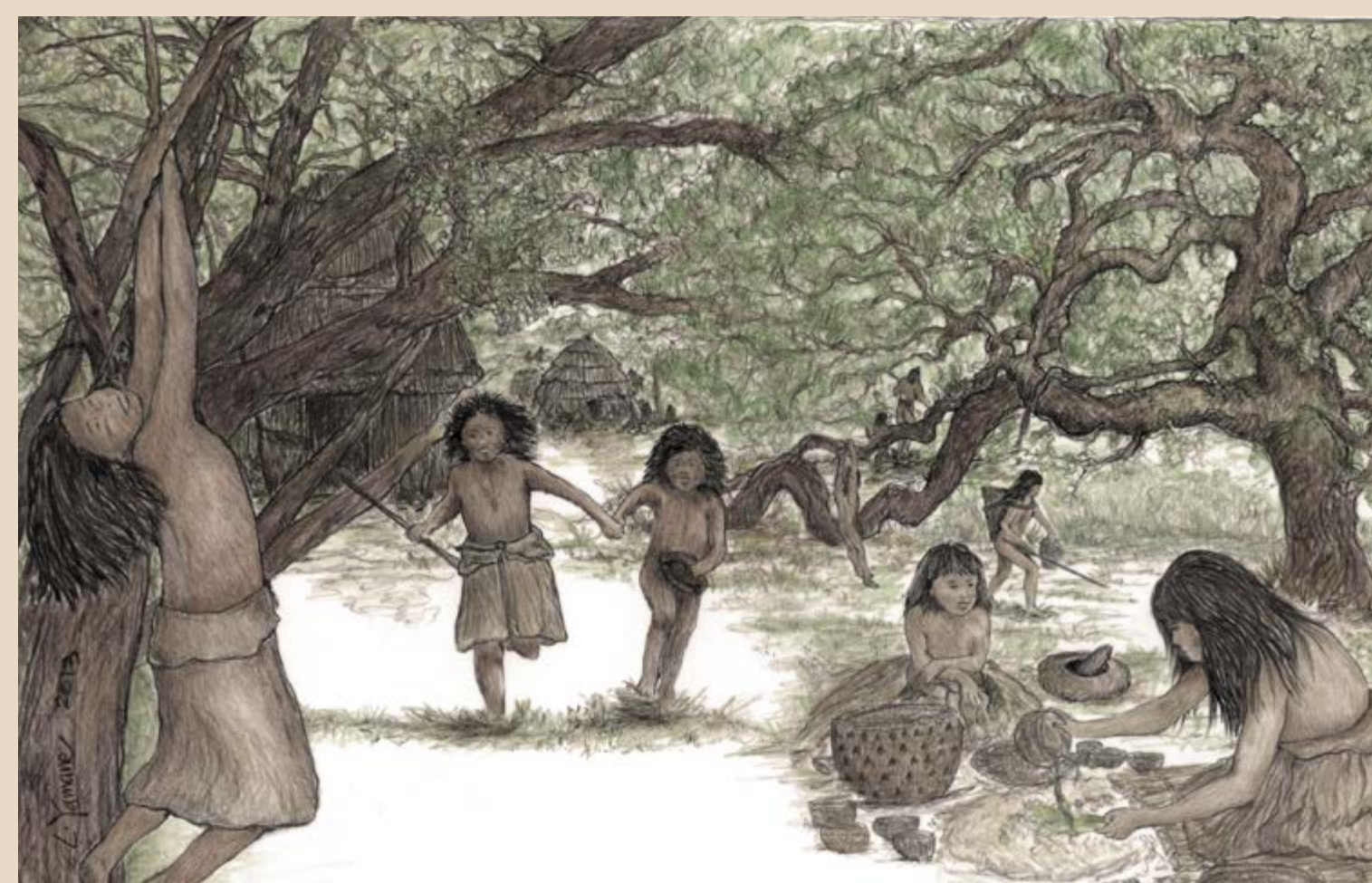
APTOS PRE-1876: RUGGED & ISOLATED

THE NATIVE PEOPLE

The indigenous people followed the seasons along the streams, harvesting marine life and moving upstream in the autumn to harvest tanoak acorns, then salmon and steelhead in the winter. When the Spanish first saw indigenous people in the fall of 1769, their largest village was on the flats beside the Aptos lagoon. However, archaeologists have found evidence of them throughout Aptos.

