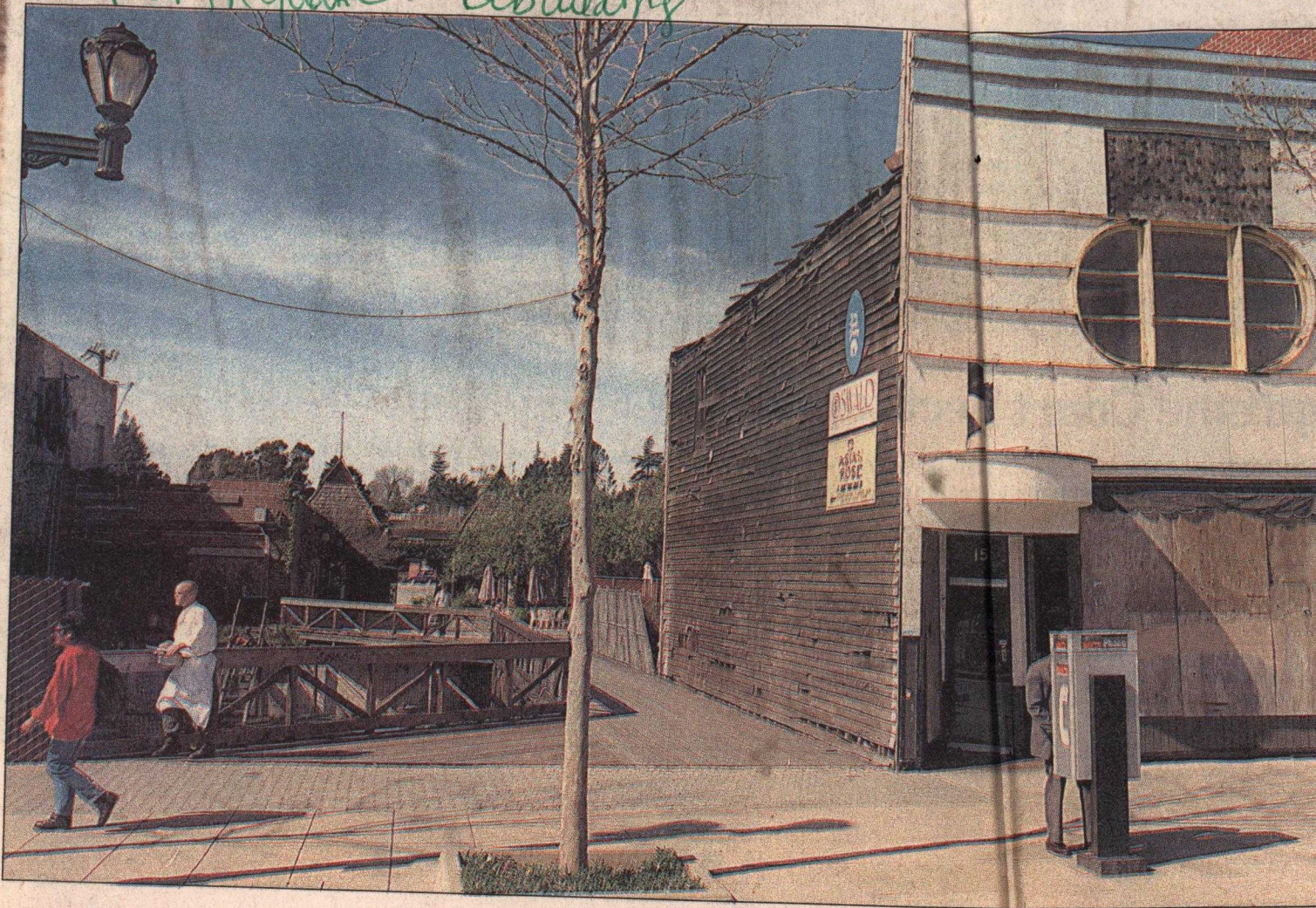


# Wounds remain seven years later

Earthquake - Rebuilding



JUDITH CALSON — MERCURY NEWS

## Santa Cruz sales figures recover from quake, but not buildings

BY JOHN WOOLFOLK  
Mercury News Staff Writer

Santa Cruz's downtown district still bears a number of conspicuously large cavities from a devastating earthquake seven years ago today, but city officials expect to see many of them filled by this time next year.

