

Soquel News from Early Newspapers

Selected by **Phil Reader**

SOQUEL AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Recently we spent a very pleasant day in visiting Soquel and examining the many improvements in that flourishing valley. On the way, after leaving Santa Cruz, we noted the fine sacks of grain, the yield of the rich grain fields on either side of the road. Threshing machines were at work, sending up columns of dust, from their unremitting work. At Soquel we found everything brisk and busy. Farmers and others were assembled at Porter's store, either for trade, or interchange of news, while the proprietor and his attentive clerk, Mr. Cummings, (we are obliged to him for favors) were busy as bees replacing goods disarranged by the earthquake. Altogether Soquel betokens a prosperous village, and as soon as the new steam mill is finished, will make rapid advances upwards and onwards in the scale of prosperity. The steam mill in course of erection is being built by Mr. O.P Wilson (formerly of the Soquel Mills), and Mr. H. Martin, of Corralitos. The dimensions are as follows: Ground floor (main building), 44 x 32; engine room, 36 x 30; height of main building from ground floor to cornice of roof, 54 feet; five stories – including basement – high. The capacity of the mill is to be from 75 to 100 barrels of first class flour per day. The motive power is a 15 horse power oscillating engine, from the Santa Cruz foundry, Mr. Martin is the machinist. When completed the mill will contain three run of stone, French Buhr, and it is the intention of the proprietors to have it in operation on or before the 20th of November. The manufacturing department will be under the superintendence of O.P. Wilson, an old and experienced miller. The mill is being built under the supervision of Mr. Ben. Hames, of Corralitos, an accomplished millwright; the third and fourth storys will be fitted up with bins for storing grain, having a capacity of 10,000 sacks. The mill is to contain all the modern improvements and labor-saving machinery usually found in first-class flouring mills; the grain can all be carried to the upper floors by elevators and patent packers.

We also visited the water-power flouring mill of Messrs. Hames and Daubenbiss and found the miller, Mr. George W. Giles busy at work, turning out A No. 1 super-fine flour; the rise of water, by the earthquake, materially assisted the revolutions of the large water wheel of this mill and more than doubled its capacity. The flour ground at this mill, we now purchase for family use, and find it superior to the best brands seen in the San Francisco market.

On our way to Soquel landing we called a brief moment at the school house, and found the school in a prosperous condition, wit the principal, Mr. Stone (our newly elected County Superintendent), faithfully plying his vocation of teacher; the Assistant, Miss Webber, also had her school in session and in proper order, the classes were reciting their lessons. School being "in" we did not disturb the studies of the scholars by an abrupt visit but took a few notes to show the force and style of the school: No. of pupils, 109; school kept open eleven months last year; number of school children in the District, 243; School Fund, State and County, \$900; school house (main building) 22 x 30, affording, in both rooms, accommodations for 120 pupils. The branches taught are such

as are usually learned in a common school education, to wit: arithmetic, algebra, grammar, history, geography, etc; school books used – the State series.

Below Soquel, near the landing, a new dam has just been built for the Linseed Oil Works and burlap factory. This improvement will also add to the interest and local wealth of that section; when this mill is finished farmers, on mountain lands, will find a ready sale for their flax seed and fibre, some already are under contract to furnish seed at three cents per pound. At the landing the steamer Salinas takes in freight and water, and also numerous coasters are engaged in freighting wood and grain, to the Bay city. Capt. Davenport, the well known Monterey Bay whaler, as cast is kettles on the beach, but as yet, has not "hooked" any of the briny monsters. The Captain says whales are shy of the coast this year, but he expects them along by and by, when the earthquake season is over. Some Italian fisherman are endeavoring to make a "haul" in the kelp, but we left before they made a landing. The wharf is a very good one, 1,200 feet long and was built by Messrs. Hihn and Lynch. At the landing there is no settlement, but many fine farms are in the neighborhood, up and down the coast, and along the Soquel creek.

