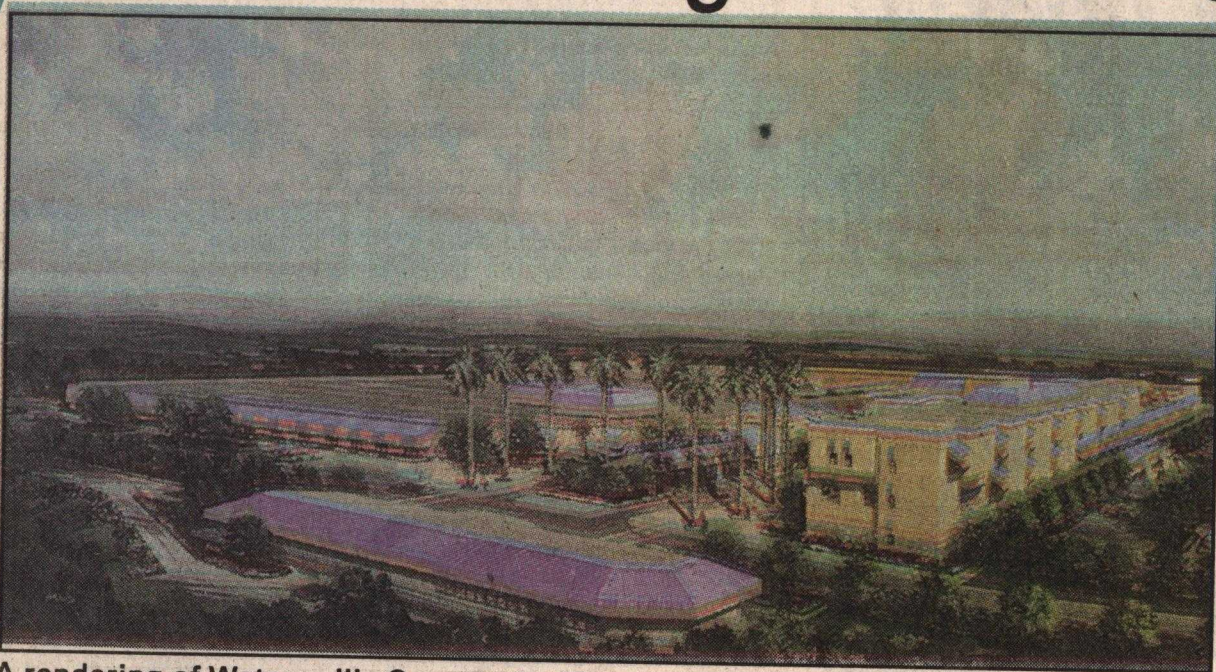


New state-of-the-art hospital on the way

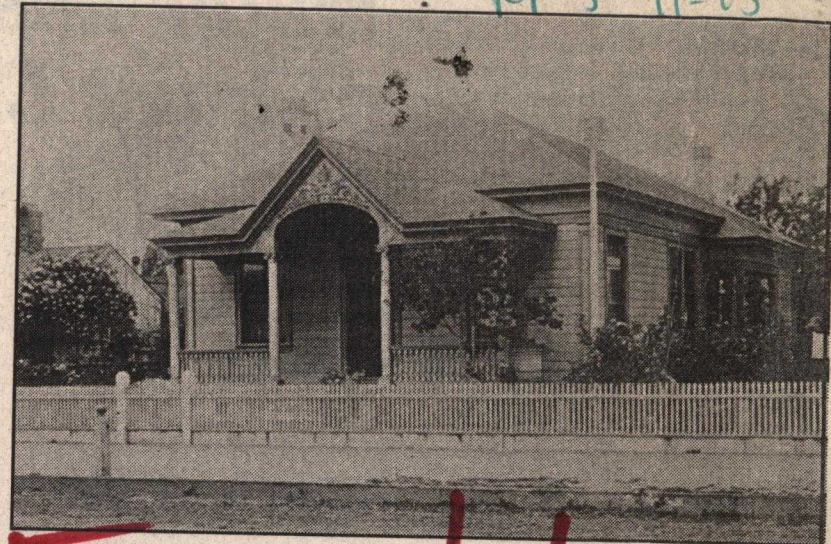
Watson Hospitals - Watsonville Hospital

Groundbreaking ceremonies tonight

RP 5-11-95



A rendering of Watsonville Community Hospital's new state-of-the-art hospital which will be located at the old Seagate site on Airport Boulevard. Above, at right, is a photo of the original Watsonville hospital, built Dr. P.K. Watters next to his home on East Beach Street nearly a century ago.



