



HISTORIC WALKING TOUR



**HISTORY OF THE
SANTA CRUZ BEACH BOARDWALK
& MAIN BEACH**

Walking Tour of the Historic Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk

Designated a California Historical Landmark in 1989, the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk and Cocoanut Grove are living history, from the top of the Casino flagpole to the bottom of the Giant Dipper's weightless drop. National Historic Landmark honors have also been awarded to the 1911 Loeff Carousal and the 1924 Giant Dipper wooden roller coaster. A visitor transported through time from the gala opening of the Casino and Natatorium in 1907 wouldn't be lost among the familiar buildings in this seaside setting.

Begin: Neptune's Kingdom Beach Street lobby

1. Inside First Floor Entrance

Just under the skin of Neptune's Kingdom Adventure Amusement Center are the great steel arches of the original Natatorium bathing pavilion. When it opened in 1907, a magnificent plaster bas-relief of King Neptune gazed down at bathers entering the heated salt-water pool. A full-figure, larger than life-size statue of Neptune watched from the balcony, attended by plaster water babies who played along the walls.

"Ladies" were admitted free, when accompanied by "a gentleman." Scratchy woolen bathing suits, towels, and changing rooms were rented from uniformed attendants, or you could sit in the gallery and watch the fun while listening to the band.

Next, walk past the Smuggler's Arcade and turn to the left to see photographs of Neptune's Kingdom as Santa Cruz' famous salt-water plunge, the scene of death-defying water carnival acts and record-setting swim competitions. For over 50 years, nearly every kid in Santa Cruz learned to swim here, until excessive repairs forced closure of the aging pool, which was replaced with the miniature golf course you see today.

Take any stairway, or the Lighthouse elevator, to second floor Historium.

2. Historium

Here you can take a walk through Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk history along the Historium. Bathers and fun lovers have come to Santa Cruz Beach since the 1850s, although it's hard to see how they could have had much fun in heavy, itching woolen bathing suits covering neck to knees! These bathing suits weighed up to 20 pounds when they were wet. Bath houses featuring heated salt-water pools, restaurants, shops, and game rooms lined the beach through the turn of the century.

In 1904 a brash young promoter named Fred Swanton had consolidated all the beach businesses and built the Neptune Casino, a wedding cake of a building decorated with onion domes and housing a bandstand, dance pavillion, skating rink, theater, and

bath house--all topped with a sky full of fluttering flags. He patterned the Casino and bath house after the Coney Island and Atlantic City parks of his native east coast.

He was undaunted when it burned to the ground two years later (June 22, 1906), and by 1907 had replaced it with the buildings you see today. The Historium exhibit case commemorates the history of Fred Swanton's Natatorium (the Latin word for swimming pool), before it became Neptune's Kingdom.

Return to the Neptune's Kingdom Beach Street diving bell entrance for an outdoor walking tour.

3. Southern Pacific Tracks:

Be sure to stay outside the painted white safety lines next to the tracks-- 2500 tons of train still rumbles by twice a day.

Turn left and follow the railroad tracks past Neptune's Kingdom toward the arcade, where train passengers boarded and departed when the Casino had its own Southern Pacific stop. In an attempt to keep the tourist dollars coming after the automobile was invented, the Southern Pacific Railroad inaugurated its Suntan Special in 1927. The first route was run on Sundays between San Jose and Santa Cruz and later lines were added from Oakland and San Francisco. As many as 5,000 people per day took the Suntan Special during its heyday. As roads improved, however, and competition from the automobile and trucking freight lines took its toll, the line was shut down, making its final run in 1960. Guests would depart the train to the rousing strains of the Beach Band, who greeted each train with blazing brass.

Stop in front of Entrance B, and look east down the track to see the white timbers of the Giant Dipper, a classic wooden roller coaster.

4. Entrance B

A 1953 modernization and 1980 remodel of the Casino saved eye-catching architectural elements of the original 1907 building, such as this round Moorish style window set in a Mission Revival style tower.

Beach promotor Fred Swanton hired architect William H. Weeks after the big fire to replace the onion-domed Neptune Casino with a Moorish style seaside dance pavillion, shops and casino arcade.

The lively Casino and the adjoining Mission Revival style Natatorium put Santa Cruz on the map as the "Atlantic City of the Pacific." The Entrance B doors now open to guests headed up to the glass-roofed Sun Room overlooking Monterey Bay.

