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Sourisseau Academy

Smith-Layton Archive

presents:

"Cool Clear Water"

by Thomas Layton

Les Amis (The Friends)

photo collection

October 2014

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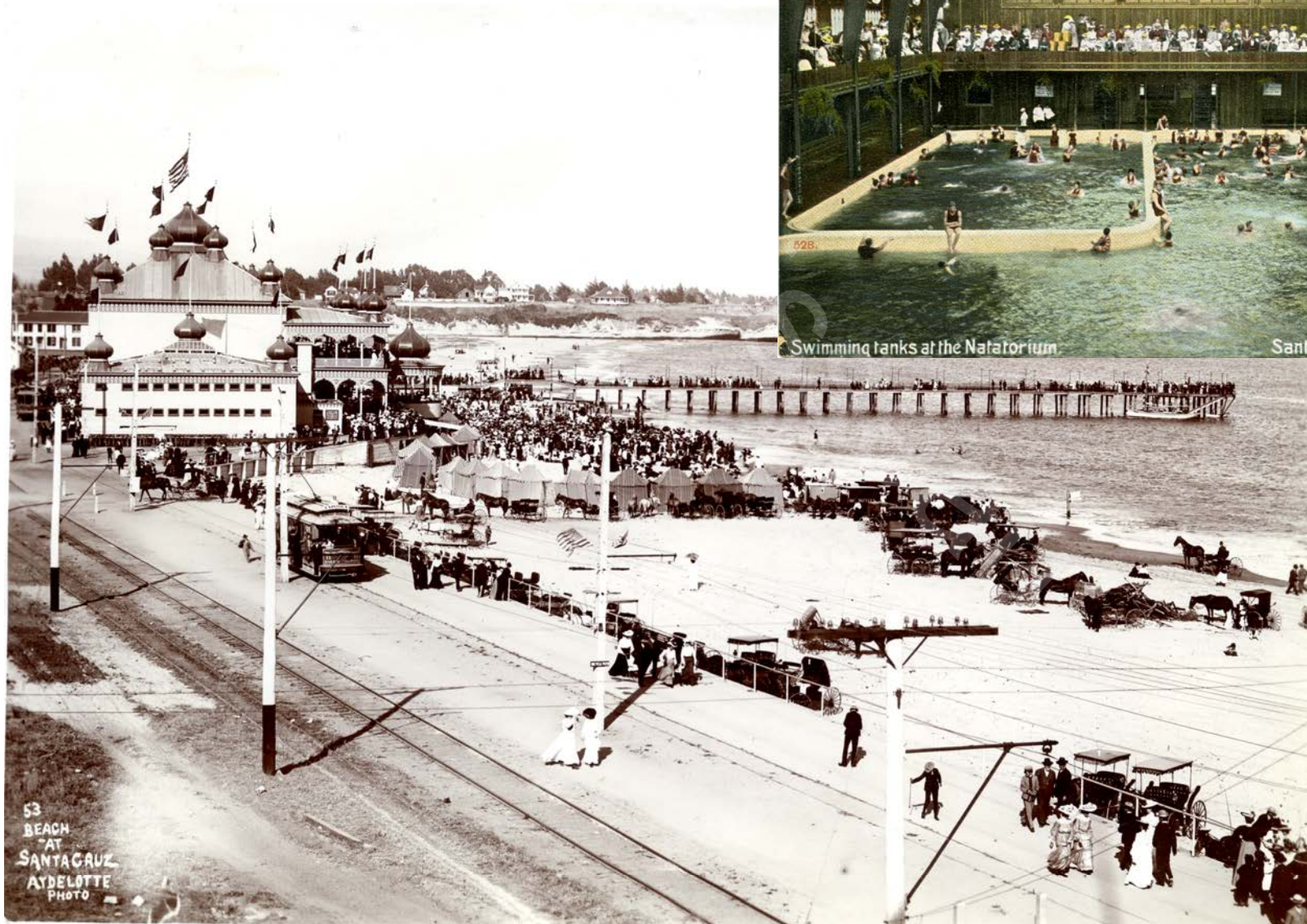
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A photo recently purchased by *Les Amis de Sourisseau!*
October, 2014



77) By the late 19th century, many Santa Clara Valley residents were finding relief from the unrelenting summer heat by traveling to the coast side of the Santa Cruz Mountains. The more wealthy built summerhouses in the coastal coolness of places like Pacific Grove, where, even as late as 1910, beach attire differed little from town attire.

