

Local architect's designs still stand

Architecture
 "This gentleman (Alexander Chalmers), the proprietor of the mills at Pajaro station, has been a resident of this locality for 36 years, and has been identified with its industrial and manufacturing affairs during the extended period which has since elapsed. Mr. Chalmers has met with his full share of adverse fortune; and his present honorable and respectable position in business and in social life has been attained after many years of effort, by industry, perseverance and energy." — Pacific Coast Commercial Record, 1890.

Chalmers was a very proficient architect and designed local buildings — such as the Bockius house on East Beach Street; Stephen Martinelli house (same street); the original wooden bandstand in the city plaza; Pajaro Valley Bank; the early Presbyterian Church; the first primary school, Ford's department store; the three-story Tuttle house on Union; the Clough house on San Juan Road plus several other structures.

He was born in Vermont in 1835, and later moved to Massachusetts, where he learned the carpentry trade. After saving enough money, Chalmers finally left for California in 1853 and came to Watsonville via the Isthmus route.

Chalmers engaged in the cattle business with his brother, and they prospered until the big drought of 1865, when their stock perished from starvation and thirst. After



That Was
Watsonville

Betty Lewis

several other endeavors, he started a flouring mill and then the planing mill.

Chalmers married Jane Searle in 1857. They had a son, W.A. Chalmers; and four daughters, Mrs. Geo. Morehead, Mrs. C. Lauritzen, Mrs. F.G. Hollingbery and Mrs. J.J. Morey. The family home was located on upper Main Street and was designed and constructed by Chalmers. He was active in military affairs and held a commission of lieutenant in the California State Militia. He also served as the first vice president of the Pajaro Valley Bank.

"The death of A.B. Chalmers at his home in this city this morning was an almost unexpected blow to the community of which he was an honorable member. Mr. Chalmers had been in fairly good health during the past two years, with the exception of occasional attacks of heart trouble and retired last night without any particular feeling of illness. About 4 o'clock this morning, his wife was awakened and found him suffering from one of



The Godfrey Bockius House, located at 332 E. Beach St. in Watsonville, was built in 1870 by architect Alex Chalmers.

Courtesy of Betty Lewis

the heart attacks. Aid was summoned and everything possible done to offer him relief but about 5 o'clock he passed away at the age of 69 years." — Evening Pajaronian, June 27, 1903.

Chalmers was a member and past master of Pajaro Lodge, No.

110, F and A.M., a charter member of Temple Chapter, No. 41, R.A.M., and a member of Watsonville Commandry No. 22, K.T. The funeral service was held at the Masonic Hall and he is buried in the Pioneer Cemetery. His wife died in 1905. Quite a few of the structures he

designed are still standing in Watsonville as a tribute to his ability as an architect.

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Betty Lewis, a local historian and Watsonville resident, is a regular columnist for the Register-Pajaronian.