

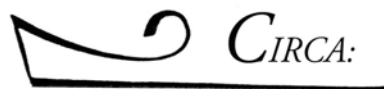
Historic Context Statement
for the
City of Watsonville



FINAL REPORT

Watsonville, California
April 2007

Prepared by



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Chapter 1

Background and Objectives

1.0 Background and Objectives

1.1 Introduction

Watsonville is expanding and undergoing a shift in its economic base, branching out from the traditional mainstay of agriculture to other economic sectors, such as light industry, manufacturing, tourism and service oriented businesses. As the City continues to grow and change, it must find methods of recognizing and honoring its history as it is reflected in the breadth of historic neighborhoods and individual properties that remain throughout the City. In doing so, Watsonville can expand and develop in new areas while remaining rooted to those events, people and accomplishments that shaped its modern profile.

The variety of building types found in Watsonville range from modest residential cottages to grand mansions, small commercial buildings to packing sheds. These varied properties give the City of Watsonville character and define the chronological development of the community. Each district or neighborhood tells the story of who lived and worked there at a particular time in Watsonville's history. As the City grows and expands to accommodate new development, it is imperative to recognize and retain the existing historic buildings that mark the City's past.

Many properties have been inventoried, or recorded, but are not officially listed as a resource on a local, state or federal registry. Additionally, an extensive field survey of potentially important properties was conducted in 2003 and other properties related to railroad and industrial development have been identified as potentially significant. However, a Historic Context is necessary to properly evaluate the significance of these properties.

1.2 Purpose of a Historic Context

A Historic Context enables the assessment of a property's historical significance by creating a framework against which to objectively qualify its relationship to larger historic themes and events. This analysis process is an invaluable tool intended to protect and maintain the historic status of a property or district, and its contribution to the built environment and community character. It is not intended to halt or delay progress but to properly shepherd the proposed project along for greater benefit. The analysis process should include:

- Evaluation of the property's historic significance including its associative value and context utilizing national, state and local criteria and status codes.
- Evaluation of the property's integrity and identification of character defining features.
- Establishment of the period of significance based on substantiated documentation.
- Determination of which Standard of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standard for the Treatment of Historic Properties* will be followed for the proposed changes (Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, or Reconstruction.)

- Review of proposed changes to properties for consistency with the selected Standard to meet the criteria and requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to avoid a substantial adverse change.

A professional who meets the *Secretary of the Interior's* professional qualification standards for history or architectural history (Federal Code 36 CFR Part 61) should conduct each analysis.

1.3 Location and Boundaries of Study

For the purpose of this initial context development project, the boundaries of the study were limited to the 2006 City boundaries for Watsonville. Some larger, regional events and developments are discussed to provide background information related to buildings, properties, events and people that specifically influenced the development of Watsonville. However, all representative properties are within the current City limits.

1.4 Context Statement Objective

The Historic Element presented in Section 8.0 of the Watsonville General Plan, Watsonville VISTA 2030, contains several goals and policies. Goal 8.2 and Policy 8.2.1 both outline the need for the development of a context statement to “allow for the comprehensive evaluation of a property’s importance within the historic context of the City of Watsonville.”¹

To satisfy Goal 8.2 of the General Plan, the objectives of this context statement development project are as follows:

1. Create a well-defined historic context based on property types, architectural character-defining features, local development and land use patterns, and including significance of place and cultural themes for the period of approximately 1868 to 1960.
2. The context statement will outline the chronological development of the City with connections made between the pattern of development and structures and properties that may still exist today.
3. The context will also give an understanding to how and why the City was developed in the way it exists today.
4. The context statement will provide documented information to allow for the comprehensive evaluation of a property’s importance within the historic context of the City of Watsonville.

¹ *Watsonville VISTA 2030*. Watsonville, California: City of Watsonville. 2006. Page 8-8.

Historic context statements are important tools for the preservation planning process. This document is not intended to be an inclusive and definitive history of Watsonville, nor is it designed to be a static report. It is a living document that should be updated and reviewed as more documented information is discovered. In particular, more review of events and properties that date within the last 50 years is needed. Eventually, such information will be vital to evaluating “newly historic” properties as they come of age. In general, this Historic Context Statement is meant to provide the City of Watsonville with a means to evaluate potential resources for their associative, architectural, or historic value. Such a tool will provide the city with a baseline reference for developing future preservation initiatives and incentives.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.0 Methodology

The City of Watsonville recognized the need for a Historic Context Statement to assist staff and residents in identification, evaluation, registration and treatment of historic neighborhoods and individual properties. In July 2005 the City contracted Circa: Historic Property Development to provide consulting services to develop the Historic Context Statement. The Circa consulting team (*the team*) included Sheila McElroy, principal, Circa: Historic Property Development; and Becky Urbano, architectural historian and conservator, Garavaglia Architecture, Inc. Both team members meet or exceed the *Secretary of the Interior's* professional qualification standards for history or architectural history.

An Initial Meeting with the Historic Context Statement Subcommittee (*Subcommittee*) and a “town tour” was conducted in July 2005. Subcommittee members included volunteers Ann Jenkins, Jane Borg, and Associate Planner Suzi Aratin. The intent was to confirm the approach and to familiarize the team with the City of Watsonville through the lens of “potential contexts”. In August a draft matrix was developed that organized potential contexts. The matrix became the base from which contexts were further developed. Its final form is presented in Appendix A to serve as an easy reference guide. Between September and October 2005 the Subcommittee reviewed the matrix and began gathering information, identifying potential sources, and initial research. From October 2005 the team and the Subcommittee worked together continually on research of each of the contexts and their sub-themes, collecting of photographs and editing.

2.1 Research Findings

The purpose of the Historic Context Statement is to 1) have a means by which to properly survey, evaluate and complete the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation forms, and 2) provide the City with parameters to make preservation-related decisions. To this end, substantiated documentation is necessary to finalize a context theme or area of significance. In the few cases where substantiated documentation was not available, or there was conflicting documentation, the theme or area of significance is identified as needing further research to corroborate.

2.2 List of Resource Types

- Historical societies
- Newspaper clippings
- Books
- Maps
- Promotional material
- Volunteers
- Scholarly articles
- Trade publications

Chapter 3

Introduction to Historic Contexts

3.0 Introduction to Historic Contexts

3.1 Thematic Development

The development of historic contexts is important for the preservation planning process. It is the framework to organize preservation activities such as identification, evaluation, registration and treatment of historic properties in a manageable methodical manner. Main sections of historic contexts are generally organized into “themes” or areas of significance as identified National Register Bulletin 15. This bulletin further explains that a determination must be made on how the theme of the context is significant in the history of the local area, the State, or the nation. “A theme is a means of organizing properties into coherent patterns based on elements such as environment, social/ethnic groups, transportation networks, technology, or political developments that have influenced the development of an area during one or more periods of prehistory or history. A theme is considered significant if it can be demonstrated, through scholarly research, to be important in American history. Many significant themes can be found in the list of Areas of Significance used by the National Register.”² This list is quoted as follows:

Areas Of Significance:

Agriculture	Exploration/Settlement
Architecture	Health/Medicine
Prehistoric	Industry
Historic--Aboriginal	Invention
Historic--Non-Aboriginal	Landscape Architecture
Art	Law
Commerce	Literature
Communications	Maritime History
Community Planning and Development	Military
Conservation	Performing Arts
Economics	Philosophy
Engineering	Politics/Government
Entertainment/Recreation	Religion
Ethnic Heritage	Science
Asian	Social History
Black	Transportation
European	Other
Hispanic	
Native American	
Pacific Islander	
Other	

² National Register of Historic Places. *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation Bulletin (#15)*. (Washington, DC: National Parks Service. 1997).

Themes are then tailored to accommodate areas of significance specific to a particular community when appropriate. In this way, contexts follow a common thread of understanding regarding municipal development and growth patterns, agricultural and commercial evolution, influences of cultural and ethnic evolutions and economic changes etc., while allowing for customization or specification in areas that define the present-day community character of the City of Watsonville.

Six primary contextual themes have been selected for Watsonville based on substantiated documentation. Discussions of history and significance within each theme are presented in chronological order. Brief summaries of these selections, and of the time periods used in the development of this document, are provided below. In-depth development of each context is conducted in separate chapters.

3.2 Summary of Regional History

Watsonville Before Incorporation

Watsonville was officially incorporated in 1868, however that is not the beginning of settlement in the area. The local Native Americans, or, as we call them today, the Ohlone Indians, lived in the coastal Monterey Bay area for approximately 4,500-5,000 years before the discovery and settlement by the Spanish Missionaries.³ Possibly the densest population of Indians north of Mexico, approximately 10,000 people lived between Point Sur and the San Francisco Bay, comprising 40 different groups, each with their own territory.

It is not known whether there were ever any Ohlone villages within the City of Watsonville, however, the Ohlone surely made trails through the area in their travels between the coast and the inland hills.⁴

The Ohlone did not make permanent villages, rather they followed a year-round harvest, traveling approximately 100 square miles between the ocean, the rivers, and the hills and meadows. The structures they built were generally made out of tule reeds, easily constructed and abandoned with little loss.⁵ Most archaeological evidence of the Native Americans comes from their ocean-side shell mounds and burial sites.

There have been several burial sites found in the Pajaro Valley, near the City, in the last 30 years. These include a burial ground on Lee Road in 1975, 28 remains found during the construction of Pajaro Valley Middle School on Salinas Road in 1994, remains excavated at the Lakeview Elementary School site in Santa Cruz County on East Lake Avenue in 1996, and a major site discovered near the Pajaro River on a bluff adjacent to San Andreas Road in 2002.⁶ Information regarding excavations in the area are kept on file at the Northwest Information Center in Sonoma, California.

³ Margolin, Malcom. *The Ohlone Way: Indian Life in the San Francisco-Monterey Bay Area* (Berkeley, California: Heyday Books. 2003). 58.

⁴ Margolin. 8.

⁵ Margolin. 54.

⁶ "Ohlone Remains Found on Pajaro Valley Site." (Santa Cruz Sentinel, May 18, 1994).

In the fall of 1769, Spanish military explorer Gaspar de Portola and his overland crew turned away from the coast near present-day Monterey where they encountered a burned Native American village on the edge of a river. The story says that the natives left a large bird, stuffed with straw, on the riverbank. While the Franciscan Father Crespi named the river the Santa Ana, the soldiers called it the Pajaro, or “bird,” River. Not long after, the exploration party discovered San Francisco Bay and claimed it for Spain.

Thus began the Mission Period in California’s history, which spanned the years 1770-1834. The Franciscans set up 6 missions in Ohlone territory, the closest to Watsonville being Missions San Juan Bautista (1797) and Santa Cruz (1791.)⁷

During the 60-year period of Mission rule, the Ohlone were lured into the Missions, and urged to be baptized. Once baptized, the fathers took responsibility for their souls and kept them at the missions against their will. After years of living under the rule of the Missionaries, the Ohlone lost their traditional way, including crafts, language, and social skills. In addition, thousands of Ohlone died of disease brought by the Spanish.⁸

After Mexican independence in 1821, the Mexican governors had carved up the Pajaro Valley into land grants and distributed the ranchos among friends and prominent citizens. The site of present-day Watsonville sits on what was known as Bolsa del Pajaro, part of the larger Rancho del Pajaro grant. This particular property was claimed and contested by dozens of individuals, including the Rodriguez brothers, Sebastian and Alexander. Final claims were not settled until 1860, when Sebastian Rodriguez became the recognized legal owner of the Rancho del Pajaro. By this time he had passed away and his two oldest sons, Jose and Pedro, tended the land. In 1860, they granted a small parcel of land to the growing settlement on their now legally confirmed land holdings. This parcel remains today as Watsonville’s Plaza.

1868 - 1888 - Settlement of the City and Coming of the Railroad

Judge John Watson and D.S. Gregory first laid out the town of Watsonville in 1852 on a portion of Bolsa del Pajaro that Watson “obtained” from Sebastian Rodriguez. There are many accounts of the initial founding of Watsonville but they all agree that the legality of Watson’s possession of this piece of land was questionable. Regardless, he and Gregory planned out a town, one mile square, near the banks of the Pajaro River. Even though Watson left the area soon after, never to return, the town became his namesake.

By 1868, Watsonville’s population had expanded to almost 2000 people. The first city government was organized, elections were held, and Watsonville became an incorporated municipality.

Kimball, Becky. “Ohlone Remains Excavated at Lakeview.” (Register-Pajaronian, Mar 28, 1996).
“Indian Burial Site Uncovered.” (Register-Pajaronian, Jul 27, 2002).

⁷ Margoline, Malcolm, *The Ohlone Way*. Heydey Books, Berkeley. 1978: reprinted 2003 160-161.

⁸ Margoline. 160.

Early Watsonville was a rough western ranching town, comprised of a few modest houses, a sprinkling of churches and a small but growing commercial district along Main Street. All this was surrounded by farms and fields. By 1870 most of the cattle ranching on the large land grants had been replaced by grains and potatoes, followed by fruit trees and produce cultivation. Production ranged from small family plots to large commercial operations with most being farmed by recent immigrants on plots subdivided from the ranchos.

Growth in Watsonville was further spurred with the coming of the railroad in 1871. This connection with the outside world transformed the city from a rural outpost to the second largest city in Santa Cruz County. The Main Street commercial districts continued to expand with the growing population and the city's increased importance as the center of agricultural trade and business for all the surrounding, smaller communities.

The increase in regional importance also brought a level of civility to the town. Newspapers were established, civil institutions grew and became formalized and the number of social clubs flourished. Theaters, an opera house and department stores were built to serve a community hungry for entertainment. At the same time, large numbers of immigrants from all over the world found their way to the banks of the Pajaro River and settled on the rich farmland of the Pajaro Valley.

1888 - 1898 - Sugar Beets

The last decade of the 19th century could be called the Sugar Beet years for Watsonville. For this brief period, the sugar beet reigned king in the Pajaro Valley, mainly thanks to the influence of the California Sugar Beet Company, which was already based in both San Francisco and Aptos. Realizing that the river bottom land of the Pajaro Valley was much better suited to sugar beet production than Aptos, Claus Spreckels started to move operations southward.

In the 1870s Claus Spreckels began experimenting with growing and processing sugar beets on the banks of Soquel Creek near Aptos. Finding this successful, in 1888 he built what was then one of the largest sugar beet factories in the world near the railroad tracks in Watsonville. Hundreds of acres of the surrounding farmland were planted with sugar beets to utilize the enormous processing capacity of the new plant. While the Industrial Revolution was changing manufacturing around the world, Spreckels' sugar beet plant was transforming agribusiness in the Pajaro Valley. The days of the small time processing plant were numbered. Individual operators began to give way to the corporate machine. Food processing was becoming big business and Watsonville was to become a leader in agribusiness innovations.

1898 - 1911 - Apples, Floods and Building Booms

Changes in technology and agriculture shaped the first years of the 20th Century. Fruit trees had largely replaced the earlier grain crops. Various new mechanized means for preparing food for shipments to the East Coast and Europe made California, and Watsonville in particular, a hotbed of product-related activity and experimentation. The automobile made its local debut as the city itself continued to grow and prosper.

Part of this new prosperity became evident in the scores of new commercial and residential buildings commissioned during this time. The well-known architect, William H. Weeks, made his home in Watsonville and was primarily responsible for creating most of the grand and civic architectural designs that helped to define the early century boom years.

Two natural disasters affected Watsonville, and the whole Pajaro Valley during this time. The first was the famous 1906 earthquake that shook and burned much of San Francisco to the ground. Watsonville sustained damage but had recovered by the time of the extensive flood of 1911. However, the city continued to thrive and even these two setbacks couldn't stop the ever-quickenning pace of development and growth.

1910 - 1920 - Lettuce, Apples, Celebrations

To show off their wonderful town and all that it had to offer, enterprising Watsonville citizens devised the first Apple Annual celebration in 1910. This popular event, showcasing the humble apple in all its forms, codified Watsonville's place as The Apple City. Complete with parades, shows, and exhibits, the Apple Annual became a major civic event.

As the Apple Annual was becoming more and more well known, the Pan Pacific International Exposition was taking shape in San Francisco, 90 miles to the north. During the years of the exposition, the Apple Annual was moved north, further publicizing Watsonville to the rest of Northern California and the world.

At the same time, experimentation with a new crop was about to put Watsonville on the map for something besides apples. Lettuce, a notoriously difficult crop to ship long distances, was benefiting from other advances in refrigerated transport. Trials with refrigeration, combined with expanded lettuce cultivation, opened up vast new markets to Watsonville farmers.

All the jubilation and prosperity of these years met with sobriety in 1917 when the United States entered into World War I. Many second generation Americans joined the armed forces and were sent to fight in and around, and sometimes against, their native countries. Back home, the economy braced for rationing and the carefree years of festivals and celebrations faded into the past.

1921 - 1930 – Boom Years

In-between World War I and Great Depression, many in Watsonville tried to recapture the glory years of the first decade of the century. However, modernization was coming to town and with it, a change in population and shifts in social awareness. Prohibition polarized the town as saloon owners clashed with the pious citizenry. A somewhat seedy feeling settled on lower Main Street where many of the less reputable bars and brothels were located. Tensions were further heightened by a growing resentment toward foreigners, particularly against Japanese and Filipino immigrants.

Yet throughout this, the population continued to steadily increase. Regular passenger train service connected the town to Santa Cruz, San Francisco, Monterey and beyond. More schools were built, the established businesses continued to expand, and an air of prosperity, somewhat subdued by the recent war, returned to the area.

1931 - 1944 – The Great Depression, WWII, Japanese Internment, Dust Bowl

The 1929 Stock Market crash didn't affect the Pajaro Valley right away. It wasn't until the early 1930s that the Depression the rest of the country had been deep into began to creep into Watsonville and the surrounding communities. Most notable during this period were the large numbers of Americans heading west to the rich soils of the central and coastal valleys of California, trying to escape the poverty brought on by the Depression and the Dust Bowl in the lower Plains States. The plight of these refugees was best chronicled in work of local writer, John Steinbeck.

While Americans from the midwest were coming further west, those foreign immigrants already in the Pajaro Valley were experiencing increased resentment from local whites. Hostilities because of union formation and increased demands by workers for better working conditions, combined with a general anti-immigrant (especially anti-Asian) sentiment were further strained by the plunge in economic vitality. By the time the United States entered into World War II, overt racism and discrimination were the norm in a location that had always been extremely ethnically mixed and relatively tolerant compared to the rest of the country. The culmination of these hostilities was the signing of Executive Order 9066 by President Roosevelt, which called for the systematic removal the Japanese population from all coastal areas.

1945 - 1952 - Population Boom, School Expansion, Flooding

The years immediately following World War II were full of upheaval and activity. Modernization was taking place all over the City. Subdivisions were being planned out. The local school systems underwent their first round of consolidation. Parking meters were installed on Main Street. And what was primarily a barn-storming airport before the war became an active municipal airport serving passengers and freight shipments alike. Public works projects such as finally installing a proper levee system were undertaken to protect all of the investment going on downtown.

In the midst of this, a shift in population was happening. Many Japanese who were interned during World War II returned to the area and faced new competition from the large numbers of Mexican workers brought in through the Bracero Program. Some Japanese families stayed and rebuilt their lives, others left. As a whole, they did not ever return to agriculture in the same numbers as before the war. Their places, at least in the fields, were now filled by Mexicans, starting the trend that continues today.

1953 - 1960 - Post War Growth

Thousands of soldiers and military personnel were stationed in the area during World War II and many decided to remain after they finished their service period. The initial post-WWII housing boom continued to accommodate these men and their ever-increasing families. Further reorganization of the school districts became necessary and over half a

dozen new schools were constructed. The City continued to annex land as quickly as they could but it was soon filled with new subdivisions and tract housing. All this growth necessitated new municipal facilities, including a new city hall and a new hospital.

Commercially, passenger rail service ended as automobile travel became more popular. Road construction replaced rail construction and the era of highways that began to reshape California in the 1920s came to dominate the everyday life of all citizens, rich or poor. Shopping centers were built outside of the downtown on thoroughfares leading out of town to house new retail shops and services. While downtown remained the commercial center of town, events in the following thirty years would significantly alter this situation.

3.3 Summary of Historic Context Themes

Historic Context Theme 1 - Municipal Development

The development of municipal services and civic structures often is an indicator of economic and political stability within a community. During periods of growth and prosperity, new structures are erected and improvements to infrastructure are undertaken. In times of hardship, such capital projects are limited or non-existent. In this way the built fabric of a place can relate the story of boom and bust and overall development.

Watsonville experienced two periods of explosive municipal development, one just after incorporation in 1868 and the second in the first decades of the 20th century. It was during the first boom that the basic municipal services were established: schools, police and fire. Watsonville went from a rural trade depot to a thriving, respectable town. In the second boom, fueled by the growing agriculture-related industries, Watsonville installed electric and telephone systems, built a new city hall, established a library, constructed the first of several community hospitals and continued to expand the school system. It is during this period that Watsonville became a city and a regional powerhouse. It is also during this time that Watsonville took on the shape and character that it retains today. Therefore, this context seeks to recognize not only the architecture and institutions from these periods, but also to establish benchmarks for future municipal growth and development.

Central to this development are discussions of large-scale factors such as fires and natural disasters. Like many other communities of this age, Watsonville had several large fires that wiped out entire sections of the city. The last one resulted in improvements to the city building codes when, in 1927, a major fire ravaged both sides of Walker between Wall and Second Streets. It ran along the railroad tracks and destroyed eight packing sheds and ten residences. Later that same night the City Council passed a resolution requiring that all new non-residential structures be of fireproof construction, meaning of brick, cement or terra cotta.

Likewise, flooding was a continual problem until the middle of the 20th century. Several large floods swamped the downtown business area and many of the homes between the plaza and the river. As a result, over the years, the entire downtown has been raised up several feet above the flood plain. This has affected architecture as well as the flow of

water in and around town. Even today, with an aging levy system, flooding continues to be a major concern when developing those areas near the river's edge.

Historic Context Theme 2 - Agriculture and Agri-business

The Pajaro Valley is covered in a deep layer of rich soil deposited by millennia of periodic flooding of its namesake river. This land has supported life in the Pajaro Valley, and commerce in Watsonville, from the days before Watsonville even existed. It drew in wave after wave of immigrants from all corners of the globe and flavored the economy with related businesses. Crop cultivation expanded to food processing, which morphed from drying fruits to innovations in flash freezing. With improvements in transportation technology came the potential to send Watsonville produce all over the world. Picking, processing, storing and transporting all manner of fruits and vegetables has been the backbone of the economy of Watsonville up until the present day. While diversification is beginning to reshape the economy, agriculture and agri-business continue to be a major factors.

In this chapter, the influence of agriculture and agri-businesses on the historic appearance and character of Watsonville is explored. As the local economy becomes less and less dependent on agriculture it will become increasingly important to establish a framework for evaluating reminders of this agrarian past. This will enable Watsonville to retain a physical and mental link to agriculture and the sense of place it created.

Historic Context Theme 3 - Commercial Development

As successes in the fields drew increasing numbers of people to settle in Watsonville, commercial enterprises to cater to the population began to diversify. The first enterprises were mostly entertainment based – saloons, dance halls, social clubs and hotels. Two other early commercial enterprises were the banks and the breweries. As more people came to Watsonville, dry goods stores flourished and related services such as barbers, coopers, cobblers and blacksmiths set up shop on and around Main Street. By the mid-1870s a thriving downtown commercial district had been established near the town plaza. This area has continued to serve as the commercial hub of Watsonville and lends to the city a rich architectural and historical backdrop.

As the city expands beyond its current commercial needs, new businesses to serve the growing population will appear, just as they have in the past. What is different is how these commercial enterprises are arranged spatially relative to the citizens that they serve. Understanding physical patterns of commercial development and their effects on the community will allow Watsonville to develop reuse goals to strengthen existing commercial centers while creating sensitive and appropriate plans for new commercial enterprises.

Historic Context Theme 4 - Cultural, Recreational and Religious Institutions

The variety of ethnic groups represented in Watsonville is the result of over one hundred and fifty years of immigrants drawn to the agricultural richness of the Pajaro Valley. Each group brought with them customs, cultures and religions from their native lands and transposed them to fit within the limitations of their new home. Upon first arriving many

formed social and religious organizations that resulted in tight ethnic communities and served as surrogate families for the many single men who came to make their fortunes. Assimilation of later generations opened some of these initial organizations to a more general audience with cultural festivals and customs being integrated within the larger Watsonville community.

Other settlers sought to establish cultural institutions in attempts to civilize the rough and ready world of early-day Watsonville. An Opera House and several community theaters were established. Fraternal organizations built clubhouses. Churches were founded. In their way, all of these institutions eventually became incorporated into everyday life in Watsonville. The result was a rural town with a level of cultural diversification typically found only in large cities at that time. It is this diversity that shaped the Watsonville of today.

Historic Context Theme 5 - Architecture and Subdivisions

Settlement patterns within a community are often indicative of perceived land value, topography, proximity to cultural institutions or the result of social regulations. Watsonville is rich with many fine examples of high architecture from some of the most well known and respected architects of their day. In particular, the contributions of long-time resident, W.H. Weeks, continue to endow Watsonville with a rich architectural legacy. This Victorian and early-century legacy is partially balanced by the many early-to mid-century housing developments that appeared between the two World Wars as well as later ones from the 1950s. These periods of growth are marked by the distinctive characteristics of changing social ideals and lifestyles brought about by modernization. The combination of these two influences, as well as early settlement patterns, provide an architectural continuum of over a century of life in California.

Historic Context Theme 6 - Ethnic and Cultural Groups

The importance and influence of various ethnic and cultural groups have been mentioned in several other thematic areas yet their impact is so great that it deserves its own historic analysis. Each immigrant group brought with them certain skills, approaches and philosophies. These different lifestyles provided them with an identity and shaped how they undertook daily life as well as how the majority population treated them. Some quickly rose from poverty to become land owners. Others suffered great discrimination and prejudice and were unfairly forced into near slavery. All advanced the agricultural economy through hard work, introduction or development of new cultivation techniques, or the successful integration of new crops to the valley. Many expanded on these efforts in the fields by founding related industries to process the produce, ship it out of the area, or service all these efforts. Their institutions provided a level of comfort to those homesick for their native lands and gave a sense of the familiar in the often confusing and brutal American culture. While many groups have blended their native customs with American trends, each retains a sense of their individual cultural identities. It is these identities that make Watsonville unique.

Chapter 4

Historic Context Theme 1: Municipal Development

4.0 Historic Context Theme 1: Municipal Development

4.1 Overview

Like most small towns in the West, Watsonville retains much of its original layout and relationship to the surrounding rural areas. This connection to the land is derived from the close relationship that Watsonville has had with agriculture and its related businesses from the time before incorporation through the present day. Settlement patterns, commercial growth, civic development and municipal identity have all been influenced, in part if not wholly, by activities on the rich alluvial soils of the Pajaro Valley.

The beginnings of Watsonville are mired in legal battles and local legend. This is because of the somewhat ephemeral nature of Mexican land grants and the ownership confirmation processes instituted between the period of Mexican Independence in the 1820s and the establishment of the State of California as a member of the United States of America in 1850. It appears that legal ownership of Rancho Bolsa del Pajaro always rested in the hands of Sebastian Rodriguez, an officer in the Mexican Army. He was granted the land in 1837 by the Mexican government but his claim under U.S. law was not confirmed until 1861, five years after his death. In the meantime, a brother, Facundo Rodriguez, sold the plot of land upon which Watsonville was laid out to Judge John H. Watson and D.S. Gregory for \$400 in 1852.⁹ Watson and Gregory quickly laid out town lots along Pajaro Street (now Main Street) before the legality of their ownership was questioned. Some realized that Watson's ownership was alleged and secured parcels of land directly from the heirs of Sebastian Rodriguez.¹⁰

Judge Watson leased out what he could to potato farmers who rushed to the area after a record harvest in 1852. The farmers threw together shanties on their plots for housing while they tended the fields. At the end of the season they hauled their harvest to the beach where it was eventually transferred to ships and sent to San Francisco. The shippers referred to the potato fields as Watson's Town since many of their clients lived on land leased from Watson. This is also the name that Watson supposedly used on his claims in court when the Rodriguez family tried to challenge his ownership of their land. The name eventually morphed into Watsonville and it was this name that was used on the incorporation documents.

Soon after Gregory and Watson laid out their little town, the citizens organized a school, a post office and a fire brigade. By the time Watsonville was officially incorporated in 1868, two dedicated school buildings had been erected; one for white students at 17 East Lake Avenue (built 1863) and one for black students at 507 East Lake Avenue (built

⁹ Lewis, Betty. *Watsonville: Memories That Linger, Volume 2* (Santa Cruz, California: Valley Publishers. 1980).

¹⁰ Other accounts state that another brother, Alejandro Rodriguez, claimed equal ownership with Sebastian for the Rancho Bolsa del Pajaro. His claim was rejected by U.S. Judge McKee in 1861. The deed for Watson's purchase, on file with the Santa Cruz County recorder, appears to not had any legal validity.

1867). (East Lake Avenue was formerly known as Fourth Street).¹¹ A telegraph office had also been established by this time and two newspapers were publishing weekly.

Photos from the 1870s show a thriving downtown commercial district along Main Street and around the plaza, donated by the Rodriguez family. Commercial development was fueled by the ever-increasing harvests from the surrounding fields and farms. Watsonville's role as commercial and trading center for the Pajaro Valley was solidified when the Southern Pacific Railroad finished their Pajaro station one-mile from downtown in 1871. Even though it did not go through downtown Watsonville, its proximity to the town spurred the development of a new industrial area between the town and the station, along the Pajaro River.

Now that Watsonville was connected to the rest of the state, and therefore the rest of the country via rail, crops and people could more quickly and more easily travel. This new freedom further fueled growth within the town itself. More and larger schools were built, a city hall was constructed, water, sewers and gas services were installed, electricity was introduced and Watsonville finished its transition from a gritty farm town to the second largest city in the county. Even the earthquake of 1906 and repeated flooding could not hamper the activity of the town.



Figure 4.1. This photo of the downtown is dated 1876. It is taken from the roof of the Mansion House on the southern corner of Main and East Beach Streets, looking southeast down Main Street, toward the Pajaro River. Note the wooden sidewalks and horsecars. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

¹¹ *Watsonville: The First Hundred Years*. (Watsonville, California: Watsonville Chamber of Commerce, 1952). 60-61. Information also provided by the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

The downside of being so readily connected to the larger world was also felt. The Stock Market crash of 1929 did not immediately impact Watsonville or the Pajaro Valley. However, by 1932 the economic problems of the rest of the country had found Watsonville. So too had the upheaval brought on by the Dust Bowl in the southern plain states. Soon to follow was increased resentment and hostilities toward Japanese immigrants and their families. The culmination of this was the round up and internment of hundreds of Japanese families living in the area in early 1942.

At this same time the military became an everyday presence in and around Watsonville. During World War II, military encampments were established up and down the California coastline. Being centrally located along the coast, Watsonville hosted a Naval lighter-than-air base for dirigibles as well as an airbase for conventional, fixed-wing aircraft. They served to augment the already considerable military presence on the Monterey peninsula and in the San Francisco Bay Area. Both airports were turned back over to the city in 1946.

After World War II Watsonville struggled to accommodate the influx of new families as well as the ever-increasing immigrant labor force. The rate of annexation accelerated, pushing the city boundaries further and further into the countryside. Farmland continued to be consolidated by large corporations while private farm owners sold their lands to developers for much-needed housing. The housing market was further stretched when road and highway improvements made commuting to the Bay Area a more viable option. The trend continues today as Watsonville tries to balance its dependence on agriculture and related businesses, with the tremendous demands for housing and the evolution from a food production center into a more diversified economy.

