



Diane Varni

Building manager Bill Lewis with IOOF cornerstone.

Cornerstone 'a great big chunk of granite' — and history, too

The Odd Fellows Hall in downtown Watsonville was severely damaged in the Oct. 17 earthquake, but the cornerstone was preserved intact.

"It's a great big chunk of granite," said Bill Lewis, who managed the building for 40 years.

The cornerstone of the 96-year-old building contained a time capsule, which the Odd Fellows opened after the cornerstone was moved to Lewis's home.

Inside were three newspapers from April 1893, all published in

Watsonville: The Rustler, the Pajaronian and the Transcript. The big news of the day was that the Pajaro Valley Railroad was now carrying freight between Watsonville and San Francisco.

The papers had "ads right on the front page," Lewis said, for such things as Levi Strauss copper-riveted overalls and Royal Baking Powder, which was deemed "absolutely pure."

Also in the capsule was a coin from the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago and a list of members of the Odd Fellows. The roster

includes such familiar Watsonville names as Menasco, Wyckoff, Beck, Jefsen and Brewington.

There's also a program for the dedication of the building, which included a performance by the Watsonville Band.

The Odd Fellows building was demolished after the quake. Lewis, who was upstairs in the building when the quake hit, made a hasty exit.

"I've got one metal knee, and I don't remember hitting the steps," he said.

—Lane Wallace