

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

6
NATIONAL
REGISTER

JUN 08 1992

OHP

1. Name of Property

historic name: Lettunich Building

2. Location

street & number: 406 Main Street

city/town: Watsonville

not for publication: N/A

Vicinity: N/A

state: CA County: Santa Cruz Code: 087 zip code: 95076

3. Classification

Ownership of property: private

Category of property: building

Number of Resources within property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> Sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> Total

Total of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Stacy R. Cray
Signature of certifying official

August 19, 1992
Date

California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
_____ See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the
National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): _____

**Entered in the
National Register**
Delores Zepher 9/24/92

[Signature] Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: commerce/trade

Sub: business
professional
financial institution

Current: commerce/trade

Sub: professional
business

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Commercial Style

Other description: _____

Materials: foundation: concrete roof: wood
 walls: concrete
 Terra Cotta

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: LOCAL LEVEL

Applicable National Register criteria: A, C

Areas of significance: Commerce/Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1914

Significant dates: November, 1914

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder : Weeks, William Henry/Patterson, James (1914)
 Minton, Henry A. /Ralley, O.R. (1928)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

 See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Building Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record * _____

Primary Location of Additional Data.

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre.

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing

A. 10 610880 4085450

Verbal Boundry Description: See continuation sheet.

Boundry Justification: See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Kent L. Seavey/Preservation Consultant

Organization: N/A

Date: 4/15/92

Street & Number: 310 Lighthouse Avenue

Telephone: (408) 375-8739

City or Town: Pacific Grove

State: CA

Zip: 93950

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

The Lettunich Building is located in the commercial core of downtown Watsonville facing on the city's historic plaza. It is a four story "L" shaped reinforced concrete building in the Commercial Style constructed in 1914 with a flat roof, stucco siding, and terra cotta and sheet metal decoration on the street facing elevations. The three story "L" rises above a first floor retail space which is basically square in plan. Rows of paired 1/1 windows characterize the principal elevations. The original entry on Main St. is a terra cotta triumphal arch garlanded with local produce. A major change in the original building was the infilling of the first floor glass curtain wall in a 1928 remodel. The work was executed in an academic classicist vocabulary sympathetic to the original design. Other changes to the exterior are minor and reversible. The interiors above the first floor are essentially intact as constructed in 1914. Overall the building retains a high level of integrity.

Terra cotta belt and string courses organize the building mass into distinct horizontal divisions of base and shaft. The rusticated first floor with its differentiated end bays reinforce the corner masses of this large structure creating visual stability. The top story is slightly differentiated from those immediately below to provide a visual terminus for the enriched and projecting cornice supported with large modillions. The flat roof is covered with a fiber-aluminum coating, and has shaped skylights above a number of light wells. Fenestration includes paired 1/1 double hung wood sash between vertical piers. 3/2 and 3/3 double-hung wood sash characterize the (NE) side and rear elevations. The original steel fire shutters have been removed from these elevations giving them a somewhat unfinished appearance. All window openings above the first floor are original.

The first floor was originally designed (1914) as a glass curtain wall with large display windows topped by small paned obscure glass transoms. This "modern" look was redefined in historicist terms for the Bank of Italy in 1928 by infilling the wide display bays with rusticated monumental piers. On the Beach St. elevation (SE) paired pilasters capped with corporate capitals in an Ionic order were appended to the massive new piers between the differentiated end bays. The new first floor fenestration included deeply recessed fixed bronze framed windows behind low bronze grilles with a decorative band of B of I symbols separating smaller paned fixed windows above. An original entry at the corner of Main and E. Beach Sts. was closed at this time when the bank shifted its new entrance one bay NW along Main Street. The original bronze Bank of Italy entry remains, albeit with a modern aluminum door.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

The building's principal 1914 entrance is also intact along the Main St. elevation in the form of a terra cotta triumphal arch celebrating local agriculture, particularly the apple. This feature has sustained some damage from the Loma Prieta earthquake but will be repaired in kind. Of particular note is the 1914 exterior lighting system still intact on the building and operational. It consists of a series of light sockets for exposed bulbs rising vertically along the buildings corners and under the projecting roof cornice defining its edges. This feature also outlines the original entrance on Main Street. The concrete coffered ceiling with consoles from the Bank of Italy occupation is still intact although the floor configuration has changed at least twice, (1969 & 1977).