5. Cocoanut Grove

Continue to the area outside Cocoanut Grove Entrance A, created in 1980, and look through the glass doors to see crystal chandeliers and the opulent staircase that leads to the grand ballroom. Just around the corner, a 1953 Modern façade masks the original ballroom entrance, once a dazzling display of lights that drew thousands to dance. During the 1930's and 1940's business at the amusement park declined slightly due to the Depression and World War II, but the Cocoanut Grove ballroom entered its hayday. The Cocoanut Grove featured dance concerts with some of the biggest names of the big band era: Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Xavier Cugat, Lawrence Welk, and many others. Today the Cocoanut Grove hosts a variety of events like trade shows, banquets, wedding receptions, dances, and parties.

6. West Entrance Park

From the grassy park at the Cocoanut Grove's west entrance there is a fine view of the municipal wharf, the last of four commercial shipping and fishing wharves on the Santa Cruz waterfront since 1853. Majestic *Washingtonia robusta* palms rise to the bay breezes here at the old Cocoanut Grove entrance, and along Beach Street toward the wharf. Forty-two palms were planted as four-foot high specimens in 1962 by Santa Cruz Seaside Company President Laurence Canfield, who donated half of them to the City of Santa Cruz.

Across Beach Street is the tiled bell tower of La Bahia apartment complex, built in 1926. The buildings are clustered around two interior courtyards with fountains, designed to suggest a Mediterranean village. Beyond La Bahia a red tile roof rises over a line of arched windows which mark the 1916 seaside villa of Judge Marcel Cerf, now housing the Casablanca motel and restaurant. It stands on the site of the 1890 Sea Beach Hotel, which was totally consumed in a spectacular 3 a.m. fire in 1912.

The first seaside rooming house and baths on the beach were built on the same site in 1866 by an enterprising young widow, Elizabeth Liddell. Her Long Branch Bath House, with 100 changing rooms, was modeled after a New Jersey resort, and made history as the first commercial bath house on the west coast.

7. Casa del Rey Hotel

Turn back toward the Cocoanut Grove. Across the street a pair of graceful palms mark the site of the Casa del Rey Hotel, a landmark three-story Mission Revival/Pueblo style building with sheltered formal gardens, erected in 1911 by the owners of the Boardwalk.

It enjoyed a long life as a beach convention hotel linked to the Casino by an overhead enclosed bridge, then became a residence hotel, a U.S. Navy hospital and finally

a retirement home. The Casa del Rey was severely damaged during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake and was demolished in November, 1989.

From 1903 to 1907 the hotel site sported a colorful tent city operated by Fred Swanton, who replaced the multi-hued striped tents with tiny cottages after the new Casino was completed.

Several of the cottages were purchased and moved around town when the Casa del Rey Hotel was constructed, and can be spotted today. Your sharp eyes may find several at the corner of the main beach parking lot. (Caption: Cottage city, 1909.)

8. Arcade

Continue walking to the front of the Arcade, where a neon CASINO sign marks both the original ornate 1907 Penny Arcade and its 1953 transformation to Modern style. No gambling took place in the Casino, which housed displays, shops and games, but the enterprising Swanton anchored a large sailing schooner just off the beach where, it was said, adults could try their luck for the cost of a 10-cent water taxi ride.

Today, challengers match wits and skill with fast-paced electronic arcade games beneath the gracefully decorated original 1907 columns. Still operating among the modern games are hand-cranked movie machines and a mysterious wax-figure fortune teller, all enjoyed by visitors nearly a century ago.

Walk through the Arcade, toward the beach, and take a few steps into the colonnade.

9. Beach Casino

On this end of the promenade, toward the beach, is the rounded form of the Beach Casino, now housing the Bay View Room of the Cocoanut Grove on its upper floor. Its shape was constructed to echo the lines of the fantastic Neptune Casino built on this site in 1904 by Fred Swanton, often called the “P.T. Barnum” of Santa Cruz Beach.

An outrageous mixture of Turkish, Persian and Indian fantasy, festooned with domes and flags and built entirely of wood, the Neptune Casino housed the town’s finest restaurant on its upper floor. The Casino burned to the ground in a fire that started in the Casino Restaurant on June 22, 1906.

