

Pacific Garden
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A moment in time

By WALLACE BAINE
Sentinel staff writer

THE FIRST THING you notice is the noise.

As the Town Clock strikes the top of the hour, its familiar, resonant tones are obscured by the skull-jarring slam of the pile driver and the growl of the bulldozers in the next block.

There is no peace these days at the head of Pacific Avenue, the block between the Locust Street lighthouse and the Town Clock. Two years after an earthquake changed the landscape of this area forever, feelings of apprehension and uncertainty still lurk here — not necessarily from the nightmares of a traumatic event long since past, but from a slow rebuilding process still taking place.

While many Californians are looking back to the ordeal of two years ago, many of the merchants of Pacific Avenue have their mind on two years hence. At that point, this block may be finished with its rebuilding, and the earthquake and its aftermath can be put to rest.

But now, the painfully slow process has only just begun.

Those bulldozers down the street represent

one of changes looming for the north end of Pacific. Soon the chain-link fences, the working crews and the heavy machinery will leapfrog to this block and the disruptive work of tearing up the street will begin.

"We're going to be pretty isolated here," said Mark McConnell, a clerk at Pacific Pants & Pack.

"We've been joking about how we're going to get our customers in here," said Patti Ruggiero, manager of Graphix a few doors down. "Are we going to have them dropped in by helicopter?"

Ruggiero and owner Carla Walton have been running Graphix for six years selling art posters and framing. They are concerned about the effects of the upcoming construction on their already depressed business.

"The fence is a real deterrent to shoppers," said Walton. "It's going to make it hard on us to attract people here and that's our Christmas season you're talking about."

They have stayed in their present location throughout the earthquake ordeal. But, said Ruggiero, they have thought about leaving.

"I don't want to leave downtown, I love it here," said Ruggiero. "But if the right situation came up we would definitely

consider it."

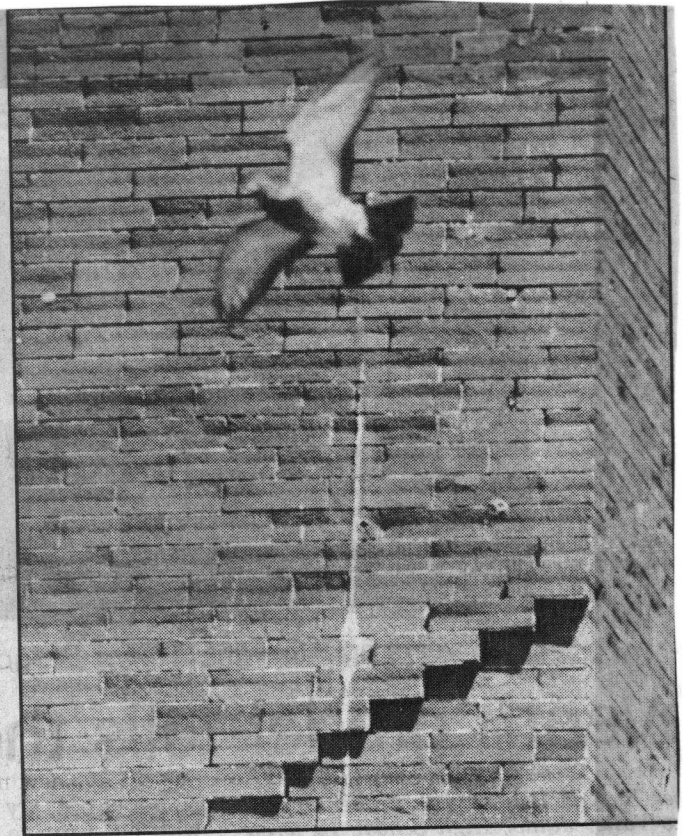
The sandwich deli Zoccoli's may itself be sandwiched by various acts of building and tearing down. One side is the crater left by the destruction of the old St. George Hotel, one of the quake's most prominent victims. There, the construction of the new St. George is beginning. On the other side is the abandoned Flatiron building that houses the legendary Tea Cup restaurant. Its owners plan to tear it down.

The trees and buildings — particularly the old St. George — that were once here and now gone gave the block a cozy feel. Now, the street lays open and exposed and the lines of sight go clear across Front Street. Maybe two years from now, the charm and the quiet will return.

For now, the block is like a patient awaiting major surgery. It knows the operation is coming; it hopes it can survive it.