Of the four Ohlone groups living on the northern shore of Monterey Bay, the Aptos Ohlone people were the last to be gathered into the Santa Cruz Mission in 1797.

It's unknown if "Aptos" was the name of a person, object or geographical feature. But to the original Aptos Ohlone people, it meant "home."



Drawing of Aptos Ohlone children playing among the coastal live oaks

Credit: Linda Yamane



Drawing of an Aptos Ohlone people village

Credit: Linda Yamane

A CHALLENGING LANDSCAPE

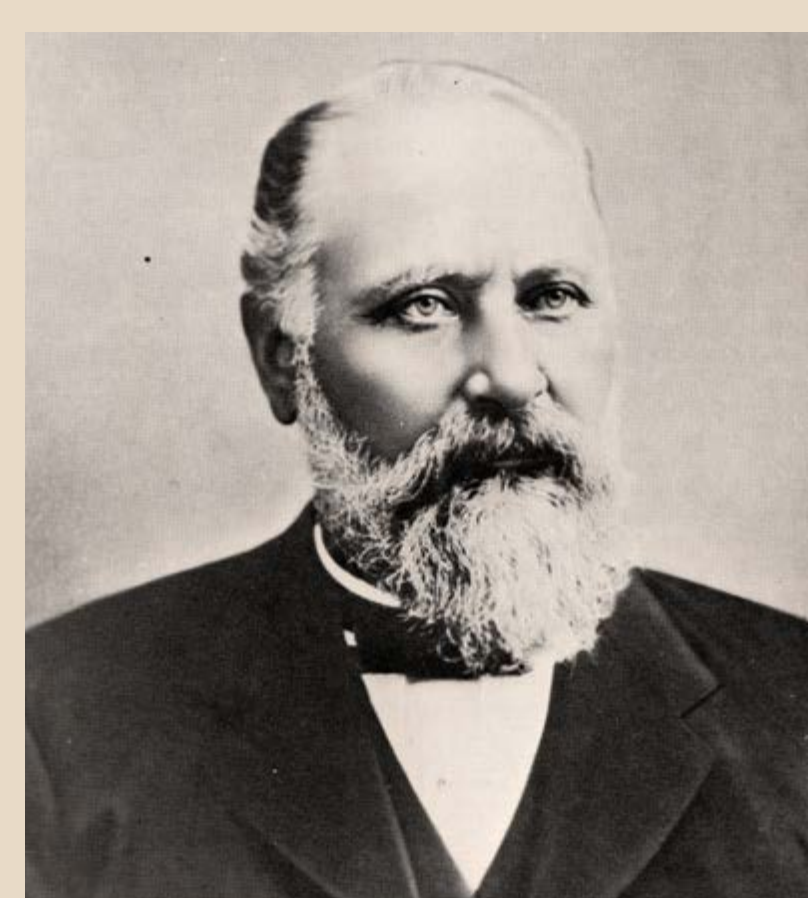
The northern edge of the Monterey Bay coastline is a relatively flat terrace with streams coming out of the inland mountains into the sea. At Aptos, however, the mountains come jumbling down almost to the beach causing Aptos and Valencia creeks to twist and turn as they cut deep before exiting in the bay. The lower hills were covered with forests of live oak while the deeper upstream canyons were filled with redwood and fir.

All those wishing to travel across Aptos must pass through this transportation tangle.



Rafael Castro 1803-1878

Credit: Aptos History Museum



**Claus Spreckels
1828-1908**



First built in 1850, Spreckels rebuilt the Aptos Wharf in 1880 to ship redwood lumber to his businesses in the Sandwich Islands (Hawai'i)

Credit: Aptos History Museum

THE APTOS RANCHO

In 1833, the Mexican government granted Rafael Castro a tract of land comprising 6,686 acres. Born in the Villa Branciforte, Castro was a citizen of Mexico and a veteran of the Mexican army. Castro valued the coastal grasslands over the forested canyons and mountains. He planned to raise cattle, and ship hides and tallow.

