



Oskaloosa Fire Station Dedication and Open House

August 3, 2017 • 2:00 pm - 9:00 pm



Groundbreaking Ceremony & Construction



Left to right: Council members Scottie Moore, Joe Caligiuri, Mayor David Krutzfeldt, Fire Chief Mark Neff, council member Aaron Ver Steeg and City Manager Michael Schrock Jr. break ground in a symbolic ceremony held Friday, April 22, 2016.



New fire station well equipped and accommodating

The Oskaloosa Fire Department was organized in 1871 and had humble beginnings in a small two-story brick building where Julie's Café is now located. The building was torn down to make way for the new city hall and the addition of the fire department at the corner of South Market Street and Second Avenue East.

It was not until 1908 that a new fire department building was planned to be erected and named the Central Fire Station. It was designed by Frank E. Wetherell, an Oskaloosa native and Des Moines Architect, in the Renaissance Revival style as a three-story brick building with a 4 ½-story bell tower. The fire station was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.

The new facility was modeled after the station in Des Moines building was two-story without a basement. The apparatus house and the truck room, stables and storage rooms were all built on the ground floor and the dormitory and living rooms of the men on the second floor.

The truck room was large enough to accommodate the ambulance and patrol wagon, hook and ladder truck and hose truck. They stood far enough apart to allow the horses to come from the rear and approach from either side. The stalls accommodated six head of horses.

A fire hose tower was completed in 1930 and offered a place where the hose could receive complete circulation of air which aided in drying the hose and prevented premature rotting.

The recently completed fire station offers additional space for the engines and trucks, private sleeping quarters for each fireman, additional restrooms, safer access to the second floor, and upgraded technology features.

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The following pages provide a look back at the fire stations, the equipment and an honor roll of those who have served the community as an Oskaloosa Firefighter.

Our special thanks go to Firefighter Mark Tennison, Tony Rivera, John Jacobs, the Mahaska Historical Society and the staff at the Oskaloosa Herald for their help with this project.

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Fire Stations



New Fire Station - July 2017



Fire Station before remodel



When the new fire station was built in 1909 a decision had to be made about what to do with the fire bell. It was decided to move it to the new building and set it in a brick cupola where it resides today.



Fire Station 1950's

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Pumpers, Engines & Trucks

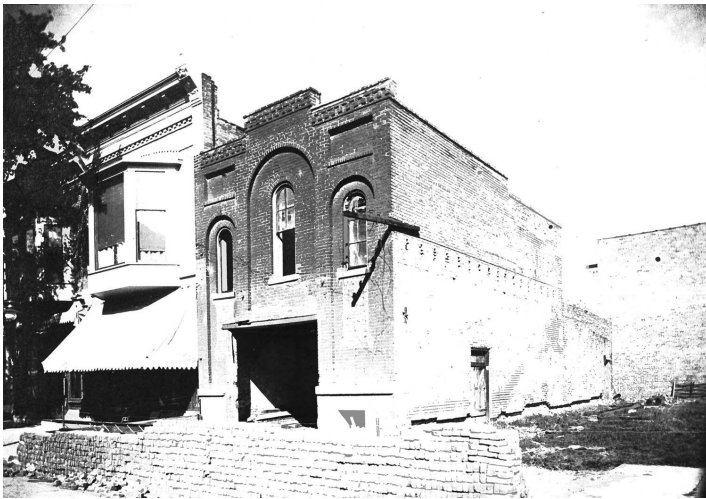


New Fire Station built in 1909

The New Fire Station.

The fire boys expected to get into their new building today, but were disappointed upon the non-arrival of the globes for the gas lights on the chandeliers. This is all that is delaying them in getting into their new building. They are ready to move and it would be only a few hours of work before they could be in the new quarters. The furniture for the new building has not been put in, but the furniture dealers have the fixtures on hand ready to move.

From now on the white team, "Nick" and "Tuck," which will be used on the ambulance and patrol, will be quartered in the new building during the daytime, and in case of a patrol call, the new wagon will be used. The black team, "Coley" and "Doris," will be quartered in the old station.



Original Fire Station being torn down



Original Fire Station where Julie's Cafe is now



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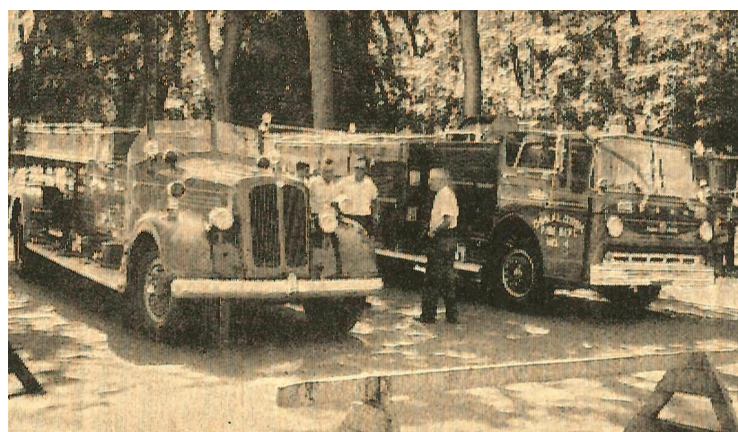
2017



2008



1966



1964

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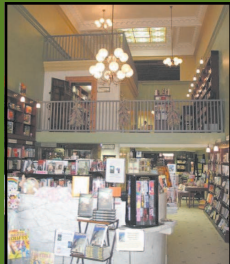
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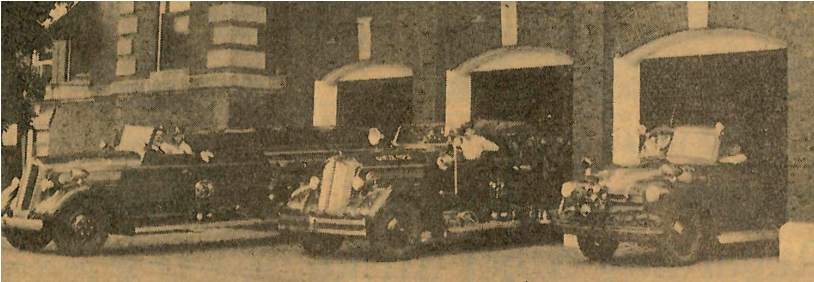
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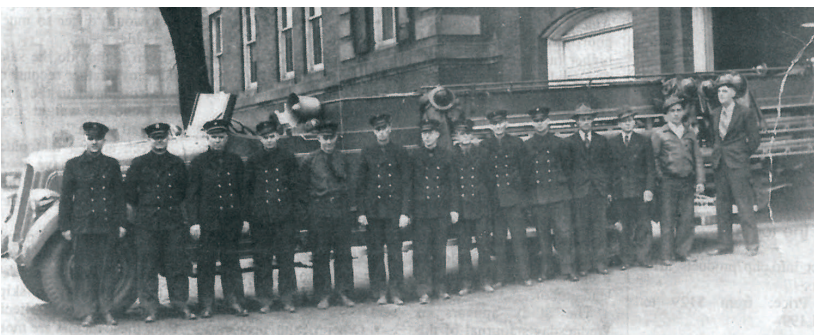
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1959



1956



1940's

FIRE TRUCK IS DUE TOMORROW

Factory Representa- tive to Repair Old Pumper

Special representative Larry Davis of the Seagrave company of Dayton, Ohio, arrived here today in advance of the new Seagrave pumper slated to arrive Saturday morning.

Davis, who will overhaul and repair a Seagrave truck owned by the city many years, arrived here as part of his routine of Seagrave fire equipment repair calls.

The new Seagrave truck, ordered last summer, is one of the latest type with a 750 gallon capacity and capable of carrying 240 feet of ladder.

1942



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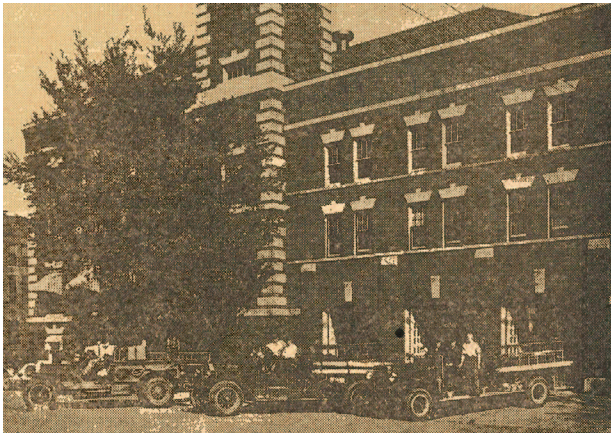
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Pumpers, Engines & Trucks

1929



Modern Motor Fire Department Cuts Local Fire Losses

Recent Purchase of Boyer Pumper Completes Equipment of Department—Facilities Should Be Sufficient for City's Future Needs For Some Time To Come

One of the finest fire departments in any city of 10,000 protects Oskaloosa from the wanton destruction of fire and probably explains why this city has not been visited by any great conflagration since the equipment of the department with modern motor fire apparatus.

Recent purchase of a new 750 gallon Boyer pumper completes the equipment of the department and provides facilities that should be sufficient for fighting any blaze the local department may be called to cope with.

Two motor pumpers, the new

Boyer and the older Seagrave, and one chemical and hose truck, an American-LaFrance, manned by experienced firemen and quartered in Oskaloosa's splendid fire station at the city hall, comprise the local fire department.

Rehabilitation of the city hall telephone system this fall brought with it the installation of a modern fire alarm system, similar to that in the larger cities.

