

Landmark up for \$4.95 million

Historic Building - RP 1-23-07
 Lettunich Building owners offer historic downtown site

By AMY LARSON

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

A central piece of downtown Watsonville is on the market for \$4.95 million.

The historic Lettunich Building, built on Main and East Beach streets in 1914, stands as four stories of original architectural artwork, designed by Watsonville's most famous architect, William Weeks.

The landmark building's walls radiate multiple shades of blue, and a large archway over the front doors has intricate carvings of fruit

grown in the Pajaro Valley.

A staircase with an antique oak banister spirals up the center of the building.

Brave building users take the ancient-looking elevator, which rumbles its way up the building so slowly that it's hard to tell if the elevator is moving.

"We have the world's slowest elevator," said Zea Sonnabend, who works on the third floor as a program coordinator for the Ecological Farming Association. "It has the flaws of an old building."

While Sonnabend's office's side

of the building is flooded with sunlight and a view of the plaza, the other side of the steel building is very cold, she said.

The Lettunich family was one of many Croatian families who immigrated to the Pajaro Valley in the mid 1800s. The building was called a skyscraper when it was first built.

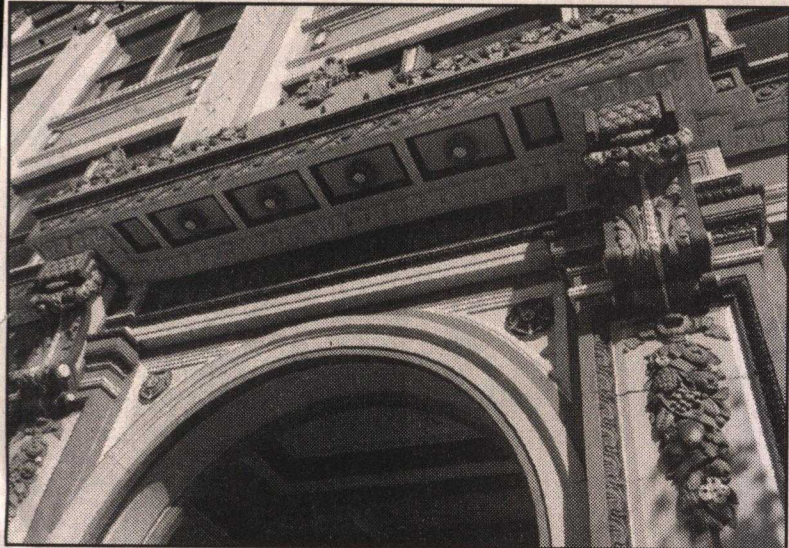
The building's owners, Mateo and M.N. Lettunich, decided they wanted one of their mansions to be moved one lot down Main Street, and the Lettunich building was

See LETTUNICH, page 2



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

The landmark Lettunich building in downtown Watsonville is on the market for \$4.95 million.



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Ornate relief detail featuring fruit and vegetables grown in the Pajaro Valley garnish the main entrance to the Lettunich building.

LETTUNICH

From page 1

constructed in the mansion's place.

From 1919 to the late 1960s, the building hosted a series of banks, including the Fruit Growers National Bank, Liberty Bank, Bank of Italy and Bank of America.

In addition to Ecological Farming Association, the 36,000-square-foot Lettunich building also houses the Immigrant Project, the Pajaro Valley Watsonville Soccer League, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Women's Crisis Support-Defense De Mujeres and other nonprofits, law offices and businesses.

After the 1984 earthquake, some of Watsonville's buildings were reduced to piles of rubble, said Jo

Anna Earnshaw, who works for the nonprofit Wild Farm Alliance on the third floor.

"Watsonville looked terrible after the earthquake, but this building looked fine," Earnshaw said. "I always feel this is a safe place."

Weeks' skill was proven by the fact that many of his buildings are still standing, despite fires and earthquakes. He designed more than 90 houses around Watsonville for wealthy families, as well as Saint Patrick's Church, the bandstand in the plaza, Mintie White Elementary School and the Porter Building on Maple and Main streets, according to archivist Jane Borg of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association.

Real estate agent Glenn Kramer said no offers have been made on the property. For more information, call 724-2343.