

U S Armed Forces

# Santa Cruz Yesterdays



**ARMORY DESTROYED BY FIRE JAN. 16, 1920.** (From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

Many Santa Cruzans tumbled out of bed earlier than usual on the morning of Friday, January 16, 1920, alerted by the old fire bell and the flames and glow from downtown which lighted up the pre-dawn sky.

In one of the larger fires of the past the community lost that morning what had been the "civic auditorium" of the period. For 37 years the Armory had been the public gathering place, located near the heart of town, in the Front and Soquel area.

The conflagration lasted something over an hour, starting at 2 a.m. As the last sidewalls were fall into the roaring furnace of flame, thousands of rounds of ammunition belonging to the naval "militia" and stored in the structure, exploded at intervals with rattle of musket fire, heightening the excitement among the onlookers and causing great clouds of smoke and cinders to shoot skyward.

## A Hot Fire

The great heat, felt even by onlookers lined along the walkway of the Soquel avenue covered bridge some distance away, caused the walls of the Leonard & Hendricks blacksmith and repair shop across Front street and the roof of the Gaba & Magidson warehouse, almost adjoining, on the north, to begin smoking.

W. T. Newcomb's small meat shop just to the south, was burned. But the Chinese wash house 100 feet beyond was saved. Vincent Avilla was credited with saving the building by soaking its steaming walls with a steady stream from a garden hose.

## \$10,000 Loss

Loss was fixed at \$10,000 for the Armory structure. G. A. Willey, caretaker, lost books and personal belongings and the naval militia (reserves) considerable equipment.

The Armory had started as a great structure 100x150 feet, generally known as the Pavilion. A group of local businessmen formed the Fair Building association, a stock company, headed by F. A. Hihn, L. K. Baldwin, R. C. Kirby, Duncan McPherson, and others. Purpose was to create an appropriate place for rose fairs, meeting and exhibitions.

Original site was at the southwest corner of Soquel avenue and Front street (as of today). But in the summer of 1883 when the hall was built, that part of Soquel avenue was known as Arcan street, and Front street had not yet been cut through to Cathcart. When the street was cut through in 1895 the Pavilion, then facing north, was shunted to its final setting, facing

west on Front street, its back to the river not far from the bank.

## "Armory" Is Born

Here it received its turreted front and became the "Armory" when the naval reserves became tenants. It was the scene of sporting events, dances, etc., but became indelibly historic to Santa Cruz on account of important political meetings held there. It was the official center for local registration for the



At the height of the fire. Photo made before daybreak, by fire-light.

World War I draft, later for physical exams. In July, 1911, Gov. Hiram Johnson of California inaugurated Geo. W. Stone as Mayor of Santa Cruz there.

The picture, showing what few ruins remained after daylight came and the fire was out, also shows Soquel avenue's old covered bridge across the background. The bridge was destined to leave the scene also. A year later it was torn down to make way for the concrete bridge still in use.

Commissioner Frank Mattison had died the day before the fire. Will Rogers and a motion picture company were here making a movie. On Lincoln's birthday, February 12, the New Santa Cruz Theatre was first opened to the public.

## Aptos Community Church To Hear Mission

Mrs. Ivan Francisco, who is in Korea, will speak at 11 o'clock Sunday at the Aptos Community church.

The Woman's Service is sponsoring an annual thank you program for the public.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

## Rolland Hoff To Attend Red Cross Conference

Rolland W. Hoffman, man, will represent the chapter of the American Red Cross Wednesday at a fund-raising meeting to be held in San Francisco.

E. Roland Harriman, president of the organization, will outline current and future programs. He is at present on a speaking tour throughout the country prior to the opening of a campaign in March. Target campaign is \$85,000,000.

Highlight of the meeting will be a display of the blood bank program which the Red Cross has been operating for 18 months collected 1,225 units of blood for use by the armed forces in disaster services.

## SIDNEY CARTER IS NOTARY PUBLIC

Oath of Sidney Carter as Notary Public has been filed with Clerk H. E. Miller.

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## PAUL ATTORNEY

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