The 1914 entry hall with its tile floors and marble wainscoating retains to a remarkable degree its integrity as constructed. So too the general appearance of the upper floors of the building. Hall runners cover the tile but the marble baseboards are in place. Square, fixed obscure glass windows high in the walls allow ambient sunlight to filter through the office spaces into the building's interior. The only noticeable change to the interior is the entry to the modern elevator that replaced the original. Even the Cutler Mail Chute is in place and working. Once the commercial anchor of the community's business core the Lettunich Building is the only early commercial structure facing Watsonville's historic city plaza to survive destruction from the Loma Prieta earthquake. Six older business houses were destroyed along Main St. and two, including the 1893 I.O.O.F. Hall along the E. Beach frontage.

In December of 1913 site work began on the new Lettunich Building. The Mansion House, a landmark Watsonville hostelry, was moved from the corner of Main and Third (E. Beach) Sts. where it faced SE onto the city plaza to a lot adjacent to the proposed construction facing SW on Main street. In early April contractor James Patterson of San Jose commenced excavation of the building site and construction began. The four story steel and concrete building had a Main Street frontage of 121 feet with 114 feet along Third (E. Beach) Street. The new "skyscraper" as it was referred to in the local press was to have five stores at street level facing Main and two along E. Third. These retail establishments were to be behind a plate glass curtain wall. The curtain wall was altered in a 1928 remodel, however some elements of the original first floor design remain. 410 Main still retains the 1914 marble and tile entry with its modified Greek key boarder motif. At the NW end of 412

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

Main one can find the original Plummers Disappearing Awning crank plate and its decorative metal trim that appears in a Greek key pattern as a partial surround in the window trim of the three existing retail stores along this elevation.

The original vestibule entrance on Main with its damaged terra cotta triumphal arch is otherwise intact as built. Small octagonal floor tiles enframed with a Greek key boarder lead inside the building where one finds the eight foot marble wainscoating and all other decorative trim including the steel framed staircase in good order. Only the original electric elevator has been modified over time. So too the case with the interior upper floors where paint changes and rugging are the only modifications to the original design and these are reversible. Typically light is brought into the interior hall spaces by a series of window and skylight treatments. These include six-light obscure glass ceiling panels in the lightwells, and large fixed four-light hall windows as part of the deeper lightwells. These features are found adjacent to the restrooms on each floor which have single two light double-hung wood sash opening onto the lightwells for ventilation. As noted in the summary paragraph fixed obscure glass transoms high in the hall walls allow ambient light to enter from the street-facing offices.

Of note is the existance of the original terra cotta street signage found in the entablature frieze above the first floor at the northerly corner of Main and E. Beach that still reads Main St. and Third St.

The exterior appearance of the building above the first floor has not changed since construction save for periodic repainting. The principal elevations along Main and E. Beach Sts. are enriched with decorative belt and string courses and the projecting roof cornice drawing from the classicist vocabulary. Subtle Baroque effects are found in the treatment of the Main St. entry and the third story window heads in the differentiated end bays where terra cotta cornucopia attempt to spill the ever present apple over the casings. The galvanized iron cornice, with its rich modillions seperated by rosettes for incandescent light bulbs below, and stylized shields above was furnished and installed by the P.J. Freirmuth Co. of Watsonville. The local press called the cornice work at the time the largest installation south of San Francisco. Freirmuth was also responsible for all the exterior lighting. A total of 123 electric globes illuminated the building's outline in the evenings. The system is intact and still functions. As of this writing no other comparable example of exterior illumination for the period has been identified on the

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

central coast. The original building was constructed in six months for a cost of \$100,000.00

In 1928 with the lease of the first floor along Third (E. Beach) St. to the Bank of Italy the Lettunich Building underwent an \$80,000.00 remodel. The man in charge was Henry A. Minton of San Francisco, corporate architect for the B of I. Removing the curtain walls Minton reinforced the steel columns with thick, rusticated piers matching those of the differentiated end walls. This treatment was carried to the SE corner of the original arched entry along Main Street. The principal bank entry was moved NW along Main St. from the corner of Third where a 1914 entrance had existed. Concrete pilasters capped with corporate capitals in an Ionic order flanked the new bank entry.

