

Livery stables necessary part of life

The livery stable business was a necessary part of the life in Watsonville in the 1800s and into the early 1900s, as well as in any other town of that period. This was before the advent of the automobile (a passing fancy), the airplane (impossible) and other modes of transportation yet to be dreamed up.

One of the most prominent livery stables in the Pajaro Valley belonged to Thomas Kennedy whose place of business was located on the south end of Main Street across from where City Hall is now located. The name of this establishment was the Eclipse Stables where from 75 to 100 head of horses could be accommodated.

Kennedy conducted a general livery, boarding or transient business and saw to it that his clients received the best of attention. The Mansion House stables were located further north on the corner of Main and East Beach Streets adjacent to the hotel; the McKewen brothers ran this establishment. The following is from the Pacific Coast Commercial Record in 1890:



Betty Lewis

That was Watsonville

"Nothing more pleasant can be imagined than a drive in one of the McEwan Brothers handsome turnouts to one of the several points of interest in the neighborhood of Watsonville. The old Glass House for instance, is reached after a pleasant 'spin' of half an hour or less whence a magnificent view is to be had of the beautiful valley which spread out like a panorama before the observer." The old Glass House referred to was the Vallejo adobe which once stood just beyond Werner's hill off the Salinas road.

In the 500 block of Main Street stood two buildings across from each other owned and operated by James Ingham, Here wagons and

buggies were built under Mr. Ingham's personal care and supervision. His spring wagons were especially noted for their soundness and durability. He was also the exclusive agent for the celebrated Studebaker wagons.

Mr. C.A. Cook was the town's leading harness and saddle maker, learning his trade in Wisconsin. He employed from one to three men in his factory, the bulk of goods handled were of his own design with facilities for manufacturing sets of harnesses ranging in price from \$10 to \$100. A fine specimen of these, with nickel and rubber trimming, was displayed in a locked glass case in the salesroom. Mr. Cook also carried a line of robes, blankets, curry combs, brushes and other stable goods and horse equipment.

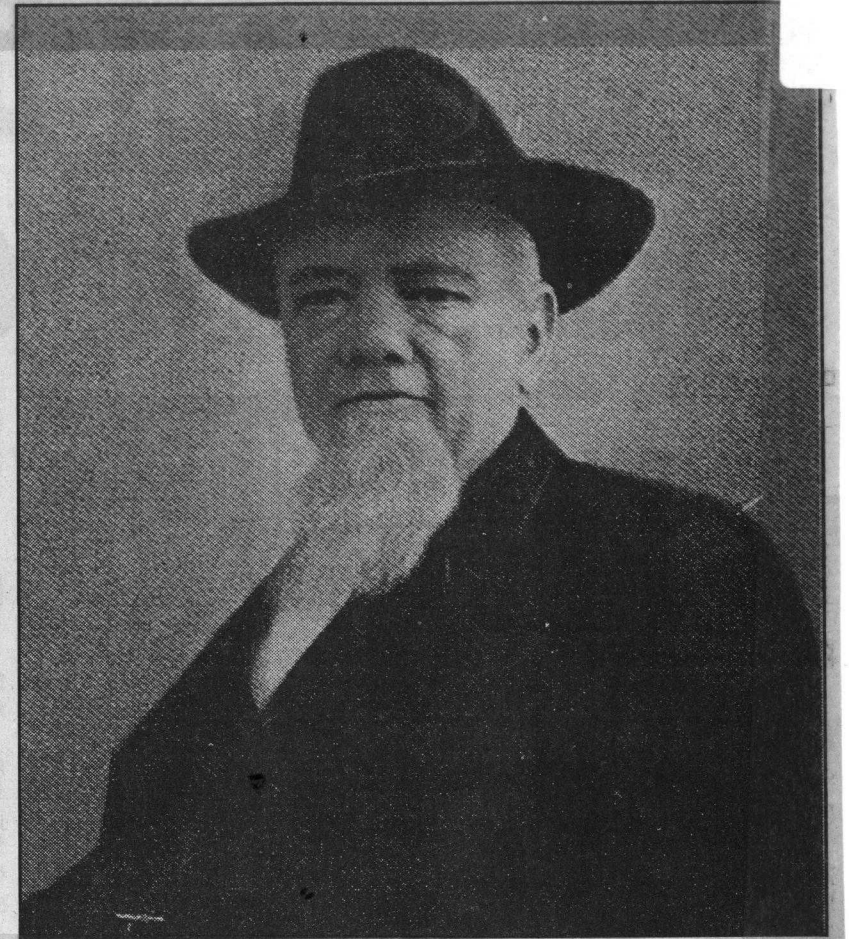
Over on Rodriguez Street, at the corner of W. Beach where the discount store is now located, was the Conover Line of stages, which ran from San Juan to Santa Cruz leaving Watsonville at 1 p.m. Travel to Santa Cruz was on one day and to San Juan on alternate days.

Sydney Conner was one of the crack stagecoach drivers of his day. He entered the livery business in 1866, after working at Ford and Sanborn's for several years.

Charley Parkhurst, the crack stagecoach driver, was associated with Conner. Upon Charlie's death, it was discovered that he was a woman and had posed as a man all his (her) life.

Horses were a valuable and necessary commodity in those early days with horse stealing a bigger crime, in many cases, than that of murder. The stagecoaches, wagons and vaqueros all needed one of the most valuable animals that man ever domesticated. At one time a stage ride to Santa Cruz, comparable to a bus ride today, was down to the price of 25 cents. But without the thrill of those early stagecoach rides on the narrow, dusty and bumpy roads that shook your innards and left you wondering if you ever wanted to travel again!

Betty Lewis, a local historian, is a contributing columnist to the Register-Pajaronian.



Thomas Kennedy

Courtesy Betty Lewis