

The Tuttle Mansion on East Lake Avenue is one of three Watsonville structures to be awarded the Historical Landmark Blue Plaque.

Tarmo Hannula/
Register-Pajaronian



City home to three Blue Plaque honorees

Historic Houses - South County

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Awards ceremony is Saturday afternoon

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✓ **WATSONVILLE** — Three buildings in Watsonville will be awarded the prestigious historical landmark Blue Plaque at the 41st annual Blue Plaque Awards Ceremony Saturday. The Tuttle Mansion (1899), the Lamborn house (1900), currently the

Pajaro Valley Arts Council, 37 Sudden St., and the Pioneer Cemetery (circa 1852), 66 Marin St., will be issued the oval blue plaque at the 1 p.m. ceremony held at the Museum of Art and History in Santa Cruz.

The other buildings getting the Blue Plaque around the county are: Daniel Williams Family Residence (1888), Ben Lomond Library and Club House (1914), F.W. Swanton Cottage (1910), Smith's China Shop (1940), Rio Cycloramic Theatre (1949), and the Howe House (circa 1888).

The Pioneer Cemetery is particularly noteworthy in that so many names that make up numerous street names around Watsonville are there, said Ann Jenkins, a member of the Blue Plaque Committee. Charles Ford and S.G. Martinelli have graves here along with Trafton, Wheelock, Peckham, Esther Steinbeck Rodgers (sister of John Steinbeck), and there is a plot for the William Weeks family. Charley Darkey Parkhurst's grave is also at Pio-

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neer. "One-eyed Charley" was a famous stagecoach driver, who drove the San Juan Bautista-San Jose-Santa Cruz route and was described by cemetery manager Everett Dias as "sharp-shootin', tobacco chewin', cussin', best stage coach driver around." At the time of his burial it was discovered that Charley was indeed a woman.

Pioneer also has a Japanese burial ground and the site of the first Japanese burial in the Pajaro Valley, Sakuzo Kimura, a Japanese immigrant worker and well-respected labor contractor, Jenkins said.

Run by the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, the Historic Landmark Program awards blue plaques to buildings in the county deemed architecturally or historically significant and which meet criteria including that structures must be at least 50 years old and in good condition. Additionally, the property owner must pay for the plaques.

"The Blue Plaque ceremony is a great way to celebrate the interesting and diverse historical architecture in our county," said Suzi Merriam, senior planner for the City of Watsonville.

Since the program started in 1973, about 250 of the blue plaques have been awarded in Santa Cruz County. The program is purely honorary, and helps to spotlight the architectural significance of buildings.

The Tuttle Mansion was constructed by architect William Weeks for Morris B. Tuttle and his family. Morris Tuttle moved to California from Iowa in 1873 with his family, where he finished his education. He was raised on a farm family, and began his farming career in Hollister.

Tuttle married Mary Ingles, another Iowa native, in 1880, and they had six children, including twin girls. In 1892, Tuttle bought 30 acres of land just outside of Watsonville on East Lake Avenue, which eventually grew to around 300 acres. Tuttle was known as an excellent fruit grower, and one of the upmost authorities on horticulture and farming in the community.



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The Lamborn house is at 37 Sudden St.

With his unparalleled farming success, Tuttle wanted to build a showpiece residence that would stand out in the Pajaro Valley. He hired the esteemed architect William Weeks to design an elaborate Queen Anne Victorian residence, which encompassed Richardsonian Romanesque details including the blocks of rough-hewn granite and Arizona sandstone on the first floor of the house.

The total cost to construct the mansion was \$20,000 — \$5,000 of which was just for the woodwork, Merriam said.

Morris Tuttle died in 1937, and his son Warren inherited the house. Warren Tuttle remodeled the interior of the house in 1939, converting it into four modern apartments with a kitchen and garage for each tenant.

The property changed owners several times until it was purchased by Oliver Realty in 1974, with the building remodeled into office suites.

The structure sustained significant damage in the 1989 earthquake, which damaged the foundation. It took two years of work to restore the building's exterior, first floor and lower balcony.

The property is still occupied by commercial offices, including Oliver Realty and Dusty Treasures Antiques, ownership of the property having passed down to the descendants of Frank Oliver.

Josiah Lamborn was born in Indiana in 1845. He was born to a farming family, and helped work the family farm in between stints at school.

Lamborn came of age during the Civil War, and enlisted in Company K, 48th Infantry from Indiana in 1864, serving his time during the last year and a half of the war.

Lamborn moved to Watsonville in 1893, at the age of 48, and took advantage of the opportunities available in this growing town. It was said that when people saw the character of his work, they began to give him contracts, Merriam said. He built houses for Warrant Porter and L. J. Hopkins, as well as his own house at 37 Sudden St.

Lamborn had Weeks design his home on Sudden Street, which was constructed by Lamborn himself. The Queen Anne Victorian residence includes a raised, wide, curvilinear wrap-around porch, with delicately turned porch rails, patterned wood shingling with varying designs, including waves, and a hipped roof.

The house was occupied as a single-family residence until it was purchased by Jim and Marjorie Peixoto, a local farming family, in 1998. The property was donated to the city for use as a park site, with the stipulation that handball courts be built at the rear.

The handball courts were immediately built, and then the Pajaro Valley Arts Council negotiated a long-term lease in exchange for the renovation of the building.

The Blue Plaque ceremony is free and open to the public. The event begins at 1 p.m. at 705 Front St. in Santa Cruz. For information, call 429-1964.