Reminders of the deadly Loma Prieta earthquake have steadily faded since it struck at 5:04 p.m. Oct. 17, 1989, destroying 29 buildings in downtown Santa Cruz.

Last year, city officials announced that rebuilding efforts had "turned the corner," thanks largely to the new Santa Cruz Cinema 9 complex, which helped draw shoppers downtown in droves.

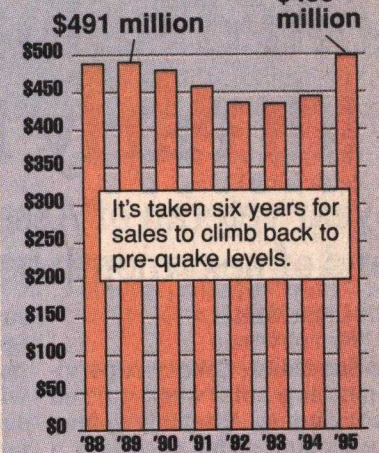
This year, they hailed an economic milestone: Downtown sales activity, measured through tax receipts, surpassed that from the years before the disaster. City-wide taxable sales for 1995 were \$499 million, topping figures for 1988 at \$489 million and 1989 at \$491 million, according to the state Board of Equalization.

"I'm optimistic," Mayor Mike Rotkin said. "Clearly, we're moving forward. It just would be nice if some (vacant) properties would move a little quicker."

This year saw the completion of a new Pacific Avenue building housing kitchenware store Chefworks on one of several lots owned by the Rittenhouses, a prominent local family that suffered the greatest property loss in the disaster. Construction is expected soon on another Rittenhouse lot: the former "Flatiron"

### Santa Cruz taxable sales

Millions of dollars



MERCURY NEWS

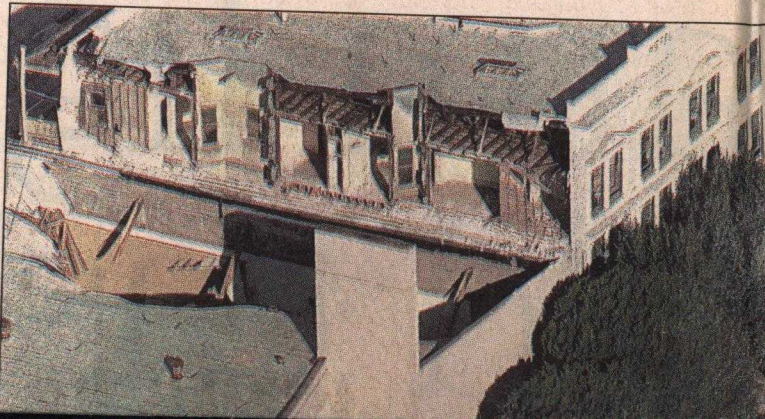
building at the intersection of Pacific and Front Street, so named for its triangular shape, said city Redevelopment Director Ceil Cirillo. Family patriarch Emmet Rittenhouse, however, would not comment on the three-story project.

Construction also has begun on the small Felice Gold lot, a former shoe store on Pacific between Logos bookstore and the Palookaville nightclub. San Jose developer Barry Swenson, who owns the lot, is building a two-story structure for mixed retail and office use, although no tenants are signed up yet, representative Martin Menne said.

