

# History of Rail Transportation IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

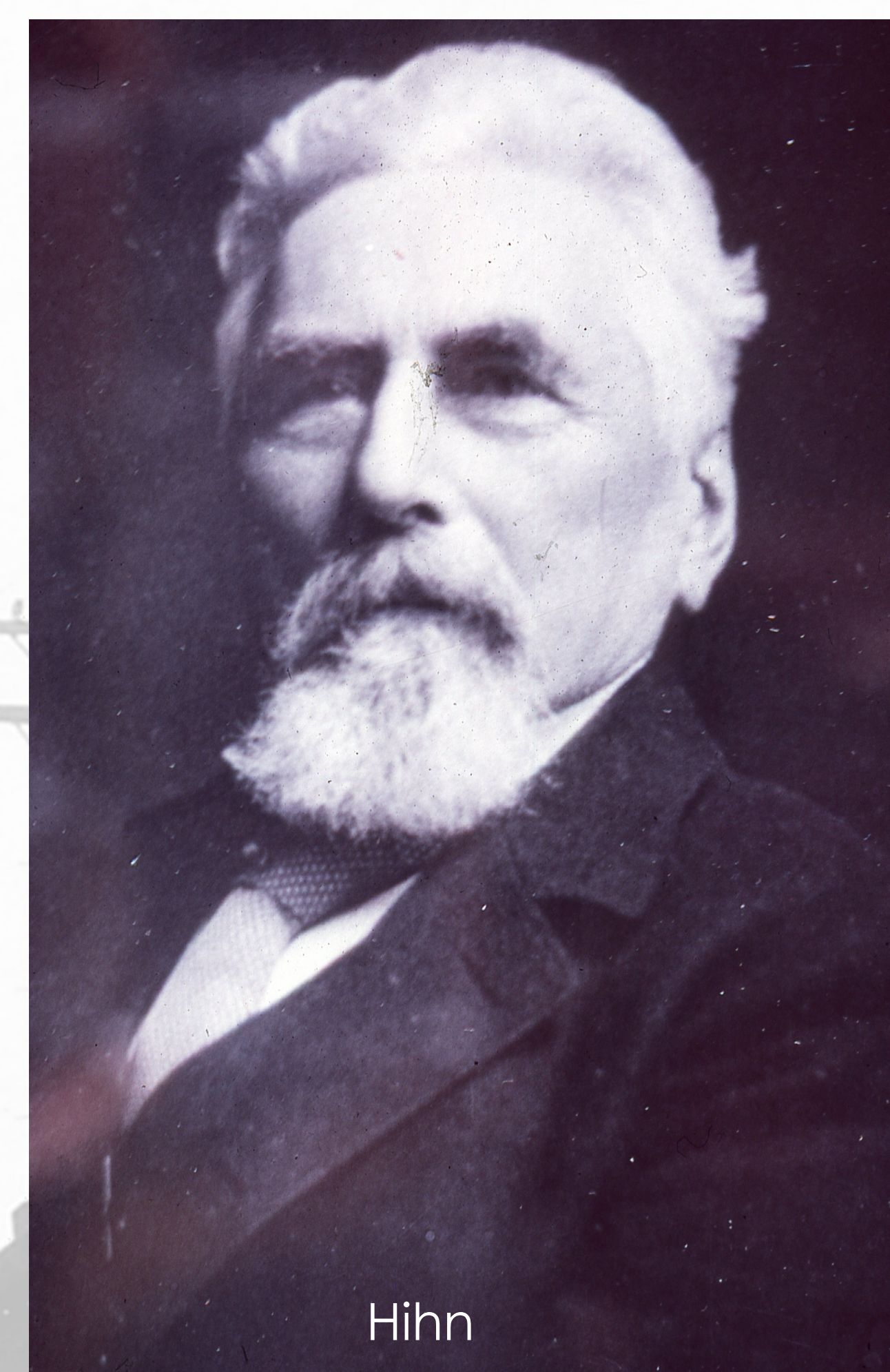
*The Early Years: 1869-1873*



May 10, 1869 – Leland Stanford, et al, as the Central Pacific Railroad, completes the western end of the Transcontinental Railroad and begins plans to link Northern and Southern California. Chinese laborers built the line.



Nov 26, 1871 – The Southern Pacific Railroad brings a standard gauge Railroad line to Pajaro, continues on to Salinas in 1872, and on to Soledad in 1874.



