

# Animal carcasses and other strangeness in the streets of Watsonville

Downtown drownings,  
maple tree vandals,  
horses on sidewalks

By BETTY LEWIS

*"It is now proposed to issue a winter chart of Main street for the use of pedestrians and teamsters. This chart will show all the dangerous spots, together with the depth of water therein after a rainstorm. This chart is intended for the information of travelers so that they may not be drowned on Main Street."*  
The Pajaronian, Nov. 22, 1888.

Ah yes, now we complain of pot holes and rough streets but we have

## That was Watsonville

it easy compared to those "good old days" when mud, water or swirling dust was the order of the day! In 1890 the local newspaper was suggesting that flat-bottomed boats or mud scows should be used for travel on Third (Beach) street during January. At this same time Maple Avenue and Trafton Street were declared public highways by the Board of Trustees under Ordinance 36.

The following appeared in the 1897 Pajaronian: *"The practice of dragging dead animals along the streets to the river cemetery should be stopped. More or less of the carcass is left along the trail and there is danger of infection therefrom even in cool weather. The proper way to remove dead animals is on a long low sled, and they should be buried where left. This is a matter which the trustees should give a bit of attention."*

It boggles the mind to even think of this problem and I'm sure the current city council would not like to grapple with it!

In 1899 the city trustees decided to shut off the street lights during the summer months due to a lack of funds, making it a little difficult, and scary, to walk abroad at night without light to guide you on your way!

Trees along the streets or in the plaza have always been a topic for discussion — people either wanted them planted or taken out. When



Betty Lewis collection

In 1913 they finally got around to legally renaming Main Street.

Maple Avenue opened to the public in 1869, it was said that 200 Maple trees were planted! In January of 1901 the following appeared in the Pajaronian:

*"Some of the shade trees on Lake Avenue have been cut down. Road-side trees make pleasant shade in summer months but by obstructing sunlight they prevent the proper drying out of roads during the wet season. A general removal of roadside trees would cause quite an improvement in some of Pajaro roads, and at the same time would prove a saving for the district road fund."* Lake Avenue was changed to Fourth Street in 1904.

Main street was originally called Pajaro street until 1869 when the Board of Aldermen changed it to Main street — but not legally! It wasn't until 1913 that this error was discovered when Granite Rock was preparing to repair the street and ran into this snag. This matter was soon straightened out and Main street became "legal"!

When Fred Atkinson was mayor in 1926, parking in the center of Main street was abolished and diagonal spaces were installed along the curbs. Many, many changes have occurred over the years regarding Watsonville streets; especially after the emergence of the "horseless carriage" in 1902 - the first in town.

Better streets were needed along with stop signs, pedestrian crossings, gas stations, motels, parking meters and on and on. Wooden plank sidewalks were replaced and bridges made bigger and stronger. And such occurrences as the following are interesting to read about but that's about it!

*"Keep your horses off the crosswalks — persons coming to town still adhere to the dangerous practice of hitching their teams at the street crossings, where pedestrians are in danger of being kicked by the horses. This practice is abominable and should cease. Several times during the past week, we have seen ladies who were compelled to take to the roads in order to cross the streets as horses were standing on the crossings."* — Pajaro Valley Times, February 9, 1867.