Paired pilasters of the same design surmounted the infill piers along Third (E. Beach) St. between the differentiated end bays. Window treatment of the remodeled first floor kept the height of the original glazing above low concrete infill walls. Standard sized rectangular plate glass fixed windows set in corporate bronze casings were capped by smaller paned transom lights above. The original (1928) Bank of Italy bronze entry is still in place on the Main St. elevation. The only modification being the addition of aluminum double doors. Decorative ironwork is seen in the base of deep window reveals and as a grille over an open air return near the SE corner of the building along E. Beach Street. There is a second entry at this location with double glass and bronze panel doors with the transom above. All of these corporate fixtures were fabricated by the Federal Ornamental Iron Works.

The interior of the Bank of Italy space has been occupied by two other financial institutions since it was established in 1928. The coffered concrete ceilings remain in place and unaltered from the Minton remodel as do the two large safety deposit vaults installed by the Herman Safe Company at the time.

The three storefronts NW of the 1914 Main St. entry underwent remodeling in 1977. The transom windows were covered over below the first floor entablature and plastered. A belt course between the display windows and infill was used to unify the design and pull the units together. The marble panels below the display windows were replaced with a colored formica to assist in the unifying process. This work appears to be reversible. In 1990 Gotcher Associates seismically retrofitted the building with no visible change the the appearance as described.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

The Lettunich Building has not changed appreciably in its appearance since its first floor remodeling by Henry A. Minton in 1928. Minton did an excellent job of integrating his design into the handsome 1914 Renaissance/Baroque three-part commercial block by William H. Weeks which is intact as constructed above the ground floor. The building has been a key anchor to the commercial core of the community over time and continues in that role in spite of the loss of a major portion of the downtown to the Loma Prieta Earthquake. Despite these losses or perhaps because of them The Lettunich Building retains to a remarkable degree its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling and association. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period with its method of construction. It represents the mature work of a major California architect, William Henry Weeks, and is bound to yield information important to the history and development of Watsonville and the Monterey Bay region.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

The 1914 Lettunich Building is significant under Criterion A in the area of commerce because of its association with an important period of economic growth in Watsonville between 1910 and 1915. This development was a direct result of the rapid expansion of the community's apple industry. The building is also significant in the architectural history of Watsonville under Criterion C as the work of a master, William H. Weeks. It was in Watsonville that Weeks first established his statewide reputation as an architect. Between 1892 and 1929 he designed at least 53 commercial and 91 residential buildings for the community in a variety of architectural styles. At this writing 19 commercial and 46 residential properties from his work remain. The Lettunich Building is Weeks best remaining example in the Commercial Style. It has a particularly strong presence and sense of time and place, and exemplifies the architect's consummate skill with the arrangement and massing of large volumes and his inventiveness with the decorative vocabulary of academic classicism.

Criterion A

Watsonville was originally known as Pajaro, a crossroads with one store and a few scattered residences on the Rancho Bolsa de Pajaro granted to Sebastian and Alejandro Rodriguez in 1837 by Governor Alvarado. In 1852 the name change occurred in a land dispute involving Judge John H. Watson, an early California legislator, and others. The area's fertile soil quickly made it an important agricultural center. In 1851 J. Bryant Hill was the first to produce potatoes and grain in quantity in the Pajaro Valley for market in the mother lode mines. The success of his venture saw an influx of settlers by 1853 with attendant growth in the small settlement.

By the early 1860s, with a population of 460, the town got its first telegraph and a turnpike road had been cut to connect Watsonville with the San Jose markets. Produce was also being shipped by coastal steamers to San Francisco from Pajaro and Moss Landings. The agricultural success of the region saw Watsonville's incorporation as a city in 1868, the principal shipping point in southern Santa Cruz County. While apples were introduced as a commercial crop in the same decade, barley and wheat were the area's mainstays with world record yields in 1871. The arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad about this time, and its subsequent connection to F.A. Hihn's

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

narrow gauge running to Santa Cruz, saw Watsonville emerge as a major service and financial support center for the agricultural region.

