

FIRE DESTROYS ARMORY; CENSUS NAMES SAVED FROM BURNING SHOP ADJOINING; \$2500 INSURANCE

The fire fiend between 2 and 3 o'clock this morning consumed and laid low the Armory on Front street, the big frame structure closely identified since 1883 with the civic, social, political and military history of Santa Cruz and the state. The fire was the most spectacular blaze since the night when a large portion of the old Santa Cruz business district was destroyed by fire. As the last sidewalls and front turrets of the old structure were falling into the roaring furnace made by the flames of the burning building thousands of rounds of ammunition belonging to the naval militia and stored in the structure, exploded at intervals with the quick precision of musketry fire, heightening the excitement among the onlookers and causing great clouds of smoke andinders and sheets of flame to shoot skyward and creating a heat that sarded the walls of Leonard and Hendricks repair shop across Front street and the roof of Gaba & Magidson's warehouse adjoining to the north to begin smoking.

The fire department was called at 2 o'clock and upon arrival at the scene found the big structure ablaze inside from end to end. G. A. Willey, caretaker, whose sleeping apartments were on the lower floor under the southwest corner of the building, was found by Assistant Fire Chief Lewis wandering around with a spotlight and apparently unaware of his danger. He was led from the building and out of danger. The department did effective work playing several strong streams on the big blaze and successfully confining it so that the property of Gaba & Magidson and other buildings on Soquel avenue near the corner of Front street were not harmed. One stream of water was played on the fire from a rear window of Gaba and Magidson's warehouse, the water wetting down about 1500 sacks belonging to the firm.

W. T. Newcomb, one of the local census enumerators, who runs a small meat shop adjoining the Armory arrived in time this morning to save a list of 400 census names and 100 farm reports. The fire destroyed his place, causing about \$150 damages. Among the losses is a set of false teeth which Mr. Newcomb would cherish if the smoking ruins would give them up today.

The Armory was the property of the Fair Building association in which Duncan McPherson and the heirs of the late F. A. Hihn are the chief stockholders. It was constructed in 1883 on Soquel avenue at the corner of Front street and in those days was the scene of many a fashionable summer affair given in connection with the annual fairs that were then held. About twenty years ago the building was removed to the present location when Front street was first put through to Laurel street. In the interim it had become indelibly historic to Santa Cruz on account of the many important political meetings which occurred there and because during the war it was the official center for Santa Cruz registrations for the national army and later as the place for physical examinations of the young soldiers and the starting point for the

draft contingents when they left the city. For many years the Armory was the headquarters of the Santa Cruz division of the naval reserves and it was there in April of 1917 that this contingent assembled and equipped for their departure to various posts of duty. In the blaze last night the reserves lost considerable equipment.

It was in July of 1911 that Governor Johnson inaugurated George W. Stone as mayor of Santa Cruz in the Armory. The old building has been one of the main recreation centers of the town, basketball, dances galore, even a wrestling match now and then having been enjoyed within its walls. In recent years a poultry show and several industrial fairs were held there.

Duncan McPherson said this afternoon that last night's fire meant a loss to the Fair Building association of \$10,000.