Through the decades following statehood (1850) Castro sold or gave smaller parcels in present-day Aptos Village to friends and relatives, but he was reluctant to sell the majority of his grant until 1872 when Claus Spreckels, a wealthy sugar industrialist from San Francisco, purchased 80% of Castro's original grant property for \$72,000.

Spreckels planned to turn Aptos into a summer resort for his family and business associates. He built a hotel down on the flat where the Aptos Ohlone village had been located.

RED GOLD: LUMBER & LOCOMOTIVES ERA 1876-1906



Woodsmen felling a redwood up the Aptos Canyon (c. 1890), Credit: Sandy Lydon Collection



Loma Prieta Lumber Mill Company operates in Aptos Canyon, Credit: California State Parks

Railroad connected Aptos with the outside world. In 1873, a group of local businessmen led by Frederick Augustus Hihn incorporated Santa Cruz Railroad. The narrow-gauge line, built by Chinese workers, traveled into Aptos through Trout Gulch and linked with the Watsonville Railroad. But Santa Cruz Railroad went bankrupt within the decade. Southern Pacific purchased the 21-mile branch line in 1881 and upgraded it to standard gauge.

Sawmills produced millions of board feet of lumber during this era, which was brought into present-day Aptos Village by rail. Loma Prieta sawmill, built in Aptos Canyon in 1882, had 185 residents and included post office, stores, cabins and a hotel. Hihn operated his own sawmill on Trout Gulch Creek from 1883-93.

An estimated 200 million board feet of lumber poured down the canyons and through Aptos. Around its edges there was a fringe of hotels and saloons, and township was formed in 1893.

Lower Prieta Railroad

Loma Prieta
(Mill site)

