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FIRE STRIKES AT DUTTON'S HEART *July 24/2004*



ASHLEY FRASER The London Free Press

HISTORIC BUILDING: Firefighters from Dutton, Southwold and West Lorne battle yesterday's stubborn wind-whipped flames that destroyed Dutton's landmark McIntyre Hotel and threatened the village's entire downtown commercial section.

Village's 'grand lady' lost

The McIntyre Hotel, built in 1875 and a renowned watering hole, falls to flames.

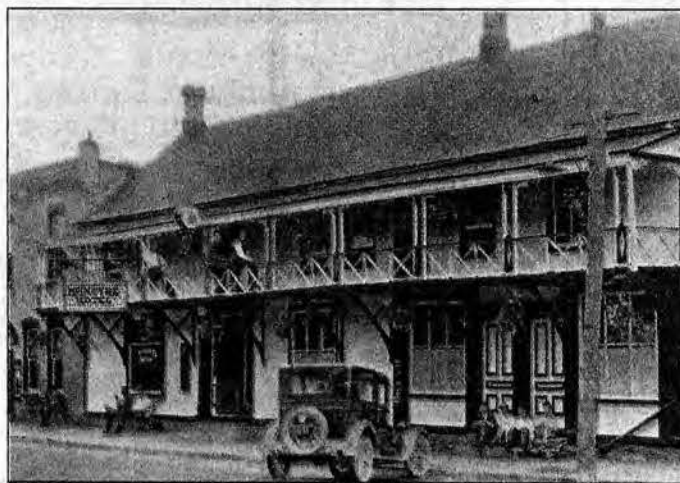
The London Free Press

DUTTON — Fire destroyed Dutton's most historic and colourful business yesterday and briefly threatened the village's commercial section.

A state of emergency was declared after the McIntyre Hotel went up in flames.

Built in 1875, the landmark hotel achieved a measure of notoriety in the writings of economist John Kenneth Galbraith, who was born nearby and made a name for himself advising U.S. presidents.

"I consider it a grand old lady and it will be sorely



BETTER DAYS: The McIntyre Hotel as it appeared in 1930.

missed," said Jenny Phillips, an artist and local history buff.

No one was hurt and no damage estimate was immediately available.

Observers said the loss will likely run to at least several hundred thousand dollars.

Though some said the hotel had become an eyesore

in recent years, others said the black hole the blaze left on Dutton's main street will be felt by the entire community.

"It's unfortunate because it's the oldest building on Main Street, a heritage building of the bygone days," Phillips said.

Firefighters from three departments and five communities faced a stubborn wind-whipped blaze that damaged several adjoining businesses.

Police evacuated the closest ones and warned those at others to be ready to move if the fire spread.

Mayor Bonnie Vowel declared a state of emergency at 3:40 p.m. It was lifted an hour later once the blaze was under control.

See BLAZE Page A3



CONTAINING THE BLAZE

JEFF KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE

Firefighters from Dutton/Dunwich, Southwold and West Lorne worked Friday afternoon to contain the blaze that destroyed the historic McIntyre Hotel.

Cause undetermined

■ *Investigation results could take a month*

JEFF KEMPENAAR

staff

Cause of the McIntyre Hotel fire will not be known for about a month as the Office of the Fire Marshall and Centre for Forensic Sciences examine items from the scene.

There were no signs of arson, said Fire Investigator Bryan Fischer, but he would not speculate on the cause.

No one was injured in the blaze that destroyed the Dutton landmark but paramedics treated one firefighter for smoke inhalation.

Diane Van Bridger, the McIntyre building landlord and bar manager said the fire was started in a second floor laundry room near an office in the rear of the building.

It spread north in to the laundromat building before the wind blew the heat and flames southward, destroying the entire McIntyre

Hotel and threatening several other businesses to the south.

By 9 p.m. the south side of the hotel was a smoldering heap of rubble and the laundromat and one of two apartments above it were gutted.

Ten trucks from Dutton/Dunwich, West Lorne and Southwold along with 24 volunteer firefighters contained the fire to the two buildings by blasting 82 litres of water per second into the buildings.

The fire lasted eight hours and damage to the McIntyre was estimated at \$500,000 by Dutton fire chief Dan Lundy and Van Bridger but the financial toll to the business community could rise.

