

Fire destroys historic building

Boys reportedly
were playing
with matches

By Frank Mickadell
The Register

C. E. Cravater - 6-21-89
HUNTINGTON BEACH — A fire believed to have been set by two boys playing with matches Tuesday destroyed a historic building that preservationists had hoped to make part of a city oil museum.

Within hours of the fire, police announced the arrests of a 10-year-old and a 14-year-old on suspicion of arson. The two boys, both from Huntington Beach, were released to their parents.

The wood-frame structure, covered with corrugated metal, was one of three in a small industrial complex built by city oil pioneer Samuel Bowen at the outset of the city's oil boom in the 1920s.

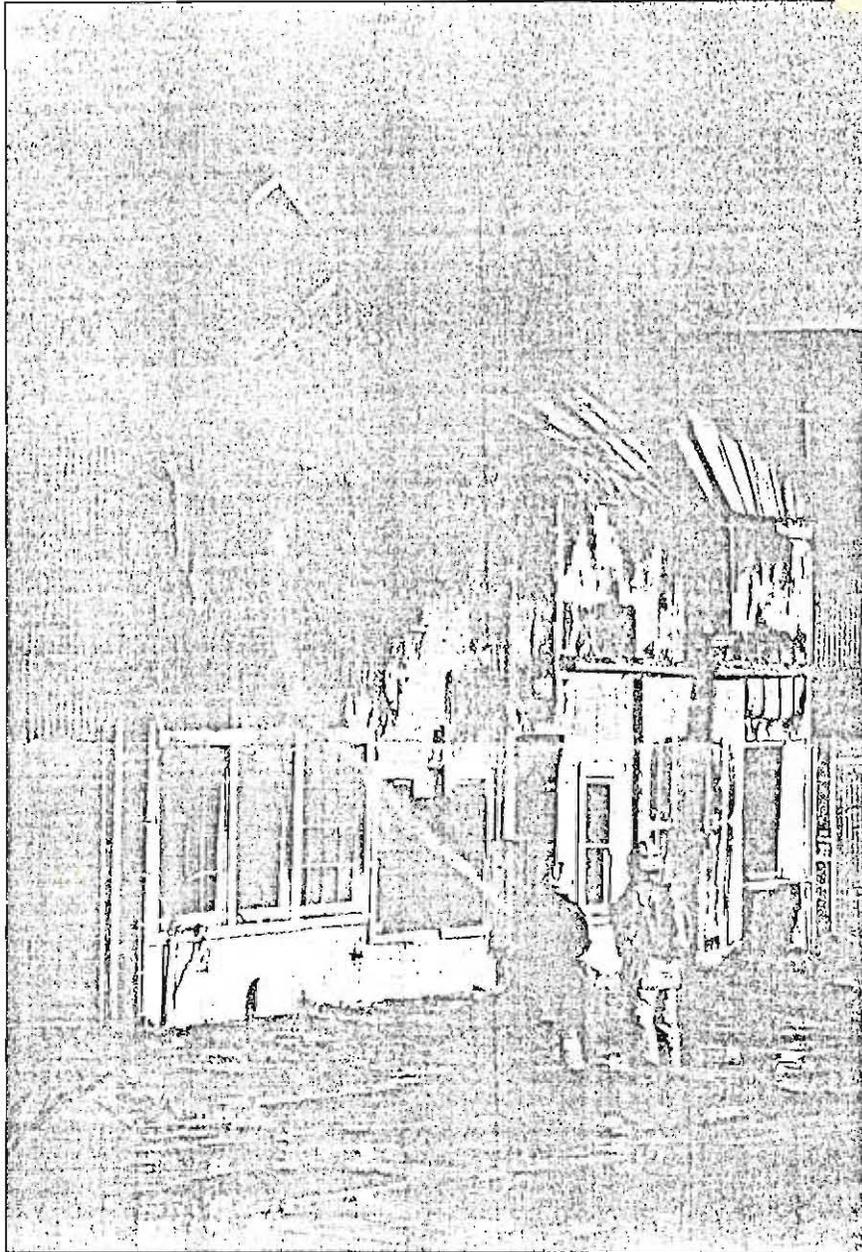
Erected in 1921 near what is now the corner of Lake Street and Yorktown Avenue, the building was the oldest of the three and housed Bowen's machine shop. Bowen used the shop to invent many tools that helped revolutionize the oil industry, city Historic Resources Board Chairwoman Barbara Milkovich said.

"It's another blow to the cultural heritage of Huntington Beach," Milkovich said of the two-alarm blaze, which had gutted the building within minutes of the 6:08 p.m. call to the Fire Department.

"These buildings were highly significant," she said. "We may have lost the potential for a major petroleum museum."

Although Milkovich and Bowen's heirs have been pushing for a museum on the site, the property owner, the Huntington Beach Co., wants to tear down the buildings — which have been vacant for months — and build six homes.

The Planning Commission has approved the housing project; Milkovich has appealed the decision.
Please see FIRE/7



David Poes Yates for The Register

Firefighters douse a fire that destroyed a building some people had hoped to make into an oil museum.