In the early 1870s the Santa Clara Valley apple crop was hard hit by a blight of Oriental Scale. This afforded an opportunity for Watsonville orchardists to enter the apple market in a big way. New packing sheds and warehouses began to spring up. The burgeoning local lumber industry was able to supply plenty of wood for new construction and packing boxes. A direct result of this increase in agriculture was the establishment of the city's first financial institution in 1874, the Bank of Watsonville. The Corralitos Water Company was supplying enough irrigation to grow strawberries and like crops on a commercial scale. The city got its water and light company in 1878. Fruit drying had become a factor in the market and new facilities for this venture were appearing, many operated by Chinese labor.

The 1880s saw further agricultural and commercial growth with the introduction of sugar beets, produce that could be grown as a second crop in established orchards. German entrepreneur Claus Spreckels constructed the Western Beet Sugar Factory and its attendant infrastructure in Watsonville in 1888. That same year the Pajaro Valley National Bank and Pajaro Valley Savings and Loan opened for business, increasing the community's importance as a financial center. The previous year 1887 saw the arrival of M.N. and Mateo Lettunich in Watsonville. These Austrian cousins under the firm name M.N. Lettunich & Co., would vastly expand the Pajaro apple industry by opening it to national and world markets over the next two decades. Their attendant investments in real estate and banking would be responsible in part for an important period of Watsonville's growth just prior to WWI.

The 1890's saw the establishment of the Pajaro Valley Fruit Exchange. Formed in 1894 it was intended to keep the profits from processing produce in the local economy. Expanding markets and financial control of the industry allowed for continued residential and commercial growth in Watsonville. The chief arbiter of taste for this period of accelerated development was architect William Henry Weeks. In fact between 1894 and the late 1920s Weeks' designs, both residential and commercial, would define the architectural character of the community.

The phenomenal success of the sugar beet industry saw Spreckel's Watsonville factory replaced by a larger facility in the Salinas Valley in the

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

late 1890s. In spite of this loss by the turn of the century Watsonville had become the largest and most successful city in southern Santa Cruz County.

In 1902 the Watsonville Railroad and Navigation Company constructed a long wharf near the old Pajaro Landing feeding passengers and freight to the seaside for passage to San Francisco aboard their freighter, the F.A. Kilburn. This system also brought pleasure seekers to the Port Rogers resort that had developed near the mouth of the Pajaro River as a recreational facility, further expanding the community's economic base to include tourism.

The period 1905 to 1914 represented the consolidation of the apple industry as the Pajaro Valley's principal agricultural crop. If the bad news in 1906 was the damage caused to the city by the San Francisco earthquake, the good news was the development of an effective pesticide by Watsonville's W. H. Volk to combat Oriental Scale. 1906 was also the year that the Lettunich's consolidated their control over much of the real estate along the east side of the Main St. commercial core with the purchase of the Mansion House, one of Watsonville's oldest hotels.

By 1908 there were more than forty canneries, driers, Vinegar factories, packing houses and sheds in Watsonville with projections of at least a fifty percent increase in floor space to meet market demands for the following five years. The city Board of Trade determined to capitalize on the success of the apple with an annual festival. In 1909 the Watsonville Apple Annual Association was formed. Mateo Lettunich was one of its leading members. Modeled on the National Apple Show in Spokane, Washington, the first Apple Annual was scheduled for October 1910. The pavilion to house the festival was designed by Wm. H. Weeks.

The success of the Apple Annual was complete. More than 30,000 people attended the five day event making it the largest apple exhibit in world history. It would continue to draw visitors to Watsonville until 1914 when the event was moved to San Francisco. Later, incorporated as a part of the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition it lost its local identity. It ceased to exist in 1916 with the decline of the European export market as a result of WWI. However, its physical imprint on Watsonville is still visible in the form of the commercial development it generated during its brief existence. The *Evening Pajaronian* for October 11, 1913 noted: "Through the apple, Pajaro Valley has become one of the richest communities in California".

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

A direct product of the Apple Annual was the construction in 1911 of the Appleton Hotel. With the large increase of tourist traffic generated by the festival and its publicity, Watsonville found itself lacking in first class visitor accommodations. To alleviate the problem funds were derived by public subscription and stock sales to local inhabitants for the purchase of property and the construction of a modern hostelry. William H. Weeks was chosen to be its designer. Built along Wall St., (W. Beach St.) a block west of Main it introduced the Commercial Style of architecture to Watsonville. Unfortunately unsympathetic alterations over time have destroyed the basic integrity of the building.

