

"Destructive Fires in Neighboring Towns"

Carroll County Times article for 21 June 1998

By Jay A. Graybeal

In an ironic twist of fate the Manchester firemen lost their hall to a June 21, 1921 fire. The men had fought a devastating fire in nearby Hampstead the day before and had not been able to replenish their chemical apparatus. The story was front page news in the June 24th issue of the Westminster Democratic Advocate newspaper, beginning with a description of the Hampstead fire:

"A combined apartment house and garage, 10 automobiles, a dwelling and two stores were destroyed, while three other stores were damaged by a fire which started from some unexplained origin in the cellar of the garage and apartment house, in the business section of Hampstead at 1 o'clock Tuesday morning.

The extent of the damage has not been ascertained as yet, but it is expected to be in the neighborhood of \$50,000. Three of the automobiles destroyed had never been used.

Samuel E. Keller, owner of the garage and apartment house, said he made an inspection of the building at 10 o'clock Monday night, before he retired to his home, which adjoins the garage building, and found everything all right. The fire was discovered by Mrs. Alberta Wheeler, who with her daughter occupied one of the apartments over the garage and who were awakened by the smoke. Before leaving the building they awakened Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Miller and Mr. and Mrs. Claude Rhoten, who occupied the other two apartments. All of them escaped uninjured, but all of their personal effects were burned with the building.

The operator in charge of the telephone exchange then summoned firemen from that town, Westminster, Reisterstown and Hanover, Pa. While awaiting the arrival of the firemen bucket brigades were formed, but despite the efforts of the men the blaze spread.

The second building to become ignited was the home of Mr. Keller, who, with Mrs. Keller and their two daughters, barely escaped from the building before it became a mass of flames. The fire then quickly ate its way to the meat store of William Winks and to Nace's music store. The contents of the meat store were destroyed, but everything, with the exception of a piano, was removed from the music store before that building collapsed.

By that time the firemen had their apparatus completely at work and they succeeded in extinguishing fires on the buildings of the Merryman Overall Company, the Allender Supply Company and the Garrett Implement Supply Company before they were very seriously damaged.

Fearing that the fire was about to touch his home Bud Geittier and the members of his family fled in their night clothing and sought refuge in the home of a neighbor. When it was seen that his home would be safe Mr. Geittier joined in fighting the other fires. He and Mr. Keller were the only ones injured. Their hands were badly cut by falling glass.

The fire gained headway because of the difficulties the firemen experienced in getting water. The only available water came from a small pond, located at considerable distances from the scene of the fire.

Fire that started from the explosion of a welding torch caused \$200,000 damage Wednesday afternoon at Manchester, Carroll county, four miles from Hampstead, the scene of a serious fire Tuesday morning.

Headquarters of the Manchester Fire Engine and Hook and Ladder Company, the office of the Dug Hill Fire Insurance Company, seven residences, a garage, four barns, seven automobiles, one motorcycle, the outbuildings of three homes, a horse and three hogs were destroyed, and a large building occupied by the Manchester bank and store, one dwelling and the public school were damaged. Telephone communication with the town was cut off.

The torch that started the fire was being used by Albert Warehime in the repair shop. With him at the time were Lester Lippy and George Trump. The gasoline from the torch spread the fire to every part of the shop and the men were forced to make a hurried escape. They were uninjured.

Manchester's only fire protection is a chemical engine and this apparatus was put out of service at the Hampstead fire, leaving the town unprotected. A hurry call was sent to nearby towns and engine companies from Hampstead, Westminster, Boring, Arcadia, Glyndon and Hanover, Pa., were soon on the scene.

There was no water supply except from wells and the depth of them made the supply unavailable. Chemicals and bucket brigades were brought into service. The fire spread from the garage to the home of George Trump, and continued along Main street. The damaged buildings were partly on Main street and York street.

In the garage were five automobiles belonging to the firm, one to Carroll Shaffer, one to George Trump, and a motorcycle belonging to Lester Lippy. The books of the firm were destroyed. The firemen made a decided stand against the fire when it attacked the bank building and under the direction of Chief Frank P. Schaeffer, of Westminster, they saved it.

The barn of John Marshall, two blocks from the center of the fire, was destroyed by sparks falling on the roof. A horse and three hogs were burned. John Whitehorst, a member of the Westminster Fire Company, received an injury to his ankle."

Fortunately, neither fire claimed any lives and both towns rebuilt. Not surprisingly, the Manchester firemen built a masonry building to replace their frame structure.

Photo Caption: Workmen had nearly completed the Manchester Fire House when this image was taken on December 29, 1898. The firemen were unable to save their building when fire ravaged Manchester in June 1921. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Mrs. Ed Jordan, 1988.