

# Fire chars SC's Town Clock

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SANTA CRUZ — The Town Clock tower caught fire Sunday night, leaving the inside of the 100-year-old structure charred but only moderately damaged.

Smoke was seen rising from the second-story cornice around 8:45 p.m., from a fire smoldering in the eaves. Smoke filled the tower and pushed out the lower windows, making it appear that the entire structure might be burning.

Crowds gathered in front of nearby bars and restaurants as smoke billowed and firefighters scaled ladders to the tower.

"Anytime something like this happens in Santa Cruz it evokes remembrances of the earthquake, and all of the buildings that were lost," city Councilman Scott Kennedy said as firefighters tore into the building with a chainsaw.

The fire was stubborn and difficult to reach. City officials said electrical work had been done in the tower last week to provide more power for lighting, leading to speculation the fire might be electrical in origin.

Firefighters methodically attacked the flames, trying to avoid damaging the structure more than necessary. People grimaced as the chainsaw ripped into the side of the metal-clad tower, sending sculpted pieces of the cornice falling.

At 9 p.m., even as the fire burned, the clock chimed and kept running.

"We got a town clock in Auburn, but it's not like this," said Nat Giuliani, who watched the fire with his grandson on his shoulders.

Giuliani, who is visiting his family in Santa Cruz, abandoned his table at Zoccoli's Pasta House across the street from the clock as dinner was being served.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Please see TOWN—A10 Billowing smoke from the burning Town Clock tower envelopes a firefighter.

## Town Clock fire

Continued from Page A1

The clock tower is a symbol of survival and monument to the spirit of Santa Cruz. The original tower was built in 1873 and stood atop the Odd Fellows Building on Pacific Avenue near Cooper Street. It was destroyed by fire in 1899 and rebuilt in its present form in 1900.

In 1964, it was dismantled brick by brick and sold to the city as

part of a redevelopment project. In 1976, donations paid for the current base, and the original tower and clockworks were placed upon it.

The Town Clock became more deeply etched in the city's memory when it stopped at 5:06 p.m. on Oct. 17, 1989, as the Loma Prieta Earthquake hit. The restarting of the clock in November 1989 marked the beginning of recovery from the

quake.

"It's a bummer," said Councilman Mike Rotkin as he watched the fire being put out.

The extent of damage and the fire's cause will not be officially determined until an investigation is completed. The fire left the clock stopped and a gaping hole of charred timber exposed to the night.