

Methodist roots traced to '52

By BETTY LEWIS

Way back in 1852, the local Methodist Church was organized by the Rev. Elihu Anthony of Santa Cruz and H.G. Blaisdell, who was to become the governor of Nevada, was appointed its first-class teacher.

The first church building was constructed in 1853 on Main (Pajaro) street and it was a very primitive affair. According to historical records, there were two

That was Watsonville churches — north and south as the slavery issue divid-

ed many of the Protestant churches.

The minister of the Southern faction preached on alternate Sundays, both mornings and evenings and in the afternoon he would lead a service for Methodist families in the Green Valley schoolhouse. On the other Sundays he would preach in Monterey County.

In 1862, the church of the south was purchased by the northern church, the southern church having withdrawn from the field. The northern church was torn down as the congregation took over the other church, which was moved to the corner of E. Fourth (Lake) and Rodriquez, now the site of Longs drug store.

"We understand that the Methodists of this place soon contemplate the erection of the new church. More commodious and in all respects much better than their present edifice. We are pleased to learn of their prosperity." — The Pajaronian, 1871.

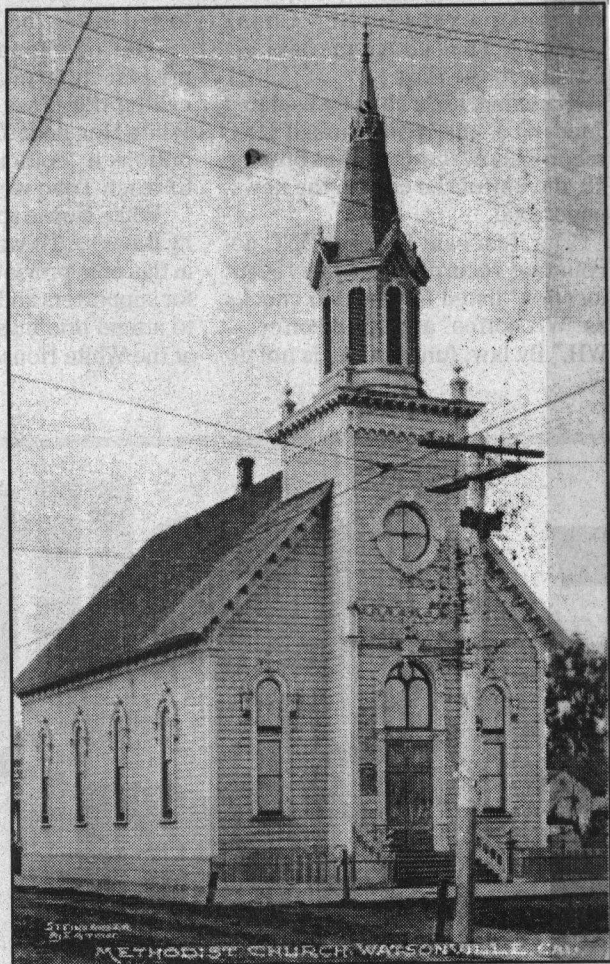
Land had been purchased at the northwest corner of Rodriquez and West Beach, now the site of Grand Auto. This new church building was dedicated on Jan. 11, 1874, and the minister was the Rev. J.E. Wickes, who received a salary of \$1,000 a year.

By 1949 larger facilities were needed and property was purchased on Stanford Street and the old building was sold in 1951 for \$15,500 to the Trinity Lutheran Church. The 1872 structure was torn down in 1967 and the steeple stored at Pajaro Dunes.

"Services are being held nightly in the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. Strong efforts are being made to secure a religious awakening in the town." — The Pajaronian, January 16, 1879.

Ground was broken for the present church on Palm Sunday, 1952, with Fred Flodburg serving as chairman of the Church Fund Drive for the first unit to be built, designed by John Easterly. An impressive dedication of the new building was held in April of 1954, climaxing two years of building. The congregation met in the educational unit until the sanctuary was built.

While Martinelli's Cider is the oldest business in town, the Methodist Church is the oldest church in Watsonville. Their congregation has contributed largely to the Pajaro Valley in many, many ways over the



Betty Lewis collection

Located at Rodriquez and West Beach streets, the Methodists' new church building was dedicated in January 1874.

years since 1852 and, we are sure, will continue to do so.

"There was a large audience at the Methodist Church last Friday night to witness the elocution contest for the Demorest silver medal. The contestants were Thomas Kerns, Maude Martin, Ella Peckham, Anna Peckham, May Hockabout, Clark Hockabout, Alex Beck and May Fowler. Dr. E. McCabe, Julius Lee and Mrs. D.W. Shepard were the judges, and they awarded the medal to Miss Maude Martin. The recitation of Thomas Kerns received much compliment and was given splendid voice and fine feeling. He is a promising elocutionist." — The Pajaronian, 1894.