A photo recently purchased by *Les Amis de Sourisseau!*
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78) Those with more modest budgets could take the early morning train to Santa Cruz for a day at the beach, and perhaps a swim in the Neptune Pool.

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79) San Jose residents, unable to escape the Valley, could board an electric trolley at Market and Santa Clara for a short trip to Alum Rock Park. Even in summertime, the springs feeding Penitencia Creek produced a sufficient dribble of stinky mineral water to fill a swimming pool, known as The Plunge. Those who were able to pay the price, such as these affluent turn-of-the-century "movers and shakers," could visit this elegant bath-house, to bask in the steam room or soak in heated water and then recline in a rocker with a pinch of snuff and a spittoon within easy firing range.

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80) During the summer months, the Guadalupe River, which runs through San Jose, was often reduced to a reedy meander between stagnant pools, and had been ignored as a possible watery resort. Meanwhile, other towns were beginning to develop their rivers into summer gathering spots.

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81) Beginning in 1904, enterprising citizens began erecting a temporary dam on the Pajaro River to create Lake Watsonville. By 1910, the Lake had become a focal point of summer recreation, where elegantly dressed town folk could board a flotilla of rented rowboats and tap their toes to lively tunes played by a brass band seated on a pavilion in the center of the river.

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82) The more adventurous could rent bathing suits at Bacon's photographic studio, pose for four tintypes at a cost of fifty cents, and then, for five cents more, ascend the stairway to a tall platform to ride a speeding toboggan down into the cool water below.

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83) Back in San Jose, the disastrous flood of 1911 destroyed not only the Alum Rock Park swimming pool but also the railroad tracks connecting the park to San Jose. Suddenly bereft of a cool water plunge, San Joseans who had witnessed the success of Lake Watsonville proposed erecting a dam across the Guadalupe River near San Augustine Street, just below its confluence with Los Gatos Creek. The "City Beautiful Spot," they predicted, would attract outsiders, and the youth of the city might "enjoy themselves in a healthful manner, and not seek the poolroom during spare moments."

