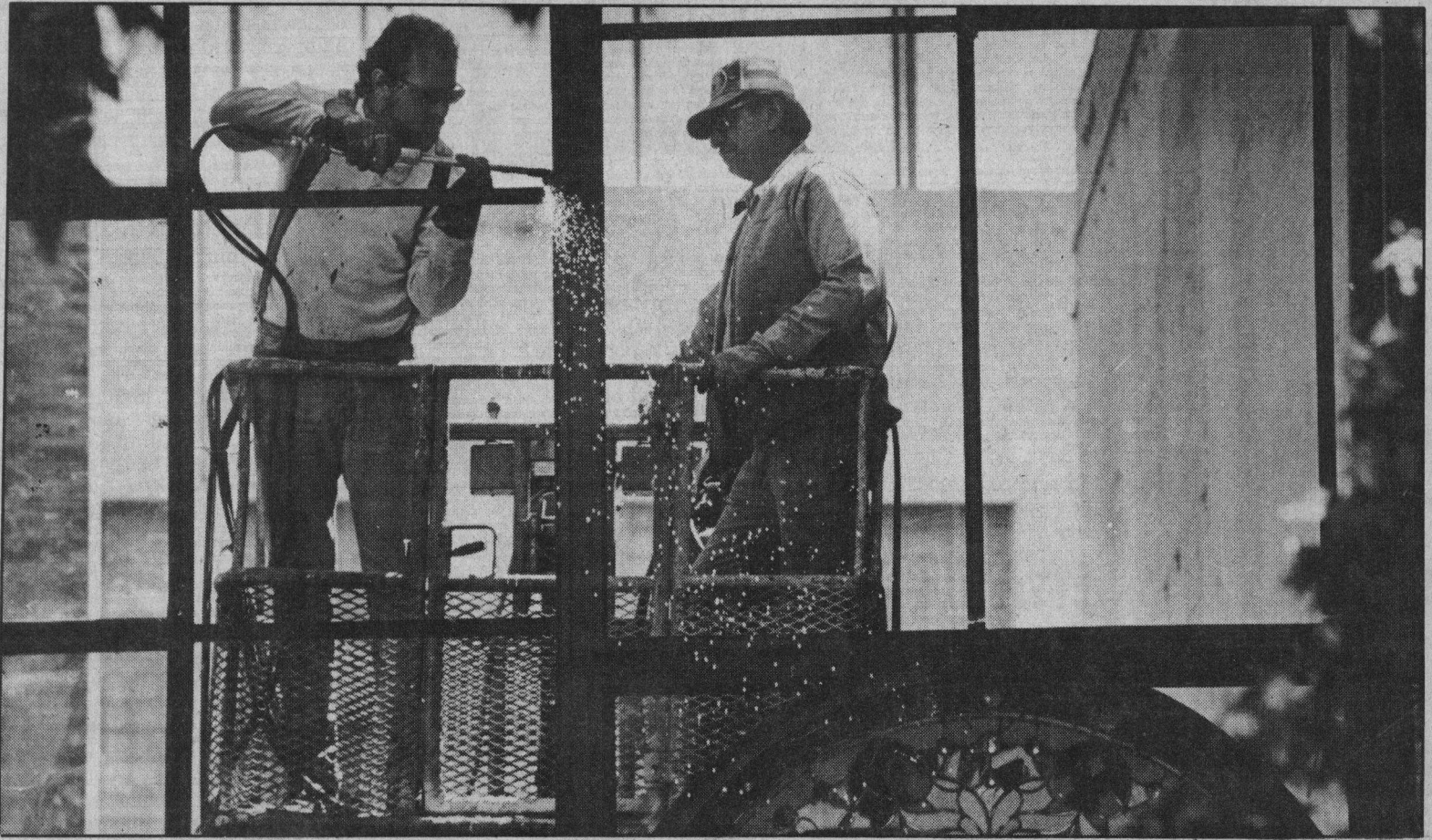


Historic atrium razed



Photos by Bill Lovejoy

Dan Cox, left, and Duke help remove the Cooper House atrium, a Pacific Garden Mall fixture since the 1970s.

