

CAPITOLA VILLAGE

HISTORICAL WALKING



1904 Train Depot

Capitola is one of the oldest vacation retreats on the Pacific Coast. Before the resort was founded, Soquel Indians lived here for more than 2,000 years. Later, during the Mexican period, the Soquel Rancho and its augmentation—totaling more than 34,000 acres—stretched from Loma Prieta to the beach at La Playa de Soquel. Rancho grantee Martina Castro used the coastline for exporting hides and tallow in the years before the Gold Rush.

After California statehood, the mouth of Soquel Creek became a shipping point called Soquel Landing. Santa Cruz County pioneer Frederick Hihn bought the land in 1856 and built the first wharf. Samuel A. Hall of Soquel leased the beach flat and planted barley in 1869.

On July 4, 1874, Hall opened a campground along the shoreline and his daughter, Lulu, named it Capitola in honor of the fictional heroine in a series of Victorian novels by author E.D.E.N. Southworth. Once the Santa Cruz-Watsonville train was completed two years later, Capitola was a success.

Hihn took over control of the vacation haven in 1882. He subdivided lots and built cabins, a skating rink, hotel, theater and a bandstand for afternoon and evening concerts on the sand. By 1895, Capitola was recognized for its grand 160-room hotel, as well as for such pleasant recreational pastimes as horseback riding, sea-bathing, boating and fishing.

H. Allen Rispin bought Capitola in 1919 and continued its development. Visitors began to arrive by automobile as well as by train, and came to stay both in the winter and summer.

The village was incorporated in 1949 as the City of Capitola, and proudly celebrated its 50th birthday in 1999.

Walking Tour

1. Stockton, San Jose, and Cherry Avenues outline Camp Capitola's first neighborhood. Lots for summer cottages were sold here starting in 1882.
2. A railroad depot was built at 250 Monterey Avenue in 1903, and welcomed thousands of visitors every summer. Turned sideways in the late 1960s, it is now the Inn at Depot Hill.
3. Cliff Avenue showcases the early homes of Depot Hill. When the subdivision opened in 1884, most of the initial buyers were German immigrants and members of the Germania Verein.
4. The tall palm is a designated historic feature that marks the spot where Camp Capitola began in 1874. Original camp structures were a small hotel, a series of cabins, a dance pavilion, and rows of canvas tents. To enter the camp, visitors crossed the creek near Esplanade Park.
5. Constructed in the 1880s and later enlarged, the F. A. Hihn Company Superintendent's headquarters has been designated a National Historic Landmark.
6. Completed circa 1902, the Six Sisters duplexes are among very few surviving buildings designed for the Capitola Esplanade by prominent local architect Edward L. Van Cleeck.
7. The Mercantile opened in 1950 as the Capitola Bowl. A Visitor Information Kiosk and ATM is located here.
8. Margaritaville is on site of a former lagoon boat and bathhouse. When the Stockton Avenue Bridge was finished in 1934, it visually connected stucco buildings along the curved Esplanade to the Mediterranean style bungalows of the Venetian Court across the creek.
9. A small community of fishing shacks once existed where the Venetian Court now stands. Beyond is the Capitola Wharf, first built in 1857 when the beach was a shipping point called Soquel Landing.
10. Along the creek footpath upstream from Stockton Bridge is the Riverview Avenue subdivision developed in the 1920s and 1930s. Several houses carry plaques as landmark structures.
11. A modest log cabin was renovated in 1947 to become the Shadowbrook Restaurant. Originally approached only from the river, the present entrance is on Wharf Road and can be reached by cable car ride or a landscaped pathway.
12. Designed in 1922 by architect George McCrae, the Rispin Mansion on Wharf Road was built by Capitola's third owner, H. Allen Rispin. Years later, it served as home for the Convent of Poor Clares. Restoration is now in progress under current ownership by the City of Capitola.

Capitola Village Map

To Hwy. 1 (Bay Ave.)
Capitola Soquel Chamber (716G Capitola Ave.)

Shuttle Lot Moved to Bay Avenue between Post Office & Crossroads Center
See Inset Map

Map is not necessarily to scale. Updates are done annually. The Village Association assumes no responsibility for map errors. For more information phone (831) 475-6522.