And in perhaps the most significant development, long-awaited plans to rebuild the Cooper House began moving forward last month

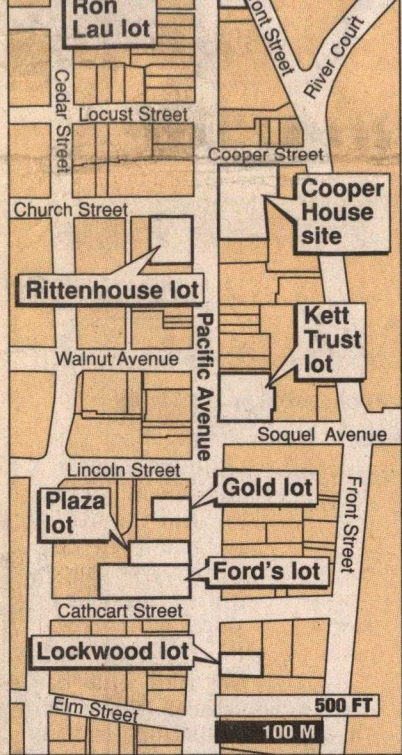
See **RESTORATION**, Page 6B

### Santa Cruz lots vacant since quake



Much of the Pacific Garden Mall, left, was reduced to shambles after the Loma Prieta earthquake on Oct. 17, 1989. A photo





MERCURY NEWS  
FILE PHOTOGRAPH

much of the Pacific Garden Mall, left, was reduced to shambles after the Loma Prieta earthquake on Oct. 17, 1989. A photograph shot Wednesday shows the former location of the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co., above. The Zwering family, owners of the cafe building where two people died in the quake, had the building demolished this summer after neighbors complained of vermin.

in the disaster. Construction is expected soon on another Rittenhouse lot: the former "Flatiron"

plans to rebuild the Cooper House began moving forward last month  
See **RESTORATION**, Page 6B

## An 'old-timer' relives horror of '89 quake

**T**HE LINE of demarcation separating newcomers from old-timers around here has constantly shifted. When I moved to Santa Cruz in late 1965, one was a newcomer unless one had been born here. Later, old-timer status was given to anyone who'd come before the UC campus opened.

These days, you're an old-timer if you were here for the Loma Prieta earthquake.

It was seven years ago today when that awesome and awful

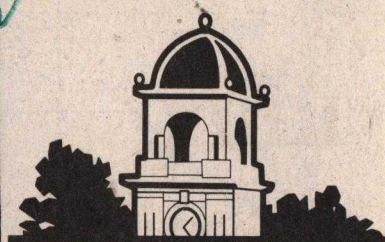


LEE QUARNSTROM

quake changed our lives forever. It changed our communities, whether we lived in Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Los Gatos, the East Bay or San Francisco. And it changed each of us individually.

I spend a lot of time on Pacific Avenue, the heart of Santa Cruz. Most of us "old-timers" have

See **QUARNSTROM**, Page 6B



SANTA CRUZ  
*Historic Perspective*

## 1889, '90 quakes awakened residents

BY ROSS ERIC GIBSON  
Special to the Mercury News

**T**ODAY IS the seventh anniversary of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. It will not soon be forgotten. What has faded from memories are the quakes of 1889 and 1890.

At 3:15 a.m. May 19, 1889, a lively but harmless quake rattled

dishes throughout the county. But on Aug. 8, a heavy quake hit at 4:45 a.m., and a slightly stronger one followed at 5:05 a.m., though no structural damage was done.

And these were merely precursors of the big event on April 24, 1890. It hit the coast from San Francisco to Watsonville at 3:35 a.m. with a rumbling, then a

stronger 20-second shake stopped clocks at 3:37 that morning, according to newspaper accounts of the time. Holy Cross Church bells made such a racket, people thought the steeple had fallen. On Pacific Avenue, 12 feet of molding fell at Horsnyder's Pharmacy, and a shop window shattered at the Golden Rule cigar store.

See **HISTORY**, Page 6B



# Quake fears recalled amid hope for future

## ■ QUARNSTROM

from Page 1B

grown used to the empty lots, Louie Rittenhouse's holes in the ground, where brick-and-mortar buildings stood for almost a century before Oct. 17, 1989. It's gotten to the point where I can look out my office window across the vacant lot where property owners have yet to rebuild on the sites of the old Trust and Elks' buildings — and not recall the terrible shaking that rendered useless most of the ancient masonry structures along the city's main street.

Most of us, I suspect, no longer jump toward the nearest exit when we feel our homes or offices shake if a bus or large truck rumbles past. Most of us have probably forgotten to update those earthquake emergency kits — with potable water, candles, spare underwear, flashlights, etc. — that we put together once the Loma Prieta aftershocks stopped coming so fast and furious.

