

Midnight fire guts City Schools offices

By MARK BERGSTROM
Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — A midnight blaze gutted half of the City Schools administrative offices at the crest of Mission hill.

Firefighters were called by a neighbor who was awakened by the sound of windows breaking at the schools building, according to Fire Chief Tony Pini.

Flames were pouring out the windows and roof on the north side of the building as the first fire engine arrived at the scene.

Because the building was constructed with two wings separated by a center entry, firefighters were able to confine actual fire damage to the north side of the building. "What burned is what was burning when we got there," said Pini.

Some 20 firefighters fought the blaze for more than an hour and a half before gaining control. "It was a stubborn fire," said Pini. The building had several false ceilings, and firefighters had to pull them down to get at the fire.

"It was a difficult interior attack and

the firefighters worked very hard," he said.

Pini estimated damage at about \$150,000, but said that figure could go higher depending on the contents of the burned-out rooms.

Cause is under investigation, but Pini said a school district employee reported smelling an electrical smell in the building about two hours before the fire.

"Our first task is to try and find office space," said schools Superintendent Dale

Please see back of section



Ed Porter

Firefighters knock out flames shortly after midnight today.

Monday, April 24, 1984

Fire

Continued from Page A1

Kinsley as he stared at the burned-out shell of the building this morning. He had been at the scene all night.

"We'll have to use whatever areas are available to us. We'll need to get telephone hookups. That's our job today," he said.

Burned out, he said, were the business office, special projects and curriculum and instructional offices. The accounting office in the middle suffered some damage. Offices to the south, including Kinsley's office, suffered only smoke and some water damage.

"A lot of people's work may be lost," he said. But, the district's permanent records are located in a different location.

The administrative office building was built at the crest of Mission Street on the site of the early Mission Hill School. The school eventually was moved a half-mile away to the present site of Mission Hill Junior High School.

In 1978, the Board of Education dedicated the plaza area to the memory of Loudon Nelson, an ex-slave who donated all his estate to the school district upon his death in 1860. Some of that money was used to buy the land. A monument was erected in his memory in front of the administrative office.