



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Steve Vandyk and Gary Goss put up a permanent mural honoring the legacy of wetsuit pioneer Jack O'Neill and his surf shop's humble beginnings at Cowell Beach on Friday.

Permanent O'Neill mural goes up

Art marks historic point of interest, coincides with Dream Inn's new Jack O'Neill Lounge

Art + Artists - 2000

By J.M. BROWN

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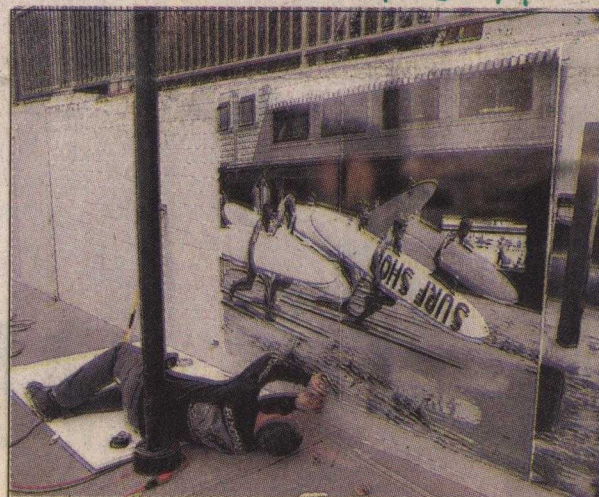
SANTA CRUZ — Works crews began hanging panels Friday for what will be a permanent mural honoring the legacy of wetsuit pioneer Jack O'Neill and his surf shop's humble beginnings at Cowell Beach.

The 55-foot-long, 6-foot-high mural made of porcelain on steel will feature archival photographs of the Santa Cruz icon through the decades that followed the establishment of his 1959 shop at the site now owned by the Dream Inn.

The artwork, placed on the hotel's retaining wall, will replace a temporary paper mural dedicated by the city in March 2013 after the location was designated as a California Historical Point of Interest. A plaque noting the designation also hangs there.

"The big picture was to have something permanent to add to the historical interest site," said Brian Kilpatrick, marketing and communications manager for the Santa Cruz-based O'Neill company. "We also wanted to beautify the area."

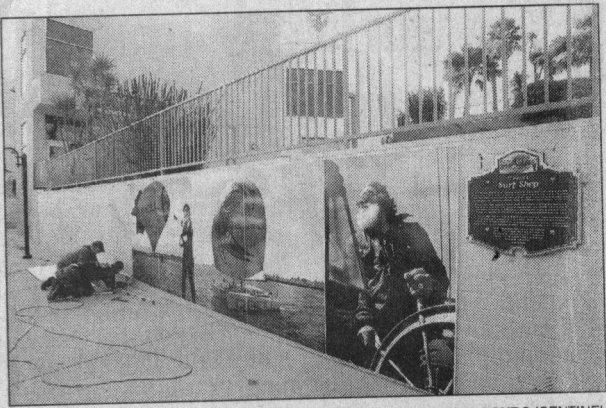
Produced by KVO Industries of Santa Rosa, the mural is being paid for by the O'Neill company and Dream Inn. It is timed to



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Steve Vandyk works on installing photo panels honoring Jack O'Neill and the site of the original O'Neill Surf Shop on the Dream Inn's retaining wall on Friday.

SEE O'NEILL ON A5



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Gary Goss and Steve Vandyk install photo panels honoring Jack O'Neill and the site of the original O'Neill Surf Shop on the Dream Inn's retaining wall on Friday.

O'NEILL

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coincide with the opening of the new Jack O'Neill Lounge adjacent to the hotel's Aquarius restaurant.

The exhibit features photos, wetsuits and other O'Neill memorabilia. It will be officially dedicated along with the mural at a date to be determined in mid or late January.

Max Schultz, director of sales and marketing, said the hotel's interest in the project was "mostly to honor Mr. O'Neill, who is such an icon in Santa Cruz." But, Shultz said, it also will "aesthetically make that wall look really nice."

Cowell's was far from being the surfing mecca it is today when O'Neill moved his wetsuit shop from San Francisco to Santa Cruz. Dubbed "boys town" for its magnetism among young wave riders, the shop closed in the mid-1960s, but it laid the foundation for O'Neill and family members to create a globally recognized thermal wetsuit and foam surfboard brand.

O'Neill, now 90 and Pleasure Point's most famous resident, still seems surprised at his own success.

"I never in my wildest

dreams ever thought any of this would happen," O'Neill told the Sentinel after a dedication event for the temporary mural last spring. "I thought I would make a few boards and have somebody to surf with."

The cost of the permanent mural has not been disclosed, but the city is not a financial contributor. However, Kilpatrick said organizers may work with the city on placing lighting at the site.

Councilman David Terrazas, who led efforts to win the historical recognition, said the marker is a reminder of the environmental and economic importance of the ocean.

"Jack O'Neill started something very special here and the state designation of this site underscores the lasting contributions he has made here in Santa Cruz and to the world of surfing," Terrazas said. "This designation reminds us of the importance of improving conditions at Cowell Beach for today and future generations."

The city is working to improve water quality conditions at Cowell's that routinely contribute to its placement on a "beach bummer" list. The city also has stepped up patrols of the beach area to cut down on illegal camping and drug use.