

# WATSONVILLE LANDMARK



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel photos

Marilyn McLachlan, left, and Zoe Ann (Orr) Marcus take a walking tour of the colorful garden at the Bockius-Orr home.

REFERENCE

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# Garden sale will benefit 'museum-home' project

By MARYBETH VARCADOS  
Sentinel managing editor

**T**HE PAJARO Valley Historical Association received a gift in January that changed its entire operation. The landmark Bockius-Orr home on East Beach Street, Watsonville, was handed over, complete with furnishings, to the association by owner Zoe Ann (Orr) Marcus.

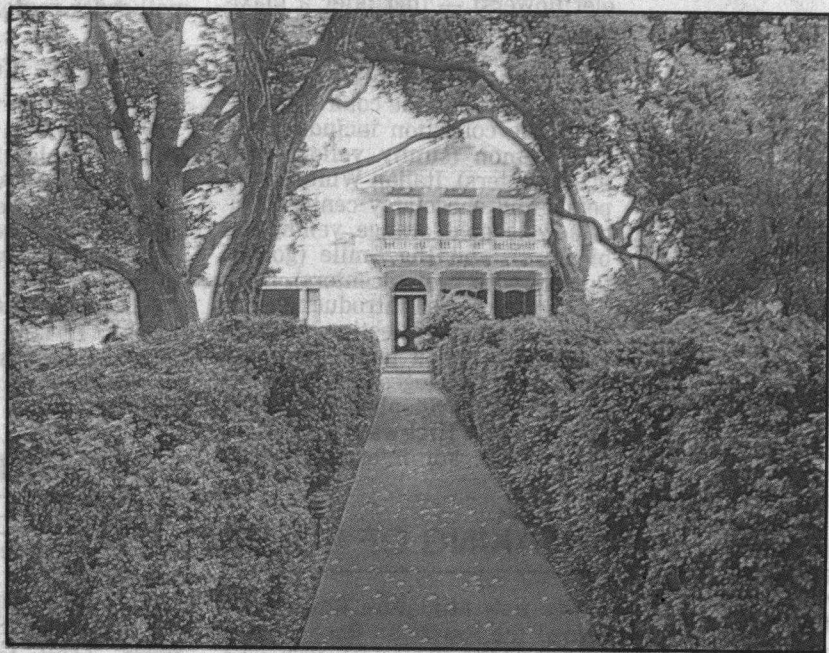
Ever since, the historical association has been planning how to use its windfall and raise funds to support it, mainly by selling its present historical home-museum.

A garden sale on Saturday will benefit the project. Garden items and rummage will be offered from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Bockius-Orr home, 332 E. Beach St. The home is approached through large, white gates and a driveway shaded by oak trees.

The "museum-home" will not be open to visitors on Saturday, according to Marilyn McLachlan, president of the 300-member association. It will be available, probably by summer, she said, for the public to rent for meetings and receptions.

Financial support for the two-story, wood-frame home with its spacious grounds, carriage house and garage with upstairs rental unit is "a big responsibility," she said.

William Bachan, attorney for the historical group, agrees. "It was a wonderful gift from Mrs. Orr. The



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recipient (of such a gift) must be sure they can handle it financially," he said. "It is sort of like, what if somebody gave me a Lear jet, but I don't have a hangar and can't buy the fuel?"

The home, listed on the National Register, was built in 1868 by Godfrey M. Bockius, great-grandfather of the late Frank F. Orr, who was editor of the Register-Pajaronian newspaper. It was occupied by

three previous generations before Frank and Zoe Ann Orr moved in and began restorations in 1946.

The Orrs strove to preserve its exterior design and appearance, while developing the gardens. His rose garden is still maintained by the historical association's gardener, Romero Estrada. Her bonsai collection has been removed, and orchids are being cultivated in the protected wood-lattice area.

A few things at the home did not change after Mrs. Orr remarried, to Gerald Marcus, and moved to another part of town. Most sentimental is the continued service of Mary Okmoto, who worked for 40 years for the Orrs and continues to clean the home weekly for the association. Framed, oval photographs of family generations also remain, arranged in progression up the staircase.

Zoe Ann Marcus said giving the home to a non-profit organization was her way to protect it. "I haven't got any family ... that house is like my child. So it is a selfish gift, a way of preserving its identity. This way, I know what will happen to it."

The historical association's current "home," the William Volck Museum, is a block away from the Bockius-Orr home, across from Watsonville High School. It has been listed for sale since January, and Marcus is covering costs on the Bockius-Orr home until the Volck house is sold. The \$320,000 price includes a rental in back and "the annex," a small structure with kitchen. McLachlan said the annex is considered one of the oldest buildings in Watsonville.

McLachlan said the Bockius-Orr home will become a "house museum," open to visitors and also available for groups to rent for meetings and receptions. Historical

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## Landmark home

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association members are receiving guidance from La Mirada Association in Monterey, which operates the historic Castro Adobe as a meeting place.

"It is good for people to know that this is done, and how it can be done," said McLachlan. "It's really very simple."

The attorney for Marcus, William Locke-Paddon, noted that such a transaction offers tax benefits to both donor and donee, when it is a qualified charity. "It is example of what owners can do as part of their estate plan, to help remember the community of their roots," he said. "Zoe Ann was on the historical association board for many years and had it in mind for some time."

In Santa Cruz, the recent donation of a historic home to a non-profit organization was more complicated than the Bockius-Orr gift. Landscape architect Roy Rydell and his wife, Frances, had established a fund in their names to the Greater Santa Cruz County Community Foundation. When Roy re-

### Preview

- **WHAT:** Pajaro Valley Historical Association Garden and Plant Sale
- **WHEN:** Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **WHERE:** Bockius-Orr home, 332 E. Beach St., Watsonville
- **DONATIONS:** 722-0715
- **INFORMATION:** 722-0305

tired, they deeded his office, a 1870s house at the corner of Maple and Cedar streets to a foundation-administered trust.

Proceeds from the sale of the house are to go into the foundation trust, with the Rydells receiving a lifetime annuity. Upon their deaths, all assets will go to the foundation.

Like Marcus, the Rydells have no heirs. "For people without children or other responsibilities, this is a way to do something for society that is a positive thing for the future," said Roy Rydell.