

# Watsonville library sets out to document town's history through old photographs

## 50 of the historic images will be on display during September

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WATSONVILLE — Librarian Carol Heitzig pored over an old photograph of an Apple Festival Parade. Within its sepia tones, a horse-drawn wagon hauled about 20 young women wearing long white shirt-waist dresses. Above them, draped across Main Street, stars and stripes of patriotic bunting were draped in folds and fans.

The parade must have occurred in the first decades of the century, when about 14,000 acres of the Pajaro Valley were covered by apple orchards. But there was no date on the back, no names of the women.

The Watsonville Public Library has 50 or so old photographs like the one of the Apple Festival. In one, turn-of-the-century butchers stand before slaughtered and splayed pigs. In another, dated 1907, a small boat plies a wide, deep, tree-lined Pajaro River. But few are dated and none is identified. To create a photographic archive useful for future generations of historians and other researchers, Heitzig said, the photos must have some information.

In March, the library won a \$10,000 grant to plant the seeds of a local photographic archive. On Aug. 1, organizers of the Shades of

Watsonville project hope local residents will bring trunks and shoeboxes and albums of old photographs to be copied and saved for posterity.

"We are hoping to find pictures of people in the fields and be able to see what kinds of clothes they wore, what kind of farm implements they used," said Heitzig, who wrote the grant. "We're also interested in the cultural things. When was the first TV set in Watsonville? When did the first car arrive? ... Everyday, simple events are history."

Watsonville is among 11 libraries statewide that have

been awarded a grant to preserve local history through photographs. The money was appropriated in the recent Library Services and Technology Act and is administered in California by the State Librarian.

The State Library already has 100,000 historical negatives on file. The Shades project started in 1991 with the nationally acclaimed Shades of Los Angeles, and produced 10,000 photographs documenting different neighborhoods over a period of six years. The project's success earned federal funding and support from the California Sesquicentennial Commission.

Watsonville's project will start with 250 photographs, but librarians hope to win more grants in the future to expand the local archive,

Heitzig said.

"We want every ethnic group to be represented, and every time frame," she said.

Photographs will be taken Aug. 1 by a professional photographer from the State Library. Heitzig said people must make an appointment, at which photographs will be pre-selected, by calling 728-6040. Someone who knows the details of the photos should attend the appointment to give dates, names and addresses of the events pictured.

Santa Cruz photographer Aaron Qualls has been hired to help operate two photographic copying machines, which do not harm originals or cause them to fade, Heitzig said.

All photos will be returned to their owners immediately.

Twenty volunteers are still needed to handle the appointments, and will receive training at the library from 1-5 p.m. July 31.

Copies of the 250 local photographs will be archived in Watsonville, but the negatives will be stored in Sacramento. An index will be made available to the public and researchers, but not for commercial use.

"The images may appear in scholarly works, but they won't appear on a Coke can," Heitzig said.

Of the photographs copied on Aug. 1, 50 will be displayed at the library during September.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Carol Heitzig poses with the kind of photographs she hopes area residents will bring to the Watsonville library Aug. 1. The photos will be documented to help chronicle the town's history.