SEASON'S FIRST: 60 acres
burn near San Juan Capistrano/7

FIRE: Five people were hurt
pushing airplanes away from fire/7



FIRE: Boys arrested on arson charges

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sion to the City Council. She said she will have to evaluate the damage to the complex as a whole before deciding whether to keep up her efforts.

Because of its former use as a machine shop, the wood in the building was saturated in oil, contributing to the intensity and speed with which the fire spread, Battalion Chief Jim Gerspach said.

Details of the ignition were sketchy late Tuesday. Huntington Beach police Lt. George Renek said the youths who were arrested "set fire to paper and other combustible materials. They were just playing in the vacant building."

Kids Admit To Starting Tuesday Fire

By Greg Hernandez
A. B. Independent - 6-22-89
Two Huntington Beach youths have admitted starting a Tuesday evening fire that destroyed a historical building slated for demolition.

The corrugated, wood-framed building was one of three located

in an industrial complex at the corner of Main and Lake streets.

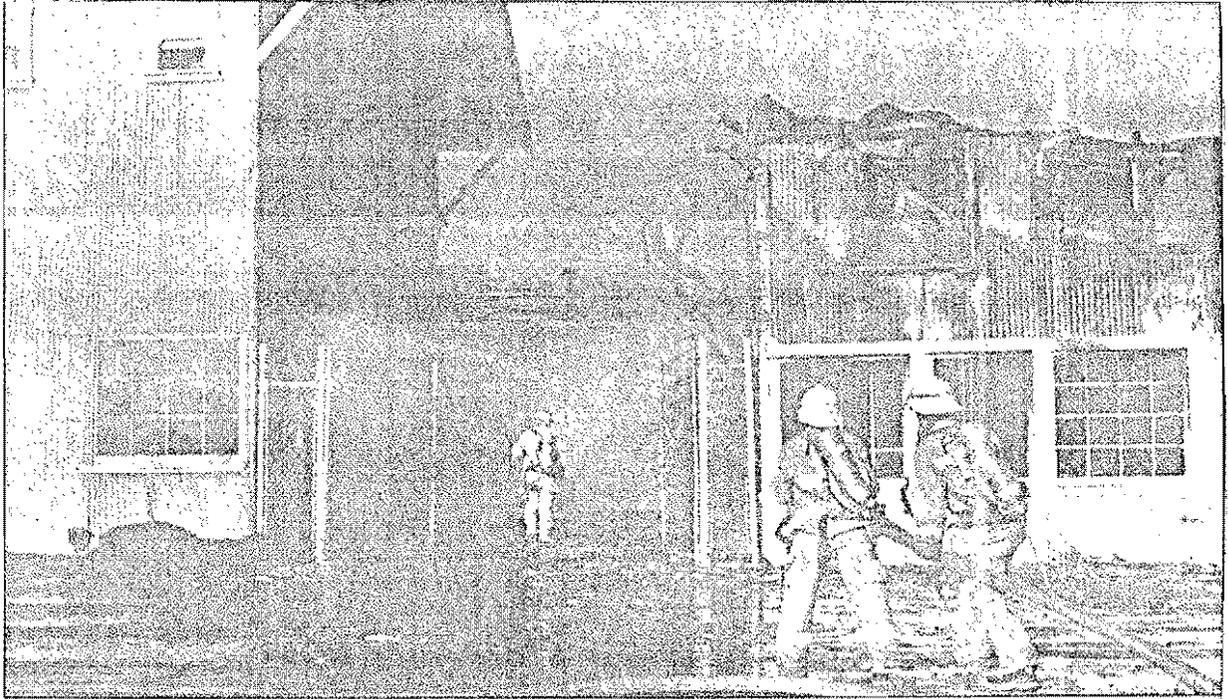
The middle building began to burn just after 6 p.m. Flames reaching 20-30 feet were seen shooting out from the roof of the two-story structure.

Approximately 30 firefighters were called to the scene and had

the blaze under control within 20 minutes, according to fire department spokesman Duane Wilson.

The two youths, 10 and 14, were arrested for suspicion of arson and released to their parents.

(See Blaze, Page A2)



Independent Photo By Ed Compton

Huntington Beach firefighters battle blaze at historic buildings at Main and Lake streets.

Blaze...

(From Page A1)

They gained access to the building despite that fact that it had been boarded up and secured by its owner, Pacific Coast Homes, a subsidiary of the Huntington Beach Co.

"When we find that a building has been vacated, we require the building owner to secure or demolish the building. The owner had complied," said Mike Tamiyasi, fire prevention specialist.

The three buildings were built in the 1920s by Sam Bowen, a prominent Huntington Beach

resident who was an early oil pioneer.

The middle building was built in 1921 and was the oldest of the three, according to Barbara Milkovich, chair of the Historic Resources Board.

"Maybe this fire will draw attention to the remaining buildings," said Milkovich, hopeful that the two surviving buildings can be saved.

Just two weeks ago, the Planning Commission gave Pacific Coast Homes permission to tear down the buildings in order to build six houses which are part of a bigger 86-unit housing project slated to be built on the site.

