



Demolition targets inspected

Sad task may begin on Monday

By KATHARINE BALL
STAFF WRITER

Demolition experts took a walking tour of downtown Watsonville yesterday with City Manager John Radin and city building inspectors.

Slated to come down as early as Monday are the Masonic Temple at the corner of Maple and Union streets, and the Hildreth building, which stands between the Fox Theater and Wells Fargo bank on Main Street. Although the Fox abuts both the other buildings, it will be spared.

The prospect of taking down the Hildreth building without harming the Fox or Wells Fargo made at least one demolition expert plaintive.

"That's impossible unless you hand-brick it down," the man complained. He had come all the way from Las Vegas to view the destruction and possibly bid for business.

Radin shrugged and told him if that was the only way to do it without harming the Fox, that's how it would have to be done.

The 55-foot-long Hildreth building housed Morelia Mexican Foods, Gonzales Jewelers and the Silver Tree. Upstairs were residential apartments. One person's ten-speed bicycle is still locked to an upstairs porch, and a potted plant is twined up the inside of a lace-curtained window. Through another window, it could be seen that a large chunk of the roof is missing.

Radin said the Hildreth building is still standing only because the Fox and Wells Fargo are holding it up.

Opposite the Fox, half the 300 block of Main Street will soon be dust and rubble. From Canada Shoes to Ace Hardware (which will be spared), all must go, Radin said. Included in that row of shops are the Jalisco Mexican restaurant, Horsnyder's Pharmacy, and the Family Bargain Center. On the other side of Ace Hardware the building housing Dori's Bridal World will also have to go, Radin said. The two remaining buildings on the block, up to the corner of West Beach Street, will remain.

At the rear of this row of shops, workers were salvaging what they could. At the Jalisco restaurant, even the bougainvillea plants that decorated the restaurant's patio were being carted out, along with many industrial-

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Crane removes clock from IOOF building (above); City Manager John Radin and demolition expert Ralph Mullican inspect big crack in Ford's Department store (right).

Diane Varni

How quick work saved the clock

You can credit Frank Osmer and Perky Hyde with saving the clock from the Odd Fellows building on East Beach Street.

"They said the building was coming down, and the clock with it, and I said, 'B——, no way,'" Osmer, a former police chief and city councilman, said yesterday morning as he watched a crane bring the 1893 clock down from its perch in the dome of the condemned building.

He said he had simply called in the crane and salvaged the clock. He will try to raise the funds to pay for the operation later, he said.

A campaign to restore the same clock in 1976 brought in lots of cash, he said, and he expects the same thing will happen this time around.

The clock will be kept in a city warehouse for a while.

"We'll see what gets built (downtown), and if there's anywhere to put it," Osmer said.

Osmer also saw that the bell in the Odd Fellows dome, its ham-

mer and mechanism, were all saved. The crane he called in also lifted two safes out of the building.

Yesterday afternoon, something called the Snodgrass collection of paintings was being carried out of the cracked and roofless building by hand, Osmer said.

