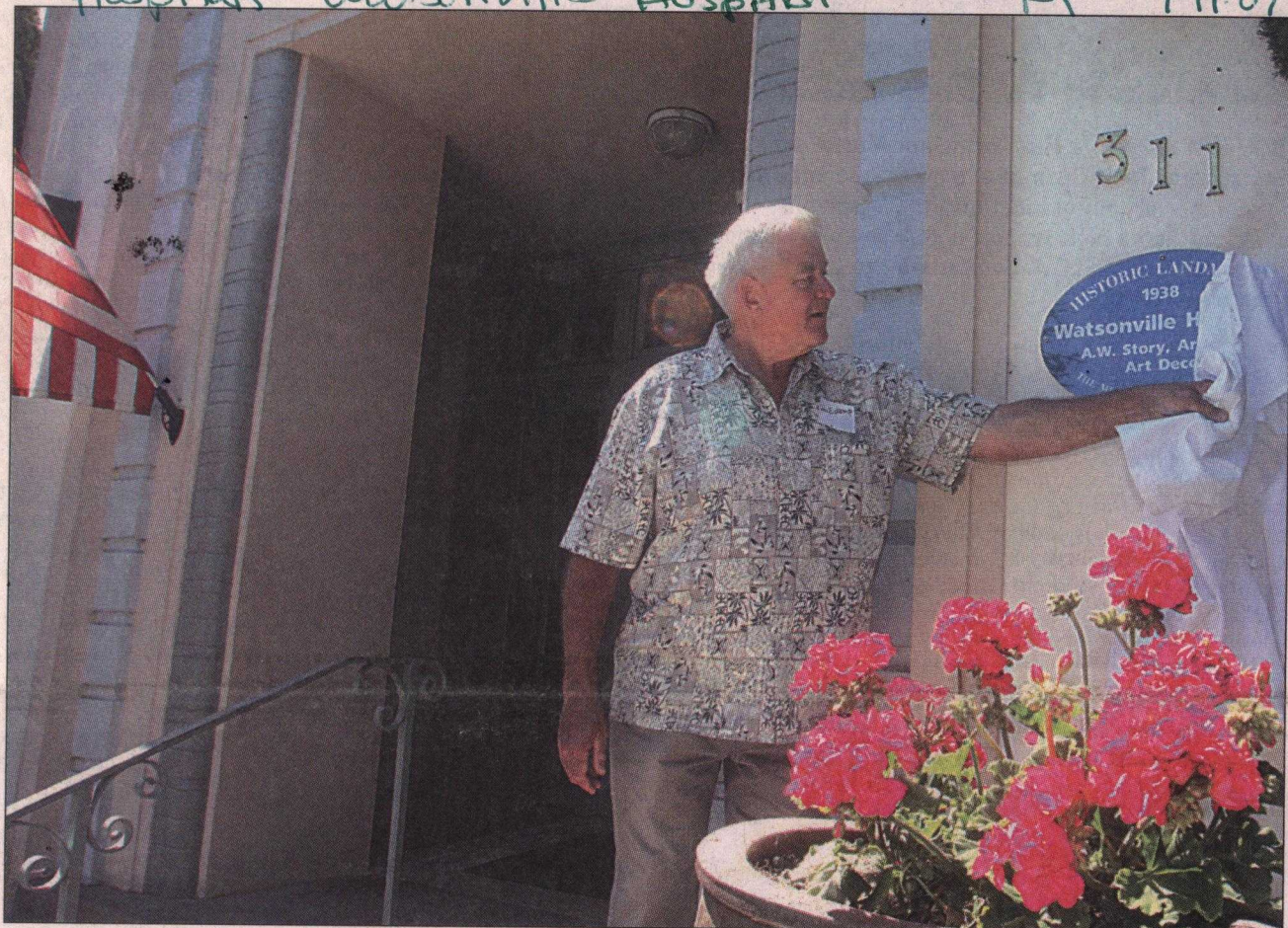


Old hospital remembered

Hospitals - Watsonville Hospital

RP 7.11.09



ABOVE: John G. Eiskamp unveils a historical landmark blue oval Friday on the 1938 Watsonville Hospital, 311 Montecito Ave., which is now Watsonville Residential Care. BELOW: Turquoise tiles line much of the walls in the old delivery room.



Former employees, patrons gather for Blue Plaque ceremony

By JON CHOWN

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

For Dr. Janet Bell, the old Watsonville Hospital, located at 311 Montecito Ave., brings back many special memories. It was the site of her first practice, when she and her husband, Taine, both doctors, moved to Watsonville and began working.

From that time, 1951, un-

til the hospital closed in 1969, Bell and her husband served Watsonville from inside the then-modern hospital.

"This was a small community and you rapidly became a part of the community," she said. "You were proud of it and wanted to be a part of it."

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Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Watsonville city planner Suzi Aratin (standing) describes the art deco architecture of the old hospital as Pajaro Valley Historical Association volunteer Jane Borg (from left), Doug Mattos, who was born at the hospital, and former hospital worker Patricia Solano listen.

HOSPITAL

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Built in 1938 in art deco style, the historical building was given a Historic Landmark Blue Plaque Award and the honor was officially unveiled on Friday. John G. Eiskamp, son of Dr. Ehler Eiskamp, did the honor of pulling the cloth off the plaque. Eiskamp, who had two children born at the old hospital, and worked in the hospital's laboratory for a short time, said his family has a long history with the building. His father, who helped raise the \$150,000 needed to start it, was the hos-

pital's first chief of staff and his aunt Lucille Mahoney ran the lab.

"This was his baby," Eiskamp said of his father's love of the place.

Today, the hospital is a residential care facility. On Friday, a half dozen former employees toured the site and reminisced after members of the Blue Plaque committee and the Pajaro Valley Historical Society talked about the building's significance.

"My father was a carpenter and he worked on the hospital," Patricia Salano said. "I worked in the kitchen right out of high school and all my children were born here."

Dr. H.M. Nestler joined the hospital staff in 1958. At the time, he was the only doctor who spoke Spanish.

"It was a different world then," he said. "In those days, we didn't have emergency room physicians. Each doctor had to take a 24-hour shift in the emergency room."

The Museum of Art and History gives Historic Landmark Blue Plaque awards to structures of architectural or historical significance throughout Santa Cruz County. The award does not place any restrictions on what can be done to the building; it merely recognizes the building as historical.