

Bicentennial 1991 - Santa Cruz City

Holy Cross arch still holds city's centennial time capsule

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EMBEDDED IN the cornerstone of the granite Memorial Arch in front of Holy Cross Catholic Church is a long copper box filled with a yellowed

Want to help?

Santa Cruz Bicentennial Committee will meet Wednesday at 11 a.m. in the ABC Room of Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium. Anyone interested in planning the year-long celebration is welcome. For more information, call Lisa McGinnis, city special events coordinator, at 429-3477.

document, three 100-year-old newspapers and an 1891 dime.

The 19th-century time capsule is a buried reminder of a centennial celebration that was five months in the planning and involved many of the movers and shakers of 1891 Santa Cruz.

Their work culminated on the afternoon of Saturday, Aug. 15, 1891, when the cornerstone of the Memorial Arch was laid in front of the church.

The ceremony took place on the mission site, near where priests and Spanish soldiers had pitched their tents and began planning a community 100 years earlier.

The arch was the big deal — not the box. In fact, Mayor Bowman had tossed the dime in as an afterthought before workers sealed it into the cornerstone with mortar.

A time capsule isn't in the plans yet for this year's bicentennial celebration on Oct. 5, but then, it appeared to be a last-minute thought at the last big anniversary 100 years ago.



In the Santa Cruz Daily Sentinel coverage of the monthly meetings of the centennial committee, no mention was made of a time capsule — not when they were having trouble coming up with \$5,600 to pay for the arch.

In fact, at the centennial celebra-

tion Duncan McPherson, then publisher of the Daily Sentinel, in a sense "passed the hat," looking for pledges to cover the \$1,500 still owed for the memorial.

His pleas netted \$202.25 from the audience, although a fund-raising dinner at the old Catholic school hours later was "well-attended," according to Daily Sentinel reports.

Planning for the arch — which still stands in front of Holy Cross Church and apparently still holds its copper time capsule under a weight of granite — began on an inauspicious note in March, 1891.

According to a story the next day in the Daily Sentinel, "Mayor Bowman named Father McNamee as chairman (of the centennial committee). The reverend gentleman declined, as he was in favor of Mayor Bowman.

"Father McNamee's motion that the mayor be called to the chair

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Granite arch at Holy Cross Church continues to encase its treasure, a copper box with mementos stashed there 100 years ago during the city's centennial celebration.

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was seconded by F.A. Hihn. His honor was unanimously chosen."

Competing with the idea for the memorial arch was the reluctant chairman's idea that a bronze monument be erected on the upper plaza.

Committee member W. Finkeldy "considered the event as a commemoration of the time when brave men went among the savages to teach them civilization as well as religion," said the Daily Sentinel story.

"It is necessary to raise all the money possible, as the finer the monument could be made, the more honor it would reflect on the city."

That turned interest to the arch, which, said Hihn, should be "not only for the present, but for the future as well."

As with things today, the price grew as time went along. The committee voted to raise \$3,000, but arch designed by architect T.J. Welch and built by T. O'Neil ultimately cost \$5,600.

As the cost grew, committee members Bowman and McNamee again were at odds. At the second meeting of the group in April 1891, the reverend suggested committee members be responsible for raising funds.

Reported the Daily Sentinel: "Mayor Bowman said that he did not feel like assuming any responsibility.

"Father McNamee remarked that it was not a practical view to take."

By August 1891, who should raise what gave way to the actual ceremony.

"The cornerstone of the Memorial Arch was laid Saturday afternoon (Aug. 15, 1891) in front of the Catholic Church with appropriate ceremonies in the presence of a large concourse of people," reported the Sentinel.

"Father McNamee, in introducing Mayor Bowman, said as he handed him a silver trowel: 'You will lay well and firm the cornerstone of the arch we are about to erect in honor of the Franciscan

fathers who shed the light of Christianity one hundred years ago.'"

Maj. James D. Phelan also addressed the crowd, according to the Sentinel story.

"It is fitting to pause and contemplate the labor of others, whose self-sacrifice resulted in the benefits we now enjoy," he said. "Cities do not spring up in a day. If we reap the harvest from the seed sown by others it is but dutiful of us to award a mead of praise to those through whose labors we have reaped the good results."

After the speeches, the copper box was sealed into the cornerstone.

In it was a document containing the names of President Harrison, Pope Leo, Gov. Markham, Mayor Bowman, Bishop Mora, the Rev. McNamee, the Rev. Farrelly, architect T.J. Welch, builder T. O'Neil and the centennial committee members.

Also included were copies of the Daily Sentinel of Aug. 15, the Surf newspaper for Aug. 15 and the San Francisco Monitor from Aug. 12.

"Mayor Bowman put a 10-cent piece in the box as it was being taken to be deposited in the cornerstone," said the Sentinel story.

"After the mayor had covered the stone with mortar, the workmen placed a granite block over it and then the ceremonies were over."

FLASH FORWARD another 100 years and talk with Mike Day, building facilities supervisor of Holy Cross Church.

After doing a little digging, Day has decided it would be impossible to retrieve the copper time capsule without damaging the arch, which, unlike the church, made it through the October 1989 earthquake without a scratch.

"I think they had in mind the arch would be torn down one day," said Day. "I dug an exploratory hole, but it would be like finding a needle in a haystack."

He said the only way to retrieve the box would be to tear into the granite.

"I don't think it's worth it unless they slipped something in there we don't know."