

Fire destroys Glendale landmark

By Eileen Kelley • ekelley@enquirer.com • November 29, 2008

GLENDALE - The old wooden house had stood the Village of Glendale test of time for over a century until Saturday when a fire quickly raced through the home that Tom O'Neill built in 1867..

Known over the past 50 or so years as the Century House, the cornerstone store in the village square went up in flames at 10 a.m. Saturday, shortly after an employee lit a candle and prepared to open up for business.

On Saturday, it didn't appear that the two-story Century House could be salvaged. The windows blew out of the building as the first fire truck pulled up the square. It took an hour to get the flames under control.

More than 100 people of this small historic community stood on the square staring at the fire.

"It's so sad," said William Breidenstein, 8.

William, and his sister Francis, 9, joined their father Tom Breidenstein as they watched the scores of firefighters douse the building with water.

The three-alarm fire brought help from about eight neighboring fire departments. Forest Park firefighters arrived first.

No one was injured in the blaze.

The villagers were grateful for all of the extensive support; some passed around cups of coffee to the firefighters while others passed around cookies.

"It was a fast starting fire," said Mayor Joe Hubbard.

Patrick Rose was at the nearby Bluebird Bakery grabbing a cup of coffee just before the fire started. He said he pulled into the bakery at around 10 a.m. and by the time he poured a cup of coffee and said hello to the workers, flames engulfed the Century House. "It went up quickly," he said.

The building had been a family home for years, even before the square was built in 1880. For the past 50 years or so it has been a store selling specialty gifts.

Jenny Dennis, who owns the Bluebird Bakery, said her daughter always looked forward to seeing the Century House gift box covered in bronze and black ribbon under the Christmas tree each year. The store had been expecting a lot of customers as coupons offering a 25 percent discount had recently been printed and distributed, villagers said.

"We are all very sad," Dennis said.

Anyone who grew up in historic Glendale would have some sort of story to share about the old house turned store.

Some people remembered the time children were able to shop for their parents at Christmastime when the then owner would have a large basket of items the youths could afford for their parents.

More recently, residents used to marvel over the rescue cat Toes who was always seen in the store front window.

Toes escaped unharmed Saturday but was pretty shaken up said Joye Rhoads, whose family owns a nearby jewelry shop. "Toes was there all the time in that front window. People would go in just to visit him," she said.

The house withstood a fire in the mid- to late- 1880s that destroyed a massive brick building adjacent to it.

Saturday the first floor of the Century House was so badly damaged the inside of the building was visible from the

street.

“It was just horrifying to see,” said Ralph Hoop, a trustee with the Glendale Heritage Preservation group, which in 1976 was able to get Glendale a designation as the National Historic Landmark District – the same designation given to the Washington Monument.

Hoop had been putting up the preservation group’s Christmas tree Saturday at the nearby train depot when the Century House went up in smoke. He said he raced to the building and saw the Century’s House’s Christmas tree on fire.

“It’s unclear if they can save it,” he said.

Chase Taylor, whose mother and before that grandmother had run the store up until the mid 1990s, said his mom Cindy Taylor was too distraught to come down to the square and see the damage for herself.

“I’m washing down my troubles,” said Chase, 13, as he grabbed a cup of a coffee – heavy on the cream.

The store is currently owned by Susan Kreuzmann.

Locals said she had recently renovated the second-story of the building and was planning to move inside.

Fire officials have not released specifics about the case or an estimate of the damage.



C.H. Foertmeyer



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All photos on the following pages were taken by Wyoming Fire Department's photographer, Joe Pagliaro





