

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

Final

1. Name

historic WATSONVILLE CITY PLAZA

and/or common THE PLAZA

2. Location

street & number BOUNDED BY MAIN, PECK, UNION, & E. BEACH STREETS N/A not for publication

city, town WATSONVILLE N/A vicinity of 16th congressional district

state CALIFORNIA code 06 county SANTA CRUZ code 087

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Watsonville

street & number 250 Main Street

city, town Watsonville N/A vicinity of state California 95076

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Santa Cruz County Courthouse

street & number 701 Ocean Street

city, town Santa Cruz, CA 95060 state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Site Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date July 1976 federal state county local

depository for survey records William Volck Memorial Museum

city, town Watsonville, CA 95076 state

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Watsonville's town plaza is located in the heart of the town and is bounded by Main Street, Peck Street, Union Street and East Beach Street. There are four cement walkways leading from each outside corner of the plaza to the bandstand in the center. There are many benches available for people to sit on and rest. The landscaping is most attractive with grass, flowers, trees, and shrubs that are always kept in beautiful condition.

The plaza dominates and enhances the core area of the downtown/Main Street district. It is a part of the original Bolsa del Pajaro land grant once owned by the Rodriguez family and was given to the people of Watsonville by Sebastian Rodriguez in 1860. In the beginning, it was a grazing land for cattle and was to be improved over the years by landscaping, bandstand, fountains, lights, sidewalks, etc.

The diagonal layout of the walkways was established in the 1870's, along with the planting of several varieties of eucalyptus. A wooden bandstand was built at the western edge in 1880, but was removed when the new bandstand was constructed in 1906 at the center of the plaza. The designer of the new bandstand was the noted local architect, William H. Weeks. It was a circular platform of random coursed sandstone with sculptured grotesques and surmounted by cast iron lamp poles. In 1965, a canopy was added, designed by Robert Wong.

Other features on the property include a drinking fountain which was provided by the WCTU in 1893; a large fountain donated by the Butterfly Social Club in 1880; a cannon made prior to 1850 and installed at the northwest corner of the plaza in 1924; and an 1899 artillery cannon located at the southwest corner.

The appearance of the plaza dates primarily from the turn of the century after the addition of the present bandstand in 1906.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and Justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1906

Builder/Architect William H. Weeks (Bandstand)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The plaza has been the center of community life in Watsonville since 1860. It is one of the few remaining town squares in California which retains its historic appearance. The bandstand was designed in 1906 by the noted architect, William Weeks. Throughout its history, the plaza has been the focus of community gatherings and celebrations, and remains the heart of downtown Watsonville.

Don Sebastian Rodriguez donated the land to the people of Watsonville in 1860. Cattle roamed freely through the city square, grazing on the fertile land which was overgrown with weeds, bushes, trees, and other "natural" landscaping. Improved over the years, the plaza has been the scene of band concerts, fairs, Fourth of July celebrations, baseball games, orations, Christmas festivities, political rallies, exhibits, debates, picnics, dedications, and promotions--the list is endless.

In July of 1871, "great strides" were being made towards beautifying the plaza, according to the local newspaper. Boardwalks were constructed and were flanked on either side by some 50 trees consisting of four or five species of Australian gum trees. A strip of land along the Union Street side had been purchased by the Board of Trustees for \$120, adding 95 feet to the length, and 25 feet to the width. In 1873, a hitching rail was constructed along the Main Street side of the plaza. In 1877, The Pajaronian started a movement to have a fountain placed in the plaza, but the idea didn't materialize until 1879. The Butterfly Social Club, organized as a social club for young ladies of the community, offered to donate a fountain for the plaza. At one of their meetings, the young women had decided to become active in a worthwhile project for the betterment of the town--thus the fountain. Made in the east, the fountain was of bronze with a granite base, and was described as "highly ornamental". A brick and cement basin was constructed and the fountain was finished in time for the dedication ceremonies on the Fourth of July, 1880. In 1893, the fountain was moved to its present location facing East Beach Street.

At the same time, the sidewalks were covered with bitumen (asphalt), and a drinking fountain, donated by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, was installed near Main Street. The first bandstand was constructed in 1880 at a point near Main Street, but was later replaced by the present bandstand in the center of the plaza.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Watsonville - Memories That Linger, Betty Lewis, 1976, Valley Publishers
 Checkered History of the Plaza, Register Pajaronian February 26, 1976
 The Pajaronian, March 9, 1893; February 16, 1899.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.4 acres

Quadrangle name Watsonville West, California

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

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6	1	0	9	4	0
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4	0	8	5	4	4	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification

The Plaza occupies the entire 225.42' x 271.15' block bounded by Main Street, Peck Street, Union Street, and East Beach Street. Boundaries encompass the historic limits of the resource.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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state		code	county		code
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11. Form Prepared By

(OHP Staff Revision, 2/83)

name/title Betty Lewis, Historian

organization Pajaro Valley Historical Association

date March 24, 1982

street & number 261 East Beach Street

telephone (408) 722-0305

city or town Watsonville, CA 95076

state

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *K M Ell*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6/20/83

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for/ Linda McClelland
 Keeper of the National Register

date 8/22/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Other improvements came with the help of the Native Daughters of the Golden West who inaugurated the Plaza Improvement Society. The work of burning out eucalyptus stumps was begun; 800 loads of sand from the bed of the Pajaro River were brought in to fill the Plaza to street level; benches were provided. Piping of the Plaza was completed in February of 1899. About 1000 feet of pipe were laid "in such a way that all the Plaza can be watered from the taps."

