

Pacific Garden
Mall - 1980 Oct - 16 1989

Ford's Store Anxious To Anchor Downtown Mall

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The oldest department store in California - Ford's Department Stores - will be "a good citizen and a good anchor on the south side of the Pacific Garden Mall" when it opens in the refurbished J. C. Penney building this autumn, a company official said Wednesday.

Harold Hyde, company vice president, told the economic concerns group of the Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce there are no plans to close any of the Ford's galleries now located on the mall: Gallery of Pants, Intimate Gallery and Sports Wear Gallery.

But with a grin at Mel Haber's Home Furnishings, he added: "We will not have room in our new store for furniture, Mel, so you won't have to worry across the way."

Hyde, who has long been associated with educational and cultural civic efforts countywide, recalled that as a member of a predecessor group of the CofC he had worked with Les Ley, Tom Williams and Keith Shaffer on such enterprises as "how to get more beach traffic here." Hyde was a founding trustee of Cabrillo College and the vice chancellor for business at UCSC.

His family, he noted proudly, has long been associated with Ford's.

"Charlie Ford," he said: "came out to California for the Gold Rush. He had worked with a druggist and so was called Dr. Ford. He started out on Montgomery Street in San Francisco in the Gold Rush days and later came to Santa Cruz County to make money feeding the miners in the gold fields. He planted about a hundred acres of potatoes, but everyone was doing that and there was a great big bust. So he opened a store on Main Street in Watsonville, which is named after Judge Watson, and the store is still there today"

This was in 1852, Hyde said.

Hyde said that Ford's is coming to the city's downtown because "we like the mall with its fine traffic and shopping."

The new store will be "all new, bright, architecturally coordinated. The eventual

establishment of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District bus terminal in the present Penney's Auto Center is expected to help Ford's and all the other stores, he said.

Ford's has won a place for itself wherever it has opened stores - Salinas, Hollister, Gilroy, Watsonville and now Santa Cruz - because of a policy of standing behind its goods, its good credit arrangements, the products a 15-person buying staff selects in such

great centers as San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York.

Hyde reported, not without pride, that the reputation of Ford's in Watsonville was such in World War II that Japanese residents

who were being interned after Pearl Harbor came to the store and deposited many thousands of dollars as credit balances on account in the store, saying they knew they could trust Ford's. The last of that money was finally claimed

in the 1950s, Hyde said.

Hyde said of the move to Santa Cruz: "We have a lot of loyal customers and fans in Santa Cruz. In Watsonville we have kept and increased our share of the market, but we have not

kept pace in Santa Cruz.

The mall is very well known to Hyde for his uncle, Arthur Hyde, was a designer with Roy Rydell of the mall.

Sam Leask, the founder of Leask's Department Store, started out with Ford's and was among those joining with Charlie Ford in incorporating the enterprise in 1890.

"Charlie Ford died in 1890," Hyde said, "and he stated in his will that the

Watsonville band accompany his bier in the funeral, but that when it was marching back after the funeral it should play 'Ta Ra De Boom De Ay,' which they did."

But business is done differently now, Hyde said. In olden days the store would barter credit for eggs and carrots and the like. Furthermore, when a man had finished shopping at Ford's he was always invited to have a slug from the whisky barrel.

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL
May 7, 1981

APR 10 1981
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