



Courtesy of Betty Lewis

The Watsonville Pippin baseball team is shown in a photo from 1909. Thomas Albright was the manager of the team.

Albright led the Pippins to baseball glory

Thomas Albright was born in Watsonville in 1876, the son of Joseph and Jane Albright and brother of William, May (Mrs. Frank Tuttle), Josephine (Mrs. George Leland), Myrtle (Mrs. Edward J. Kelly) and Etta. After attending local schools, Tom worked on his father's farm for a while and then entered the blacksmithing business on Main Street.

Young Albright married Eva Aston in August of 1900.

"Two well known young people of this city, were quietly married Sunday and are now enjoying their honeymoon." — The Pajaronian, August 26, 1900.

In 1907, Albright ventured into the political arena running for the office of police chief. He won the election and was re-elected two years later by a very large majority.

Albright spent many of his leisure hours playing baseball and worked very hard toward establishing a baseball team in Watsonville.



That Was
Watsonville

Betty Lewis

"Chief Albright is now wearing the smile that won't wear off, for now over \$700 has been subscribed to the local baseball fund, and the prospects of raising \$1,000 are as bright as the prospects for more rain." — The Pajaronian, 1909.

Ball grounds were secured at the corner of Ford and Walker streets and grandstands were built on the four acres, plus fencing was installed around the ballpark. The players listed on the newly formed team were: Ray Bartlett, Frank Sears, Lynn Marsh, Charles Friene, Joe Giannini, Chris Gorman, Vic Salsberg, Pancho Dias, Joe Ne-

vis and Sid Smith. The Three "C" Baseball League was formed that year, and Albright became manager of the local team — the Pippins. Under his leadership, the team won the pennant in 1909 and 1910.

In the 1909 win, the pitcher, Friene, ended the season with a 340 batting average and batted in 33 runs — not too shabby!

Albright was considered a sure bet in the 1911 election for police chief but the combination of the saloon and church elements made for a "peculiar" election, noted the local newspaper, and Sylvester Whitsitt ousted him for the job of police chief. Albright supported Sunday afternoon baseball, which went against the grain of churchgoers as well as the saloon trade — bad for business.

Albright became an automobile salesman, being associated with Elmore Lee, son of Judge Lee, who owned the Century Garage. He later sold his interest in the company to H.W.

Vaughan and went into business with John Covell, brother-in-law of architect William Weeks, who had the Overland agency. In May of 1916, Albright and another automobile dealer from Santa Cruz, F.A. Shultz, were out on a demonstration ride with Chris Thompson of San Juan Road. After dropping Thompson off at his home, the two men drove toward the Vega railroad crossing where the Del Monte Express struck their car and the men were hurled out of the car and killed.

Upon Albright's death at the early age of 39, the Pajaronian had the following to say: "As a businessman he was square, honest and upright, as a friend he was a true companion and a big hearted soul. The tragic death of Mr. Albright has removed one of Watsonville's most popular citizens."

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