In December 1913 M. N. Lettunich & Co. moved the Mansion House north along Main St. in order to capitalize on the increasing business activity generated by an expanding apple industry. In the spring of 1914 work commenced on the Lettunich Building. Located on one of the busiest corners in town it would become the largest and most technically modern business block in Watsonville. Because of these features and the building's handsome appearance many well established businesses and prominent professional people were quick to lease space in the new edifice.

Early tenants included a number of attorneys and medical doctors, among them Dr. P.K. Watters, a former mayor and founder of Watsonville's first hospital. Albert Files of Monterey opened a branch of the Nations Goods Store and Bazaar adjacent to Local druggist E. W. Hanson's new pharmacy in one of the store fronts along Main Street. Daly Brothers Dry Goods and Louise Hansen's Millinery occupied the Third (E. Beach) St. frontage. The occupancy rate increased from 30 percent at the time of opening to 60 percent by the end of the first year of operation. The building's first banking facility was established in 1919 when the Fruit Growers National Bank leased space along Main Street.

The immediate commercial success of the Lettunich Building soon made it the professional center of the city. Shortly after its opening in November 1914 the editors of the *Evening Pajaronian* observed that:

" The Messrs. Lettunich have shown their faith and confidence in the prosperity and future success of the community by erecting their new building, which is one of the most modern and up-to-date business blocks in the state. The new building has been an incentive to other individuals in the community, and has resulted in a building boom in this city. The Lettunich

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

block has acted as a stimulus to business and capital in the community".

Only three commercial buildings remain in Watsonville from the 1910-1915 era of economic expansion associated with the growth of the apple industry. The four story Appleton Hotel on W. Beach St. was constructed through public subscription in 1911 to accommodate the rapid influx of visitors brought by the popular Apple Annuals. The buff-colored, two story Brewington Block of 1914, with its patterned herringbone brick veneer and terra cotta cornice with festooned consoles at 428-432 Main St., housed the offices of the Western Union Telegraph Co. and other service support facilities at the street level and the Ames Hotel on the second floor. The third, the Lettunich Building was for many years the professional center of Watsonville's commercial life housing many of its leading medical, legal and financial firms as well as prominent retail stores.

Criterion C

William H. Weeks (1864-1936), the architect for the Lettunich Building had done work in Watsonville as early as 1892 when he drew plans for the First Christian Church. By 1894 he was a resident of the city and well on his way to becoming one of the leading designers in the Monterey Bay region. By 1897 the *Watsonville Pajaronian* could note that:

"Architect Weeks is one of the busiest men in this part of the state. He is looking after construction of a large number of buildings in the Pajaro and Salinas Valleys, and is busy preparing plans for new buildings. His work is first class testimonial of his high rank as an architect".

Weeks was the son of a contractor/builder. He was well schooled in the Beaux Arts academic tradition of his time, both through formal training at the Brinker Institute in Denver, Colorado and from practical work in the family firm. Over a career that spanned forty years he designed a recorded 53 commercial and 91 residential buildings in Watsonville. Of these approximately 19 commercial and 46 residential properties remain representing the wide range of architectural styles he worked in.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

By 1905 Weeks had opened an office in the new Flood Building in San Francisco and expanded his practice statewide. While his forte tended to be school buildings and libraries, his office handled a number of building types in a variety of popular architectural forms.

In the re-building of San Francisco after the earthquake of 1906, the two and three part Commercial Style block emerged as a dominant building form. In these structures the vertical mass is divided into principal zones where the analogy is made with the base, shaft, and capital of a classical column. The top story of the upper zone is oftentimes slightly differentiated from those immediately below it in order to assist the cornice in providing a visual terminus to the composition. The lower zone tends to be treated monumentally, often with rustication. The Renaissance/Baroque decorative vocabulary of academic classicism was the detailing of choice for most of these new vertical blocks rising from the post-earthquake ashes.

