

Watsonville library turns 100

By DAVE BROCKMANN
Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — Down through the years, the public library has been a city institution. The Watsonville Public Library on Union Street, which owes its first building to legendary American industrialist Andrew Carnegie, is embarking on a year-long celebration to mark its 100th anniversary with an open house Saturday.

"It's a great milestone when you have an institution reach 100 years," said City Manager Steve Salomon. "It has brightest of futures and will probably take an increasing role in the community."

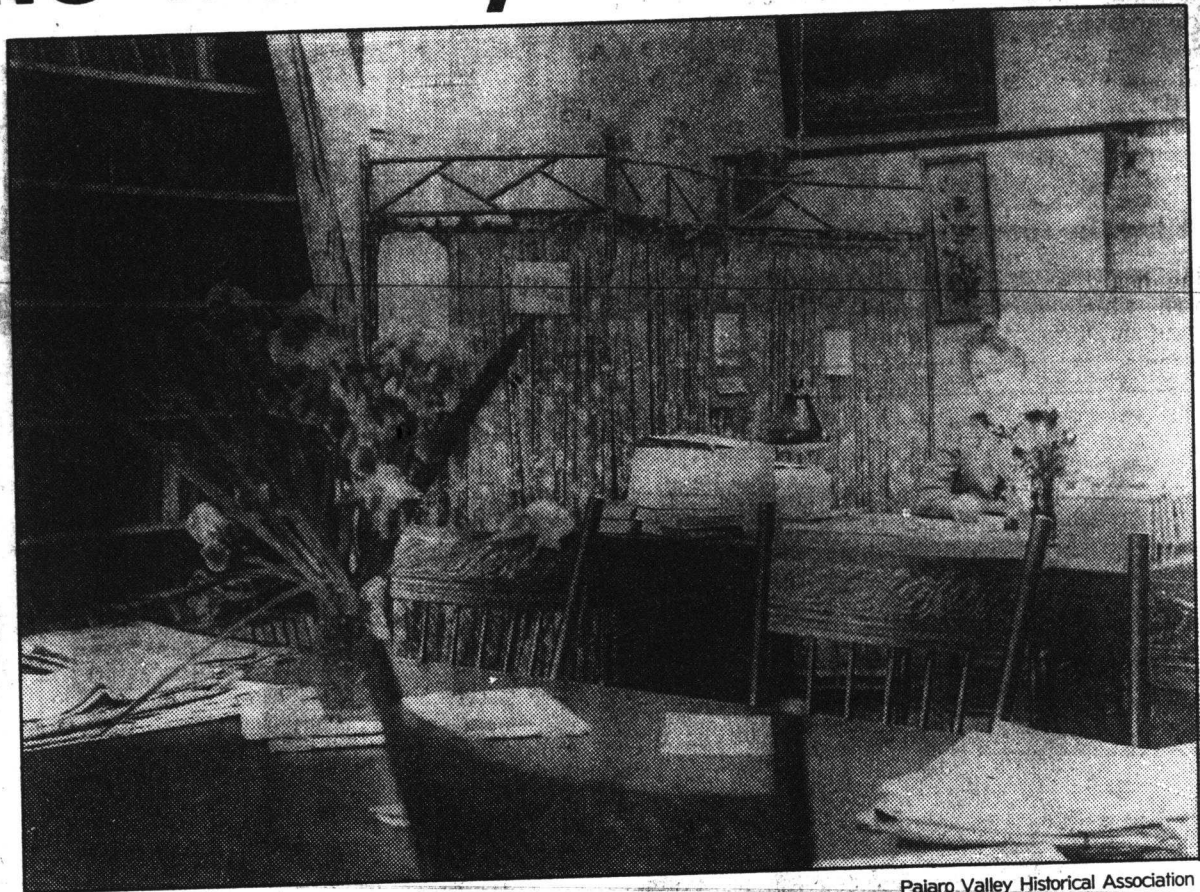
The open house is 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the library, 310 Union St. Included in the festivities will be a flag-raising and cutting of the birthday cake at 11 a.m.; music by local singer Nancy Raven and strolling troubadour Larry Jones; entertainment for the children from Gaby the clown, the Caterpillar Puppets and a children's costume contest; and a talk by historian Betty Lewis about the early library days.

Watsonville's original library building was the result of a \$10,000 gift, later increased to \$12,000, from Carnegie. The Carnegie building served the community of Watsonville until 1976, when the current library was constructed.

Today, with a collection of 100,000 items (books, tapes, CDs, periodicals, videotapes), the library has a circulation of over 200,000 items per year — a far cry from the days when the "reading room" was run by the Odd Fellows and its tiny collection moved from location to location to serve the informational needs of the small farming community.

"From such modest beginnings, great institutions are developed," said Jane Borg of the Woman's Club. "I think we can certainly count today's Watsonville Free Public Library a 'great' organization for our community. It is doing a heroic job of responding to the needs of one of the most diverse communities in the nation."

Interim director Carol Heitzig, who oversees the



Pajaro Valley Historical Association

A circa 1900 photo of the reading room at the Watsonville Public Library.

children's library, said the advent of year-round school and the elimination of librarian positions in the schools have been the most notable changes the past few years.

A open house reception and silent auction for community members, city dignitaries and Friends of the Library volunteers will be held Friday at 310 Union St. from 6 to 8 p.m.