4.2.1 History – Schools

Education has been a cornerstone of the Watsonville community from the beginning. Over the first several decades of settlement, most children were educated in the home or sent to a neighbor for their schooling, as no school buildings had yet been built. In those times, most children left school before completing the 8th grade. Those that wished to go to college took private lessons in preparation for college entrance exams. Therefore, the first schools to be built were primary schools. Because the population was spread out over the surrounding farmlands, many rural one- and two-room schools were constructed to serve children in an immediate geographic location. This resulted in over a dozen independent schools and districts until the first consolidation and official districting was completed in 1946. At that time four districts were created out of the many schools in and surrounding Watsonville: Corralitos, Freedom, Pajaro (Watsonville), and Salsipuedes. Each had their own boards, superintendents and physical plants. In 1965, under further consolidation, these four districts merged to form the Pajaro Valley Unified School District.

Today, those educational institutions within the boundaries of this study include portions of the former Pajaro and Freedom School Districts. For this reason the following

chronicles the development of these districts while those former districts not currently a part of the municipal boundaries are not included.

Freedom Public Schools



Figure 4.2. This image is of the 1903 William Weeks designed Roach school that once sat at the corner of Ross Road and Holly Drive. It has since been relocated to its current site on the campus of the Freedom United Methodist Church at 223 Airport Blvd. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

The first school in Freedom, then known as Whiskey Hill, was called the Roache School and was started in the parlor of the Roache family home. As the population grew, the need for a dedicated school building became apparent and in 1867, the Moehr Family donated land for the construction of a school building. The Roache School remained in this structure until 1903 when W.H. Weeks was contracted to design a new facility at the corner of Ross Road and Holly Drive.¹² A second New Roache school was constructed in 1929 and expanded in 1936. The 1929 building later became the Freedom United Methodist Church. It was expanded in 1936. The Freedom church merged with the Watsonville United Methodist Church in 2000 and the Methodist Cal-Nevada Conference currently owns the Church grounds. They are presently leased to the Santa Cruz County Office of Education for special classes.

¹² The current Freedom School at 25 Holly Drive was built on this site of the 1903 Weeks School, around 1962. The 1903 building was moved next to the 1929 Roache School. Both became part of the Freedom United Methodist Church and are currently part of the Watsonville First united Methodist Church.

The original Roache school building was quickly overcrowded with children from the increasing Watsonville and Freedom populations. Augmenting the Roache School was the first Amesti School in 1879 and the first Calabasas School built in 1884. The Amesti School was replaced in 1912 with a new building on Amesti (now Green Valley) Road, which was again replaced in 1946. The Calabasas School was replaced in 1963, shortly before the regional merger of school districts.

1946 was a period of change for the school districts in and around Watsonville; six small schools decided to merge to form the Freedom School District, the Roache School changed its name to Freedom School and new pressure from the baby boomer generation increased the demand for classroom space. The new Freedom School District purchased a portion of the Naval Airbase for \$1. They established a campus on the site for administrative offices, classrooms, adult education and community facilities. Following several years in former military structures, a new campus was constructed in 1963 a half-mile from the airport on Holly Drive and remains in this location today. The Freedom School bell is from the USS Langley, a reminder of this time when their school campus was a naval base. The remainder of the airbase later became the Watsonville Municipal Airport.

Watsonville Public Elementary Schools

Scott's Hall, a boarding house on Main Street facing the Plaza, served as the first public classroom space for the children of Watsonville. Classes were conducted in a large room that eventually had to be partitioned with cloth to create two classrooms. For 10 years this, and several other parlor-turned-classroom spaces served as the public school system in Watsonville. In 1863 a proper schoolhouse was built with funds subscribed from the growing town's citizens. The Pajaro School District was formed and a building was constructed at 17 East Lake Avenue at Brennan Street. It was known as the "Pajaro School." The original building was expanded in 1866 and continued to serve as the First Primary School until 1909 when it was moved back 60-feet for the construction of a new building designed by W.E. Green. Both were demolished in 1929. The Watsonville Grammar School for grades 5-8 was built in 1876 at East Lake Avenue and Sudden Street, less than one block away from the first school. This building was designed by James Waters and expanded in both 1909 and 1916. Classes were conducted here until April, 1938 at which time students and teachers moved to the new E.A. Hall School at Palm Avenue and Brewington Street. The 1876 Grammar School was razed in 1951 for construction of the May Way Shopping Center.

The time period between the construction of these first two primary schools was one of great expansion and social diversification. The Civil War was fought and California entered the union as a free state. Many newly freed slaves came to California to find their fortune in the rich agricultural lands and gold fields throughout the state. A sizable population found their way to Watsonville and were taxed, like all other citizens, for support of the schools. However, their children were not allowed to attend. After protests, a separate one-room schoolhouse was constructed at 507 East Lake Avenue in 1867. The separate-but-equal solution was a temporary compromise. In 1875, after a nearly a decade of separation, the African-American community protested by boycotting the school at

507 East Lake. A stipulation in the land lease stated that the city had rights to the land and the building only if it continued to serve to educate all children regardless of race or creed. When the African-American community boycotted, the building failed to meet this clause and was shut down. To comply with the 15th amendment, the schools were forced to integrate in 1876.

With the additional African-American students and the children of the immigrant populations flooding the valley, the Pajaro School district began to look ahead to major expansion for the primary grades. The 2nd Primary school discussed above was the first response, however that too quickly became overwhelmed. In the 1870s space was rented by the school district at Allen's Hall on East Lake Avenue and by 1906 the Watsonville Power and Light Company's Gashouse was being utilized to relieve perpetual overcrowding. The Power Company's building was rented for so long that it became known unofficially as the Gashouse School. The district utilized the building until 1909.

Over the course of the next four decades, four new elementary schools were constructed to meet the needs of the still expanding population. The first was the 1917 Radcliff School on Rodriguez Street. The Radcliff school, sometimes known as "Rodriguez School," was built to serve a growing population on the west side of town and was the first public elementary school to be built at a distance from the location of the first



Figure 4.3. The beginning of the expansion of the Watsonville Public School system was marked by the construction of Radcliff Elementary School. It was the first school to be built west of Main Street. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

primary and grammar schools on East Fourth Street (now East Lake Avenue.) It was designed by local architect Ralph Wyckoff, who later received a number of commissions for public buildings in Central California. It was expanded in 1928.

From its first years, the Radcliff School educated “English learners,” i.e. non-native speakers of English. However, it was not until the 1970s that it became the first officially designated Bilingual School, a huge departure from the historical “immersion” curriculum. The bilingual program was a study model for the entire school district, and although many adaptations and changes have come about over the years, the philosophy of respect for all native or first languages has been accepted throughout the system.



Figure 4.4. This is an early image of the Linscott School. Its exact date is unknown. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

The Linscott School was built in 1928 on Elm Street near Riverside Drive on property that was part of the Bockius Ranch. Named after the “grandfather of local schools,” J.W. Linscott, it originally served children “assimilating from farm labor communities across the nearby Pajaro River.” At this time that meant most were Japanese. Throughout the years the country of origin has changed for the students but the challenges associated with teaching English as a second language as well as the usual studies has remained the same. This eventually led to problems in the early 1980s when desegregation of the small, mostly Latino school population became too costly for the district. The school was shut down in 1981. In 1986 it reopened as a kindergarten and 1st grade only, eventually expanding into a K-4 magnet school. In 1994 it became Linscott Charter School, a role it continues to play over a decade later.

Mintie White Elementary was designed by W.H. Weeks and was dedicated in 1929 on Palm Avenue. It was named for Arminta E. Allison (Mintie) White, an early Watsonville teacher who devoted over 40 years to the education of local children. Like the Linscott School, Mintie White has traditionally been a multicultural environment, drawing its students from the immigrant laborers living in the surrounding neighborhoods.



Figure 4.5. Here is a view of Mintie White Elementary shortly after completion. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

The Great Depression slowed the general economy but not the influx of workers and families into Watsonville. With help from a Public Works Administration grant, E.A. Hall Elementary, on Brewington and Palm Avenues, was built 1938. It is named for Apple Annual president and civic leader Edward A. Hall. Today it operates as a middle school.

A second wave of school expansion followed the baby-boomer years. This period was felt especially hard on the Monterey Bay Area when many soldiers stationed here during World War II decided to settle in the area. The result in Watsonville included three more elementary schools. MacQuiddy Elementary was constructed on Martinelli Street in 1950 and named for Thomas Smith MacQuiddy, superintendent of Watsonville Schools for 41 years (1907-1948). Four years later H.A. Hyde Elementary went up on Alta Vista Street. This school was named after long-time nurseryman, school board trustee and civic leader H.A. Hyde, another major player in the creation and execution of the Watsonville Apple Annual celebrations. In 1965 the New Bradley Elementary School was built on the site of the old Corralitos School (1859). Since then, eight new elementary or middle schools have been built within the city limits, as well as several charter school and alternative schooling options.

Watsonville Public High School

Over the course of the 20th century, many changes in the nature of public education were reflected by actions taken in the Pajaro School District. The ever increasing number of elementary and grammar schools were needed to handle the millions of new immigrants flooding California. Compulsory education through age 16 was instituted as early as 1874 and more and more students were choosing to attend high school, and eventually college. For those in Watsonville, this meant that they could complete an optional 2-year, then 3-

year course at the grammar school, attend a boarding school elsewhere, or travel to Santa Cruz to attend high school. It became a matter of civic pride to provide these individuals a proper school to prove to the outside world that Watsonville was as educated and civilized as any of the larger cities around it. The California State Legislature finally passed a bill in 1891 that proscribed the process by which a town could organize a high school. Under this bill “any city or incorporated town of one thousand two hundred or more inhabitants may, by majority of vote of the qualified electors, thereof, establish and maintain a High School at the expense of such city or incorporated town.”¹³ In 1895, a \$25,000 bond measure was passed to construct the first high school on 3 1/2 acres at the corner of Marchant and Beach Streets. W.H. Weeks provided the design for this two-story, symmetrical Stick-style building with a central tower. It burned to the ground in 1901 and was immediately replaced by another Weeks design, this time in a Mission-revival style.

By 1917 the 6-classroom facility was too small and Weeks was called upon once more to design a second building for the High School campus. It became known as the East Building. Other additional buildings were constructed over the next fifty-years to serve the changing and increasing demands of a modern high school. A gymnasium came first (1937) followed by shop buildings (1950), a music building (1953), a library (1966) and an art studio (1969). By the 1950s the campus was becoming crowded and the original 1905 structure was torn down to make way for the library. The 1917 building survived



Figure 4.6. This is a photo of the second Watsonville High School built in 1917 and designed by William Weeks. It was demolished after the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.

¹³ *An Act to Provide for the Establishment of High Schools in the State of California* was approved by the legislature on March 20, 1891.

the 1989 earthquake but was rendered unsafe in aftershocks. It was demolished in 1990. In 1992, a replacement building was dedicated as the “Centennial” Building.

Today the Pajaro Valley Unified School District serves almost 19,000 students, 75% of which are Hispanic. This is spread over 19 elementary schools, 5 middle schools and 3 high schools. The numbers continue to increase as more people are moving away from the densely populated and expensive Bay Area and Santa Cruz to the outlying communities such as Watsonville.

Private Schools

Watsonville also has a long history of private institutions of higher learning beginning with several private tutors mentioned in a directory from 1875. Many of the early churches established small schools to serve the needs of their congregations. Three of the largest and oldest institutions include St. Francis’ School, Moreland Notre Dame and Monte Vista Christian School. All are affiliated with a Christian church organization but have had secular affiliations during their histories.

St. Francis’ School began in 1868 as the Pajaro Valley Male Orphan Asylum on 130 acres of land donated by Prudenciana Valejo de Amesti and her daughters between College and Kelly Lakes (Laguna Grande and Laguna Chiquita respectively.) It was founded by the Catholic Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, which had been established on the site in 1854 on land previously donated by other individuals.¹⁴ Four years later, administration of the orphanage was given to the Franciscan friars of Mission Santa Barbara. The Friars continued to operate the asylum as a sort of seminary for orphaned boys with some help from state contributions for the care of wards of the state. They were expected to tend the grounds where animals were kept and crops grown, in addition to their studies and daily prayer. By the turn of the century, enrollment had reached 300.

To support such a large population, in 1901 the Friars required a new church and built a Gothic edifice next to the old wooden Valley Church. During the next decade, changes in attitudes toward juvenile criminals resulted in the creation of reformatory institutions. Prior to this, minor offenders were put in jail with of-age convicted criminals. The result was a state mandate for the Friars to take in some of this population. Foundations were laid for a new school that included eight cottages, a dining room and an administration office, on the south side of the road, by Kelly Lake, in 1914. This expanded school became known as St. Francis School.

Financial difficulties and the war years of 1914-1918 resulted in the Franciscans turning over operation of the institution to the Bishop of Los Angeles, Fresno and Monterey. In 1921, ownership of the complex passed to the Salesians of Don Bosco. The Salesians are an order of the Catholic ministry dedicated to spreading the gospel to youth. They ran the school as a self-sufficient enterprise, using physical labor in the fields as well as mental labor in the classroom to educate their charges. At this time, St. Francis School was

¹⁴ This information was included as part of a related file of historical documentation collected by the Pajaro Valley Historical Society. The original source of the information was not recorded in the file.

operating as a boarding school for children from families of moderate to low incomes rather than an orphanage or reform institution. In January of 1927, the Salesians dedicated a new chapel, constructed closer to the new school. A week later, a fire swept through the 1855 church and the 1874 asylum buildings.

The Salesians operated the school, in expanding areas, including high school education, through the 1950s. Later in the 1950s, it later became a seminary under their guidance. In 1970 the seminary closed and nearly two decades of alternate church-related uses, took their toll. The 1989 earthquake finished the job, destroying the 1927 campus. Fundraising was immediately started for construction of a new school. St. Francis Catholic High School opened on the site in 2002.

Moreland Notre Dame Academy began as a memorial by Margaret Moreland for her daughter Josephine. Shortly before her untimely death at age 19, Josephine was encouraging her mother to use her influence in the community to improve the education of a growing population. Mrs. Moreland contracted in 1899 with W.H. Weeks to design a new boarding school for girls to be run by the Catholic Nuns of Notre Dame. Josephine was at the College of Notre Dame at the time of her death and the nuns accepted the offer of a new school in her honor. This grand first structure faced Main Street. It was damaged in a fire caused by the 1906 earthquake but repaired and improved in short order.

Until 1920, boys were accepted in grades one through four and were taught separately in the Boys' School. After 1920, boys were accepted in grades five through eight. Boys and girls continued to be taught separately until about 1940. Growing enrollment necessitated the addition of more classrooms. In 1941, an initial \$40,000 was raised to begin building an entirely new school. This second school building was constructed in 1942 on Brennan Street and was used to house the elementary classrooms.

The last graduation for Moreland Notre Dame High School in 1957 coincided with the opening of the new Mora Catholic High School. The boarding school also closed at this time and Moreland became a primary-grade private day school. In 1963, during another campus expansion, the elaborate 1899 William Weeks portion of the school was demolished and an ambitious fund raising drive was begun through the efforts of A.L. and Mitch Resetar to build a new convent and classrooms. Today the 1941 classrooms remain in the midst of several 1960s era structures.

The most recent addition to the private boarding/institutional schools is also the largest. Monte Vista Christian School was established on the former Murphy ranch in 1926. The Murphy home served as the first school building until larger facilities could be completed over the next several years. Like the Pajaro Valley Orphanage, the students at Monte Vista were expected to complete chores such as tending the animals or gardens or even constructing new dormitories in addition to their studies and religious devotions. The school continued to expand over the next 75 years to include field houses and athletic fields, art buildings, computing facilities, and new living quarters. It continues today as the largest private school in Santa Cruz County, with grades 6-12 and is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

4.2.2 History - Civic Institutions

When the Rodriguez heirs finally settled their claim in 1860, Watsonville was firmly established along the banks of the Pajaro River in the northeast corner of their Rancho del Pajaro. At the time, battles over land ownership were bankrupting the original rancho owners throughout California. After spending over 10 years in the courts, it is possible that the Rodriguez heirs declined to fight the legality of all the land claims within the town of Watsonville. No records of further disputes appear, and in 1860 the Rodriguez heirs bequeathed a plot near the center of town, along Main Street to the settlers. A strip of land 28 feet by 95 feet on Union Street was purchased by the City after incorporation in 1868, to fill out the square. This plaza was the first civic property in Watsonville.

Another ten years passed between the incorporation of Watsonville on part of the former Rancho del Pajaro land grant, and the adoption of the first city charter in 1878. While some civic buildings and government bodies were organized in this period, their formation started in earnest after 1878. The first city government consisted of a Board of five Trustees with one appointed by his peers to serve annually as president. This position was roughly analogous to a mayor but had full voting privileges on the Board. A list of these early Boards covers most of the leading citizens of the time, indicating that those with large land holdings or significant incomes were the ones who governed the town.

In 1903 a second city charter was adopted. This document divided Watsonville into four wards with each ward electing two aldermen. The new position of Mayor was elected by popular vote. Watsonville's first mayor was R.P. Quinn. However, his victory was contested and in 1904 the State Supreme Court ruled that W. A. Trafton was the rightful winner. He was then sworn in as the second mayor of Watsonville. The second city charter was replaced in 1960 with the current charter. Under the current system the city is governed by a "Council-Manager" form of government. The council consists of seven



Figures 4.7 and 4.8. These two views of the Plaza date to c.1900 and c.1910 respectively. The young plantings in the photo on the left have matured considerably in the photo on the right. Photos courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

members, each now popularly elected from seven districts. The council then appoints one of their members to the position of Mayor. The Mayor has voting powers on the council board and is responsible for legislative recommendations and policies. In addition, a City Manager is hired by the Council to manage the day-to-day affairs of the City.¹⁵

City Hall

The first City Hall was a dual purpose building on Main Street near the corner of Maple Street. It housed a volunteer fire department and equipment on the first floor and a large meeting hall on the second. The meeting hall served the three volunteer fire companies in Watsonville as well as the Board of Trustees. It was designed by Thomas Beck in 1875 and served the City of Watsonville for over fifty years before being altered and expanded.

By 1927, Watsonville had long outgrown the shared space on Main Street even though the fire department had moved out into separate quarters in 1925. The process to purchase a neighboring building from the Foresters of America was begun and Ralph Wyckoff was contracted to design the new space. His solution was to partially dismantle the front portions of both buildings and create a single marble façade to visually unite the two structures. City operations continued out of the existing buildings during construction. When complete, the new building housed the police department on the first floor and all other city offices on the remaining floors. This building served as City Hall for the next 38 years.

The expansive growth of Watsonville in those following four decades put great strains on the existing police and government facilities. Larger quarters for both were needed and a search for possible site locations began. In the end, the current location was preferred and plans were drawn up by Robert B. Wong, Ronald Sandy Jr. and William Hedley of San Francisco. The 1875/1927 building was torn down to make room for the current City Hall on Main Street, which was rededicated on April 24, 1965. Construction is currently underway for additional city administrative space across Main Street from the existing facilities. The anticipated completion date is June 2007.

Police Department

Watsonville has had several different policing systems in its history. Before its incorporation, Watsonville was policed by the county law enforcement. More locally, private citizens often took matters into their own hands, such as in 1856 when private funds were raised for the construction of a jail, or calaboose “for the purpose of punishing the vagrants who infest the place.”¹⁶ With incorporation in 1868, a new system called for the popular election of a Marshall. The first Town Marshall was J.D. Byrd who served five years at the post. Vigilante justice was still common, but more law and order slowly came to the area as the town became more established. In 1903, when the second city

¹⁵ Watsonville City Charter, adopted as amended in 1998. Available online at <http://www.ci.watsonville.ca.us/departments/clerk/charter.html>

¹⁶ “The citizens of Watsonville are building a calaboose by private subscription, for the purpose of punishing the vagrants who infest the place.” (Pacific Sentinel, Oct 25, 1856).

charter was adopted, the post of Police Chief was established. It too was a position filled by popular vote. The last Town Marshall was Howard Trafton and the first Police Chief was F.A. Rasette. Mayor J.W. Atkinson made the Police Chief an appointed position in 1925 and it remains as such today.

The location of the 1856 calaboose is unknown as are the locations of the early city jails. The first that appears on Sanborn maps is dated from 1914 on Rodriquez Street near the corner of Second Street on the same lot as the Apple Annual Auditorium. A new jail facility was constructed in 1937 on Union Street behind City Hall. It operated until 1982 when it was converted into office space.



Figure 4.9. The 1937 Police Station, shown here in an undated photograph, remains today as part of City Hall office complex. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

Fire Department

The first fire protection agency was formed in 1861 as the all-volunteer Pajaro Bucket Brigade #1. Their first home was at a building on Union Street next door to Scott's Hall.¹⁷ At that time most fire fighting was done with hand pumps and a horse-drawn water cart. It required many men to operate and because most buildings at this time were wood-framed structures, the potential for massive fire damage always lingered. In spite of these dangers and difficulties, being a volunteer fireman was a social status symbol. One did not just join but had to be voted in by the rest of the members of a given station. Also,

¹⁷ Scott's Hall was a meeting hall and boarding house on Union Street, mid-block across from the plaza in the vicinity of the current Cabrillo College location.

they were not paid, except for money given by a thankful homeowner. It was a love of the challenge, the social status and the highly competitive games held against neighboring companies that drew the biggest and strongest men in the community.

By 1873 the company had merged with a rival bucket brigade and formed the Pajaro Engine Company. It comprised over 80 members and “a good hand engine and hose carriage” that was stored near the Plaza on a lot dedicated for this purpose.¹⁸ The growing population of Watsonville required more up-to-date facilities so in 1873 a lot on Pajaro (now Main Street) was purchased. All this was done with donated money by private citizens. It wasn’t until 1875 that the town of Watsonville established a municipally funded fire department. Even then, the first pieces of equipment were those from the Pajaro Engine Company who generously deeded all of their apparatus, engine, hose carts, etc., as well as their building on Union and 3rd Streets to the city. All this was moved later in the year when the first City Hall/Firehouse was constructed on Main Street.

In 1925 the fire department moved to a new building designed by Ralph Wyckoff on the corner of Second and Rodriguez Streets, next to the Apple Annual Auditorium and the City Jail. It was expanded in 1927. This building remains and is still used by the fire department for storage of its antique fire fighting equipment. It is augmented by two modern stations where day-to-day operations are carried out. One is located next door to the 1925 station, while the other is on Airport Boulevard.



Figure 4.10. Even though Watsonville had a fire department, volunteer or commissioned, since its founding, it wasn’t until 1925 that they had a dedicated fire house. This building remains on Rodriguez Street, next to a more modern station. This photo appears to be from near the date of construction. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

¹⁸ *Santa Cruz County Directory for the Town of Watsonville*, (publisher unknown, 1873).

Libraries

From early on, the citizens of Watsonville displayed a commitment to the intellectual well-being of their community. This was true for formal education with the early establishment of dedicated public school buildings. It was also true for informal education in the form of an active public library system.

The precursor to an official public library was known as the Watsonville Literary and Library Association. They organized in 1868 as a group of prominent women interested in gathering resources, both literary and monetary, for the establishment of a community reading room. The group was short-lived and by 1872, the International Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) local chapter purchased the Literary Association's collection and installed them in a room on the first floor of their meetinghouse. It is unclear what hours were kept or how long this first reading room remained in business. A second account of the IOOF reading room dates it to 1896, opening with a collection donated by the Women's Christian Temperance Union. This may have been a continuation of the first reading room, or a second attempt at bringing literature to the community of Watsonville. In any case, in 1896 a librarian, Belle Jenkins, was hired for \$20 per month to keep the library open in the afternoons and evenings five days a week. Jenkins served the community as a librarian until her retirement in 1929.



Figure 4.11. This is a photo of the Carnegie Library in Watsonville. It was built in 1905 and demolished in 1975. It once stood where the current public library is located, at the corner of Union and Trafton Streets, near the plaza. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Vally Historical Association.

Around the turn of the century, spurred on by the growing population and civic pride, the Watsonville Women's Club was formed as a private group charging themselves with the responsibility of providing financial and organizational aid to build a formal Watsonville Public Library. The first step was to erect a new dedicated library building. Around this time, Andrew Carnegie was doling out \$10,000 grants to communities that could provide matching funds and a site for the construction of new public libraries. There was contention within the community concerning the site for the library should they be able to raise the required funds. In the end a site on the corner of Union and Trafton Streets was donated to the cause. Watsonville's Carnegie Library was built in 1905 by the local Graniterock Company, and designed by local architect, W.H. Weeks.

The library soon outgrew its initial space and in 1934 an expansion took place into the remaining portion of the original corner lot. This proved to be a temporary measure. Expansion was once more needed by the end of the decade and a neighboring house was demolished to make way for a library garden. From this point on, expansion was always in mind as surrounding properties came up for sale. In 1960 a parking lot was added by tearing down the YWCA Salvage Shop building at Union and Maple. This was done as a temporary solution as the land was intended to be used for any future expansion needs. However, the next round of expansion did not include the 1905 Carnegie Library building. It was demolished in 1970 for the construction of a completely new library facility. It was completed in 1976 and served the community for the next 20 years as the sole public library facility for Watsonville outside of those at the schools. In 1996 a new Freedom branch of the Watsonville Public Library was established at Freedom School. In 2000 it moved into the renovated old Freedom firehouse building at the corner of Airport and Freedom Boulevards. A new Watsonville Public Library is scheduled to open in 2007 as part of the Civic Center expansion in downtown Watsonville.

Post Office

The post office was the center of any pioneering community. It usually served as the central communication and transportation center of a community and it was not uncommon for a town to develop around the post office to serve all the people who came to ship and receive goods. Watsonville was the natural choice for the region's post office because it already was the center of commercial life for the surrounding agricultural families and businesses in the Pajaro Valley. This reality was underscored in 1854 when an official Post Office was established on the northeast corner of Main Street and East Lake (Fourth) Avenue. From this point on, the Watsonville post office became a wandering department, changing locations no fewer than seven times in its first 100 years.

The first post office building was located on the corner of Main Street and East Lake Avenue in a wood-frame building constructed in 1854. In 1893, it moved into the newly constructed Peck building on the corner of Main and Peck Streets just south of the Plaza. This is the location shown on the 1902 Watsonville Sanborn map. This was but a temporary location and it was shortly thereafter moved to the Porter Building at the corner of Main and Maple Streets. After a decade at this spot, the government moved the post office across the plaza to the IOOF building on Third. At this point the citizens of

Watsonville began petitioning for a permanent location. They launched a fundraising campaign to show the Postmaster General that they were serious about finding a permanent home for their post office. This campaign raised \$16,000 and caught the attention of the United States Government.

In 1924, with money in hand, the agreement brokered between the city and the federal agency had Watsonville securing a lot and constructing a building to be used for the post office. In this way, the citizens could decide where they wanted their post office and also what design it would take. The federal government would then lease the structure for 10 years for a price equal to the investment that the City made in the building's construction. At the end of the 10 years, the United States Postal Service would own the building.

A lot on the corner of Trafton Alley and Union Street was purchased in 1924 for a "temporary" post office while the designs and locations for a permanent facility underwent preparation and public review. The cost of this lot, the construction of the temporary facility and complications with the final designs used up most of the original \$30,000 seed money. By 1934, the end of the 10-year plan as agreed to in 1924, the federal government took ownership of the "temporary" building and lot leaving Watsonville without a permanent post office. The citizens protested that they had been cheated. More money was raised and the lot at Trafton and Union Streets was expanded through the purchase of a lot adjoining the "temporary" facility in 1936. Construction was delayed several times and during this period the post office operated out of the Opera House on Third Street.

Finally, in 1937, Watsonville got a post office they could be proud of. Built in the Monterey style this building stands today as part of Cabrillo College at the corner of Peck Terrace and Union Street. It was decommissioned as a post office in the early 1990s following the Loma Prieta earthquake when the current facility on Main Street was constructed.



Figure 4.12. After decades of struggle with the Federal government, Watsonville finally got a post office they could be proud of in 1937. The 1905 Carnegie Library can be see at the far right. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

Airports

Watsonville citizens saw the potential in a local airport from the earliest days of commercial air traffic. In the 1930s, passenger air travel was still in its infancy, however, freight shipping by air, as well as crop dusting and small private airplanes, piloted by local air enthusiasts, were well established. Such enterprises were a great boon to the agricultural interests in the Pajaro Valley. With such enterprises in mind, the Watsonville Airport Corporation was formed, and purchased 100 acres of the Silliman Ranch in north Monterey County. The Corporation dedicated the first airport, located off Salinas Road, in 1931. This was not a commercial airport and was used primarily by small one- and two-passenger privately owned aircraft.



Figure 4.13. Here is a rare aerial photograph of the first Watsonville Airport. The date is unknown. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

To garner support from the non-piloting population, traveling airshows were held at the airport in both 1933 and 1935. These shows featured planes performing stunts in the air just above an admiring crowd. Many included daredevils who walked on top of the planes while they flew through the air or pulled up just short of crashing into a building or plunging into the crowd.

Watsonville waited another 10 years for commercial air service. By this time the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA, a precursor to the FAA) had made money available to support the construction of a county airport for Santa Cruz County. The CAA first

approached Santa Cruz with the offer of a regional airport on the condition that the City purchase the land and that the land always be used as an airport. Santa Cruz turned it down and Watsonville seized the opportunity. The construction of a new, modern facility on what became Airport Boulevard was well under way when both airfields were taken over by the Navy in 1941 to augment the ships and training facilities scattered across the Monterey peninsula and on the other air facilities in the Bay Area. They added 32 acres and several barracks buildings to the two newly constructed runways. The old Watsonville airport off Salinas Road near Route 1 (in north Monterey County) was leased by the Navy as a “lighter-than-air base” for submarine-surveying blimps, while the new airport on Airport Boulevard was used for larger military planes and as a training ground for the newly minted Navy pilots and navigators.

The Navy retained the rights to both airfields until 1947 when they were turned back over to the City of Watsonville. The City regained full ownership of the original portions of the new airfield as well as the lands added to it by the Navy. Some Navy buildings were used for housing and eventually for the Freedom School, while the rest became the Watsonville Municipal Airport. It was from here that Southwest Airways operated passenger traffic until 1956 and Slick Airways transported produce to San Francisco, Los Angeles and other regional hubs. At its height, Slick Airways was transporting up to 5 tons of strawberries per day via air freight. Today it operates as a base for corporate aircraft and houses several municipal agencies, including Animal Control and the Watsonville Police Shooting Range. In terms of based aircraft and range of operations, it is the busiest airport in the tri-county region.¹⁹ The original 1931 airfield near the junction of Salinas road and Route 1 was sold to Edwin Petersen in 1948 and turned into a cattle feed lot.

4.2.3 History – Infrastructure: Water

Port Watsonville

While outside of the study area for this context statement, Watsonville’s relationship with the Pacific Ocean underscores the dependence that the city has always had on other means of transportation, namely the railroads and then the freeways. This is not for lack of interest or investment. Many individuals have tried over the last 150 years to establish a viable port at the coast, directly west of Watsonville for both produce shipping and for recreation. However, all of these ventures were ill fated and none brought regional shipping to the shores near Watsonville with any lasting impact.

