

Cooperative local effort characterizes YWCA history

By BETTY LEWIS
CORRESPONDENT

THE Young Women's Christian Association of the Monterey Bay District was organized in 1929, at a meeting at the Casa Del Rey Hotel in Santa Cruz on May 17.

The district was to comprise Watsonville and Santa Cruz, plus other communities that were a part of those two high school districts.

Any woman or girl over the age of 12 was eligible to join; any woman over the age of 18 was eligible to be on the council that was a part of the national organization.

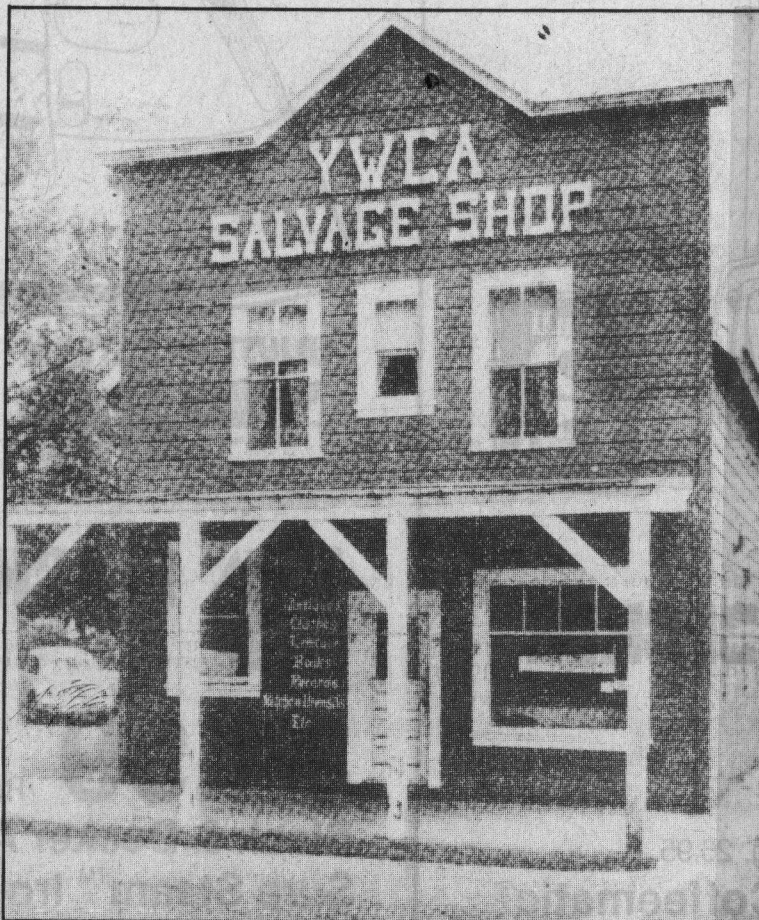
The first slate of officers elected was Mrs. R.S. Norris, of Santa Cruz; Mrs. H.V. Harvey, of Watsonville; Mrs. S.B. Hunt, of Scotts Valley; and Mrs. H.A. Hyde, of Watsonville.

It was decided to have the district office in Watsonville. A room at the First Christian Church was secured and Miss Helen Scott was hired as part-time district secretary.

The monthly meetings of the Monterey Bay Council would alternate between Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

The first of the association's annual dinners was held in 1930 at the Hotel Resetar in Watsonville with 99 people in attendance. The club secretary noted that "the whole affair was a great success and not a minute dragged."

The operating budget for 1930 was \$3,331.



PV Historical Association collection

The salvage shop raised money for the agency.

and protected place to live."

To help defray the cost of the new building, the old Roza grocery store on Union Street near Maple Street was rented and a salvage shop was set up. A group women spent long hours to make the project a success. On the list of volunteers were such local names as Jennie Menasco, Chris Cusak, Lois Wood, Florence Wyckoff, Stella McGowan and Helen Rodgers.

The YWCA Salvage Shop was

torn down in 1969 to make way for a city parking lot adjacent to the library.

In October 1977, the YWCA purchased the home of Bob and Shirley Manfre at 340 E. Beach St.

The Oct. 17, 1989 earthquake caused extensive damage to the property and the house was red-tagged.

Betty Lewis is a local history writer.

The next year, the annual dinner was held at Buckhart's candy store, 329 Main St., where dinner in the upstairs banquet room cost 75 cents a plate. A short program was given by the Girl Reserve groups from both towns — the Girl Reserves was one of the programs sponsored by the YWCA.

In 1933, Mrs. Jane Ball became the new district secretary and, in 1934, she reported that there were six Junior Reserve groups with a total membership of 102, two Girl Reserve groups with a membership of 93 and two Blue Triangle groups with a membership of 55. Eighteen advisers served for these 10 girls' organizations.

A summer camp had been instituted in the Santa Cruz Mountains at Camp Hatfield near Ben Lomond.

In 1935, the district secretary's office was moved from the church to the upstairs room of the Watsonville Woman's Club at 12 Brennan St. A number of years later, Watsonville and Santa Cruz split the office because there were enough members and programs to merit each having its own YWCA organization.

The year 1952 saw the local YWCA purchase its first home of its own — a four-bedroom house on the corner of Maple and Marchant streets. Here they would have room to broaden their community programs and to rent out the upstairs bedrooms to young working girls "in need of a homelike

Grand old residence a home to many

IT'S STILL A beautiful building — the Watsonville YWCA — despite severe damage by the Oct. 17 earthquake. The home is uninhabitable and has been red-tagged by building inspectors.

The Tudor-style structure was designed by architect Frederic Bigland and built in 1930. The parcel, a little more than one acre, was carved from an orchard that used to be part of a large farm owned by G.M. Bockius, who settled in Watsonville in 1852. Bockius built the home next door to the YWCA in 1870.

The home was built because the federal government was planning to build the present post office at 322 Union St. in Watsonville. That meant H.S. Fletcher and his wife, Bell Bockius Fletcher, whose lived on the site, had to move from the home where they'd raised their family. An unmarried son and daughter lived with them at the time.

Mr. Fletcher was the then-

retired president of the Bank of Watsonville, which was later absorbed by the Bank of Italy, which became Bank of America.

Mr. Fletcher died before the home was finished. His widow lived in the home until her marriage in 1954 to John Hirst. In 1962, she sold the house to Bob and Shirley Manfre. Fifteen years later, the Manfres sold the home to the YWCA.

Changes to the original structure by the YWCA included enclosure of the stairwell to provide a fire wall, and conversion of the garage into a child-care room.

After the YWCA bought the home, the upstairs rooms were home to many single women through the years. An office and lounge was also on the second floor.

YWCA officials are now working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to determine the future of the building, which could include demolition and rebuilding.



Diane Varni

The Watsonville YWCA bought this home on East Beach Street in 1977.