

# Center for Art and History



Jose Castillo continues work on the McPherson Center for Art and History, a key to the rejuvenation of Santa Cruz.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel



# Groundbreaking set for arts center

By GUY LASNIER  
Sentinel business editor

SANTA CRUZ — Concrete flowed into the basement of the old County Jail Tuesday, marking a turning point from destruction to construction.

"We're actually getting something into the building instead of taking something out," commented construction superintendent Ron Strickland of Hodgson Construction, the Redwood City contractor converting the jail into retail shops and office space.

Over the past six months, crews yanked out steel bars and wire from cells, and asbestos from walls and ceilings, stripping the three-story Front Street building to its 1938-era concrete skeleton. Four hundred cubic yards of oil-contaminated soil was hauled away.

Tuesday, after lunch, workmen pumped concrete for footings and shear walls to bring the building up to 1973 earthquake codes and strengthen it for a fourth floor.

Construction will begin in the next month on a three-story museum just south of the jail building. Together, the two buildings and the Octagon Museum to the north on Cooper

Street will be known as the McPherson Center for Art and History, a \$6.5 million project that has tapped just about every source of funding available. An official groundbreaking is scheduled for Saturday.

The project is a key component of the rejuvenation of downtown Santa Cruz. Planned before the October 1989 earthquake, the art and history center began as a privately funded project with a \$2.4 million budget. Benefactors have contributed or pledged \$3.1 million. Two organizations, the Art Museum of Santa Cruz County and the Santa Cruz County Historical Trust secured a 50-year lease on the vacant jail.

Then everything changed. After the quake destroyed more than half the commercial space downtown, the empty jail was seen as a relatively quick source of new space for displaced retail businesses. The museum would move next door into an entirely new building.

The quake was a blessing in one regard, said project manager John Fry of CDM Corp. in Watsonville. It brought in outside money.

After months of negotiations a \$2.56 million state and federal grant was secured to reno-

vate the jail for the commercial retail side of the project. The museum side still must depend on private donations.

As the project grew in scope, so did the costs. The private museum developers bought a city parking lot next to the jail. Total cost of the museum venture is about \$4 million, all in private money.

But building a museum from the ground up also meant it could have facilities and extras that were not possible previously. Proper security and interior climate control, for example, would not have been possible in the old jail, project backers say. Those amenities will allow the museum to be "accredited" and thus host exhibits it would otherwise could not.

"It's a bigger and better thing in the end and that's what's important," said Bruce McPherson, whose family contributed \$1 million when fund raising began.

McPherson said confusion over funding has grown with the project. "Many people thought it had been covered by the federal government," he said.

*Please see POP CULTURE — A10*

## Pop culture fights communism

*Continued from Page A1*

Conservative scholar Irving Kristol also deplored the state of American popular culture but asserted that its worldwide spread had helped undermine communism. He cited, as an example, the enormous popularity of blue jeans and the Voice of America's broadcasts of rock music in Yugoslavia before the fall of communism.

Their popularity, he said, was such that authorities "felt unable to withstand it."

"American popular music, like American popular culture generally, has a wonderfully corrosive effect on all totalitarian and strongly authoritarian regimes," Kristol said. "The spirit of this culture is profoundly individualist, almost anarchic in fact, and crosses the grain of all collectivist societies."

Washington economist Stephen E. Siwek, ticked

off evidence of the pervasiveness of American pop culture. He said in 1990, "Pretty Woman" was the No. 1 film in five European countries; U.S. television accounts for almost half of the 50 highest rated shows in Italy and Spain; CNN is seen in 122 countries; and Mary Higgins Clark, Danielle Steel and Stephen King recently made the best-seller list in France.

Pico Iyer, author of "Video Night in Katmandu," offered further evidence.

He said 300 million Chinese watch the Super Bowl on television and 49ers caps are de rigueur in Europe. Last year, he said, he watched the video "Jaws" in Tibet, listened to the Village People in Pyongyang, North Korea, and found a pirated version of "Coming to America" on sale in Bhutan — "perhaps the most tightly closed country in the world."