By the same token, it's likely that most of you, like me, feel an extra jolt of terror when our normal small temblors strike. I used to think earthquakes were thrilling; for the past seven years, I have found them all frightening.

Many of us live our daily lives in states of denial: I choose to believe that the Loma Prieta quake relieved all the stress along the San Andreas Fault and that we'll never experience another big-time shaker. Perhaps today is a good time to recall the reality of life during and after a major quake.

My personal losses were enormous. The quake had emotional aftershocks; they hastened the end of a marriage. It did almost \$30,000 worth of damage to my house, destroyed my office on Pacific Avenue and gave me a severe case of the heebie-jeebies



LEE QUARNSTROM

that only recently have I been able to overcome. Deep down inside, I know that we could be hit by another quake, even the long-predicted Big One, at any moment. All that bad stuff could happen again.

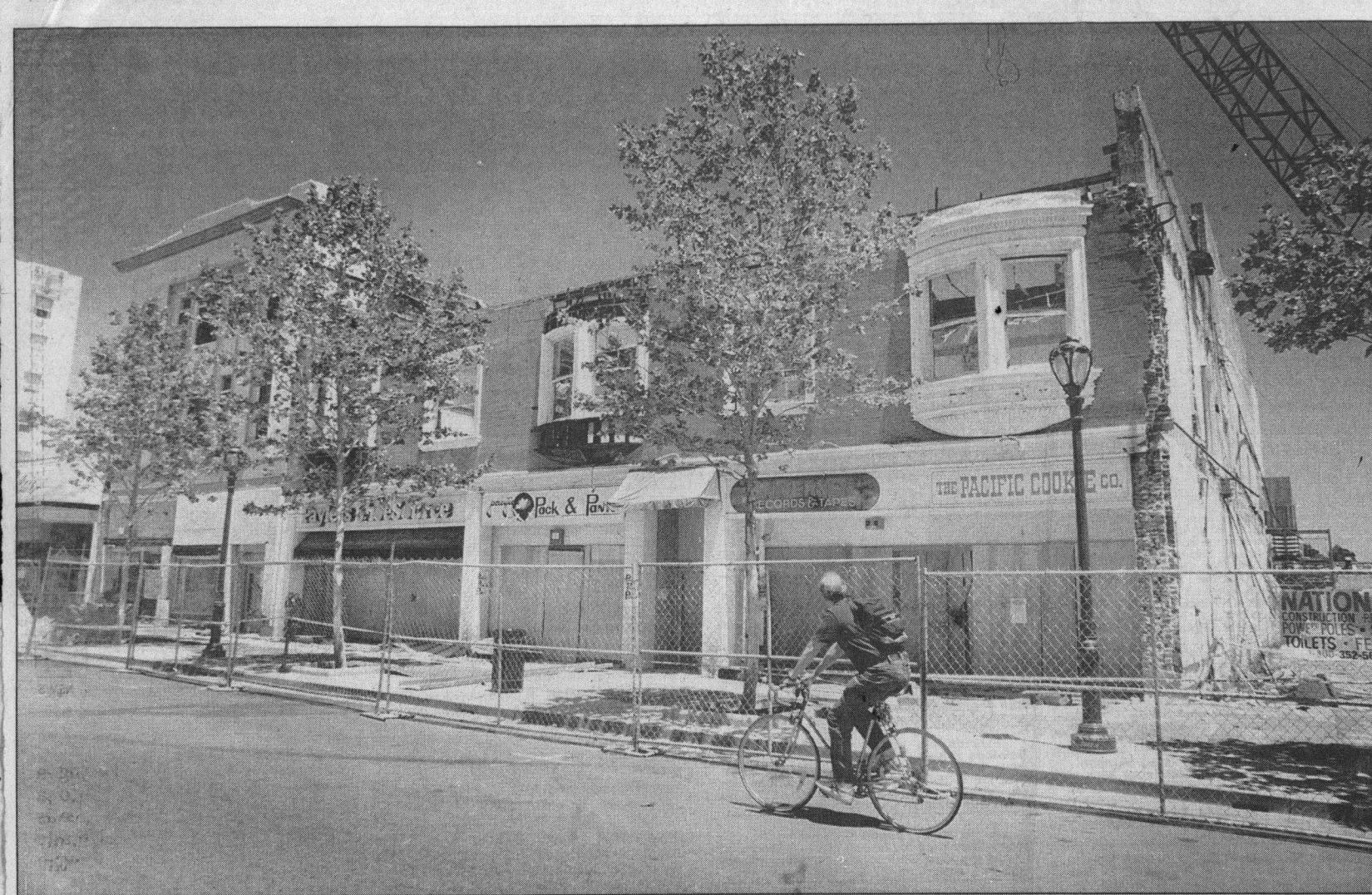
I have chosen, though, to look at the bright side of things.

