

# Two historic homes on Beach Road

By BETTY LEWIS

Out on Beach Road stand two houses that evoke considerable interest from passersby — the former Redman and Thurwachter homes. Driving toward the beach, you would first pass the Redman house. The large, two and a half story Victorian structure sits out in the middle of a field which is bounded on two sides by Lee and Beach Roads. Its former elegance has been lost to time and the elements. Built in 1897, it was designed by that prolific Watsonville architect, William H. Weeks, and the building contract was let to Will Porter. His was the lowest bid, \$3,368, in a field of five. Porter, however made a hasty departure from town and the local firm of Lamborn & Uren finished the construction.

James Redman arrived in Watsonville at the age of nine with his parents, Kenrick and Matilda. Other members of the family were Sara Ann (Mrs. Owen S. Tuttle); Mary (Mrs. Cassius Oliver); Oda (long-time Watsonville school teacher); Christy, Frank and Vina. After attending local schools, Redman took up farming as did his father before him. In 1882 he moved out to the Beach Road property; the 1883 Census records show him as owning 70 acres of land valued at \$5,170.

Redman married Lulu Harlan, and they had an adopted daughter by the name of May. Lulu died in 1903, and Redman then married Mrs. Ellen Woody (the sister of Judge A. B. Hawkins) in 1915. James Redman had died in 1921 at the age of sixty-four and the local newspaper noted:

"Jim Redman was a good man of a quiet, unassuming, retiring nature, his many sterling qualities were recognized by those who knew him."



The Redman home has fallen into disuse and disrepair.

"... Mr. Allen, the contractor, is erecting a fine large dwelling house for Mr. Thurwachter, which, when finished, will be a credit to the valley . . . . We are pleased to see this evidence of prosperity following Mr. Thurwachter, for he is entitled to Fortune's smiles, he being one of our best farmers . . . ."

—The Pajaronian, September 14, 1871

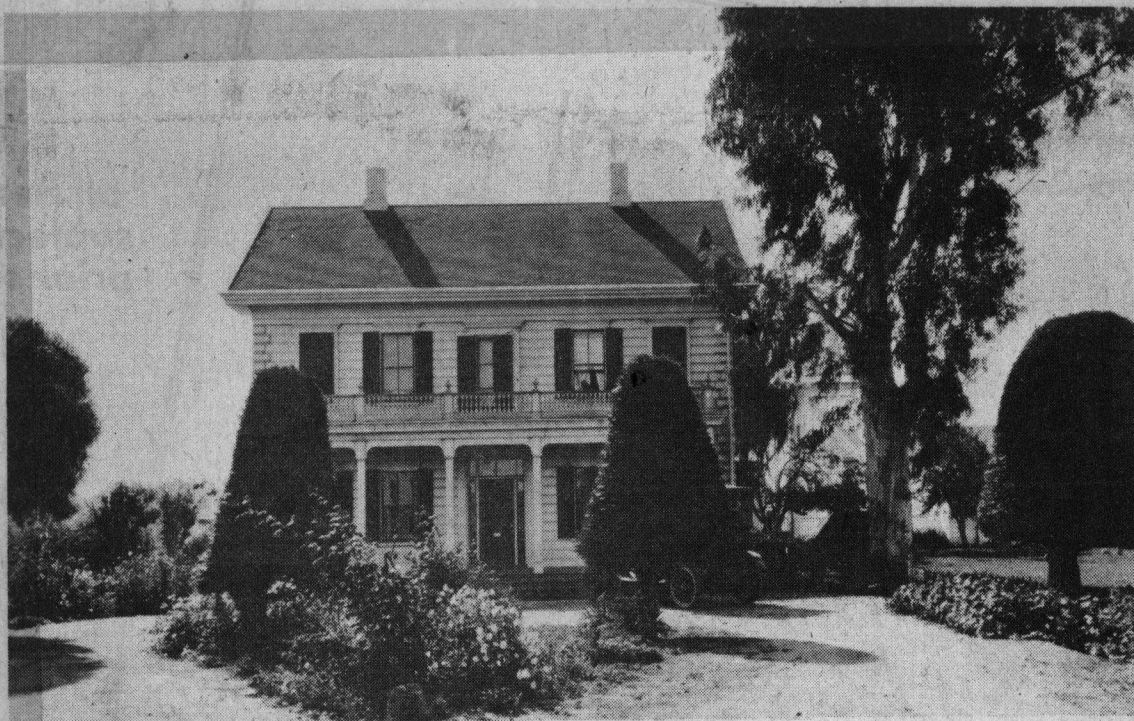
Frederick Thurwachter was born in Germany in 1833 and came to America in 1850. In 1854, after four years in New York, he came to California and lived in Soquel for five years. He then moved to the Pajaro valley, where he married

Catherine Sweeney, a native of Ireland. He purchased his ranch on Beach Road in 1866 — 113½ acres which were planted to Bellefleur apples, barley and potatoes.

The two story house with its veranda running across the upper floor boasts chimneys built by Kingsley King, father of Pajaro King, the first white child to be born in the Pajaro Valley. Its style is reminiscent of midwestern homes in the early days. Old timers remember the heavily laden tables of food on a Sunday afternoon, as friends and relatives would go by horse and buggy to the Thurwachter house and partake of their hospitality.

The landmark cypress trees

were first shaped in the late 1920s, when the Filipino gardener decided to cut out an airplane on one side in honor of Charles A. Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic. A star appeared on the other side denoting that Lindbergh was a "star flyer." This started a practice that continued for many years, as succeeding gardeners cut around the existing figures and added a few of their own. The "V" for victory and star was for soldiers at Camp McQuaide during World War II and the "Ella" for the Thurwachter's daughter. "Eileen" was in honor of Eileen West, Ella's step-niece and companion for many years. Frederick and Catherine had seven children.



Thurwachter house, circa 1920, before the trees were cut.

"After suffering for some time past from a complication of ailments incidental to his advanced age, the soul of Frederick Thurwachter took flight to its maker yesterday morning about two o'clock . . . His passing away will bring a pang of regret to all the old timers of this valley, for he was one of the earliest settlers, and his many friends and acquaintances will grieve deeply, for he was a fine man, upright and just — of many sterling characteristics, and enjoyed the confidence and esteem of all who knew him ."

The Evening Pajaronian,  
March 16, 1914

His wife, Catherine, had died just two months previously. The house stayed in the family for many years but is now owned by Steve and Tom Mine.

The Redman and Thurwachter houses are only two of Watsonville's older homes, but they are outstanding, and prominent, examples of the valley's early years and its architectural history.