Swanton immediately began promoting a new Casino on the site, and crews began construction of the buildings you see today. The new Casino opened with a Grand Ball on June 22, 1907, a truly amazing feat and a tribute to the armies of craftsmen and construction crews of the day.

10. Marini’s Candies

Also on this end of the promenade, you'll see Marini's Candies. Their salt water taffy is a Santa Cruz seaside tradition. The shop has been open and operated by the Marini family since 1928, and the red and white taffy-wrapping machine behind the candy counter is original equipment. You'll often find candy-makers at work in the windows.

11. Colonnade:

The view down through the arches of the old plunge building hasn't changed since the covered seaside promenade was added for strolling visitors in 1909. Above is the former Palm Court Room of the Natatorium, once fitted with wicker tables and chairs and potted palms. Here ladies enjoyed a quiet cup of tea overlooking the sea, while youngsters and spouses frolicked in the salty Plunge.

Stroll down the promenade, past shops and the beachside Neptune's Kingdom entrance, to Cap'n Jack Flint's Pirate Ship, and begin a tour of the Boardwalk.

12. The Boardwalk

Many of the earliest rides on the Boardwalk were operated by itinerant concessionaires, who set up the rides here in the summer and moved them to Long Beach in the winter. Since the 1950s, however, the Santa Cruz Seaside Company has owned and operated all the rides on the Boardwalk, while most shops, games and food stops are leased by concessionaires.

13. Double Shot

This 125' tall tower ride was installed at the Boardwalk in the Spring of 2005. Riders are launched skywards at more than 3 G's to a breathtaking view of the California Coast and then experience the weightlessness of negative G forces as they are shot back down for the ultimate thrill. With the Boardwalk's limited space, a tall ride that took little floor space was a great option for the company.

14. Bumper Cars, Sky Glider

The first bumper car ride, Dodge-Ems, was installed in 1922, and the first rider drew lots of laughs when the spinning car failed to respond to his command of, "Whoa!" Dodge-Ems were replaced in 1940 with cars from the Treasure Island World's Fair, and have been updated since.

The 1000-foot-long Sky Glider was added in 1967, offering a birds-eye-view of the Boardwalk scene. The technology was developed in the ski lift industry, leading to a compact ride that fit the Boardwalk's limited space.

15. Historical Landmark Plaque, Walkway 3

In 1989, the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk and Coconut Grove were declared a State Historic Landmark, in recognition of their continuous contribution to the economy and industries of the State of California since 1907. A spirit of historic preservation guides company policy to preserve and maintain the historic buildings and rides for future generations to enjoy.

16. Original Boardwalk Board Walk Samples, Walkway 3

When originally constructed in 1904, the Boardwalk actually was a walk made of boards, elevating fun seekers above the sandy beach. The last remains of the old board walk were replaced or covered with sturdy concrete decks over an engineered seawall in 1960.

17. Loeff Carousel

The beautiful whirling Carousel has been the pride of the Boardwalk since it was installed new in 1911. The Carousel boasts hand-carved antique wooden horses and chariots created by the Danish wood-carver Charles I.D. Loeff.

The Loeff horses are identifiable by their jeweled saddles and bridles, elaborately carved flowing manes, slender prancing legs, and above all by intricate carvings beneath the cantle of the saddle. Look for angels and cherubs, pomegranates and rabbits. Loeff was the first Carousel designer to add lights as decoration, dazzling the riders with his brilliant displays. The Loeff horses are now very rare--none were made after 1918.

An air-driven band organ built in 1894 provides the carousel's circus-like music, and you can see its drums and xylophone through a window on the inside wall of the Carousel building. This is the original 342-pipe Ruth band organ. The Carousel even has a ring machine that operates mechanically by the turning of the carousel.

The parking lot across the street from the Carousel was home for the first beach merry-go-round in 1889. Called the Steam Flying Horses, it featured standing wooden horses who bumped along a steam-powered circular track, with music provided by a banjo player attired in a black silk top hat.

18. Down by the Sea Store

Proceeding down the Boardwalk, you'll see the distinctively modern architecture of the 1950s, dubbed Googie style after the restaurant in Los Angeles that made it famous. Once dismissed as American bad taste, Googie has come into its own in architectural history. It features boomerang shapes, soaring lines that abruptly switch

directions like a flying saucer flight, and pierced structural beams that highlight the inherent strength of modern building materials.