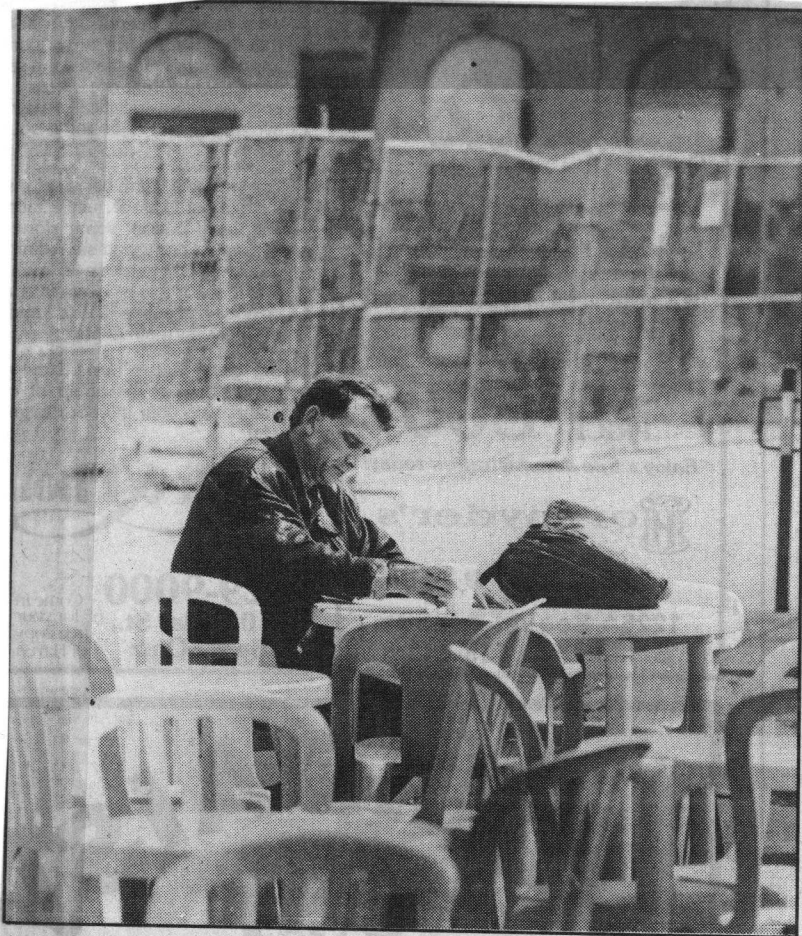
"Sometimes changes are better," said Patti Ruggiero bravely. "Sure, you sometimes wish there was no earthquake and one day everything would be magically transformed into what it was. But that's not going to happen."

"Sometimes changes work out."



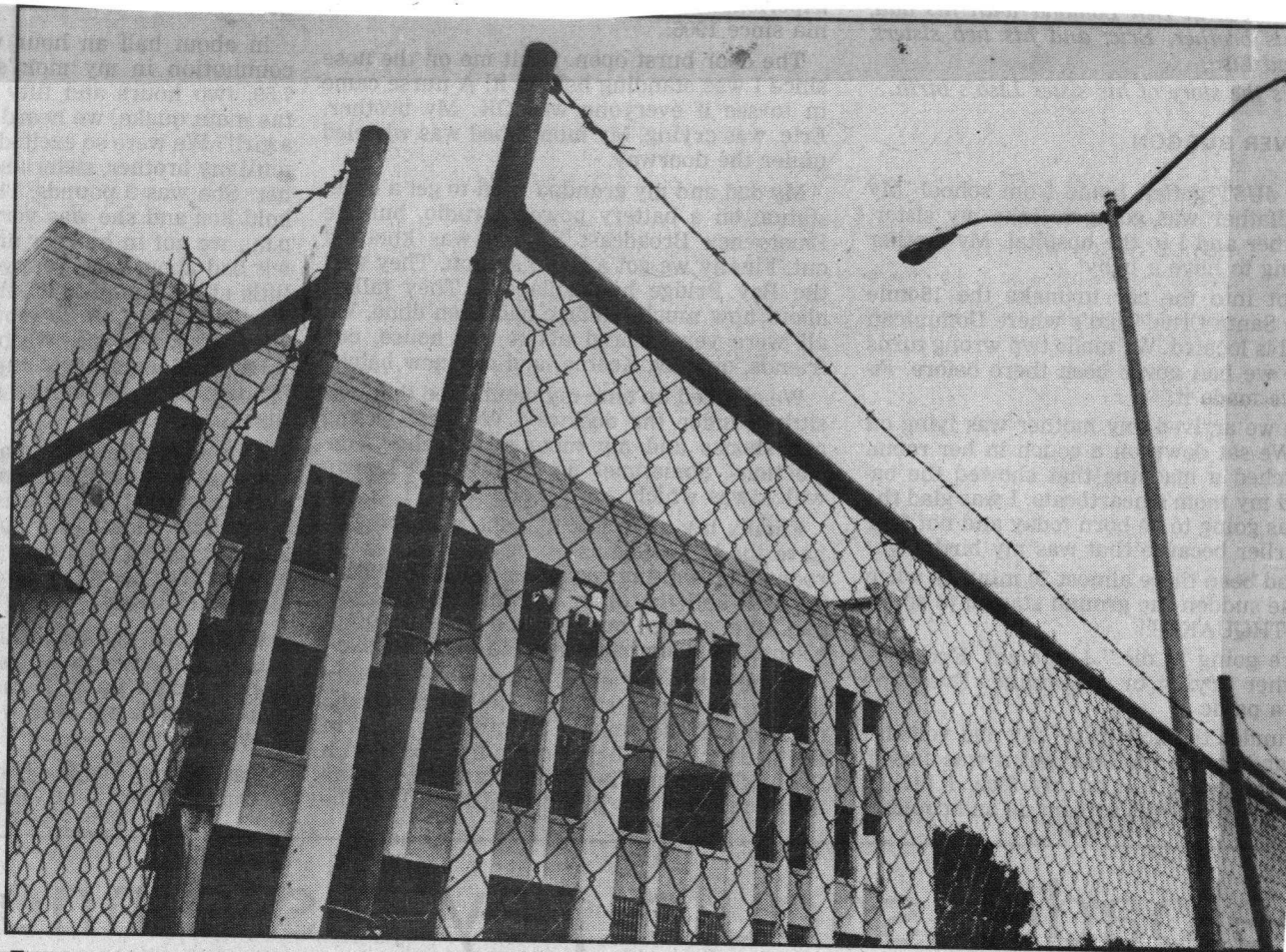
Unsettled bricks in a building serve as jagged backdrop for a passing pigeon.