Insurance adjusters were still expected to be surveying each building for costs of damage and to decide what other buildings should be

demolished.

The apartment at the rear of the laundromat building was damaged heavily by smoke and water.

One building in question at press time houses Jerry Galbraith's Investors Group had extensive damage to the roof. The building suffered smoke damage.

McNeil Insurance suffered minor smoke damage and moved to the vacant building owned by Murray Brown. He is offering the store to other businesses that suffered damage or were evacuated Friday.

Apartments above Panther Products, Marg's Accounting and the Dutton Flower Shop had water and smoke damage. It was unclear how many businesses would open before press time.

Mac's colourful history missed

JEFF KEMPENAAR

staff

As the McIntyre Hotel burned Friday, a congregation of lost regulars and sympathetic friends of the long-standing watering hole shared hamburgers cooked by a neighbour and toasted their destroyed home away from home.

"It was so much fun here on a Saturday night," said Diane McAlpine who had operated 'the Mac' for three years before selling it back to Tom Van Bridger, the McIntyre's current owner. "I put my heart and soul into that place, every last dime."

A. McMillan built the McIntyre Hotel in 1857 along the wooden boardwalks and mud streets.

J.H. McIntyre bought the hotel in 1881 and changed the name to the McIntyre House Hotel.

There were 26 bedrooms, several sample rooms for travelling salesmen, a dining room and a stable at the back. There was an overhanging porch and painted decaden woodworking on the facade that would be changed over time by various owners.

Before the fire there was four apartments and an office on the second floor above a dining area, banquet room, bar and dance floor on the main floor.

The hotel put Dutton on the map and was a place where generations of regular and tradesmen would meet to share fable and truths, glory and pain and always good laugh.

To many, it became an eyesore or place with a rough reputation but to many others, it's a place that will be missed.

A group of regulars held a vigil behind the McIntyre as it burned.

McAlpine said she had a long love affair with 'the Mac' and it drove her and her husband to the brink of bankruptcy to keep it up to code. "It was a riot here. There would be line-ups, and honestly there were less fights than compared to the 150 or so peaceful people."

"People said it was a bad place because there was fights and bikers," said McAlpine. "But it was so much fun and everyone would be there. I'm going to miss it."

MCINTYRE HOTEL FIRE AFTERMATH

Water flow was key to saving Dutton

BY PATRICK BRENNAN
TIMES-JOURNAL STAFF

DUTTON/DUNWICH

— At the height of the fire that consumed the McIntyre Hotel last week, at least two people were thankful for the municipality's decision to source out another water supply source earlier that year.

"We were using water at 86 litres per second," Mayor Bonnie Vowel said in an interview Tuesday, describing the firefighting effort to control the blaze that threatened to destroy the historic downtown.

The weak link would have been that the water plant at Eagle, which Dutton/Dunwich had relied on as its sole source of municipal water, was only capable of supplying 65 litres per second.

Fortunately, a decision two years earlier to connect to the Elgin supply boosted the available flow of water to what was needed to fight the raging fire last Friday afternoon.

Still, Vowel acknowledged, Dutton did not get enough water to fight the fire without affecting neighbouring communities.

West Lorne, which sent one of its fire departments to assist Dutton,

had to get by on what was stored in its standby tanks as did Glencoe, Vowel said.

"They were fine, but had it (the fire) gone on for a while ..."

Vowel said a wrap-up debriefing meeting was held Tuesday to assess everything that took place during the fire.



▲ VOWEL

She said she was proud of the job Dutton/Dunwich firefighters did, along with crews from West Elgin and Southwold who joined in the battle.