19. Haunted Castle

Dark rides are a feature of every boardwalk--places to be scared out of your wits and come right back out into the sunlight. This ride, which opened in 1980, replaced a 1931 Dante's Inferno, the 1934 Laff in the Dark, and three pirate themed dark rides. All had gory creatures that jumped out as if to grab you, and all required a corps of technicians and artists to keep them operating in proper shape.

20. Ice Cream Stand

Adjoining the Haunted Castle is a tiny ice cream stand boasting a black and white ceramic tile façade and chrome streamlined overhang. This very sanitary look was used heavily in food establishments from the 1930s into the 1950s. The Lane family opened four Frozen Custard stands on the Boardwalk in 1935, and ran them for three generations until the 1970s. This is the only original custard stand remaining.

21. Giant Dipper

The Giant Dipper opened to screams in 1924 and has been giving one of the world's best-rated rides ever since. It was designed and constructed by Arthur Looff, the son of the carousel carver.

Along with the 1911 Looff Carousel, it has been recognized as a National Historic Landmark, an honor awarded only to historic places that have contributed substantially to the engineering, architectural and cultural history of the nation. Coaster riders have been even more enthusiastic: the Giant Dipper consistently rates among the ten best coaster rides in the world!

The Giant Dipper was constructed at a cost of \$50,000 in 1924, and used 14 miles of lumber laid end to end, 862 gallons of paint, and 3150 light bulbs. The train travels at speeds up to 55 miles per hour along 1/2 mile of track, and that heart-stopping first hill is a 70-foot drop. The track is walked many times daily and inspected by a coaster mechanic. The braking system, track, and cars have all been replaced with the latest in ride safety technology.

To get a full-length view of the length of the Giant Dipper, look back when you reach Walkway 5, a little further along on your tour. Before you leave the Dipper entrance area, walk over to the beach railing for more history.

22. Beach Overlook

The beach has been the scene of every kind of activity over the years, from hot-air

balloon landings to soap opera star swoonings. The first bathers used private changing houses provided by the area landowners in the 1860s, and some were mounted on horse-drawn wagons. To enforce modesty and protect women bathers from view, the ladies bathed inside the wagons, which were pulled into the surf and returned to the beach with their shrieking wet contents.

Newspaper editors were outraged by the indecent Santa Cruz bathers, especially men whose “shaggy shanks” were visible below their long-john style bathing trousers. In later years, the Santa Cruz police chief arrested men who attempted to lounge on the beach without bathing shirts.

All that changed in the Roaring Twenties. The first Miss California Beauty Pageant took place right here in 1924, and continued into the 1970s. The Hollywood film industry has favored the Santa Cruz Beach as the setting for tales of romance, adventure, intrigue and comedy, and beachgoers have been seen by millions on national television.

23. Sky Glider Entrance #1/ L.A. Thompson Scenic Railway Site.

The first thrill ride at the Boardwalk was brought from Coney Island in 1908. L.A. Thompson’s Scenic Railway brought passengers up and down a series of gentle hills on a one-mile track, where they experienced four minutes of “scenic excitement.” The Scenic Railway was removed in 1923 to make way for the Giant Dipper roller coaster--and riders who thought the Giant Dipper would be more of the same got the surprise of their lives!

24. Typhoon/Coast Line Railroad Site

The wild Typhoon ride marks the site of Fred Swanton’s 1907 Coast Line Railroad, a scaled-down steam train that operated the length of the Boardwalk. In spite of its size, it required a licensed engineer and fireman to operate, and was so powerful it was removed and leased to a logging company during the winter off-season. The popular train ride was replaced with a diesel powered, Streamline model from 1931 to 1945, when the track was taken out.

25. Logger’s Revenge

Water rides have been popular in amusement parks nationwide since the first Shoot the Chutes dumped folks in the drink in 1895 at Long Island’s Sea Lion Park. Over the years the rides have become steeper and wetter. The Logger’s Revenge was installed here in 1978. A Chute the Chutes water slide was a big hit in the same spot from 1929 to 1935.

