

William Richard Radcliff's lasting influence on the Pajaro Valley

On the eve of Rutherford B. Hayes election, in 1876, to the Presidency of the United States, a young man came to the Pajaro Valley who was going to make quite a name for himself - his name was William Richard Radcliff. Born in Toledo, Ohio in 1855, he and his family moved to Grass Valley, California, where Will was raised, received his schooling and learned the printing business.

He moved to Sacramento to work on the Sacramento Union, one of the most respected newspapers in the state. His next job was with the Crocker Company where he worked for five years. This company handled all the printing for the Central Pacific Railroad Company and Will was to become a first-rate printer as well as



**Betty
Lewis**

That was
Watsonville

an accomplished writer.

Coming to the Pajaro Valley in that year of 1876, Will purchased a half-interest in the Pajaronian from C.O. Cummings, editor and publisher of the newspaper. In 1879, Will married Lizzie Hopkins, daughter of James Hopkins, a local man and, in 1880, he bought out Cummings who retired from the paper and Radcliff became

the sole owner.

Radcliff and his wife had a daughter, Ruth, who was to become a teacher at Watsonville High School. Lizzie died at the young age of 27 in 1883 and Will later married Annabel Tuttle, daughter of Owen and Mary Tuttle. In 1891, Radcliff moved into his new home located on the corner of East Beach and Alexander streets. This large two-story house was fronted by a white, picket fence and the first floor of the home contained a parlor, dining room, library, pantry, kitchen, sewing room, porch and upstairs there were three bedrooms and a bathroom. (The house was torn in down in 1928 to make way for the building of the California Furniture Company structure in 1929).

Tragedy struck again in 1900 when Annabel died of a burst appendix. Radcliff had become the assistant cashier of the Bank of Watsonville in 1889 and, later, cashier. It was because of these duties and others that he sold his interest in the newspaper to James Piratsky and his brother, Berge Radcliff, in 1903. Will Radcliff also served on the city's first Board of Aldermen and as a school trustee.

In 1916 a heated debate was going on by the Watsonville school trustees on which architect would be hired for the new high school building - W.H. Weeks or Ralph Wyckoff. Both men were very capable but Weeks had many years of expertise in school designs so he was chosen. Then Wyckoff was hired to design the new

primary school on Rodriguez Street and property was purchased from the Charles Ford Company for \$3,280 plus several other lots that fronted on the street.



W.R. Radcliff

1923. An addition was made to the school in 1928 by W.H. Weeks. The

school is now the Radcliff Adult School.

Three children were born to Will and Annabel; Belle who married Floyd MacFarlane, Katherine who married Clarence Laws and Phillip who died at the age of two. Upon Radcliff's death Thomas MacQuiddy wrote: "Watsonville mourns the passing of one of God's true noblemen, W.R. Radcliff is no more with us and our loss is immeasurable. His devotion to our community's true interest and to that of our county and state amounted to a sacred patriotism. In devotion to American institutions and in intelligent and untiring service, Mr. Radcliff is comparable to the nation's greatest spirits. Now many communities are blessed with the presence of men of his caliber."