If Louie and his family, as well as a few other landowners, ever get off their duffs and take some risks, downtown Santa Cruz will be better than it ever was before the earthquake. Already, despite some annoying street people, Pacific Avenue is a much more lively place than it used to be.

But even now, as I write, some of that old fear comes creeping back. I recall standing in the middle of Soquel Avenue, a block from my home, hugging for dear life a woman I'd never really met before; it seemed like several minutes that we stood paralyzed while the concept of *terra firma* went out the door as the ground shook like it was made of Jell-O. That woman is now a friend, as would be anyone with whom you've shared, and survived, that moment when you know you're going to die!

Many thousands of us shared that moment seven years ago. We are the old-timers.

Write Lee Quarnstrom in care of the Mercury News, 1205 Pacific Ave., No. 201, Santa Cruz, Calif. 95060.



MERCURY NEWS FILE PHOTOGRAPH

A bicyclist passes the Elks and Ferrari buildings on Pacific Avenue in 1993, shortly before the buildings were demolished.

## Santa Cruz wounds remain 7 years later

### ■ RESTORATION

from Page 1B

with news that San Jose computer giant Cisco Systems intends to anchor the 96,000-square-foot project. The Cooper House had been a historic courthouse converted to boutiques and a bar and was considered the crown jewel of Santa Cruz's old Pacific Garden Mall.

Still, there are large gaps along Pacific that remain stubbornly unfilled. They include the former Ford's department store lot and adjacent former Plaza Books lot at the Cathcart Street intersection, the former Trust and Elks buildings lot at the Soquel Avenue intersection and three adjoining Rittenhouse parcels at the Church Street intersection.

City officials see development of the Ford's lot as key to revitalizing the lower end of Pacific Avenue. The corner by the lot has become an unsightly hangout for panhandlers and street youths and a headache for surrounding merchants, who say their businesses have suffered because of the scene.

Last year, the city bought the adjacent Plaza Books lot to offer

“The tenants are out there, but they don't want to wait 12 to 15 months to get the space.”

— Redevelopment Director Ceil Cirillo

promising early this year when Swenson and Santa Cruz Seaside Co., two prominent and proven builders, bought the property. But they have yet to submit plans for a project. Spokesman Menne said the project is in the design stage but no date for groundbreaking has been set.

The Trust and Elks buildings lot, former location of Pacific Cookie Co., is owned by the Kett family, which has had it on the market for years, Cirillo said. This year, the redevelopment agency got city permission to privately negotiate with the owners to offer city assistance to help them develop the site, she said.

Cirillo said the last vacant lot to be rebuilt probably will be the Rittenhouse property at Pacific and Church, now weed-filled pits surrounded by chain-link fencing. That is because the three combined parcels are so large, total-

said there are no plans to develop the site. His wealthy family had been widely criticized for foot-dragging over rebuilding — especially after son Louis was elected to the city council in 1990 promising aggressive reconstruction and failed to build a single Rittenhouse lot during his four-year term.

Another big hole lies at the head of Pacific in the former locations of Bookshop Santa Cruz and the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co. This summer, the Zwerling family, owners of the former cafe building where two people died in the earthquake, demolished it after neighbors complained of vermin. It was the last earthquake-damaged structure to fall. The redevelopment agency then bought the lot to help the owner of the adjacent bookstore lot, Ron Lau, rebuild the site by offering the

two together.

