



19th century lithograph gives detailed look at old buildings in Watsonville.

# Old homes are Victorian treasures

By VINCENT T. LEONARD

My wife, Betty, has long been of the opinion that the old homes and business buildings in Watsonville stand as witness to the competence and honesty of the contractors who erected them and to the fine skill of the carpenters they employed. I agree heartily. The beautiful pictures of Victorian homes assembled by the Pajaro Valley Historical Association and published in recent issues of the Register-Pajaronian show that the people of Watsonville are

proud of their treasures, even though they, unlike Santa Cruzans, have not had group after group formed to protest the destruction or even the remodeling of almost any old building.

Mrs. Mary Struve of La Selva Beach has lent me a lithograph of an artist's sketch of Watsonville before the turn of the century and it shows many of the buildings that are still standing, many well-remembered ones that have long been gone. The big sketch was published by Elliott Publishing

Co. of San Francisco and is not dated. I would guess that it was put out between 1883 and 1900 because it labels the Watsonville Depot as the Southern Pacific RR Depot and SP took over the line in 1882. The Spreckels Sugar Mill is shown in full operation, with the notation that it employs 300-400 men and that, the year before, the mill had set the US record for sugar production, 15,349,040 pounds. The sketch also shows the Pajaro Valley Railroad in operation, noting that the 15-mile-long line connects the sugar mill with Spreckel's best fields. The picture of the city is framed in detailed close-ups of beautiful residences and prominent businesses, among the latter, the Albright strawberry fields and the Wm. McGrath farm, called the county's model farm. The St. Patrick's Church pictured is the twin-towered wooden building that I knew as the church hall during my high school years

(1917-1921). The original Watsonville High School, with its many-gabled roof and tall bell tower, occupies a prominent place among the pictures, and a note boasts that its construction cost \$25,000. We know that it was built in the early 1880's and destroyed by fire on Nov. 8, 1901. The Charles Ford Company, billed as the "leading mercantile establishment of the county" is shown with flags awave and with its two-story-high, glassy turret, topped with an ornate cupola poised jauntily over the corner of Main and Wall Streets. Important residences chosen for special treatment are the Charles Kuhlitz, Joseph Albright and L.D. Holbrook homes, while Pajaro is represented by the J.T. Porter mansion and the Waters nursery.

Four-block-long Bridge St. appears as a precursor of Riverside Drive. It did not yet extend south of Main St. Other principal streets appear pretty

much as they are today. There are no streets on the Heights and only a few scattered buildings. The important hostilities of the day were the Mansion House, on Main St., across Third St. from the Plaza, and the Hoffman House, nearly two blocks further down, on the East side of Main. In front of the Mansion House the artist has even sketched in the hotel "van", the carriage that met every passenger train at the SP depot.

The tiny "Free Library" nestles against the then-very popular Opera House. Trees line thoroughfares from which they have long since disappeared. The picture bespeaks peace and prosperity. Looking at it, I feel that Watsonville's long, slow, healthy growth is as truly rooted in the fertile soil of the Pajaro Valley as are her orchards, and that that accounts for the serene, homey atmosphere of the neat little city of homes and gardens.

## Democrat club sets meeting

Discussion of a "people's Francisco, representing the lawsuit to set aside the 1972 national lawyers guild, will be election" will be held tonight (Thursday) at 7:30 p.m. at a meeting of the People's Democratic Club of Santa Cruz County.

Steve Wasserman of San

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