

Hotels and Boarding Houses

The Mansion House Hotel was an elegant downtown structure

RP 5-22-08



That Was
Watsonville

Betty Lewis

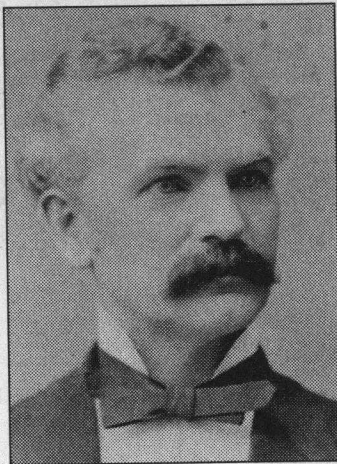
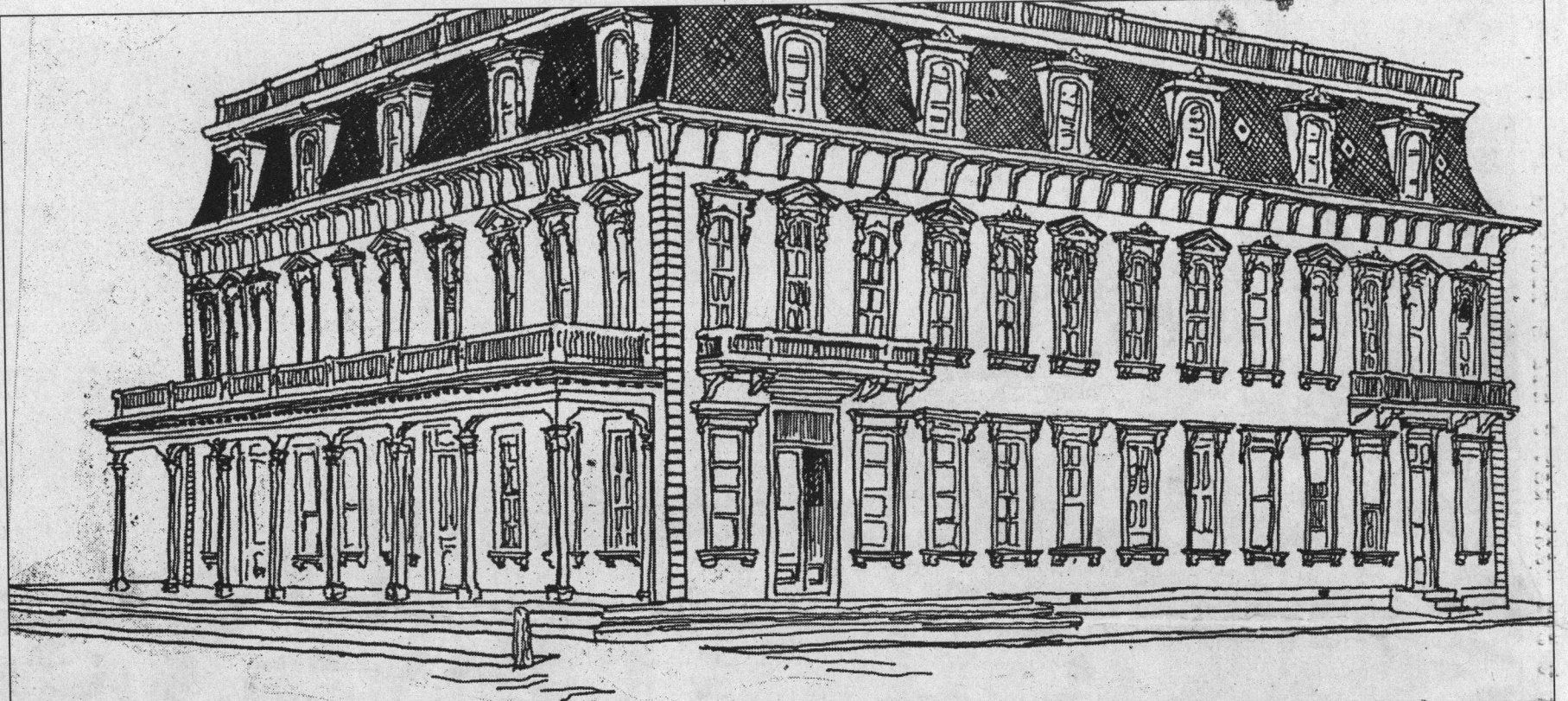
The Mansion House Hotel, designed by senator and architect Thomas Beck, was built in 1871 on the corner of East Third and Main streets.