The fire department was just a minute and a half reaching an alarm a mile from the station during a test run a few weeks ago. Mayor R. K. Davis and Fire Chief

Will Pyle arranged the test without the department's knowledge and timed the department from the moment the alarm was phoned to the station. And the run was made through the heart of the city at the busiest hour of the week.

The introduction of automatic fire alarms in many buildings equipped with sprinkler system has furnished several opportunities to time the department's response. Not so long ago the department answered a test alarm from one of the city's industrial plants in exactly 59 seconds.

Fire losses in Oskaloosa were the lowest in Iowa in 1928, thanks to the effectiveness of the local department. Constant study of ever changing fire fighting methods is required of the men of the force and the Oskaloosa department ranks high in the state from the standpoint of efficiency.

The department was organized back in 1871. Hand drawn hose carts and volunteer firemen who paid for the privilege of belonging to the company and provided their own uniforms served the day. Fleet footedness was required of the men who made up the hose teams.

Fifty years ago Oskaloosa boasted three fire companies, equipped with a steam engine, "Long George," named for Mayor George H. Baugh, and two small hand propelled pumps. Horses for this equipment came from a neighboring livery stable. Water was supplied from four large cisterns about the square and two large reservoirs, one at the Proudfoot woolen mills on north A street and the other at the Seibel mill on High avenue west. Locomotive bells or whistles served as fire alarms.

Later came the combination hose and ladder wagon. A small fire station was erected on the present city hall site. Two horses were purchased, "Coalie" and "Major," and Sam Jones was employed as Oskaloosa's first salaried firemen. Levi Cook from an adjoining iron mill relieved Sam at meal time.

Twenty years ago, March 17, 1909, the present station was erected, built in the administration of Mayor Charles H. Ralston, and without a cent additional cost to the city. By

that time Oskaloosa had a salaried department, supplemented by the services of a dozen call firemen. Two more horses, "Nip" and "Tuck," were purchased.

The chemical and hose truck was acquired on October 3, 1912. Many will remember the trial run between the old horse cart and the new motor truck, north on Market to C avenue and east on C avenue to the old Picket place. Somehow or other folks would like to have seen old "Nip" and "Tuck" outdistance that new fangled arrangement. But the truck reached the blaze, had it extinguished, and impatiently awaited the arrival of the team.

An epidemic of costly fires, low water pressure, and a desire to complete the modernization of the department figured in the purchase of the 750 gallon Seagrave pumper January 23, 1917. The pumper's advantages over the chemical and hose truck were many.

Oskaloosa has placed so much dependency upon the Seagrave that folks began to wonder what might happen if the pumper were to break down at a fire, or if two serious blazes were to break out simultaneously in different parts of the city. That was the feeling that prompted the purchase of the new Boyer pumper this summer.

Fires were community events in the old days. By the time the hand drawn or horse drawn equipment reached the alarm the flames had assumed threatening proportions and "fire fans" were sure of seeing "a good fire" every time the department was called out. Frequently the services of a large number of citizens were required in aiding the department in fire fighting. Fire losses were heavy, too.

But the appearance of motorized equipment put a stop to that. Blazes discovered in time were extinguished before any great damage resulted and the "fire fan" generally met the truck returning to the station. There have been serious fires from time to time but these might have become city wide conflagrations without modern apparatus.

Not only have local firemen saved the city many thousands of dollars

in fire losses but they have been of farm fires about Oskaloosa. Motor equipment has paid for itself many times in the saving of losses. The city does not make a general practice of permitting fire equipment to leave the municipality.

Another important step in the direction of more effective fire fighting was one likely to conform with uniform standard connections.

Oskaloosa department is unique in the length of service of its firemen. Assistant Fire Chief Henry Sonderegger completed 50 years of service March 15 and was retired on pension on that date. The department was placed under civil service by Mayor S. V. Reynolds some eighteen years ago and it is no longer the victim of political fortune.



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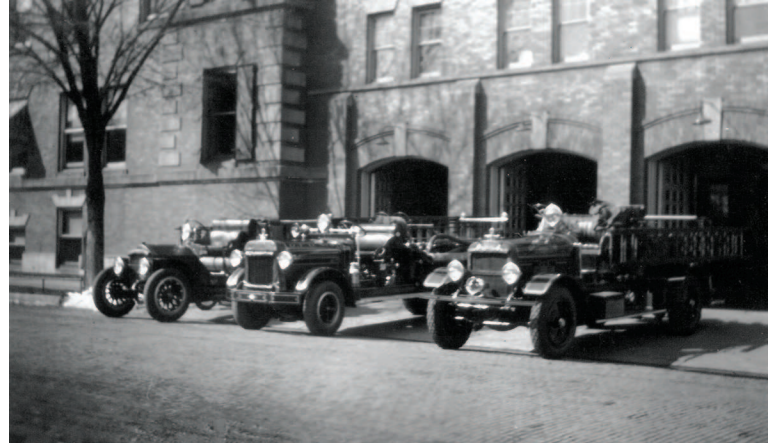
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Pumpers, Engines & Trucks



1915



1920's



1913



1909

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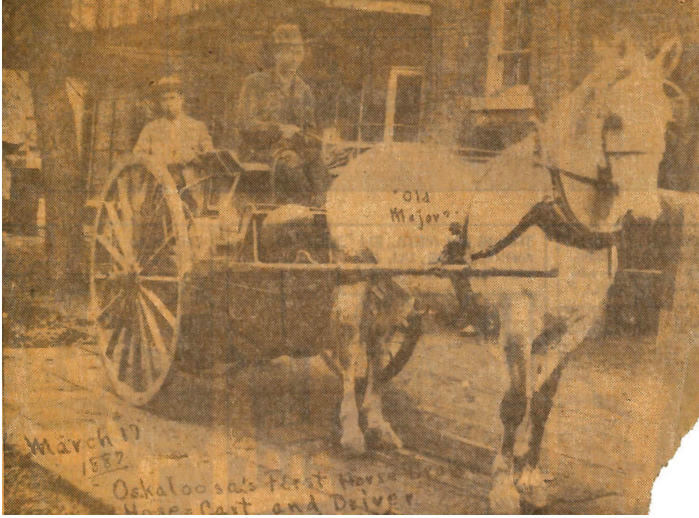
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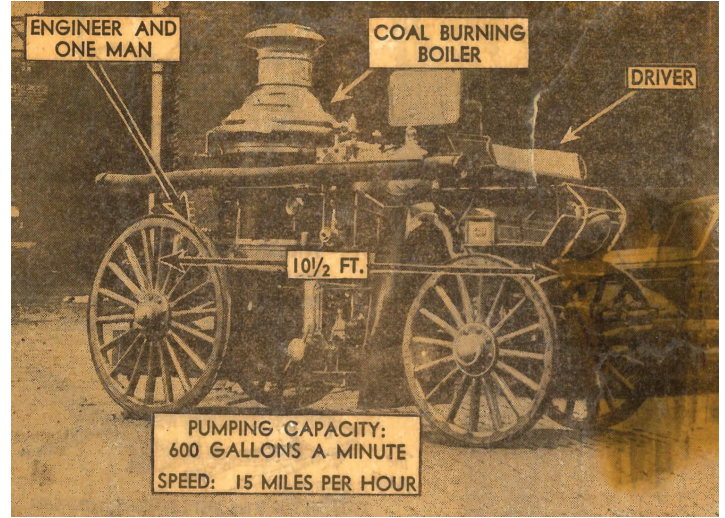
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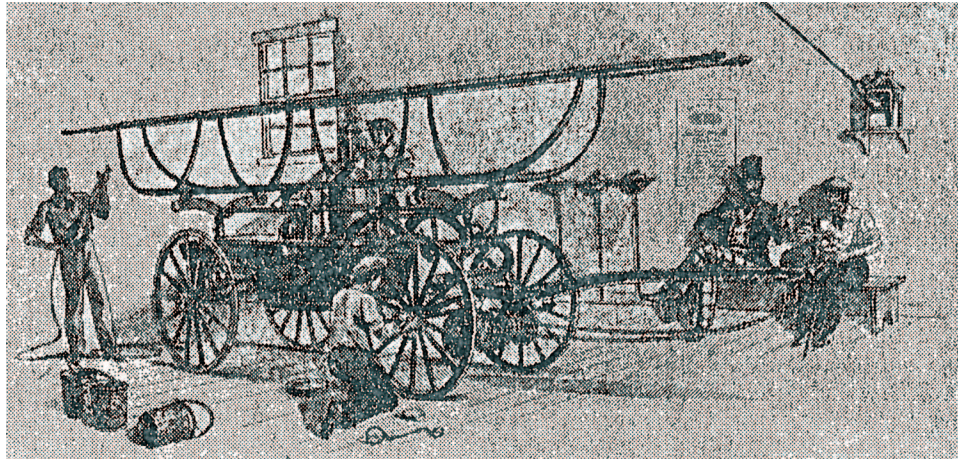
Notable Fires



1887



"Long George" Fire Engine 1873



"Long Charlie" Fire Engine 1873

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1845

Oskaloosa's First Fire of Record

Reprinted from the pages of The Oskaloosa Herald August 26, 1944

Any town must be of some consequence before it can have a fire that amounts to much. For a number of years after its founding the log cabins in Oskaloosa were so scattered that no more than one of them would burn at one time. But after the business section began to take on form the fire hazard increased, but no means of fighting flames had been thought of. Here is how Mrs. Semira Phillips* describes the first fire of note in the town:

