

# Trinidad--Town of History and Views

## Haven-Cove Like Old-World Scene

By CHET SCHWARZKOPF  
(Photos by Dick Ryan)

Twenty-four miles north of Eureka, where Highway 101 skirts the Humboldt coast, stands the historic and picturesque town of Trinidad. The visitor who takes time to look about must be impressed by its setting. To the seaward bulks Trinidad Head, on the landward side rise the forests and hills, and at its feet the Pacific ocean rumbles along a rockbound shore.

Trinidad, the early day Spaniards called it, for they landed upon Trinidad Head on Trinity Sunday, June 11, 1775. And the name suits it well today, for it stands at the trinity of forests, sea, and hills. Of the many beautiful viewpoints and settings in the Redwood Empire, probably none has been more admired by both visitors and residents than this "town of views."

And as a potential center of future development, few places in Humboldt would seem to offer more.

### UNEXCELLED VIEW

Let us drive to the top of Trinidad Head first. The road is surprisingly good, thanks to the efforts of the Lumberjacks' association of Arcata, who are actively interested in Trinidad as a resort and outdoor recreation center.

There is an observation platform atop the Head, and from it you get a view of beaches, woods, and hinterland that is beyond the scope of words. To the south are Moonstone and Clam beaches, as well as Little river's mouth. To the north stretches a rugged shoreline in the direction of Patrick's Point. At your feet lies the town, its white buildings and sheltered boat harbor giving the impression of a doll village. And inland extends the great sweep of redwood forested hills, with the Trinity mountains in the background. As you gaze in silence, you realize again how much Humboldt has to offer . . . that it is truly a promised land.

On the south slope of Trinidad Head, directly below the lookout-stands a large concrete cross. Here it was that Juan Bodega erected a cross and took possession in the name of Spain on that historic Sunday, long ago. The present monument was placed here by the club women of Humboldt county in September, 1913, replacing the Spaniards' wooden cross which had crumbled with the years.

And here also it is known that at least one Humboldt couple were married, standing at the foot of the cross in the great temple of the out-of-doors . . . a fitting place.

### VISIT TO LIGHTHOUSE

Down from the top, and around to the western side of Trinidad Head, you come to Trinidad lighthouse—started in 1871, by the Coast Guard. It is run by Leroc Merritt, boatswain's mate first class, and Stanley Castello, seaman first class, both USCG. The two men live with their families in pleasant appearing homes beside

the lighthouse. The oil-burning lights were replaced by electricity in 1947, Merritt tells you—but the plant needs a man on duty regardless, for the light must never fail. An engine-driven auxiliary generating plant stands by at all times.

The lighthouse tenders' houses have gas, water, and electricity, the same as any in town. Gas is stored in Flamo tanks, while the water comes from a spring on the Head, and is stored in tanks of 77,000 gallons capacity. As you look over the place, you realize this is a far cry from the isolated lighthouse operators of fiction. For it is hardly ten minutes' drive to town.

### A LOOK ABOUT TOWN

You leave Trinidad Head, vowing to return often, and enter the town itself. You pass the old whaling station—once an odoriferous landmark—whose concrete "kettle" stands stark and forlorn, together with a number of abandoned dwellings. You wonder a little that these haven't been fixed up, during the present housing shortage.

Then down to Trinidad's fishermen's cove and beautiful beaches—there is a touch of the Mediterranean in this peaceful harbor whose waters have provided refuge from the buffeting of the open sea for generations of seafarers . . . the Spaniards, Vancouver, the Russians, and then the American ship Boston, commanded by Captain O'Kain, in 1803. Then in the 1850's, when gold was discovered back in the mountains, the harbor became a landing and loading place of first importance. And nowadays, the fishermen who bring in gold from the sea again use the historic shelter-harbor in Trinidad Head's lee. While out in the harbor, and off Trinidad Head, the bellbuoys toll their warning of rocks to avoid—and add the final inimitable touch.

Along the shoreline road into the residential district and, as you look at the New England architecture and white picket fences of some of the older homes, you realize that history does indeed stride through Trinidad's streets. For the town was founded early in 1850 by Captain R. V. Warner as a base and harbor for mining explorations, and is now thought to be the oldest incorporated municipality in California, according to its pioneer residents.