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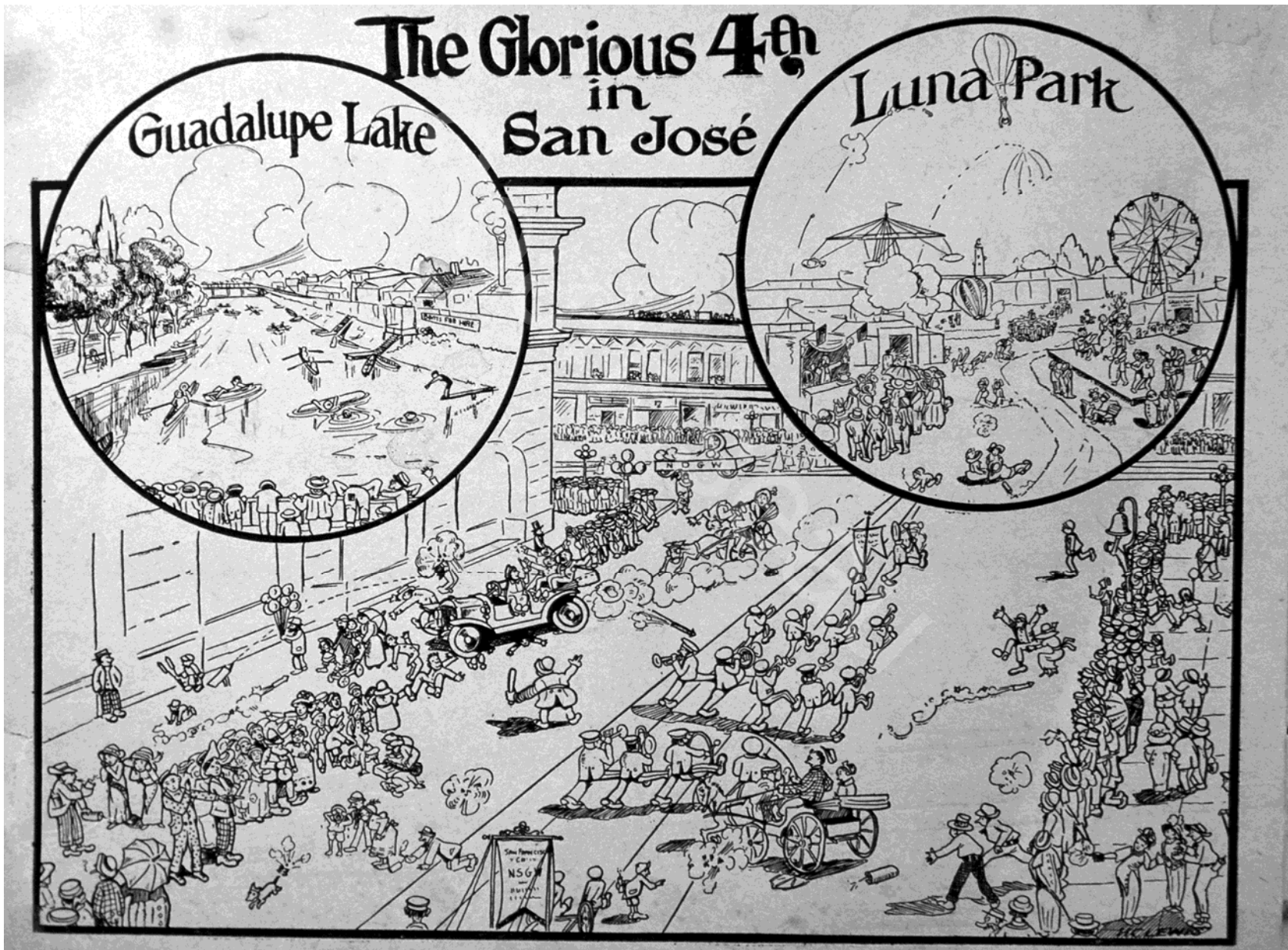
84) On May 3, 1914, San Jose Mayor Thomas Monahan presided at the opening ceremonies of Guadalupe Lake, which would become known as “Monahan’s Lake.” The festivities, accompanied by the St. Joseph Church Brass Band, featured not only a water polo game but also races by swimmers, rowboats, and children paddling washtubs.