"But I must go back to my school in that little cabin, the Methodist Parsonage, corner of A Avenue and Third Street, in September 1845. The first great event after beginning that school was our first visit to the Majors place, 14 miles west of Oskaloosa, and the next was Oskaloosa's first fire. On Wednesday, September 17th, as I was going to my dinner, and had just reached the stile at the Phillips home, corner of Second Avenue and Sixth Street. I heard a commotion up in town, and on looking around I saw flames leaping up from a house on the west side of the square. I called to the folks in the house and told them a house was on fire. I didn't go in, but went up town as fast as I could go, and found Dr. Weatherford's house all in flames and their household goods piled and scattered about the ground, the clock all broken in pieces. The nearest well was on the lot where the Irving House

now is, corner of First Avenue and A Street. Men were running here and there in a state of frenzy; some ran to the stores and seized all the buckets they could find, and commenced carrying water from that well. The ground was clear between the burning building and the well I have mentioned. The first house south of the fire was Wm. B. Street's store, a small frame building; they kept throwing water on it and by hard work saved it. The house just north was a tailor shop and then a cabinet shop, built of logs, and owned by a man named Parish Ellis. They were also entirely consumed. George W. and John W. Jones had a long frame store on the corner where the Bears' store is now; that was scorched and began to blaze, but was saved with little damage. When I got to the fire I seized a bucket and carried water as fast as I could. I was running with a bucket of water when I met John Jones who snatched it out of my hand. I saw him run and dash it on their store just as the weatherboard began to blaze. The Jones store was saved. John used to tell my husband that my bucket of water saved it. I don't deserve that credit but John's gallantry was great. Just before that fire a Mrs. Wright had bought that house of Dr. Weatherford, and I think they had some litigation over it.

*Mrs. Semira Phillips originally published this accounting in her book in 1900. As Mahaska County's first school teacher, she proved herself to be a close observer and a good reporter.



Congratulations on the completion of the Oskaloosa Fire Station

Groundbreaking Ceremony
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Volunteers Fought Oskaloosa's First Fires City Now Boasts Capable Full Time Department

Oskaloosa has had reason to be proud of its fire department and the record made both by volunteer and full time fire fighters over the years.

The department is well equipped and housed and rates among the best in Iowa. Under the direction of Fire Chief M. C. Whitmore and Assistant Chief Will Pyle, local firemen have been scientifically trained not only in modern fire fighting practices but in life saving and property protection and salvage.

Like almost every town, Oskaloosa has had its share of costly blazes, but effective work by firemen has prevented spreading flames from causing general conflagrations and heroic rescue efforts are frequent in the history of the department.

Organized In 1871

The first fire department was organized in 1871. There were two companies, and each company was equipped with a small hand-power fire engine. The engine comprised a waterproof tank, much like a wagon bed, equipped with force pumps. The pumps were operated by hand-power, much like the old time hand cars on the railroads. The engine carried a suction hose for use where a well was available, but most generally was fed by a bucket line of men and boys. These engines were drawn by man-power, with often as many as twenty men pulling on the ropes.

Steam Engine Added

Along about 1873 a steam engine was added to the fire fighting equipment, and about eight big cisterns were sunk in convenient places about the business section of the town. In case of a big fire the engine would have

to be moved from one cistern to another, when the first one was pumped dry. The engine known as "Long George" was very effective down town, but was practically useless in the residence part where wells were few and water was scarce. Hence the little engines were maintained until the city became equipped with water works.

Companies Reorganized

The addition of the steam engine made it necessary to reorganize the fire department, and three companies came into being.

Under the new arrangement, Oskaloosa Fire company No. 1—consisting of 25 members operated the Cole Brothers steam engine, and had charge of the hose tower and about 1500 feet of hose.

Captain C. Woodruff was foreman, J. W. Laffollett, assistant foreman, Melvin Ream, second assistant foreman, W. H. Duke secretary, B. T. Dutton treasurer, H. Duke hose formen, and W. B. Ingles assistant hose foreman.

Company No. 2—First organized as Defiance company No. 2 in August, 1873, but it was disbanded and the second company was organized Jan. 1, 1877, with the membership limited to 15 men. This company had a small engine of Douglas patent called "Long Charlie", and 250 feet of hose. Robert Carroll was foreman, William Walters assistant foreman, Charles V. Hoffmann secretary and William Owens treasurer.

Widawake company No. 3 had a similar membership and engine and 200 feet of hose. This company was organized in August, 1873. H. P. Welker was foreman, C. D. Alexander assistant fore-



SAM JONES, Oskaloosa's first paid fireman, was mighty proud when he took charge of the first horse drawn hose

From The Herald "Family Album" cart March 17, 1887. The cart was drawn by old Major, veteran fire horse.

man, D. C. Waggoner secretary, and J. A. Jones treasurer.

The Artesian Well

Feeling the need of a more abundant water supply to fight fires and for domestic consumption, an artesian well was advocated, and finally about 1874 the city council appropriated \$10,000 to sink such a well in the middle of the public square.

Work continued on the project until 1876 when the hole was still dry at a depth of 2500 feet. An additional \$15,000 had also been sunk in the hole, and it was abandoned as a bad job.

Water From River

Three years later, on August 25, 1879 the city council took steps to provide Oskaloosa with an adequate supply of water from the south Skunk river.

A 25 year franchise was granted Coversale & Cowels of Cincinnati, O., to install a water system similar to the one serving the city of Keokuk. The franchise provided that the Holly Manufacturing Co., of Lockport, N. Y., should furnish the equipment for the plant. Fire hydrant rentals were to pay the plant.

Fire Committee Named

Disastrous fires had plagued the early settlement and the city council, July 11, 1884, authorized appointment of a committee to consider action necessary to the organization of a paid fire department. The committee named by Mayor James Rhinehart, included Henry Lyster, T. T. Wright, and Silas Scott.

But council proceedings fail to reveal when the committee reported.

An ordinance No. 15, setting up regulations for a fire department was entered on the books in 1870 but never passed. It provided for a department of 40 members, with the chief engineer to be in charge and to receive \$100 a year.

First Ordinance Adopted

It was under the administration of George H. Baugh as mayor that the city council adopted the first fire department ordinance in August, 1871, cutting the membership to 10 to 20 men and fixing the salary of the chief engineer or fire chief at \$25 a year. The fire department ordinance was rewritten Jan. 9, 1877, as

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The fire department ordinance was rewritten Jan. 9, 1877, as ordinance 39, providing for Company No. 1 with 15 to 25 men, and Companies No. 2 and No. 3. The chief engineer was given authority at all fires and his salary remained at \$25 per annum.

Other offices set up included foremen, assistant foreman, who were responsible to the chief engineer, and created fire wardens in each ward. Firemen were to receive \$1 a month and exemption from road taxes. All had to be uniformed and officers were required to wear belts showing their official capacities.

Hook And Ladder Co.

Records of the fire department show that Hook and Ladder Co. 1 was organized March 10, 1885, at a meeting held in the mayor's office.

J. W. Daniels was elected foreman, G. W. Watkins first assistant foreman, J. C. Stewart second assistant foreman, John N. Martin secretary, and Thomas

McGee treasurer. Members also included Thomas Mason, J. C. Kenworthy, J. D. McKey, James Capp, Buck Capp, S. J. Stewart, Melvin George, W. I. Neagle, G. H. Price, and J. Burk.

City council records carried frequent references to wells, concerned the fate of the artesian well, payments on the steam fire engine, fire department expenses which were not itemized, etc.

Homer Little's Reminiscence

Homer Little, night policeman who is probably the sole survivor of the volunteer fire department days, recalls that water for fire fighting was drawn from cisterns at the corner of town and reservoirs, located on north

A street, and at the Seible & Esgen mill.

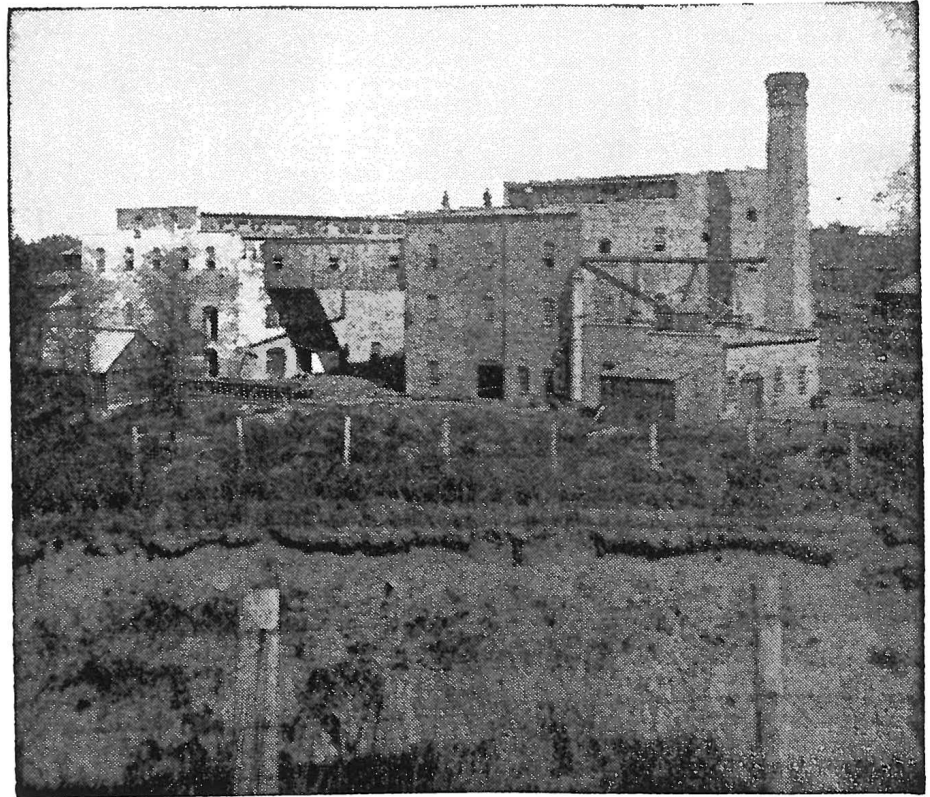
He says that "Long George" was named for Mayor George Baugh and says that old "Major", only fire department horse was probably the most pampered horse in Oskaloosa. Later "Coalie" was purchased to team with "Major." Levi Cook, grandfather of Police Sergeant Jay Cook, was in charge of the steam engine. His shop was around the corner from the old fire house which was located in the alley just north of the present city hall. Sam Jones was on duty and was the first full time salaried fireman.