### WHAT TRINIDAD IS DOING

Next stop is at Hotel Trinidad, whose commanding view of sea and hills is out of this world. There you meet Mrs. Celia Owens, who bought the premises several years ago, and through her, you're introduced to Mrs. Stella Herzog and her cousin, Alvin Johnston, who is the town marshal. Both are old-time Humboldters, originally from the Mattole valley. Mrs. Herzog is active in town affairs and supplies interesting facts on present day developments.

Trinidad now has a population of about 150 people, you are told, and many more live in the immediate vicinity, or "suburbs." It has a county library, in charge of Mrs. Emma Griffin. Its general store is owned by Mose Saunders, while John Spinas and Harold Daniel run its garage. It also has two restaurants, which cater to a tourist and fishermen trade.

Close to Mrs. Herzog's heart is the Trinidad Civic club and its activities. Mrs. Albert Myers is president, and the organization is sponsoring several projects for the town's betterment. Prominent on their list is a replica of Trinidad Head lighthouse, now under construction. The bell and light in this edifice will be from the old lighthouse, before it was modernized. Location is along the shoreline road, near the hotel, and the ground was donated by Earl Hallmark, of Hallmark Fisheries who, along with other deep-sea fishermen, is interested in furthering Trinidad.

"We are indebted to the Humboldt County Federation of Women's clubs, and Mrs. Glyndon Smith in particular," Mrs. Herzog



View of Trinidad Head and Shelter Cove as seen from Highway 101

says. "For it was through them that Trinidad got to keep the old light and bell which we felt should belong here permanently."

Another of the club's projects is the Trinidad beach recreation area which will provide boat landings for sports fishermen, as well as picnic grounds and park. The Lumberjacks' association, through Lee Brown of Arcata, have pledged themselves to contribute \$500 for what will be one of California's most beautiful marine park areas, when completed.

Still another of the Trinidad ladies' ambitious projects is the rebuilding of the town's Catholic church—long a historic landmark—in which job, the Lumberjacks again will help.

**NEW SCHOOL PLANNED**  
Trinidad lost its school by fire a few years ago, and the city hall and one of the town's three churches are now serving in lieu of better accommodations. However, Mrs. Herzog says, a new Trinidad school is to be built which will combine with Crannell, Patrick's Point, and Moonstone Beach. This will be a county job.

Incidentally, Trinidad is in the throes of organizing its own fire department, you are told. On its city government are: Lee Melendy, mayor; Keith Thomlanson, Chester Dryden, Howard Havens and Everett Griffin, councilmen; Wilda Thomlanson, clerk; and Alvin Johnston, city marshal.

**PIONEER RESIDENTS**  
On a tree-sheltered slope, overlooking the open sea and the seal rocks, there stands a fine old home. It belongs to Mrs. Martha Underwood, who was born in Trinidad in 1872, and whose mother came there in 1863. Mrs. Underwood has lived in Trinidad all her life and, in common with everyone you meet there, loves every square rod of the place. It is your good fortune to arrive at her home just as she is finishing a batch of delicious doughnuts—which you are invited to sample then and there.