As early as 1868 the landing at Palm Beach was being used to ship Pajaro Valley produce out to San Francisco. At this time ships would anchor out beyond the breakers and small barges carried grains and potatoes from the shore. This operation was run by the Goodall and Perkins Co. and the small port became known as Camp Goodall. Eventual competition with the railroad limited any shipping expansion opportunities at Camp Goodall. However recreation opportunities remained and portions of Camp Goodall were

¹⁹ *History*. Watsonville Airport website. <<http://www.watsonvilleairport.com>>.

leased, in 1881, by Charles Ford. He constructed a hotel and a series of cabins near the beach that became a popular resort area among local residents.

By the turn of the century, the popularity of beach resorts and the growing regional importance of Watsonville, brought two individuals to town with visions of a major west coast shipping port at Camp Goodall. In 1902 W.J. Rogers and H.H. Main organized the Watsonville Transportation Company with dreams of establishing an electric rail line connecting Watsonville and Camp Goodall to transport pleasure-seeking passengers and freight to their new port. As part of this endeavor, the company constructed a wharf that extended over a quarter-mile out into the bay. Local money poured into the project and the well-known Santa Cruz promotional master, F.E. Snowden was elected president of the newly renamed Watsonville Railroad and Navigation Company. Rogers was appointed manager and Camp Goodall was renamed Camp Rogers.

Watsonville businessman, Fred Kilburn, vice-president of the new company, commissioned a steamer to conduct passengers from Camp Rogers to San Francisco. The *Kilburn* was supposedly the fastest steamer on the west coast at the time. In April 1904 the *Kilburn* made its maiden voyage with a passenger docket full of dignitaries and well-wishers. Townspeople packed the passenger cars of the electric railway and climbed aboard the freight cars that were added for the overflowing customers. All arrived at Port Rogers to celebrate the opening of what everyone hoped would be a premiere destination for shipping and shore recreation. Port Rogers was renamed Port Watsonville.

The popularity of the passenger lines to Port Watsonville made the venture an overnight success. Early plans to expand the railway as far as Hollister and eventually to Fresno began to be floated, even as reconstruction of a portion of the wharf was underway. Some of the original timbers sustained substantial parasitic damage and had to be immediately repaired. During the repair work, in November 1904, a huge storm hit the Monterey coast and the several hundred feet of the already weakened wharf were washed out to sea. The company reinvested its growing profits into the repair of the wharf and operations were soon back to normal.

In 1905 suspicions concerning the business operations of the company eventually led to indictments of Rogers and Main for falsifying documents and embezzling money. Creditors demanded payment and the company was forced to declare bankruptcy on September 8, 1905. That same day, in Oregon, the *Kilburn* was holed and had to be dragged to shore for repairs. It never returned to Watsonville.

The resort and shipping dreams of Port Watsonville died down for several years until Snowden reorganized the company in 1911. He expanded the wharf to an astonishing 1700 feet which prompted several steamship companies to apply for docking privileges. With this news, The Pajaro Valley Development Company and the California Pacific Company were formed to develop the beach property at Port Watsonville. Lots were sold, a tent city appeared and a casino opened creating an even greater draw to the seaside resort area. However, this too was short lived. In December 1912 another major storm hit the area, washing away large portions of the wharf and flooding the resort. It never

recovered. Snowden sued the wharf builders, tying up the fate of the whole operation in the courts for over five years. The company was dissolved in 1913 and all of its assets sold off. The rail tracks were torn up in the early 1950s. Today nothing remains of Port Watsonville except some of the wharf's pilings.

Pajaro River

From its beginning, Watsonville has had its identity shaped by the Pajaro River. While never a formal transportation route, the river has formed the southern border of the town, separating Watsonville from the town of Pajaro, but also serving as the dividing line between Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties.

The first toll bridge across the Pajaro River was built in 1867 at the foot of Pajaro Street (now Main Street). Early on this was the main thoroughfare to and from Watsonville and all of the early businesses were established between the town plaza and the Pajaro River. This low-lying area not only contained the primary business district but also formed part of the natural flood plain for the river.

At least six major floods have inundated downtown Watsonville to varying degrees since the town was laid out in 1852. Not much is known about the floods of 1852 or 1862 but by 1890 several local newspapers had been established and the new technology of photography was advanced enough to document the damage. For the next 50 years the 1890 flood served as the benchmark for all others. In the next century, floodwaters again rose in 1911, 1914, 1917, 1931, 1938 and 1955. Of these, the March 1911 flood is generally regarded as the most devastating of early 20th century floods. This was the first to completely submerge the town plaza. Heavy currents during the flood washed away topsoil and trees and pulled some homes off their foundations.

Many more minor floods occurred during this period in those areas along the riverbanks, in the lowest portions of town. In these areas, flooding became such a common event that people began to build their houses well above ground level to avoid unnecessary damage from high waters. Today, this type of architectural solution can still be seen in the older homes between the river and the Plaza.

The increasing frequency of major floods was almost wholly due to increased settlement throughout the valley and attempts to channel the river. As land uses became more intensive, silting of the bottom of the river increased. This raised the river bottom and made it more prone to spilling its banks. Even though most portions of downtown were also raised through capital improvement projects, flooding was becoming a more widespread and common problem.

With the frequency and severity of floods on the rise, Watsonville finally began construction of a levee system around 1930. It successfully protected the city for the next 19 years, barring the flood 1938 when the levee was breached in several places. A stronger levee was built by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1949. This levee was most fully tested during the 1955 flood when the Pajaro River crested at less than 12-inches from the top of the levee. In more modern times (during the 1990s) breaches on the

Pajaro side of the river caused widespread damage but Watsonville has remained relatively unharmed.

Lake Watsonville

At the turn of the 20th century, editors at *The Pajaronian* proposed the creation of a temporary lake above the bridge at Main Street for the amusement of the town as part of the annual 4th of July celebration. In 1907 the 4th of July Committee, along with the Chamber of Commerce and the City of Watsonville, hired a contractor to temporarily dam up the river, thus creating Lake Watsonville. A Water Carnival was organized. The series of festivities included races, contests, the election of a Carnival Queen and a water parade. A teak Queen's barge was commissioned from Hawaii to transport the Water Carnival Queen across the lake to the floating pavilion at the Lake's center. Picnic grounds were cleared and many citizens launched boats and ventured further upstream. The lake remained until October when it was drained for the winter. This spectacle was repeated in 1908, 1910 and finally in 1914.

4.2.4 History – Infrastructure: Rail

The Railroad

No other industry has had more influence on the development of California, or the entire western half of the United States, than the railroads. For good or for ill, whole towns were created or destroyed, whole ways of life improved or oppressed by the railroad and the political machine that supported them. This is no less true of Watsonville than it is for many other towns in California. The story of the railroad and the Pajaro Valley has many facets, only a few of which are touched upon in the following. What are presented are those pieces that directly influenced the development of the town and the growing agricultural businesses of the valley.

The Transcontinental Railroad was completed in 1869, forever changing life in America. Railroad fever swept the nation as towns competed for rail connections. The competition was stiff and usually done behind closed doors. Even before the railroad came to Watsonville in 1871, it was a contentious affair. Early plans by the Southern Pacific showed a route following the coast to Santa Cruz, then to Aptos, over to Watsonville and down through the Salinas Valley. However, by 1868 the Central Pacific Railroad had taken over the Southern Pacific. The route was then changed to incorporate the CP rail line already established through the Santa Clara Valley to Gilroy then south into Hollister and finally Bakersfield. A spur line was constructed through Monterey County in 1871. It was this line that connected Pajaro to San Francisco. Local legend says that Watsonville was not the choice for the rail depot because they failed to offer the railroad executives enough incentives and subsidies. Whatever the reason, Watsonville had to wait five more years before it had a railroad stop of its own.

About the time that the Central and Southern Pacific railroads were laying track through Monterey County, the citizens of Santa Cruz County decided to take matters into their own hands. A plan was proposed by Fred Hihn to construct a railway from Santa Cruz to Watsonville. The initial plan, in its somewhat shady history, started in 1869 with the



Figure 4.14. This view is of the 1895 Southern Pacific Depot on Walker Street. The Watsonville depot is built according to Southern Pacific's Standard Station Plan No. 22. This was once the most common depot design of the SP lines. Spreckels' plant is clearly visible at the far left of the image. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

formation of a committee to put together a ballot measure to support the establishment of the Santa Cruz & Watsonville Railroad. The idea was to partially finance the railroad construction and have the Southern Pacific take over operation. The plan ran into problems during the financial panic of 1873 which left the Southern Pacific cash poor and the citizens of Santa Cruz County still without a railroad. Hihn was not discouraged. He rallied the county again with the idea of a narrow gauge railroad, which would be cheaper to construct and operate, that would be owned completely by the county. The voters approved the measure and the first Watsonville depot was completed by the time the train rolled into Watsonville in 1876.

The Santa Cruz & Watsonville Railroad, while well conceived, met with almost immediate problems. Firstly, the railroad's narrow gauge tracks meant that any goods shipped on standard gauge rails had to be unloaded and transferred by hand to the SC&W trains. This added expense and delay in time cut deeply into the railway's ability to remain competitive with alternative steamer transportation to San Francisco Bay. Secondly, the Southern Pacific's line into Pajaro could supply much of Monterey County with the rail service that they required, thus limiting the customer base for the SC&W to only certain segments of Santa Cruz County. The final blow was a large storm that

wreaked havoc on the railway's infrastructure in 1881. It was eventually sold to the Southern Pacific Railroad at a loss.

The SPRR reconstructed the tracks, adjusting them to accommodate a standard gauge railcar. This eliminated the transfer problems of the old SC&W lines. An influx of capital and the connection of Watsonville to San Francisco via rail in 1883 finally brought the County into the rail age.

One other rail line that greatly influenced Watsonville was the privately owned line Pajaro Valley Consolidated Railway that operated between Watsonville and the company town of Spreckels. Originally constructed around 1890 to haul sugar beets from the fields to Claus Spreckels' state of the art processing plant in Watsonville, the tracks later served to feed an even larger and more technologically advanced facility in the company town of Spreckels. Sugar beets were then moved from the fields around Watsonville to Spreckels via Moss Landing. Even when the Watsonville plant was closed in 1898, the rail line continued to serve the community with limited passenger transport from Watsonville to Moss Landing for picnics and weekend recreation.

This railway too was eventually sold to the Southern Pacific and the rails sold for scrap. The last portion of the rail line, a metal viaduct over the Pajaro River, was dismantled and salvaged in 1936. The old depot for the Pajaro Valley Consolidated Railway still stands in its original location at 480 West Beach Street and currently serves as a storage facility for Resetar Brothers.

Finally, confusion concerning names has clouded some of the historical accounts of the railroad in the Watsonville area. The 1871 Pajaro station, the first in the area, was renamed Watsonville Junction in 1913. Even though it referred to Watsonville in its name, at no time did it ever exist within the city limits of Watsonville. The later 1895 Watsonville station was sometimes referred to as Watsonville Depot. This station has always been located on Walker Street near West Beach Street. Up until 1958 it was used by the Southern Pacific Railroad for ticket sales and storage. At that time, only a single agent was stationed at the Watsonville Depot and the remaining portions of the building were leased out to private businesses. Today it has been "mothballed" by GraniteRock Co. in order to preserve the structure. The 1871 Watsonville Junction station was torn down and replaced in 1948. The 1948 station remains today across the river in Pajaro.

4.2.5 History – Infrastructure: Roads

Early Paths and Trails

First pathways were animal trails. Native Americans used these trails for gathering food and trading between tribes and by the time the Missions were established, these routes were well worn and widely known. They were then used by the Mission inhabitants as packtrails used to venture between the Missions. In the Pajaro Valley, this included routes to and from Mission San Juan Bautista and Mission Santa Cruz and Monterey's Presidio, as well as Mission San Carlos in the Carmel Valley. As time passed, carriages and other horse-drawn vehicles widened these trails.

The first road into the valley facilitated travel between Missions San Juan Bautista and Santa Cruz. Out of the San Juan Valley, in San Benito County, it followed the old Anzar Road, over the Aromas Hills, down to Thompson Road, skirting the valley north along Casserly Road, and out of the valley along today's Freedom Blvd. A well-used trail also extended north from Monterey around the Bay toward Santa Cruz, passing through Watsonville at a ford across the Pajaro River. These routes were well established before Americans arrived in the 1850s. In 1860s, a toll road was built over the mountains toward San Jose. Today it is known as Old Mount Madonna Road. Smaller access roads, called skid roads (they were formed with logs or "skids"), led to the various lumber mills working the redwood groves. Many are still used today as fire and logging access roads.

Highway 1

The construction and maintenance of county roads became the responsibility of the Santa Cruz Co. Board of Supervisors in the 1880s. Eventually the California Bureau of Highways was created in 1895, partially in response to the advent of automobiles and the call for paved roads. However, construction was not actually started until after the passage of the Highway Bond Act in 1909. The result was the state's first system of paved highways and county roads in the 1910s and 1920s.

The road closest to the coast was known in the early decades of the 1900s as the Coast Road. It extended south from San Francisco to Santa Cruz along the cliffs and dunes of the Pacific Ocean. As cars began to appear in the region, road construction accelerated.²⁰ Around Watsonville, the most used road for early automobile travel south from Santa Cruz followed (approximately) present-day Soquel Drive and Freedom Blvd.

In 1919, Santa Cruz County passed \$924,000 bond measure to supplement state funding. "Among other projects, the county paved the road linking Watsonville and Santa Cruz that generally followed the stage line, through Freedom, Aptos, and Soquel. This road is now Soquel Drive/Soquel Avenue/Freedom Boulevard."²¹ This later became designated as Highway 1 but was known locally as the Watsonville-Santa Cruz Highway.

The State Division of Highways took over county roads in 1933, and in 1936 the Division began studying ways to improve the route between Santa Cruz and Watsonville (now Freedom Blvd., Soquel Drive, and Soquel Ave.) Tourist travel, through-traffic, and the state's program to build a shoreline highway, increased the demand on the region's roadway system, which led the Division of Highways to build what eventually became freeway State Route 1.

During 1941-42 a three-lane "modern thoroughfare" connecting the north end of Watsonville and Rob Roy Junction (present northbound Freedom Blvd exit near Aptos High School) was completed. No major culverts or bridges were required, and the area was sparsely populated. The road was not considered limited access, and the center passing lane was a particular hazard. The advent of World War II prevented the

²⁰ R.W. Eaton is said to have had the first car in Watsonville around 1904.

²¹ Hyde, H.A. *Regarding the First Roads in Pajaro Valley*. December 6th, 1926.

continuation of this roadway to Santa Cruz.

Following World War II, from 1947 to 1949, construction was begun on a four-lane, divided and controlled access “freeway” extending south from Santa Cruz. This was made possible by the passing of the Collier-Burns Act that provided increased fuel taxes for highway construction. This segment, built to improved modern standards, joined the Rob Roy-Watsonville section (built in 1941-42) at “Rob Roy,” now the Freedom Blvd. off ramp. Ten years later, the connection between the Watsonville/Morrissey Blvd. section and Highway 17 was completed. At this time, the route through Watsonville from the north included Highway 1, which passed down Watsonville’s Main St., crossed the Pajaro River Bridge, passed through Pajaro and continued south on Salinas Road, turning west at Werner’s Hill (Pajaro Valley Golf Course), then south along today’s road to Moss Landing. In 1947, traffic lights were installed along Main Street to control the increased traffic through downtown. Parking meters made their debut on this stretch a year earlier.

In 1956 the Highway 1 by-pass was proposed to connect with the “freeway” at today’s Airport Blvd. off ramp and proceed south to join Salinas Road at the top of the hill, near the large frozen food storage plant. This proposal was completed and dedicated in 1967 and it is this route that remains today.

During the 1960s, overcrossings and undercrossings were built, converting the Santa Cruz to Rob Roy section to a full limited-access freeway. The Rob Roy to Watsonville section was not converted to the same status until December 1974.

4.2.6 History - Utilities

Water

Water was pumped by hand from individual wells for the first decade after incorporation. As the city grew, so did the need for regular water service to provide for residents, businesses and fire protection. In 1878 the Town Trustees granted a contract to the Watsonville Water Company to lay pipes for a municipal water system. Later that year, a second company, the Corralitos Water Works, was also granted a contract. While the Watsonville Water Company tapped natural local springs, the Corralitos Water Works siphoned from nearby creeks and rivers. Both companies constructed reservoirs and laid down pipe, but it was the Corralitos Water Works that installed the first fire hydrant on Main Street in late 1878. By 1882 both companies organized under the Corralitos Water Works name and were using the same set of pipes.

Original owners of the Corralitos Water Works, James Rodgers and William Landrum, sold their shares to Francis Smith and W.W. Montage in 1889. It was later incorporated as the Watsonville Water and Light Company in 1896. The business remained privately held until 1923 when it was purchased by the City of Watsonville and folded in with other municipal services.

4.2.7 History - Communication

Telegraph & Telephone

When the Pajaro Valley was first settled, it was a place largely isolated from the rest of the world. Geographically, politically and to a large extent economically it remained a self-sufficient community. At the time it took six months to travel from New York to San Francisco by sea and six weeks or more over land. News traveled only as fast as the person carrying it so most business was limited to local and regional transactions. This began to change in the decade after the gold rush when the newly invented telegraph allowed for quick communication between all corners of the country. By 1860 Watsonville had a telegraph office and its first connection to the larger world. Direct communication was given another boost in 1892 with the establishment of Watsonville's first public telephone exchange.²² It was housed in the lobby of the Lewis House (later known as the Hoffman House) on Main Street near the southwest corner of the present-day intersection with Central.

Newspapers

Locally, most events were distributed through newsprint. Today's venerable Register-Pajaronian began as two separate papers, The Pajaronian and the Watsonville Register. J.A. Cottle founded The Pajaronian in 1868 as a weekly paper in the town of Pajaro. It was sold about a year later to R.A. Ankeny, who moved it to Watsonville. In 1876 it came into the possession of W.R. Radcliff who ran the paper for the next quarter century. The still weekly publication again changed hands in 1901 when it was purchased by James Piratsky and George Radcliff and became an evening daily.

The Watsonville Morning Register began as the Weekly Transcript, a "democratic sheet" established by William H. Wheeler in 1876. In 1881, George W. Peckham took over the newspaper and began daily publication. The name was changed from the Transcript to the Register in 1904. Peckham remained at the head of the paper until 1919 when it was purchased by Fred Atkinson. In 1930 Atkinson bought The Pajaronian and controlled both the morning and evening newspaper franchises. The two titles were combined into a single daily publication in 1937 when they were purchased by the John P. Scripps Newspaper group.²³

Radio and Television

Beyond newspapers, radio and television have also had their place in Watsonville. KOMY began as radio station KHUB in 1937 and was also owned by Fred Atkinson. KSBW was granted a broadcasting permit in 1953 as part of a share-time permit granted to Salinas Broadcasting Co. and Monterey Radio-TV Co.²⁴ It was granted a cable license in 1962 and cable television was extended to Watsonville in 1964.

²² A private telephone line was installed in 1879 to connect Ford's store on Main Street with the Watsonville Mill and Lumber Company in Pajaro. Ford owned the Watsonville Mill and Lumber Company and maintained the company headquarters at his Watsonville Store. Several other private telephone lines existed as early as 1877 between various residences. Lewis, Betty, "When the Telephone Came to Watsonville," *Register-Pajaronian*, (Watsonville, date unknown)

²³ "125th Anniversary," *Register-Pajaronian*, (Watsonville, 1983)

²⁴ "Year In Review," *Register-Pajaronian*, (Watsonville, 1953)

4.3 Summary

Throughout its existence, Watsonville has been a regional center of social, economic and political importance in southern Santa Cruz County. What began as a cross-roads in the middle of a large agricultural area evolved into a shipping center, financial hub and educational gateway between the fields and the rest of California.

The population of Watsonville began a proud tradition of quality education and high civic-mindedness in its early days. Quick adaptation to a rapidly growing youth population led to the construction of a series of public school buildings of high architectural merit. These institutions were supplemented by several private schools to serve needs not met elsewhere in the educational system. Beyond the formal classroom, the citizens of Watsonville could continue their education through public reading rooms, and eventually a long-lived public library system.

Like many quickly expanding municipalities, Watsonville has gradually moved from volunteer to full-time municipal services. The long-standing traditions established by the early pioneers of the fire and police departments continues today. Many of these offices and departments will soon move into a new civic center campus that will once again centralize the municipal government and hopefully become the foundation of a new and thriving downtown district.

The evolution from rail to road has lead to several far-reaching implications for Watsonville over the last 50 years. First to be impacted was agriculture-related shipping. The introduction of quality roads, refrigeration technology and advances in packing technologies (most developed locally) made shipment by truck more cost effective and more efficient. This turned what was a weigh-station into a regional shipping center. Improvements to Highway 1 only increased this change.

In more recent years, the importance of Watsonville as a shipping hub dwindled, but the same conditions that brought about the rise of shipping were now causing other changes. Easy access, a small town environment and quality schools were making Watsonville attractive to families looking to escape the crowding and housing prices of the Bay Area. As more and more agricultural businesses relocate over-the-border or overseas, Watsonville is being transformed from an agricultural powerhouse to a more diversified working community. This transition continues today and presents a host of new challenges, advantages and problems for a municipality that has a long history of innovation and rising to meet challenges in all shapes and sizes.

4.4 Representative Properties

Schools



Address: 550 Rodriguez Street

Historic Name: Radcliffe Elementary

Common Name: Radcliffe Elementary / Rodriguez Elementary

Historic Use: School

Current Use: School

Year Built: 1917, expanded 1928, remodeled 2005

Architect: Ralph Wyckoff (1917), W.H. Weeks (1928)

The Radcliffe School was the first elementary school built west of Main Street. Its significance is in its purpose to educate the mostly immigrant children living close to the industrial section of Watsonville, as well in its association with local architect Ralph Wyckoff. It was expanded in 1928 during a period of tremendous growth within the school district. The building retains most of its original detail and massing and remains in use by the Pajaro Valley School District as an elementary school.

See page 23 for a historic photo of this building.

Civic Institutions



Address: 105 Second Street
Historic Name: Firehouse #1
Common Name: Firehouse #1
Historic Use: Firehouse
Current Use: Fire Department Museum and storage
Year Built: 1925
Architect: Ralph Wyckoff

After many years of sharing space with City Hall and the Police Department, Watsonville finally built a dedicated firehouse in 1925. In its early years, the firehouse shared the lot with Watsonville's city jail as well as with W.H. Weeks' Apple Annual Hall. While these other structures have long since been demolished, Firehouse #1 remains as a reminder of the wave of civic improvements that took place in the first quarter of the 20th century in Watsonville. Today it is adjacent to a modern, active firehouse, and serves as the department's archives and museum. It remains largely intact and appears just as it did in 1925.

See page 32 for a historic photograph of this building.

Transportation



Address: 407 Walker Street
Historic Name: Watsonville Depot
Common Name: Watsonville Depot
Historic Use: Passenger and Freight train depot
Current Use: Storage
Year Built: 1895
Architect: Southern Pacific Railroad

Even though the railroad came to Watsonville in 1871, it was many years before the Southern Pacific rolled into town. With SP came standard rail sizes and faster, more convenient passenger travel options. This is actually the second depot built on the site and it was mainly used for shipping sugar beets and apples. It is an early example of Southern Pacific's Common Standard Plan No.22. This once was the most numerous type of SP depot. Very few examples remain today. It was in active service until 1958, at which time all operations were shifted to Watsonville Junction (Pajaro). Today it retains most of its original massing with several additions. An extension at the front, passenger waiting room, end of the building was added and the open freight shed on the opposite side of the building was enclosed sometime between 1908 and 1920. The raised doors at the far end indicate the height of the former loading docks that ran along three sides of the building. It is currently used by a private owner for storage purposes.

See page 41 for a historic photograph of this building.

Chapter 5

Historic Context Theme 2: Agriculture and Agri-Business

5.0 Historic Context Theme 2: Agriculture & Agri-Business

5.1 Overview²⁵

From the era of ranchos and vaqueros to the days of flash freezing and global distribution, the rich soils, mild climate and abundant water sources of the Pajaro Valley have been the economic engines that keeps Watsonville running. What is most remarkable is that so many different crops, techniques and innovations originating in the Pajaro Valley have fueled the growth of agriculture and agri-business worldwide. These changes were the result of new populations, new technologies, economic risks and physical toil. Chronicling the evolution of agriculture in Watsonville provides a glimpse of global technological and political shifts. Technological advances altered farming methods while political factors at home and abroad often dictated who was working in the fields and what was being grown.

The history of Pajaro Valley agriculture and immigration can be roughly broken into two periods: pre-1900 and post-1900. Before the turn of the century the fields around Watsonville were planted mostly with grains or orchards. These crops required little irrigation and only moderate numbers of workers for tending and harvesting. During this time, immigration was dominated by European groups, Chinese laborers and some Japanese workers. The Europeans, and to a much lesser extent the Japanese, were able to become land owners and moved up the social and economic ladders. European farmers became the civic leaders and businessmen that ran Watsonville. They moved out of farming and into farm management. This necessitated greater numbers of hired farm hands to tend the fields, which at this time were mainly Chinese immigrants, followed by growing numbers of Japanese workers.

After 1900, more and more labor-intensive crops were being planted. At this time, crops such as strawberries, and later lettuce, required hand planting, pruning and harvesting. Exclusionary policies on Chinese and Japanese immigration limited the number of new laborers coming from those countries. Mexican and Filipino workers arrived to fill the void. However, by this time land ownership was being concentrated in a small number of families, then corporations. The average laborer no longer had as many opportunities to rise above their difficult social and economic positions. Frustration with the situation came to a head in the mid-20th century and resulted in union organization.

With each wave of immigration came a new method of farming or an expertise with a new type of crop. Early on, what was planted in the ground was partially related to who was doing the planting. The influx of immigrants not only diversified the population, it

²⁵ Most of the information contained in this chapter has been generally drawn from a number of sources to compile the brief history of agriculture around Watsonville presented in Chapter 5. Of note is the collection of oral histories archived at the University of Santa Cruz and made available online through their website as well as the various summaries created by the Pajaro Valley Historical Association for the purpose of this context statement. Specific citations are noted where appropriate and all histories are noted in the bibliography. Unless otherwise noted, all information was collected from multiple sources for verification and distilled into a general narrative.

also diversified production, at least through the last quarter of the 19th century. However, as commercial farming grew in importance, the influence that immigrant populations had in the introduction of new crops began to dwindle.

With the abundance of harvested goods, packing and processing was needed to ship them from the field to brokers and shippers in San Francisco and Los Angeles. These industries started at the edge of Watsonville and soon congregated around the rail depot. The extension of the Southern Pacific to Pajaro in 1871 opened up vast markets to local farmers. Prior to this, most crop production was for family use or for local sale only. The farms were small and primarily worked by family members. With the coming of the rail lines, shipping goods further and further away became a possibility. By 1880, commercial farming was a viable business venture and the farms became much larger and more specialized. With the production of food for large-scale distribution, new ways of preparing the produce for long distance travel were needed.

Continual innovations in food processing from the settlement of the area up through the present day have made Watsonville what it is. Apple dryers, automatic washers, cold storage and flash freezing all began in Watsonville. Food from the rich fields surrounding the city fed people all over the country, and even from an early time were shipped internationally. By World War II, Watsonville was sending tons of local fruits and vegetables to U.S. Troops around the globe, earning Watsonville the moniker of “Freezer Capital of the World.”

The following chronicles some of the highlights in these various agricultural realms over the last one hundred and fifty years. To understand the evolution of these businesses in Watsonville is to gain a deeper understanding of food production and distribution in the United States. Local and global political and technological changes can be read in the history of agriculture and agri-business in the Pajaro Valley. Further discussions on the immigrant populations and their contributions can be found in Chapter 9.

5.2.1 History - Crop Development

Potatoes

The Gold Rush drew in thousands to California and most people quickly grew frustrated with their lack of success in the foothills of the Sierras. People looked elsewhere for their fortunes in enterprises less risky and more stable than gold mining. Because many were farmers in their home states and countries, the search for rich land where they could establish farms often led them away from the mountains. Those that ended up in the Pajaro Valley in the middle of the 19th century found a large, sheltered valley largely occupied by cattle ranches and little else.

J. Bryant Hill decided to try his hand at growing potatoes in this sparsely populated region and leased a portion of the Salsipuedes Rancho from Don Manuel Jimeno. Records differ in the exact amount of acreage he devoted to this test planting but all agree that the results were astounding. Hill’s yield in the rich alluvial plain brought him a small

fortune at the market in San Francisco and the word quickly spread to other Forty-Niners that the Pajaro Valley was a gold mine of a different sort. The Spud Rush was on.

In the next two years, almost the entire valley floor was planted with potatoes. However the success was short-lived. By 1853 so many potatoes were coming out of the Pajaro Valley and other early agricultural centers within the state that market demand collapsed. Supply vastly exceeded demand and the price plummeted. Those who paid to harvest their crops and ship them to market were left broke or in debt. Those who just left their crops in the fields to rot fared slightly better financially.

Many were too broke to return to wherever they came from, and decided to stay in Watsonville. So many stayed that an instant population appeared and with it, related businesses to serve the burgeoning, unincorporated settlement. By 1854, Watsonville boasted seven stores along Main and Beach Streets, at least one boarding house, and several churches.²⁶

Grains and Hay

Farmers new to the region tended to grow what was familiar to them. The soil in the Pajaro Valley proved to be very forgiving and a great many different crops eventually flourished, some briefly and others over a greater span of time. Besides potatoes, many came to the area experienced in grain and hay cultivation. The benefits to growing these crops included a quick return on investment as they were relatively easy to plant, cheap to cultivate and could be planted and harvested in one relatively short growing season. In the case of hay, some could be harvested multiple times with one planting. At a time when property claims were contentious and rightful ownership was always in dispute, being able to plant and harvest in a short period of time allowed farmers to make money without a large upfront investment. If they were forced to move, they would not have to leave behind much in the way of land improvements.

Strawberries

Strawberries have one of the longest continual commercial cultivation histories in the Pajaro Valley. First planted around 1860, they commanded \$2 per quart, (a figure roughly equal to \$35 today.) Their expense stemmed from the irrigation required to supplement the annual rainfall. The reality that strawberries were a more labor-intensive crop to grow and harvest also contributed to their extreme market value.

Some smaller, residential crops followed for the next several decades but the real shift came in 1880 when the Corralitos Water Works opened. A new system of reservoirs and ditches enabled larger-scale irrigation. Later that year regular shipments to San Francisco were made, filling a growing demand of the rapidly developing city.²⁷ By 1884, 186 acres were dedicated to strawberries. This figure jumps to over 700 acres by the turn of the century. In 1904 J.E. Reiter and D.J. Driscoll planted their first crop of “Banner Brand”

²⁶ *Santa Cruz County Directory for the Town of Watsonville.* (publisher unknown, 1873).

²⁷ Wilhelm, Stephen and James Sagan. *A History of the Strawberry: From Ancient Gardens to Modern Markets.* California: University of California Division of Agricultural Sciences. 1974.

strawberries on the Cassin Ranch and began a fruit and berry growing business that continues to the present day.

While advances in irrigation spurred on crop production, only local markets benefited. Strawberries do not keep as long as citrus or apples without refrigeration, so the temperature maintenance requirements were much more stringent. It wasn't until 1921 that the first railcar of strawberries was shipped to east coast markets. This advance in refrigeration demanded new ways to package and process the fruit. Being at the source, Watsonville became a leading strawberry processing center even as local strawberry production declined due to overproduction statewide in the late 1950s.

Strawberry acreage in the Pajaro Valley continued to decline as Santa Clara County became a leading producer by mid-century. However, in more recent decades, as berry fields in other parts of the state have been replaced by housing or other crops, Watsonville's strawberry production has steadily increased.



