

Depot time capsule unearthed



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

ABOVE: Pajaro Valley Historical Association archivist Jane Borg joins David Pickett (center), general attorney for Union Pacific Railroad, in sifting through items left in a 1949 time capsule in a cornerstone of the Southern Pacific depot at Watsonville Junction in Pajaro Tuesday. **BELOW:** Cards from the Lions Clubs, Granite Construction Co. and Gene Morton distinguished clothing for men were among the dozens of cards found in the capsule.

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Historical items saved before Union Pacific station gets demolished

By TODD GUILD

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

If it hadn't been for the intervention of a Watsonville historian, a bit of history would likely have been lost forever.

After Jane Borg, an archivist with the Pajaro Valley Historical Association, learned that the Union Pacific station on Salinas Road was to be torn down, she remembered that a time capsule had been placed behind a cornerstone there in 1949.

Grainy black-and-white photos provided by the historical association show then-Mayor C.H. Baker placing the box in a small alcove in the wall, along with several other men who



were dedicating the building upon its completion.

There the time capsule sat, waiting to be unearthed, for more than six decades.

But the capsule, a small box of thick-gauge copper welded together and stuffed with dozens of bits of memorabilia, was forgotten over the years, and

was all but certain to fall victim to wrecking crews.

But Borg contacted Union Pacific representatives and told them about the capsule. Plans were immediately made to extract the capsule and the historical treasures it contained.

Borg was the honored guest at the depot Tuesday, where representatives from Union Pacific and the historical association broke away the cornerstone and chipped away the mortar that held the box.

Borg said the event — and the ceremony to open the time capsule — was especially

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Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

ABOVE: Jim Rector shows the copper time capsule that he and Antonio Borraro (right) dug out of the wall. **BELOW:** This 1949 photo from the Register-Pajaronian shows Watsonville Mayor C.H. Baker (left) with a mortar-filled trowel on the day the time capsule was sealed into a Southern Pacific building cornerstone. (Photo courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association)



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meaningful to her. Her grandfather was a Union Pacific employee for many years.

"That's why I'm here," she said. "Because he retired here."

The trains that passed through the Pajaro Valley hauled massive amounts of fruits and vegetables grown here, which shifted to products such as lumber, Borg said.

"The Watsonville depot was so important, not just for Pajaro, but for the whole community," she said.

With dozens of attendees watching, workers cut away the stone and the mortar, then pried the box loose from the wall. Then they cut away the top with a grinder, a process that took about 10 minutes.

Finally, the box was opened, and Borg and Union Pacific employee David Pickett, both wearing white gloves to protect what was inside, slowly began to take out the artifacts.

These included several business cards, notes, railroad regulation books and timetables, many of which bore the names of people who have since died and businesses that have faded into the annals of history.

Other items show the names of residents and businesses, such as J.J. Crosetti, Granite Construction employee John Porter and Blanche Tuttle, who was secretary to Baker.

"All these cards give us a sense of how important this was to the community," Pickett said. "Everybody wanted in on this."

One of the business cards was that of Mabel Curtis, who ran the PVHA many years ago.

"We're still finding notes from her, saying 'do XYZ,'" Borg joked.

The time capsule also contained a note written by Anna Wilson, who was Betsy Woolpert's mother and Graniterock CEO Bruce Woolpert's grandmother.

Today, the Graniterock quarry on Old Chittenden Road still bears the Wilson name, Borg said.

Some of the artifacts will go to the historical association's archives, while others will go to the Union Pacific museum in Omaha, Neb.

"We take our history very seriously," Pickett said.

The depot building, which was seriously damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, is scheduled to be demolished within the next 120 days, said Union Pacific spokesman Aaron Hunt.

Hunt said the property will still be used by Union Pacific. A modular office will take the place of the building for the foreseeable future, he said.

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