



NEWS



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Fire-damaged building in Old Town Victorville razed

Matthew Cabe, Daily Press

Posted: January 2, 2019, 5:06 pm



A lone crewman operates an excavator during demolition of a vacant building in Old Town on Wednesday. The building was deemed a safety hazard by city officials after it was gutted by fire last year. [James Quigg, Daily Press]

Seventh Street storefront demolished after fire in August rendered it a safety hazard.

VICTORVILLE — A longstanding storefront on Seventh Street in Old Town that received a mural makeover in 2012 has been demolished, fewer than five months after a fire gutted its interior and rendered the property a safety hazard.

The building, located between B and C streets, was reduced to rubble Wednesday. Witnesses saw a lone crewman using a Komatsu excavator to tear down the structure that has sat vacant for years in Victorville's downtown district.

City spokesperson Sue Jones told the Daily Press the building was “damaged beyond repair” during the August fire. The city's building official later determined the property to be a severe public hazard, which prompted its demolition.

“Following the fire, a portion of the building protruded over the sidewalk and was unstable,” Jones said. “The sidewalk had to be closed as a safety precaution to prevent any pedestrians from being injured should the structure topple. The sidewalk closure in a heavy pedestrian area was a public inconvenience. All of these factors were considered in the city's decision to demolish the building.”

Despite sitting unoccupied for years, the building received a level of care in 2012 not long before the International Route 66 Festival, which was held in Victorville that year.

Apple Valley Legacy Museum Founder Marcy Taylor painted a mural on the building that honored the states that Route 66 travels through. It was one of several murals she painted on short notice in preparation for the festival that brought thousands of Mother Road enthusiasts to Old Town.

Taylor told the Daily Press she has fond memories from that 2012 summer because it fostered a sense of community in an embattled section of the city that has long suffered in disrepair amid myriad rehabilitation efforts.

“I got a couple people that helped over the summer,” Taylor said. “We needed to hurry up and do something. So we got a theme, pictures out of the old books and got to work ... All the business owners down there were so happy to see work being done.”

Taylor, who opened a second legacy museum in Old Town last year, said Wednesday's demolition made her feel like crying. She said Victorville is getting “worse and worse,” which has left her “worn out from trying” to help.

“Most every building I painted on is either demolished or damaged in some way,” she said. “I’m trying to be less emotional about it, but hours of work was destroyed. It’s emotional for me ... We contacted every business owner to get permission to paint down there. It really hurts you.”

Jones said the city pursues demolition when buildings are damaged to the point that they are unsalvageable. Otherwise, attempts are made to work with property owners on rehabilitation.

Franklin Eugene Kraatz, the current property owner, agreed to the demolition, according to Jones. She said Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds were used for the leveling and noted that the property will have a recorded lien for cost recovery by Victorville upon any future sale.

San Bernardino County Fire Department firefighters battled a blaze inside the building that broke out Aug. 23 and brought an hours-long shutdown to both sides of Seventh Street.

Crews initially mounted an interior attack of the second-alarm blaze, but a retreat was ordered due to the degree of fire involvement in the building, according to a previous Daily Press report. From there, ladders on fire engines were used to knock down the bulk of the fire with elevated streams.

Attempts to record a cause for the fire were unsuccessful Wednesday. County Fire Battalion Chief Dave Meddles said the fire marshal’s office would contact the Daily Press early next week with information.

Jones, meanwhile, said the last year of occupancy is unknown. The building previously housed the original Victorville Cycles before that business moved to its current location on Ridgecrest Road, she said.

Kraatz became sole owner in September, property records show. The Kraatz family has maintained ownership since 1985.

Before that, it was owned by the late George R. Seals, a prominent community leader who, among other achievements, was instrumental in organizing the American Legion Post in Victorville, according to multiple news reports.

Future plans for the site are unknown, according to Jones. She said she was unaware of any other demolitions scheduled in Old Town in the near future.

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20190102/fire-damaged-building-in-old-town-victorville-razed>

Molotov cocktails found on roof of Colton business that caught fire

Brian Rokos, San Bernardino Sun

Posted: January 2, 2019, 6:36 pm

Two Molotov cocktails were found on the roof of a Colton business that caught fire Tuesday, Jan. 1, the Colton Fire Department said.

Just after 10 p.m., firefighters were called to Lily's Water and Ice at 295 S. La Cadena Drive, Capt. Tom DeBellis said. Firefighters who ascended to the roof found the incendiary devices, DeBellis said.

The fire caused about \$500 damage, he said.

Colton firefighters, with the assistance of the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department, are investigating the case as an arson.

Authorities ask anyone with information on the fire to call the Colton Fire Department at 909-370-5100 or the Colton Police Department at 909-379-5000.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2019/01/02/molotov-cocktails-found-on-roof-of-colton-business-that-caught-fire/>

19-year-old airlifted to hospital after crash on 7th Street in Victorville

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News

Posted: January 2, 2019



7th Street was closed in both directions as deputies investigated the crash. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com) — Firefighters extricated a 19-year-old who was trapped in a mangled vehicle following a two-car crash here Wednesday.

The crash was reported at 8:13 pm at the intersection of Circle Drive and 7th Street near Winchell's Donuts.

Firefighters had to use special tools to rescue the trapped occupant from the white 1997 Volkswagen Jetta and subsequently airlifted to Loma Linda University Medical Center via helicopter H325.

The driver of a second vehicle, a silver Nissan Xterra SUV, sustained minor injuries.

Deputies closed 7th Street between Tatum Road and Lacy Street while the cause of the crash was investigated.

<https://www.vvng.com/19-year-old-airlifted-to-hospital-after-crash-on-7th-street-in-victorville/>

EDITORIALS/OPINIONS/LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Another cash grab by government

Terrance Millen of Morongo Valley, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: January 2, 2019

Regarding the “fire tax,” I have only one comment. Has anybody paid attention to the bigger tax rape of \$25 million annually San Bernardino County is going to get off this issue plus the property tax for fire service? Wake up, people, this is a program that will go statewide if it succeeds here!

Regarding Mr. Cook’s remarks on forestry management — I know for congressional historic fact that all of California’s resource money for forestry management has been very quietly withdrawn by every federal government in the last 50 years.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/article_ef2061b6-0ef2-11e9-a8bd-a7d639ed5715.html