

# New owners push weekend reopening for Cooper House

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4-10-87

SANTA CRUZ — A young, ambitious developer is working quickly and furiously to reopen the Cooper House Saturday in time for the start of the Easter Week holiday crush.

If 24-year-old Brian Roeder meets his high-pressure deadline, the familiar tunes of the "Warmth" soft-jazz band will once again float over the Pacific Garden Mall.

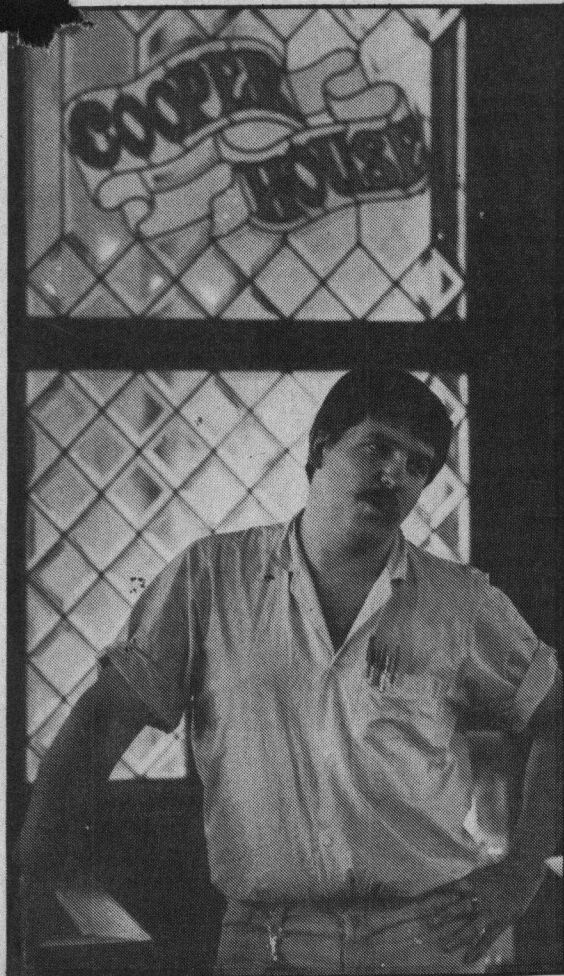
"That will be a big moment for me when I hear the first note from Warmth," Roeder said Thursday afternoon. He was working non-stop on the remodeling of the bar — making calls in a makeshift office in the alcove, answering myriad questions from workers and taking applications from prospective employees.

He hopes to finish remodeling the once-popular "Oak Room Saloon," and reopening of the downstairs kitchen and other work — all within a 13-day construction timeline.

"We decided that if we were going to be part of the Cooper House and downtown this summer, now is the time to make it happen," Roeder said cheerfully.

Roeder said he and his father, Ray Roeder, of Aptos, are buying the building for an undisclosed price from owner Steve Sanchez, and his family. The Sanchezes bought the landmark building about a year ago and had announced plans for a major face-lift on the old county courthouse. But the remodeling was

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Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Brian Roeder says he can't wait to hear jazz band Warmth perform again.

## New owners

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not completed, and shops moved out of the building for better, more lucrative locations.

A few shops on the main floor and basement have stayed, and will continue to do so, Roeder said.

The Roeders have experience in developing mobile home parks in Jolon in Monterey County and in other Central California locations, said Brian Roeder.

The young developer said the Cooper House holds a special place in their hearts, because his family used to sit outside in the cafe — listening to Warmth and sipping cool beverages — in the early 1970s. At that time, former owner Max Walden had succeeded in turning the former legal haunt into a quaint cluster of shops.

Roeder has kept the original Oak Room bar, but it has been moved into a different configuration. Antique stained glass from a greenhouse will be part of the back bar. Still remaining will be

the handsome English beveled pub mirrors, saying "GIN," "WHISKY" "ALE" and "BRANDY."

Food from a "limited" menu will be served to the outdoor tables from the basement kitchen. The upstairs restaurant, which has been undergoing remodeling, will remain closed for a while, Roeder said.

The upstairs will be closed for the time being. Roeder said the fate of the entire building will be better known after the close of escrow. He gave no date for the escrow closing, but said it is "long-term."

"The businesses will be run in the same kind of relaxed atmosphere that there has always been," Roeder said. "But it won't be gonzo. It will be professional. "We want the building to stay very much the same as it has been, with some improvements. I think it's time to get going on this.

"I know this sounds hokey, but this is kind of like a dream come true for me."