Dec 1871 – Santa Cruz County electorate approves railroad construction bonds to lure Southern Pacific – or any other railroad – to build a line from Pajaro through Santa Cruz County and northward. Pajaro Valley voted overwhelmingly against the bond measure.

1872 - Frederick A Hihn attempts to entice Southern Pacific RR to build the line into the County.

Dec 1872 – Southern Pacific surveyors begin laying out the line between Watsonville and Santa Cruz, but decide not to build it due to the Financial Panic of 1873.



Jun 1873 – Led by Claus Spreckels and FA Hihn, Santa Cruz County businessmen decide to build the railroad themselves. Due to costs it will be a narrow gauge (36 inch) line. Funds for the new Santa Cruz Railroad project include their own monies plus the previously-approved County funding.

1869

1871

1872

1873



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*Construction of SCRR : 1873-1876*



Dec 1873 – Santa Cruz Railroad construction begins, working from Santa Cruz toward Watsonville. The majority of laborers on the line were Chinese.



Oct 1874 – *Betsy Jane*, a tiny construction locomotive, arrives for use by the Santa Cruz Railroad.

Dec 7, 1874 – First five miles of Santa Cruz Railroad track are completed and Hihn asks County for payment.

Dec 14, 1874 – Watsonville attorneys secure an injunction to stop payment of County funds, but construction continues with an infusion of cash from Spreckels.



May 22, 1875 – Santa Cruz Railroad line completed only from Santa Cruz to Aptos.

Mar 1876 – Injunction is lifted and Hihn agrees to adjust route into Watsonville.

Apr 1876 – Santa Cruz Railroad's Watsonville-Santa Cruz line is completed and the *Betsy Jane* locomotive delivers the first revenue load, two car loads of potatoes!

1873

1874

1875

1876



# History of Rail Transportation

## IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

*The end of SCRR : 1876-1883*

May 1876 – Locomotive *Pacific* delivered to SCRR and put into service.



1877 – Locomotive *Jupiter* delivered (train now displayed in Smithsonian exhibit).

1876 – 1880 – Santa Cruz Railroad does reasonably well financially, but is hindered by the competition of the Southern Pacific Railroad at Pajaro, and by the threat of an over-the-mountain South Pacific Coast Railroad.

1880 – Over-the-mountain South Pacific Coast Railroad constructed between Santa Cruz and Bay Area, including 25 miles of rail and 6 tunnels, by Chinese laborers at a cost of \$110,000/mile.



Feb 1881 – Santa Cruz Railroad trestle over the San Lorenzo River is brought down in a flood. Hihn, Spreckels and other stockholders no longer are willing/able to subsidize operations in the face of competition with South Pacific Coast and Southern Pacific Railroads. Santa Cruz Railroad goes into bankruptcy.



Near Twin Lakes

Oct 1881 – Southern Pacific (through their land management branch – Pacific Improvement Company) buys Santa Cruz Railroad at auction.

Sep 1883 – Southern Pacific replaces narrow gauge Santa Cruz Railroad with standard gauge and old narrow gauge locomotives move to other areas (eg *Jupiter* was sent to Ecuador to transport bananas). Chinese laborers widened the tracks.

