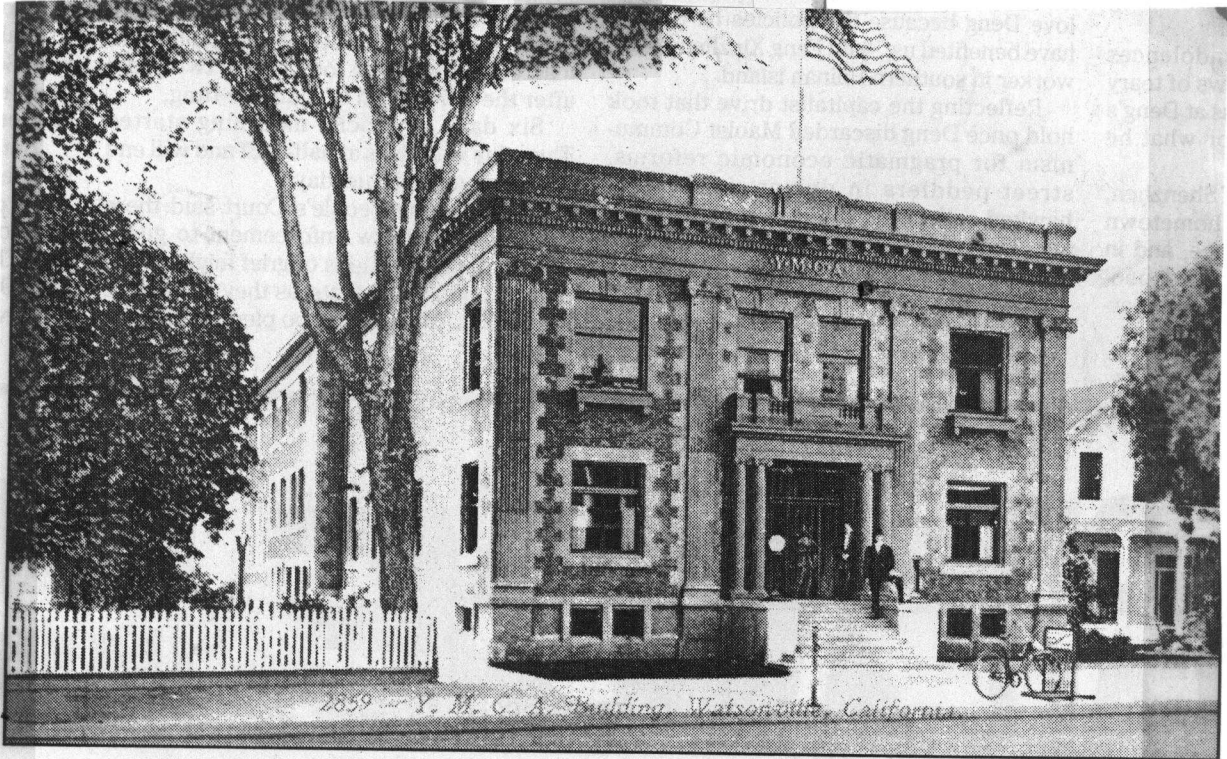


Watsonville's YMCA marks 100 years



2859 - Y. M. C. A. Building, Watsonville, California

Betty Lewis collection

Things aren't exactly the same at the YMCA as in days gone by, when Mr. Anthony gave singing lessons and Mrs. Cooper taught the piano.

The following is from a pamphlet published by the YMCA in 1904 entitled "The Wealth Of the Pajaro Valley":

"There are powerful enemies, whose number and name is Legion at work to destroy our boys and young men. Some of them "cripple" our young men while they are boys, and therefore, destroy the possibility of their bringing the highest mar-

That was Watsonville

ket price and some of them hit at the root of manhood and blight the life in such a way that they never reach the market. The Young Men's Christian Association is the special agent of the Church, organized to protect the valley's greatest asset, the young men and boys, from the ravage of this legion."

The history of the local "Y" goes back to 1897 when the first meetings were held in local churches, and later in the Hildreth Building and the first local president, H.A. Hyde. In 1899, serving on the board of directors were Mr. Hyde, F.H. Nohrden, J.S. Brown, C.H. Ames, Alex Beck, Christy Redman, E.H. Zimmerman and W.H. Weeks.

Membership was limited to young men over the age of 15, though younger boys were admitted

when accompanied by a parent. Dues were 50 cents per month or \$5 a year. In 1901 the expenses for the year ran as follows: Rental of the rooms - \$360; light and fuel - \$110; postage and petty cash - \$60; printing - \$75; literature - \$20; salaries \$900, and old debts - \$139, making a total yearly budget of \$1,672.

Soon larger facilities were needed and, in 1904, rooms were rented upstairs in the newly completed Jefsen Building. Programs offered to the young men of the town were practical talks and lectures, educational classes which included mechanical drawing, social economy, bookkeeping, plus a literary society and study and discussion groups.

Walter B. Anthony gave singing lessons and Mrs. J.F. Cooper taught the piano. In the game room members could play checkers or chess

and the first Friday night of each month was devoted to a social evening. The religious department included Bible classes, prayer circles and training courses. Memberships were now open to any boy between the ages of 8 and 16 and Leslie Briggs was the general secretary.

In January of 1905, the membership stood at 201 with 130 young men over the age of 16, and 71 boys under that age. At the end of the five-year lease on the Jefsen rooms it was learned that the YMCA rooms were to be converted into apartments. It was decided to purchase land at 535 Main St. and William

Weeks drew up plans for the first YMCA building.

A vigorous and noisy campaign was instituted to raise money for this worthwhile project. Every time \$1,000 was raised, the city fire alarm sounded! The new building was completed in 1912 and included a swimming pool, residence rooms, dining room, meeting and game rooms and boasted of the only gymnasium in town.

By 1951, a larger building was needed so the old Grammar School property on the corner of East Lake and Sudden was purchased. The building on Main Street was torn down to make way for a parking lot which is still there today.

The May Way shopping center was built with income going to pay off the mortgage resulting in the first unit of the present YMCA being built. This included a large swimming pool, showers, dressing and locker rooms, therapy, check room and temporary lobby.

The local YMCA has grown and changed over the past 100 years; most of the religious impact is no longer stressed; girls and women are members; the gym and game rooms have improved considerably. Physical fitness is stressed and many kinds of indoor sports are featured. The present director is Steve Orosco and the Watsonville "Y" looks forward this year to its centennial celebration.

The following is from the Y.M.C.A. brochure published in the 1950's: "We believe that Christianity is not a mantle to be donned for only an hour in Church each week, but a way of life that permeates our every day activities. The YMCA urges its members to attend and be faithful to their chosen forms of worship and then to demonstrate their Christianity through their behavior toward their fellow men."