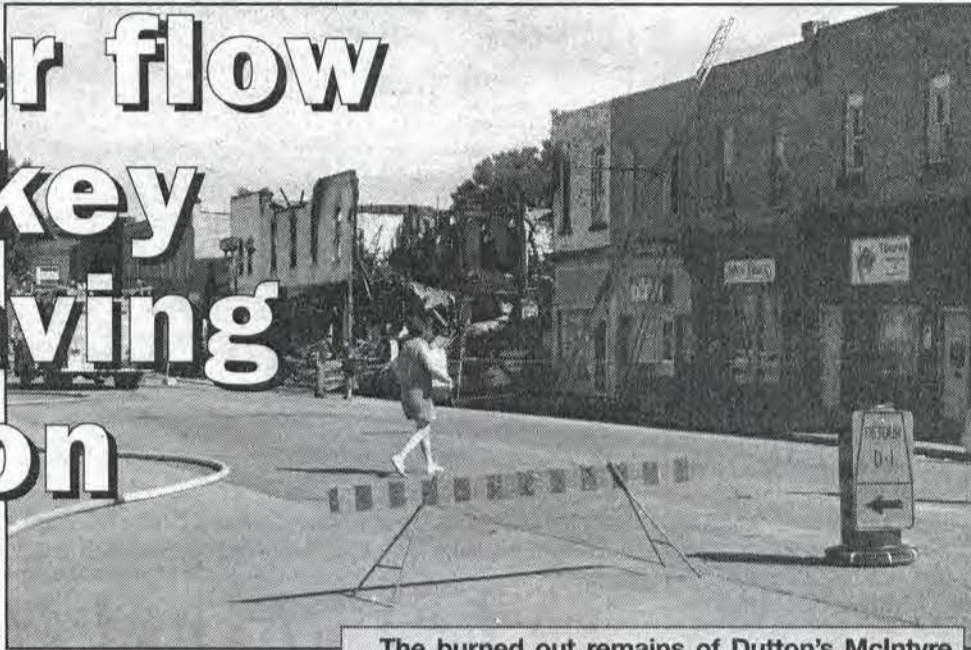
Vowel had more than a casual interest in how the fire progressed.

McNeil Insurance, a business in which she is a part owner, was three doors from the hotel and directly in its path.

She knew as soon as she saw the first licks of flame, it was time to act fast.

"When I went out the back of our building, I saw what was happening and

The burned out remains of Dutton's McIntyre Hotel sit behind barricades erected for public safety over the weekend. The hotel was destroyed in a dramatic blaze last Friday. (T-J photo)



started to take stuff out of our building," she said.

For now, the business has located north of the fire scene and Vowel expects to be in the temporary headquarters for approximately a month.

Insurance adjusters spoke to most of the affected businesses and victims, Vowel said, assuring them they were still assessing property damage.

"We had insurance adjusters out here while the fire was still burning," she said.

Vowel said she was satisfied the municipality's emergency measures plan stood the test and worked as well as it could.

In review, she questioned whether there was any more equipment the fire department could have had to extinguish the blaze.

"I wondered if there was anything we could do to help the firefighters

any more," she said.

Vowel said a good example of how the community pulled together was a landlord who found a vacant apartment for a family of three to move into less than 24 hours after the fire.

"They've got furniture in there already," she noted.

Vowel said she observed different agencies who participated in the meeting raised unique concerns.

The Elgin-St. Thomas Health Unit for instance, pointed out the urgency of cleaning out the rubble as soon as possible for safety reasons.

"We don't want to be sitting on a pile of rubble in six months," Vowel said.

Absent from Tuesday's meeting was the adjuster representing the company which insured the McIntyre Hotel.



Blaze levels ^{July 24/2024} Dutton hotel

BY JEFF KEMPANAAR
SUN MEDIA

DUTTON – The 129-year-old MacIntyre Hotel was destroyed in a mid-day fire yesterday that shrouded Main Street Dutton in smoke and left at least eight people homeless.

Dutton Fire Department arrived at the historic building at 1:15 p.m. and was joined by firefighters from West Lorne and Southwold. They were able to prevent the blaze from spreading to neighbouring buildings to the south by 5 p.m.

Cause of the fire was not immediately known.

The Ontario Fire Mar-

shal's Office is investigating.

The second-storey apartments were home to a family and a single man.

Firefighters were expected to be on the scene overnight, said Chief Dan Lunn of the Dutton Fire Department.

No one was injured in the blaze.

Main Street was closed as firefighters departments fought through the heavy smoke.

Damage is estimated at \$500,000.

Diane Van Bridger and her two daughters, Lorna, and Lyndsey lived above the bar and were devastated to see an excavation crew knock down her



Dutton lost a large part of its downtown Friday afternoon when a fire took the MacIntyre Hotel to the ground. (Sun Media photo) ST THOMAS PAPER

apartment and pile her belongings in the parking lot behind the building.

Van Bridger was leaving with her daughter Lorna at around 1 p.m. when she saw smoke coming from the building's laundry room.