We also visited the tannery of Benj. F. Porter and G.K. Porter 1 ½ miles south of Soquel, and found everything prosperous and progressive. The carpenter, Mr. Chase Barker, was at work repairing and building and the numerous employees in the tanning and other departments were busy as ants, in the various duties of their calling. In the absence of Mr. B. F. Porter the superintendent, Mr. Barker courteously explained the theory and working of the process of making leather from the time the hide is received at the vats, until it is turned out a ready finished boot, suitable for the most fastidious amateur's taste as to style and shape. This tannery not only makes the leather, but manufactures it into boots and shoes of various qualities, for the California market. A new building has just been finished, 25 x 48 feet, nineteen feet post, or a finishing room; five finishing tables on one side, and a marble table on the end will occupy the upper story. The marble table is used for currying the better quality of upper, calf and kit leather. The machinery for warming the liquor in the vats, driving the bark mill, and rolling the sole and harness leather is driven by a 12-horse power steam engine. Thirty-four vats are used for tanning, besides the large pools called layaways, soaks, limes baits and other vats used to prepare the hides for the tanning process. This tannery has been running since 1853, and was formerly owned by a Frenchman. From 500 to 600 pieces of upper leather, per month, is the average capacity of the works. In connection with the tannery is a manufacturing establishment at San Quentin where the leather is made up into boots and shoes by prison labor from 125 to 250 cases of boots per month, one dozen in a case are manufactured, besides a large number of shoes; sixty hands (convicts) are employed by this firm. We examined some of this work at Porter's Store, Soquel, and found the boots, both heavy and light, of superior manufacture, equal to the best Philadelphia boot, and style, superior to any in the California market. Mr. Porter also attends to farming, raising grain, vegetables, etc., for his own use. In the granary is a lot of 1,200 bushels of superior wheat, grown from 31 acres of land, also a good crop of corn, beans, etc. Altogether, this tannery will compare with the best in the county, and we were glad to see such substantial evidences of prosperity.

Santa Cruz Sentinel
Sat., October 21st, 1865

LETTER FROM SOQUEL

Soquel, March 7th 1866.

Editor Sentinel: As our benighted little place has not been represented, in your columns for some time, I propose to give a few items just to let the outside world know that we still exist.

Soquel has, during the past year, grown considerable. First – the new "Steam Flouring Mill," which has been grinding for the last five or six weeks, is a perfect model mill, in machinery and work, the whole concern being by three men; the mill has a capacity of one hundred barrels of flour per day (or will have) when the owners put in an engine of sufficient power – as they propose soon to do.

At present they are grinding about twenty barrels per day, running one run of stone about every twelve hours, burning about one and a quarter cords of wood, and making a superior quality of flour.

The old "Bates" Steam Saw Mill" has changed hands and is now under the management of a company of "Down East" lumbermen – Grover & Co – who have fixed up things and are prepared to turn out any quantity of redwood and fir lumber.

Messrs. B.C. Nichols & Bro's are about to build a new saw, shingle and lath mill on the Aptos Creek, about two miles from the mouth of said creek, and a wharf is also in contemplation of being built at the mouth of the creek to facilitate shipping, as the Soquel wharf, at present, is in very dilapidated condition, vessels not being able to discharge a load there except at very high tide, but the enterprising owners, Messrs. Hihn & Sudden, I believe contemplate running it (the wharf) out to deep water soon. Capt. Davenport's whaling company have been extremely unfortunate this season, not having caught a single whale. Such a run of bad luck would have discouraged almost any man but Davenport, who still hope to get a whale or two before the season closes.

There has been two new houses built here since the rain commenced, and two more will be put up soon; so hurry up with your "Court House" and jail, or we will have the County seat here before you are aware it; don't laugh – Soquel is on the "Qui Vive."

The roads in our district are in an excellent condition, thanks to our worthy road overseer John Daubenbiss; with the exception of some bridges, which our road overseer would repair but funds are running short and Soquel (so says John Dimon) has had her share of the road money (and he is supposed to know), and he fears that Pescadero might suffer if he asked for an appropriation.

