



The old Watsonville Buddhist Temple, pictured above, as it appeared in 1949

Watsonville Buddhist Temple celebrates 85th anniversary

The Watsonville Buddhist Temple will observe its 85th anniversary this weekend with a service and banquet at the temple at Blackburn and Bridge streets.

A service will be held at 3 p.m., with the Rev. Russell Hamada of Mountain View Buddhist Church as the English speaker and the Rev. Junjo Tsumura, former resident minister at Watsonville Buddhist Temple, as the Japanese speaker. At 5 p.m., there will be a banquet, with Sheridan Tatsuno as guest speaker.

The temple was formally organized on July 7, 1906, in a ceremony at the old Opera House on Third Street (now Beach Street) that included Buddhist ministers from Oakland, Sacramento, Fresno and Los Angeles. Within a year, the temple had signed up 208 members, and funds were raised to purchase a lot at the corner of Union and Bridge Streets, where a temple was built.

That building, which featured a long stairway at the front, was used for 50 years, including the

period from April 1942 to late 1945 when the temple building was closed during the World War II internment because most of Watsonville's Japanese-American community was sent to Poston, Ariz. The temple was used as a temporary hostel for returning families following the war.

The current church building was built and dedicated in 1956, in observation of the Watsonville Temple's 50th anniversary.

Presently, the temple is served by resident minister Rev. Shinryo Sawada.