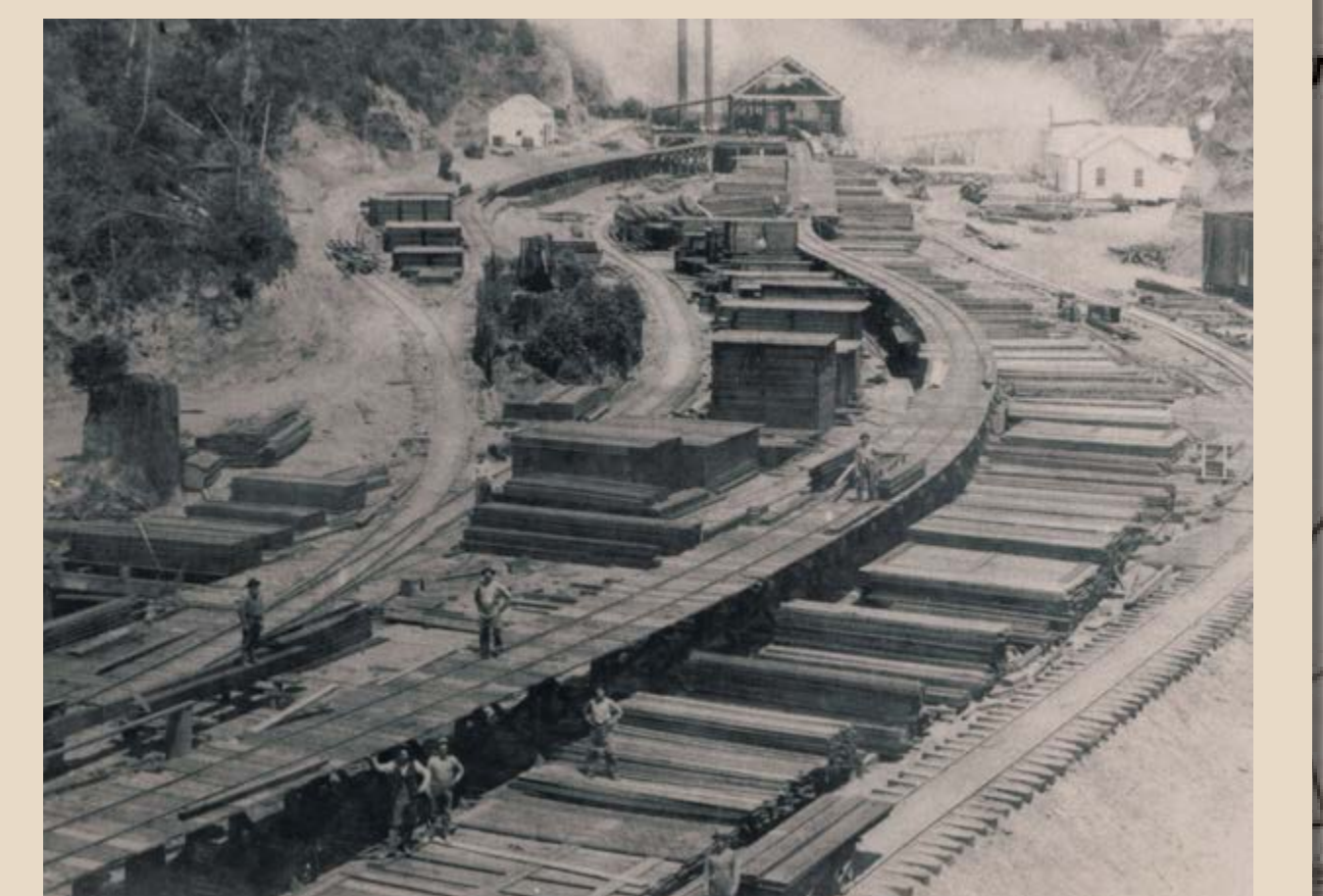
Hihn Valencia Rail

Santa Cruz Watsonville Rd

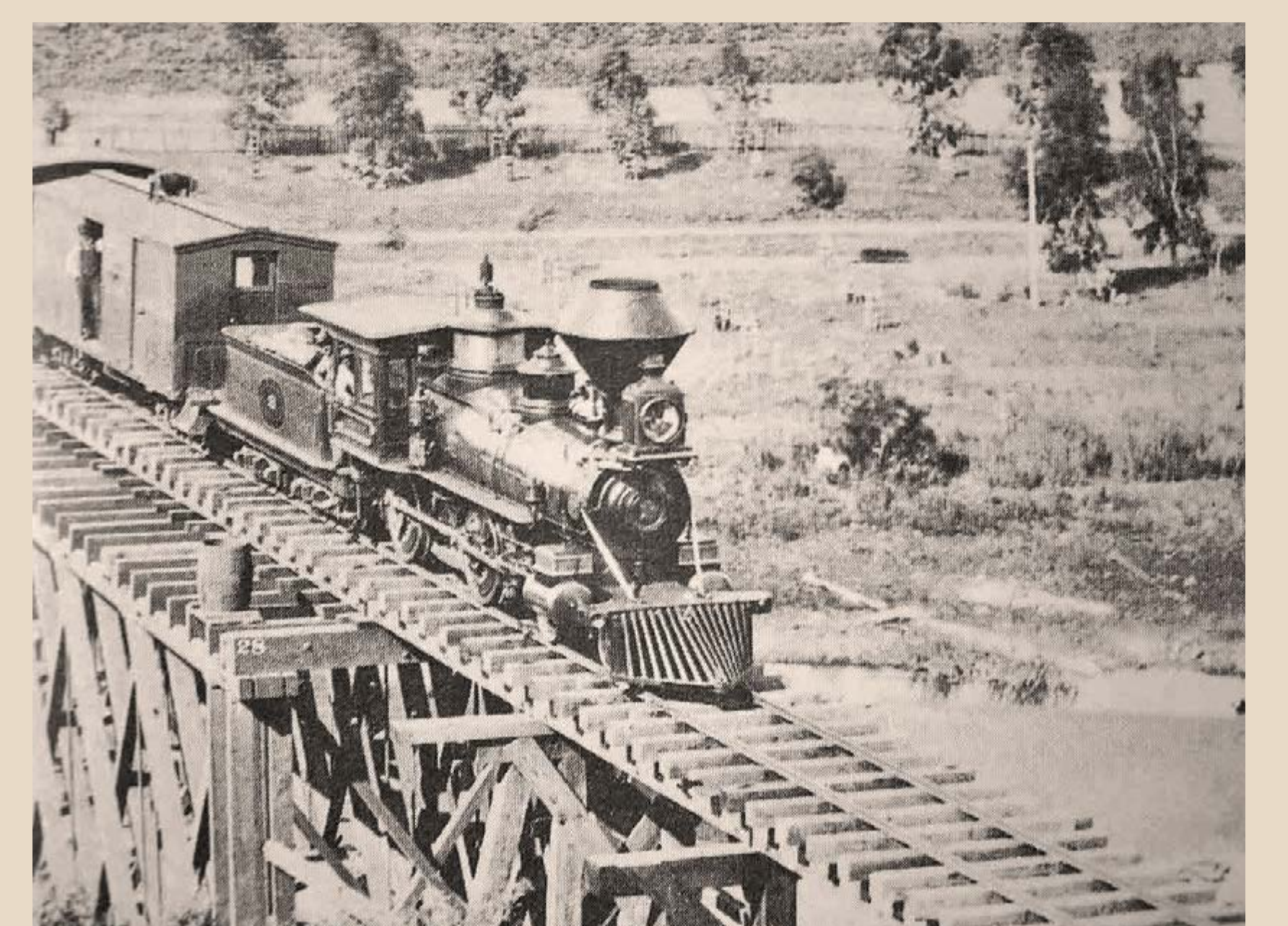
Southern Pacific Railroad



A Chinese railroad crew works in Valencia Canyon (c. 1885), Credit: Pajaro Valley Historical Society



Hihn's Valencia Mill uses a narrow-gauge railroad to transport logs, Credit: Carolyn Swift



