

# The 1989 earthquake was Watsonville's worst

Earthquake - Watsonville

Watsonville has experienced many, many earthquakes but the worst was in October of 1989 and the April 18, 1906 quake did some limited damage. While attending a post card and paper memorabilia show in Santa Cruz recently, I found some wonderful postcards of Watsonville. One of those is pictured here from 1907. On the face of the card is a picture of the Watsonville strawberry fields and what was on the back piqued my interest. I found the following on micro-film at the Watsonville library.



**Betty Lewis**  
That was Watsonville

shortly after midnight Sunday night. Three were slight tremors, two, the last, strong shakes. Succeeding them, those whose ears were as close to the ground as people sleeping in the camp cottages, heard a

rumble and roar such as is made by a fast train rushing through a tunnel, an avalanche of rocks tumbling down a mountain or it might be by a Titanic game of nine pins played in some cavern far underground. At the same time the ocean surged and roared on the beach with sudden fury that startled some of those living nearby, who feared that a tidal wave might overtop (sic) the rampart of sand and engulf the adjoining country. This alarm, though natural, was needless, for the disturbance of the waters soon subsided and the Pacific ocean resumed the regular rhythm of its ebb and flow."  
— Evening Pajaronian, Dec. 3, 1907.

Camp Goodall, at that time, was a United States reservation and was leased to the Pacific Steamship Company who, in turn, subleased it to Jerome Downing, manager of Camp Goodall (later Port Watsonville and Pajaro Dunes).

During the 1906 earthquake the A. Lewis two-story building at the corner of Main and Maple, withstood the quake without any damage but, in 1989, fell to the wrecking ball from extensive damage. 1906 saw Mr. DuCommon's jewelry store sustaining some damage but at his home a more serious loss occurred. A Chinese tea set dating back to the period of the Ming dynasty was smashed into bits and pieces — an irreplaceable historical loss.



The 400 block of Main Street after the Loma Prieta earthquake in October of 1989.

Betty Lewis Collection

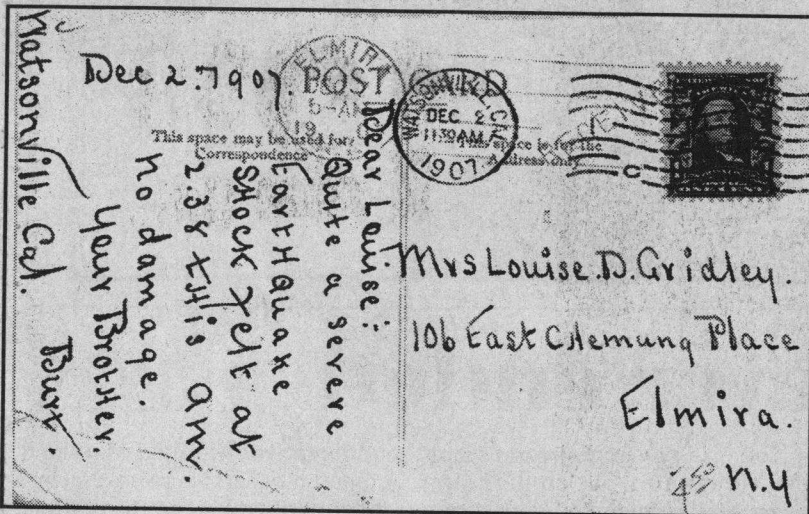
When the 1989 earthquake hit, I was in Coeur d'Alene visiting our youngest daughter and her family waiting for the World Series game to start and my husband was at home in Watsonville. Our son was at Candlestick for the game along with his son and our oldest daughter was walking up the back path to our house. The quake hit and she saw the house bending back and forth and rushed inside to see if her Dad was all right (he was).

But back in May of 1899 the following appeared in the Pajaronian: "There was no earthquake shock here last Saturday. It was a salute to Admiral Dewey on his departure from Manila, which was being fired at the Granite Rock Company's quarry at Logan by W.E. Miller, Jr. The scene of the explosion is about eight miles from Watsonville, and though less than five pounds of Hercules powder was fired the loud report was distinctly heard in this city

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and even out in Corralitos."

By August of that year, though, 36 shocks were recorded on an indicator owned by H. Atkinson of Watsonville. It affected the Green Valley and Casserly districts the most and was followed by many other shocks. The Pajaronian noted: "Pajaroites are ready for a peaceful change."

Betty Lewis, a local historian, is a contributing columnist to the Register-Pajaronian.



A postcard sent the day after a 1907 earthquake