Fire spread to a laun-

dromat next door and the two apartments above the adjacent building.

"I walked down the street from work and all I saw was smoke from my window. There was nothing I could do," said Deryk Lemaire who had just moved from Nova

Scotia to an apartment above the MacIntyre.

Hundreds gathered to watch the blaze while community members rallied to help businesses evacuate and gather food and support for those left homeless.



Galbraith immortalized McIntyre as a centre of humour and violence

The London Free Press

The McIntyre Hotel, Dutton's most famous son has written, "had been the scene of some of the most uproarious violence that alcohol has ever produced."

"It was on Saturday night that the Scotch gathered at the McIntyre House to make merry and seek one another's destruction," world-renowned liberal economist John Kenneth Galbraith wrote in his book *The Scotch* in 1963.

"Whisky bottles were emptied and used as weapons; sometimes the bottom was knocked off to make a better impression on the thick epidermis that so admirably protected the average clansman."

Galbraith, who now lives in Cambridge, Mass., particularly remembers the first of July in 1914 or 1915 when as a young boy he and his family were leaving Dutton in a horse-drawn buggy after celebrating Dominion Day.

It was about 4 p.m., he wrote, and the drinking was well underway.

"As we passed the McIntyre House, we saw it. Some 40 or

ABOUT THE MCINTYRE

► Built in 1875 on Main Street in Dutton by A. McMillan and called the Dominion House.

► Name changed to Nelson House in 1881 by manager W. Nelson, who bought it in 1883.

► Name changed to McIntyre House Hotel in 1888 after it was bought by J. H. McIntyre.

Source: Jenny Phillips, Dutton

50 clansmen . . . had been reinforced by elements of a Scottish regiment which had come to grace the celebration and provide music.

"Some of the celebrants were in the bar; others were struggling to approach it or shouting to those inside to pass out the bottles.

"A number of fights were already in progress in the crowd outside. . . . Pipers around the edge of the struggling mass were offering a competitive combination of pibrochs, marches and laments to inspire the combat-

ants to greater feats of violence . . .

"The memory of that journey . . . has never forsaken me. The sound of the pipes did not recede. In fact, on the contrary, it grew in volume as the whisky was passed out and the pipers warmed to their work.

"Over the spiel of the pipes came the high demonic shrieks which for a thousand years on 10,000 battlefields has struck terror to the hearts of the brave. It is the cry of uncontrollable joy of a drunken highlander as he rushes toward personal immolation."

It wasn't all violence, though. Homespun humour had its place, as in this musing from Galbraith, who would become an ambassador to India and adviser to American presidents, including John Fitzgerald Kennedy:

"A commercial traveller from Toronto had called for a cocktail and gave instructions on how to make it.

"The patrons were outraged but Johnnie McIntyre quieted them down and went out for ice. This he got from a little iceberg by a tree in the yard. It

owed its origins to the dogs who frequented the tree and to the Canadian winter, which quickly converted all moisture to ice.

"Johnnie thought this would return the man to whisky and so did those to whom he quietly confided the stratagem.

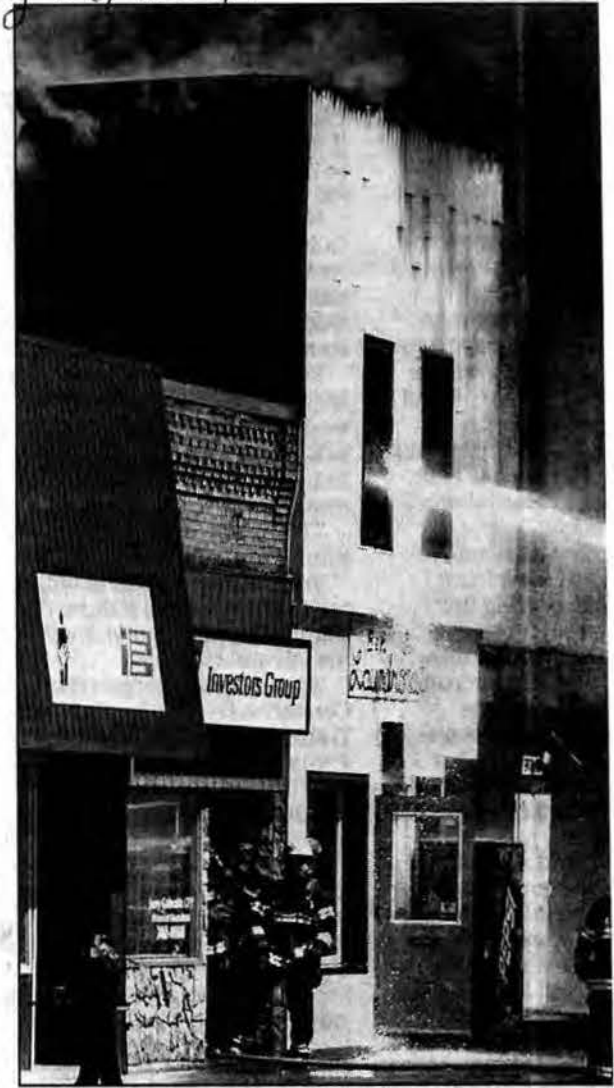
"The man from Toronto praised the flavour and called for another."