Figure 5.1. This view of the Redman House, taken circa 1945 when it was owned by the Hirahara family, shows the surrounding, heavily cultivated property. Today, the land around the house is still used for agricultural purposes. Photo from the Online Archive of California: War Relocation Authority photographs.

Hops

Like potatoes, the high market prices for hops appealed to more adventurous farmers who were willing and able to invest in a somewhat more risky crop. Unlike potatoes, hops usually required at least one season to become established, after which they could grow up to 25-feet high in a season. Such growth required a strong trellis or wired support system upon which to rest. This requirement for a large upfront investment sometimes took years to realize a profit. And like strawberries, hops required irrigation and harvesting had to take place quickly and by hand, a process that was very labor intensive. Adding to this, hops had to be dried before use, yet another additional expense for the farmer. This may explain why more individuals didn't try to get in on the high market prices for hops. Those that did were richly rewarded but had to be financially able to make the initial capital investments, making hops a crop that only the established landowners could undertake.

In 1867 James Cathers reportedly planted the first local hops acres near Johnson Canyon. His initial success was followed by J.C. Smith, who in 1868, the year of Watsonville's incorporation, planted another hops field nearby. Over the next two decades increasingly larger amounts of land were devoted to hops, which continued to bring in a generous price at market. In 1885, a farmer named McGrath planted his first hops crop. The McGrath family stayed with hops until 1907 when they were the only hops farmers left in the valley. By this time, commercial hops production had moved to the dry valleys of the Pacific Northwest where most of today's hops are grown.

Prunes

Prunes and apricots were planted throughout the Pajaro Valley beginning in the 1880s. In the years before apple orchards took over the valley, these fruit trees enjoyed a moderate period of successful cultivation. At first the orchards were for family use, often planted near residences. What could not be canned for use by the family was sold to brokers who bought from a number of individuals, pooling these small harvests together to ship to larger markets. Like many aspects of agriculture, the railroads and labor pools influenced the size and types of prune orchards. Commercial orchards appear around 1882 when J.M. Rodgers planted the first commercial prune trees. In the next 12 years this expanded until over 1500 acres of the Pajaro Valley was planted with prunes.

The explosion in fruit bearing trees led to the development of dehydrating facilities to process all the fruit for the larger markets. Prune driers reached peak production in 1896, handling over 2 million pounds of green fruit. Production tapered off after the turn of the century, as prune and apricot orchards were being ripped out and replaced by increasingly popular apple trees. Successive years of poor production in the 1940s and 1950s lead to the continued decline of prunes and most other orchard fruit production.

Lettuce

As irrigation systems improved after the turn of the century, specialty produce started to be planted in greater and greater numbers. One of the first non-traditional production crops was lettuce. Moses Hutchings planted three acres of lettuce on his property in 1914

as an experiment. He found that not only did it grow exceptionally well in the sandy soil, he had a ready market in the restaurants in San Francisco. He planted his first true commercial crop in 1916.

Lettuce is a relatively fragile crop to harvest and ship. Without ice or refrigeration, it rots very quickly. To ensure that his crop made it to San Francisco in as good a form as possible, Hutchings designed special wooden crates, which he then filled with ice and packed in the field during the night. In this way, he was able to limit the exposure to warm temperatures and prolong the range of use of his crop. Expanding these methods for large-scale lettuce production made it very labor intensive to pack.



Figure 5.2. To facilitate rail shipments, the Pajaro Valley Lettuce Company loaded train cars directly from their cooled lettuce packing sheds on Walker Street. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

The first cross-country rail shipments relied on ice to preserve the lettuce. First it was picked in the field and brought to a packinghouse. Here, the field crates were unpacked, then repacked with crushed ice between each layer of heads. (Blocks of ice up to 300 pounds each were shaved and crushed by hand for packing.) These crates were sealed and then packed in with chunks of ice placed around the crates for shipping via railcar. This would cool the shipment for only a few days and any delays en route meant a ruined shipment. Such a setback befell the first shipment in the fall of 1919 but this did not stop

progress. By the end of the year shipments were headed to Chicago and New York on a regular basis.

Improvements in refrigeration technology greatly expanded the number of acres devoted to lettuce throughout the southern half of California. In 1948 experiments with vacuum cooling resulted in a whole new way to preserve and ship lettuce. This method required the heads to be packed in the field and the crates transported to a cooling room where the heat was extracted from the produce, reducing it to near freezing temperatures. The nearly frozen crates were then loaded into refrigerated trucks for market delivery. It was now possible to prolong the shelf life of produce long enough to get them from the field to markets over 3,000 miles away. Lettuce remains today as one of the principle crops being shipped out of the Pajaro and Salinas Valleys.

Flowers

Greenhouses, nurseries and flowers are relative newcomers to the agricultural landscape around Watsonville. While Judge Blackburn (of apple fame) established a nursery with James Waters in 1868 at the end of 3rd Street, only a few small competitors set up shop. Waters bought out Blackburn's share in the nursery only five years later. This was a very successful business venture for Waters and he was continually acquiring new land or establishing new fields for his stock in and around Watsonville. He developed part of his original nursery lands on East Lake and Sudden in 1893 as the Waters Subdivision.

Waters had little competition until the arrival of Henry Alton Hyde in the 1890s. He was a carpenter with a green thumb who turned his hobby into a thriving business. He established the H.A. Hyde's Nursery on Freedom Boulevard in 1905 and specialized in flower seeds and bulbs, particularly Begonias.

It wasn't until the late 1950s that commercial greenhouses started to gain a foothold. The first two of these businesses were a rose greenhouse run by Henry Sakae, an early lettuce farmer, on San Andreas Road and a carnation business run by Ben Graust on Freedom Boulevard. These early commercial enterprises were soon joined by dozens of commercial greenhouses in the 1960s. Many of these owners were escaping the pollution and high business costs of the Bay Area and found Watsonville to be friendly to their needs.

Apples

Watsonville was known in the early 20th century as the "Apple City." It earned this nickname by growing, processing and shipping fresh produce and processed apple products all over the country as well as overseas. Many of the city's early civic leaders made their living in the apple business either through growing them or with innovations in apple processing.

Some apple trees did exist in the valley prior to 1868 but their origins are unknown. Records indicate that apple trees may have been planted near the missions and in gardens around some of the ranchos, however Judge Blackburn is credited with planting the first



Figure 5.3. This sign proudly proclaims Watsonville to be “The Apple City.” This photo was taken from the Pajaro Bridge, looking up Main Street toward the plaza, circa 1910. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

successful modern apple orchard around 1852. Other residential orchards started to appear in the following seasons. Five years later Blackburn expanded his first set of trees into a commercial orchard. Some competition for the distinction of the first commercial apple orchard exists. In this same year, Isaac Williams and Judge R.F. Peckham open their own commercial orchard. Both of these endeavors matured, and by 1860, there was enough to warrant the first commercial shipment of apples. Approximately 50 acres was devoted to the cause at this time.

Apples production in the Pajaro Valley received a huge boost when Orient Scale and the codling moth appeared in the Santa Clara Valley in 1873. The destruction of crops throughout the Santa Clara Valley increased demand for healthy produce from other areas of the state. The Santa Cruz Mountains helped to insulate Watsonville from the initial ravages of these two pests. While apple production disappeared in one valley, the other increased output and came to dominate the apple market. While Orient Scale and the codling moth did both end up in the Pajaro Valley, they never had quite the destructive consequences as the epidemics in the Santa Clara Valley where many orchards never recovered.

The increase in apple production during the crisis spurred a whole host of mechanical and technological innovations to further establish Watsonville as the Apple City. In 1876, Marco Rabasa, L.G. Sresovich and others came to broker apple crops and to organize the buying, packing and shipping of apples to market. They established a system of brokering and selling that is still largely followed today.

The limited lifespan of fresh fruit increased demand for dried fruit and each type of fruit required different methods for preparing and drying the harvest. Local businessman, Thomas Beck, invented the first mechanical drum type apple dryer in 1885. His invention was used until 1901 when it was bettered by J.F. Unglish and his apple drying kilns with fixed trays. Other firsts include the first commercial apple washer, designed by Everett Goodale in 1928 and the first long distance apple shipments in 1887.

In 1887, M.N. Lettunich completed the first freight car shipment of Bellflower apples to Denver. One month later, he shipped Newton Pippins to London. Both these green varieties grew well in the Pajaro Valley and were not cultivated in other apple producing regions of the east coast or Pacific Northwest. Their relative rarity raised their price to two to three times that of the typical red varieties and created a rapidly growing niche market almost exclusively filled by Watsonville apples. The demand for Bellflower and Newton Pippin apples was so great that by 1910 over 1 million trees on 14,000 acres had been planted and just over half of them were actively producing fruit. This amounted to almost 3 million boxes of apples, or approximately 2.25 million bushels of fruit.

M.N. Lettunich and his brother, Mateo augmented their initial apple shipping successes by constructing the first apple packing shed out on Walker Street in 1895.²⁸ Soon after, with apples becoming the dominant crop in the valley, apple-packing houses sprouted all along Walker Street and around the train depot. These packing sheds soon expanded into cold storage facilities. The largest of these operations was established by the Watsonville Apple Distributors, a cooperative group of 23 apple packers and shippers founded in 1915.

Along with apple orchards, apple packing and apple storage, apple-related products were also produced in Watsonville. Martinelli Brothers had the cider market covered, but many producers set up cider vinegar facilities along Walker Street and down near the Pajaro River. Most of these appear between 1900 and 1930, at the height of apple production. H.J. Heinz had one of the largest facilities on First and Walker Streets. Its main building was an old Japanese fruit packing plant with dozens of pickle vats grouped at the center of the one-block lot. Although Heinz no longer operates the facility, it remains an active vinegar producing plant under the current ownership.

Also of great consequence to the Watsonville economy was the apple drying industry. The first apple dryer was a modified prune dryer developed by Watsonville resident, Thomas Beck in 1885. Eventually the industry came to be dominated by Chinese firms. The first of these was the Quong Sang Long Company owned by King Kee. So fully did Chinese firms fill the apple drying market niche that the style of drier used almost

²⁸ Lewis, Betty. *Watsonville: Memories that Linger* Vol.2, 1980.

universally in the industry became known as the “China Dryer.” By 1918, 84 apple-drying kilns operated in Watsonville, employing over 1400 people. At this time almost half of the total apple crop produced in the Pajaro Valley was dried.

Apples remained the principle crop up through the 1950s. Advances in technology at this time increased output by 20% per acre, thus enabling more land to be used for other crops. At the same time, low yielding and difficult to manage orchards, such as those in the mountains, were either abandoned or ripped up.

Today, China is the largest grower of apples, supplying 41% of the world’s commercial apples. The United States is second in production with Washington, Michigan and New York leading the domestic suppliers. As of 2004, California ranked fourth in domestic apple production.

Other

Throughout the last century and a half, the major agricultural crops mentioned above have been supplemented with smaller growing operations. Like much of the southern states at the time, cotton and tobacco made brief appearances in the 1860s on Jesse Carr’s farm on the former Salsipuedes Rancho. More successfully, in 1894, J.H. Logan introduced Logan and Mammoth blackberries to the Pajaro Valley. The former variety was the result of an accidental cross-pollination in Logan’s fields. In the 1930s mushrooms became a commercial crop, growing in importance through the 1960s. During World War II popping-corn was briefly produced and in the mountains several Christmas tree farms have replaced orchards and hilly vineyards.

5.2.2 Agri-Business

The organization of the fruit and vegetable growers had a lasting impact on how business was conducted in Watsonville. The establishment of these professional and corporate unions seemed to coincide with the increased importance of food processing in the local economy. For instance, in 1917, shortly before refrigeration allowed for more wide spread distribution, the Central California Berry Growers Association was formed to collectively market their products. They changed their name to Naturipe in 1922. The West Coast Farms Collaborative was formed in 1955. This was the same organization that stood at the heart of one of the major strikes in the Watsonville area.

Overall, trends in agriculture reflected innovation in technology and changing responses by business to increased industrialization and mechanization of the food industry. Drawing on the histories of the various crops mentioned above and their place on the timeline of Watsonville history, the following section highlights some of the specific businesses and organizations that pushed Watsonville agriculture onto the national and international map.

Apple Annual

The Apple Annual enjoyed a brief but explosive period of popularity in the first decades of the twentieth century. It grew in four short years to become the largest festival of its kind in the state, so large that it anchored one of the state exhibition halls at the Pan Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915. Local civic leader, E.A. Hall, did not conceive of a small local festival. From the beginning he schemed and promoted a festival to outshine all others that came before it.²⁹

Fueled by tremendous growth in the local apple business that saw five new packing houses constructed on Walker Street between 1900 and 1905 and the growing international recognition of Watsonville apples as a superior product, E.A. Hall found a ready and willing audience in his home town. He first proposed his ideas for the Apple Annual in 1908. A board of directors was selected and public bond measures passed to support the construction of a fair venue worthy of the celebration that Hall envisioned.

William Weeks drew up plans for a massive exhibition hall on Second Street between Walker and Rodriguez Streets. Inside, it had one of California's largest stages, measuring 30 by 100 feet, in a hall that could seat 3000 people. Perhaps most remarkably, the entire building was constructed in less than 90 days.

Promotion for the first Apple Annual in 1910 took place anywhere Watsonville apples were displayed including the state fair in Sacramento and the Ferry Building in San Francisco. It was billed as "The Apple Show From Where Apples Grow." It had such widespread support from the towns around Watsonville that many county businesses and offices in Santa Cruz and Monterey shut down for certain days of the event, encouraging their employees and customers to attend. To entertain these masses, each day was filled with speakers, parades, competitions and exhibitions, shows, performers and displays of technological advances and Watsonville's apple producing prowess. Governor James Gillett was at the opening ceremonies where he was presented with a large wooden spoon and a three-foot diameter apple pie. The pie was later shipped, whole, to the Governor's mansion.

Under the direction of Annual President Otto Stoesser and Manager Harry Perkins, the second Apple Annual, in 1911, expanded on its predecessor in all aspects. The presenters represented all apple-producing counties in California and many from outside the state. Overall attendance was almost double that of 1910 at around 60,000 visitors. The 1912 Annual had Watsonville's first automobile parade as one of the main attractions with over 125 participants at a time when there were fewer than 400 cars in the county. A boost in attendance also came from a Navy cruiser and two submarines that anchored off Moss Landing for the duration of the festival. However, tragedy struck on the night of October 11 when one of the submarines pulled loose from its moorings and was grounded. Two servicemen died.

²⁹ Watsonville had participated in earlier events in Portland, Oregon and London, England. The Apple Annual surpassed both events in size and attendance.



Figure 5.4. The Apple Annual began as a local promotional event and became the premier apple festival in the state. Growers from around the world set up elaborate displays highlighting their produce. This photo was taken from inside the Apple Annual Hall, later called the Watsonville Auditorium. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

The trend towards larger and more popular Apple Annuals continued in 1913 when the first Apple Queen was crowned. By 1914 it had grown so large that it was moved to San Francisco, to be housed under several enormous tents at Eighth and Market. The following year it stayed in San Francisco and became part of the California State exhibition during the Panama Pacific International Exposition.

The grandest Annual in 1915 was the last. The onset of the United States' involvement in World War I quieted the flurry of activity for subsequent Apple Annuals. The spirit was further dampened by several years of poor harvests and by the time the war was over, interest in the Apple Annual festival had waned. There was talk in 1943 of reviving the celebration but involvement in WWII, local declines in apple production, and political tensions prevented any further action.

Martinelli's

Stephen Martinelli left Switzerland in 1859 at the age of 17 and came to California where his older brother owned a farm. He tried his hand at farming but found that the work did not suit him. Instead, he began to experiment with making cider from apples in his neighbors' fields. He perfected his techniques and in 1868 founded the S. Martinelli Co. while still in his brother's barn. The first product line included bottle-fermented

“champagne” cider, hard cider and various carbonated soft drinks. They were immediate hits with the local community.

The Martinelli Brothers continued to make and bottle various forms of apple cider at the farm on East Lake until 1885 when they constructed a manufacturing facility at 227 East Third Street (now East Beach Street). A 40-acre orchard was planted near the facility to insure that a supply of quality apples was always available. Martinelli knew this was the key to his product because from the beginning he insisted on 100% pure apple juice. No water, filler, sweeteners or apple concentrates were allowed. This remains true today.

Martinelli felt that Pajaro Valley apples were the best in the world and his 100% pure juice was the result of using these superior apples. Soon the rest of the country would agree. In 1890 Martinelli’s won their first gold medal at the California State Fair, beating out many well-known east coast brands.

In 1917, as Stephen Martinelli Jr. was attending school at the University of California Berkeley, he developed a method to make unfermented apple juice. This non-alcoholic cider beverage hit the markets in that same year and became an instant success. Bottles of it were sent with Navy troops during World War I. The soldiers supposedly liked it so much that there are stories of Martinelli’s cider being carried into battle. After the war, it became a popular drink nationwide, especially given the limitations of Prohibition. This popularity of their non-alcoholic sparkling apple juice allowed the company to fill a unique niche in the new, more global, market.

Prosperity and increasing demand continued through the Depression. In 1937 a new office and an addition were constructed on the 1885 building to keep up with production. By the end of World War II, unfermented apple juice was the most popular of their apple drink products and the old fermentation tanks were dismantled. When the plant was again expanded in 1945, all production of alcoholic cider beverages ceased.

Today Martinelli’s is run by the founder’s grandson, Stephen C. Martinelli and his great-grandson, S. John Martinelli. It continues to operate the East Beach Street plant however, production is greatly augmented by a recently purchased processing facility at 735 West Beach Street where most of the packing and shipping is completed.

Spreckels

One of the early corporate entities in Watsonville’s agricultural history was the Spreckels Sugar Beet Company. This company was the first to put Watsonville on the map as an agricultural force and transformed the area through its infrastructure and expansion. While it operated for only 10 years in Watsonville, it left a lasting mark on the region that can still be seen today.

Claus Spreckels made his fortune from a newly developed process he perfected to extract superior grade sugar from sugar beets rather than from cane. His process far surpassed the quality

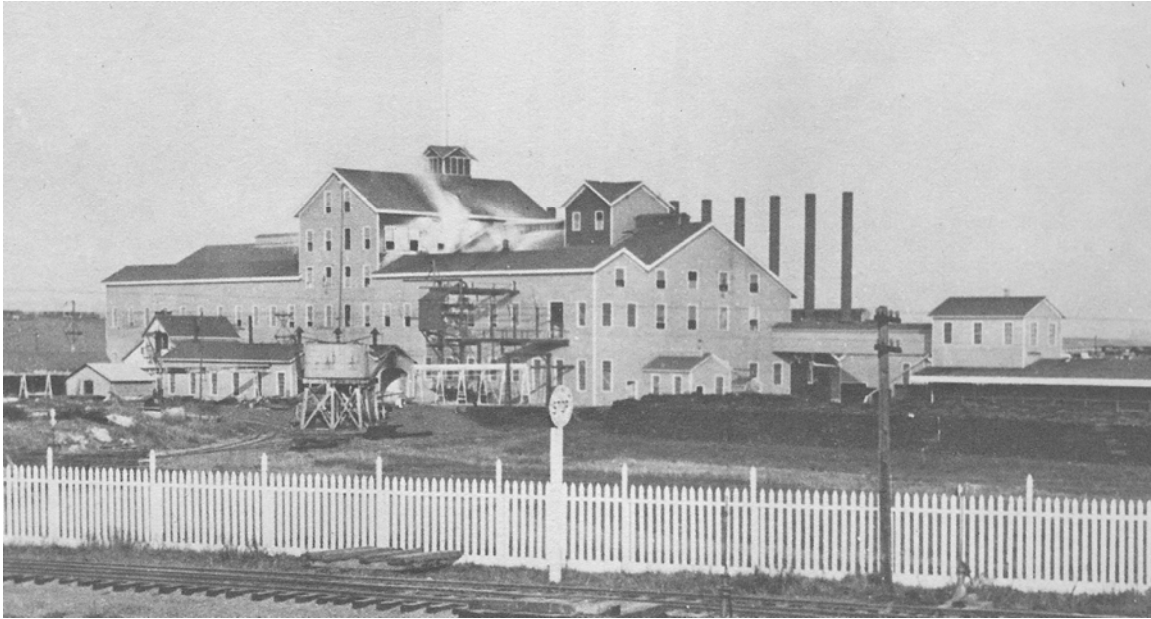


Figure 5.5. This photo of the Spreckels plant was taken shortly after it opened in 1888 at the western edges of Watsonville. Photo is courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

of then-available sugars and could be produced at a much cheaper cost. He combined his scientific gifts with the talent of a shrewd businessman. When looking for a site for his new processing plant, Spreckels saw potential in the rich soil of the Pajaro Valley. The foresighted founders of the city of Watsonville understood what his capital investment in their region could do for the community and did their best to convince him to start his empire in their town. Spreckels realized that he needed to provide incentives to convince farmers to grow sugar beets when other crops were generally easier and cheaper to grow. His plan was to pay farmers to grow sugar beets. The farmers were guaranteed a risk-free investment for their time and Spreckels was guaranteed a steady supply of raw material that met his quality standards. He single-handedly turned the Pajaro Valley into the sugar beet capital of the world. To process the future crop, in 1888 he built what was then the largest sugar beet factory in the world on land purchased on Walker Street by subscriptions from local farmers and businessmen. It was officially called the Western Beet Sugar Co. but locally it was known as Spreckels Sugar Beet plant. As the plant reached maximum capacity in 1891, the company constructed a narrow gauge railway from Moss Landing to Watsonville to make transporting sugar beets from the fields to the processing plant easier and more efficient. The rail line was named the Pajaro Valley Consolidated Railway and it served as a corporate shipping line as well as a part-time passenger rail.

Success quickly followed as demand for Spreckels' beet sugar soared. At its peak, this Watsonville plant was processing an average of 359 tons of beets per day, yielding 45 tons of sugar. It operated continually for the three to five month period of sugar beet harvesting and remained silent the remaining months of the year.

In 1898, Western Beet Sugar Co. became part of American Sugar Refining Company, also headed by Claus Spreckels. This new company began construction of an even larger and more state-of-the-art processing plant near Salinas. They extended the narrow gauge rail line to Salinas and built company housing nearby. The new plant became known as “Plant 1” and it was located in the new town of Spreckels, California. It had a processing capacity greater than all other like facilities in California combined. As soon as Plant 1 was complete, the Watsonville plant (Plant 2) was closed and all locally grown sugar beets were shipped to Plant 1.

The rail line was eventually purchased by Southern Pacific and dismantled for scrap. The last remnant of its tracks, an iron viaduct across the Pajaro River, was torn down in 1936. Plant 1 operated until 1981. It was used for storage and packaging for another 14 years. The depot for Plant 2 still stands at 480 West Beach Street in Watsonville.

Cold Storage and Fresh Frozen Food

In the early days of electric refrigeration, Watsonville growers shipped their produce to San Francisco or to Los Angeles for storage in large facilities in these metropolitan railroad hubs. From there, they were shipped to markets around the country. The growers soon realized that if they could develop cold storage facilities closer to the fields, the quality of their produce would increase and the costs associated with getting them to market would decrease. In 1928, twenty-three Pajaro Valley growers banded together to form the Apple Growers Cold Storage Co. They constructed a small plant consisting of four rooms with a total capacity of 240,000 boxes. Food was packed into crates in the fields then brought directly to the storage facility near the railroad tracks.

In 1929 they began to branch out into related sub-industries such as ice production and experimentation with storage methods. This new enterprise was known as Apple Growers Ice and Cold Storage Co. Their first ice plant was constructed on Beach Road. Produce was carried to the facility via truck, wagon, and a series of conveyor belts that ran from Walker Street to Errington Road. Food was transported in this manner until the mid-1950s.

In spite of the Depression, the 1930s marked a period of rapid growth for the Apple Growers storage facilities. The first expansion in 1930 altered the original structure to six rooms for a total of 350,000 boxes. This was augmented in 1939 with a commercial storage room that utilized carbon monoxide to control the atmosphere and reduce spoiling. It was the first of its kind. As U.S. involvement in World War II approached, innovations in freezing were developed. American troops were able to have frozen fruits and vegetables from Watsonville no matter where they were. In 1944 alone Watsonville processed over 20 million pounds of vegetables and 1 million pounds of fruit for overseas troops. All this international shipping was made possible by advances in food freezing. The burgeoning industry flourished after the War as did the number of facilities and Watsonville became the unofficial Freezer Capital of the World.

Food freezing and cold storage in Watsonville continued to grow in the post-WWII years. In 1947, Apple Growers processed almost 42,000 tons of ice, for a total revenue of



Figure 5.6. Apple Growers Ice and Cold Storage Co. has occupied this site since 1928 when the company was founded. The current facility looks very similar to the one pictured here in this historic photo. Over the years the plant has expanded but its street façade has remained largely unchanged. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

\$140,035 with a staff of ten employees. By the 1950s their cold storage facility had 18 rooms. A decade later they added on yet again with 11 more rooms, bringing them to a total of 29 rooms for cold storage. It was, by far, the largest cold storage operation between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

By 1950 Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley accounted for 17.5% of all the frozen food processed in California, which, in turn, accounted for 3.2% of the national frozen food market. As a whole, the frozen food industry in Watsonville was grossing over \$15 million a year by 1952. There were 13 plants for freezer processing fruits and vegetables, comprising a large portion of the local economy. Nearly everyone in Watsonville was either employed by agriculture or food processing businesses. The largest at that time were Baker Food Products and California Berry Freezers. When these plants closed in the last quarter of the twentieth century, many people in Watsonville were left without jobs and had few places to turn for employment.

Food Processing

Watsonville has a long history of food processing. Scurich Brothers established the first commercial cannery in the early 1880s before commercial canned goods really had a market. Several other canneries, including the San Monte Fruit Company followed after the turn of the century.

With the Industrial Revolution came advances in food packaging technology. Canned and jarred foods could now be produced with efficiency and economy, giving the contents a shelf-life of months or even years. Until this time, all canning was done at home with home-grown or local produce. It took a long time for the public to accept commercially canned foods. In fact, it wasn't until World War I, when canned food became the prime

source of food for soldiers overseas, that the domestic markets for such products really became part of everyday life.

Of course, with acceptance came a huge demand for canned goods as the shift from home canning to store-bought canned goods continued. As this shift happened, it made economic sense to establish canneries and processing plants near the source of produce. This made Watsonville the ideal choice. As sardine canneries popped up in Monterey, fruit and vegetable canneries appeared in Watsonville. They joined an already established industrial area inhabited by packing plants handling raw produce on the western side of town near the tracks along Walker Street. As frozen foods became technologically and commercially viable, frozen food processing plants joined the canneries and packinghouses. Frozen foods packaging was a major employer in Watsonville until the 1980s and 1990s when many companies moved their plants out of the United States.

Chemical spraying

The appearance of the Codling Moth in 1873 in the Santa Clara Valley brought widespread panic to apple orchardists in the Pajaro Valley. They knew that it was only a matter of time before these devastating pests made their way over the mountains. Some solution had to be found. Early on, a mild acid known commonly as Paris Green (a chemical combination of sodium arsenite, copper sulfate and acetic acid) was used to prevent infestation. However, when exposed to the coastal fogs, the acidic compound formed a liquid that burned tree leaves and left the fruit unprotected from sun damage. Around 1900, the Pajaro Valley Horticultural Commission turned to the University of California at Berkeley for help.

Professor Charles E. Woodward sent two promising graduate students to Watsonville to conduct research on the 10-acre plot that the Horticultural Commission donated for this purpose. William Volck and E. Ellersile Luther eventually created a neutral-pH spray that did not harm the trees and was suitable for mass production. It was lead arsenate. They joined forces with local orchard owner Charles Silliman and director of the Horticultural Commission, Charles Rogers, and founded the California Spray Chemical Company, in 1907 to market their new solution.

New production facilities were constructed in 1909 just outside Watsonville at Riverside and Walker Streets. Research continued to improve the product, resulting in the Volck-developed Ortho line of oil-based spray insecticides. The company quickly grew and began production worldwide by the 1920s. When the Depression hit, California Spray Chemicals was left with large investment in capital projects and very little coming in from the many farmers to whom they generously extended credit. It was absorbed by Standard Oil of California in 1931 which became eventually became Chevron. Volck remained with his company, now known as the Ortho division, until his death in 1943. It was sold to Monsanto in 1993. Although the use of lead arsenate was eventually replaced by DDT many Ortho-brand products are still sold today for commercial and home use. Through all the transfers in ownership, the Ortho product line has remained well-known and well capitalized for weed and pest control.

Farm Laborers and Unions

No discussion of agriculture in California can be complete without including some discussion on farm laborers. The types of crops and economies of scale that evolved in the Pajaro Valley were, and are, largely shaped by those individuals and groups who tend and harvest the fields. (The ethnic and economic realities of today's farm laborers are largely unchanged from their counterparts a century ago.)

Farming was a familiar livelihood to most early immigrants coming to the Pajaro Valley. They brought with them knowledge of crops from their homelands and a willingness to work hard in a new land. Before 1900, many were able to work for several years as laborers, then save a little money and move into sharecropping and eventually into land ownership. At the time, crops such as potatoes and wheat had given way to orchards. However, after 1900 opportunities for advancement became harder and harder for laborers to take advantage of.

Early crops, planted on modest-sized farms, required only a family and a small number of hired hands to manage. As the landowners were able, many expanded their small land holdings and began to employ a greater number of farm hands to tend the fields. A shift to more labor-intensive crops such as strawberries and lettuce further removed the landowner from his fields except perhaps in a supervisory role. The sheer amount of work required to tend and harvest these crops made the farmer dependent on outside help.

By the turn of the century, most farmers were hiring laborers through farm labor contractors or utilizing a network of sharecroppers to tend the fields. Labor contractors typically were of the same ethnic background as their workers, and spoke enough English or had enough local contacts to act as a mediator. Farmers dealt only with the contractors who then found the workers. Laborers often lived on the farm in a camp and were provided with room and board. If they had families, the men stayed at the camp while the families lived in town. Automobiles changed this to a certain extent, allowing some to stay in town with their families and travel to the fields each day for work.

In contrast, sharecroppers lived on the land they farmed. Each family was allotted three to five acres of land, plants or seedlings for planting and a small house to live in. A portion of their harvest then went to the landowner in exchange for the use of the land and to pay back the debt of the seedlings. The Japanese used this system to slowly gain economic stability, often pooling resources with family members to jointly purchase land. They favored strawberries and eventually came to dominate strawberry farming in the area.

For the general laborers after 1900, labor contractors controlled just about everything relating to employment and board. The farmer paid the contractor who then took his cut and paid out the rest to the workers. Many contractors also ran their own boarding houses and provided transportation to and from job sites. By the 1940s, most farms were run by corporations who paid each worker directly but retained the contractor to find and supervise the field workers. Most labor camps remained ethnically segregated and varied widely in quality and respectability.

By the 1930s most farm labors were either Mexican or Filipino, with Japanese workers moving into sharecropping and land ownership. As the Depression wore on, the Mexican and Filipino groups were joined by Dust Bowl emigrants from the Plains States. Great hardship and overabundant labor sources caused wages and working conditions to spiral downward. Those who had been in the state for a while and knew the ropes fared well enough but newcomers faced hardship and intolerance.