The following is from the Pajaronian in December of 1871: "In the lower story, is the commodious office and reading room, a pleasant 'waiting room' a wide hall, a large billiard saloon, a large and lofty dining room. While the culinary department is a model of convenience, all the modern improvements being introduced.

"Closets and the various rooms connected with a hotel kitchen are large and handy, and the ranges and water tanks, and in fact all things connected with this important department are as perfect as possible. The whole house is supplied with gas, and last Thursday evening when the house was first opened and the gas turned on, the 65 or 70 windows being lighted up the effect was very beautiful.

"In the lower story are also three pleasant stores — one occupied by Wells Fargo and Company, the other by a barber's shop and the third will soon be occupied by a stock of drugs. In front of the whole building on Main Street is a broad veranda, reached by several steps. Messrs. Sharp and Van Wagner were contractors for the plastering and their portion of the job is a credit to them.

"C. A. Langley was the contractor for the painting and graining and his part of the work has been executed in an elegant and workman-like manner. The graining — an imitation of California laurel, oak, mahogany and other varieties is a fine exhibition of the painter's



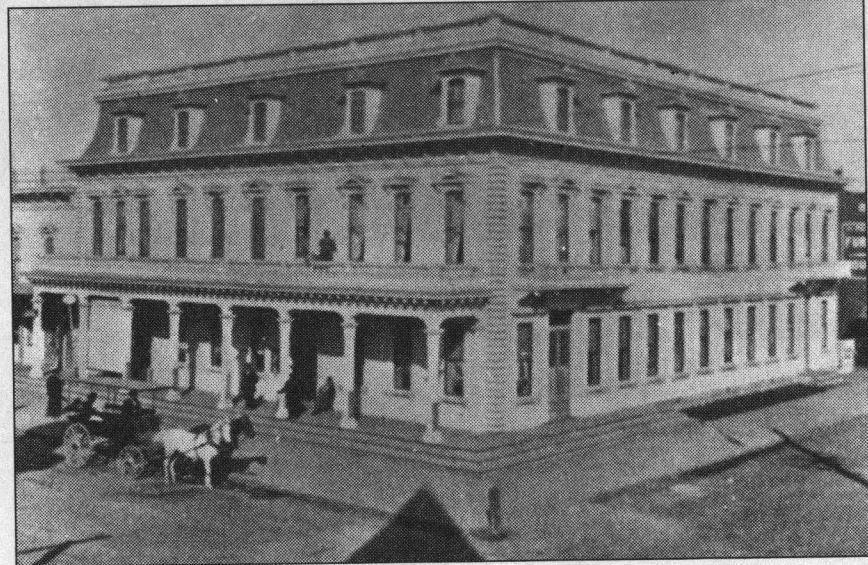
Thomas Beck

straightforward business energy, is proprietor and landlord. And from the way in which the hotel opens and the satisfaction impressed by all in regard to the comforts of the house and its management, it will be a flattering success, as well as a pride to this section of the country."

From an ad in the 1878 Pajaronian: "Owing to scarcity of gasoline, last Friday night the gas works failed to provide the town with light. The company could find no gasoline in San Francisco. Doolittle of the Mansion House luckily found some gasoline in the hotel gas works and started the machine in operation. The Mansion has been provided with excellent light while the rest of the town is blinking behind candles.

Mansion House shaving and bathing saloon. haircutting, shampoo, dyeing, etc., performed in the most fashionable and best style to the art. Hot and cold baths — bathing rooms kept in neatest manner. Shaving, 25 cents, shampoo, 25 cents and baths 25 cents."

Some important people



ABOVE: A sketch of the Mansion House Hotel is shown. LEFT: A photograph of the Mansion House Hotel is shown. The Mansion House Hotel was built by architect Thomas Beck in 1871. It sits on the corner of Main and East Third streets.

Courtesy of Betty Lewis.

stayed at the Mansion House — John Philip Sousa, Susan B. Anthony and Tom Thumb.

In 1910, the year Beck died — "He was a good architect and many of the large buildings of this county bear evidence of his excellent ability in that line. I well remember, as a schoolboy, going over the Mansion House with him while the same was in the course of construction. In

his line of business he has had charge of some of the largest public buildings in the state and no whisper of 'graft' has ever been suggested in any of his work. (James A. Hall)"

Mateo and M.N. Lettunich eventually purchased the property for \$40,000 in 1906 and the old hotel was moved north. In its place, the Lettunich building was built in 1914 and the Man-

sion House was remodeled in to the Royal Hotel, then restaurant and offices. Much has happened to the Mansion House over all the years but it is just about the oldest building in downtown Watsonville.

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