1876

1878

1880

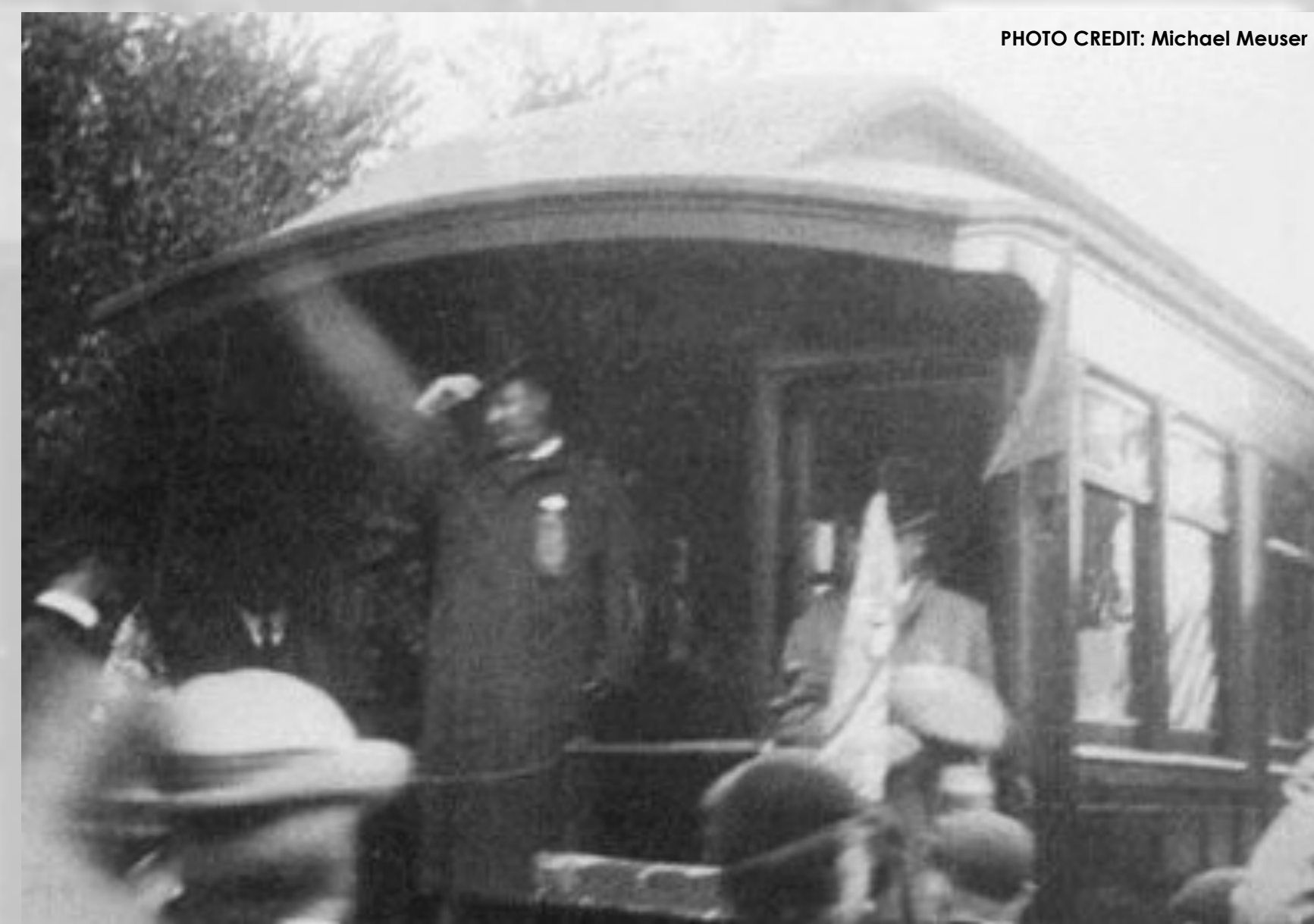
1883



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*SP and the Suntan Special : 1887-1947*

1927 – Southern Pacific begins the Suntan Special – an excursion train over the mountain from San Jose to the beach in Santa Cruz.