It was in these conditions that the Filipino and Mexican workers began to demand better pay and fairer treatment. While not the first labor uprising, one famous early incident was the 1934 Salinas lettuce workers strike. No unions had organized the field workers yet and the workers united to demand an increase in wages. They blocked entrances to packinghouses and disrupted shipment transports. Violence erupted soon thereafter. In the end, the packing shed workers were able to increase their pay from \$.15/hour to \$.35/hour. At the time this was the highest price in the state and it served to attract additional workers to the Central Coast. Although some of the workers achieved higher pay, the strike did not affect any fundamental change in the way management and labor dealt with each other.

At this time, agriculture remained one of last areas to unionize. In Watsonville, packing shed workers organized under the statewide Fruit and Vegetable Workers Union, an AFL affiliate, by 1930. In 1933, the largely Filipino Cannery Workers' and Farm Labors' Union was founded. (It later became the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers' Union of America, the FTA). However, strong ethnic associations through the farm labor contract system made unification of laborers difficult. They started to be courted by more radical and controversial unionizing organizations, which added to general confusion.

In 1936, another lettuce workers strike broke out in both Salinas and Watsonville. In May union workers in the packinghouses refused to handle produce picked by non-union laborers. Both Salinas and Watsonville owners were members of the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California and sought to make an example of the striking workers. Salinas owners wanted to take immediate action to assert the power of the Association, while Watsonville owners took a less assertive stance. Workers and the Association failed to agree to terms before a September 4 deadline, resulting in the erection of a ten-foot fence around the Travers-Sakata packing shed on Beach Street in Watsonville. This was to protect strikebreakers and management from the picketers. In Salinas, picketers threw rocks and the police responded with force. The situation in Watsonville remained more stable. By November the packing workers returned to work without a contract. This was a taste of many strikes to come.

The coming of World War II and Japanese internment, and then the Korean War drained the existing labor supply. In response to the Growers' pleas for help, the United States and Mexican governments established the Bracero program in 1942. Labor contractors were allowed to go to Mexico and recruit workers to fulfill special contracts for labor supplies. A farmer simply told the contractors how many men they needed and for how long and a group of Mexican workers was sent to do the job. Even when the program

ended in 1960, Mexican workers continued to cross the border, both legally and illegally, to work in the fields of California. This cheap source of labor was so profitable to the farmers that they petitioned the Department of Labor to extend the program. The result was today's green card system.

Also in the 1960s, labor unions began to try to organize the ethnic laborers. As new laborers arrived, they were told that they should unionize and the idea began to catch on. Tensions between the corporate farmers and labor leaders escalated as one tried to maintain the sources of cheap labor and the other demanded a larger cut of the profits. Strikes and picketing became more frequent. Eventually most aspects of fruit and vegetable production in and around Watsonville did unionize. Some groups joined the AFL, others the CIO, the Teamsters or Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers.

5.3 Summary

Today the importance of agriculture and related businesses in the local economy is no less profound than it was at the turn of the 19th century when Watsonville was becoming "Apple City." However, today its place in the economic realm is more precarious. Constant threats of overseas competition have led to numerous plant closings, layoffs and a general reduction in jobs. The fields around Watsonville continue to be some of the richest in the world and produce thousands of tons of produce each year. What has changed is how that produce reaches consumers and where that preparation takes place.

The loss of agri-business is more than an economic problem. Agriculture is a key portion of the general physical and historical context for Watsonville. Strict growth-control measures imposed by Santa Cruz County are helping to protect the many acres throughout the county traditionally used for growing crops. These restrictions help to retain the traditionally rural atmosphere of the county. However, there exists an extreme pressure on the municipalities within the county borders to expand in order to accommodate the growing influx of people escaping the Bay Area in search of more affordable living and a better quality of life. This new role as a working community for the San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas is one that must be balanced against the retention of agricultural, and agriculturally related, businesses while attracting new industry to grow the available job base. How the city chooses to do this and how they respond to the changing economic climate will determine the course of Watsonville's future and may create entirely new contexts within which the history of the area can be interpreted.

5.4 Representative Properties

Agri-business



Address: 850 West Beach Street

Historic Name: Apple Grower's Ice and Cold Storage Co.

Common Name: Apple Grower's Ice and Cold Storage Co.

Historic Use: Cold Storage Warehouse Facility

Current Use: Cold Storage Warehouse Facility

Year Built: 1929

Architect: unknown

In 1928, 23 local Pajaro Valley growers organized the Apple Growers Cold Storage Company so they could ship their produce directly to their customers rather than to the port cities of San Francisco or Los Angeles. This not only increased their profits, but allowed them to ship fresher produce. They built their first plant on this site in 1929, where they remain today. Over the years, the building has been expanded many times, but retains its original street façade and signage.

See page 66 for a historic photograph of this building.

Agri-business



Address: 735 West Beach Street

Historic Name: Green Giant frozen food processing plant

Common Name: Martinelli Cider production and bottling facility

Historic Use: Frozen Food Processing and Packaging

Current Use: Beverage production, bottling and shipping plant

Year Built: 1968³⁰

Architect: unknown

This plant was the first built in Watsonville specifically for processing frozen foods. Before this time, all other plants were modified to accommodate frozen food processing. At one time, frozen food processing was one of the largest ag-related employers in the area. Today, most plants have been closed. This one is not occupied by Watsonville's oldest active commercial enterprise, Martinelli's Cider. This plant greatly expanded Martinelli's production capabilities from their initial plant on East Beach Street.

³⁰ "United Foods Plant Largest in the State." (Register-Parjaronian, Jun 18, 1968).

Farm Labor and Unions



Address: 103 Rodriguez Street
Historic Name: Mona Lisa Café and Market
Common Name: Mona Lisa's
Historic Use: Market and Restaurant
Current Use: Café
Year Built: Pre-1962
Architect: unknown

This favorite gathering spot of the Latino community in Watsonville was reputed to be a prime center for early labor organization discussions and rallies. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s the Café served as a meeting place for Latino women who organized to help out their struggling and poor neighbors and friends as well as to support the Latino community with cultural and political event. The murals that cover three sides of the building were first painted in 1974 by University of California at Santa Cruz student Alex Louis Espinoza. They were restored in 1998 by Yermo Aranda. The murals depict various image related to Mexican-Indian culture and history. It is believed to be the first mural of its kind in the United States.

Chapter 6

Historic Context Theme 3: Commercial Development

6.0 Historic Context Theme 3: Commercial Development

6.1 Overview

Apart from agricultural-based businesses, Watsonville also has a strong tradition of local commerce and community based investment. Until relatively recently, Watsonville had a thriving downtown full of businesses and services. Throughout floods, earthquakes, depressions and boom years many establishments remained, linking generations of shoppers and becoming part of the collective social memory.

During the early years, transportation was limited and most goods and services that could not be provided for at home were supplied by general merchants and craftspeople. As better roads and the railroads connected Watsonville to other regional towns such as Santa Cruz, Monterey and Salinas, more options became available. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, manufactured goods became cheaper and easier to obtain and families produced fewer and fewer of their own possessions. More salespeople set up shop to meet the growing demand and related businesses followed.

Other cultural changes also began to take place as more and more people found themselves with more free time and spending money in the growing economy. Forms of entertainment such as theaters and movie houses soon arrived. While many were short lived ventures, plagued by complicated leases, shady contracts and fickle public tastes, some hung on through their glory years and remain today as ghosts of their former opulence.

6.2.1 History - Banks

One key to a thriving business district and a healthy community is a strong local banking system. Up until the mid-19th century, individuals either paid cash that they had saved, bartered for exchanges of services or purchased items on credit. Even items such as houses, horses and land were purchased in cash or bartering. The credit system also involved small loans from the merchant extending the line of credit or by a wealthy individual in town. Terms were set by the lender and monies distributed by hand from large, heavy safes. The establishment of banks within a community provided dedicated saving and lending capabilities and more strongly secured places to keep money. They helped to regulate and formalize financial transactions at all levels of the local economy.

Not surprisingly, the history of Watsonville's financial institutions reads like a list of prominent founding fathers and early citizens. Watsonville's first bank, the Bank of Watsonville, was organized May 11, 1874. Charles Ford was its first president. He headed a board of directors that included Thomas Walker, John T. Porter, G.M. Bockius, Charles Moss and J.W. Besse. In 1890 the Watsonville Savings Bank was incorporated with G.M. Bockius as president and H.S. Fletcher (Bockius' son-in-law) as vice-president. W.R. Radcliff was the cashier and the directors were the same as those of the Bank of Watsonville. Both banks became affiliated with the Bank of Italy in 1923.

The Fruit Growers Bank (founded 1919) was sold to the Liberty Bank in 1927 and in the same year became a branch of the Bank of Italy. The following year, the two branches of the Bank of Italy merged and in 1929 occupied the ground floor of the Lettunich Building. Later in 1929 the Bank of Italy merged with the Los Angeles-based Bank of America. (“Bank of Italy” may be seen over the main entrance to the Lettunich Building today.)

Historically the other competing banking institutions were the Pajaro Valley National Bank and the Pajaro Valley National Savings and Loan. Both were founded in 1888 under the guidance of directors John T. Porter, Frank Gubbay, A. Lewis, A.B. Chalmers, Arthur Atteridge, G.W. Sill, Peter Cox, Patrick McAllister, Thomas Sheehy, W.H. Rowe and L.J. Beckett. In 1893, the Pajaro Valley National Bank moved into the newly built Peck Building, at the corner of Peck and Main Streets, where it remained for over 40 years. Changing times and tastes dictated a new structure on the old site and in 1939 the current edifice was built. The Pajaro Valley Bank was acquired in 1961 by Wells Fargo. The corner of Main and Peck continues today as a Wells Fargo branch in the 1939 Pajaro Valley Bank building.

Watsonville Savings and Loan, Inc. opened in 1950, sixty years after the last previously established “savings” institution, and in 1962, The Bank of California opened for business across from the Plaza, on the southwest corner of Main and Wall (W. Beach) Streets, 75 years after the establishment of the old Pajaro Valley Bank and within one



Figure 6.1. The Art Deco building to the left of center is the 1939 Pajaro Valley National Bank building on the corner of Peck and Main Streets. It became a Wells Fargo branch in 1961. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

year of its takeover by Wells Fargo. In 1967, Bank of California constructed a large bank building in the 500 block of Main Street. After the closure of The Bank of California, the building was occupied by Sumitomo Bank until it discontinued business in Watsonville. The next “new” bank to come to town was Valley National, in the early 1970s, opening next to the Post Office on Union Street across from the Plaza.

6.2.2 Merchants

Ford & Co.

Ford & Co. was the oldest mercantile store in California until quite recently. It spanned 141 years and was located in 12 towns and cities throughout the central coast, but its humble beginnings were in Watsonville. It lasted through earthquakes, fires and floods and its main store anchored downtown Watsonville from before incorporation until the 1990s. Its success and failure served as a reflection of the economic health of the city.

Charles Ford came west in 1849 and was one of the lucky few who found modest prosperity in the gold fields. He went back east later that year for health reasons but the call of California lured him back in 1850. With experience in shopkeeping and as a miner, he understood what was needed to supply the many fortune seekers in San Francisco. After two years of living in San Francisco and running a supply store, he decided to try his luck with his own store in a new place. The Spud Rush in the Pajaro Valley was in full swing at this time (1852) so he moved to Watsonville and opened Ford’s Dry Goods Store.

The company grew as quickly as the new town. By 1857, Ford needed a larger building and constructed a new store near the Plaza. This two-story building was a bit larger than he needed so the store was limited to the first floor while the Masons’ used the second floor as their first meeting hall.

Business continued to flourish and more and more people moved into Watsonville and set up farms on the surrounding land. Ford personally became active in the civic life of the early town and he and his heirs made sizable business investments in the area including a lumber mill, race track and property investments. Lucius Sanborn was hired in 1865 to keep the books and was quickly made an equal partner. The store changed its name to Ford & Sanborn to reflect the new partnership. Sanborn remained until 1879 when he retired and sold his interest in the company back to Ford. At this time A. A. Morey and James Menasco joined the firm and the name was changed to Charles Ford & Company. Ford passed away in 1890 and the company came under the full ownership of Morey and Menasco. Menasco’s descendents continued to run the business until the 1990s when it was closed for good.

The long life and success of Ford & Co. took place in a series of buildings, most of which stood at the northwest corner of Main and Beach Streets. The first was built in 1857. This building was moved to the rear of the lot in 1873 when Alex Chalmers was commissioned to design a new edifice on the site. In 1883 Ford & Co. purchased the Cooper Emporium, an early competitor, next door. This structure was moved in 1884 to

make way for another Chalmers-designed Ford & Co. building that occupied almost a quarter of the city block. This large, two-story Italianate building originally had a prominent corner tower that overlooked the intersection. It became known as the Ford Block. At the same time Ford & Company expanded into Salinas and King City. Eventually there would be 12 stores from Half Moon Bay to San Luis Obispo, with the oldest and largest in Watsonville.



Figure 6.2. Ford & Co. in 1900 appeared much as it did at its construction in 1884. While this building remained until 1989, it was altered significantly several times. It was torn down in 1989 after the Loma Prieta earthquake. This photo is from Betty Lewis, *Watsonville: Memories That Linger*, Volume 2.

The 1906 earthquake damaged many of the Ford & Co. stores but they were repaired or rebuilt in short order. More noticeable change to the Watsonville store began in 1925 when architect Ralph Wycoff redesigned the flagship store. Under his direction the corner tower was removed and the storefronts were modernized. Four years later, a third floor was added to the northern section of the building. The storefronts were again modernized in 1954 and a third floor built on the southern section of the building in 1956. This look was short-lived and in 1969, the entire street façade was altered. The 1989 earthquake damaged the 1884 building beyond repair. It was torn down and the current structure erected in its place. Ford & Co. reopened its doors in 1990 but the combination of the earthquake and a general recession proved to be financially ruinous for the company. It closed its doors on February 14, 1993.

Steinhauser & Eaton Drug

This Watsonville institution first opened its doors in 1874 as the Watsonville Drug Store. It was located at 313 Main Street across from and just west of the Plaza. In 1899 Elliot Steinhauser and Roy Eaton purchased the store and changed the name to Steinhauser &

Eaton. Steinhauser sold his interest to Eaton in 1908 and Eaton continued to run it until 1963 when it was sold to Harry Johnson. Eaton died 5 years later.

6.2.3 History - Breweries

At one time, Watsonville produced almost 25% of California's beer. Most of this was from the Palmtag Brewery on Front Street while a lesser contribution was made from the Watsonville Brewery on East Lake Avenue near Lincoln. While long disappeared from the collective memory and architectural record of Watsonville, the breweries were a shaping force for the first fifty years of settlement. They used hops grown and dried by local farmers and employed many local workers for the manufacture and delivery of the finished products.

In 1868, the year of incorporation, Christian Palmtag bought the Pajaro Brewery on Front Street. He quickly changed the name to Palmtag Brewery although it was also called the Pajaro Brewery. Palmtag and his sons brewed Watsonville-made beer for the next decade and a half, slowly gaining a local, then regional reputation for quality products and reliable output. Christian and his wife, Fredericka enjoyed their success by hiring Thomas Beck, in 1872, to design a large Italianate house near the brewery on Front Street. By 1881, the Palmtag Brewery was the largest brewery south of San Jose. This success was tempered by the unexpected death of Christian Palmtag in the same year. He was only 49 years old.

Perhaps spurred on by the success of the Palmtag family, several investors founded the Watsonville Brewery in 1882. This venture enjoyed a moderate level of success, expanding their physical plant by another story in 1894. Fredericka purchased it in 1901 in a bid to expand her late husband's commercial enterprise.

With a wide audience, the Palmtag family expanded their operations with a two-story addition to the Front Street plant in 1884. This included the addition of a malt kiln to enable the growth of their product line. In 1896 another expansion took place to install and update modern plumbing to the steam works. Growth continued through the acquisition of Watsonville Brewery in 1901 and another capital improvement project in 1904. In 1908, William Palmtag, Christian's son, added a modern bottling and refrigeration facility on Main and Front Streets. Unfortunately, this period of rapid expansion did not last. Fredericka passed away at age 75 in 1911.

After his mother's death, William Palmtag started to divest his brewery interest, moving on to wine and banking in Hollister. He leased the brewery to Acme Distribution Company later in 1911. In 1914 the original Watsonville Brewery works on Lincoln Street was destroyed by fire. The rest of the Front Street buildings were torn down in 1920. Nearby, in 1918, the Palmtag mansion on Front Street was sold to Angelina Muzzio for use as a residence and boarding house. The house was moved to San Andreas Road in La Selva Beach in 1997 and restored. Today, a park stands on the original Front Street site.

6.2.4 History - Construction

No discussion of influential businesses in Watsonville could be complete without including Granite Construction. Warren Porter (son of John T. Porter), Arthur Wilson (a MIT trained engineer from Oakland) and four other investors founded Graniterock Company on February 14, 1900, to exploit a small granite quarry near Aromas. The outcropping was first discovered in 1871 and used by the Southern Pacific Railroad for ballast on their local railbeds. In these early years, all work was done by hand by fifteen men who slept in the company bunkhouse and ate at the company dining hall. In 1903 the quarry was automated with a steam powered crusher. A rail line was installed to handle the increased output. However, the side-dump cars were still loaded by hand and pulled by horses from the quarry bed to the shipping center.

The 1906 earthquake destroyed the new crushing plant and twisted the rail line into an unusable mess. Wilson saw opportunity in the tragedy he witnessed as a disaster relief volunteer in San Francisco. Acting as a general building contractor, Wilson and Graniterock Company built a number of important buildings in San Francisco and throughout the greater San Francisco and Monterey Bay Areas.

More opportunity presented itself with the increasing popularity of the automobile. Graniterock Company began to branch out into paving and road construction. Their first paving contract was Lake Avenue in Watsonville from Walker Street to the northeast city limits. When the California State Legislature passed the “Get Out of the Mud Act” in 1915, Graniterock expanded further into the concrete business. This expansion continued throughout World War I with construction of military bunkers, railroads into the Southern California oil fields and highways connecting the many small towns of the region.

In 1922, Arthur Wilson purchased controlling interest in the company and started Granite Construction Company as a separate entity. He served as this new company’s first president. In 1924, Wilson started Central Supply Company to distribute the many construction materials that Graniterock Company was now producing.

1929 marked a turning point for the companies. Arthur Wilson died of a heart attack ten days before the stock market crash. During the Great Depression virtually all production at the Aromas quarry ceased. To stay afloat, the Wilson family sold their interest in the Granite Construction Company to Walter Wilkinson and Bert Scott in 1936. Soon after, the Wilsons divested three branches of their Central Supply Company chain. In spite of all this, innovations at Graniterock Company continued, including the addition of capabilities for pre-mixed concrete. This product was used in many WPA projects in the area.

The onset of World War II and the subsequent building boom in the area found Graniterock well placed to make a swift comeback. A new plant was opened at Asilomar in Pacific Grove while mining continued at the Aromas quarry. In the 1970s Graniterock merged with Central Supply to form one company. Today the company continues to be

family owned and operated and maintains three branches in Watsonville, including their company headquarters at 350 Technology Drive.³¹

6.2.5 History - Hotels

As a regional commercial center, Watsonville catered to travelers. The options ranged from very refined to abject squalor depending on how much money the traveler had and the color of their skin. Most were concentrated on Main Street with some of the cheaper establishments spilling over onto Union or the intersecting side streets. In general, the further from the water one traveled, the higher the quality of the hotel and the better its reputation. Today, very few independent hotels remain in downtown Watsonville. Most are associated with national hotel chains and are located outside the historic center of the city, closer to Route 1 and the airport. However, several hotel buildings do remain and offer a glimpse of Watsonville at the turn of the last century. In particular, the Resetar Hotel, the Mansion House and the Wall Street Inn (formerly the Appleton Hotel) have many original details on their facades and in their lobbies.

Central / Lewis / Hoffman Hotel

Located at 245 Main Street the Central Hotel, later the Lewis Hotel, anchored the central downtown for several decades on either side of 1900. Built in 1872 as the Central Hotel, it was a modest 30-room establishment with a restaurant and on-site laundry facilities. A. Lewis bought the hotel in 1877 and remodeled it to include 45 rooms, all with gas and marble-topped washstands. On the ground floor there was a reading room, a bar and restaurant, a conservatory and gardens. The Lewis Hotel also had the distinction of housing Watsonville's first telephone and switchboard in its lobby in 1892. F.W. Johnson took over management of the hotel in 1896 and changed the name to the Hoffman House. He remodeled the inn to 65 rooms. Several years later he purchased the Watsonville House across the street. In 1911, L.H. Davis bought the Hoffman House property and turned it into a boarding house. By this time most of the area around the hotel, on both sides of Main Street, contained many saloons and boarding houses. Some were specifically for Chinese or Japanese immigrants who worked the fields as laborers. This seemed to mark the end of the once stylish Hoffman Hotel. It was demolished in 1919 and the name, Central Hotel, applied to the establishment across the street.

Mansion House

The Mansion House was constructed in 1871 by T. D. Alexander on the site of the Pacific Exchange Hotel across from the Plaza on the northeast corner of Third Street (East Beach Street) and Main Street. At the time of its opening it was the grandest hotel in the Valley and particularly known for its restaurant. Other amenities included meeting rooms, 65 hotel rooms all with gas and water and an Atlantic & Pacific Telegraph Company office in the lobby. The hotel reached the peak of popularity after the Lettunich Brothers purchased it in 1906. This was when Watsonville was entering its Apple-years and the Lettunich Brothers owned the largest apple packing company in the region.

³¹ History of Graniterock Company. Corporate Website. Available online at <http://www.graniterock.com/history.html>

Soon after purchasing the hotel, they acquired several lots on Main Street directly up from the Mansion House. “In 1914 the old hotel was jacked up and lowered onto a series of 100 feet long log rollers to its current location at 418 Main Street. As it inched along and one log would roll out from the back of the building, it would be picked up and placed under the front.”³² William Weeks was hired to design a new office building for the corner lot at Main and East Beach Streets. The Lettunich Building, as it became known, was finished in a record 6 months time. Both remain in their 1914 locations.

Appleton Hotel

The Appleton Hotel was built in 1911 with huge popular support. The success of the 1910 Apple Annual was marked with large numbers of overnight visitors to Watsonville. Other than the Mansion House, very little high-quality lodging existed so the citizens saw the need for a new, modern hotel to exemplify their successful and prosperous city. The result was the Appleton Hotel, designed by W.H. Weeks. Next door was the Appleton Theater and the two became a huge draw for future Apple Annual guests. However, this success was fleeting. Like the Appleton Theater, the Hotel quickly lost its luster during the Depression. It hung on as a hotel through several decades and was turned into a residential hotel for low-income individuals in the 1970s. Its name was changed to the Wall Street Inn. In January of 2005 fire gutted the top two floors and destroyed the roof. The current owner is planning to alter the space from 50 apartments to 74 studio units while restoring the lobby and facades.³³



Figure 6.3. Looking east down Wall Street, the Appleton Hotel is visible at the left of the photo. It later became a low-income residential hotel. Currently, the owner plans to turn it into apartments. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

Resetar Hotel

³² Historical marker

³³ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 29, 2005

Of higher renown was the 1927 Resetar Hotel on the corner of Main Street and West Lake Avenue. It was designed by W.H. Weeks and financed by the Resetar Brothers, Mike, Louis and Mitchell. When it opened, it was the one of the largest structures ever built in Watsonville. The lavish lobby contained stained glass doors that lead to an outside patio and tiled fountain. The hotel was sold in 1955 to Charles Leonard, Joe Batich and Mike Dubracich. They immediately undertook a remodel of the commercial spaces on the ground floor. It was sold to the Charles Ford Company for offices and storage in 1969. Today it serves as assisted living quarters for persons with special needs with retail on the first floor. It still retains many of its original interior decoration and exterior elements.

Other Hotels

Many hotels have come and gone along Main Street, servicing all levels of society during many economic ups and downs. One of the longest-lived was the Morningstar Hotel at 208 Main Street near Chinatown (and later Japantown) close to the corner of Riverside. It began in 1864 as the Western Hotel. It later was known as the Kuhlitz Hotel after its owner, but spent much of its existence as the Morningstar. It was an establishment reputed for vice of many kinds and burned down in 1929.

6.2.6 History - Other Lodging

Many travelers coming through the Pajaro Valley were looking for simpler, cheaper and more long-term lodging options. Apartments or flats were not part of the housing stock in Watsonville's early days. It was more common to find lodging rooms and boarding houses to meet visitors' growing needs. Some were reputable businesses operated out of private homes or converted houses. Others were shady establishments that housed illegal gambling, prostitution and speakeasies and provided little more than a mat on the floor.

In general, the earlier and most well-respected boarding houses were just off Main Street. Scott's Boarding House, also known as Scott's Hall, faced the plaza on Union Street. It operated for many years and served as the primary community gathering spot in the early days around the time of incorporation. When the railroad came to town in the late 1870s, several small hotels and boarding houses also appeared near the depot on Walker Street. However, most hotels and lodging houses lined Main Street.

When the Chinese arrived in the 1880s as farm laborers, they encountered great hostility from European settlers. Separate lodging facilities existed for them around the Chinatown section on Maple between Main and Union Streets. The 1886 Sanborn map shows a row of "Chinese quarters" on Maple Street. A similar phenomenon occurred with Japanese immigrants several decades later. Maps from the turn of the century specifically call out Japanese lodgings and they are concentrated between Main and Union in the blocks between Bridge Street (now Riverside) and the Pajaro River. Consequently, these were also the areas that had the highest concentration of saloons, billiard halls and lodging houses. In essence, this was the rough part of town.

This trend continues through about 1920 when boarding and lodging houses all but disappear from the map. By the 1950s many locations formerly having lodging houses had been demolished and replaced with very dense housing, usually small cottages. (See Appendix B for more information.) The automobile was making it easier for people to live in town and travel to and from the fields. More permanent housing sprung up but it was very modest. The densely packed cottages often shared a central plumbing facility, such as bathrooms, with the other buildings on the property. These developments were off Main Street on side streets near the river and the railroad tracks. Oral histories from this time recount the often horrible conditions that people lived in with no heat and no indoor plumbing in areas frequently flooded in the winter months.

6.2.7 History - Entertainment

Theaters

Along with saloons and billiard halls, Watsonville has had many theaters and cinemas in its past. Early places were simple affairs that often played other roles in the community. Probably the first of such establishments was the Opera House, built in 1871 by Peter Folger across from the Plaza on Beach Street. It was originally constructed to house a skating rink, a novelty and a fad that was very popular in Santa Cruz at the time. The Opera House had many different functions over the course of its 92-year existence. It served as a clubhouse for several fraternal and cultural institutions at various times and as a stage for traveling theater companies, hosting such popular actors as Billy Sheridan and important speakers such as Susan B. Anthony. The Opera House had several informal names, including Liberty Hall. This was the name printed on invitations to society celebrations such as balls. For common uses, it was referred to as the Opera House.

As the building aged, it was subjected to more intensive uses. In 1904, the Unique Theater opened on the first floor showing early silent films and visiting vaudeville performers. The venture went broke in less than two years but left a lasting impression on the people of Watsonville because of the unusual way that “silent” films were screened. Editor of the *Pajaronian*, James Piratsky, would narrate the films, providing dialogue and sound effects as the films played. Various cinematic and theatric uses continued in the first floor theater until 1921.

A series of commercial enterprises were established in the Opera House starting in 1921, including a grocery store, a furniture store and eventually a bowling alley. A mysterious fire ripped through the wood-frame building in 1963, completely destroying it.

Several other cinemas appeared after the 1906 earthquake. La Petite Theater opened in 1907 in the Hildreth Building on the corner of Main and Maple Streets. It was remodeled by Mrs. James Piratsky in 1908 and when it reopened, her husband continued his tradition of augmenting the silent films with his own theatrics. Disputes over the theater’s lease resulted in its closure in 1909. When it reopened the second time, in 1910, it was called The Lyric Theater.

The Lyric shared a portion of the Watsonville audience with several other short-lived theaters until the opening of the T&D Theater in 1915. This theater was built adjacent to the new Appleton Hotel on Beach Street. It was the first building designed and constructed for the specific purpose of being a movie theater. W. H. Weeks created a grand structure that provided a luxurious theater-going experience at the height of Watsonville's economic and agricultural success. It soon put most of the smaller and cheaper cinemas out of business but its period of dominance faded quickly.

In 1922, the El Pajaro Theater opened on Maple and Main Streets. It was designed by noted theater designer G. Albert Lansburgh, creator of the Warfield and Golden Gate Theaters in San Francisco. It was the largest movie house in Watsonville at the time. The T&D couldn't compete, and closed its doors only a month later. It remained closed for several years and was damaged by a fire in 1924. This prompted its owners to remodel the T&D in the Spanish-colonial style and reopen it as the Appleton Theater in 1925. For a while, Watsonville had two grand movie palaces, but when the economy soured in 1929 both experienced a great decrease in ticket sales. The Appleton closed in 1930 and the El Pajaro (now the California Theater) was purchased by Fox West Coast Theaters in 1931. It was known from that point on as the Fox Theater. In 1935 Fox West Coast Theaters also took over management of the Appleton Theater and reopened it as the State Theater. The company operated both theaters, showing new releases at the newer Fox Theater and second run movies at the State Theater. To increase attendance, the State Theater experimented with showing Spanish language movies once a week for the increasing Latino population.

The State eventually closed its doors in 1966 when the building was sold to Ford & Co. for use as a warehouse. It was demolished after the 1989 earthquake along with the Ford & Co. building next door. The Fox Theater was also damaged in the earthquake when a building next door fell into the lobby. After a remodel and a rearrangement that moved the main entrance to Maple Street, the Fox reopened in 1993. It closed in 2005 citing low attendance and expensive upkeep. The future of Watsonville's oldest remaining theater is uncertain.

One other theater that should be mentioned is the Starlite Drive-In Theater, which opened in 1949. As a post-WWII economic boom hit the country, many more people could afford automobiles and more and more business were created to cater specifically to people and their cars. Auto-court motels, drive-in restaurants, and drive-in theaters were very popular novelties of the time. It was closed in the mid-1980s and demolished for the construction of Starlight Elementary School.

6.3 Summary

Diversification of any local economy makes it much stronger and more resistant to changes in any one sector. This has helped Watsonville weather many global tragedies such as the Great Depression. It has also helped to make Watsonville known regionally for things besides lettuce and frozen foods. Early on this notoriety was for its breweries. At the turn of the century it was for its festivals and theaters. Today it has several well-

known businesses including West Marine, Graniterock Company and Orion Telescopes to name a few.

What all of these industries and companies have in common is an innovative spirit, one which Watsonville has traditionally fostered amongst its citizens and business-people. In the early years, for breweries, close proximity to superior raw ingredients was a key element to their success. Easy access to rail shipping, and later regional and interstate highways, proved an important impetus for merchants and food processing companies. Through all of it, the local banks helped to foster a secure investment realm for citizens and businessmen alike.

Also important to the historic development of industry in Watsonville was the willingness of the local citizens to start businesses to serve their neighbors. When business was good, they often reinvested their profits back into the community. This was either through the establishment of financial institutions, investments in other local enterprises, serving in public office, promoting their hometown or supporting local charities and civic institutions. During the boom years of the early 1900s, this pride and commitment of the commercial leaders to Watsonville helped to create the architectural legacy and shared municipal history that makes up the bulk of this document. These individuals and companies had influence well beyond this commercial context. They were influential in municipal realms, social circles and government on all levels. Most were also part of strong ethnic associations and set the stage for a multicultural city. The context of commercial interests and the level of involvement the associated individuals shared in the community is a model today just as it was over a century ago.