Some of the petty larceny chaps, from your locality, were down this way last week, and carried off the under-clothing of a young and esteemed lady of this pace, they having been left hanging on the clothes line over night. Should we be lucky enough to catch one of these fellows, you will not have the opportunity of putting him in your Court building for a few hours then let him escape.

- DON FULANO

*Santa Cruz Sentinel,
March 10th, 1866*

SOQUEL AND VICINITY

On Wednesday last, we made a brief visit to Soquel and some of the adjacent sawmills. In the town everything was quiet, the Church Fair being the chief topic of conversation. The steam grist-mill and planing-mill was not running, but the various

mechanical branches of trade seemed to be thriving. Besides the large, new and elegant church of the Congregationalists, now enclosed and under roof, we counted some twenty new houses of barns in various stages on completion. The church is located on the east side of the stream, near the road, on what is known as the Parrish Addition, and has an eligible site, with a fine tower for a bell and cupola. The Fair (to raise means for the painting and plastering of the building) was a success, as we are informed, and deservedly so, judging from the preparations and facilities to entertain and amuse visitors. The tables were most sumptuously laid with all the luxuries of the season, while ice-cream and other delicacies, were abundant. Passing up the creek from the village, a number of splendid farms extend from the road, westward, where fine crops of grain, hay, corn, etc., are raised, while the rich bottom lands, on the right-hand side along the banks of the creek, fairly bristle with tall spires of standing corn. We thought of Sampson's foxes and wondered if the fiery tails of Reynard (the coyote) could ever burn so large a crop. The flume of the water-mill (John Daubenbiss's) also runs along the left bank of the stream. The mill is running, and as usual turning out a splendid article of A. No. 1 flour. There are plenty of trout in the stream and the flume, from which the urchins in the neighborhood catch large numbers. A small boy of Nathan Hart, we are informed, caught 176 in less than two hours in the flume. The orchards, in the vicinity, look healthy and the trees are bending with fruit. Mr. Pagles, at the blacksmith and wagon-shop was busy at work, and a number of items were waiting their return to have repairing done. At the sawmill (B. Cahoon's) large piles of lumber were stored to dry, or waiting a market. Lumber is cheap, now, and Mr. Cahoon only supplies the demand at the mill. Everybody was busy at the mill sawing lumber into apple boxes; over 30,000 feet of lumber has already been cut, or ordered for apple-boxes – last year over 80,000 feet of redwood boards were sawed, at this mill, in suitable shape and length for fruit boxes. After viewing the splendid garden and corn fields, we examined the sweet potato vines, now in full bearing – many of the potatoes being larger than the average in the market - and of unprecedented yield. Last year, one potato was raised which measured over two feet in length, and of large size. There are five rows of these delicious tubers, not over a dozen rods long, each, from which five tons of potatoes will be gathered this season (or a ton to the row) which is about five times as much as the yield would be of Irish Potatoes. The corn is of the yellow-dent variety, and some of the ears are really monsters, of giant proportions. The turnips, watermelons, muskmelons, etc., were superior and growing luxuriously; one crop rotating another, so as to keep a constant supply of fresh vegetables the year round. We noted corn and cucumbers just coming into blossom, planted on the 25th of July. As in other orchards, the trees and vines were bending, in fact breaking down with fruit. At the tannery of Mr. Rabel, the immense water-wheel was gradually revolving, grinding bark and rolling sole-leather, while the immense piles of tan-bark, indicating a provident and prudent preparation for the coming winter and spring. Some of the best heavy sole-leather made in the State is turned out at this tannery. Mr. Rabel is famous as a superior tanner, especially of belting, harness, and other durable, leather, required in the California market.

The new school house, on the west side of the road near the tannery, is almost completed (enclosed and under roof) and is a fine building. The cost of the main house, was more than the amount raised, and it was resolved to borrow the money to complete it. There was a school in session, taught by a lady, in the old house, but we had no time

even to make a brief visit. We would here remark that the road is in a very bad condition, deep ruts are cut either on one side or the other, so as to keep the heavily laden lumber wagons on a continual strain, with the main weight of the load constantly on one wheel or the other. Little repairing would be beneficial. We passed several wrecked wagons, loaded with lumber, waiting repairs.

