

# America's pastime has long history in Watsonville

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**H**ALLELUJAH! Baseball season is here. My grandson, Josh, and I can again make our treks up to Candlestick to see our favorite team play ball while we wolf down hot dogs and cheer on the Giants. We were lucky enough to be there when Dave Dravecky made his dramatic comeback from cancer and when Jack Clark got so mad he ripped out first base and threw it down the line.

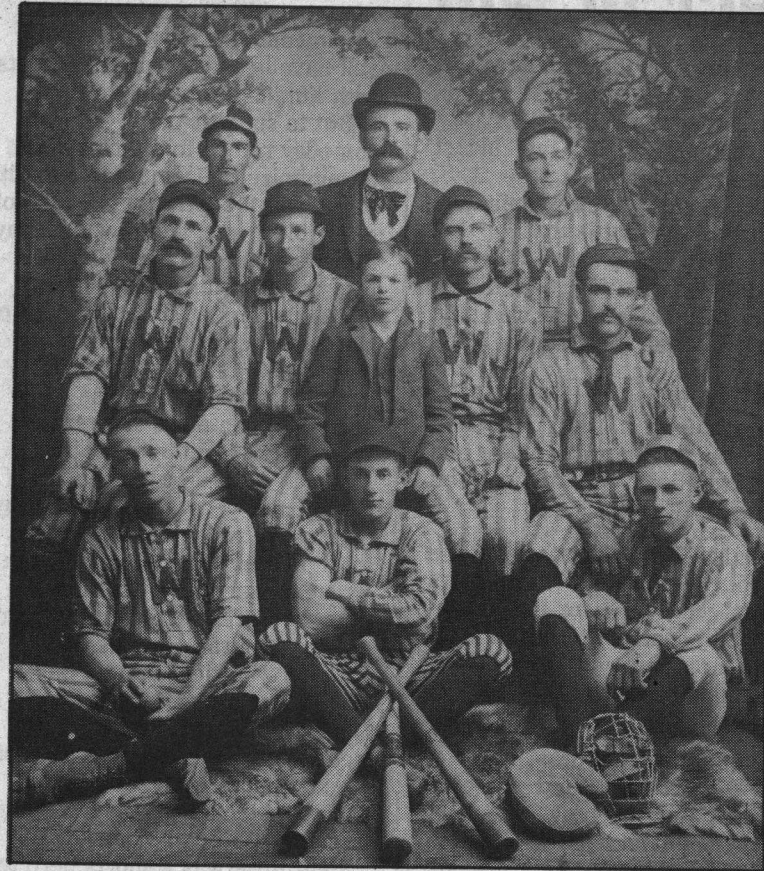
You can't beat a nice warm afternoon (even if Candlestick doesn't have many of them), a cheering crowd and a good baseball game!

Baseball has a grand history in Watsonville.

Back in 1890, there was the W. A. White baseball team, and in May of 1891, a district baseball league was organized, composed of Watsonville, Hollister, Salinas and San Juan Bautista. Charles R. Peckham of Watsonville was secretary of the league.

A game between Watsonville and San Juan in June of that year got rather bloody as a San Juan player was struck by a ball just below the eye and knocked senseless. A Watsonville player later was hit in the mouth by a ball and "most of his teeth were loosened by the effects of the throw." The game was forfeited to Watsonville.

By July, the Pajaronian was editorializing: *It might be well for the district baseball league to clothe*



Pajaro Valley Historical Association

**1891 champions, top row, from left: Alonzo Soto, Oscar Buob, Charles A. Palmtag; middle row: Henry White, Charles McCassin, William Raunegger, William Malcolm, Ed Pidge; bottom: Pete Helmer, Al Moore, Ed Struve.**

*the umpires with all the authority such officials have in the major leagues...a healthy dose of fines on the part of the umpire or the ordering out of the game of kicking*

*players would be applications of power that would suit the patrons of the game. To make the district games more popular the umpire should be given the power to fine*

*or remove disobedient players."*

The local baseball club disbanded that fall of 1891 with \$100 in the treasury, which was divided among the active players.

Before the beginning of the season in 1894, the Monterey and Watsonville clubs held an indoor game in the Opera House, which was then located across from the Plaza on East Third (now Beach) Street. But this type of game did not attract fans. Perhaps people thought it would be too dangerous for spectators!

When a women's baseball team scheduled an appearance in Watsonville, it brought the following reaction:

*"We, the Women's Christian Temperance Union of Watsonville, standing for those principles which uplift humanity and tend to a proper observance of God's Holy Day, do most earnestly deplore and deprecate the appearance of our sisters, 'The Bloomer Baseball Club,' in Watsonville, especially on the Sabbath Day. Believing that woman's privilege and duty is to elevate and not deteriorate mankind, we wish to plead with all thoughtful fathers and mothers, and all young people, to stop and consider what if it were your daughter or your sister and to use your influence for purity and righteousness on that Holy Day..."*

**The Pajaronian, July 18, 1901**

The "Three C" baseball league was formed here in 1909. Money was raised and four acres of land

were secured at the corner of Ford and Walker streets. A bandstand was built, a diamond laid out and a team, named the "Pippins," was organized under the guiding hand of Police Chief Tom Albright. According to the local newspaper:

*Now that Watsonville has the baseball fever, there is no town in the Tree C league that can put it over the Apple Center for down-*

*licorn brothers: William Lee, third base; George Edward Jr., first base; Clarence Douglas, catcher; John Archie (known as "Kilwee"), left field; Eddie, shortstop; Amos, second base; Albert, center field; Elmer, right field, and Harry, pitcher.*

George (Pop) Skillicorn, the boys' father, was the manager and substitutes included Tommy