

# THAT WAS WATSONVILLE

## When Theodore Roosevelt and his party stopped in Watsonville



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**Betty Lewis**

**The Pajaronian, May 14, 1903**

— "After many unsuccessful attempts to have President Roosevelt's train stop at Watsonville depot word was received yesterday that the party would stop in this city for fifteen minutes. Circulars were gotten out and distributed about the streets forthwith and the news was received with delight. The fact that the president consented to stop here was largely due to the efforts of E. A. Hall, president of the Pajaro Valley Board of Trade, and to the good work of Warren R. Porter and George W. Sill, who brought the matter before the President's private secretary, Wm. Loeb, Jr., and to the attention of President's Benjamin Wheeler of the University of California.

"Notwithstanding the short time for preparation about 3,000 people assembled at the depot this morning to do honor to President Roosevelt, who has the love, confidence and respect of the American people as a whole, regardless of party affiliations. Of the throng that greeted the chief executive were hundreds of bright school children each of whom brought his or her floral greeting to the man grown great by his own efforts.

"A man who is broad mentally, morally and physically, and in whom the American people have implicit faith. As the train, drawn by two monster locomotives, one decked in the national colors and bearing a huge floral horseshoe on the pilot, came into the yard, the Watsonville City Band played an inspiring patriotic air. Flowers, by the handful, were thrown upon the platform of the rear car upon which President Roosevelt stood, and the kindly face of the President beamed with delight upon the happy school children from whose hands the floral tributes came.

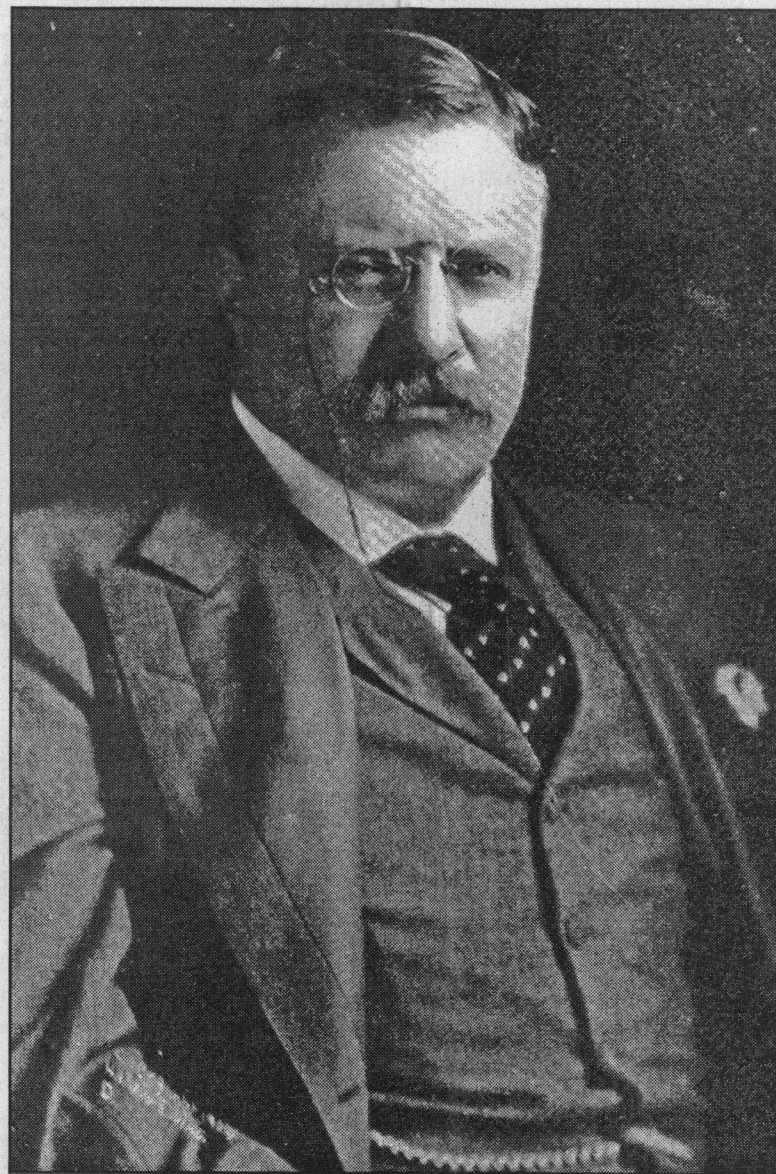
"The depot yard was crowded with people, nearby buildings were

lined with men and boys, and the camera fiends took snapshots at the President from numerous points of vantage. The reception given the Chief Magistrate of the nation was worthy of the people of Watsonville. A very creditable showing indeed for the short time given for preparation. W. A. Trafton, president of the City Council, and E. A. Hall, president of the Board of Trade, were at the depot and with the reception committee stood near the platform of the car from which the president spoke.