The new saw mill, at the forks of the creek, now owned by the "Soquel River Lumbering Company" – Messrs. W.H. Parkinson, P.B. Fagen, C.W. Thomas and Waterman – is in an advanced state of completion, and will be in running order by the 1st of October. This mill was temporarily started in July last, and after sufficient lumber was cut to complete it, it was thoroughly overhauled and enlarged, so as to increase its facilities and power, and afford more working-room. The main building is 40 x 130 feet in the clear, with a boiler-house of 20 x 90 feet in the clear; the frame-work and timbers are of the largest size, and every thing is built in the most substantial manner. All the latest improvement in hauling and handling logs and lumber has been introduced with planers, edgers, siders, cut-off saws, etc, making the mill and machinery, when completed, decidedly the best in the country. It is estimated that the daily average of lumber when running, will be 20,000 feet. The timber will be brought on a railroad, some three miles, from the timber-belt, east of Phillip's mill. The road is now nearly graded, and we saw numbers of graders at work, shoveling and digging along the banks of the creek.

At Phillips – Old Kentuck's – mill (now owned by Messrs. Howe & Grover) a good article of lumber was being sawed. The average is 3,000 feet of lumber per day and soon they will commence night-work, when 7,000 per day will be cut. This mill, like Cahoon's is run by water-power, and is very economical in its machinery, etc. The large mill known as Simpson's (now owned by Mr. Dickens) is also running, cutting 12,000 feet per day, but as we did not visit this mill, or Moore's and the old Bates' mill, we cannot give the particulars. Nichols mill at the Aptos, we were informed is doing well, but being out of range, was not visited. Altogether, Soquel and her lumbering interests, have no reason to complain, notwithstanding the low price of lumber now prevailing. We look forward for a bright future to the prosperous town, especially as the price of lumber is bound to be up. The north-west coast cannot compete with our own domestic trade, and when the reaction comes, a golden harvest will be the reward.

Santa Cruz Sentinel
Sat. September 23, 1869

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

The traveling correspondent of the *Pacific Rural Press* of October 7th gives the following in his last letter.

This county is full of interesting data for the correspondent; no trouble to find plenty to write about, the only trouble is, what to miss mentioning. Its abundant crops of cereals, and its manufacturing interest are not the only attractions.

SOQUEL

This quiet little village of about 100 souls is situated four miles south of Santa Cruz, and at about one half mile from the bay of Monterey; at this point there is a fine wharf and warehouse to correspond with its requirement. Just below this landing is one

of the finest *bathing beaches* on this coast, considered so for its pure white sand, its freedom from fogs and wind, and the absence of undertow to the surf. Some 500 families have visited this point of Monterey bay the present season, staying from 4 to 30 days each. I will state that all come prepared to camp out, although all the necessaries are obtainable in the vicinity. Soquel is noted for more children than any town of its size in the State, requiring three first-class school teachers to instruct its rising generation, and strange to say, all its business men are bachelors.

SOQUEL RIVER LUMBER COMPANY

This company run a steam mill, and regularly employ 40 men, in getting out and manufacturing lumber, of which they turn out four hundred and seventy thousand feet per month.

The grist and lumber mills of E.B. Porter, of this place, are run by steam – 40 horse power engine. The former has 3 run of bahrs, with a capacity of forty barrels of flour per day; and the latter is capable of turning out about 7,000 feet of lumber per diem.

PORTER'S TANNERY

This manufactory is the property of Geo. & Benj. F. Porter, and is situated about 1½ miles south of Soquel. It has a capacity equal to the largest at Santa Cruz, and 20 men are regularly employed. A very respectable little hotel at this place is presided over by A. Mann. Its principal merchants are F.J. Cumming and E. Porter. ...