Some Old Timers

Homer recalls names of some of the volunteers of former days — John Bird, George Carr, Charles Carr, Harvey Carr, B. T. Dutton, Grant Daniels, Charles Hartman, Sam Jones who later was in charge of the

engine and Major, John Martin, Al Murkelbach, Al Mendenhall, Ed Simmons, Andy Wymore, George Watkins, Jake Turner, Henry Sonderegger, Nelson Cook, father of Jay, Steve Stewart, Frank Bronson, Henry Myers, Miller Burkhart, Jud Lyons, William Richie, Ott McCord, J. W. Laffollett, Isaac Bush, Perry Byrd, Frank Long, George Sonderegger, Mike Scully, et al.

Major F. L. Downing was mentioned as fire chief in the early days, although he probably did not take an active part in fire fighting. The records for 1887 show that J. W. Laffollett as foreman was among the early chiefs, serving a number of years and then Jan. 3, 1893, he was replaced by Basil Dutton who served until 1900. John Bird replaced him for a couple of years and the name of William Gochee appeared as his successor.



OSKALOOSA PACKING PLANT—This picture was taken of the Oskaloosa Packing company plant at the southwest edge of Oskaloosa in 1884. The plant was de-

stroyed by fire and was not rebuilt because damage suits and nuisance clogged the court docket. The plant had a capacity of 1,000 hogs a day.

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1896

THE GREEN & BENTLEY

FIRE OF 1896



The Green & Bentley Drug Company's fire of 1896 was one of the most destructive fires that ever visited Oskaloosa. The store was filled from the top of the second floor to the lowest depths of the basement with an expensive stock of drugs, toilet articles and paints and oils. While the fire started on April 26, it burned for several days, and the flames at times shot up at least 100 feet in the air. The more water firemen poured on the blaze the fiercer it seemed to burn and the department had to exert all their efforts to save surrounding properties. The above picture was taken by Carl Johnson, after the fire had finally been extinguished. After the fire the building was practically rebuilt, and the present fine drug store and bank

arose out of the ruins. It will be noted that the sidewalk was of heavy planks, and there was only the suggestion of a curb between the street and the sidewalk. High avenue at that time had not been paved, except for this block extending from Market street to A street,—and this pavement was of the old McAdam type of limestone blocks. Note the man in the center foreground with his hands under his coat tails. This was then the prevailing style of clothes of a well dressed man,—a derby hat, long tailed coat and tight trousers of a lighter color than the coat and vest. True to the human instinct he appears to be more interested in the ladies on the corner than in the wreck caused by the flames.

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1907

FIRE DESTROYS MORROW'S LIVERY

BUILDING AND MOST OF THE CONTENTS BURNED.

1881 - estimated \$15,000 - the McNeill Bros. THE HORSES WERE ALL SAVED

Losses Will Be From \$30,000 To \$35,000, Only Partially Covered By Insurance—Many Private Rigs Consumed.

Oskaloosa suffered a heavy fire loss early Sunday morning in the destruction of the W. A. McNeill building, corner of High avenue and Second street, occupied by the George A. Morrow livery business and by the offices of the McNeill Brothers Company. The building and almost all its contents were wholly destroyed, but the prompt action of Mr. Morrow and son, Frank Morrow saved the loss of any of the stock stabled in the basement of the building. A few of the rigs in the building were taken out, but the larger number of the better vehicles went up in flames.

The fire started in the north end of the second story and by the time the fire company arrived so great headway had been gained that the fire department could not stay the progress of the flames, although four streams of water were turned upon the building.

The loss of the building and contents will cause an aggregate loss of between thirty and thirty-five thousand dollars, a portion of which is covered by insurance.

No statement has been made as to the intention of rebuilding the property, but it is probable that the building

will be replaced next season.

Cause and Start.

The cause of the fire may never be definitely known. No one is certain of the origin of the flames: The fire may have been caused by spontaneous combustion in new hay, or by tobacco fire dropped somewhere in the vicinity. Some have ascribed the start of the fire to defective electric wiring. This was impossible, as there were no wires in the part of the building where the fire started.

The fire was first discovered by George Morrow, owner of the livery business conducted at the place. He with his son Frank had gone toward the rear portion of the building shortly before six o'clock, when great quantities of heavy smoke began filling the room. A moment's investigation showed the building to be on fire, although it was impossible at that time to determine its exact location. The Morrows did not attempt to turn in an alarm. Their first thought was for the safety of the fifty head of horses in the basement stables of the building. Both ran to the basement, cut the animals loose and drove them from the barn. The horses, turned loose, scattered at will about the streets, but many of them sought to re-enter the burning building and had to be prevented by means of whips until they could be secured.

A number of people attempted to turn in the alarm from places in the neighborhood. The first flames that burst from the rear openings of the building caught the telephone cable that runs through the alley north of the barn and fifty pairs of wires were rendered useless. The girl in central knew that something was wrong, but could not locate the trouble. She next heard the fire bell, but was still helpless in calling the firemen, because she did not know the location of the fire. The alarm was sent in by Charles Douglas, employed at the Shipley & Nowels barns near the scene

of the fire. Douglas reached the fire department by means of the "old phone," and the fire fighters were soon at the scene of the trouble. By the time the company was ready for work the entire upper floor of the building was aflame and the fire burned very quickly into the other portions. The fire traveled from the top down, but made rapid progress. When the heavy roof fell in the whole building was a veritable furnace. The side walls soon collapsed and within a few hours all was a heap of ruins where had stood one of the best business blocks in the city.

The wind was blowing from the north and the flames originated at the north end of the building in a mow filled with hay. The entire building was soon filled with a dense smoke and explosive fumes which, becoming super-heated, rapidly communicated the fire to all parts of the structure. As soon as the supports of the roof were consumed it fell with a crash that carried the floors to the basement and the whole place was in ruins. So rapid was the progress of the fire that the department was entirely powerless before it, and the four streams of water that were soon going had no effect. The intense heat endangered neighboring property, but the big feed and sale stable of Sam Walthall on the north was protected by streams from a garden hose.

SAFES ARE TAKEN OUT

Valuable Papers Are Recovered From Smouldering Fire.

All morning a dense cloud of smoke hung over the rear end of the ruins of the Morrow livery stable which was destroyed by the fire Sunday morning. The large quantities of hay and straw which were covered by the heaps of brick and timbers will probably continue to burn and smoke for several days in spite of the fact that a stream of water from the fire hose was played on the mass of ruins continuously yesterday. The work of removing the smaller of the McNeill steel safes, which fell into the basement from the second story of the building during the fire, was completed yesterday afternoon by digging beneath it and hoisting the heavy safe with block and tackle. Today the Geo. Morrow safe was removed from the rubbish in like manner and the books and papers, which were more important than the small amount of cash in the safe at the time, were recovered.

No disposition of the lot has yet been made, but Mr. McNeill has several times said that he would not rebuild at that place. If Mr. Morrow wishes to finance the rebuilding of a livery stable at that location, Mr. McNeill is willing that each should appoint an appraiser and let them appoint some disinterested party to set a value on the lot and he will sell it for the appraised value. It is likely, however, that the location will never be the site of another livery stable, as it is one of the most valuable vacant lots in the city and would be an ideal location for a substantial business block.

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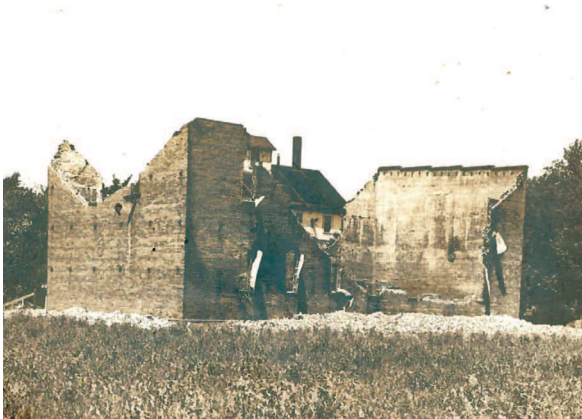
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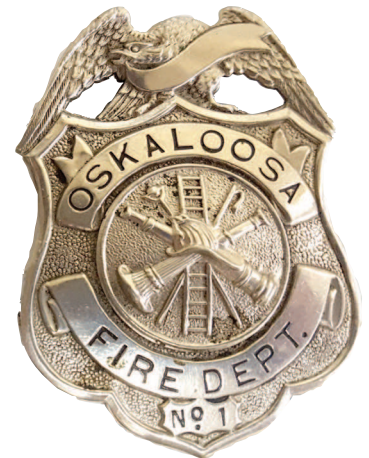
Notable Fires

1908



THE MAY FIRE RECORD.
074
Only One Alarm, But the Loss Was Enormous.
64-08
 Although the city fire department had but one fire alarm for the month of May, the fire was one of the most disastrous in the history of the city. The fire was that of the Hoover distillery ware house on the morning of May fifteenth and the loss was in excess of a quarter of a million dollars, counting the loss to the government. The insurance of the distillery company was about eighty thousand dollars. The destruction of the building and the contained property was total.

