

328 Union Street —

a long and varied history

By BETTY LEWIS

328 Union Street.

Prior to 1869 the Watsonville City Plaza was a wide-open field bounded by Main and Third (Beach) streets. Between the Pajaro River and East Beach Street were farm lands and a few scattered wooden structures, with Union Street just a dirt road running north and south. The Scott Boarding House, which stood on the site now occupied by Valley National Bank, was built in 1854 and, reputedly, was the first wooden frame building to be erected in Watsonville.

Owned by Richard and Mary Scott, the boarding house also served as a meeting hall, school and dance hall, and in 1860 was the scene of the organization of the Presbyterian Church, on Dec. 2, 1860, with eleven charter members being present. In 1863, Scott's Hall was used for another purpose:

"UNION LEAGUE MEETING — All true friends of the Union are requested to meet at Scott's Hall, in Watsonville, on Wednesday evening, May 6th, 1863, at 7 o'clock P.M. for the purpose of organizing a Union League on the plan adopted by the Union Leagues of San Francisco and Sacramento. James Brennan, Thomas Snodgrass, Alfred Devoe, R.F. Peckham, Ford & Sanborn, and M. Kearney and many others."

—Pajaro Times,
May 2, 1863

Scott's Hall was crowded on that Wednesday evening when Civil War was raging in the South — the California State Senate had passed a Resolution on May 17, 1861, to support the Union. At this meeting the Pledge, adopted by the Union League of New York, was read and then adopted by the local group. All persons signing the Pledge became members of the League. There were 18 Articles in this Pledge:

"The primary object of this league is, and shall be, to bind together all loyal men of all trades and professions in a common union to maintain the power, glory and integrity of the Nation."

—Article IV

At the second meeting of the Union League of the Pajaro Valley, on May 13, 1863, in Scott's Hall, the following officers were elected: Captain James Brennan, president; A. Devoe, vice president; A.P. Knowles, secretary; and Otto Stoesser, treasurer.

The group was backed by the philosophy of the Pajaro Times, whose first issue was published on Saturday, April 25, 1863, and stated in its "Salutatory": "The Pajaro Times will always be an earnest advocate for American nationality — for the Union, and nothing but the Union. We look upon the preservation of the American Union as it has grown from the Government of our fathers as essential to the maintenance of the principles of human liberty. Its defense and support have not been entrusted to this or that, political party alone, but to the people at large, irrespective of party. To maintain the Union in all its integrity and might, we must extend a cordial support to the Constitutional government in all its earnest and legitimate efforts to enforce the laws and authority of the Constitution ..."

Mary Scott, the genial proprietress of the boarding house, was well known for her delicious home-cooked meals, which were set before her male boarders every evening. Such illustrious boarders as the following stretched their weary legs under the heavily laden dinner table: John Howard Watson (the town bears his name); Darrell Gregory (a lawyer and business partner of Watson's); Senator B.S. Whitting; the Honorable Jesse D. Carr; Judge Lucius Holbrook, whose courtroom was just north of the Scott house; and Charles Ford.

In 1868 several local businessmen petitioned the Board of Trustees to open Union Street from the Pajaro River to East Beach Street. A Commission was appointed to look into the matter, including how much such a move would affect property owners along the contemplated thoroughfare. One such party, Mr. Syme, declared he would sustain damages of \$200 for destruction of his orchard and the removal of a house. The town agreed to pay him this amount for a strip of land 96 by

28 feet. Richard Scott was reimbursed \$300 for vacating a portion of his property.

On Nov. 1, 1869, City Ordinance No. 15 — the opening of Union Street — went into effect, and work began on widening the dirt road into a public thoroughfare. This was to be very beneficial to the general public and, also, to the fire engine house which was then located next to Scott's Hall. In 1875 it moved into a new building at 268 Main Street.

The Scotts had two daughters — Emma, who married John W. Linscott, an early-day educator, and Kate, who married local man Manuel Arano. Mr. Scott died in 1877 at the age of 52, and in 1885 William Burland became the proprietor of Scott's Boarding House:

"Mr. Burland desires to inform the Public and Travelers that he has opened the Scott Boarding House, on Union Street, opposite the Plaza, where can be had — First Class Board, Lodging, Fine Sleeping Rooms — Meals — 25c"

—The Pajaronian,
July 16, 1885

Mr. Burland continued operating the boarding house until 1891, when Owen Tuttle purchased the property and tore down the historic old building; the lumber was used in the building of a stable for Mr. Tuttle.

Alex Chalmers was hired to draw plans for a house for the Tuttle family and the result was a handsome three-story structure with full basement. The interior of the house boasted many fine woods, lovely tile work and spacious rooms. In the parlor was a magnificent fireplace made of Spanish cedar and ceramic tile.

Mr. Tuttle, who had arrived in the Pajaro Valley in 1873, died in 1899, and his wife, Mary, died in 1930. It was in 1935 that the Tuttle house was torn down to make way for a modern building to house the Charles Williams grocery store, which in 1955 became Lambert's Market. The present Valley National Bank opened in 1967.



The Plaza (about 1889): Last building on right is present site of post office.

When the Tuttle house was being erected, Frank Dixie Jr. and Ray Hockabout, local youths, pooled their pennies and

purchased a 25-cent rubber ball from Tom Cooper's Emporium, which was located where Monterey Savings and Loan is now. The boys were allowed to play around the new house, as their fathers were the plaster contractors, and one day when playing catch the ball flew into the partly constructed house and could not be found, even though some laths and plaster were moved in the search. Forty-four years later Ray, then a local plumber, found his long-lost ball.

The removal of the house elicited the following comment from the local paper in 1935:

"The passing of the three-story Tuttle home marks the passing of an era in Watsonville when the block was one of the choice residential sections of the city. The equally venerable Fletcher home to the south is now on government property and it is expected it will be razed in the near future to make way for a new post office."

A temporary post office was built in 1924 and the present one in 1937.

328 Union Street, as you can see, has had a long and varied history, and the passing of time has certainly changed the complexion of that piece of property in the heart of town. Both Scott's Boarding House and the Tuttle house bring to mind a different way of life in a much smaller town; we remember the men and women who were instrumental in shaping the destiny of the town of Watsonville.

"Ball at Scott's Hall — The Ball given at the above place on Thanksgiving night was a pleasant affair, and as many were present as could comfortably find dancing room. The musicians were Messrs. Majo, Holbrook, the Benham brothers and Jennings, and they performed their parts to the satisfaction of all. The supper, which the dancers sat down to about twelve, reflected great credit on Mr. Scott's skill, and all did ample justice to the good things of every variety which covered the festive board. The dance broke up at three in the morning."

—The Pajaronian,
Nov. 25, 1869