The remaining cavity is the small Lockwood property near Cathcart Street across from the Catalyst nightclub, which was formerly a Western Union and Upper Crust pizza store. Cirillo said it is difficult to develop because it has no rear delivery access. Agent Todd Prindle said the city's guidelines calling for two-story buildings to create more office space make it economically difficult to rebuild. The developer would prefer a one-story project, he said, but plans to break ground on a project next year.

Cirillo said the biggest hang-up in rebuilding the remaining empty lots has been that retailers have been reluctant to sign leases for stores that have yet to be built.

“The tenants are out there, but they don't want to wait 12 to 15 months to get the space,” Cirillo said.

Rotkin said a contributing factor has been tougher lending rules, since the savings and loan failures of the late 1980s, that require developers to lease 80 percent of their project before they can get a loan to build it.



izing the lower end of Pacific Avenue. The corner by the lot has become an unsightly hangout for panhandlers and street youths and a headache for surrounding merchants, who say their businesses have suffered because of the scene.

Last year, the city bought the adjacent Plaza Books lot to offer along with the Ford's lot, hoping the added Pacific Avenue frontage would be more attractive to retailers. But no project materialized. Development looked more

vately negotiate with the owners to offer city assistance to help them develop the site, she said.

Cirillo said the last vacant lot to be rebuilt probably will be the Rittenhouse property at Pacific and Church, now weed-filled pits surrounded by chain-link fencing. That is because the three combined parcels are so large, totaling 20,000 square feet, that a project will require a commitment from a major retailer to anchor it, she said.

Emmet Rittenhouse, however,

building where the people lived before the earthquake, demolished it after neighbors complained of vermin. It was the last earthquake-damaged structure to fall. The redevelopment agency then bought the lot to help the owner of the adjacent bookstore lot, Ron Lau, rebuild the site by offering the

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# Temblors resulted in damage but no injuries

## HISTORY from Page 1B

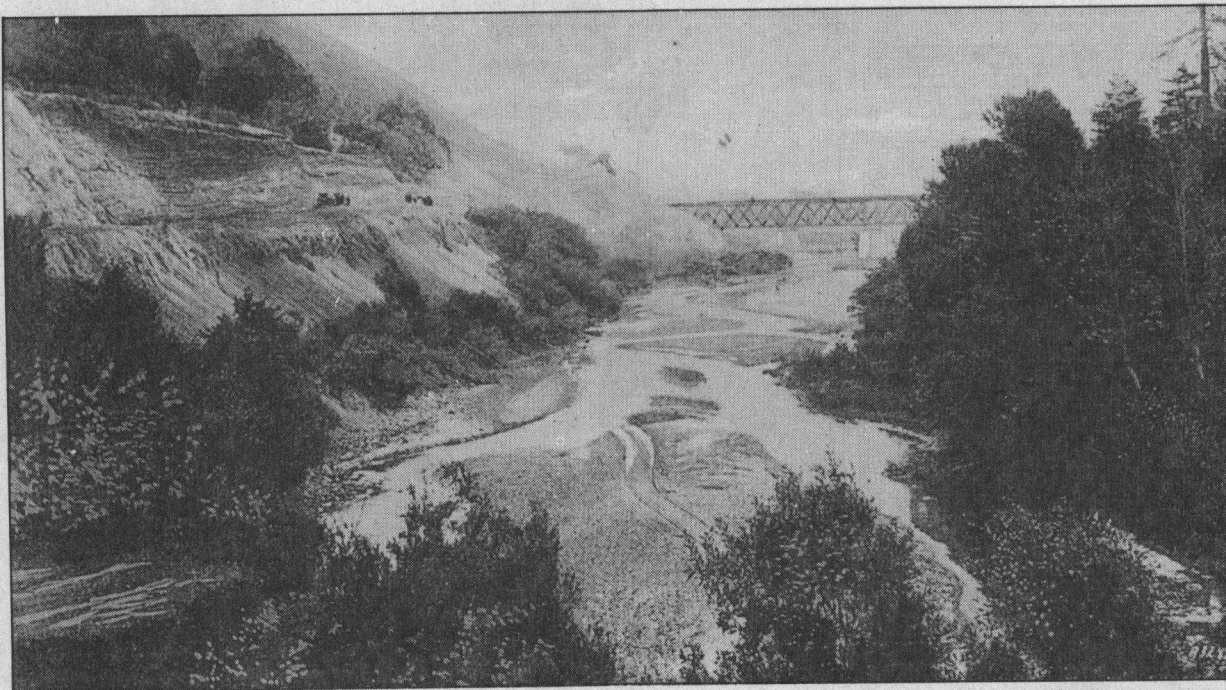
Cracks appeared in the facades of the three-story Chestnutwoods Business College, which was on the site of today's Woolworth's.