6.4 Representative Properties

Banks



Address: 326 Main Street
Historic Name: Pajaro Valley Bank
Common Name: Wells Fargo Bank
Historic Use: Bank
Current Use: Bank
Year Built: 1939-1940
Architect: unknown

The first Pajaro Valley Bank was established in 1888. After many years in the Peck Building, the bank was demolished and this excellent example of Art Deco design was erected on the site. It is one of the only buildings of this style in Watsonville. Very few changes have been made to the building since its construction. It became a Wells Fargo in 1961 and continues to serve the community as a banking institution to this day.

See page 76 for a historic photo of this building.

Hotels



Address: 30 West Beach Street
Historic Name: Appleton Hotel
Common Name: Wall Street Inn
Historic Use: Hotel
Current Use: Vacant
Year Built: 1911
Architect: W.H. Weeks

This Weeks' designed hotel was built to accommodate the massive crowds of people who flocked to Watsonville in the early part of the 20th century for the famous Apple Annual celebration. At the time, it was the finest hotel in Watsonville and rivaled contemporary luxury hotels in Santa Cruz or Monterey. It was also associated with the Appleton Theater next door, which was a grand movie palace and theater complete with gilded interiors and murals in the lobby. Over the years the hotel has declined until, most recently, it was serving as a residential hotel for low income residents. A fire in the upper floors destroyed much of the building's interior in January 2005. The lobby remains largely intact in spite of some water damage. The building's future is uncertain at this time.

See page 82 for a historic photo of this building.

Hotels



Address: 15 West Lake Avenue
Historic Name: Resetar Hotel
Common Name: Resetar Inn
Historic Use: Hotel
Current Use: Assisted Living Facility
Year Built: 1927
Architect: W.H. Weeks

While the Appleton showcases Weeks' mid-career work, the Resetar is an excellent example of his late-career designs. Less glitzy and glamorous than the Appleton, the Resetar exemplified a more restrained sensibility, typical of the Art Deco period. While not a traditional Art Deco design, the hotel has several very fine, intact elements that showcase the intricate geometric patterning that often adorned grand buildings from the period. The tiled corners and the largely unaltered lobby are clear reminders of the level of clientele that once came to Watsonville. The hotel was built by the Resetar Brothers to provide visitors to Watsonville with a modern hotel, showing them that Watsonville was a modern and cultured city. Today the building has been carefully rehabilitated into an assisted living facility. The renovation emphasizes the character-defining features of the original hotel while updating the building for modern conveniences and amenities.

Lodging House and Restaurant



Address: 300 Walker Street
Historic Name: Krough Building
Common Name: Del Monte Café
Historic Use: Parlor House and Restaurant
Current Use: Café and apartments
Year Built: 1910
Architect: unknown

Lodging houses of this type once proliferated along Main Street and near the railroad tracks. Often they had a saloon or restaurant on the first floor and lodging rooms and/or a bordello upstairs. During Prohibition, the Del Monte was noted as a soda fountain and cigar shop on Sanborn maps when in fact, it operated as a speakeasy and bordello.³⁴ They catered to the large transient population that came to work in the surrounding agricultural fields or in the many processing and packing plants along Walker Street. It was purchased in 1941 by John Ucovich and sold again in 1969 to Vince and Lucy Kovacich, Croatian immigrants. At that time it was run as a legitimate restaurant. The Del Monte Café represents a once-common commercial enterprise and building type that has largely disappeared from the streetscape.

³⁴ Register-Pajaronian, October 18, 1917.

Entertainment



Address: 300 Main Street

Historic Name: Fox / El Pajaro / Appleton / California Theaters

Common Name: Fox Theater

Historic Use: Movie Theater

Current Use: Vacant

Year Built: 1922

Architect: G. Albert Lansburgh

Designed by the famous theater architect, G. Albert Lansburgh, the Fox represents the pinnacle of theater design in Watsonville. It was the last great theater to be constructed downtown and it immediately put all other theaters out of business. It was bigger, more modern and more luxurious than any of its predecessors. Over the years it continued operations, in spite of dwindling ticket sales in the last few decades. It was recently sold and is awaiting redevelopment.

Chapter 7

Historic Context Theme 4:
Social, Recreational &
Religious Institutions

7.0 Historic Context Theme 4: Social, Recreational & Religious Institutions

7.1 Overview

Many of the social safety nets that are common today, such as social security, workers' compensation, retirement savings and health and life insurance are modern establishments. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries people typically worked until they were too old or sick to continue. Typical families relied on one principle bread-winner, the male head of the house, to provide money, shelter and food for everyone else. If something happened to that person, their families were then left to support themselves through whatever means they could find. Low levels of education, a trade-oriented economy, and social barriers meant that one's situation in life was often precarious and easily upset. These factors became increasingly exploited by industrial employers where they could rely on cheap sources of labor for dangerous work. When the worker became injured or was killed, others were there to take his place and few laws and enforced regulations prevented, or dissuaded, owners from such cruel and inhumane actions.

Fraternal, social and religious organizations served to provide a social structure to the community's collective existence. They provided routine and support from like-minded individuals in matters economic, social and spiritual. Such bonds were especially important in the days before mass communication and super sonic travel, when communities remained largely isolated from each other. Self-sufficiency was not an ideal but a requirement of a harsh and often lonely life. Belonging to a larger group provided some relief from this isolation and served to break the monotony of a hard-labor life.

Some of these institutions evolved with changing social trends and ways of life more than others. Most can still be found in Watsonville, but perhaps with not as numerous a member-base, or with a different member demographic than at their height of prominence. All continue because they provide some larger community benefit and fill a need in the supporting population. To look at these institutions and organizations is to understand the social growth and needs of Watsonville over time.

7.2.1 History - Fraternal Organizations

Early fraternal organizations were set up to provide some network of social support. Many were associated with certain trades or were organized along ethnic lines. Others provided order and a social hierarchy apart from birthright or financial standing in the larger community. They served to watch out for their members' needs in times of hardship. Some of the larger groups established nursing homes, orphanages and cemeteries for their members and for the needy in their communities. Those that survive to this day still provide many of these services although to a lesser extent than they once were called to do.

The fraternal institutions were organized in roughly analogous manners. Typically, there was a parent organization that operated on the national, or international level. At the local

end, individual community groups organized and were affiliated with the parent organization. Depending on the exact structure of the group, they were thematically named and often numbered as well. For example, the Freemasons had individual lodges that reported to a state or regional grand lodge which then reported to the national or international overarching organization. There could also have been variations within a group representing slight differences of rites or organizational nomenclature.

The specific rituals and rites of each group varied. However, their general structures and senses of purpose were remarkably similar. Typically, one could only be eligible for candidacy through the invitation of an existing member. Once initiated, certain levels of standing were reached through knowledge or deed according to their specific codes. As a member progressed up the rankings, they were granted more prestige and respect from their fellow members. Sometimes new privileges were also opened up to members of a particular standing and with the privileges came increased power and authority within the organization.

Even today, many of the older fraternal organizations remain closed to women. They do not limit female participation, per se, but rather channel female participation into women-only “sister” organizations. Some are set up in a manner similar to their “brother” groups but may have different rituals of their own that remain unknown to the uninitiated. Historically they tended to work in tandem with their brother groups and traditionally included the wives and daughters of members.

Those groups with more commercial leanings served, and still serve, as networking groups where fellow members gave preferred business standing to each other and they worked to support the commercial and personal successes of their peers. All tended to provide programs for the general youth populations of their communities and had considerable influence in local politics. The larger national and international groups maintained offices in politically strategic locations and lobbied on behalf of their members’ interests when appropriate.

The following represent the most well-known and well documented fraternal and associated groups found in Watsonville since its initial settlement in the mid-1850s. It is not an all-inclusive list as many groups merged, records were lost or no records were kept of their meetings. For the most part, what is represented below are the largest local and national organizations that show how well connected Watsonville’s citizens were to widespread social movements of the times.

Independent Order of Odd Fellows

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows was established in 17th century England to provide help to those in need and to work for the betterment of mankind in general. The first North American order was formed in 1819 in Baltimore. They created the Rebekah Degree in 1851 to include women under the Odd Fellow banner. This organization was also one of the first to establish senior care homes for its members and orphanages for the greater community. All individual local lodges reported to the Sovereign Grand Lodge Headquarters in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. California also had a state Grand

Lodge and a state Grand Encampment. Membership required the declaration of belief in a higher Supreme Being but no particular religious affiliation was advocated. The official policy “forbids any interference with one’s religious beliefs or political opinions.”³⁵ Each lodge set its own dues fees and structure.

The first California lodge, Lodge #1, was granted a charter on September 9, 1849, in San Francisco. Watsonville’s Lodge #90, aka Pajaro Lodge #90, was chartered ten years later with the primary goals of supporting members in times of need and preventing members from becoming wards of the state. At the time, this was a men only organization. Their sister organization, Watsonville’s Paradise Rebekah Lodge #62 was founded sometime after 1873.

Among their lasting contributions to Watsonville’s history, Lodge #90 established a cemetery for IOOF members, known today as Pioneer Cemetery. Many of Watsonville’s founding citizens are buried here. An 1873 directory states that the IOOF met in a dedicated hall in the Stoesser Block. This location was also shared by many of the other fraternal and social groups of the time but the location was always referred to as the IOOF Hall. Whatever the nature of the space, by 1893 they had raised enough money to construct a dedicated lodge building on Third Street. This structure figured actively in a number of Watsonville’s social and cultural events. It housed classrooms for the local schools, was the first public reading room and library, served as a temporary church for several denominations and was used by the community for gatherings and meetings as well as being the home for the Watsonville Odd Fellows. The building was renovated in 1952. Sadly, it was severely damaged by the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake and torn down in 1990.³⁶

Another group known as Damascus Encampment #44 was founded in 1872 in Watsonville. This name appears to be an affiliated lodge of the IOOF but the origins and fate of Encampment #44 are unknown. Lodge #90 and Rebekah Lodge #62 are both still active.

Freemasons

The Masons are one of the largest and most well known of the fraternal organizations. Their origins are loosely found in the English stonemasons guilds of the late middle ages. The first official Lodge was formed in 1717 in London. Colonists brought Freemasonry to North America and the organization claims 13 signers of the Declaration of Independence and 14 U.S. presidents as members.

Like the Odd Fellows, Masons must profess a belief in one God but no specific religious doctrine is promoted or followed. They greet each other as “brother” and believe, among other things, that each individual has a right to think and act freely, that each person has a responsibility to be a good, law-abiding citizen and that improving the community is central to an honorable life. To focus on specific aspects of community development,

³⁵ IOOF website

³⁶ The bell and clockworks were saved prior to demolition. Today the bell rests in the municipal service yard. The whereabouts of the clockworks are presently unknown.

there are several sub-groups within the Masons that focus their efforts on certain segments of the community. The Shriners were established as a fraternity of Masons who stressed fun and camaraderie over ritual and chose philanthropy, specifically for children, as their community improvement mission. Scottish Rite Masons are another fraternity of members who have achieved a certain level within the general Freemasonry organization. It offers members ways to advance further in the group.

The Freemasons are organized into lodges or temples. Different sub-fraternities, like those listed above, have different rituals, or degrees, of advancement. The highest “degree” is the 33rd which is granted to individuals who have shown an extraordinary lifelong commitment to the ideals of the organization and to their community.

In Watsonville, the Masons were the first fraternal organization to be established. Pajaro Lodge #110 of the Free and Accepted Masons was chartered in 1857. By 1873 they had their own meeting hall in the Hildreth Block. By 1908 the Masons Hall was in the upper floors of Charles Ford & Co. The Masonic Temple was dedicated on May 17, 1913, and shared with the Elks Club at the corner of Maple and Union Streets until the Elks moved back to the Sanborn & Ford building in 1923. After the Masonic Temple was extensively damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, the Pajaro Lodge #110 joined with Confidence Lodge in nearby Soquel, forming Confidence Lodge #110. The 1913 Temple was torn down in 1989.

Eastern Star

While the Freemasons were a men-only organization, there was a co-ed Masons-affiliated group known as the Order of the Eastern Star. In Watsonville, the Eastern Star #18 Lily of the Valley Chapter was founded in 1875. While this organization was technically open to both sexes, its bylaws specify that women must be affiliated with a recognized Masonic Temple, usually through a father or husband who was a Master Mason in good standing.

Men could also join if they had already obtained the Master Mason level. Because of the required advanced standing of the male Mason connection, this was a relatively exclusive sub-group of the larger Freemason organization. Like the Masons, members of the Eastern Order claimed to be “deeply spiritual but not religious”.³⁷ This group is still active on a national and statewide level, however, following the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, and the resulting damage to the Masonic Temple, Lily of the Valley Chapter #18 joined the Wild Lily Chapter in Soquel, taking the name Wild Lily but retaining “#18” from the Watsonville chapter. Wild Lily #18, is affiliated with the Soquel-Pajaro Masonic Center in Soquel.

³⁷ The Grand Lodge of Virginia. “Who Are the Masons?” 2004. Accessed February 2006. Available at <http://www.grandlodgeofvirginia.org/whomason.htm#who>.

Elks

The Elks have a vague early relationship with the Jolly Corks, a group of drinking buddies fond of practical jokes at London pubs. When New York passed a law restricting the opening of public establishments on Sundays, English actor Charles Vivian, figured out that if he could form a private group, a club of his friends, they could still meet for their Sunday drinking and carrying-on. He gathered his friends together and formed an American chapter of the Jolly Corks. Soon thereafter, one of the members died, leaving a destitute wife and child. The Corks felt a responsibility to aid the family. They adopted a mission of charity and civic growth to augment their animated and lively weekly meetings. In 1868, these Jolly Corks adopted the Elk as their symbol-head when no one present at the meeting could think of anything detrimental to say about elks. This was the beginning of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. Vivian modeled it on an English group called the Order of Buffalo with different titles for the various leadership positions within the group. Many members were actors and traveled frequently between East Coast cities, spreading the word about the Elks and their chosen purpose. Many actors and show business professionals have belonged to the Elks over the years as well as five presidents and dozens of congressmen.

Since its founding, several affiliated groups have been organized. These include the Benevolent and Protective Order of Does, for women related to Elks members and the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, founded by African Americans who had been refused membership into the official Elks. They were antagonistic groups for a time, but became affiliated in 1918. The Elks opened the organization to women in 1995.

Elks Lodge 1300 was founded in 1913 in Watsonville. In accordance with its parent organization, they stressed patriotism, Christian theology and support of fellow “brothers” and the community. The Charles Ford building was used for meetings until the Masonic Temple was completed later in the year. In 1923, the Elks moved back to the Ford building and spent \$23,000 refurbishing the clubrooms. In 1929 they purchased land on the corner of Martinelli Street and East Lake Avenue for the construction of a future clubhouse. It was eventually completed and dedicated in 1959.

Kiwanis

Unlike earlier organizations, the Kiwanis, founded in 1915 in Detroit, was purely charity driven from the beginning. Their purpose was much less about ritual and member secrecy and more about community improvement and business networking, adopting the mission to “serve the children of the world” and to live by the Golden Rule. They actively sponsor the Key Club and Circle K youth programs.

Sponsored by the Santa Cruz club, Watsonville Kiwanis Club was organized in January 1926. Membership reached 56 by the end of the first year. Over the years they became known for sponsoring youth activities, civic programs and patriotic affairs. The Watsonville Club held meetings up until 2000, but they no longer appear to be active.

Pajaro Valley Historical Association

A proposal was made in 1930 before the Watsonville Woman's Club to form a history-gathering committee. This committee was active for a few years collecting biographies and facts about early families and businesses.

In 1940 the Native Sons of the Golden West realized a need to preserve local history. On April 23 they named a sponsoring committee to discuss it. An organizational committee was formed that night. At the next meeting on May 16, bylaws and a constitution were brought before the group and accepted. The purpose was stated as follows: to promote interest in Pajaro Valley history; to gather items, photos, and paintings of historical value; to protect historic interest; and, when deemed advisable, to erect suitable monuments and markers.

The first donation was made by Mrs. Antoinette Peck Deaton — an autographed book of her poems. Victor Tuttle offered to store items in part of Charles Ford Company warehouse. Meetings were held at night at various places: the Chamber's rooms, the YWCA, the Woman's Club, and in members' homes. In 1950, Mayor Marinovich allowed the use of a room in City Hall as a museum and meeting room, but in 1960 that building was torn down, so once again they met wherever they could and stored their artifacts in various places.

In 1964, Mrs. Helen Haynes Volck Tucker donated her home to the group to be used as a museum and named in honor of her late, first husband, Wm. H. Volck. Volck was an entomologist, who with Mr. E.E. Luther had invented a chemical spray (the forerunner of "Ortho" sprays) which combated the Codling moth that was attacking the apple trees in the Pajaro Valley. Dedication of the museum was held July 4, 1965, and soon after that Mabel Curtis moved into two of the rooms and became "resident curator."

In 1993 the Bockius-Orr house was donated to the PVHA by Zoe Ann Orr Marcus. The Volck building was sold in 1998 and the association and its collections moved to the Orr property, 332 East Beach Street.

7.2.2 History – Social Clubs

Many other social groups flourished in Watsonville, drawing together people with similar hobbies, talents and interests. Some were open only to men, others only to women, many were ethnically exclusive. Little is known about most of these groups as many were informal gatherings that flared and died out as tastes and trends and populations changed. Some made lasting contributions to the community at large, while others existed for pure entertainment.

Watsonville Woman's Club

The Watsonville Woman's Club, one of the oldest and continuously active women's organizations in Santa Cruz County, was organized early in 1899 with 31 members who met in private homes. The constitution stated: "The object of this Club shall be to unite the influence and enterprise of its members to promote measures which all can endorse,

whether these be educational, moral, social or civic.” Their first project was to solicit funds from Andrew Carnegie for the establishment of a permanent home for the Watsonville free public library. After the turn of the century they turned their attention toward the construction of a clubhouse. Many fundraisers were held before local architect, Ralph Wyckoff was selected to design the clubhouse in 1917.

The work of the club has encompassed hundreds of community service projects, including historical preservation, garden and art shows, musical and dramatic performances, playgrounds, vocational workshops, and many projects relating to community health. Especially notable among the latter have been the organization of an early children’s day care center and the establishment of well baby clinics. Fundraising for the Infantile Paralysis Foundation (Polio) was a major effort. For many years this clubhouse was the location of the American Red Cross Mobile Blood Bank and was staffed by volunteers from the club. Later projects were the initiation of the Watsonville Community Hospital Lifeline and Eye Clinic.

The Watsonville Woman’s Club spans the entire history of women as they stepped out of the home to participate in the life and welfare of the community. In 1999, the club



Figure 7.1. Ralph Wyckoff designed the Watsonville Woman’s Club in 1917. It remains today, largely unaltered from its original form. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

celebrated its 100th anniversary and is now embarking on its second century with a continuing program of community service and educational and cultural programs. In the 1990s the associated Watsonville Woman's Club Foundation was established as a nonprofit 501(3)c to encourage donations to be used for educational and cultural outreach.

Other Social Organizations

One of the earliest was the Watsonville and Pajaro Driving Association Jockey Club, founded in 1876. This group was fond of horse racing and organized competitions between members on makeshift racetracks. These horse-lovers were challenged in 1893 by the Pajaro Valley Wheelman's Club, a group dedicated to the new pastime of bicycling. The women of Watsonville had higher goals in mind when they formed the Watsonville Women's Club in 1899 to support community improvement projects and other civic educational events. Their Clubhouse stands today on Brennan Street, as does the YWCA Manfre House on East Beach Street.

Two bachelor sponsored dancing clubs enjoyed several decades of popularity after 1900. The Los Amigos Dancing Club met regularly and sponsored weekly dances at local halls and community spaces. A bit more exclusive, the 1913 Gawsling Dancing Club was for single men and held formal dances to which the young ladies of the town were invited by special invitation.

Two of the more recent and better-known clubs include the Rotary Club founded in 1927 and the Watsonville Band, established in 1947.

7.2.3 History – Religious Institutions

Watsonville has grown and changed in size and ethnic make-up continuously since the middle of the nineteenth century. A glimpse of these changes can be seen when looking through the history of the many religious institutions that dotted the different neighborhoods and communities. The rise (or fall) in prosperity among congregations is often inherent in the patterns of development and architecture used for various church buildings. The following is a selective list of some of the oldest.

Methodist-Episcopal Church

The first Protestant church in Watsonville was the 1852 Methodist-Episcopal Church (today the First United Methodist Church). Founded by Reverend D.A. Dryden on the banks of the Pajaro River, this informal, revivalist church was established to serve the pioneering families who first settled the Pajaro Valley. Together with the IOOF, this congregation helped to establish the Pioneer Cemetery. In 1856 they rented space in Scott's Hall and by 1873 had moved into a small church building on the southeast corner of Fourth (West Lake Ave.) and Rodriguez Streets. Already they were outgrowing the modest structure and plans were being drawn up for a new building at the corner of Third (West Beach) and Rodriguez Streets. This building withstood the 1906 earthquake but required minor repairs to make it structurally sound. During repairs, the congregation met at the Odd Fellows Hall down the street.

The modern church organization dates to 1939 when the Methodist-Episcopal church voted to merge with the Southern Methodist church. This new and larger congregation no longer found the 1873 building adequate for their needs and began campaigning for a new church building. Progress to gather support was slow and ground for a new facility was not broken until Palm Sunday 1952, 100 years after the Church was founded. The first services in the current church on Stanford Street were held in 1954 and the old church on Rodriguez was sold to the Trinity Lutheran congregation.

Methodist Mission Church

This offshoot of the Methodist Church had a short-lived existence in Watsonville. It started as a means to spread the Methodist religious doctrine to the many foreign (mostly Asian) immigrants living in the town around 1900. In 1902, the Bishop Harris and the superintendent of the Presbyterian Mission Church agreed to split their missionary efforts rather than compete with each other. The Methodists moved their missionary work to Pajaro and areas south while the Presbyterians³⁸ focused on Watsonville.

Saint Patrick's Catholic Church

Saint Patrick's Catholic Church has remained on the southwest corner of Main and Ford Streets for 142 years. The original church building was constructed in 1864 and sat exactly where the current structure is today. A rectory was also constructed just north of the corner lot on Main Street. In 1865 a bell from the San Antonio Mission was brought to the church and installed. By 1869 the Church had grown enough to be designated a parish, a testament to the rapidly expanding town of Watsonville in the years following the Gold and Spud Rushes.

As the new century approached, St. Patrick's was in need of a larger worship space as well as facilities for a school and larger church-related gatherings. W.H. Weeks was hired to design the new buildings in 1901. He chose a dramatic Gothic design complete with a 132-foot tower and spire. The new auditorium and gymnasium building was large enough to sit 600 people. Weeks said of his new creation that it was "a building not built for a day, a week, or a year, but a building that will look little worse for wear when we have ceased our early activities, and the youngest church member of today will have reached the time allotment of three years score and ten."³⁹ Even at the end of his tremendous career, Weeks considered it one of his most successful designs.⁴⁰ 1500 people filled the new church for dedication services in 1903.

The earthquake of 1906 was the first big test for the church and its incredible spire. Amazingly enough, it suffered no damage. The next big test was the 1989 earthquake. This shaking severely damaged the church building as well as the spire. Shortly after the quake it was uncertain whether the church could be, or should be repaired. Demolition was considered but in the end, the church was reconstructed and properly retrofitted

³⁸ See the summary of Westview Presbyterian Church for more information on the Presbyterian mission.

³⁹ Weeks, W.H., unpublished interview, 1903.

⁴⁰ Pfingst, Edward. *History of St. Patrick's* (Watsonville, St. Patrick's Church, 1969)



Figure 7.2. This photo of the 1901 W.H. Weeks designed St. Patrick's Church also shows the auditorium and rectory. The original 1864 church, shown at left, was moved at this time and used as the parish auditorium. Both it and portions of the rectory pre-date the current church. Information and photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

against future seismic activity. It stands today as one of the oldest religious structures in Watsonville and is the oldest in continual use.

Valley Church / St. Francis Catholic Church

Our Lady of Help Catholic Church, the Valley Church, and St. Francis all describe the same institution located on the outskirts of Watsonville. Known most frequently as the Valley Church, it claims the title of oldest Catholic congregation in the valley. The cornerstone was laid in 1855 on land donated by William Francis White and Eugene Kelly between Kelly and College Lakes. Under the care of the Franciscan Brothers, the Church grew rapidly and the worship house had to be enlarged only five years later. A need was sensed by the Franciscan Brothers and among the pioneering families in the Pajaro Valley for the establishment of an orphanage in the area. The Amesti family donated an additional 130 acres of land, including their farmhouse, for use by the St. Francis School, an orphanage for boys. With the help of the orphans, a new Gothic-styled church was built in 1901 that served the School and the community until 1927 when it burnt to the ground.

The current church building was constructed immediately afterward of fire-proof construction in reinforced concrete. No detail was left unattended to in the Italian

Renaissance Revival building that included a “hand-carved alter executed by Franciscan Lay Brothers from the Black Forest Region of Bavaria. (PVHA newsletter fall 2005). In spite of a number of changes in ownership of the institutional buildings, the church itself has remained active in the community. When many of the St. Francis School buildings were damaged in 1989, they were removed and replaced by the current St. Francis Central Coast Catholic High School which stands opposite Our Lady of Help Catholic Church. It is run by members of the Salesians Order who also continue to administer rites in the 1927 church.

First Baptist Church

First Baptist Church was founded in 1914 as Lake Church and held their first services at 500 Main Street in a room of the YMCA. Less than two years after their founding, Lake Church merged with City Church and changed their name to First Baptist Church of Watsonville. By 1920 the congregation had constructed a building at 640 Lincoln where they remained for the next 27 years.

In 1947, the Church broke ground for the new Baptist Church of Watsonville at the corner of Fifth and Madison Streets. Designed in the Spanish Revival style, a newspaper article from the time claims that it was one of the largest construction projects in the area since before the United States entered World War II. The members of First Baptist were so crowded at their old church on Lincoln Street that they began to hold services in the new building when construction was only half completed. Easter Sunday, 1948 was held in the newly finished educational rooms of the complex while the auditorium and main sanctuary remained under scaffolding nearby. It was also at this time that the Watsonville Church decided to cease fellowship with the Northern Baptist Convention, opting instead to join with the more conservative Southern Baptist Affiliated churches. Finally, after five years of construction and waiting, the new church building was dedicated in 1952 with a weeklong series of events. Fifty years later the congregation remains one of the largest in the region and has again outgrown their facilities on Madison and Fifth Streets. They currently rent space at the Henry J. Mello Center for the Performing Arts and are looking for new options.

Danish Evangelical Church / Lutheran Community Church

Reverend Adam Dan organized the Lutheran Community church as the Danish Evangelical Church of the Pajaro Valley in 1880. Locally it was referred to alternatively as First Lutheran Church or as the Danish Lutheran Church. (The latter is how it appears on Sanborn maps from the era.) Land was donated by F. Erickson on Ford Street between Main and Rodriquez for the construction of a church in 1880 but the church wasn't constructed until 1889. At the time this parcel was on the outskirts of Watsonville.

By the 1880s, the Danish community was a combination of elders and adults who immigrated to the Valley from the Motherland, and their children who were American citizens. To maintain a sense of community and a connection to their homeland, the Danish Lutheran Church held all their services in Danish until 1903. At that time some Sunday School classes were taught in English while the regular services remained in

Dutch. Shortly thereafter, they went to a bilingual system like that followed in many Hispanic churches today, with services in both the native tongue and in English.

In 1904 the Church comprised of approximately 30 families representing over 120 individuals of all ages however they were unable to support a full-time pastor. Since 1880 a Danish Lutheran preacher was shared between Watsonville, Salinas and the small community at Chualar. Each Sunday the pastor traveled, by train, to each community to hold services. After almost 75 years the arrangement was revisited and Watsonville decided to obtain its own pastor to lead the congregations in Watsonville and Freedom. In 1954 the first full-time parish pastor was hired.

Other changes were also in the works. Since the 1930s there had been talk of finding another, larger space to replace the modest structure at 250 Ford Street. However, it was only after the hiring of a Watsonville pastor that plans began in earnest for a new church. By 1959, the congregation had purchased a lot at Alta Vista and Marilyn Street and began construction. In 1960, the old church on Ford Street was closed and the Danish Lutheran Church moved to 95 Alta Vista. They took their bell, crafted and donated by a Danish blacksmith and church member in 1904, to the new location and installed it in the new bell tower.

Since then the Church has added many community services, including a school and pre-school to their facilities. In 1969 their name was officially changed to First Evangelical Lutheran Church to pay homage to their original moniker. In 1979, a new pastoral office was built next to the Alta Vista church site. The congregation remains today at 95 Alta Vista.

First Presbyterian Church / United Presbyterian Church

United Presbyterian Church was originally called First Presbyterian Church when it was organized in 1860. Reverend James Woods gathered eleven members in Scott's Hall beside the Plaza and the church was born. One of the first orders of business was the collection of funds to build a proper church for the congregation. The current site at 112 East Beach Street was selected and the first church building was erected in 1864. Designed by Alex Chalmers, this building underwent several radical reconfigurations before being replaced completely in 1970. By 1887, the congregation had outgrown the original Chalmers building. The building was moved back on the lot, reoriented and incorporated into a new Eastlake-style structure built at the front of the lot, facing East Beach Street. In 1925 the church was again remodeled and enlarged. Finally, in 1970, the church was demolished and the current building was constructed in its place.

Westview Presbyterian Church

From the beginning United Presbyterian had strong outreach and missionary programs than many of the more ethnically aligned churches. While these churches tended to support and nurture their often poor and culturally isolated congregations, the Presbyterian Church focused their work outwardly into other communities, following the Wesleyan tradition. As such, they started the Watsonville Presbyterian Mission in 1898 to focus on the rapidly increasing Japanese population who were mostly living in poor

conditions along Union Street near the Pajaro River. As new immigrants, and as agricultural workers, they were a population isolated by language and social convention, like so many of the immigrant groups before them. This area at Union and Maple was a thriving Japan town with services and businesses that catered to their needs. The Mission church was established as a way to further service those Christian Japanese who may have been too poor or too few to support the founding of their own church.

In 1911 the Presbyterian Mission was officially changed to the Westview United Presbyterian Church and dedicated a new church building at 214 Union Street. When most of Watsonville's Japanese citizens were interned in the 1940s, the church on Union Street reverted back to the regional Presbyterian Church authority. It was leased to the City of Watsonville for use as a nursery school until the congregation return around 1945. At that time it was used by the Church as a hostelry for those internees who returned to find all their possessions lost. This Union Street building was never returned to full-time church service. They purchased property on First Street between Rodriguez and Menker Streets in 1929 but were forced to wait as fundraising efforts were hindered by the Great Depression and the internment of most of the congregation. Half of the necessary funds were generated through sales at the Moses Service station (now Kay's Garage). This gave



Figure 7.3. These were the founders and early members of the Methodist Mission Church, later Westview Presbyterian Church. This image dates to the turn of the century and is courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

them the boost they needed and in 1958 they moved into a new building at 118 First Street where they remain today. The old Westview site was sold to the Salvation Army.

All Saints Episcopal Church

All Saints Episcopal Church had a difficult beginning. Reverend William Ingraham Kip, the first Episcopal Bishop of California, held the earliest Episcopal services in Watsonville, in 1861. He reported to the Church leaders that Watsonville was “a permanent town, situated in a rich agricultural region.”⁴¹ While no official church had been established at that time, a small group of citizens continued to gather and follow the Episcopal doctrine. In 1868 the Church was stable enough to attain Mission status and was referred to as “Grace Mission.” The women of the congregation raised \$800 and bought a lot on the northeast corner of Third Street (Beach Street) just east of the Plaza. Services continued to be held in individuals’ houses or in rented halls.