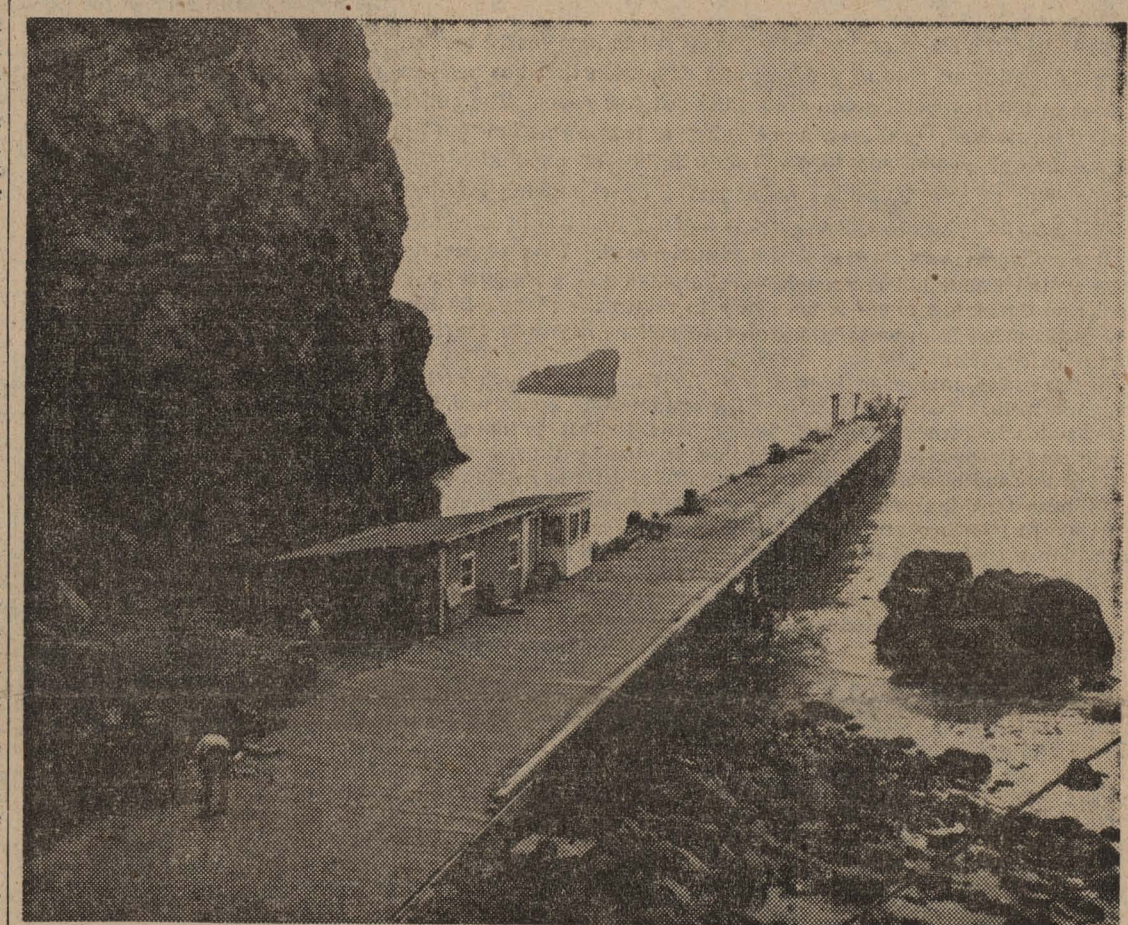
"I remember the day when the railroad ended here in Trinidad," she says. "We used to love to go into Eureka on the steam cars. That was a gala occasion. I felt bad to see the railroad go."

Another old-timer is Clarence Heberlee, whose new home commands a view of open sea and bay from a well selected site. "I like it here," he says. "This is as far as I plan to go."

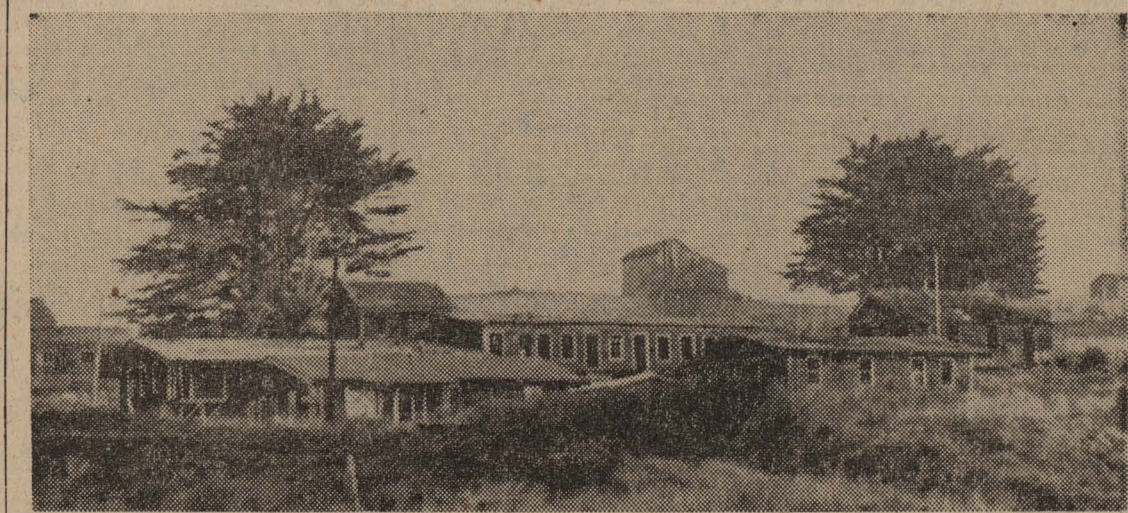
**TRINIDAD'S SUBURBS**  
The old coast highway slips unobtrusively out of Trinidad, and if you follow it, you will go through one of Humboldt's most beautiful residential sections. For several miles, the road is lined with comfortable, happy-appearing homes, set in woodlands of their own and overlooking the sea. What more could a person ask for on this earth, you think? For here is real living—and you live only once.