Reports had the two shock waves that reached Salinas and Gilroy at 3:40 lasting 10 seconds. But other than emptying shelves, the only damage was broken windows at a Salinas courthouse. The same quake, however, played havoc with adobe buildings from Watsonville to Mission San Juan Bautista, where the convent housing 90 children lost a wall. There were no injuries.

The shock waves rattled the Santa Cruz Summit and San Jose at 3:45. In the mountains, news accounts had the quake lasting 40 seconds. Only a few chimneys went down. The coast felt a dozen distinct aftershocks until 9 that night.

The 1 p.m. train from San Francisco at first couldn't enter the county as bridges were damaged in various areas. The Pajaro River railroad bridge settled three feet and was misaligned eight inches. Quickly repaired, the train slowly entered the county at 2:30 p.m., as the bridge swayed beneath it.

The epicenter was reported at Chittenden Pass. With a groan, a hillside road (today's Highway 129) disappeared in an avalanche filling the Pajaro River with earth, rocks and trees and changing the river's course. Afterward,



ROSS ERIC GIBSON COLLECTION

The Pajaro River railroad bridge linked the county to the outside world after the 1890 quake.



SANTA CRUZ  
Historic Perspective

a hissing sound filled the air as pockets of natural gas escaped. A deep, half-mile-long fissure left a five-foot-wide gap in the foothills. And a private road leading to Judge J.H. Logan's farm north of Aromas vanished.

Damage was greatest around Corralitos and Chittenden, topping \$12,000. All chimneys on the east side of the Pajaro Valley were toppled. The Chittenden Ranch lost its water tower, and pails of milk not spilled by the

quake were trampled by cows waiting to be milked.

The Corralitos paper mill was shut down because of serious structural damage. The seismograph measured building movement as one-seventh of an inch at ground level, one inch at 7 feet, and six inches at 42 feet. If ground-level movement had been a half-inch, buildings would have fallen.

Locally reported earthquake theories recounted in newspaper stories were remarkably sophisticated. Seashell fossils found on Loma Prieta Peak indicated the mountains were fairly young, having been pushed up from sea level, according to one theory. Mountain hot springs showed the closeness of magma, which "floats" the mountains on an unstable crust, producing earthquakes through slippage, and venting of heat and gas, said another report. Another theory speculated how the weight of the sea could transfer venting pres-

sure into the mountains, and the tonnage of rainfall collected or depleted from mountain aquifers could influence quakes.

For a month after the 1890 quake, the Pajaro Valley and San Juan Bautista areas experienced three aftershocks a day, with residents "suffering from the monotony," said one news account. A crew of carpenters lived at the Pajaro railroad bridge to instantly repair any damage. San Juan mission held services in the plaza. The priest wanted to leave, complaining in one news story that his town was about to be swallowed up. By July the aftershocks were down to two a month, then one a month, before ending in October.

From 1891 to 1905, 25 aftershocks were felt.

Then came the Big One in 1906.

Local historian, architectural consultant and author Ross Eric Gibson writes a weekly history column for the Santa Cruz/Monterey edition.

**I'm optimistic. Clearly, we're moving forward.**

— Mayor Mike Rotkin