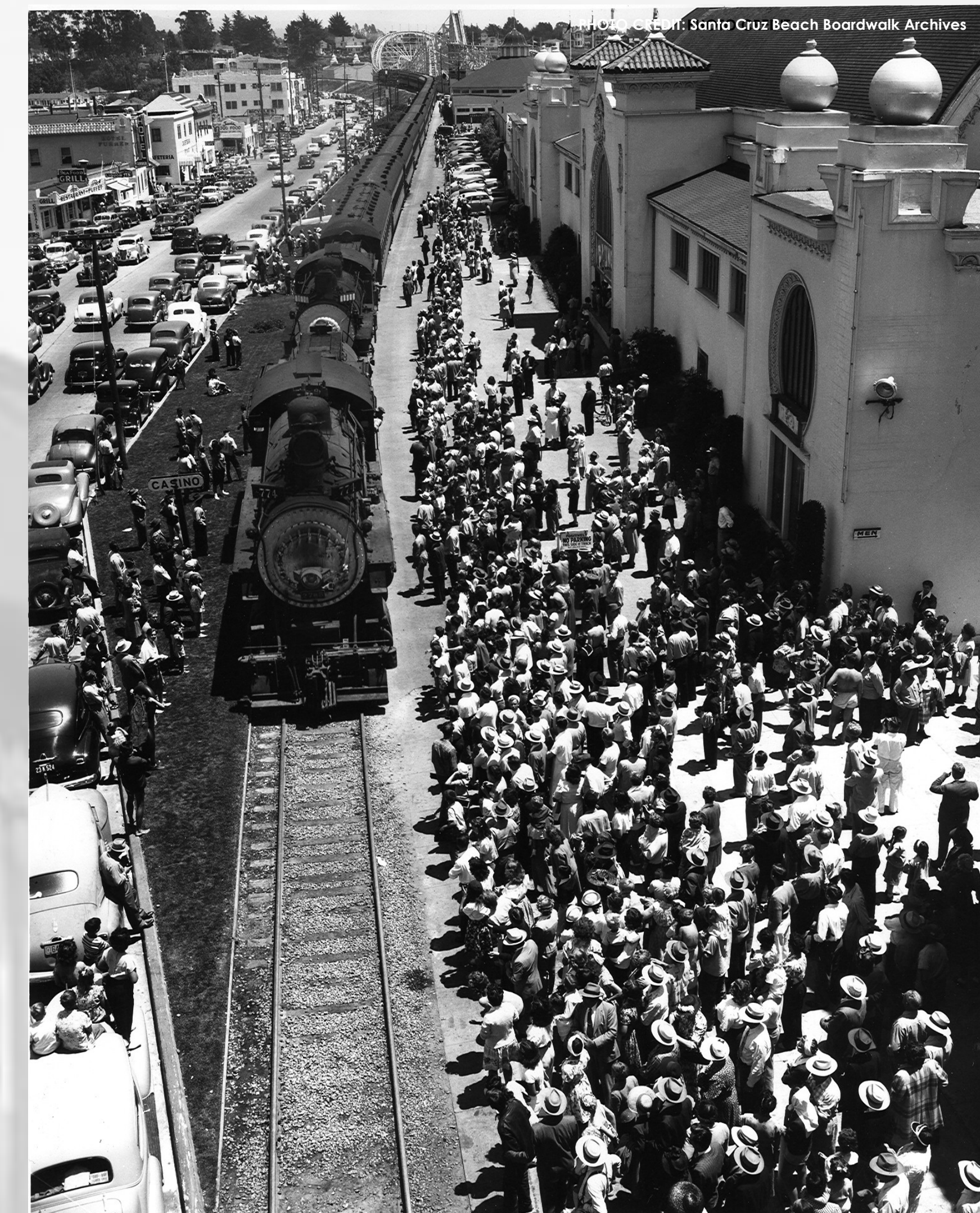


1903 – President Theodore Roosevelt visits Santa Cruz County via train.

Jan 1887 – Southern Pacific buys the over-the-mountain line (South Pacific Coast) and now controls Santa Cruz County's two main rail-road lines promoting tourism and industries.



Late 1930s – Most popular years of Suntan Special, a round trip cost \$1.25.



1941 – 1946 – Suntan Special suspended during World War II.

1940 – Storm closes the over-the-mountain line and it is eventually abandoned.

Apr 1940 - Suntan Special resumed going around-the-mountain through Watsonville Junction to Santa Cruz, adds 35 minutes to trip.



Jul 1947 – Sep 1959 – Suntan Special continues during the summer carrying about 900 passengers per trip.

1887

1900

1927

1930

1940

1945

1947



# History of Rail Transportation IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

*Recent Rail History : 1976-2012*

1976– Aptos Ladies Tuesday Evening Society re-enacts Lucile Aldrich's 1961 defeat of a proposed cement plant in Aptos.



1996 – The RTC runs three demonstration trains on the rail line– Return of the Suntan Special, Coastal Cruiser/Flexliner, and First Night Trolley/RegioSprinter. The purpose of these events was to showcase various kinds of modern rail vehicles and explore their suitability for Santa Cruz County.



1990 – Voters of CA and Santa Cruz County approve Proposition 116 making funding to buy the rail line possible.



1996 – Union Pacific buys the Watsonville-Santa Cruz line from Southern Pacific and Rio Grande Railroads.

2011 – California Transportation Commission approves acquisition of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line for public ownership.

Oct 12, 2012 – RTC successfully completes acquisition deal and the Santa Cruz Branch line is now owned by the people of Santa Cruz County!

