

approximate building dimensions:  
16 1/2 feet wide  
48 feet long  
26 1/4 feet high

no outside stairway in back

downstairs was eventually divided into 2 apartments, with an additional side entrance

extensive garden space

children of present tenants (Mexican-American)

Old Chinese house at 18 Brooklyn Street, Pajaro, Calif. Built between 1902 and 1908 (by J. H. Porter?), after Watsonville's Chinatown burned down and the refugees moved across the river. Used until mid-1930's as a Chinese language school, with apartments above and a single large classroom below.

asphalt shingles

green asphalt shingle roof

stairway to upstairs apartments?

concrete slab

1st story facade has been plastered; the rest of the house has wood siding. Painted pale turquoise over an earlier coat of pink (!)

REFERENCE

# Pajaro: a port of entry to minorities

By Micki Farley & Allen Grasso

The Pajaro Valley served as a "port of entry" for many minorities into Santa Cruz County. This is one of the items revealed in an archeological report recently completed for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"Pajaro has a special significance to the county," says local archeologist Rob Edwards. "Right now it is a first home for many Mexican-Americans. Before that it was an entry point for the Dust Bowl Okies, Slavs, Filipinos, Italians, Japanese, Chinese and others."

Edwards can illustrate his statement by taking a visitor for a walk in a Watsonville graveyard. The headstones he points out, are arranged by nationality and period of time.

The field study for the Corps of Engineers prepared by Rob Edwards and Micki Farley goes into more detail on Pajaro and its minorities.

The first minority in the Valley was a group of early Spanish explorers; the Indians were a majority then. In 1769, the Spanish probably camped just east of Watsonville. One of them recorded in his journal: "We halted on the bank of the river (Pajaro). . . near a pleasant plain, full of cottonwoods, alders, tall oaks, live oaks and other species not known to us."

Later the explorers stopped near a lagoon (either College or Pinto Lake) which they described as being surrounded by good pasture. They also wrote of great forests with high trees of a red color.

The local residents of the Valley were a hearty race of people whose ancestors had probably entered California about 20,000 years before. These Indians lived a stable hunting and gathering existence until about the time of Classical Greece, when their population began to expand. They developed complex social patterns as they discovered more efficient ways to exploit and store food.

When the Spanish explorers arrived, they found a village of 500 people a short distance south of the Pajaro River near what is now Watsonville. Writing in 1769, they

# Pajaro Valley: port of entry

Continued from page 1

tell us that the "heathen. . . were making their spherical shaped houses of poles and tule."

The beginning of the 19th Century saw large chunks of land dominated by single Spanish-Mexican families. At that time, the land was devoted to the raising of cattle for hides and tallow, and there was very little agriculture in the Valley.

These wealthy families trusted vaqueros to run their spreads. The vaqueros, in turn, assigned most of the ranch and domestic chores over to "free" Indians, who were paid almost nothing beyond their food and some coarse clothing.

There were a number of great ranchos around Monterey Bay. Rancho Salsipuedes in the Pajaro Valley totaled 31,200 acres.

A typical rancho consisted of a main house and quarters for the vaqueros. Separate huts were set aside for married and unmarried Indians.

Two of these ranches flourishing in the rich Pajaro Valley were owned by members of the numerous Castro family. The ample Indian labor plus the demand for hides caused the wealth of the Castros to increase.

Agriculture was introduced into the Valley in 1851, when J. Bryant Hill rented 2000 acres of Rancho Salsipuedes to grow potatoes and grain. This was during the years of the gold rush when men dreamed of instant wealth. But few dreamed of the agricultural gold mine that lay in the rich soil of the Pajaro Valley.

In 1871, one Pajaro farm achieved a world record for yield of wheat per acre, and the rush into farming the mid-county was on.

The land changed dramatically as lakes and swamps were drained to make room for agriculture. And as the Indian population dwindled, farm labor was provided by immigrants and a large Negro population.

The Valley changed again in 1871 with the coming of the railroad, and its narrow gauge connection to Santa Cruz. Now mid-county growers could concentrate on huge, single crops that could be shipped all over the country.

More labor was needed, and it was Eastern Europe that provided the next wave of immigrants: Yugoslavians. The new minority entered the Valley as menial laborers, and soon worked their way up to land owners. Today they own at least one-third of the orchard land in and around Watsonville.

Portuguese immigrants arrived in 1876, to join the whaling industry, but they too wound up in the Valley. They eventually became land owners and dairymen, and their women achieved reputations as skilled midwives.

The Chinese had been in the Valley since gold rush and railroad building days. The South Pacific Coast Railway employed 1,600 Chinese to build tunnels through the Santa Cruz Mountains in the late 1870s.

The Chinese stayed on in the Valley and were clever enough to work at jobs that wouldn't bring them in competition with whites. This helped to avoid serious confrontations over available work. It was the Chinese plan to save their money and return home wealthy by Chinese standards. Despite their low standard of living, the Chinese were still able to send money to their families in their home country.

Pajaro's Chinatown was established along Dupont Street (now Brooklyn Street), and by 1908 was flourishing with stores, dwellings, a restaurant, a school, gambling houses, barber shops, a herbalist and a volunteer fire department. Transient Chinese would at times swell the normal Chinatown population from 1,500 to twice that size.

The Chinese community served mainly other Chinese and did not have much to do with whites. Trouble in Chinatown was handled by their own police force.

It was the Porter family who built and owned Chinatown, and their old, large house still stands in Pajaro.

As the Chinese and other immigrant groups worked their way up in the community, other menial laborers would be needed, and it was the Japanese who next answered the call to Pajaro. By 1910 there were 689 in the Valley.

It did not take the Japanese long to contribute to the economic success of Pajaro, and, in turn, become successful themselves. When the Japanese moved up, that again created a need for more laborers.

Arriving directly from the sugar fields of Hawaii to fill the gap were the Filipinos.

By now, immigrants to the Valley had clearly formed a pattern. As each minority worked its way up, a new minority had to be brought in to do the low labor. This made for a rich multi-racial multi-cultured society--and an explosive one!

Many of the Filipinos were young and unmarried. They attended dances and stimulated the fear of whites.

In 1930, anti-Filipino feeling was so rampant that the Northern Monterey County Chamber of Commerce felt prompted to make a public statement regarding the rights of whites over Filipinos to inhabit the county. This touched off a race riot that received international notoriety.

It was also during the tragic 1930s that entire families migrated from the Dust Bowl to Pajaro. Each family dreamed of finding work and buying a small farm. Instead, they found all the jobs taken by Filipinos, Mexicans and Japanese.

The Oklahomans became desperate with no work and no place to live. Camps had to be established along the Pajaro River. The Wall Street Auto Court was one of the many created during this era.

Trouble broke out again as the large number of out-of-work whites resorted to violence in order to force the aliens to leave.

The Japanese meanwhile had stayed to themselves, worked hard, and had built up an enormously successful strawberry industry. That set the stage for one of the saddest chapters in the history of the Pajaro Valley.

In February of 1942, Executive Order 9066 brought about the removal of Japanese from military areas. In California, that meant everything west of Highway 99. Lands were impounded, strawberry production dropped, and local committees were formed to divide up the confiscated property.

It would be the 1950s before the Japanese could be coaxed back to contribute their intelligence and enthusiasm to the Pajaro Valley economy. Today the flower growing and strawberry industries are once again dominated by the Japanese.

Which brings us to the Pajaro Valley today. Some things have changed, but one thing hasn't changed and maybe never will. Pajaro still attracts minorities--and they are still struggling to improve themselves.