

# Watsonville's longtime Friend

Bio-F

RP 5-17-07



That Was  
Watsonville

## Betty Lewis

Ralph Spyker Friend: here was a man who was very active in the Watsonville community plus other pursuits. He served as president of the Watsonville Savings and Loan, building contractor including extensive buildings, at Camp McQuaide, the 250th Coast Artillery and Fort Ord. He built many homes, business buildings and processing plants.

Friend built the gas building on Main Street that is being moved to Auto Center Drive. He owned the Pajaro Valley Hardware store at 12 Peck St. and he served as president of the Watsonville Federal Savings and Loan Association. During World War II, Friend joined the U.S. Army of Engineers and was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service. When he was in Antwerp, he was very popular with the people — they called him the mayor, which he was.

Friend married Grace, who died a short time ago at age 104. He also left a son, Eugene; daughter, Geraldine; and brother, Earl.

Ralph became president of the Watsonville Chamber of Commerce in 1937.

Following are some of the things that happened while he was at this job.

- For the Fourth of July celebration, there was a "Whiskerino" contest. The men were judged by their blackest, reddest or bushiest hair in order to win a prize.

- After a very spirited campaign, Carolyn Ellis was named Goddess of Liberty for the holiday celebration.

- A jail building was to be built, a new post office opened on Union Street and new high



Courtesy of Betty Lewis

## Ralph Spyker Friend is shown.

school gym was built by architects, William H. and Harold Weeks.

- A playground for children opened on Second Street and model homes were built in the new Hyde Park Tract. The Santa Cruz County Fair was held on Nov. 11-14 in the Watsonville Civic Auditorium.

Jenkin and Evert now ran the Evening Pajaronian, Morning Register and the Register-Pajaronian newspapers. When Ralph Friend had served his year as president of the Chamber of Commerce, Joe D. Anna took over the reigns. Friend had purchased a farm on San Juan Road in the '50s and built the house there.

He was to die at the age of 66 in 1967 of a heart attack. Friend was born on June 1, as I was, but in 1901. He was a descendent of Pocahontas, as written in the book "Pocahontas and her descendants" by Wyndham Robertson and R. A. Brock.

Ralph was a charter member and past president of the Watsonville Rotary Club. On the day he died, the Rotary Club adjourned their meeting in his honor.

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*Betty Lewis, a local historian and Watsonville resident, is a regular columnist for the Register-Pajaronian.*