-L.P. Mc

Santa Cruz Sentinel
Sat., October 14th, 1871

RESOURCES OF SOQUEL AND APTOS

The importance of these two shipping points on the Bay of Monterey, their resources and value cannot be too highly estimated, when considering and speaking of the general resources of Santa Cruz county. The region known as Soquel embraces all that vast, valuable and varied land bordering on Soquel Creek and its many tributaries, every acre of which is valuable for its redwood, pine, oak, laurel and madrone; a forest covering a large scope of country. Some of the most desirable and beautiful homes and farms in the county are located in the vicinity of Soquel Creek, fruitful orchards and vineyards loom up in every available nook through the mountains, and no where can a more lovely or healthful climate be found. Among her citizens are found a few of the old pioneers who come hither before the days of gold, and have clung to this region as the most desirable spot to live and die, in the world. Among them are the names of Hames and Daubenbiss, so familiar to every man of early times, will long be remembered for their genial qualities and generous hospitality.

The most important resource of Soquel is that of lumber. There are eight sawmills, of a capacity in the aggregate, to manufacture twelve million feet per annum. This lumber is mainly shipped from the Soquel wharf, most of which goes south, and not a little finds market in San Francisco. On there will spring up a large trade in the firewood line. It is estimated there is one quarter million cords or more of hardwood available for shipping from this point; add to this list the

agricultural products of some twelve thousand acres of the most productive soils in the State, and one can easily and readily perceive that our neighbor, Soquel, is destined to be a place of much importance. The timber region contains an area of almost fifty square miles, or one fourth of the estimated amount of timber of the county. In this vicinity are also two good flouring mills, two tanneries, and one planing mill. Porter's tannery furnishes the leather manufactured into boots, shoes &c., but the convicts in the States Prison. Much valuable land in and about Soquel adapted to agriculture, is for sale at prices very reasonable. The influx has been large since the settlement of titles to those large and productive tracts; soon there will not be an acre of unappropriated soil in that region. The silk worm is being propagated in favored localities with promise of great profit. The fine wharf, warehouse and surroundings at this landing, is a great inducement to farmers looking for good and cheap facilities for marketing their produce....

Santa Cruz Sentinel
Sat., October 21st, 1871

THE FLOODS IN SOQUELL HOW THE WATERS ROSE AND SURPRISED THE CITIZENS

Soquel creek reached its highest point for many years this morning, though it did not, like the San Lorenzo, rise higher than ever before known. Some say the waters were greatest at 1 a.m., while others think the flood was most between 3 and 4 o'clock.

The main streets of the business portion of Soquel were flooded, because of a jam below the paper mill.

In Nathan Hart's house the water stood a foot and a half deep; the furniture was all damaged. Mr. Hart stepped out of bed into a part of Soquel creek which was running through his bed-room. The water was four feet deep in front of his house, which stands between John Bowman's store and H. Weller's saloon.

Several inches of water entered John Lyman's two shops, but the damage was nominal.

D.J. Bertola's barn came near being washed away; the bank caved away under it. Half the barn is suspended over the rushing waters.

B. Howard's barn is also left hanging over the creek, damaged to the extent of \$100 or more. A big tree came down the creek and knocked away the outer posts of the barn.

About forty feet is gone of the wagon bridge the county built last year a Camp Capitola near the mouth of Soquel creek. The foot bridge near there is entirely gone.

A house which stands near the county bridge at Camp Capitola last night threatened momentarily to fall into the creek, but at last accounts is still standing, though badly undermined.

The bridge over Soquel creek at the old chair factory, near Cahoon's, was swept away. This afternoon the skeleton of this bridge came down stream and

lodged across the creek just above the bridge near John Bowman's residence, where it threatened to cause a jam if the waters should again rise; so W.R. Wilson and Frank Walser attached ropes to both ends of the runaway bridge, sawed it in two, and secured the timbers.

Several young men of this village were busy to-day spearing and hooking in planks, fragments of fence, ford wood, and other drift. Their enterprise was well rewarded. But they could not catch their wheelbarrow, on it went, whirling down the boiling waters in a most tantalizing manner.

-Wake Robin

Santa Cruz Daily Surf
Monday, Jan.27, 1890