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Slawinski Auction Co. employees prepare inventory of Haber's Furniture for final auction.

# Haber's goes under the gavel

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SANTA CRUZ — Everything goes. Absolutely the last day. Really.

Saturday, Haber's Furniture at 812 Pacific Ave. will end its 78-year history downtown when auctioneer Bob Slawinski bangs his gavel down for the last time.

"This is it," Haber's co-owner Mel Haber said Wednesday. "Everything from wall to wall, even our cars."

Haber and his brother Ken decided last June to close the store, pushed against the ropes by the earthquake and recession. At the time they promised to have "one hell of a sale."

They sold off most of the inventory over the past six months. The store closed its doors Jan. 10. Now between 400 and 500 pieces of new furniture are left and will be auctioned Saturday

along with fixtures, a forklift, commercial quilting machine and the company delivery truck.

Joining in the auction will be Marian Vantress of Vantress Design Associates who is downsizing her business, Haber said. Portions of her inventory are scheduled to be auctioned also.

Slawinski, whose Felton-based auction company has been booming over the past two years, said Habers is the fourth Pacific Avenue business that has called him in to liquidate assets in the last year.

"It's tough to see cornerstone businesses like Haber's calling it quits," Slawinski said.

Haber said he won't know until after the auction whether the company founded by his grandfather will break even. "The auction will tell," he said.

The store lost \$300,000 worth of inventory and lost business from the

1989 the earthquake and store closures that followed.

The brothers remodeled the store, spending some \$600,000, but reopened only to find the county mired in recession.

The Haber family owns the property and another building on Front Street where Inside Furniture was located. It too went out of business and the building is vacant.

The Habers will concentrate on trying to lease the properties.

Although there has been some interest, Haber said efforts thus far have been thwarted by a reluctance of new businesses to come downtown. "Everyone who was semi-interested has pulled back," he said.

*The auction is scheduled to begin 11 a.m. Saturday. Previews are set for 3-6 p.m. Friday and 9-11 a.m. Saturday.*