A Santa Cruz Railroad train crosses Soquel Creek, Credit: Bruce MacGregor

GREEN GOLD: THE APPLE ERA 1900–1950



Ralph Mattison in dryer



Caption



Apple Barn



Lam Family



Caption

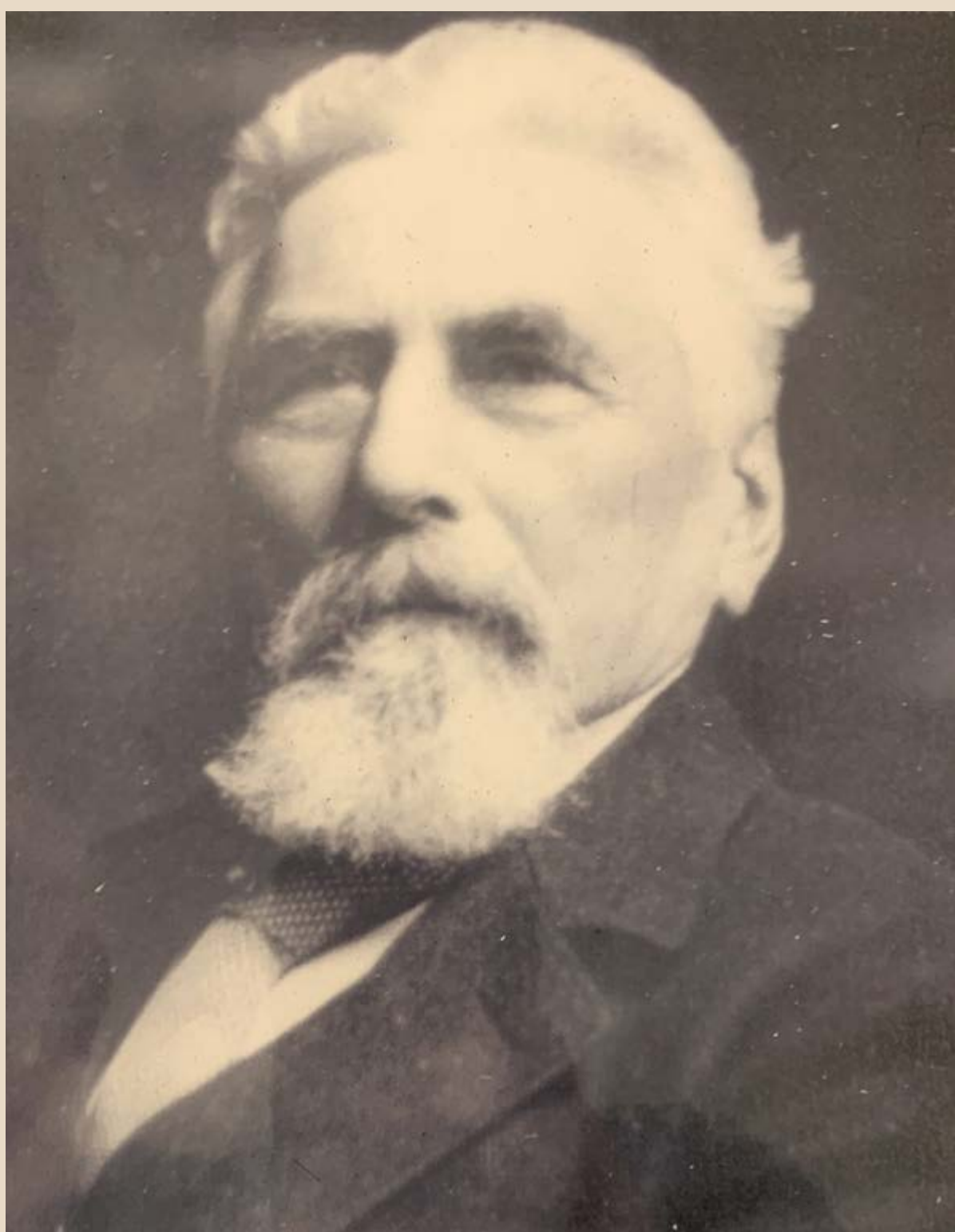
Apples became the leading industry in Aptos in the 1890s when logging depleted the forests. Hihn had the land up Valencia planted with apple trees and helped unemployed lumbermen become apple farmers. Using the railroad right-of-way, apples could be brought down by horse- and mule-drawn wagons.

Apple processing — including cider and vinegar works, and fruit drying — took over most of the lumberyards.

A rare partnership developed between Lam Pon, a Chinese immigrant entrepreneur, and Ralph Mattison, a local property owner.

Ralph Mattison built the apple dryer in Aptos and leased the building to Mr. Lam who ran the operation.