10-16
Kern
SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL
October 16, 1991
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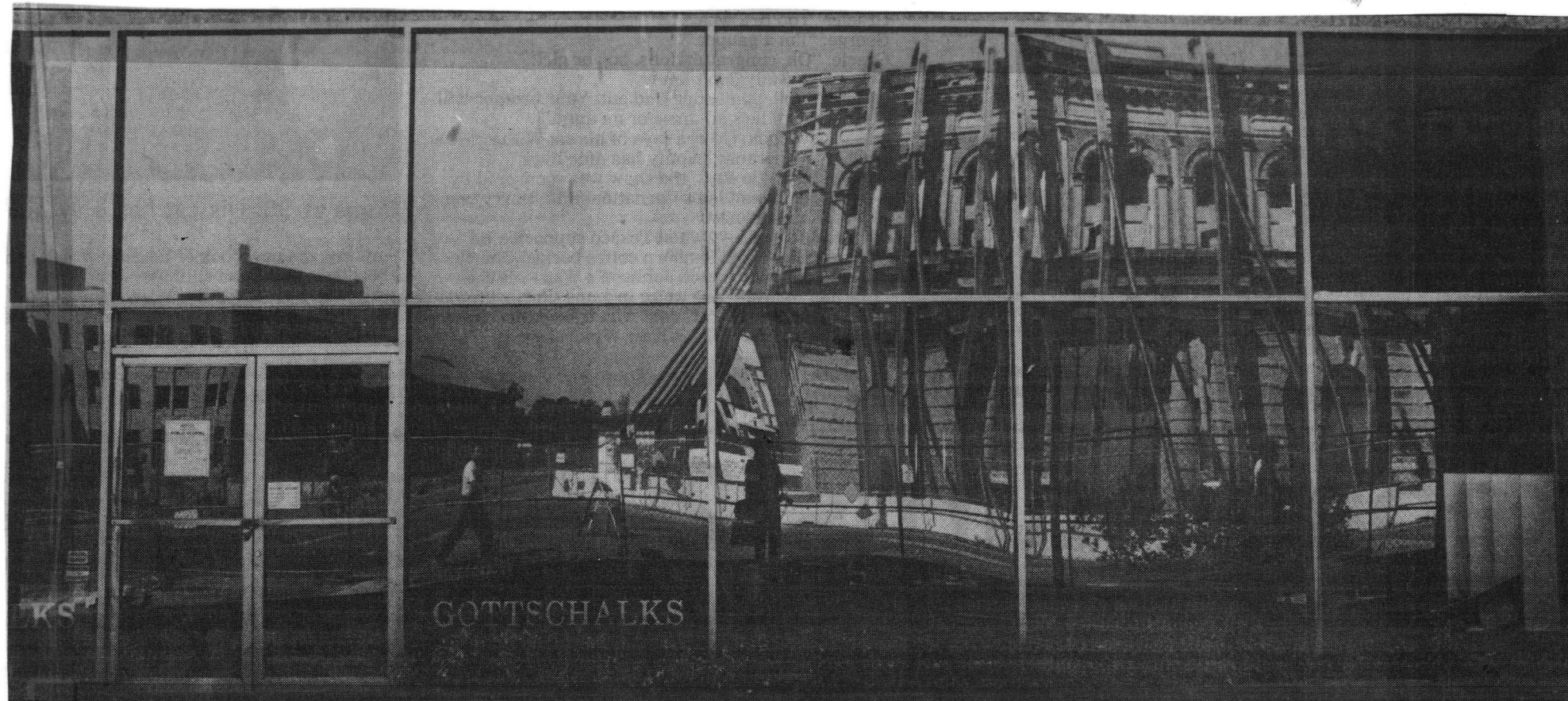


Photos
by
Shmuel
Thaler/
Sentinel

It isn't Paris, but Zoccoli's sidewalk dining is back



Fences will disappear in 1992 when the McPherson Center for Art and History opens.



Window of long-empty Gottschalks mirrors the shell of the old County Bank building on Pacific Avenue and Cooper Street.