

# Local Masons followed ceremony and tradition

On November 5, 1855, the first meeting of the Pajaro Lodge No. 110 F. & A.M. was held in Watsonville. By March of 1857, the Masons were meeting on the second floor of Charles Ford's new store — he was a charter member of the organization. Other meeting places over the years included the Hildreth Building, Stoesser Block and then back to the Hildreth Building. They met on the Saturday of or preceding the full moon of each month. In 1860, the Masons were thinking about building a place of their own and a lot was purchased adjoining the city plaza for \$250 from the Fletcher family but, in March of 1863, the property was sold to Charles Ford for the same price. The Masons had decided not to build at that time.

In June of 1870, the annual St. John's Day was celebrated with Thomas Beck as the Master Mason. Two Hundred Masons headed by a brass band marched to Craig's grove, a half mile from town, where orations and music prevailed for several hours. The group then marched back into town to Allen's Hall for a splendid dinner then on to Hildreth's Hall for the grand ball to climax a busy and entertaining day.

A ticket for the Masonic Ball in 1881 sold for \$1.50 and the affair was held at the Rink, also known as the Opera House and Liberty Hall. The reception committee consisted of Charles Ford, A. Lewis. M.



**Betty  
Lewis**

That was  
Watsonville

Phelan, James Ingham and J.L. Halsted. The floor director of the evening was John T. Porter.

In 1910, when the local Masons paid the funeral costs for one of their brothers, the following bill was submitted by Wyckoff & Aston, funeral directors: Return fright on coffin and box \$1.35; Telephone \$1.10; Transportation of remains \$4.40; Removal permit \$2.50; Attendance \$10.00 and Dead wagon and team \$5.00.

In 1912, land was purchased on the corner of Maple and Union for the building of a Masonic Temple. The cornerstone was laid in November of 1912 and a large crowd gathered on the site for the occasion. The Watsonville Band rendered the song "Rock of Ages" and the Rev. C.L. Thackeray gave the invocation. The main speaker for the day was Grand Master George Perrine. In part, he said: "An order which has existed for thousands of years like the Masonic order can only be founded on truth and a morality that is universal and the best for the best

men of all ages..."

After the ceremonies, the lodge members marched back to the old hall for a social evening. The formal dedication for the new Masonic building was held in May of 1913. "Scores of Masons from this city and other localities in the state were present to attend the exercises and the services both Saturday afternoon and drew large crowds. Many of the State Grand officers were present as well to add dignity to the occasion and all were pleased with the reception that was tendered them and all were enthusiastic over the prosperous and successful standing of the local Masonic Lodge."

Local attorney John Gardner delivered the oration of the day. Afterwards, local and visiting Masons sat down to a splendid dinner in the old meeting room over Ford's store. This was followed by a reception and grand ball in the new Masonic Temple. On June 26, 1924, the mortgage on the temple was burned and, in December of 1937, Edward Pfingst presented the lodge with the trowel used by the Grand Master when he laid the cornerstone back in 1912.

In April of 1952, the lodge members decided to sell the hall and build a new temple in another location but no action was taken and two years later the Masonic building was refurbished. The Moorish style of architecture of the building

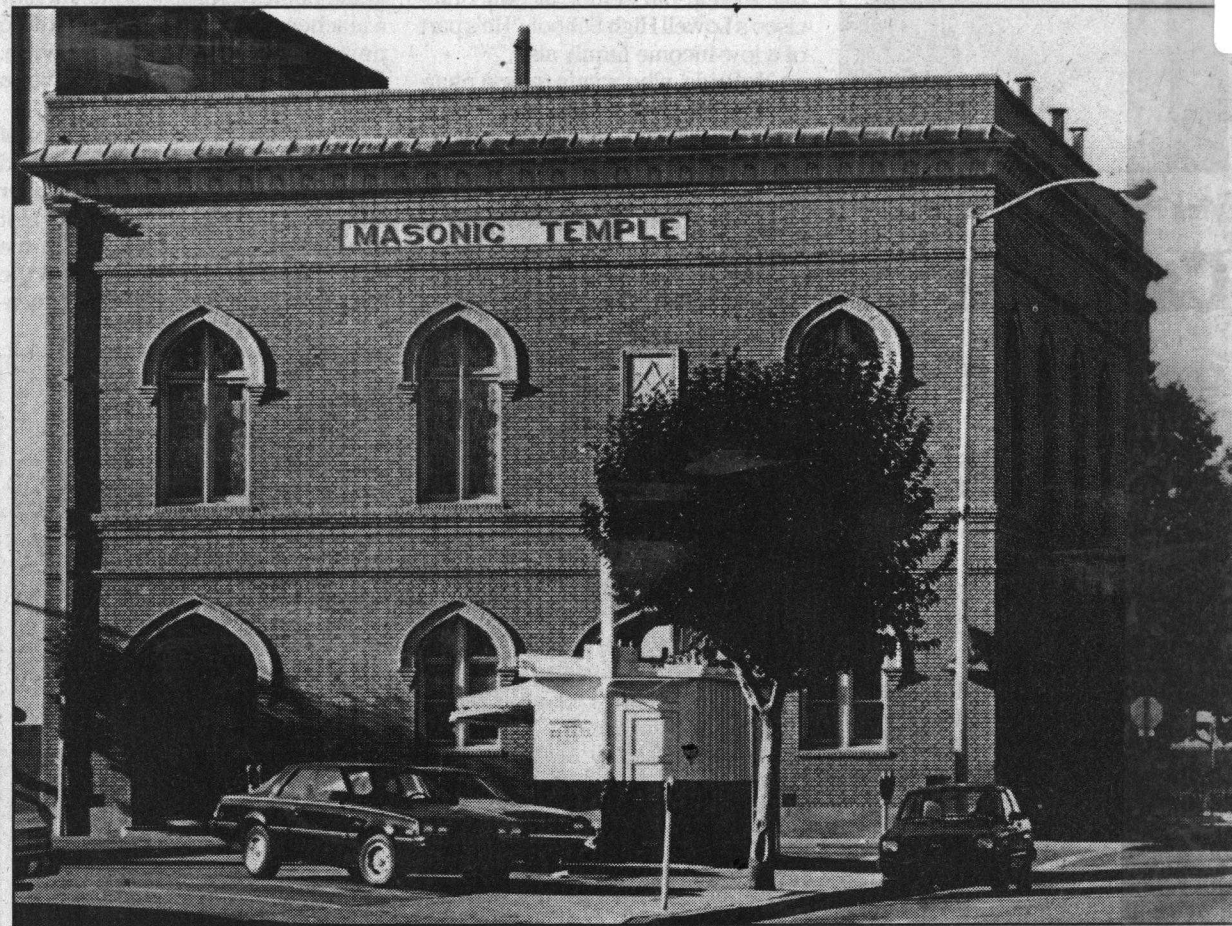


Photo by Diane Varni/1986

**The Masonic Temple, built in 1913 on the corner of Maple and Union streets, was demolished after the 1989 earthquake.**

was very unique in the town of Watsonville until 1989 when it had to be torn down after the earthquake in

October of that year and the property, in back of the Fox Theater, is now a parking lot.

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