26. Site of the Great Auto Race/Cave Train Overlook

Race car rides have been a fixture at the Boardwalk since former road-racing champion Major Earl Clipperly placed midget racers on an open racetrack at this location in 1938. The Autorama introduced a safer rail-guided ride in scaled-down sports cars in 1962, and Walt Disney came up to take a look at the design. Autorama was renamed the Great Auto Race and replaced with cars that were patterned after 1910 autos. The Great Auto Race was taken out in 1997 to make space for all of the other rides you see today.

The Cave Train to the Lost World opened with a prehistoric theme in 1961, built into an extensive engineered seawall construction project that reclaimed floodlands at the river. The Cave Train and the Autorama were both inspired by high-tech rides introduced at Disneyland, the world's newest and most remarkable amusement park of the time.

27. Ferris Wheel

Bridge engineer George W. G. Ferris amazed patrons of the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition with his 265-foot high revolving wheel, which carried 1440 passengers at a time in 36 trolley-like cars. The Santa Cruz Beach Ferris Wheel was built by the Eli Bridge Company, and installed in 1963. George Ferris never patented the ride that bears his name, and died penniless at the age of 37, unable to profit from the millions his invention made on the world's midways.

28. Boating Concession and Leibrandt Bath Houses

The view from Walkway 6 looks across the site of Stephen Washburn's boating concession near the San Lorenzo River railroad bridge, described in 1875 as "the most beautiful little rowboats ever seen here." Washburn's Moonlight Boating cruises were very popular in the 1890s, and his hand built wooden boats were admired by all.

In this area John Leibrandt erected a few changing houses for his ocean-bathing friends in 1865. The owners preached the health benefits of bathing in salt water. Scores of tourists began visiting Santa Cruz to enjoy this highly-trouted "natural medicine". Soon other concessions sprang up nearby, including restaurants, curio shops and photo stands. The bathing house idea quickly developed into commercial bath houses further down the beach

The City's lifeguard corps began here in 1870, when Charles Arcan patrolled Leibrandt's bathing beach and later received a gold watch engraved, "From the grateful parents of Phillip Figel for saving his life from a watery grave at Santa Cruz, June 12, 1879."

A return by way of Walkway 5 will take you outside the Boardwalk to walk the length of the Giant Dipper, where you can get an unobstructed view of the classic wooden structure.

BOARDWALK HISTORY TEST

1. In the 1860's and 1870's what were the main attractions in Santa Cruz?
 - a. Salt water and bath houses
 - b. Fishing and the wharf
 - c. The beaches and the healthy sea air
2. What the Casino and Boardwalk patterned after?
 - a. Coney Island and Atlantic City parks
 - b. San Diego Park
 - c. Whitney's Playland Park
3. Who laid the plans for the first boardwalk and casino?
 - a. John Marin
 - b. William H. Weeks
 - c. Fred Swanton
4. When did the first casino burn down?
 - a. June 22, 1906
 - b. August 15, 1907
 - c. July 30, 1908
5. What was the first thrill ride at the Boardwalk?
 - a. Loeff Carosel
 - b. Giant Dipper Roller Coaster
 - c. L.A. Thompson Scenic Railway
6. What was the Suntan Special?
 - a. A special rate on suntan lotion
 - b. A train that traveled from San Francisco Bay Area to Santa Cruz.
 - c. A discounted entrance fee that was offered for the Plunge.
7. In 1907 when the Casino opened it consisted of
 - a. gambling and card games of luck
 - b. displays, shops, and "penny arcade" games
 - c. a saloon style bar
8. What took place of the Plunge/ Natatorium?
 - a. The Jet Star
 - b. The miniature golf course
 - c. The Giant Dipper Roller Coaster
9. The original Ferris Wheel created by George W. G. Ferris in 1893 held how many passengers at a time?
 - a. 40
 - b. 100
 - c. 1440

10. The Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf is the last remaining commercial shipping and fishing wharf on the Santa Cruz waterfront since 1853. How many were there in the 1800's?
 - a. 2
 - b. 4
 - c. 5

11. What pageant took place on Santa Cruz Main Beach from 1924-1970's?
 - a. Miss California Beauty Pageant
 - b. Miss Santa Cruz County Pageant
 - c. Little Miss Beach Girl Pageant

12. What movie had parts filmed at the Boardwalk?
 - a. Lost Boys
 - b. Sudden Impact
 - c. Attack of the Killer Clowns
 - d. All of the above