

# A household name locally for 100 years

In 1836, a boy was born in Prussia who would later make quite a name for himself in the Pajaro Valley.

David Alexander, at the age of 16, left his native country with his parents and journeyed to America, where the family settled in New York. David finished his schooling and came to California in 1859 and traveled to the mining areas selling merchandise.

He arrived in the Pajaro Valley in 1870 and the Pajaronian on Sept. 29 wrote the following: "Messrs. D. and Wm. Alexander, who have lately opened business in the Post Office block, seem to be doing a good business owing to their cheap prices and gentlemanly dealing — go and see their goods and you cannot help but purchase."

In January of 1871, David Alexander made a trip to Grass Valley to wed Fritzie Levy and bring her back to their home in the Pajaro Valley. William Alexander left the business in April of 1873 and started a new establishment next door to the Central Hotel while David carried on alone.

*"In passing the Snodgrass block the other day we happened to look into D. Alexander's store. For the last two weeks he has been in constant receipt of goods, until now his store and warehouse is full to overflowing, from floor to ceiling. You can see nothing but stocks of goods, leaving barely enough passage way for the hundreds of customers crowding into his establishment."* - The Pajaronian, 1878.

The Snodgrass block was located in the 300 block on Main Street on the west side. As can be seen by the accompanying advertisement, Alexander's not only carried clothing for men and boys, but also groceries and provisions at the time.

In 1888, A.B. Chalmers was hired to draw plans for a two-story resi-



**Betty  
Lewis**

dence to house the growing family. This new home was located at 123 W. Third (Beach) Street. The house contained 11 rooms exclusive of closets, pantries and bathroom.

The store was also expanding and had changed locations several times until, in 1897, Mr. Alexander decided to build his own establishment. He hired architect William Weeks to design a one-story building to be erected at 349-351 Main Street across from the city plaza.

A year later two of David's sons, Sol and Henry, were taken into partnership and the name was changed to D. Alexander's and Sons. A third son, Jewel, went on to become a successful lawyer in San Francisco where Dave Alexander moved to in 1910. He became a buyer for the firm, a role he enjoyed until his death in 1923.

Watsonville has never had a synagogue; the closest was in Santa Cruz, the Temple Beth-El, now located at 3055 Porter Gulch Road. The Jewish cemetery, Home Of Peace, is located on Meder Street. Many of the local Jewish families held gatherings in their own homes when a member of the family died and quite a few are buried up in Colma at the cemetery there.

The Alexander store was to expand and change ownership over the ensuing years. Many local people remember Sol Alexander greeting people at the door and making them feel right at home while looking for the right outfit to wear for

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that special occasion.

For a while there was a ladies department which was eventually taken over by Leask's of Santa Cruz for a brief period. In 1968, the store was sold to David Hyman and it became known as Senor David's.

Alexander's was a household name in Watsonville for nearly 100 years. The building was torn down after the 1989 earthquake.

*"David Alexander's life is a*

*shining example of what a boy — a foreigner — can become in this grand republic of ours and when determination to get ahead is backed up by honesty, push and enterprise. Dave Alexander was an honest, square man; a good citizen, a devoted father, and one who proved his faith in the future of Watsonville." — The Evening Pajaronian upon Alexander's death in 1923.*