THE HIHN APPLE PACKING WAREHOUSE



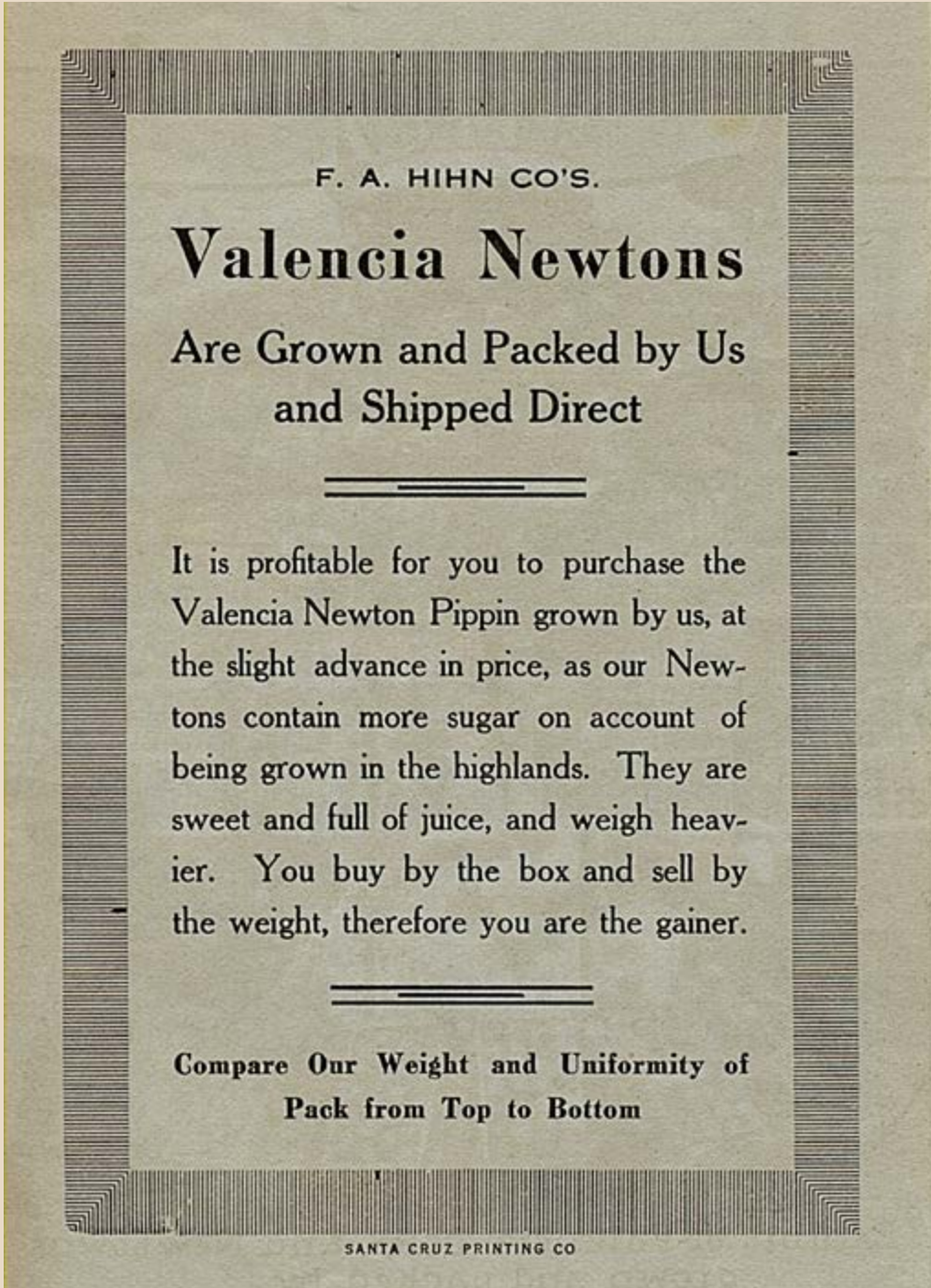
Frederick Augustus Hihn (1829-1913)
was the first self-made millionaire
in Santa Cruz County.

The Hihn Apple Packing Warehouse (Apple Barn) was constructed on the former lumberyard by Frederick Hihn circa 1906 to process apples. Hihn was a leader in the apple industry in Aptos. The apples were primarily green varieties, with the Newton Pippin and Bellflower the most popular.

Apple-loaded wagons came to the front of the Apple Barn where the apples transferred onto a covered loading dock. During the harvest, the loading dock would be piled high with crates of apples.

Once inside the barn, the apples were sorted for quality and size, and packed into boxes. Apples to be dried or processed were packed separately from those going to market.

Freight cars rolled on the spur railroad line behind the Apple Barn. The apples were destined for Watsonville, known as the Apple Capitol of the State. In Watsonville, the apples were sent to processing plants, or boxed, labeled and sent across the nation and to foreign markets. The Apple Barn is the last remaining industrial building in Aptos from the Apple Era.