Figure 7.4. This photo shows the 1896 All Saints Episcopal Church building at the corner of Third and Carr. The date of the image is unknown. The building was torn down in 1966. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Society.

⁴¹ “Celebrating 93 Years.” (Register-Pajaronian Sept 1954).

In 1876 the first church building was constructed on the lot at 100 East Beach Street. Local architect Alex Chalmers, who had previously designed the neighboring Presbyterian Church, designed it. Grace Mission continued to grow in members and in prosperity at the new location. In 1884, at the Episcopal Convention, the name was finally changed from Grace Mission to All Saints Episcopal Church. It became a recognized parish in 1889 with a membership of 21 citizens. In 1896 they moved to a new building on the corner of East Third and Carr, approximately one block from the previous church lot, which was sold, torn down and replaced by a Weeks designed private residence for Owen Tuttle.

A rectory was built in 1905 and then moved in 1951 to 69 Lincoln Street. In 1966, larger facilities were needed and a new church was constructed on Rogers Street near Martinelli Street. One year later the old church on Third and Carr was torn down and the church on Rogers Street was dedicated. A ship's bell from a World War II freighter was added to the bell tower in 1972.

First Christian Church / Disciples of Christ

Like all of the other early churches, the First Christian Church began as a small group of believers meeting in various homes. In 1861, the Christian Church built a small one-room church outside the town limits on San Juan Road. Their first full-time minister arrived in 1868. Reverend Frank Aldridge made a public display of baptizing church members in the Pajaro River. With his addition, they outgrew the one-room church and began meeting at Scott's Hall on Union Street. In 1873 they purchased the old Methodist



Figure 7.5 This photo is of the fourth building for the First Christian Church. The first three all burned to the ground shortly after their completions. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

Church on what was then the southeast corner of Rodriguez and 4th Street.⁴² They remained at this location for twenty years.

W.H. Weeks designed a new church on lot at corner of Main and Fourth Streets on a lot purchased from James Blackburn. In 1892, when it was almost ready for dedication, the unoccupied church mysteriously burned. Church members immediately rebuilt the structure according to the same plan. This too was a short-lived structure. It burned again in 1902. At this time a new location was desired and a lot was selected at the corner of East Lake and Alexander streets near the First Presbyterian Church. William H. Weeks was again chosen as the architect. The new stone church was dedicated in February of 1904. Fire continued to plague the First Christian membership. In 1927, this stone church burnt again and the congregation was forced to meet in the Odd Fellows Hall while a fourth Weeks designed church was constructed, this time on East Lake and Madison Streets.

Weeks chose a different style for the new edifice. The new Mission-style building was a complete break from the heavy stone design of the previous church. It was dedicated in 1928 and the Church continues to use this building today.

Christian Science Church

The Church of Christ Scientist requires that each group meet certain requirements before being recognized as an affiliated group. The first step is to form an informal group of like-minded individuals who all follow the principles set forth by the Mother Church in Boston, Massachusetts. Once regular Sunday meetings are established and the group contains a certain number of members from the Mother Church, it can petition for recognition as a Society. When the Society meets certain additional requirements, including a minimum of Society members, it can petition for status as a branch church.

Just before the turn of the century, in 1898, members of the early Watsonville Christian Science Church began meeting in peoples' homes. They officially organized and petitioned the Mother Church for recognition as a Christian Science Society in 1902. By this time they had moved into the old Methodist, then Christian church on the corner of Rodriguez and 4th Street. They continued to grow and in 1907, were officially granted a charter by the Mother Church to become First Church of Christ Scientist, Watsonville.

By 1920, they had outgrown the church on Rodriguez and were moving between the Odd Fellow's Hall, a rented space in the Marinovich Building and the Women's Club on Brennan Street. They settled temporarily in the Women's Club while they purchased a lot at 230 East Lake Avenue (1925) and built a new church (completed in 1931, and now the Knights of Columbus hall). According to church doctrine, a church building could not be dedicated until it was free of debt. Watsonville First Church of Christ Scientist dedicated its new building in 1944.

The next move started in 1960 with the purchase of three lots on Arthur Road off Freedom Boulevard. George Willox was hired to design the new structure. Construction

⁴² Rodriguez ran parallel to Main Street from the Pajaro River to 4th Street until after 1960.

began on the Georgian-style building in February 1963 at 352 Arthur Road and was completed in November of that year. It included an auditorium and school facilities. It was dedicated in 1965 and continues to serve them today.

Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints

There appear to be two incarnations of the Mormon Church in Watsonville, one early in the Church's organization and then fifty years later another was organized during the Great Depression.

The first church in Watsonville was organized by George Smith, Brigham Young's advisor, around 1864. (The Church of Latter-Day Saints was founded in 1830 and arrived in Utah around 1847.) By 1873 a church had been constructed on First Street. The 1886 Sanborn map shows a very small building noted as "Mormon church" at the foot of Rodriguez Street on Front Street near the riverbank. By 1892 it was gone.

The second founding has a better documented history and begins in 1931 as a small group meeting in the home of Ida Garfield. They organized as an independent branch of the California Mission in 1934 and started to hold services in the IOOF Building. They stayed here for over 20 years. A new stake of the mother church was established in San Jose in 1952 and all local Mormon groups were reorganized accordingly. The Watsonville Branch became a Ward. They completed a new church building of their own a year later at 114 East 5th Street. Like the Church of Christ Scientist, the church building was not dedicated until it was free of debt.

The current Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was built on Holm Road in 1996. The building on East 5th Street now houses the Watsonville Senior Center.

Buddhist Temple

The Watsonville Buddhist Temple has been the center of a strong Japanese community in Watsonville for 100 years. It began in 1906 with services conducted by a San Franciscan minister in the Opera House on East Beach Street. As family members joined the church, a campaign for a permanent building began. In 1907 the first minister, Reverend Jinno Inouye, arrived from Japan. He galvanized the congregation toward action and later that year they purchased a lot on the northeast corner of Bridge and Union Streets. Fundraising continued for the construction of the temple. It took less than a year to raise the estimated \$7500 construction cost at a time when the average wage for a Japanese farm worker was \$.10/hour. The building was dedicated in 1908 as a Temple of the Jodo Shinshu Nishi Hongwanji tradition of Buddhism. They remained here for 50 years before moving several blocks east to the current temple at 423 Bridge Street. The original temple was torn down, along with the original Westview Presbyterian Church, in 1972 to make way for a new Salvation Army complex and Del Sol Market.

The Temple served as more than just a religious institution. For many it was the social center for their community. Japanese school classes, teaching cultural and linguistic traditions, began in 1919 and were held at 59 Union Street. In 1941, the Japanese school was disbanded. It was reinstated after the war when it was taken up by private teachers.

However, in 1968 the Temple reinstated its sponsorship and brought the classes back under their social and cultural wing. Other social activities included a long tradition of sponsoring Boy Scout Troops, beginning in 1927. There have also been pre-school services, language classes and movie nights highlighting Japanese-language films.

During World War II, the Buddhist Temple was closed. In 1945, as individuals and families returned to Watsonville, it reopened, and operated as a social aid center and temporary lodging house, as well as a religious sanctuary. It was a safe and familiar place in an area that was less than welcoming. Participation and membership after internment greatly increased as the Japanese community focused on rebuilding their lives. This period marked the high-mark for Temple membership. They were able to construct a new building in 1958 where they remain today. As they prepare to celebrate 100 years in Watsonville, the Temple has restored their original altar and is planning needed repairs to their Bridge Street building.

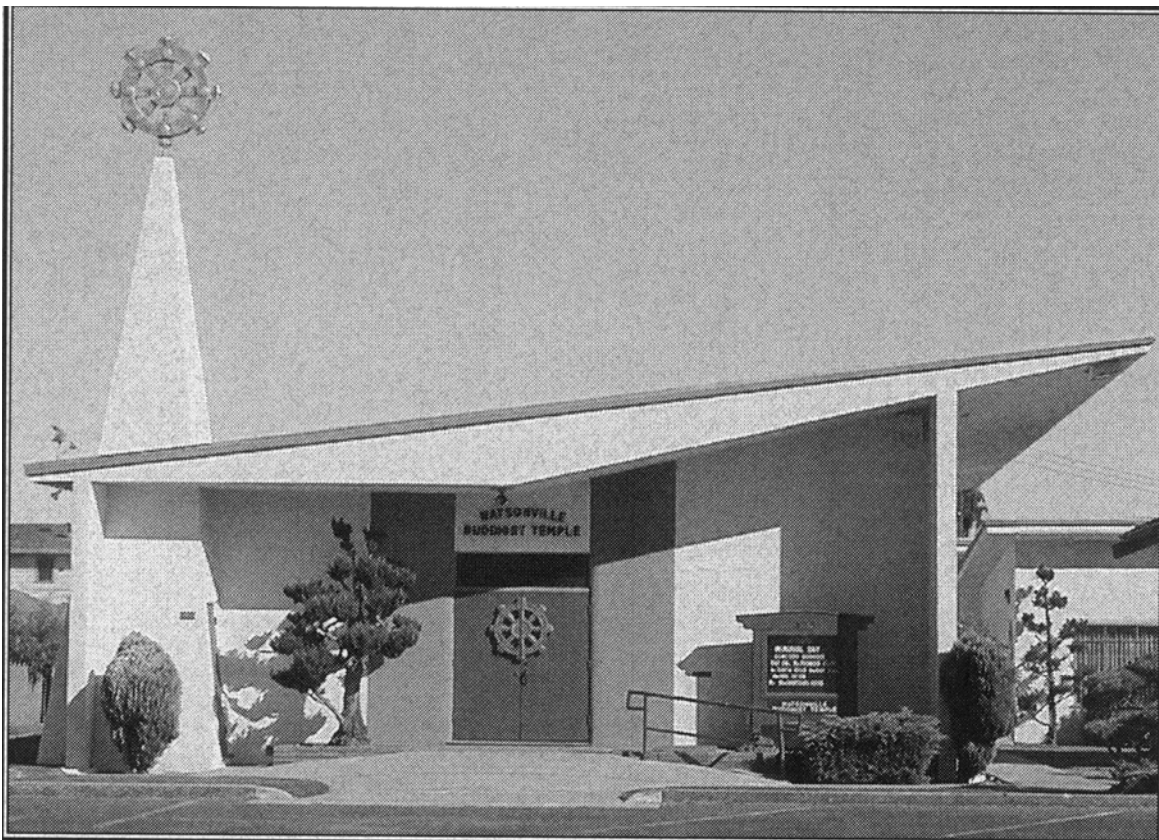


Figure 7.6. This 1958 Buddhist Temple replaced the original 1908 building. The Temple was organized in 1906 and despite a forced closing due to World War II Japanese Internment policies, has remain a vital force in Watsonville's Japanese-American community. Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

7.2.4 History - Recreation

Baseball

Baseball came to California with the gold rush. As the miners left the gold mines, they took this new game with them to the farms and valleys throughout the state. Like many other small communities in the region, baseball fever took Watsonville by storm. When leagues started to form in the 1890s, every town had a team of ready players. Watsonville's size and geographic location allowed it to be one of the early members of the fledgling California League in 1898. However, competing with teams from San Jose and San Francisco proved to be too much in both the talent and financial resource areas. By the time the American League formed on the east coast in 1900, professional baseball had left Watsonville.

This left the door open for semi-pro and amateur teams, both of which flourished in the region. From 1901 through the post-WWII era, Watsonville has fielded teams in a number of Californian minor leagues. This included the Central California Counties, or "3C" league, the Mission League and a handful of "outlaw" or independent leagues. Teams from Watsonville moved from Vallejo, from Fresno, or were homegrown. In 1901, the women of Watsonville even formed their own short-lived ball organization, the Bloomer Baseball Club.

The popularity of these teams ebbed and flowed throughout the first quarter of the 20th century as did the quality of their ballparks. In 1903 Cassin's lot, at the corner of 6th and Rodriguez Streets underwent a remodeling to turn it into a worthier field. The lot became a host to professionals vs. businessmen and YMCA teams. This fueled the fire for competing ball fields elsewhere in the area. In 1907, players could choose between Cassin's lot and a park near the beach in Port Watsonville. In 1909, Pajaro businessman, John Porter revamped his field on the other side of the river while Watsonville businessmen built an entirely new field at the corner of Ford and Walker Streets on 4-acres complete with a grandstand and fencing paid for by private donations. It is unclear which of these fields Watsonville's ever-present team, the Pippins, favored.

By 1910, Sunday baseball had become a part of the typical American lifestyle. Japanese immigrants were particularly rabid about Sunday baseball. Sunday became known as "baseball crazy day."⁴³ Churches and community groups formed teams to play each other. Because the professional leagues were closed to minorities, the Japanese eventually created their own semi-professional leagues of all Japanese players who toured the western United States playing other Japanese, white and Negro teams. Throughout California, the 1920s and 1930s became a golden age of Japanese baseball. However, as one player remarked, "We couldn't join any league back then because the league competition began in June and that was always time for our strawberry harvest. We had to finish our work before we could play ball."⁴⁴ At this time, Watsonville's Japanese team was the Watsonville Apple Giants.

⁴³ Nelson, Kevin, *The Golden Game: The Story of California Baseball* (San Francisco, Heyday Books, 2004) and Nakagawa, Kerry Yo, *Through A Diamond: 100 Years of Japanese American Baseball* (San Francisco, Rudi Publishing, 2001)

⁴⁴ Nakagawa, 44.

In Watsonville, the fervor surrounding Sunday baseball became a source of discontent amongst pious citizens who were afraid that ballgames would result in lower church attendance. However, in spite of these worries, baseball continued to grow in popularity. New leagues were continually forming and disbanding and friends and neighbors joined up to play each other when their favorite Pippins were not in town. One of these teams was made up of all brothers. In the 1920s, the athletic Manxmen of the Skillicorn family, all nine brothers, formed their own team and traveled to play exhibition games in the region. (Their four sisters traveled as team cheerleaders.) They were so popular and so unusual that today they are remembered in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

In 1920, the Pippins played their last game as the Mission league disbanded at the end of the season. Regional baseball picked up slightly around 1945 with the reorganization of



Figure 7.7. There were so many Skillicorn brothers in 1922 they could fully field their own baseball team. Two went on to play in the minor leagues for a few years. The team is now featured in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY. Photo is from *Watsonville: Memories that Linger, Volume 2* and courtesy of Eddie Skillicorn who played shortstop and is pictured to the left in the middle row.

the Watsonville Falcons as Pete's Packers and later as the Watsonville Packers. But in 1958, with the introduction of Major League Baseball to California and the broadcasting of games on the radio and television, little interest remained in regional baseball leagues. Today nothing is left of these early parks.

7.3 Summary

Watsonville has always been a close-knit community. Many times, this familiarity was borne out of smaller social circles within the larger municipal family. These circles may have been ethnic, religious or social in nature. Some had only local affiliations while others were global in scale. Each provided a secondary form of social support outside the immediate family or provided ways for individuals to explore identities beyond their employment status.

The fraternal and social organizations provided community and individual support in many ways. For some it was financial, but for many others, these groups allowed people to explore roles not provided to them in their everyday lives. As organizations, their clubhouses became the social centers of the community. For instance, the IOOF building was used by almost every community group in Watsonville for nearly a century. Prior to its destruction in 1989, it had been used by almost every citizen in Watsonville for one purpose or another, either as a classroom, a gathering space, a church or a meeting location. Like the businessmen who worked to promote Watsonville as a good place to work, these organizations worked to make sure that Watsonville was a good place to live.

For a relatively small city, Watsonville has always had a disproportional number of religious institutions. Beyond this, Watsonville has traditionally had a wide range of religions and denominations. Such a distribution of various congregations was typically limited to the large metropolitan areas around San Francisco Bay or Los Angeles. The fact that Watsonville has been able to support this variety speaks not only to the devotion of its citizens but also to the breadth of different ethnicities, traditions and tolerance in the community. Many of these groups have continued for a century or more and have added significantly to the architectural history of the city.

With such high religious and social participation, the serious nature of Watsonville has been tempered with a healthy love for competition both on and off the ball field. While businessmen and inventors spent their weekdays marching Watsonville forward, they spent their weekends cheering it on. Baseball, the Apple Annual, "Lake Watsonville" and Port Watsonville are but a few of the recreational opportunities that have been mentioned so far in this document. Baseball in particular gained in popularity and became a way for dissimilar aspects of the community to come together for an afternoon. In the process they formed a common heritage that lives on in the Little League games throughout the city today.

7.4 Representative Properties

Social Clubs



Address: 340 East Beach Street

Historic Name: N/A

Common Name: YWCA

Historic Use: Private residence

Current Use: Social clubhouse

Year Built: 1930

Architect: unknown

This stone-faced Tudor revival building was originally constructed in 1930 as a private residence. This is the second dedicated home for the Watsonville YWCA. The group, active since the early 1930s, moved to this location in 1979 from their previous headquarters at 202 Maple Street. The building was severely damaged in the 1989 earthquake, which left it empty for several years. It has since been restored and reoccupied by the YWCA to continue to operate their classes and outreach programs from the building.

Religious Institutions



Address: 721 Main Street

Historic Name: St. Patrick's Catholic Church

Common Name: St. Patrick's Catholic Church

Historic Use: Church

Current Use: Church

Year Built: 1903

Architect: William H. Weeks

St. Patrick's Church has a long history in Watsonville, dating back to 1864. This current building withstood both the 1906 and 1989 earthquakes. While the tower did sustain some damage in 1989, it has since been retrofitted and continues to serve the community. It is part of a larger campus that includes an auditorium on Ford Street and a rectory next door on Main Street. The original rectory pre-dates the current church building, but has been added to several times over the last 100 years.

See page 102 for a historic photo of this building.

Recreational Spaces



Address: 225 Sudden Street
Historic Name: Callaghan Park
Common Name: Callaghan Park
Historic Use: Children's Playground
Current Use: Children's Playground
Year Built: c. 1915

Callaghan Park is named after city alderman, P.A. Callaghan, who worked hard to get this first Watsonville playground established. As Watsonville rapidly expanded at the turn of the century, he recognized that the city landscape was changing. Large homes with spacious lawns, once typical around town, were being replaced by smaller houses on smaller lots. While children used to play in the streets with little fear of horses or wagons, dangers from the growing number of automobiles made the streets essentially off limits. The result, in his mind was a park dedicated to children. Callaghan Park once had park supervisors who watched the children and oversaw any group activities. A field house, slides, swings, sand boxes and ball fields were eventually added by various civic groups and the City of Watsonville.

Chapter 8

Historic Context Theme 5: Architecture and Subdivisions

8.0 Historic Context Theme 5: Architecture and Subdivisions

8.1 Overview

Watsonville has developed both organically and as a planned community. It's street grid pattern, changes in topography, organization of services and architectural history reflect the transition from a western frontier town to a civilized, commercially prosperous city. The evolution from a small regional crossroads to a commercial center was shaped by changes in technology, alterations to social patterns and customs and changes in demands for goods and services. Some of these changes rose from evolutions in modern lifestyles while others reflected alterations to common tastes in architecture and consumer goods. Landowners and architects shaped the appearance of Watsonville through land development and design until Watsonville became known for its handsome buildings and variety of services. With a little familiarity of settlement patterns and key artistic influences, many of these details can be read in the communal environment.

8.2.1 History – Settlement

Patterns and Growth

The original municipal boundaries of Watsonville enclosed a one-mile square piece of the Bolsa del Pajaro land grant. It was approximately centered on the Plaza with its southern border marked by the Pajaro River. Current lot configurations along the original boundaries do not reflect the demarcation of municipal jurisdiction, indicating that the city grew irrespective of the boundaries and that the boundaries did not conform to any existing property lines. At the time of incorporation in 1868, most of the city was farmland centered on a very small, two to three block-long commercial district. In fact, early maps indicate that orchards existed within this one-square mile limit well into the twentieth century.

While the population of the town steadily increased, the city government felt no pressure to annex land until 1907. A small two-block, eastern extension that included both sides of East Lake and East Beach Streets, and all the land in-between, was added. It was part of the Bockius orchards. The second annexation in 1925 added a small portion of land at the northeast corner of the original square to include a section of Freedom Boulevard. It included approximately 13 blocks, which was almost entirely occupied by the Watsonville Heights subdivision. The first portion of this subdivision was begun in 1905 while the second commenced in 1925. The settlement of the second Watsonville Heights subdivision was most likely the reason for this annexation.

The next annexation did not occur until 1930. This addition connected the 1907 and 1925 annexations and included several 1920s era land subdivisions. In 1940, this area was expanded yet again to include land owned and subdivided by the Tuttle family. It went out to Tuttle Avenue and included both sides of the street.

From here, the city began a rapid growth in terms of land annexation. The combination of post-war demand for housing, an increase in the population from servicemen who settled

in the area after WWII, and the increased demand for farm workers, led to a housing shortage locally that was greater than the general shortage felt nation-wide. To address this issue, and cash-in on increasing land values, (and subsequently generated property taxes) Watsonville completed six annexations to the west of downtown in the 1940s and seven in the 1950s, mostly to the northwest of the original town borders. Even though Watsonville roughly doubled in geographic size between 1940 and 1960, it still retained a rather compact residential and commercial core roughly centered on the downtown commercial center. Up until the middle of the twentieth-century, most citizens who lived within the city limits lived within 3/4 of a mile from downtown, which made it easily accessible by foot.

In spite of several decades of tremendous economic innovation and growth in Watsonville, none of the annexed lands up until this point, included any industrial parcels. It was all used for residential purposes. This left the city with little control over the growth and practices of the packing houses, processing plants, chemical works and storage facilities that proliferated to the west of downtown. The only industrial areas included within the municipal boundaries were part of the original city limits. These lands, just to the west of Walker Street, encompassed the passenger and freight depots but did not include the Spreckles plant or many of the industrial buildings out on Beach Street past the railroad tracks. Most of these lands were not officially added to Watsonville until the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Subdivisions

Around the turn of the century, a shift in the real estate property sizes took place. Before this time, most residential lots were large enough to support the myriad of outbuildings and land uses required by families. These included the outhouse, a chicken coop, storage sheds, a vegetable garden and perhaps a small number of fruit trees for personal consumption. Increased availability and decreased costs of manufactured items and store bought produce and food made many of these ancillary buildings unnecessary. Many of the earliest settlers who purchased large tracts of land for farming began subdividing their land as its value for residential uses rose well beyond its value as agricultural land. Subsequently, many of the early, self-sufficient homesteads on the edges of town were subdivided into small lots more reminiscent of today's layout.

Subdivision at this time was a term used to mean the platting of land into streets and small lots. Developers laid out the streets and set up amenities such as sidewalks and perhaps lighting (later in the 20th century), but they did not build or sell houses. Sometimes a builder might purchase several lots from the developer and construct houses on speculation, but the two parties remained relatively separate. This is in contrast to the modern subdivision method where the builder and the developer are the same or work as business partners. This current system, and the resulting tract housing, did not appear until the 1950s.

Watsonville began subdividing its farmland near downtown in the early 1890s. J. Waters advertised 75x180 foot lots on his property north of East Lake from Sudden Street to Madison in 1894. The cost was \$6 per front foot for the choicest lots on East Lake near

the school. Generally the property got cheaper as you went west and/or south towards the Pajaro River. These lands were prone to periodic flooding and were often located near industrial sites. They ranged from \$2-\$10 depending on their distance from Main Street.

The first subdivisions were rather small, and included only portions of blocks along one side of the street. These were usually a single lot that was subdivided into smaller parcels. After the turn of the century, as the town grew more wealthy and well known for its apple production, whole farm parcels were subdivided. These areas could include anywhere from one to dozens of blocks and were generally named after the families who owned them. They included the Bockius Subdivision on the eastern side of town (1899) and the Tuttle Tract at the northeastern boundary of Watsonville (c1930). Others were given neighborhood names such as Watsonville Heights (1905 and 1925), Buena Vista Heights (1911) and Huckleberry Park (1936). Some were named after the architect who designed the houses, such as the 1905 Weeks subdivision on Palm Avenue, near the present-day Mintie White School.

Most of these subdivisions were available only to those able to fully pay for land and the construction of a house. Mortgaging was financially risky for banks and private lenders, and generally only those already in possession of significant collateral were eligible for short-term loans. Long-term loans, such as those used for modern mortgages, did not become available until government underwriting was implemented in the 1930s. Therefore, most of the subdivisions tended to be occupied by people of moderate means – professionals, business owners and large farmland owners. However, at least one subdivision was built for, and marketed as, rental housing. These rentals would have been mostly for farm laborers or for store and office clerks. These economic divisions served to segregate many of the neighborhoods racially and politically even though no definitive evidence of historically ethnic neighborhoods exists today.

8.2.2 History - Architects

Alex Chalmers

Architect Alex Chalmers was a Scottish born businessman and designer who came to Watsonville in the 1850s. He was primarily responsible for the appearance of Watsonville's first generation of public buildings and elegant homes. Among his most notable commissions was the initial expansion of the first primary school on East Lake Avenue and the first bandstand in the plaza. Both of these were eventually replaced by William Weeks' designed structures. Chalmers built homes for many of the most prominent citizens such as Stephen Martinelli, Owen Tuttle and Judge Bockius (including the Bockius-Orr house). For several generations he was best known as the designer of Ford's turret-ed Department store. Chalmers died of a heart attack in 1903.

William H. Weeks

William Weeks was, by far, the most famous and prolific architect associated with Watsonville. He lived in the town for over 18 years, making it the base for his wide-reaching architectural practice. Virtually all important civic, commercial and residential buildings were designed by him or his firm and they represent a career that spanned over

four decades. His range of styles, choices of ornamentation and attention to detail have few equals to this day. His influence on the built heritage of Watsonville cannot be understated. He is almost single-handedly responsible for the incredible wealth of architecture found in the relatively compact borders of the city. Much has been written about his life and his works. What follows is but a brief summary of his legacy.

William H. Weeks was born in 1864 in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada. His father was a builder and architect who moved the family several times before settling in Oakland, California just as William was beginning his own architectural career. His first contact with Watsonville was through a contract to design a new Christian Church on the corner of Main and East Fourth Street.⁴⁵ The church project was plagued by difficulty, including several fires, but Weeks was not deterred. He moved his own young family to Watsonville and opened his first office in 1894.

Business quickly picked up pace after he won the competition for designing the new Watsonville High School 1895. When it burned to the ground in 1901, Weeks designed a completely different building for the site. This high school opened in 1902 and remained until 1964. It was joined by a second building on the site, designed by Weeks in 1917. He went on to design dozens of school buildings around California and particularly in the Central Coast Region.

By 1897, W.H. Weeks was expanding his practice with an office in Salinas to service the growing towns of Salinas and Spreckles. Just before the earthquake, he established an office in San Francisco in the newly completed Flood Building. Weeks was staying in the California Hotel on Bush Street on April 18, 1906 when its tower collapsed into the fire station next door, killing fire chief Dennis Sullivan. Weeks escaped unharmed and went on to help rebuild San Francisco in the heady years between the earthquake and the Pan Pacific International Exposition in 1915.

Even though he continued to design hundreds of buildings in the Watsonville area, Weeks moved his family to Palo Alto in 1911 to be closer to his growing practice in the Bay Area. This was short lived as he again moved in 1914 to Oakland. In 1924 he opened an Oakland office, quickly followed by a San Jose office in 1926.

W.H. Weeks is credited with 22 Carnegie libraries in California, many of which are still standing. In the Pajaro Valley alone he designed over 90 residences and redesigned a similar number of buildings. Interspersed with this work were dozens of educational, civic and commercial structures throughout California and the Pacific Northwest. While he got his start in Watsonville, he influenced architecture on a statewide scale. W.H. Weeks died in 1936 in Piedmont, California, ending a forty-year career that touched almost every county in the state.

Ralph Wyckoff

Ralph Wyckoff was born in Watsonville in 1886, during the boom years of the late 19th century. He began his career as a drafter in W.H. Weeks' Watsonville office in 1903. Six

⁴⁵ For more information on the Christian Church and its history, see Chapter 7.

years later, he left Watsonville to work in Weeks' San Francisco office, which was being overwhelmed with the rebuilding frenzy following the 1906 earthquake. After five years in San Francisco, he was granted an architecture license. This was his chance to leave the comfort of Weeks' enterprise to start his own firm, which he did in 1914 in Berkeley. Wyckoff was only on his own for a year or so before returning to Watsonville to take over the firm of H.B. Douglas, another notable local Watsonville designer. While at the head of Douglas' practice, Wyckoff was credited with the Watsonville Women's club (1917), the Radcliff School on Rodriguez (1917) and the Marinovich Building (1916) among others.

In 1919, he moved to Salinas and opened an office with Hugh White, but continued to be a favorite architect in his hometown. After this move he designed the Watsonville High School Shop building (1950), oversaw the remodeling of Chalmer's 1884 design for Ford's Department store (1924) and designed the Watsonville fire station (1925). He passed away in 1956 at the age of 72.

8.3 Summary

The architectural legacy from Watsonville's settlement remains remarkably intact. Patterns of development are still discernable as are the distinctive stylistic periods that they tended to foster. Individual architectural gems exist throughout the City. They represent vernacular designs as well as high architectural achievement by very well known and respected designers. The breadth of the existing housing stock, commercial buildings and civic structures is astonishing and is a tremendous asset to the City and community of Watsonville.

8.4 Representative Properties

Early Development



Address: 332 East Beach Street

Historic Name: Godfrey Bockius House

Common Name: Bockius-Orr House / Pajaro Valley Historical Association

Historic Use: Private residence

Current Use: House museum and archival storage

Year Built: 1870

Architect: Unknown, remodel by W.H. Weeks

Godfrey Bockius bought the original 70-acre plot of land on which 332 East Beach Street sits in the 1860s. He lived in this house with his family until his death in 1906. The original house was only one-story. Shortly after its completion, a two-story addition was commissioned. Some interior alterations were designed by William Weeks at the turn of the century. The house remained in the Bockius family, eventually becoming owned by his great-grandson, Frank Fletcher Orr. Frank's widow, Zoe, donated the house and several of its outbuildings, including a water tower and carriage house, to the Pajaro Valley Historical Association in 1993. A few of the family's furnishings were included in the donation.

Subdivisions



Address(es): 201 & 207 Rodriguez Street

Historic Name:

Common Name:

Historic Use: Row cottages

Current Use: Private residences

Year Built: pre-1892 (based on Sanborn maps)

Architect: unknown

Such dense arrangements of modest houses are still relatively common in Watsonville. They stem from earlier attempts to provide workers' housing near the fruit processing plants west of Main Street. Consequently, almost all "workers' housing" is found near Walker Street, interspersed with industrial sites that once held packing plants and processing factories. This grouping is more elaborate than most, retains a good deal of historical integrity and still has some sense of historical context with its proximity to Walker Street and the close proximity of other workers-associated housing.

William H. Weeks



Address: 110 Maple Avenue
Historic Name: Mateo Lettunich House
Common Name:
Historic Use: Private Residence
Current Use:
Year Built: 1895
Architect: W.H. Weeks

This grand Queen Anne-style building was commissioned by Mateo Lettunich in 1895 on property he purchased in 1893 for \$650. The construction of the home cost around \$3,900. Lettunich also hired Weeks to design another house on the adjacent property, but in a much different style. It remains today in much the same form and appearance as it did when it was first constructed.

