

Contact: Hercules Historical Society  
[www.herculeshistory.org](http://www.herculeshistory.org)  
[society@herculeshistory.org](mailto:society@herculeshistory.org)  
(510) 541-9105

**For Immediate Release**

Sunday, November 16, 2014, at Hercules, California  
With Photos and Captions

**Historic Hercules Building Destroyed by Fire**

**Hercules, California (November 16, 2014)** – An unoccupied historic building was engulfed in flames and quickly destroyed by fire today. The fire was reported at 1:00 PM. Firefighters from the Rodeo-Hercules Fire District, with aid from other agencies, controlled and extinguished the fire.

The wooden structure, designated “Building 133”, was one of the last remaining buildings of the Hercules Works, an explosives and chemical factory important in California history.

Today’s City of Hercules is the site of the Hercules Works, acquired in 1878 by the California Powder Works, which was founded in San Francisco in 1861. Later acquired by the DuPont firm, then operated as the Hercules Powder Company, it was one of the largest explosives plants in the world and a cradle of the scientific and technical innovation characteristic of the Bay Area’s modern economy. Through the mid-1950s, it was the dominant source of explosives used for mining, railroads and construction in California. It produced one-third of all the TNT used by the United States in World War I, and much of the explosive power needed to construct the Panama Canal.

In 1980, Building 133 was listed with 35 other buildings and sites of the Hercules Works on the National Register of Historic Places as contributing to the only remaining example of a company town of an explosives plant in the United States.

Building 133, constructed about one hundred years ago, was originally located in the Hercules company “Village” on Talley Way, near the superintendent’s mansion. It was used as family housing for factory supervisors, including the Purvis family. A wooden bungalow with typical period construction details, it was last occupied in 1999.

Building 133 was then moved three times. In 2001, it was removed from foundations, partially dismantled and moved to a location north of Railroad Avenue. In 2007, the City of Hercules accepted title and delivery to property owned by the City (or its Redevelopment Agency) adjacent to Building 69, known as “Civic Arts”. Building 133 was again moved in 2010 to its final location west of Santa Fe Avenue, on an abandoned roadway, adjacent to the Union Pacific rail line, overlooking the San Pablo Bay. Since 2010, it was not maintained or protected.

# 30 #

(366 words)

**(Two Photos with Captions Follow)**



**Photo 1**

Building 133 on Railroad Avenue in 2005.

Credit: Hercules Historical Society



**Photo 2**

Building 133 on fire, November 16, 2014.

Credit: Hercules Historical Society