Cooper House glass panels were unsafe

By MARIA GAURA
Sentinel staff writer

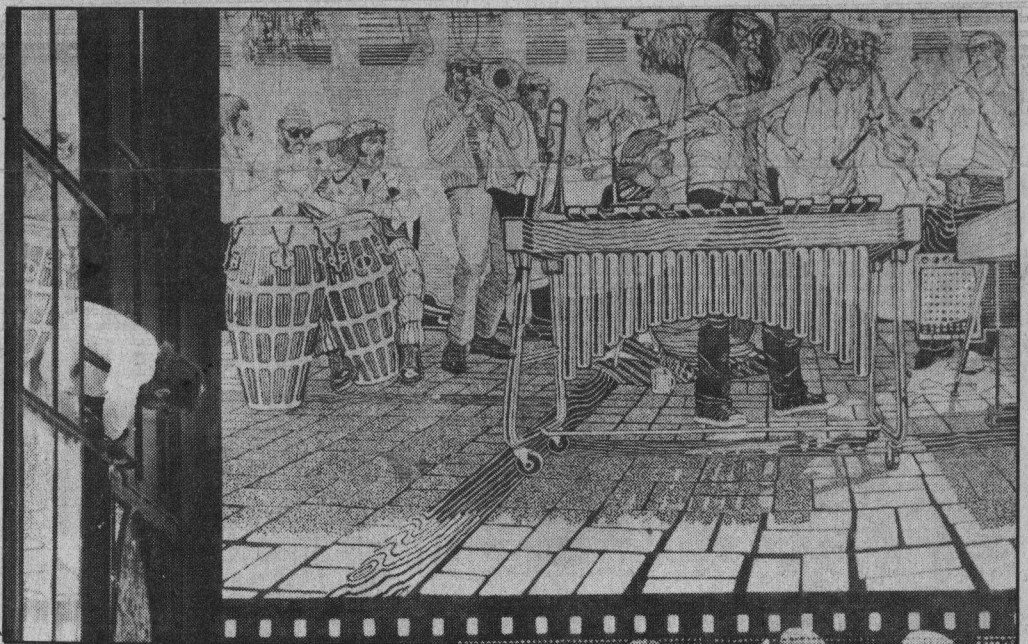
SANTA CRUZ — The glass-paned atrium spanning the alley beside the historic Cooper House was leveled Tuesday after being condemned as unsafe.

The atrium, with its stained-glass panels, was installed in the late '70s when the former county courthouse on Pacific Avenue was transformed into a shopping center by developer Max Walden. When the building was recently purchased by Los Gatos developer Jay Paul, the atrium was declared unsafe and slated for demolition.

"In an earthquake (the atrium) would rock back and forth between the two buildings like a rattle, or a battering ram," said project manager Michael Bates, who is overseeing the renovation of the property. "It could destroy the buildings on each side. It's not attached to either structure."

Workmen with a cutting torch sliced apart the metal frame of the atrium, then a crane lifted out the large sections of frame and laid them onto a truck bed. The glass panes, except the stained glass, were unceremoniously bashed out and tossed to the pavement.

A large black-and-white mural near the atrium, titled "Jazz Musicians," also will be removed soon. Painted by artist Jim



Artist Jim McFarlin painted this mural in 1976. It too will be removed.

McFarlin in 1976, the mural initially caused a bit of debate: was the mural art or advertising? Some argued that the mural was advertising because it depicted members of the jazz band "Warmth," which played at the Cooper House regularly for years. The piece was eventually judged to be art.

Both the stained glass and the mural will be put in storage for the time being, Bates said. There are no plans to reinstall the pieces when the remodeling is complete.

Developer Paul wants to restore the old building to an authentic Victorian style, and remove the '70s kitsch installed by Walden.

But some people are sad to see the flamboyant details vanish.

"I hate to see it go," said one local merchant. "I liked the Max Walden era. I'm happy with restorations that are a little funky."

Other proposed changes to the Cooper House, such as tearing out and rebuilding the brick planters and iron trellis work around the patio, will be heard by the city's Historical Commission at 4 p.m. today in the City Council chamber. A proposal to allow pushcart vendors on the patio will be heard by the city Zoning Board on June 26.