

Santa Cruz Sentinel

Continuation Of The Santa Cruz Sentinel-News

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Judge Rules Out GI Trial

Holy City's Main Building Razed By Fire

Holy City, once the home of an off-beat religious cult and lately a sleepy community nestled in the Santa Cruz mountains, regained the limelight late last night when its main community hall was razed to the ground by a spectacular fire.

Division of forestry units from Santa Clara county were still dousing the smoldering embers of the blaze this morning. The flames during the height of the fire leaped 100 feet and were visible in Los Gatos.

The community hall, which contained the many writings, pictures and other mementos of Father W. E. Riker, founder of the cult, also contained a barber shop, rest rooms and sleeping quarters.

Two persons were in the building when it caught fire at approximately 9:45 o'clock, but both escaped unharmed. They were Earl Russell, custodian of the building, and Emil Rechsteiner, a barber, who also resided in the structure.

The fire is believed to have been started from a short circuit in a lamp in Russell's room.

The blaze was first reported by service station operator Ronald Edmundson.

Maurice R. Kline, part-owner of the former religious community, said it would cost \$75,000 to replace the building. "I had only nominal insurance on the structure," he said. He described the loss of Father Riker's mementos and writings as "irreplaceable." Kline had purchased half interest in the community last year from Riker.

The one-time cult leader, now recuperating in a Los Gatos rest home from an auto accident, is reportedly taking the loss philosophically.

Kline reported him as saying: "I guess it was God's will to destroy the old Holy City to make it possible to build a new one out of the ashes."

Eight fire fighting units from state forestry departments in Santa Clara county, plus those from Santa Cruz, Felton and Burrell divisions, along with the Redwood Estates volunteer department answered the call.

Approximately 200 people gathered at the fire and cars were parked for approximately a mile along Highway 17 as drivers stopped to watch the holocaust.

Pacific Gas and Electric company repairmen were also on the scene to handle "hot" wires which had fallen from the building.

The building, a one-story wood frame structure, had hardwood floors, a stage, orchestra pit and was pine-paneled and had stained glass windows.

Holy City Blaze Is Battled



Faulty Wiring Is Blamed For Blaze



Les Gum, right, pictured last night at the Holy City fire which burned down the city's community hall, museum, barber shop and public restrooms. Gum headed Santa Cruz division of forestry units to the spectacular blaze which was blamed on faulty electrical wiring in a reading lamp in an apartment in the community hall. Two men sleeping in the hall escaped from the blaze

which was reported at 9:45 p.m. Firemen from Santa Clara county this morning were still dousing the smoldering embers—all that was left of the hall.

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Water Rate Increase Is Foreseen

A proposed hike in the minimum water rate from the present \$1.25 to between \$1.70 and \$1.80 per month may be necessary to finance the \$3½ million revenue bonds for water development projects, Water Department Director Wes Webber reported in preliminary plans yesterday.

The water commission has recommended dams be built at Newell creek and Zayante creek, and a pipeline and adequate water treatment plant be constructed.

Eisenhower's Civil Rights Bill

Brush Fire Hits