Architect Weeks and his office had been responsible for some of these buildings, most notably the richly ornamented Hotel Glenn of 1911 at the NE corner of Mason and Market Streets. The prominent cornice of this ten story building still functions as a focal point and strong visual anchor along Market Street.

Smaller communities with aspirations tended to openly emulate their regional urban centers in matters of commercial design. Such was the case in Watsonville. That same year, 1911, Weeks introduced the popular Commercial Style to the agricultural community in his plans for the publicly subscribed Appleton Hotel. Its four story vertical mass was zoned horizontally. The upper zone being slightly differentiated from those below. The building's exterior was enriched with decorative terra cotta panels above many of the window openings, and balconets to reinforce the uneasy symmetry of the fenestration. A richly ornamented metal marquee marked the original entrance along W. Beach Street. The least successful aspect of the Appleton Hotel was its ground floor treatment where the functional requirements of the building design conflicted with the historicist expression of the upper floors.

Weeks was able to resolve this problem in the Lettunich Building by wrapping the first floor with a glass curtain wall. The design accommodated the changing requirements of merchandising on the ground level where unencumbered showcase windows could be used to great advantage.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

These could also be remodeled without damaging the permanent character of the historicist upper floors. They also clearly defined the building's functional differences. His use of differentiated end bays with their wide rusticated piers reinforced the corner mass of this large building assuring its visual stability. Weeks' careful restraint and discipline of ornament in the building ensemble are a credit to his compositional skills.

His skill at arrangement and massing of large volumes, to which embellishment is always subservient, was unerring in its rightness to proportion. His buildings, large or small, residential or commercial always have a strong presence, and an inventiveness based upon his ease with the accomplishments of the past. As testament to his ability, upon completion of the commission the *Watsonville Register* described his new building as, "the handsomest as well as the most valuable business block in the city".

While stylistically academic the Lettunich building was thoroughly modern for its time in functional program. It contained an electric elevator, steam heating plant, a central mail chute system and even a compressed air vacuum cleaning plant with outlets on every floor. The eighty-seven office spaces were well lit with electric and natural light brought in through large, paired exterior double-hung sash windows supported by a liberal use of interior hall transoms, skylights and lightwells. The employment of an exterior electric lighting system framing the building envelope for night illumination was one of the first applications of this technology along the central coast. This feature of the building is still in place and operational.

The only major alteration to the building occurred in 1928 when its first floor was leased to the Bank of Italy. M. N. Lettunich had become Vice President of the Watsonville Fruit Growers Bank when it was established on May 1, 1919. He was President of the bank when it was sold to the Liberty Bank of America, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Bank of Italy, in 1927. That same year, through a merger of the two institutions and stock sale, the B of I became the second largest bank in the United States. M.N. Lettunich was appointed to the B of I Advisory Board after the merger. A portion of the first floor of the Lettunich Building became the Watsonville branch of the expanding financial institution.

San Francisco architect Henry A. Minton was tasked to integrate the Bank of Italy's corporate image into Week's original building design. To Minton's credit he was able to do so without detriment to the original composition.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

To accomplish this he infilled the glass curtain wall along Third (Beach) St. and part of Main by expanding the mass of the existing concrete piers. Closing the original corner entrance to the building at Third and Main Sts., he matched the rustication of the differentiated end bays firmly tying them to the ground. The new entrance was offset along Main with rusticated piers carrying as far as the original arched terra cotta entry. Minton flanked the new entry and its stock bronze and glass Bank of Italy hardware with concrete pilasters capped by corporate capitals featuring eagles in a composite order. Pairing these pilasters he faced the infilled piers along Third (Beach) St. to integrate it into the composition of the upper floors.

Minton's careful use of applied ornamentation from the academic classicist vocabulary provided a successful solution for the functional requirements of the bank as well as respecting the integrity of the original Week's composition. It is significant to note that the exterior design for the Bank of Italy branch office in the Lettunich Building is basically intact as executed in 1928. It may represent one of the last survivals of a major financial institution's early corporate architectural expression.

The Lettunich Building was constructed at the height of a significant period of economic growth and development in Watsonville. As the Editor of the *Watsonville Pajaronian* noted on the building's completion in November of 1914:

"As conclusive proof of the fact that Watsonville ranks as one of the most progressive and up-to-date cities in the state, one has but to look at the type of buildings constructed here in the last few years, the new Lettunich Building being the latest as well as the most modern of these structures. W. H. Weeks, the architect deserves credit for designing such a magnificent building for this city and the building will be a monument to his skill and ability".