By FAITH RAIDER
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — After five and a half years of planning, Watsonville Community Hospital's new state-of-the-art health-care center is finally on its way.

A ceremonial ground-breaking will be held at the hospital's new site on Airport Boulevard at Nielson Street this evening for the \$67.4 million rebuilding and renovation project, which promises to propel the 100-year-old hospital into the 21st century. Ceremonies begin at 5:30 p.m. and the public is invited.

Construction on the \$67.4 million project — the most expensive to come out of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake — is not scheduled to begin until June. But after the extensive planning process, hospital administrators couldn't wait until then to let the community know that the new

hospital is coming soon.

"It's a ceremony to say it's really going to happen," said John Friel, the hospital's president and CEO. "We're in the last quarter of the game, if you will." The project should be completed in April 1997.

The new facility will have fewer beds, all in private rooms, and it will provide more outpatient services than the old hospital at Green Valley and Holohan roads,

alterations that are designed to accommodate how health care has changed in recent years.

"Hospitals aren't being used as much as they were 25 years ago when the (old) hospital was built," Friel said.

The number of patient beds has been cut from 130 to 100 because a smaller percentage of patients are admitted into the hospital and

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because the average length of their stay has dropped, he said. Patient stays have dwindled from an average of eight to 12 days in 1969 to three to four days now, Friel said.

Outpatient services will be expanded in the new buildings to accommodate patients' needs, he said. A quarter century ago, only 5 percent of the hospital's work was providing outpatient care. Now fully half of the hospital's patients receive walk-in care, he said.

Even complicated treatments such as cataract and hernia surgeries are performed on an outpatient basis, he said.

Because the project calls for wholesale renovation of two buildings for administration and outpatient services on the site formerly owned by Seagate Technology Corporation, as well as the construction of a new

hospital building, the layout of the buildings will be tailored to their uses.

For example, the emergency room will be next to the intensive care unit where many patients admitted through emergency are transferred. In the old building, the intensive care unit on the fourth floor "couldn't be farther away" from ER, Friel said.

Such planning will cut down on staff traveling time and better meet patients' needs, he said. "The whole thing is being designed to make us more efficient on a minute-to-minute basis."

Although the new hospital building will be smaller than the old 150,000-square-foot building, between the three health care buildings, the facility will have 207,000 square feet. Some of that extra space will be occupied by 30 physicians' offices.

The new site is the hospital's fourth since it was founded by Dr. P.K. Watters a century ago.

A five-room "sanitarium," the original building sat beside its

founder's home on what is now East Beach Street. In the early days, meals were cooked in his home under the supervision of his wife and carried to the hospital on trays.

In 1938, the second Watsonville hospital was built by a group of local doctors eager for a more modern facility.

Thirty-one years later, the hospital moved to its third and current location. Watsonville Community Hospital now employs more than 700 people and has a staff of 75 physicians.

A new hospital has been in the works since the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake destroyed sewer lines under the ground floor of the building. Because hospital building codes are among the strictest in the state, the hospital determined that building on a new location would cost about the same as making the repairs.

About \$600,000 of a \$43 million Federal Emergency Management Agency grant the hospital received for the project in 1990

has been spent on repairs to the old hospital. Other funding sources are a \$4.4 million grant from the state Office of Emergency Services, \$17.9 million in bonds and a \$2.1 million FEMA loan.

The hospital's purchase of the new Seagate site for \$18.9 million, which has been expected for many months, became final last week. Building construction and renovation alone is expected to total \$36.2 million.

Coordinating funding plans with FEMA and the OES slowed the overall planning process, Friel said.

"Working with the state and federal government has been an experience. There are a lot of nuances to it," said Friel.

Wayne Runestrand, the hospital's project manager, coordinated plans for the new facility between Anderson DeBartolo Pan, Turner Construction and Sugimura & Associates, among other companies.