1909 - Duffin House



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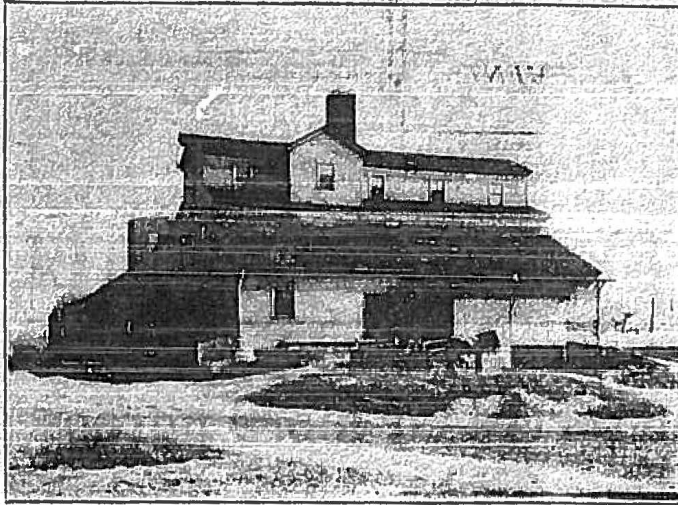
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1910

AN OLD LAND MARK GONE



BEFORE THE FIRE OF OCTOBER 9, 1910.



AFTER THE FIRE OF OCTOBER 9, 1910.

During the past year, Oskaloosa was forced by the fire fiend to part with an old land mark—the Siebel Mills—which were destroyed on October 9. The main structure was erected by Benjamin Rupp in 1861-52 and was operated as a grist mill and a distillery. The business grew and prospered and in 1857 a large addition was erected for a whiskey refinery. The property passed into the hands of Hamilton & McCurdy in 1905, who discontinued the distillery and in that portion of the building occupied by the refinery they established a woolen mill. The property passed to the hands of Sohn Siebel and W. Esgen in the following year, 1866, and was increased in size and importance. In the old building were three sets of the old-fashioned grinding burrs and had a capacity of two hundred and fifty bushels of wheat per day. In later years the old-fashioned and obsolete grinding machinery was replaced by modern steel roller process. The old woolen mills, a three story structure, measuring 110 by 123 feet, was burned to the ground in 1886 and was never rebuilt. The elevators, warehouse and storage sheds occupied the greater portion of the lots whereon stood the old woolen mills.



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1912

THE DESTRUCTION OF PENN COLLEGE

Oskaloosa College for their generous offers for the use of various buildings in the city.

"Resolutions embodying the sense of the great loss which has been sustained in the death of our beloved associates will be formulated as soon as possible."

Remaining Walls Pulled Down.

The east and west walls of the main section which were left standing, when the front wall fell, were pulled over about eleven o'clock this morning. They were considered very dangerous and ordered down. A fire line was stretched several hundred feet from the burned structure, and the public not permitted to cross into the dangerous territory.

Seniors of the college are considering the abandonment of their class play, owing to the tragedy, and suggested before the faculty assembled, that a musical program be substituted in its stead. They feel that the sentiment of the community might condemn the class play, following the death of former college members and associates.

Office of the president will be made temporarily at the home of President David M. Edwards, 425 College avenue, and the office of Registrar Prof. W. E. Barry will be established in the parlors of the Friends' Meeting House.

Commencement Arrangements.

Work for the year was practically over at Penn college with the exception of examinations. Monday, May 29, would have been the last day for recitations in class and the work was in review of the work of the semester and the final clearing of notes for the examinations. Commencement affairs are scheduled for the week following that of June 5.

What interference the calamity to the school will exercise upon the program of commencement week cannot be stated at this time and the program is to be worked out later.

Destruction of the main building will not hinder the commencement program proper, as this can be held in the Auditorium building or in the Yearly Meeting house which stands at a corner of the campus, at the north end of C street.

An Old Time Structure.

Erection of Penn college main building was started in the late sixties. First the central portion was erected, and in the seventies the west wing was added. The east wing was not completed until about 1889 or 1890.

The building burned was a three story brick structure over a basement story and was one of four buildings standing upon the campus aside from the president's cottage and students' apartments. The Gymnasium, south of the main building, the Auditorium or Chautauqua building, and the Yearly Meeting house were not injured.

No plans for the future have been made or considered as yet and what can be done or what will be done is a matter for future consideration.

Insurance Amounted to \$22,000.

Insurance was carried on the buildings and equipment in the total sum

of \$22,000.00, which will cover only a portion of the loss. The list of companies involved is as follows:

Hartford of Hartford.....	\$ 2,000
Liverpool London & Globe.....	5,000
Hawkeye and Des Moines.....	1,500
Germania	3,000
Farmers of Cedar Rapids.....	2,500
Fireman's	3,000
Lumbermen's	2,500
Northwestern National	2,500

Total \$22,000

A few other policies in small amounts may also be in existence.

Some Personal Losses.

The loss of valuable equipment and books and manuscripts impossible to replace is felt very keenly by several Professors of Penn. Prof. Gover C. Lawk, Assistant Professor of Biology sustains the most loss. Among the articles destroyed by the blaze were included, a new one hundred dollar microtone, microscopes valued at over thirteen hundred dollars, 1500 demonstration slides worth from fifteen to twenty-five cents each, the entire collection of vegetable and plant specimens, glassware costing over three hundred dollars, between three and four hundred dollars worth of books and research work, part of which can never be replaced owing to the discontinuation of their publication, and apparatus worth over five hundred dollars.

Professor Ella Harrison Stokes, Professor of Philosophy, also loses heavily. A large personal library worth half a hundred dollars and the college departmental collection were burned, making a loss of several hundred. Prof. Rosa E. Lewis, Professor of English Literature, also will suffer a several hundred dollars damage in books. Prof. William Eugene Barry, Professor of Greek and Latin, sustains heavy losses, too, having personal and departmental literature destroyed. Prof. Frederick Tostenson, Assistant Professor of French and German; Prof. W. C. Dennis of the School of

Expression; Prof. Clarence M. Case,

well played. By her keen interpretation, contrast was clearly shown in the three movements. The Beethoven number was followed by a group of three short selections, all of which were excellently given. In the first of these, "Mendelssohn's Spring Song" there was a continuous accompaniment which showed smooth and clear technique. Borodin's "Au Couvant" was a lyrical number and was one of the best received of all on the program. The "Polonaise in A major," by Chopin, a brilliant number, was played with much energy and force. Hiller's Concerto-op. 69 was accompanied by the College Orchestra. This was a heavy number and was brilliantly rendered, both from the standpoint of interpretation and technique.

Professor of Sociology and Economics, and other instructors suffer some losses. The large grand piano in the college chapel is listed among the losses.

Rumors of Other Fatalities.

Possibility exists that one or maybe two bodies are still in the ruins of the building but this cannot be determined until the debris has been cooled and carefully searched.

It is said that a helper at the M. & St. L. round-house who was known to go to the fire and was seen working among the students, has not reported today and careful search fails to reveal his whereabouts.

Effort was being organized this afternoon to have all the students register and in this way check the college attendance for the purpose of finding if any of the students are missing.

Mr. Williams' Funeral.

Funeral service of the late Robert H. Williams will be held Monday, May 29, 1916. Prayer service will be conducted at the home, No. 741 North E street, at two o'clock, for relatives and intimate friends of the family. Formal service at the Friends' church at 2:30 o'clock. Interment in the Friends' cemetery.

The Penn College Fire

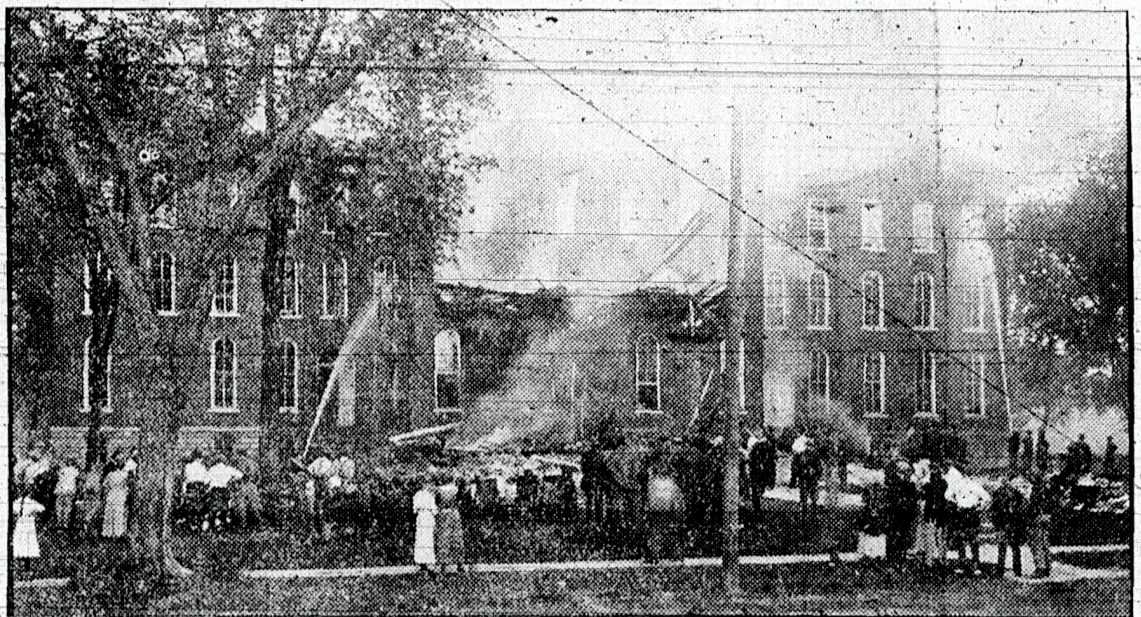


Harry Oakley



R. H. Williams

View of the Ruins and the Two Men Who Lost Their Lives



1912

PENN COLLEGE A MASS OF RUINS

Main Building Is Destroyed By Fire This Morning

TWO LIVES ARE SACRIFICED

R. H. Williams and Harry Oakley Killed By Falling Wall



Penn College "main building" was almost totally destroyed by fire that started about three thirty o'clock this Saturday morning and the lives of Robert H. Williams, financial agent of the school and Harry Oakley, a Freshman, son of George Oakley of North E. Street were snuffed out when the south wall fell outward as the heavy bell crashed through the building from the roof.

