

Watsonville's street names tell own stories

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Many of the names of Watsonville's streets and byways are redolent of the early days of the Pajaro Valley community, recalling as they do many of the families and entrepreneurs who founded the city.

Among the more familiar names would certainly be Charles Ford, who founded the Charles Ford Co. in 1852 and after whom Ford Street is named. The company he founded is now the oldest mercantile store in the state.

Then there are Watson Street, named, as was the city itself, after Judge John Howard Watson, and Rodriguez Street, named for the family which once owned the Bolsa del Pajaro grant on which the city is located.

Other names are probably less familiar to most readers.

Brennan Street, for example, was

named after Capt. James Brennan, a pioneer in the coastal shipping business. He built the Salinas, the first ship to arrive at Pajaro Landing, where the warehouse to store goods to be shipped was built in 1859. Incidentally, Brennan Street, in 1875, was subjected to an ordinance that required residents to construct their own sidewalks, measuring six feet in width and composed of either plank-ing or gravel.

Sudden Street, opened in 1871, was named for another sea captain, Robert Sudden, who also was prominent in shipping affairs in the 1860s and 1870s. At one time he owned a large tract of land between East Lake and Palm avenues. Palm Avenue was once called Callahan, with the eastern portion known as Joy Avenue.

Lee Road was named for "Judge" Julius Lee, who came to Watsonville in 1862, became the county's first district attorney, and was a promi-

nent lawyer in Watsonville. He died in 1910 at his home on East Beach Street at the age of 81.

Beck Street is on a parcel of land once owned by the Hon. Thomas Beck, who served as a state senator, secretary of state, architect and farmer, and who also died in 1910 at the same age as "Judge" Lee.

Alexander Street was named for Thomas D. Alexander, who, in 1856, built the Pacific Exchange Hotel, which was replaced by the Mansion House in 1871 on a site now occupied by the Lettunich Building. Alexander was instrumental in organizing the first fire bucket brigade and was an active member of that organization for many years. Upon his death in 1914, at the age of 87, the Pajaronian noted: "Mr. Alexander was one of the leaders in the community life; one of the influential citizens of the state, and was a man of the highest probity and character, his word being as

good as his bond."

Brewington Avenue runs through land that wasn't subdivided until 1925, but the street was named for George Brewington, who came to Watsonville in 1860. He acquired a lot of land and was a pioneer in the strawberry industry. He lived to the ripe old age of 94, and died in 1929.

Hushbeck Avenue received its name from Louis Hushbeck, who arrived in the Pajaro Valley in 1855. At one time he operated a wagon-making shop on Main Street and also farmed in the Amesti District. He also lived to an advanced age, dying in 1905 at 80.

Bockius Street is named for Godfrey Bockius, who built his home on East Beach Street in 1870 and owned land that stretched clear to the Pajaro River. Bockius was a farmer, judge, state assemblyman and banker, who, in the hardy tradition of others of his stripe, lived into his 80s.

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Walker Street memorializes Thomas Walker, who came to Watsonville in its earliest years, acquired extensive land holdings, and helped organize the Bank of Watsonville in 1874. He was also the brother of artist James Walker, who was widely known for his beautiful landscape paintings.

Some pioneer names got lost in the shuffle of history. What is now Second Street began as Lewis Alley, named for A. Lewis, who had built a two-story building on Main Street at the site of what is now the Canada shoe store. There was a long and bitter battle over demands that Lewis Alley be widened; when it was finally accomplished by the removal in 1902 of a wooden building that was blocking access to Main Street, it was named Second Street, and Lewis Alley faded into history.

1905-1905