

Post office's many homes

There's been one in Watsonville since 1854

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In 1854, just two years after the founding of Watsonville, a post office was opened on Main Street, then called Pajaro Street.

Historians have cited two different locations — one at Main Street and East Lake Avenue, now the location of the Jefsen Building, and the other on the 200 block across from the present City Hall.

Llewellyn Thrift was the postmaster. The local citizens were required to pick up their mail at the post office, and, when a newspaper was started in 1864, it published an Advertised Letter list reminding people to pick up their mail.

Service to the Pajaro Valley was not always the best, nor the fastest, as it came by stage coach since the railroad did not make an appearance until 1871. In 1870, the following appeared in the Register-Pajaronian:



Dedication of new post office on Union Street in 1937 came before construction had been completed.

Pajaro Valley Historical Association

Every four years, by some unaccountable decree of the circulation office of Washington, the mail route for this section becomes involved; gets into a snarl, and is so mixed that it is impossible to tell what mail facilities will be afforded, whether it be daily, semi-weekly or semi-occasionally. We understand the present stage line will run over the mountain road carrying passengers and Wells Fargo and Co.'s express, while the mail will come, dragging along behind time, via the Cape Horn or San Juan route.

In 1875, an announcement was made that the post office would be open several hours on Sunday to accommodate the large number of men who were harvesting, and, that same year, the location was changed to Slight's confectionery manufac-

tory, with Slight as postmaster — a very convenient arrangement! By 1882, the salary of the postmaster was \$1,700 a year.

The Peck building was erected in 1893 at Main and Peck streets and the post office was moved into new and elegant headquarters, which were adorned with beautiful marble, swinging oak doors, wainscoting, plate glass windows and cuspidors for the male customers' convenience. B.A. Osborn had been appointed postmaster the year before and was at this post in 1900 when the salary was up to \$2,200 a year.

John Carr was the first carrier for rural route delivery, which was to become free delivery in 1905. The first mail delivery to homes and businesses in Watsonville began Jan. 1, 1901, with carriers Harry Bridgewater and Clark Hockabout delivering

mail three times a day. The rate rose from 1 cent to 2 cents.

In 1903, the Porter Building was constructed at Main and Maple streets, and again, the post office was moved into new quarters. George Radcliff was the postmaster and the windows were open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. six days a week and from noon to 1 p.m. and 6:30 to 7 p.m. Sundays and holidays.

By 1913, the post office had moved again, this time to the first floor of the IOOF building.

In 1924, property was purchased near the corner of Union and Trafton streets and a temporary post office was constructed with money raised by local citizens.

The post office was temporary because the government leased the building for 10 years, paying enough rent to return the local

investment. At the end of the 10 years, the federal government was supposed to gain control over the building and a permanent office was to be built. But a new post office wasn't built until 1936, when additional property was purchased and the old building torn down.

While this was going on, business was conducted in the old Opera House on East Beach Street. The dedication of the new post office was in May 1937, and the doors swung open to the public in September. Harry Bridgewater was the postmaster.

Changes were made to accommodate the handicapped and to enlarge the lobby, but eventually, more room was needed and, just recently, the post office moved again — this time to its current location on south Main Street.