Fire Started On Third Floor.

Starting about three-thirty o'clock this Saturday morning in the third floor of the main building, the fire burned slowly downward, consuming the central structure, and ruining the east wing and a part of the west wing of the structure. Portions of the ruins were still blazing at eight o'clock. The fire department was summoned at four o'clock.

Loss Over \$75,000.00.

The extent of the loss sustained may not be known for several days. The main building, which is a practical wreck with the possible exception of a portion of the west wing, was valued at fifty thousand dollars. Estimate of the equipment and other property in the building, the auditorium, library, laboratories, and other departments will exceed twenty-five thousand dollars more. Total property loss approximates seventy-five thousand dollars with partial insurance.

Victims Trying to Save Property.

The victims of the fire, together with a number of others were in the college administration office in the effort to get the safe out of the burning building and to save the records of the institution. Efforts of the boys were being directed by Prof. Clarence M. Case and Rev. Stranahan, pastor of the Friends' church, was close at hand assisting. Robert H. Williams from the start of the fire had been foremost in the salvage work and was lending a hand here and directing the other work there. When the noise of the falling bell alarmed the rescue party working on the office and warned by the shouts from the crowd outside, the workers hastily sought the large entrance hallway in the attempt to escape. Some of those in the building made their escape. All but young Oakley succeeded in getting into the clear, outside of the building. Robert H. Williams was caught outside of the building and buried beneath two feet or more of masonry that crashed down upon him. The body of young Oakley was found buried in the brick debris near the safe. Professor Case and others of the party had narrow escapes, the brick falling about them. Kelley Davis and George Minear were not so fortunate and barely got away with their lives. They are considerably hurt and both were taken to the Oskaloosa hospital for attention.

Roomers Driven From Dormitory.

Fred Huxtable and Orville S. Batten, who roomed on the third floor of the main college building, first found the fire. They were awakened by the crackling of the flames and upon investigation found the ceilings in the Biology laboratory and German recitation room in the east wing, on fire. An attempt to put out the blaze with buckets of water was unsuccessful and failed to retard the flames until the fire department could arrive. When discovered, only a small portion of the rooms was "adame", but with no opposition the fire spread rapidly, involving the entire roof.

The fire department laid one line

Valuable Art Collection Saved.

In a short time, help had been summoned, and several young men assisted R. H. Williams in removing as much property as was possible. All the records of the institution were saved, the valuable collection of oil paintings originated by Honorable S. M. M. Myers were removed, and a portion of the reference and research books and manuscripts were taken from the library. Some of the equipment on the first and second floors was saved from the blaze.

Many Narrow Escapes.

Some were successful in escaping from the building, running through various doors and openings. But Williams and Oakley were caught near the entrance, being buried beneath the falling front wall. George Minear and Kelley Davis escaped the main fall but were injured by flying bricks. Mrs. J. L. Lee was running from the front and fell, bruising hands and knees.

Prominent in College And Prohibition Circles.

Robert H. Williams was a member of the Friends church and active in the affairs of the college. In addition to being financial agent of the Penn board and business manager, Mr. Williams was also State Chairman of the Prohibition party of Iowa. He served as councilman from the Fifth Ward, Oskaloosa, during a term of two years and was superintendent of the Deacon Public schools a number of years.

Roomers Driven From Dormitory.

Mr. Williams resided at No. 211 North E street, near the college campus. He was one of the first to arrive at the college after the sounding of the alarm and worked anxiously in the effort to save the property until he was caught in the falling wall.

Facility Meeting and Resolutions.

At 10 o'clock this morning members of the Penn college faculty and members of the Penn college Senior class, and Fourth Year Academy class, met in the Argonaut Hall of the Gymnasium building, to consider the plans and course which the college should follow, in regard to next week's program and along the lines of Commencement Week.

The following preliminary resolutions were drafted and adopted:

"In recognition of the appalling tragedy which has befallen the college in the death of some of its members, it is the sense of the faculty that all college activities should be suspended until Wednesday morning, May 31st, and that in the meantime the entire college community should unite in paying profoundest respect to the memory of those who died in its service."

"On Wednesday the college will assemble in the Friends' Meeting House at 8:15 a. m., for chapel exercises, notwithstanding the loss of the main college building, and the program of examinations and commencement will be carried out as planned, in the various buildings upon and adjacent to Penn Campus."

"The faculty desire to express their gratitude to Superintendent O. P. Flower of the Oskaloosa Public Schools, President C. E. Boman and Secretary George True of the Commercial Club, the management of the Lacey Hotel, and the management of the

were immediately rushed to the hospital and the rounding up of the young men who were in the building commenced. While no one saw Williams and Oakley crushed beneath the wreckage, some saw their location before the crash, and failing to account for them, began the search.

George Minear, who was injured by the falling front wall escaped from

death miraculously. He was in the large main hall on the lower floor, when the warning came from Floyd Dent, that the roof was coming through, and Minear ran in attempt to force his way through the front entrance. The first falling bricks struck him on the back of the head and as he drew back, the entire wall caved, striking the front of his body in various places. Harry Oakley who was just in front of him was crushed to death by the collapse.

Bodies Are Recovered.

As soon as the blaze had been smothered out in the front of the school, dangerous portions of the structure were torn down, to prevent further accidents, and the work of clearing the debris from the front of the burned building commenced. Mr. Williams' body was found on the front sidewalk, about six feet from the door lying face downward. His head and face were badly crushed, and a leg was broken. A short time afterward, Harry Oakley's form was discovered in the front entrance of the college, lying against the steel safe and vault. Bricks were piled beneath and above the body. His body was not marred as much as that of Mr. Williams.

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(Continued from Page 6.)

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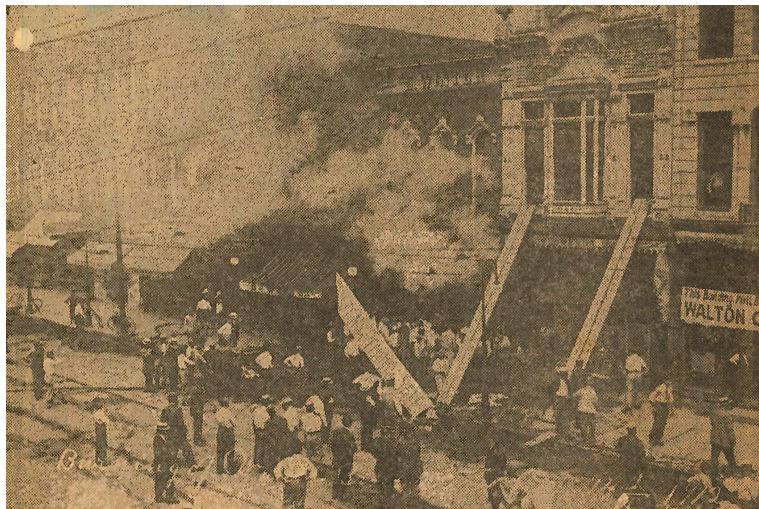
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1912

BURNING OF THE WALTON CLOTHING STORE



All of a sudden one busy summer morning while the proprietor and clerks were about their work, flames and smoke burst from the basement of the Walton Brothers Clothing store at 109 High avenue west. So quickly did the room fill with choaking flames that inmates had to drop everything and rush to the street. Miller Beard, bookkeeper in the Green & Bentley Drug Store, had been doing some work on the Walton books and had left them in the clothing store. Immediately upon the alarm of fire, he thought of the books, and at the risk of his life he ran into the burning store, and carried the books out. How the fire started remained a mystery, although a young

man who had been in the basement that morning disconnecting the gas meter, might have dropped a match or lighted cigar. The Waltons were preparing to move from their location at 109 High avenue west to their new location at 105, two doors east. In the picture may be seen the sign announcing the change. In the center foreground may also be recognized W. J. Gochee, who was then chief of police. The picture was taken by Kelly and has been preserved by Mr. Gochee. The fire occurred on August 14, 1912, and the clothing stock was practically ruined. The Waltons, R. D., Harry and Sam, opened a new store in the changed location, and operated it a number of years thereafter.



