

# Saving *EARTHQUAKE '89* *Santa Cruz* *11-9-89* *City* history, facade Documents rescue needed

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Unless an invaluable collection of historical items can be retrieved from a building badly damaged in the Oct. 17 earthquake, Santa Cruz County will lose a huge chunk of its past, Micki Ryan fears.

But that past is probably safe, according to Philip Boyce, chairman of Pacific Western Bank, which owns the building.

"I know that people have lost their livelihoods and that this isn't the same thing," said Ryan, the archivist for the Santa Cruz County Historical Trust. "But it's like the whole community suffering amnesia. We'd be losing all of our memory."

Although the structure has been judged unsafe, Boyce said he expects that it can be shored up enough to allow retrieval of the historical items.

The first floor of the downtown Santa Cruz building, at Cooper Street and the Pacific Garden Mall, has been empty since January. The upstairs housed the county historical items, the offices of the Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Association, and a variety of professional offices.

## Historical look

Besides supporting removal of the historical items, Boyce said he is committed to saving the building's historical look.

"We would like to save the shell, if it can be done," he said. "We're looking at ways to brace the shell and then attach a steel building inside."

That Boyce is considering saving the facade of what was known for decades as the County Bank building is good news to Ryan and other local historians.

The bank building was put up in the 1890s by the predecessor of County Bank of Santa Cruz, which merged with Pacific Western Bank several years ago. It is across the street from where the Cooper House — the first structure demolished because of earthquake damage — once stood.

If the bank shell came down, there would be a huge expanse of open space where two historic buildings had been.

But just as important as the bank building to the historians is what's inside.

## Original articles

One collection includes the original articles of incorporation for every business in the county between 1851 and the mid-1960s, Ryan said.

"It's one thing to talk about such-and-such a family coming here from Genoa and starting a business," she said. "It's quite another to see their actual signatures on the documents."

Also locked up in the building are hotel registers dating back to the 1860s, an "incredible" collection of photographs going back to the 19th century, a large number of framed pictures and diaries of early-day county residents.

One of the diaries, Ryan said, is from someone who provided detailed descriptions of the 1906 earthquake — and of the months of aftershocks.