1980

1985

1990

1995

2000

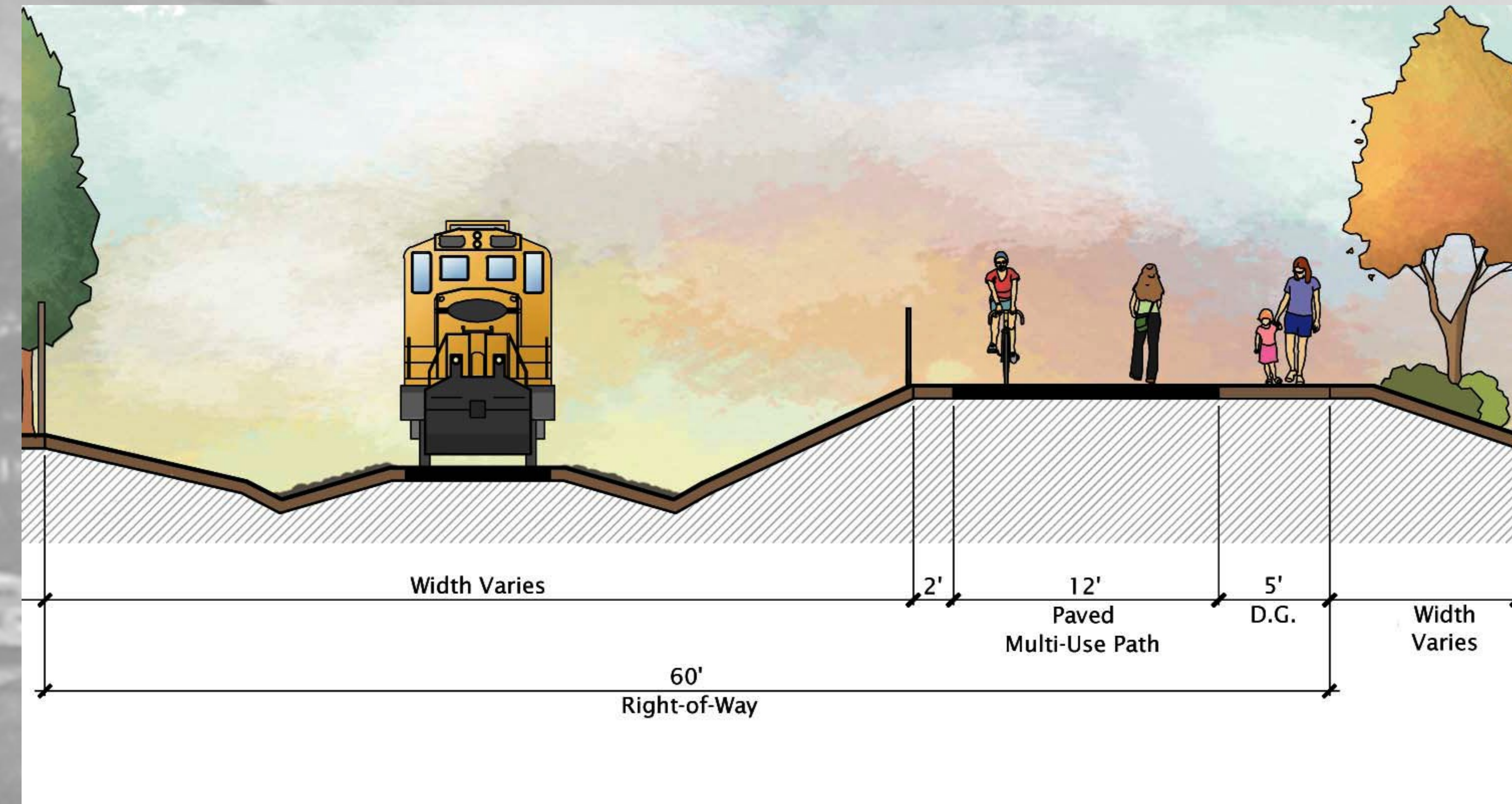
2005

2010



# The FUTURE of Rail Transportation IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

*What's next for the Santa Cruz Branch line?  
Preserving the corridor for public transportation uses.*



## Short Term

Increased freight rail

Holiday/Recreational passenger  
rail (Train to Christmas Town)

## Medium Term

Bicycle/Pedestrian “rail trail” segments  
of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic  
Trail Network

## Long Term

Expanded passenger rail service

Completion of the 31 mile spine of  
the Monterey Bay Sanctuary  
Scenic Trail Network

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

And On...