

Mushroom plant now coming down

By KEITH MURAOKA
Sentinel Staff Writer

SOQUEL — The last link to Soquel's most odoriferous landmark — the 34-year-old Castle & Cooke Food mushroom plant — is being demolished to make way for 300,000 square feet of manufacturing and light industrial buildings to be known as Soquel Research Park.

The 17½-acre site adjacent to Highway 1, 41st Avenue and Soquel Drive is being developed by Oceanic California, a real estate development division of Honolulu-based Castle & Cooke.

Oceanic Vice President Dan Raber said 23 individual parcels, ranging from 11,000 to 112,169 square feet, are being offered to developers of manufacturing businesses. He said the biggest interest so far has come from Central Coast "non-electronic" developers.

Two of the parcels have already been sold to Lakewood Enterprises of San Jose, a subsidiary of Mushroom King. Raber said 10 other parcels are in escrow.

The two Lakewood Enterprises' parcels are 25,221 and 14,506 square feet, respectively, he added. The Santa Rosa-based firm plans to use the sites for future industrial development. Purchase price and terms were not disclosed.

Of the 10 parcels in escrow, Raber said they include industrial parcels located in



Workers start taking apart sheds

the interior of the park, as well as commercial sites. Final close of escrow for eight of the parcels is scheduled for November upon completion of off-site improvements.

The demolition process involves the removal of the mushroom plant's eight buildings including mushroom growing sheds, warehouses, repair and packing facilities, a research and development lab and a mushroom retail store encompassing 401,000 square feet. Crews began work last Monday and are expected to take six weeks.

Raber projected one or two of the new manufacturing buildings could be completed by late this year, "although most probably won't be done until the spring of

1986."

Oceanic California is offering the sites for sale and build-to-suit. Raber said the parcels are easily combined to accommodate larger companies.

The mushroom plant was closed in January after 34 years of growing odoriferous mushrooms. Originally known as West Foods, some 10 million pounds of mushrooms were grown yearly at the plant.

While some people say you could marinate a steak in garlicky Gilroy by hanging it on a clothesline, old-time locals were known to swear their vegetables grew better with the odor of mushroom compost in the air.

The Soquel plant was closed because the alternate industrial use of the property will allow the company to recover its investment in the property. Such a step is in line with Castle & Cooke's announced policy of converting its assets to cash whenever possible.

Oceanic California is a landholder and developer of high technology, industrial and residential projects in California and Nevada.