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1944

AFTER ONE OF OSKALOOSA'S MOST DESTRUCTIVE FIRES



In this picture you are standing in the 100 block on the south side of First avenue west looking north. The building in the right foreground is what was left of the Eagles building which was immediately rebuilt. The vacant space 60x120 is where the Bashaw Barn stood, now the site of the Iowa Power & Light Company's offices. In the background are the remains of the Beadle Building, facing north. It sheltered the K. of P. Lodge on the third floor, offices on the second floor and three business rooms on the ground floor. The picture has been preserved by Elmer Patterson who was a member of the fire department at the time. The fire occurred on a bitter cold night,—the 15th of December, 1916. Half of the Bashaw building was of wood construction, and the second story was filled with loose hay. When the flames got into it the fire spread with alarming rapidity. The Ottumwa fire department was called for and came to the rescue. After a hard fight the flames were held in check, and our people heaved a sigh of relief.

WIRING IS BLAMED FOR FATAL FIRE

Deputy Fire Marshall V. E. Lubberden, called here today to investigate the fire which took the lives of a young mother and three children on the old Burlington road three miles east of Oskaloosa early Thursday morning, expressed the opinion that defective wiring may have caused the fire.

Sheriff Dwight Mateer and the fire official, after a thorough investigation, ruled out foul play and favored wiring defects as the blaze origin. Sparks or defective flu were ruled out as a cause after investigation. The officials conferred with E. L. Gilchrist, owner of the house in which Fireman, first class, Lee Sanders and his wife and three children had made their home for the past month.

Wiring 30 Years Old.

They learned that wiring on the 30 year old structure had not been replaced or reconditioned to take care of increased power of recent years. Gilchrist said the house, just a quarter of a mile from his own home, had been occupied but little

in recent years and had served mostly as a tenant home.

Overheated Pump?

Although there were no witnesses to the fire and ruins left little on which to work, Lubberden said that a basement motor used to pump water from a well into a pressure tank for household use may have become overheated, causing the fire. Mr. Gilchrist also told the officials that wiring insulators in the basement had been attached to wooden sills.

Burned to death in the fire were Mrs. Laura Eggleston Sanders and three small children, Guy, Laura Lee and Bethene, while the sailor husband was on duty at the Ottumwa U. S. Naval Air Station. The

bodies were cremated at Des Moines and shipped to San Gabriel, Calif. by air express while Sanders left for the west coast by train to handle the burial Thursday night.

Mother Holding Baby.

The burned body of 14 months old Bethene was found in the arms of the mother and indications were other children had gotten out of bed as the mother attempted unsuccessfully to get them to safety.

1954

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WORST FIRE IN HISTORY HITS CITY

By Dave McMillen, Managing Editor,
and John D. Mattix, Staff Writer

The worst fire loss in the city's history devastated nearly a quarter block of downtown Oskaloosa Thursday night, destroying four businesses, heavily damaging a fifth and leaving other businesses in the 100 block of High avenue west with smoke damage.

The disastrous blaze completely gutted the Western Auto Associate Store on the ground floor at 121 High avenue west, also completely destroying the Kelly Studio located in second floor quarters and William Penn College fraternity Delta Beta Phi clubrooms located in the basement of the structure.

Working its way east, the blaze also destroyed the Sherwin-Williams Co. paint store and Benz's

Central Book Store and caused heavy water and smoke damage to the recently remodeled Adams & Jones Hardware before firemen from 14 communities were able to bring it under control about 3 a.m. Friday morning.

The first alarm was turned in at 5:56 p.m. by Dale Tucker, who operates Tucker Texaco Service on A avenue west, when he noticed smoke coming from the rear of the Western Auto store as he was pumping gas.

A second alarm was triggered by Donald Glasford, a seventh grader at Oskaloosa Junior High School, who noticed smoke in a front window of the store.

The youth raced to Dean's Cigar & News store where co-owner Ronald Krusemark also notified the Oskaloosa Fire Department.

Krusemark, Delbert Brackney of 1117 Gurney street and several unidentified William Penn College students were attempting to move a car parked in front of the Western Auto Store when a plate glass window in the store exploded outward, narrowly missing them with a shower of glass shortly after Oskaloosa firemen arrived on the scene.

Firemen Jerry Ver Steegh, who also witnessed the explosion of the plate glass window, said a "great big puff of black smoke" erupted from the store front when the window blew out.

Reynold Watts, who purchased the Western Auto store three years ago, told the Herald he and an employee, Jerry Slobe, had left the store about 5:45 p.m.

Watts said when he arrived at his home, 1406

south Second street, his daughter ran from the house to tell him the store was on fire. He returned immediately to the store, he continued, to find it billowing huge columns of smoke.

By 7 p.m., crowds totaling several thousand had gathered in the surrounding streets as the blaze gained momentum. A short time later, flames broke through the west wall and police and auxiliary officers began moving the crowds back for fear walls would begin collapsing.

Authorities also feared a large shipment of ammunition which arrived just this week at the Western Auto store might explode.

By 7:40, the building was engulfed in flames, visible for miles around as they licked skyward. Dense smoke which blanketed the downtown area and lack of an aerial ladder hampered the efforts of firemen to contain the fire in the three-story building.

A call was put in to Albia for that city's aerial unit, but it developed mechanical troubles en route and was forced to turn back.

Centerville responded to the emergency with its aerial unit, but by the time it arrived about 8:30 p.m., the fire had already spread to the adjacent Sherwin-Williams store, owned by Tom Haigh. With the Centerville unit and an aerial bucket owned by Stevenson Landscaping of Knoxville on the scene, firemen succeeded in slowing the blazes' advance as darkness fell.

Around 9 p.m., Oskaloosa Fire Chief Willard Ellis said he felt the blaze could be contained in the Sherwin-Williams building.

However, a combination of stiff winds, estimated at between 10 and 15 miles per hour, and the lack of a solid fire wall between the Sherwin-Williams building and the adjoining book store caused the conflagration to break out anew in the

second floor storage area above the book store about 11 p.m.

By midnight, the second floor above the book store,

(More Pictures Page Five)

Estimates top previous fire losses

In terms of preliminary dollar estimates, the fire that raged through three buildings in the 100 block of High avenue west Thursday night and early Friday is by far the worst in Oskaloosa's history.

In recent years, the city's most costly fire dollar-wise was the Lacey Hotel blaze, March 3, 1962, that also destroyed quarters occupied by Dr. George R. Anton, Sven Barber and Beauty Shop and the Railway Express Co.

THAT location was rebuilt by the present Fareway Store. Estimates on the 1962 fire pegged losses as high as \$250,000.

Early guesses on the loss from the fire that erupted in the Western Auto Store around 5:45 p.m. Thursday, range in the neighborhood of \$400,000, and indications are that it could go higher. The blaze that gutted the

Gambles store on High avenue west two years ago caused damage in excess of \$100,000. "There have been other costly blazes over the years, such as the 1948 fire that destroyed the Ideal Lumber Co., forerunner of the present Mathew Lumber Co., but because of inflation none have carried the dollar loss as associated with this latest holocaust.

Although the fire was brought under control by 3 a.m., Adams & Jones Hardware adjacent to the book store had already suffered severe smoke and water damage. Den Adel Insurance, the last business before reaching the alley in the middle of the block, also received some damage.

All that remained of the Western Auto building, owned by the Kalbach Realty Company, Friday morning was the outside walls. The area was roped off as crews prepared to knock down the walls to prevent them from collapsing into the streets.

THE Kelly Studio was the only business above ground level in the quarter block of buildings. The remaining two floors of the three-story block were used for storage or were vacant.

The building housing the Benz Central Book Store also is owned by Kalbach Realty. FIRE ... (Continued on Page Seven)



A grim scene

HERALD PHOTOGRAPHER JOHN DE GROOT captured this scene early Thursday evening from atop the Rivala building shortly after flames engulfed the Western Auto store on the northeast corner of High avenue west and

north A street in downtown Oskaloosa. Also destroyed were Kelly Studio above Western Auto and the adjoining Sherwin-Williams and Benz Central Book Store. Total fire loss has been estimated at \$400,000 — worst in the city's history.

Floods follow thunderstorms

By United Press International
Portions of Iowa had flood waters Thursday following three nights of thunderstorms and high winds.

Rainfall of between two to three inches was reported over a wide area from Atlantic to east of Marshalltown early Thursday.

The heaviest fall reported was 3.79 inches three miles south-east of Marshalltown. Small streams throughout the area were over their banks. Larger rivers were rising with some areas above flood stage by noon Thursday.

At Marshalltown the Iowa River was 18 inches above flood stage, and the Skunk River was above flood stage at Oskaloosa by six inches.

On the Des Moines River, Four Mile Creek was out of its banks the Raccoon River was flooding in the Redfield area, and just south of Des Moines the North River was 30 inches over its banks.

DES MOINES (UPI) — Four persons—including a 15-year-old boy and a woman—have been charged with possession of explosive devices in connection with the recent theft of dynamite and blasting caps from a Des Moines firm, and all are being questioned in the pre-dawn bombing of the city police station.

Four questioned in DM bombing

DES MOINES (UPI) — Four persons—including a 15-year-old boy and a woman—have been charged with possession of explosive devices in connection with the recent theft of dynamite and blasting caps from a Des Moines firm, and all are being questioned in the pre-dawn bombing of the city police station.

'An almost impossible job'

By JOHN D. MATTIX
Staff Writer

"It was an almost impossible job to stop this fire," Oskaloosa Fire Chief Willard Ellis said at 4:45 a.m. Friday, as he stood viewing the gutted, smoldering wreckage of buildings involved in one of the worst Oskaloosa

disasters of all time. At this point, it was ten and a half hours since the alarm at the fire station here sounded, summoning firemen to the rear of the Western Auto Store at 121 High avenue west.