Its more heady years behind it, the McIntyre — the Mac to locals — has closed and reopened several times over the past decade.

Second-floor rooms that in early years served as shelter for travellers and, more recently, as longer-term accommodation for Dutton residents haven't been rented out in recent years.

But artist and local historian Jenny Phillips says the building — which she called "the keystone of downtown Dutton" — has remained an important part of the community's social fabric.

"A lot of people will remember the good times," she said, "and will mourn the passing of an old friend."



ASHLEY FRASER The Lo

DEVASTATING FIRE: Dutton lost a large part of its downtown yesterday to a fire that destroyed the McIntyre Hotel.

BLAZE: Owners of small businesses feared the fire might wipe out Dutton's entire Main S

rom Page A1

"It's pretty devastating, specially for all the small businesses in town," Vowel said. "Everyone will just have to try and get back to normal as soon as possible."

Anxious residents and small business owners feared the wind-fuelled fire would wipe out the entire street of century-old buildings.

"It's hard to tell in a town like this where the fire is going to spread because it can jump from building to building," said Chief Dan Lundy of the Dutton-Dunwich volunteer fire department.

To contain the flames, firefighters kept their hoses trained on both ends of the building as a backhoe pulled mauling sections apart and away.

Lundy said the fire appeared to have started in a second-floor apartment.

An investigator from the Ontario Fire Marshal's office was headed for Dutton late last night.

Fire crews were still pouring water on the rubble hours after the flames subsided.

When the fire began, dozens of residents rushed downtown, many helping merchants near the hotel.

"I was at home and got a call and came down," said Margaret Bruenbauer, owner of Marg's Accounting and Tax Service next door to the hotel.



ASHLEY FRASER The London Free Press

HISTORY UP IN SMOKE: Dutton and area residents watch as firefighters battle yesterday's fire, which destroyed the McIntyre Hotel.

"All kinds of people showed up to help me get the important stuff out."

At least two adjacent buildings were fire-damaged and several had smoke and water damage.

Merchants kept firefighters supplied with food and water.

Ambulances stayed at the scene for several hours.

At least 10 fire trucks and more than 24 firefighters showed up from the Dutton-Dunwich, Southwold and West Lorne departments.

Diane McAlpine, a former operator of the hotel, was sad-

dened by the loss.

"We've had so much fun at that hotel," she said. "I think everybody's father and grandfather spent their youth there."

"It's a landmark," said Norm McWilliam, 83, a retired farmer who lives near Dutton.

"I went there in my wild and crazy days," McWilliam chuckled. He said the business had fallen on hard times in recent years.

"It had a lot of good times, too, though. It was a place you could go for a good meal, not just a beverage room. It was a

well-run establishm-

Residents said they had fallen into disrepair last decade or so and hands several times.

The owner was identified as Tom Van Bridger but not reached for comment.

Dave Mancari, owner of Mancari's restaurant, said he had to close out pizza to firefighters. Mancari's restaurant also was saddened by the fire.

"Over the last 10 years, it's become a great place to go for a drink, so, it's become a great place again, kind of like Mancari said.

"I've been going there since Saturday for the past few months because they have karaoke or live entertainment."

Many in the village were mindful of the hotel's history and considered it an eyesore.

John McNeil, 72, an insurance broker who is still on the business, said the loss was a blow to the town.

