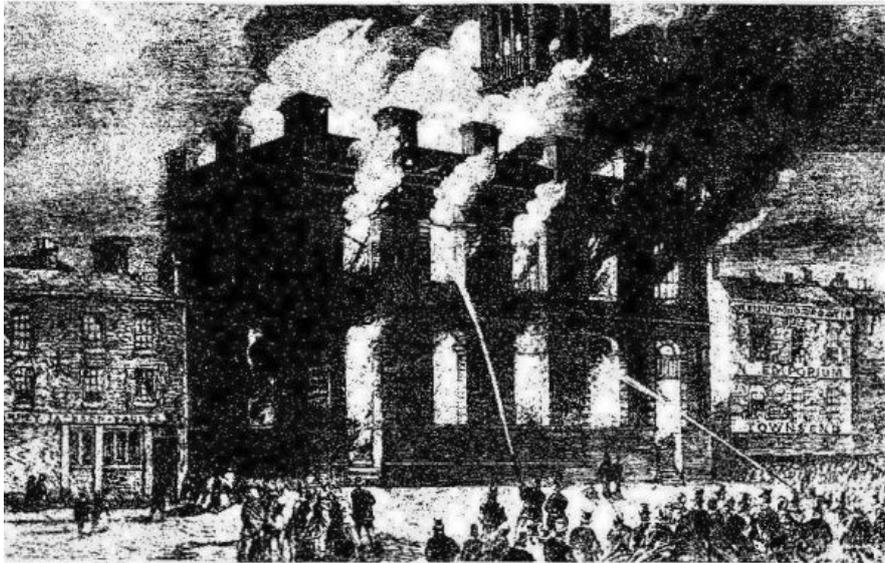


THE SURREY THEATRE



In 1865 The Surrey Theatre on West Bar was burnt out, the play that week being "The Great Fire of London". It was in a district thick with theatres but not theatres as we know them today. The top of Corporation Street had four, The Tankard, The Gaiety, London Apprentice and The Surrey; while only a few yards away at the bottom of Snig Hill was The Grand (or "The Star") in Spring Street. The entertainment arrangement was much as we know it today with the modern club. One entered the building, took a seat at a table, drinks were served and the show was free. The Surrey Theatre was however, a real theatre and was the largest and most luxurious in England at the time, apart from Covent Garden in London. It contained, besides the stage, an auditorium, a restaurant, museum, waxworks, and in the summer dancing on the roof. At strategic points inside the building gas jets were kept alight to enable gentlemen to light their cigars, cigarettes not having become popular by then. It could have been one of these which caused the fire. The building was a total loss and the owner, Mr. Thomas Youden, faced bankruptcy as the damage was estimated at £30,000 and it was only insured for £13,000.