



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Dancers from the San Francisco Gung Fu Society perform the Lion Dance for the gallery opening.

Watsonville honors Chinese pioneers

By JAMIE MARKS

Sentinel Staff Writer

WATSONVILLE — A hundred years ago, the backbone of the agricultural economy of the Pajaro Valley was the Chinese laborer. So it seemed fitting that the opening of the new Pajaro Valley Gallery recognize that group.

Beginning with a traditional Chinese Lion Dance and ending with a feast of roast pig, a large crowd gathered Saturday at the Porter Building in downtown Watsonville to celebrate the gallery's opening.

On display were more than 150 photographs,

rare letters and personal documents chronicling the experience of the Chinese in the Monterey Bay from the 1850s to the present.

Watsonville's first Chinatown was located near where the Porter Building now stands, at Main and Maple streets. It grew from small beginnings in 1865 to a much larger community and in 1888 the Chinese moved across the river into Pajaro. The new Chinatown was called Brooklyn.

The exhibit was prepared by the Santa Cruz City Museum in conjunction with Sandy Lydon, author of "Chinese Gold," an account of the Chinese in Watsonville, Monterey, Salinas and Santa Cruz.

The exhibit shows the reasons behind the Chinese emigration from China, the immigrant's involvement in fishing, agriculture, business and the building of the railroad, the history of the anti-Chinese movement and the demise of the region's Chinatowns.

Funding for the traveling exhibit was provided by the California Council for the Humanities, Cabrillo College Foundation, the city of Santa Cruz, Cabrillo College, County Bank, the Ow family, Capitola Book Cafe/Pizza Co., the IBM Corp. matching gift program, the Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County and Porter Building Associates.