An article in the local newspaper, The Pajaronian, described the Plaza in 1905:

"The Plaza, which forms the central point in Watsonville, is generally considered the prettiest miniature park in California. It is planted with palms and ornamental trees, and its ever verdant lawns of velvet green sward are bordered with a thick growth of scarlet geraniums which are in full bloom all the year. Saturday evenings, when the electric lights are lit and the excellent city band is discoursing melodious music, it presents the appearance of a scene in fairyland."

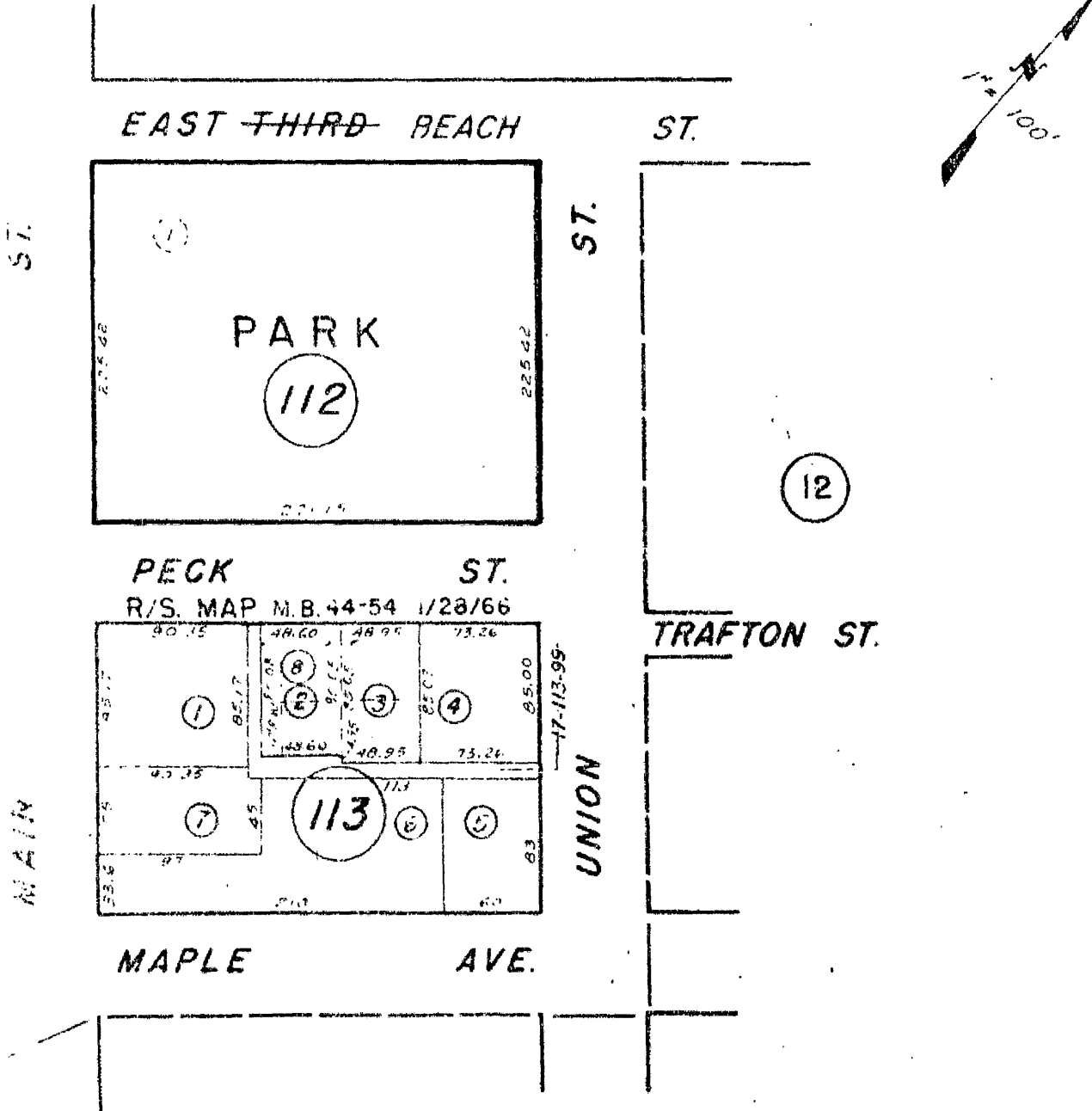
In 1906, the present bandstand was constructed. Local architect, William H. Weeks, drew up the plans, and the building contract was let to Granite Rock for \$1590. In 1924 a cannon was added to the Plaza. It was said to have been carried on board the mailship Oregon, and was among many that fired shots on October 18, 1850, signalling the news that California had been admitted to the Union. The cannon arrived in Watsonville in 1876, borrowed from San Francisco for a Fourth of July celebration of the nation's centennial. Used on several other occasions, it was never returned. Due to neglect, the cannon was pushed aside, forgotten, moved and lost. Finally found behind the old City Hall, it was placed back in the Plaza in June of 1924. The field artillery cannon at the southwest corner of the Plaza was cast in 1899, just after the Spanish-American War.

The Plaza has been the physical and social center of the local community throughout its history. It is, and has been for many years, the beauty spot of Watsonville as well as a local landmark.

Tax Area Code
2-023.52
2-020.51

17-11

WATSONVILLE CITY PLAZA
Watsonville, Santa Cruz County, California



Assessor's Parcel Block B
Lot Numbers Shown in Circle

Assessor's Map
Book 17 Page 11
City of Watsonville
County of Santa Cruz, Calif.

LIBRARY

POST OFFICE

UNION STREET

PLAZA

North
↙

EAST BEACH STREET

BECK STREET

WATSONVILLE CITY PLAZA
Watsonville, Santa Cruz County, California

Location of features within Plaza
(not to scale)

DRINKING FOUNTAIN

MAIN STREET

ARTILLERY CANNON

CANNON

BAND STAND

FOUNTAIN