Then as you return to town over highway 101 from the north, another of Trinidad's suburbs impresses itself upon the traveler. For here are several modern, commodious motels, set in their individual glens and woods—as well as a number of new residences. Possibilities of development here seem almost indefinite.

One last look before leaving—Trinidad heights. In the woods on the east side of highway 101, where the road winds toward Luffenbohtz creek, are a number of lovely, secluded homes—most of them fairly new. It is another Thessaly, right out of the classics. Where else on earth but the Redwood Empire can people enjoy such an environment? It is the Gardens of Hesperides—only it belongs to America today.



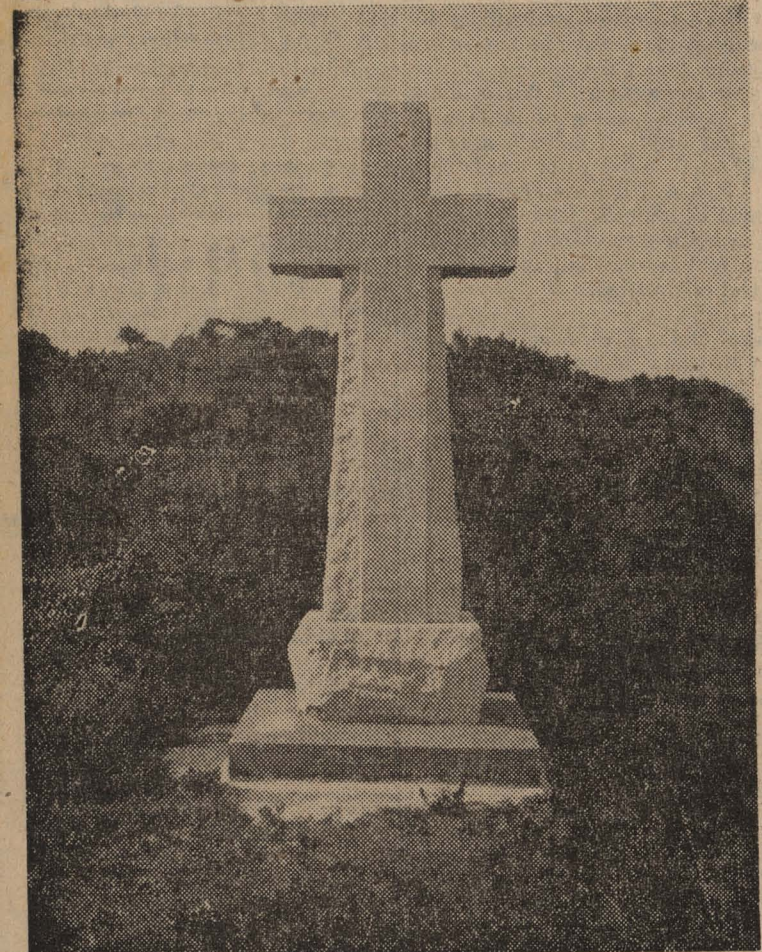
Fishermen's wharf in cove, beside Trinidad Head



