

"The Palace Livery Stable Fire In Westminster"

Carroll County Times article for 30 March 1997

By Jay A. Graybeal

On several occasions Westminster has witnessed disastrous fires which threatened to destroy multiple structures. One such fire was the April 6, 1906 one that destroyed H. H. Harbaugh's livery stable and residence located next to the Fire House on East Main St. The April 6th issue of the American Sentinel newspaper carried a two-column article about the fire:

DISASTROUS FIRE IN WESTMINSTER.

H. H. Harbaugh's Palace Livery Stable and Residence Destroyed.

22 Horses, 45 Vehicles, Harness, Provender,
Household Furniture &c., Burned.

Mr. Harbaugh and Family Barely Escape With Their Lives and Lose All Their Wearing Apparel.

LOSS \$18,000; INSURANCE \$6,500.

The Firemen's Building and Contents Damaged to the Extent of \$3,000 to \$5,000, but Fully Insured.

A fire, which destroyed about \$25,000 worth of property and threatened, for a time, a widespread conflagration in this city, occurred between 3 and 4 o'clock, this morning, or to be strictly accurate, started 15 or 20 minutes before 3 o'clock.

The property destroyed consisted chiefly of the Palace livery stable and residence of Mr. Harry H. Harbaugh, on East Main street, with nearly their entire contents, consisting of 22 horses, 45 vehicles, a large lot of harness, provender, household furniture and the wearing apparel of Mr. Harbaugh and his family.

The stable was a large frame structure, with the residence portion under the same roof and fronting on East Main street, between the Firemen's Building and the residence of Mayor O. D. Gilbert, but with wide spaces intervening. The rear of the stable bordered on St. John's Catholic Cemetery. The fire started near the rear and the wind drove it toward the front with such rapidity that Mr. and Mrs. Harbaugh and their three little boys barely escaped with their lives, and had to flee barefooted and in their night clothing from the burning building. It had been in progress for perhaps twenty minutes before it was discovered, when it was too late to make any effort to rescue the horses, most of which were probably suffocated before an alarm was sounded.

Of the horses which perished 18 belonged to Mr. Harbaugh and one each to Mr. J. E. Hippiie, Mr. Charles E. Goodwin, Dr. Thomas J. Coonan and the A. B. C. Bread and Pie Company. Among them were some very fine animals, including a span of beautiful cream colored horses recently purchased by Mr. Harbaugh, and in which he took much pride. Mr. Hippiie's horse was a very valuable one, he having recently been offered for it \$800. A fine tally-ho coach, trap, rubber-tire runabout, and stick wagon and

the wagon of the A. B. C. Company were about the only vehicles saved. Otherwise the destruction was complete.

Mr. Harbaugh and his family were temporarily clothed by their neighbors. Fortunately Mr. Harbaugh's books, except a scratcher, were saved. He estimates that loss on the building at not less than \$10,000, he having recently had an offer of that amount for it. His horses and vehicles, at a moderate estimate, were worth \$7,000 and furniture, wearing apparel, &c., not less than \$1000, making his total loss fully \$18,000. His property destroyed was insured in the sum of \$6,500, in companies represented by Mr. Charles E. Goodwin's insurance agency.

The heat from the burning stable ignited the window frames of the Firemen's Building and the flames spread into its interior, greatly endangering the structure. Only the almost superhuman efforts of the firemen saved it from destruction. The extent of the damage to the building by fire and water is from \$8,000 to \$5,000, the loss being fully covered by insurance in the Carroll County and Dug Hill Companies and in companies represented by Mr. J. H. Fuss and others.

Much of the surrounding property was in danger, blazing flakes from the burning stables having been carried for quite a distance, and having fallen on the roofs of many houses, in some instances igniting them. Fortunately shingle roofs were damp and householders watched, with hose and other means at hand, to suppress the first beginnings of a blaze thereon.

As usual, the firemen deserve special commendation for their energetic efforts to protect and save property from destruction. A visitor from Baltimore, who witnessed their work, was overheard to remark that they far surpassed the firemen of that city in efficiency. Citizens residing in the vicinity supplied them with hot coffee while they were engaged in their arduous duty.

Next to the destruction of the roller mill of Messrs. Roberts, Roop & Co., this was the most disastrous fire in this city since the great conflagration of April 9th, 1883, when 17 or 18 buildings, including Grace Lutheran Church and parsonage, were destroyed, and two lives were lost.

Photo caption: Smoke rises from the ruins of the Palace Livery Stable on East Main Street in Westminster. The April 6, 1906 fire completely destroyed the structure and threatened the adjacent Firemen's Building and Mayor Oscar D. Gilbert's residence. J. Leland Jordan Collection, Historical Society of Carroll County, gift of the Commissioners of Carroll County, 1955.