

The Pilot Hose Company (1896)

This organization has for fifteen years been a notable institution of Santa Cruz, and for a long time was as prominent in its role as a social club as it was efficient in its service as a hose company.

Pilot Hose was organized May 26, 1880, by the flower of the young men of Santa Cruz. On many a fiery field and in several hard-fought tournaments with neighboring companies they proved themselves alike invincible, while in social matters the club easily led, and the pleasant "Pilot Parlors" were the rendezvous of society people and the scene of many a joyous festivity.

The company, its cart, hose and other appurtenances were first housed in a very modest and cheap rented building, but in 1884 the Pilots became land-holders and house-holders—the proud possessors of a convenient two-story building on Pacific Avenue, the ground floor used as a hose-house and the second story as club rooms, with billiard table, piano, sideboard and all other appurtenances thereunto belonging, while a commodious gymnasium was also fitted up.

But in 1894 the accumulated treasures of fourteen years, endeared by many pleasant associations, went up in the flame and smoke of the great fire, and the Pilots were homeless—not for long, however. After mature deliberation, the lot on Pacific Avenue was sold and another purchased on Church Street near the avenue. A committee of members were appointed as Building Trustees. These were Henry F. Kron, president; F. W. Ely, Robert Effey, W. C. Hoffmann, J. Ho. Bailey, John Severio and F. A. Sweeney. By the time a year had elapsed, the present very handsome building was completed. It is two stories in height, 40 feet front and 83 feet depth, built of pressed brick and iron, in terra-cotta color and dark green. On one side of the arched entrance is the headquarters of the city fire department, while the other side is occupied as the office of the Big Creek Electric Power Company. On the second floor the two large apartments in front are elegantly furnished, one as a reception room, the other as a billiard room. Across the rear of the building stretches the gymnasium and dancing room 30 x 40 feet in dimensions, while baths, card-rooms and "All the comforts of a home" are to be found within the substantial walls.

Robert Effey, the first foreman, held that office for twenty-one successive terms. He was succeeded by F. W. Ely, who was foreman six terms, when Mr. Effey was again elected, served two terms, and was succeeded by Henry F. Kron, the present president. F. W. Ely is now chief engineer of the city fire department and C. E. Lilly, assistant.

J. Ho. Bailey, now of San Francisco, was for many successive terms secretary, and W. H. Duke the treasurer. The present officers are as follows: H. F. Kron, president; C. H. Bernheim, vice-president; L. L. Fargo, secretary; trustees, D. W. Grover, F. W. Ely, John Severio, Wm. C. Hoffmann.



Portrait of Frank Ely

[In 1889, Mr. Ely was the volunteer foreman of the Santa Cruz Pilot Hose Co.; he became the first paid Santa Cruz Fire Dept. Chief, 1894-1897.]

Sources

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