Old whaling station dwellings on edge of town



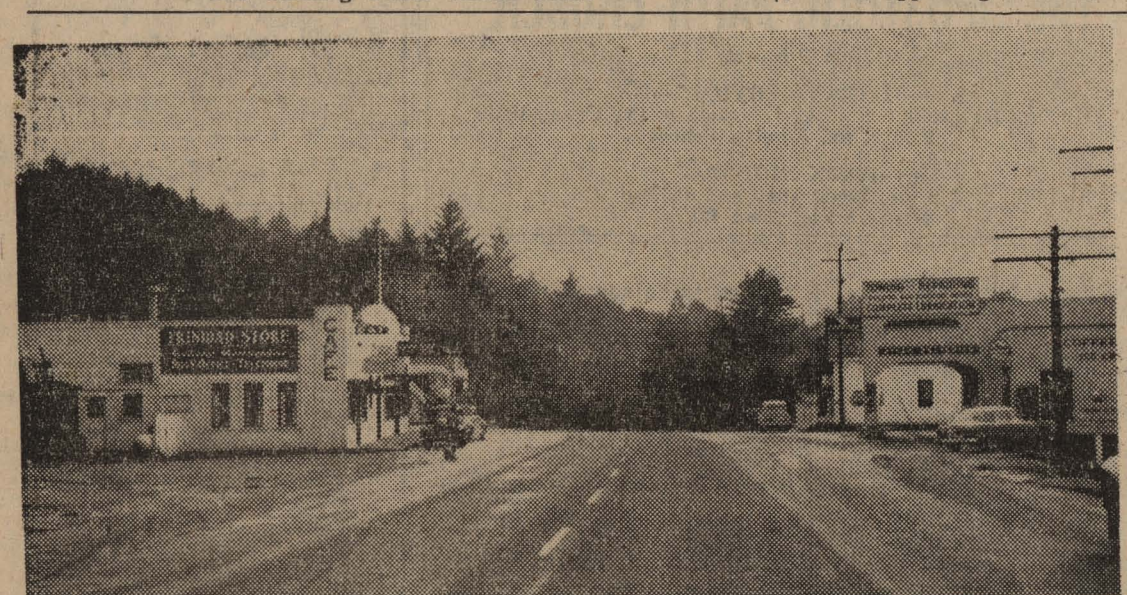
Air view of Trinidad Head, showing lighthouse, inner harbor and outer beach  
Photo by Merle Hhuster.



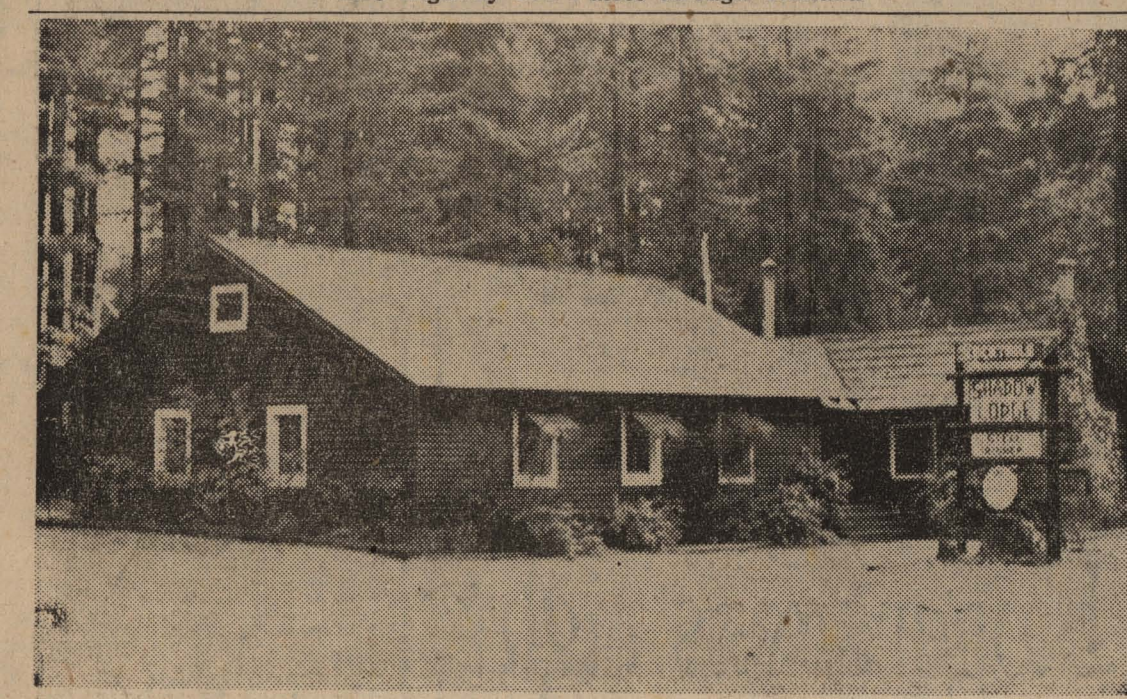
Famed Trinidad Cross overlooks sea



Old whaling boiler stands stark



Where Highway 101 Passes through Trinidad



One of several attractive nearby restaurants