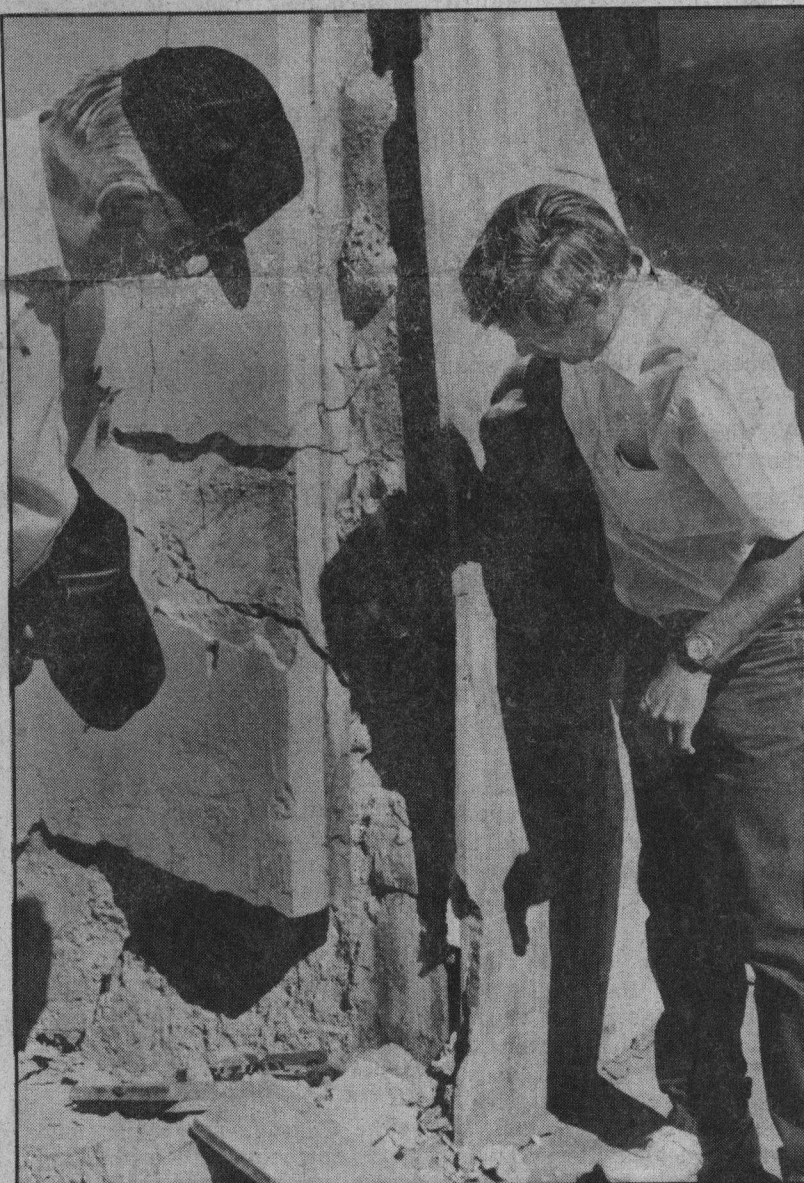
The crane company, Bay Cities Crane and Rigging of Richmond, made the trip all the way down from the Bay Area without so much as a down payment to lure it, Osmer said.

"The guy (at the company) asked me if I had any authority, and I said no," said Osmer.

Osmer said he did tell the police and fire departments what he was going to do, and they agreed to it.

Perky Hyde, wife of Ford's executive Hal Hyde, will help with the fund-raising effort, Osmer said. Anyone who wants to donate to the salvation effort should send a check payable to the Town Clock Committee, care of the Pajaro Valley Bank, 2 Brennan St., Watsonville 95077.

—Katharine Ball





Diane Varni

Jose Lozano hauls bougainvella from Jalisco restaurant, which is among the condemned buildings.

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size cans of tomato ketchup.

Structural engineers have decided that all of Ford's department store will have to go, said Neil England, the city's chief building inspector. He demonstrated how cracks in the concrete of the building supports are so wide one can reach right in and fondle the buckled steel at the heart of the supports.

"This was the newest, best part of the building," England said. It was built in the 1960s, Radin said. Another part of the store, the first to be designated for demolition, dates from the 1850s.

When Ford's will be torn down is still a question mark, Radin said, because the store's proprietors want to remove as much merchandise as possible beforehand.

On East Beach Street, facing the plaza, the domed Odd Fellows building (which housed Kane Hall Palmtag insurance agency) will be torn down, as will the adjoining Bake-Rite bakery building, where falling bricks killed a woman when the earthquake struck.

But the Lettunich Building, which occupies the corner of Main and East Beach is fairly sound, Radin said. So is the pink wooden Mansion House, with its green mansard roof. The building

housing the Chamber of Commerce in that same block of Main Street may have to come down, however, Radin said. But no decisions have yet been made about it.

Across the street, on the west side, in addition to Ford's the "little Lettunich" building, inscribed "E.B. Lettunich" across its face, which stands next door to Woolworth's, will be demolished. One corner of its brick facade is leaning out perilously over Main Street. The building housed Western Auto and Bridal Veil, among other stores.

At the corner of East Lake Avenue, the Johnson Drugs building is also seriously damaged, Radin said, but no decision has been made about whether it will be

torn down or salvaged. It is leaning heavily on Carpet House, next door, and both buildings may have to go, he said.

Radin also said the steeple of St. Patrick's Church is definitely a goner, and that the diocese of Monterey, which owns the church, will have to make up its mind "very, very soon" about whether to put up the substantial cash it would take to salvage the rest of the church, or allow it to be torn down.

Radin said he had not yet set a deadline for when the diocese must decide, but the precarious condition of the church is the only thing that is keeping Main Street between Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue from being reopened.