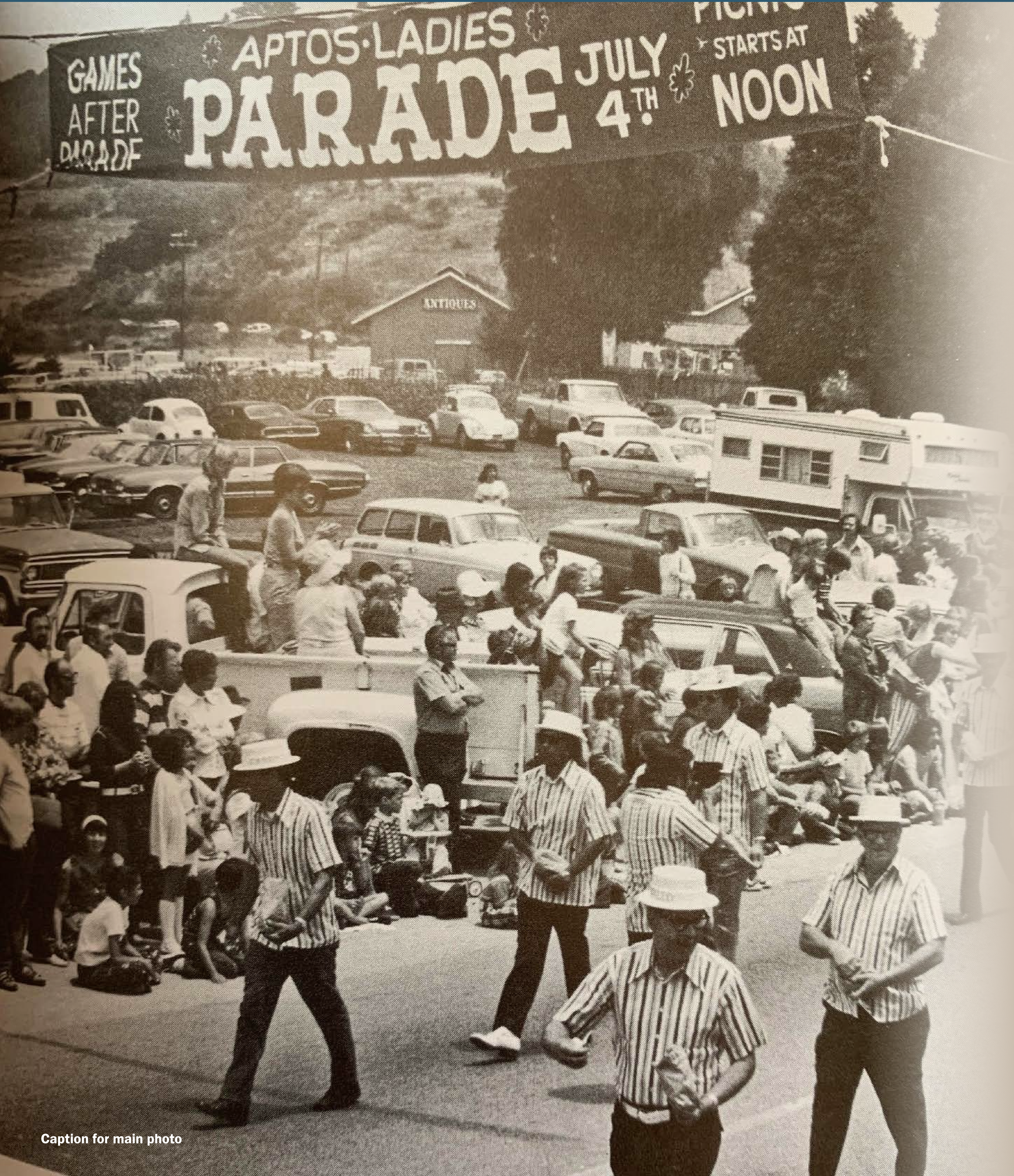


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APTOS COMMUNITY EMERGES 1900–PRESENT



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Aptos Village declined through the first half of the 20th Century as industrial businesses closed and the highway was relocated (1949). To keep the town alive, Jim Toney purchased the Bay View Hotel and the Apple Barn, establishing a small full-service row of shops in Aptos Village. Eventually, the barn would be repurposed into the Village Fair, an antique market.

External forces began changing the face of Aptos. Coastal neighborhoods grew and, in the 1960s, a surge of development saw the widening of Soquel Drive, establishment of The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park and the coming of Cabrillo Junior College, Rancho del Mar and Resurrection Church. But locals, led by the Aptos Ladies Tuesday Evening Society, successfully quashed an effort to build a concrete batching plant in Aptos Village and worked to limit growth.

Highlighting the independent spirit of Aptos, the World's Shortest Parade was established in 1961 to celebrate the Fourth of July.

Visioning for the future of Aptos Village began taking shape in the 1970s, though it would be decades before a formal plan was created.