"The schoolchildren were drawn up in a line near the track and made an impressive showing with their pretty flags and rich bouquets. The little fellows got a good view of the president and were made glad. Perhaps not one person who saw President Roosevelt failed to be impressed with the greatness of the man. His face shows strength of character and determination of purpose, and in his hands the affairs of the government of this nation would seem safe.

"President Roosevelt and party had not only an opportunity to see the people of Pajaro Valley and hear their voices united in cheers. A sample of the products of the valley's rich soil was presented them that they might long remember their stop here. Two boxes of large luscious strawberries, stamped El Pajaro brand and grown by James Hopkins were handed upon the cars to the party. With the strawberries was furnished a large can of the richest cream. The Pajaro strawberry will make a good impression anywhere and it will prove a treat to the presidential party at this season of the year. The stop at Watsonville, though brief, was highly appreciated and President Roosevelt will lose nothing by speaking to the people of this valley.

"As the train pulled out, three cheers were offered for the greatest President of the twentieth century, and the hearty response of the audience seemed to endorse the sentiments of the one who offered it immediately following and while the president was still in hearing distance. The throng joined in singing that soul stirring air: 'My Country 'tis of Thee.' President



Courtesy of B. Lewis

**Teddy Roosevelt, a Republican, was president of the United States from 1901 to 1909. He was born in 1858 and died in 1919.**

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Roosevelt stood upon the rear platform with uncovered head as long

as he could hear the voices."

His brief but highly appreciat-

ed address of the chief executive was as follows:

"My fellow citizens, I have but a minute here, and I can only express to you my appreciation of your having come out to greet me. This is a great fruit center. California is a great fruit state — but above all a great state for Californians (applause) and more that that, my friends, the thing that has impressed me the most in this country, in going from the Atlantic to the Pacific, is the essential oneness of the people. The fact that Americans are all Americans from Maine to California — from the Golden Gate to Sandy Hook.

"That is the important point, and glad though I am to see all your products I want to congratulate you upon one, the children (applause). They are ahead in quality and ahead in quantity, and as I believe in your stock, I am glad it does not show any symptoms of dying out. I do not come here to teach I come here to learn.

"It has done me good to be in your state, to meet your people. Until last week I had never been in California — I had never been in California, and I go back a better American than I came, and I think I came out a fairly good one. These facts of truisms, that you accept the natural order of events, need to be impressed upon our people as a whole. We need to understand the commanding position already occupied and the infinitely more commanding position that will be occupied in the future by our nation on the Pacific. And this is the greatest of all the oceans and one which more and more during the century opening, must pass under American influence. And as unavoidably happens when a great opportunity comes, it means that a great burden of responsibility accompanies the opportunity.

"A nation cannot be great without paying the price of greatness, but only a craven nation will avoid paying that price. I believe in our people, and therefore I believe that they will dare to be great. Therefore, I believe that they will nail the chance this century brings, as one, which it should rejoice a mighty and masterful people to have. And we can face the future with the sure hope of success and confi-

dence of success if only we face it in the spirit of which our fathers faced the problems of the past. Goodbye and good luck to you."

**The Pajaronian, May 14, 1903** — "The people of this community are nothing if not patriotic, and the hastily passed word that the President's ear would stop at Watsonville this morning drew an immense crowd of people to the depot grounds. Perhaps a few went out of idleness, it may be that some attended through curiosity, but the heart of the multitude was drawn there because it is an American heart. The people went to hail their chief, the uncrowned head of the nation, and they saw a man. A man of the people, a man of sympathy, one who joyed in their gladness and made them feel that he could share in their grief if they had any. He is the typical American — at home in the drawing room, on the battlefield, in the council chamber or on the plains.

"There is no place so high but he might fill it, no hut so humble but he might abide in it and he carries this appearance of ready adaptability in circumstances in his every move. Programs with demonstrative features have been prepared for the reception of former presidents, but they rarely proved satisfactory some unlooked for incident always occurred to mar the pleasure of the meeting, but in this instance the very irregularity of the proceeding constituted its charm. A citizen from the north would say to one of the Southland: 'Let's go see Teddy.' And they went and were glad above all. Mr. Roosevelt himself, president of the great United States though he is, seemed to be glad they were there, and as the train left Watsonville the people with earnest hearts and loud huzzas, echoed the parting words of the people's president. 'Goodbye, and good luck.'"

The History Channel on TV has produced a wonderful two-part series on Theodore Roosevelt with much of it based on the two books authored by Edmund Morris.

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