William Weeks designed six office buildings in Watsonville between 1910 and 1916. Of the six only three remain, all in the Commercial Style of architecture. His first, the Appleton Hotel of 1911, has had an unsympathetic remodeling of the ground floor. It is currently being used for senior housing.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

The two story Brewington commercial block of 1914 suffered considerable structural damage as a result of the Loma Prieta Earthquake in 1989 and is currently undergoing remodeling as a hotel complex at the expense of the historic integrity of its first floor.

The Lettunich Building is the finest remaining example of Weeks' work in the Commercial Style in Watsonville. It retains to a remarkable degree its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. In the aftermath of the Loma Prieta Earthquake which saw the loss of five historic buildings facing the city plaza, it evokes a particularly strong sense of time and place and should be placed on the National Register at the local level of significance.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

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Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Watsonville. 1920 and 1940. Located at the McHenry Library, Univ. of Calif. at Santa Cruz.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

Verbal Boundry Description:

Beginning at a point at the intersection of the northeast corner of Main Street and E. Beach Street in Watsonville, thense running northwest 122 feet, bounded on the southwest by Main Street, thense running northeast 112 feet, bounded on the northwest by a commercial building, thense running southeast 122 feet, bounded on the northeast by a vacant lot, thense running southwest 112 feet to the point of beginning, the property is identified as part of Assessor's Parcel Number 017-022-027.

Boundry Justification:

The boundry includes that portion of the city lot that has historically been associated with the property.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Photographs Page 1 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA

(Except where noted the information for items 1 through 5 are the same for all the photographs listed.)

- #1 1. Lettunich Building
 2. 406 Main Street, Watsonville, CA 95076
 3. Unknown
 4. Ca. 1915
 5. John F. Devery, 220 Cypress Lane, Watsonville
 6. Looking northerly from the SW side of Main Street at the
 Lettunich Building about a year after completion.
 7. Photograph #1 of 10
- #2 3. Hagman
 4. Dec. 1914
 6. Looking northerly from the SW corner of Main Street at the
 Lettunich Building's unique exterior lighting system. Note
 the original corner entrance at Main and E. Beach Streets,
 bottom center of photo.
 7. Photograph #2 of 10
- #3 3. Kent L. Seavey
 4. 1991
 6. Looking north at the Lettunich Building from the SW side of
 Main Street. Basically the same view as #1 above. Note Minton
 alteration of 1928 along first floor from Main Street arch to
 and along E. Beach Street.
 7. Photograph #3 of 10
- #4 6. Looking westerly at the SE East Beach Street elevation from
 Watsonville's historic City Plaza.
 7. Photograph #4 of 10
- #5 6. Looking SW at NE side and NW rear elevations of the Lettunich
 Building. Note common wall with 1871 Mansion House to right.
 7. Photograph #5 of 10

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Photographs Page 2 Lettunich Bldg., Santa Cruz Co., CA
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- #6 6. Looking in a northerly direction from Main Street at the 1914 arched entry on the SW elevation of the Lettunich Building. Note apples above cornice, and damage sustained from the Loma Prieta Earthquake in 1989.
7. Photograph #6 of 10
- #7 6. Looking in a northerly direction from Main Street at the 1928 Bank of Italy entry on the SW elevation of the Lettunich Building. Note corporate capitals and stock bronze entry hardware.
7. Photograph #7 of 10
- #8 6. Looking north from the corner of Main Street and E. Beach Street at the original Main and Third Street signs mounted on the Lettunich Building. Note the exterior light fixtures above street signs.
7. Photograph #8 of 10
- #9 6. Looking west from the interior of the 1914 entry at the original eight foot marble wainscoating and tile floors of the Lettunich Building.
7. Photograph #9 of 10
- #10 6. Looking NE along the second floor hallway of the Lettunich Building showing original 1914 features in place. Marble baseboard and tile floors are covered by rugging. Photo taken with available ambient light from skylights, lightwells and system of interior obscure glass transoms that naturally illuminate the interior spaces.
7. Photograph #10 of 10