Ralph Wyckoff



Address: 12 Brennan Street

Historic Name: Watsonville Woman's Club

Common Name: Watsonville Woman's Club

Historic Use: Social organization

Current Use: Social organization

Year Built: 1917

Ralph Wyckoff became the local architect of choice after leaving William Weeks' office to start his own practice in 1914. He designed the Watsonville Woman's Club the same year as the Radcliff School on Rodriguez Street. It is one of the few Tudor style buildings in Watsonville and it retains many of its original features.

Chapter 9

Historic Context Theme 6: Ethnic and Cultural Groups

9.0 Historic Context Theme 6: Ethnic and Cultural Groups

9.1 Overview

Watsonville's municipal, social and economic history is the story of immigrants who came to the Pajaro Valley in search of a better life for themselves and their families. Some came to California after spending time on the east coast of the United States. Others came directly from their homelands. Many came with little knowledge of the English language but were armed with agricultural expertise and ingenuity. While the individual reasons for coming to Watsonville vary, there are several overarching patterns of settlement and social development that are common to many different groups. The first arrivals from a particular country or geographic region tended to be male. They came alone, or with other male relatives, to earn enough money to either send for their families or to start a family. At first many sent money home with the intention of returning, but more often they remained in the area and settled. Jobs in agriculture were usually obtained through a labor boss of the same ethnicity. This labor boss organized work teams of immigrants and contracted with farmers. The boss usually spoke both English and his native tongue and served as an interpreter and mediator between the farmer and the laborer.

Geographically, the first arrivals were western Europeans. Southern and eastern European ethnic groups followed shortly afterwards. Most of these settlers came over land from Eastern states or the mid-west territories in search of Californian gold and stayed to settle the fertile river valleys. They became the primary land owners. Next came various Asian groups, starting with the Chinese, then Japanese and eventually Filipinos. The early to mid-20th century brought a shift to Central American immigrants, a trend we see continuing today.

The waves of immigrants can be divided into two groups – those that came early enough to establish their own ranches and farms and those who came to work as laborers. The earlier European settlers came to set up their own farms, homesteading or squatting on Mexican land grants. As they acquired more land and ranching gave way to crop cultivation, the increased demand for farm laborers brought Asian, and then Central American immigrants. The first group moved into ownership and wealth while the second struggled to survive.

As a general trend, each group worked for a period of time as laborers before moving into sharecropping or land leasing. In this way, they slowly built up enough money to either purchase their own land or to start their own business. As one group gained more economic independence, new groups came in to fill the labor void. The timing of these transitions coincided with various trigger events elsewhere in the world – famine, political instability, natural disaster and of course, general poverty.

The following attempts to chronicle the major ethnic groups that settled in the Pajaro Valley and shaped Watsonville history. For each, the reasons for their immigration are explored as well as their experiences upon arrival. Their stories are very closely linked to

the agricultural history of the area and more information on that particular element can be found in Chapter 5.

9.2.1 History – Immigrant Groups

Irish

While some Irish immigrated to the United States in the first half of the 19th century, it wasn't until the potato famine in Ireland in 1845-1849 that their numbers became significant. During this five-year period, over 1 million Irish men, women and children left their homelands for the east coast of the United States. Many arrived with nothing but the ragged clothes on their backs. Most were cheated out of any meager possessions they brought with them. With limited funds and a desire to stick together with fellow Irishmen, the vast majority of Irish immigrants remained in the large eastern coastal cities, at least initially. When the western territories opened up, mid-century homesteading policies made it possible for even poor families to become land owners. This drew thousands west, many of them Irish. The discovery of gold in California in 1848 enticed some to continue west where most did not find their fortune in gold but instead found land in a mild climate.

By 1850, Irish immigrants accounted for 43% of the foreign born population in the United States. In California, they formed the largest foreign-born group as they arrived to work on the railroads or to try their hand at mining during the Gold Rush. Once in California, the rich and abundant soil tempted them to stay. California and the potential for success in agriculture called out to this largely agrarian population. And while the Pajaro Valley was not the cool, damp climate in which they were familiar farming, it proved to be just as ideal for growing their beloved potatoes.

Along with potato farming, the Irish also brought Roman Catholicism to California. As they remained the largest immigrant group in the region for the next three decades, several catholic churches and organizations were established in Watsonville. The Catholic Church of the Immaculate Heart was founded in 1854, followed by St. Patrick's Catholic Church in 1864 and St. Mary's Catholic Church in 1868. Today St. Patrick's still stands on its original location on the corner of Main and Ford Streets.

Among the many reminders of the Irish influence on the early settlement of Watsonville and the greater Pajaro Valley are the names that remain in the directories, on company letterhead and on street signs throughout the City: The Driscoll Brothers, Roache School and Roache Road (William Roache), Larkin Valley (Michael Larkin), Callahan Park (Pete Callahan) and Moreland Notre Dame (Margaret Moreland) to name but a few.

Danes

Danish settlers followed the Irish in the 1870s and 1880s, fleeing internal political unrest and skyrocketing land values in their homeland. Like the Irish, they first arrived on the east coast and made their way west in search of suitable farmland. They brought with them the Lutheran Church and a familiarity with grain crops such as hay and wheat. They

came in great enough numbers to support many cultural groups and clubs that emphasized their Danish heritage to the younger generations.

Many of the early accounts by Danish settlers in the Pajaro Valley revolve around social gatherings. The Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church was established in 1880. At that time they met in people's homes or other suitable gathering spaces. In 1889 a dedicated church building was erected on Ford Street and this became the center of the Danish community. Up until the early 1900s, all services were conducted in Danish but English classes were taught through the church to assist recent immigrants and their families. Also of importance were the many social clubs established by the Danish population to provide company and support to community members, as well as new arrivals from the homeland.

It is said that in the late 1880s the Danes used to dam up the river near the Pajaro Bridge and have bathing parties. Families would row boats and swim from the banks while an official "port captain" oversaw the action to make sure no one was injured. This may have been the inspiration for Lake Watsonville, the annual Fourth of July creation that entertained a generation of Watsonville citizens in the early 20th century.

Like the Irish, the Danish immigrants brought with them knowledge of a particular crop derived from generations of farming in their homelands. In their case, wheat, hay and grains were the crops of choice. Following the fallout in the potato market in 1853, farmers looking to make quick gains planted wheat as it was a proven crop and the reward was almost immediate with yields available after only a single season. Throughout the next fifty years, wheat would remain a staple crop, although the number of acres dedicated to its cultivation would fluctuate.

Many Danish farmers left as fruit trees and vegetables took over the arable acreage around Watsonville, but a good number remained.

Dalmatians / Croatians

The Dalmatian, or Croatian, immigrants were one of the most successful and prosperous immigrant groups in Watsonville. The first immigrants arrived in the 1860s but their numbers increased greatly around the turn of the 20th century. Most came from a very small part of Croatia near the south of Dubrovnik, called the Konavle Valley. They often arrived with no money and a very limited education, having been sent to the United States to escape poverty and hunger in their homeland. This small former city-state on the eastern shores of the Adriatic sent their young men, some hardly teenagers, to the Pajaro Valley to join other relatives who had been able to make a living in the rich soils of the area. It has been said that so many people emigrated from the Konavle Valley that even today, most inhabitants have at least one relative living in or near Watsonville.

Like the Danes and the Irish, these young men arrived with a centuries-old knowledge of farming and crop cultivation. So prolific were they in the fields that they soon rose above the economic levels of the Asian immigrants. Part of this success resulted from their tight

organizational tendencies and their strong sense of responsibility for newly arrived countrymen.

The Croatians organized labor clubs to aid Slavic immigrants, a system utilized by many other immigrant group. These clubs functioned as brokers for the workers, and negotiated with landowners on behalf of the workers. This made fieldwork steady and better paid for the Croatians when compared to their unorganized fellow immigrants. These clubs also formed the central hub of their social lives and provided shelter and food to those who required it. Being white and European, they were able to escape most of the overt racism and discrimination that Asian immigrants dealt with on a daily basis.

Perhaps the most significant impact that the Croatians had on Watsonville was their knack for orchard cultivation, specifically apples. While they were not the first people to plant apple trees in the valley, they were largely responsible for tending the orchards and investing in apple packing enterprises early on. From these modest beginnings grew the apple empire that earned Watsonville the title of the “Apple City.”

Many Croatian families remained in the apple business and used their profits to establish businesses and to aid in the economic and social growth of Watsonville. (For example, the Resetar brothers made their fortune in apple farming and fruit packing before constructing the Resetar Hotel in 1927.) These same families were later pioneers in growing and cold shipping of lettuce from the Pajaro Valley. This is one of the main crops grown around present-day Watsonville. M.N. Lettunich is credited with shipping the first railcar load of apples from the Pajaro Valley to London. Later in life he helped organize the Watsonville Apple Distributors,⁴⁶ Appleton Investment Co., built the Appleton Hotel and established the Fruit Growers National Bank, which was eventually to become part of Bank of America.⁴⁷

Chinese

Chinese immigrants formed the agricultural labor base in the Pajaro Valley for most of the last quarter of the 19th century. They first arrived in California during the Gold Rush and soon discovered that the only jobs available to them were the heavy labor positions in the mines. Some eventually found employment building the thousands of miles of railroad criss-crossing the state. Others, tired of the abuse on the railroad or in the mines, settled in the agricultural regions where the demand for unskilled labor was high and the danger levels were lower. Their contributions to the economic growth of the Watsonville area went well beyond their toils planting and harvesting crops. They drained and cleared much of the low-lying valley floor, opening up large areas of fertile and arable land and introduced and cultivated new crops such as mustard. Perhaps their biggest influence came through their techniques and efforts that created conditions for successfully growing strawberries.

⁴⁶ Lewis, *Watsonville: Memories that Linger*, Vol. 2, 1980.

⁴⁷ Bushee, Ward, “Slavs of the Pajaro Valley: First a Trickle, Then a Stream.” (Register-Pajaronian, June 5, 1968).

The first Chinese immigrants began arriving in Watsonville in the mid-1860s and by 1888 they were the second largest foreign-born group in the Valley. Like most immigrant groups, they tended to live and work in close proximity to their fellow countrymen. A small Chinatown developed between Main and Union near Maple Street. However, a fire destroyed most of this settlement in 1876. It was believed to have been intentionally set.

Tension between the white, European business community and Chinese merchants in Chinatown had been growing for some time. Most of the time their conflicts were solved in a civil manner and when much of Chinatown was destroyed by fire, an unofficial agreement was reached between both parties. In 1888, as conditions in Chinatown became more and more crowded, the Chinese residents agreed to move their businesses and hotels across the river to Brooklyn Street in Pajaro on land made available by John Porter. Here they would have more space to house and serve the ever-increasing Chinese population that was flooding the area to work in the Spreckles Sugar Beet factory. In exchange, the business leaders agreed to pay to move what buildings they could from Watsonville to Pajaro and to pay for the first three months rent in the new location. It marked the first time that a Chinese population willingly moved at the request of local civic leaders

By the time of the 1876 Chinatown fire, anti-Chinese sentiment had been steadily increasing in Watsonville and around the country. Legislation was passed by Congress in 1882 to limit, and then close down, the immigration of Chinese to the United States. Eventually, all people of Chinese nationality were barred from owning land and becoming legal U.S. citizens. This all but solidified the Chinese immigrant's place at the bottom of the economic and social scale, making it very difficult for them to rise out of the labor staff to become landowners.

Yet in Watsonville, the Chinese population had a certain amount of power within the local economic establishment. For the last decade of the 19th century, Watsonville's economy was dominated by Spreckels' sugar beet factory. He contracted local farmers to grow sugar beets and that was the predominant agricultural crop being harvested in the fields of the Pajaro Valley. Chinese immigrants not only did most of the harvesting, but they also performed most of the factory labor that Spreckels' giant plant required. This dependency on Chinese labor gave the entire Chinese population a tremendous bargaining chip. This led Chinese laborers to use work stoppages and strikes to try to improve their wages and working conditions. It is believed they were the first to use these methods in the Pajaro Valley.

When Spreckels' closed his plant in 1898 in favor of a new facility near Salinas, times became tough. This was compounded by downturns in the local fishing industry and growing national and regional resentment toward all Chinese immigrants. Time improved somewhat as Watsonville's apple crops became the predominant agricultural product. Rather than compete with white farmers, enterprising Chinese businessmen turned to related products such as dried apples and apple cider vinegar. At the time, most shipments of apples were for fresh products. By drying the apples, their shelf life was

greatly expanded. Soon this particular niche in the market came to be dominated by Chinese drying houses.

By the 1930s a sizable number of Chinese families still remained in Watsonville, concentrated around the drying houses on Grove Street.⁴⁸ As the second generation matured, many left the area or moved into less crowded, more racially tolerant neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city. In their stead, a series of other, newly arrived, immigrant groups flowed into the Valley to work in the fields and processing plants.

Japanese

The first waves of Japanese immigration differed from preceding groups in several ways. First, their numbers were constrained not by the United States but by the Japanese government. Emigration from Japan was banned until 1885 when the government underwent a policy shift. Men formed the bulk of the first arrivals in the late 1880s with women and children following later, if at all. A second difference between early Japanese immigrants was their education level. Many were literate and had had a formal education.

The men worked primarily in the fields as seasonal laborers, replacing the aging and increasingly organized Chinese population. By the turn of the century, the Japanese population in the Pajaro Valley was nearing 400. Like the Danes, they placed a strong emphasis on social organizations and utilized a system of labor contractors, soon establishing labor clubs of their own. Because so many workers were single men with limited knowledge of the customs and language of their new environment, these clubs became de facto Japanese boarding houses and social centers.

Many Japanese laborers formed cooperatives to lease land and cultivated their own crops, mostly strawberries. This form of share cropping, along with their hard work and skill at farming and horticulture brought them modest success. As cash tenants they controlled the working conditions on their leased land. Many sought to improve the lot of their fellow countrymen through hiring from the labor clubs and providing working conditions superior to those on the larger white-owned farms.

With success came families. Those who had left wives and children in Japan sent for them. Those who came as bachelors, utilized traditional marriage arrangements by their family members in Japan. These so-called “picture brides” arrived in the United States to marry men they had never seen before. For some the culture shock was too great and they abandoned their new husbands. However, most stuck it out, living in dirt-floored shacks while their husbands toiled in the fields all day. Their presence helped to stabilize and solidify the Japanese community in Watsonville.

After the turn of the century, enough Japanese citizens had arrived in Watsonville to create a Japantown at the south end of Main Street. It included public baths, grocery stores, a tofu factory, schools, stores, doctors and cultural institutions. Three that remain active to this day are the Westview Presbyterian Church, the Watsonville Buddhist

⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that Sanborn maps from the period specifically labeled Chinese industries and business. This included hotels, restaurants, packing sheds and the like.

Temple and the Japanese-American Citizens League (JACL). These three institutions are largely responsible for the continuation of the Japanese culture and history through the generations. They were, and still are, the pillars of the Japanese community in Watsonville.

The JACL was particularly active in the daily lives of Watsonville's Japanese community members. It's had many names over the years but it has always served to support the entire community in times of prosperity and hardship. In 1910, the Japan Society was formed to aid Japanese citizens in various legal struggles both with the United States and Japanese governments.⁴⁹ Its primary purpose was to offer legal aid in matters of military service and immigration. The Society also performed important social and cultural duties for the largely single male Issei (recent immigrant) population. As number of children in Watsonville grew, the Japan society sponsored a Japanese language school.

Following restriction of Japanese immigration in the Gentlemen's Agreement, the Japan Society assisted its members in acquiring documents to travel to and from Japan as well as assisting in the entry of picture brides. In order to foster good will among the general population in Watsonville, the society sponsored a float in the annual Fourth of July parade.

In early 1930s, Issei Watsonville residents Hatsusaburo Yagi, Ippatsu Jumura, Ennosuke Shikuma, and Ennosuke Fukuba encouraged the younger Nisei (1st generation, American born Japanese-Americans) to form an organization similar to those being formed elsewhere in the state. The organization was named the Watsonville Citizen's League. It began with 35 members, including Tom Matsuda, Bill Shirachi, and Sam Hada. Their leadership became critical after the signing of Executive order 9066 in 1942.

The JACL was reorganized in the spring of 1947, with an invitation to the Japanese community to form a "non-religious citizens organization" which would be a Nisei group to carry on community services. One year later, a meeting actually occurred. The first decision of the new group was to enter a car in the Fourth of July parade, resuming a tradition begun by the Watsonville Japan Society before the war.⁵⁰

Another important facet of the Japanese community in Watsonville, and throughout California, was baseball. Churches, businesses and civic groups all sponsored teams. Since they were not allowed to play on mainstream professional, or semi-professional teams, they formed their own leagues. These leagues played not only against other Japanese teams, but also against teams from the Negro leagues, other minority groups, and sometimes against barnstorming white teams for special exhibition games. Sunday

⁴⁹ At this time, Japanese immigrants were not allowed to become U.S. citizens and remained obligated to Japan for military service and other general citizenry responsibilities. This made for difficult travel arrangements and required filing of many legal documents.

⁵⁰ Information from a JACL program commemorating 50 years of service-from 1934-1984, on file at the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.



Figure 9.1. Japanese fans on Baseball Crazy Day in the 1920s. Such scenes were once common for many ethnic groups on Sunday afternoons. Photo is from *Through a Diamond: 100 Years of Japanese American Baseball*.

was the day for baseball and was commonly known as “baseball crazy day.” Everyone went out to cheer on their favorite players. Watsonville fielded so many teams that they had city-wide tournaments and yearly all-star teams.

Like the Chinese, the Japanese immigrants eventually ran into harsh discrimination and racism that went beyond the sporting world. Anti-Japanese laws were passed limiting first immigration, then citizenship and finally land ownership. The culmination of these actions was the detainment and forced relocation of over a hundred thousands Japanese and Japanese-American citizens in the early 1940s. Most from Watsonville were sent first to Salinas Rodeo Grounds, then to the Poston internment camp in Arizona.⁵¹ The combination of the Great Depression and Internment nearly destroyed the economic vitality of Watsonville’s Japanese population. Many lost farms, houses and businesses. Others were able to put their lands in the trust of non-Japanese friends and retained ownership when they returned. Ford & Co. allowed their Japanese customers to put large sums of money on credit to safeguard it in their absence.

⁵¹ In all, 1,301 people of Japanese ancestry were removed from Santa Cruz County. 71% of them were American citizens.

Upon their return, those who were able to salvage some of the life they left behind often took in others who were less fortunate. The Japanese community rallied around itself, setting up hostels in churches, basements and barns. However, many chose to leave the area altogether. Some accounts from the time estimate that only one-third returned to Watsonville. Whatever the initial numbers and in spite of the tremendous obstacles, by mid-century a sizable community had been reestablished. As the restrictive national and local legislation was gradually repealed, the Japanese community once more began to flourish. Strawberry production increased. Japanese businesses resumed operation and new families settled in the area.

After World War II, opportunities for educated Japanese opened up in the larger community. Where once they were relegated to jobs in agriculture, now there was a growing Japanese professional class – lawyers, doctors, teachers, businessmen, politicians, etc. In 1948 the Alien Land law was repealed by popular vote and 1952 Japanese aliens were finally allowed to apply for United States citizenship. Today Watsonville's Japanese are still involved in the strawberry business as well as the nursery business. While little is left of the Japantown of the 1920s, a thriving and vibrant community remains.

Portuguese

The Portuguese arrived in the Pajaro Valley in two waves. The first group consisted mostly of whalers and farmers from the Azores, coming to escape poverty and conscription in the Islands. They became fishermen and farm laborers in the area in the 1870s. Many of the fishermen settled in and around Monterey and Santa Cruz. Those more inclined to farming settled in the valleys. While never a large group, this wave of Portuguese immigrants were responsible for introducing the sweet potato to the Santa Clara Valley. In the Pajaro Valley, many became ranchers or dairymen.

Around 1910 a second wave of Portuguese came to the Watsonville area, this time from mainland Portugal and the sugar plantations of Hawaii. At the time, they were the second largest immigrant group in the labor camps around Watsonville. While the total Portuguese population in California continued to grow through the 1950s, (it is estimated that 1/3 of the Portuguese immigrants in the United States lived in California) their presence in Watsonville lessened.

Filipinos

When the United States won the Spanish-American War in 1898, part of their spoils included the Philippine Islands. As a United States territory, Filipinos were not U.S. citizens, but they traveled with U.S. passports and were granted exemption from existing immigration quotas. Taking advantage of this ready and willing labor force, the large Hawaiian sugar and pineapple plantations actively recruited Filipino workers. Many came to Hawaii only briefly before continuing on to California. By 1920, approximately half of the country's 5600 member Filipino population resided in the state and was concentrated in the San Francisco Bay area and the Sacramento delta lands around Stockton. Growing restrictions on Asian immigration and anticipation of Mexican immigration quotas spurred a rush for Filipino workers in the mid-1920s. In 1923 alone

over 2500 new immigrants arrived from the Philippine Islands. By 1930, their numbers were over 30,000 and they comprised a majority of the farm workers around Watsonville and elsewhere in the Pajaro and Imperial Valleys.

Unlike many previous or contemporary immigrant groups, many Filipinos arrived in the United States with a working knowledge of the English language, a result of being a U.S. territory. The more business savvy became labor contractors and organized the mostly young, single male Filipino population into work groups for local farmers. At first they were touted as a model working group, however they soon became prone to anti-immigrant actions just like every other Asian ethnic group before them. This culminated in 1930 with 5-days of rioting in Watsonville that resulted in the shooting death of a young Filipino man as he slept in a labor camp on the edge of town.

In 1935, the Philippines were granted independence following a ten-year period of commonwealthship. As part of this new independence from the United States, Filipinos who had not become U.S. citizens, were subjected to a yearly immigration quota of 50 individuals. This all but halted the influx of new Filipino immigrants. Many of those already here joined the military when the U.S. entered WWII and never returned. The result was a sudden drop, by 1945, of the Filipino population in Watsonville. Those that had married and settled remained, but few new families came in to replace those people who had left. As a result, in labor camps, the Filipino workers began to work more closely with Mexican workers brought in under the Bracero program.

Unlike many of the other immigrant labor groups, the Filipino men tended to be more united both as labor contractors and as workers. Less exploitation and stealing took place among the Filipino community than in the Mexican community. Part of this closer unity may have been a result of the tremendous prejudice the Filipinos experienced at the hands of the European and American citizenry. Filipino men were not allowed to marry Caucasian women, including Mexicans, however this did not stop many from intermarrying. With the female Filipino population virtually non-existent, interracial couples naturally formed. Many were shunned by their own ethnic communities as well as the white establishment.

In the fields, Filipinos were able to effect a small amount of change in the days before large-scale unionization in the late 1950s. The lettuce strikes in Salinas in 1934 were largely organized and supported by Filipino workers with a smaller number of Mexican workers joining in. This strike resulted in an increase in wages and improvements in living conditions that made Salinas and the Pajaro Valley an attractive location for workers in other parts of the state. These early victories energized the community but did little to change widespread labor practices or policies.

Mexicans

Like many immigrant groups before them, the Mexicans came to the Pajaro Valley in search of a better life, higher wages and more opportunity for their families. They arrived in several waves and through different means. The first groups consisted mostly of single men and families trying to escape the war for Mexican Independence around 1910. The

former were often conscripted into the army and fled to the United States rather than be shot for desertion. The latter were often families of government officials or were in some way associated with the Mexican government and who were fleeing for their lives. Most arrived illegally and ended up as field workers or opened restaurants and businesses to serve the growing Mexican community. Unlike later waves of Mexican immigrants, many of these early pioneers were able to slowly save some money through sharecropping, eventually establishing roots in the community of Watsonville. Their children gained an education and many returned to Watsonville to become today's leading citizens and businesspeople.

Greater numbers of Mexican immigrants arrived during World War II to fill the labor shortages left by the Japanese internment program. Simultaneously, more and more of the Valley was being devoted to labor-intensive crops such as lettuce and strawberries. This further increased demand for migrant labor. To solve the shortage, the United States and Mexican governments jointly created the Bracero program in 1942. Under this program, workers were allowed to enter and work legally in the United States for a certain period of time, determined by contract. When the contract was complete, the workers were required to return to Mexico. The promise of work and better wages attracted thousands of rural Mexican farmers who had lost everything in the revolution and struggled to find work under their new government. It also attracted young and educated Mexican men looking to "experience" life in California. Regardless of education or background, all participants in the Bracero program were hired on a contractual basis by farmers through approved labor contractors who worked directly with the federal governments to fulfill demand. The agreements were often in English only leaving many Bracero workers with little to no understanding of the terms of their employment or their rights under the program's charter. They were often exploited or threatened with deportation and worked with little security.

In spite of this, they still made more money harvesting crops than they could hope to make in Mexico and many stayed through the end of the program in the 1960s. Since then Mexican immigrants continue to cross the border to work in the fields surrounding Watsonville and throughout the Central Valley.

The early exploitation by unscrupulous labor contractors, often more established English-speaking Mexicans, began to rally some workers to organize for change. The Filipino community had already had some success with wage increases in Salinas raising the 1935 rate from \$.15/hour to \$.35/hour. This served to draw more Mexican workers to the area where Watsonville was known for its solid, cheap housing and clean living conditions. Some accounts from this period recall workers around Watsonville being relatively happy compared to workers elsewhere in the state.

This is not to say that the work was easy or without risk. A typical field worker put in eight to ten hours a day, much of it bent over to harvest close growing crops like lettuce and strawberries. Several breaks for smoking and lunch allowed only limited rest in a day. For those who worked in the orchards, the work was in an upright position and easier on their backs and legs, but they suffered greatly from the added hazard of

pesticide spraying. It was not uncommon for workers' skin to discolor, for them to become violently ill, and in some cases, to die from chemical exposure. These risks were known by labor contractors, but nothing was done to protect the workers, most Mexican or Filipino, until protesting began in the middle of the 20th century.

At this time, around 1950, Latinos accounted for approximately 8% of Watsonville's general population. By 1980, they comprised 43% of the population and ten years later they became the majority ethnic group.

9.3 Summary

The impact of immigrants on the economy and social atmosphere is far-reaching and comprehensive. Whether the industry was ranching, agriculture, processing, mercantile, hospitality, entertainment or civic in nature, it was founded and sustained by people from all over the world. Some were drawn to the area for economic reasons, others to escape persecution, famine or crowding elsewhere. All left their mark.

Early Irish, Danish and Dalmatian settlers came first to farm the lands that Mexicans had ranches. They brought with them knowledge of grain crops and dairy farming and transformed the open flatlands into cultivated fields. Their successes fed the early development of Watsonville. They built the first schools, first commercial districts and established the first government.

As California exploded with gold fever, other nationalities began to appear. The Chinese, in particular, changed the way that the Pajaro Valley was cultivated. A plentiful supply of labor allowed for different, more intensive crops to take root. They introduced mustard as a commercial crop and laid the agricultural foundations for prolific strawberry production. Their organization, both in labor groups and in social units, established patterns often imitated by other immigrant groups that followed.

Japanese settlers were recruited for their horticultural prowess. They capitalized on their knowledge by forming cooperative groups and eventually farming for themselves. Their systems of sharecropping and cooperative development allowed many to find modest prosperity in the midst of discrimination and overt racism.

Most recently, Mexican and Filipino workers have arrived to keep the agricultural engine running. They have filled the fields and the factories for almost fifty years. In that time, they have been able to organize into unions and have gained some stability to a largely migrant employment situation. These gains were not quick nor were they universal. They continue to struggle for rights and living wages.

These struggles are not unique to Watsonville. They are representative of similar stories throughout California. What is unique is the range of ethnicities and nationalities represented in such a relatively compact urban area. Their legacy remains in the street names, in businesses, in the names of the civic leaders and the names of the school children. Many have lived in the area for generations. These deep roots have provided

stability and a strong sense of place. This is the true legacy, the tremendous community of people, faiths, beliefs and creativity that is found throughout Watsonville's long and distinguished history.

9.4 Representative Properties

Community Spaces



Address: 236 Ford Street

Historic Name: Danish Lutheran Church

Common Name: Danish Church

Historic Use: Church

Current Use: Commercial Offices

Year Built: 1889

Architect: Unknown

The Danish community was very strong during Watsonville's formative years. Even today it remains in smaller community groups, family names, commercial enterprises and street names. This is one of the earliest, and last, buildings dating to the years of active Danish immigration to the Pajaro Valley. The building has been slightly altered with a small one-story addition to the rear around 1905 and a second one-story rear additions between 1920 and 1962.

Community Spaces



Address: 118 First Street

Historic Name: Westview Presbyterian Church

Common Name: Westview Presbyterian Church

Historic Use: Church

Current Use: Church

Year Built: 1958

Architect: Unknown

Westview Presbyterian Church began life as a mission church associated with the local Presbyterian congregation. The mission's main focus was on serving the growing population of Christian Japanese settlers in Watsonville. The first church on Maple Street was very active up until World War II when the entire Japanese population was sent to internment camps in California and Arizona. After Internment, the church spaces were vital to many displaced residents who returned to Watsonville with money, credit or possessions. In spite of their personal devastation, the Westview community continued to expand within the Japanese population. They built this facility in response to a need for larger facilities to support their growing community outreach activities.

Chapter 10

Report Conclusions

10.0 Report Conclusions

Even after completing the research and composition of this context statement for the City of Watsonville, there still remains the question of “Why?” Watsonville was never at the junction of any major shipping routes. The railroad came late and went hardly anywhere for quite some time. Highway 1 goes through Watsonville but no other major road intersects it in the vicinity. There was no serviceable port and the airport never had the capacity or infrastructure for large-scale air shipments. Yet, Watsonville has prospered for over one hundred and fifty years.

It seems as though Watsonville found itself in the right location at the right time and drew in creative and tenacious people to take advantage of these fortuitous conditions. Plenty of other cities developed in the middle of rich agricultural lands, but only Watsonville was able to use this proximity to their benefit. Additionally, these individuals turned around and benefited the community with their generosity and commitment to the overall health and wellbeing of the town.

This innovation, and a general progressive attitude, made Watsonville the home of many “firsts” that have affected the lives and lifestyles of people all over the world.

- First commercial shipment of strawberries
- First commercial shipment of lettuce
- First refrigerated produce shipments
- First flash-frozen produce shipments
- First headquarters and laboratory for Volck’s Ortho-line of pest control
- First headquarters for Easton Sports
- First headquarters for Driscoll Brothers
- First regional Mormon Church
- First regional airfield

Watsonville has always be an adaptable and often created its own opportunities. The Port Watsonville saga is but one example of the tenacious attitudes of the local businessmen. And while that particular experiment did not work in their favor, plenty of others did. Probably the most successful, historically, was the Apple Annual. This event alone made Watsonville a household name for a generation of Californians.

Beyond the commercial successes that Watsonville has enjoyed over the course of the last 150 years, it has also benefited from a highly diverse ethnic and cultural community. These groups each shaped the City through their churches, social organizations, languages, cultures and certain economic knowledge. This last aspect was most acutely felt in the late 19th century when many of the recent immigrants brought with them specialized knowledge of particular crops and growing methods. Each introduced or expanded upon, various aspects of the agricultural economy, bring with it, increased

success and prosperity to the larger municipal community. These efforts are reflected in the names of streets and businesses that continue to serve Watsonville today.

As Watsonville moves into the 21st century and the myriad challenges that face it, much can be learned from similar struggles in its past. Population booms, economic busts and the range of happenings in-between all have shaped the current City. Looking back at how these changes took place, what was successful and what was not, all will help the City move forward with a strong sense of where it has been. This knowledge is the key to managing the development of a modern community with a rich history and allowing informed decisions regarding the path of future growth and development.

Chapter 11

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