"That place has been a trap for more than 100 years," he said.

"It hasn't been a good economic unit for some time, so it goes down without anything else with it, it's not so bad."

Phillips, co-owner of the Village Crier restaurant, said the hotel was missed.

"It's hard enough to live on Main Street without having it in it."

Morning after

■ *Nine lose home as community mourns McIntyre loss*



JEFF KEMPENAAR/CHRONICLE

Jon Angel and Aaron Brown of the Dutton/Dunwich Fire Department survey the remains of the McIntyre Hotel before the Ontario Fire Marshall inspector arrives Saturday morning. The cause of the fire is not expected to be known for at least a month as evidence is examined by the Centre for Forensic Sciences and the Office of the Fire Marshall.

photo by Elizabeth Kornakes



Dutton down, not out

'Resilient' community rallies around blaze's victims

BY IAN MCCALLUM
TIMES-JOURNAL STAFF

DUTTON — With a gaping hole in the heart of their community and the stench of acrid smoke still blanketing the air, the residents of Dutton gathered in small groups Saturday to pay their respects to 'The Mac.'

Less than 24 hours after the McIntyre Hotel succumbed to flames Friday afternoon, the conversation gravitated towards the plight of a half-dozen businesses affected by the stubborn blaze and the nine people displaced from apartments on the second floor of the hotel and adjacent laundromat.

But praise flowed also for the efforts of fire chief Dan Lundy and the volunteer firefighters, not only from Dutton/Dunwich but from neighbouring communi-

ties, and the residents who pitched in when their community was threatened.

And while many bemoaned the end of an era in the demise of The Mac, immortalized in locally born John Kenneth Galbraith's book, *The Scotch*, others like artist Jenny Phillips spoke of "the beginning of a new era."

"This community is very resilient," observed Phillips. "And while this is a major setback to the business community, the people here have often taken negatives and turned them into positives."

Phillips talked of the opportunity presented to revitalize downtown Dutton.

"I'm sure that everyone will rally around and be supportive of the businesses affected. This may be something that just perks up our downtown."

SEE FUNDRAISING, PAGE 3



Dutton/Dunwich Mayor Bonnie Vowel expects Main Street in Dutton to be open to traffic sometime this morning following a fire Friday which gutted the historic McIntyre Hotel. The busy thoroughfare was closed all weekend because of fears the remaining shell of the 129-year-old structure would collapse. Cause of the fire is undetermined. (T-J photo by Ian McCallum)



photos by Elizabeth Kornalet





photos by Elizabeth Kornaker.





The Dutton Advance under demolition. (Sun Media photo)

Dutton Advance comes down

Moved from Wallacetown

By SUN MEDIA

DUTTON — One of the last buildings moved to Dutton from Wallacetown more than 100 years ago has been demolished, making way for a medical clinic expansion.

John Drummelsmith and Dutton/Dunwich staff took down the former Dutton Advance Building, 158 Main St., at Shackleton Road.

It was moved to Dutton, along with other buildings from Wallacetown, when the Canada Southern Railway came through Dutton in 1872.

Local historian Don Carroll videotaped the demolition and also took still photos.

He said the building is one of the last, if not the last, remaining buildings in Dutton, moved from Wallacetown.

He said it was likely pulled by horses, using a capstan, where the horses would walk in circles around the building turning the rollers with a gear system over several days, possibly in 1885.

The land was purchased for the building in 1873, a year after the railway was laid through Dutton.

"It was always the first place people went when they came into town," Carroll said of the Dutton Advance. "It was a social place where people found out what was going on."

Demolition went smoothly, according to Drummelsmith.

"No surprises," he said.

The adjacent Dutton Medical Clinic remained open through the day as Main Street was only closed when the front of the building was demolished.

It's hoped construction can begin this year on the expansion.

Staff met with architects to work on the final draft of the building, expected to be 19-by-eight metres (27 by 65 feet).

There are also no plans to close the clinic during construction as the new building will be erected, then doors will be broken through.

The building housed the Dutton Advance which operated 112 years uninterrupted until 2001 and was last operated by Dan and Marlene Moore.

"It's sad. I have lots of great memories," said Marlene Moore, who watched some of the demolition. "But I'm pleased it's making way for the expansion of the medical clinic."



The Dutton Advance under demolition.
April 2007.