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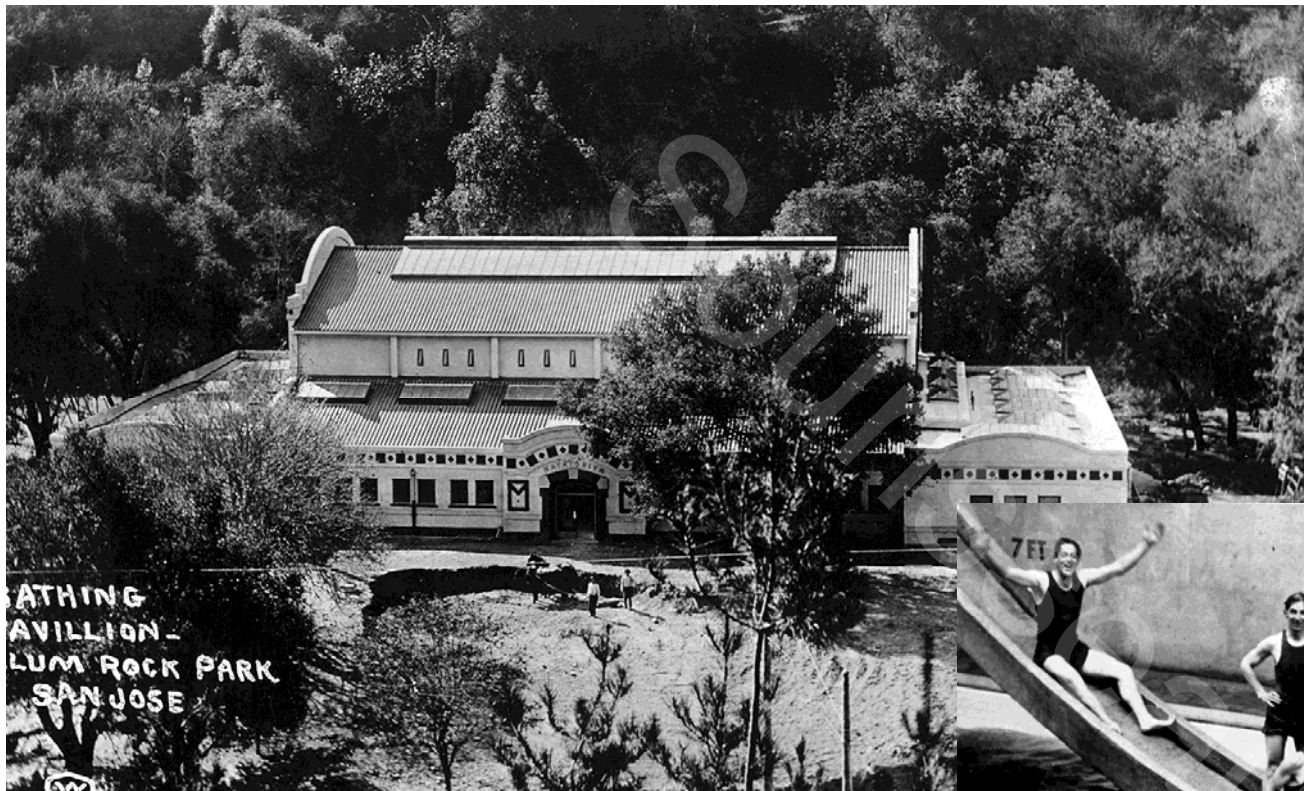
85) An enterprising lakefront entrepreneur quickly converted his River Street print shop to the Port San-O-Say boat rental agency — rendered phonetically because the hoped-for rush of out-of-town visitors might not know how to pronounce San Jose. For good measure, he added ice cream to his stock of stationery and tobacco.

A photo recently acquired by *Les Amis de Sourisseau!*
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86) Three weeks after the opening of Guadalupe Lake, a local artist's cartoon impression of a raucous 4th of July celebration in San Jose featured blown-up views of the Luna Amusement Park and of Guadalupe Lake — for which the only details even vaguely approximating reality were the row of fannies on the Santa Clara Street bridge and the Port San-O-Say boat rental dock.

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87) In 1915, the brand new Natatorium, a gigantic indoor swimming pool, was completed at Alum Rock Park. The pool — also known as The Plunge — featured a balcony for spectators, "death-defying" high diving boards, and a breath-taking slide from a height of thirty feet down to the pool.

A photo by Thomas Wohlmutter recently acquired by *Les Amis de Sourisseau!*
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88) Some say that Lake Guadalupe lost favor when it became a breeding ground for mosquitoes. That may be true, but with the revival of Alum Rock Park, people clearly preferred that more varied venue. Soon, the Lake Guadalupe dam was removed. Today, a full century later, Alum Rock Park has been returned to nature, with all the attractions, including the Natatorium, removed. In San Jose, a new generation of civic leaders is once again developing a park at the confluence of Los Gatos Creek and the Guadalupe River, but without a dam, so that Chinook salmon can also once again ascend the stream for recreation of their own.