FLAMES were almost immediately out of control and resulted in the complete destruction of the Western Auto building and two other businesses plus extremely heavy smoke and water damage to a fourth firm in the quarter block area.

"In the last few years," the fire chief said, "many people told me if this area ever started burning we'd lose the whole quarter block."

"But we didn't. We stopped it. We lost a lot, but we didn't lose it all."

Credit for stopping the holocaust, the chief said, was due to the "fantastic response we got from many firemen. Some of them came from 50 miles away."

An aerial ladder provided by the Centerville Fire Department and a boom truck, which both arrived about 8:30 p.m. Thursday, in response to urgent requests from local firemen, drew the greatest praise from the chief along with the efforts of nearly 120 men from 14 towns.

"The determining factors were those two pieces of aerial equipment that poured water down on top of the fire," Ellis said.

As the flames were brought under control sometime shortly after 3 a.m., Friday, the fire-

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Concern

THE FACES of Oskaloosa Fire Chief Willard Ellis (right) and Capt. Joe Townley mirror their concern during the early stages of the worst fire in the city's history.

Approximately 120 firemen from 14 communities including Oskaloosa battled the disastrous blaze. (Herald Photo)



Engulfed in flames

FLAMES AND DENSE SMOKE filled the air about 7:30 Thursday evening as the Western Auto store was completely engulfed despite the courageous efforts of Oskaloosa firemen and units from surrounding communities. Not until two aerial units came into play later was the roaring inferno slowed, and then not before the Sherwin-Williams and Benz Central Book Store were destroyed.



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1988

Downtown fire takes life of Oskaloosa man

By MARY PALMER
Herald Staff Writer

One person is dead as result of a fire Sunday morning in two buildings on the north side of Oskaloosa's historic city square. State Medical Examiner Dr. Tom Bennett, who performed an autopsy Sunday afternoon says the victim was David Wayne Yarbrough, 24.

Firemen and a boom truck were at the scene all Sunday night and the east half of the 100 block of High Ave. East was still barricaded Monday morning, because of fears the west and south walls of the building might collapse. A persistent hot spot under the Flower Village roof still required water.

The State Fire Marshall's office has been called in to investigate cause of the blaze. Mike Hyles from Mt. Pleasant was expected to arrive Monday morning.

Police received a call at 5:59 a.m. Sunday from Kerry Sammons, occupant of a third floor apartment above Voorhees Studio of Photography. Sammons escaped with some clothing but no shoes or coat. He lost two cats in the fire.

Fire Chief Dave Miller said flames were coming from the rear windows of the second floor of Brown's Shoe Fit building when firemen arrived at the scene. He believed that the fire started in that apartment, occupied by Tom Smith, but would not make that official. The body was found in that apartment and removed about 1 p.m.

A brisk northwest wind with

gusts up to 30 miles per hour fanned the flames and sent smoke over the Courthouse, billowing so high it was seen as far as Fremont, 12 miles away. The wind chill factor was six degrees Fahrenheit. Miller said the wind and ice on equipment and clothing made fighting the blaze more difficult.

John Sybenga, owner of the Brown and Voorhees building, said five apartments were in the building. His manager, Mariys Klein, said she had rented apartments to Dorothy Williams, Avery Meyers, Sammons, Gary Russell and Tom Smith. "We don't know who the victim was or how he got there," Sybenga said. "We rented to Tom Smith."

Williams was located at the home of her mother. Meyers was aided to escape with just "important papers" and was provided housing by the Red Cross. Gary Russell and Tom Smith have made contact with authorities and are safe.

Early in the fire, as windows were broken and oxygen entered the burning structures, a flash explosion sent glass flying across the street into the park and blew bricks out of the rear third-story wall, just missing some firefighters.

At the height of the fire, firemen were fighting the blaze from several angles. One hose was aimed at the left front top window or the west side wall of Flower Village, and another was aimed at the east top window of the Voorhees building. Firemen were on the roof of

Ole Town Square pouring water down, and more firemen were on the roof of the first floor portions at the rear of the burning buildings, and others were riding the boom truck as it moved from place to place in the street or the alleys.

Miller considered that the fire was under control about 11 a.m., after three other departments — New Sharon, Cedar Township and Pella — had brought men and equipment to the scene. By that time, a small part of the wall on the west side of Flower Village had fallen out, and the roofs of the former Sunstrum building and the Sybenga building had collapsed to the floor of the third story. Miller said there was fire damage on the second floors, also, with smoke and water damage on the ground levels. The office immediately to the west across the alley had minor smoke damage.

The Sunstrum building was rented by Bill Sunstrum's grandfather in 1914 and purchased by the family from Maxwell O'Brien and Viola Stevenson in the 1940's, Sunstrum said. He was selling the building on contract. He had no estimate of damage.

Tom and Debbie Schmidt, owners of Flower Village and the Gift Box, housed in that building, said all their records were in the building, and they had "partial" insurance. The third floor was vacant and merchandise was stored on the second floor. He had not been able to enter the building, and had no idea what his future plans might be.



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Brown's Shoe Fit Manager Jim Zimmerman said they had been able to remove records but nothing else. He also had no idea what plans would be. He planned

to begin inventory and clean-up as soon as they are allowed into the building.

Dean Voorhees was able to salvage one camera and negatives, and most of his Saturday work. He said almost everything was covered with water. He said they probably will have to move to another building, but won't be sure until he is able to get into the store.

Joanne Estal said their damage was "minor", and they hope to have Ole Town Square open in two or three days. There was some smoke on all floors and a "minimal" amount of water in the lower level. She paid tribute to the firefighters for a "tremendous job," saying that two scorch marks on their west wall showed how close they came to losing their building.

"I'm still in a state of shock," Sybenga said. He had no estimate of damage Sunday night.

During the morning and much of the afternoon, traffic in the down town area was blocked off, including highway 137. Iowa Power and Light crews were called at 6:25 a.m. to disconnect the power and stood by to assist. Firemen shut off the gas supply to the buildings.

This is the first major fire on the Square since 1933 or '34, according to Irma Glatly, local historian. At that time, Blakeslee Drug Store, located on the west side of the square where Holton's and the Carousel were most recently, was destroyed.



7 Nov 1988

Herald photos by Mary Palmer

Firefighters battle blaze Sunday morning. See pages 10 and 11 for more photos.



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2006

'A total loss'

Oskey church 'a total loss,' but is looking toward 'a new beginning'

By JARED McNEILL
The Oskaloosa Herald

OSKALOOSA — A fire, originating in the basement of the Oskaloosa First Church of the Nazarene, claimed the church building Saturday night as firefighters battled the blaze early into the morning.

"It looks to be a total loss," said Oskaloosa Fire Chief Frank Glandon at an impromptu press conference Saturday night.

According to Glandon, the Oskaloosa Fire Department was called out at 7:01 p.m. to The Oskaloosa First Church of the Nazarene, 300 S. 11th St. Four more fire departments had been called to the scene: New Sharon, Fremont, Eddyville and Ottumwa. A number of other agencies were helping out as well.

The fire originated in the basement in the area of the furnace room then worked its way up to the area of the sanctuary.

He said that a person was at the church readying it for a prayer meeting when smoke was discovered.

He said that no one was in the building at the time of the fire, so there was no fear of injuries in that regard.

Also, at the time of the press conference, no injuries were reported from the personnel.

The health of the firefighters was at the forefront of the

church's mind, according to the Oskaloosa Nazarene Church Board Secretary Joe Milledge.

"Our immediate concern is the safety of the firefighters, obviously, and we want to stay out of their way so that they can do their work," he said. "Secondarily, our concern is also for our congregation and that they have a place to meet and worship and we also have a concern for the safety of the premises after the fire is put out because this will be a hazardous area."

Milledge said that the church's campus was more than just one building. Five other buildings encompass the block.

Though when asked whether church would be held in another building, he said that arrangements had been made at an 8:30 p.m. church board meeting that Sunday's church service would be held at George Daily Auditorium.

A pastor from Fellowship Bible Church, who had a child in the Missoula Children's Theatre performance at George Daily Auditorium Saturday night, got word of what had transpired and asked Wright if it would be OK if the Nazarene church could use the auditorium's facilities for worship.

He agreed. Phone calls were made and it happened.

Wright said that this is just how things are in Oskaloosa

"with people collaborating together and sharing their resources freely and that's why the community's able to do the things it does."

But this isn't the only thing on the church's mind. The church has had an interim pastor and has been looking for a new minister.

Pastor Dave Childers has been happy to fill that role for four and a half months, and addressed his feelings concerning the fire Saturday night.

"Our people have a tremendous sense of loss, but it re-emphasizes again that the church is not a building," Childers said. "The church is God's love for hearts of people."

According to Childers, the congregation just got done celebrating their 90th anniversary, but remained steadfast when he said, "We're marching toward a 100 and believe the greatest days for this church are still in the future."

He, along with Milledge expressed their gratitude to



Herald photos by Jared McNeill



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Church fire

those helping in the battle to next day at Oskaloosa's George Daily Auditorium.

The next morning at 'church'
That future started the next day at Oskaloosa's George Daily Auditorium.

People packed the makeshift church as they prepared for worship Sunday.

The service started with Pastor Childers speaking.

"The church building is a total loss," he said, but emphasized that they weren't here just to talk about that, they were there for worship.

That the church did. Songs flooded the auditorium as people sang:

"Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary

Pure and holy, tried and true

With thanksgiving, I'll be a living

Sanctuary for you."

Not long after more songs and prayer, Milledge got up to say a few words.

He led off with speaking about driving past the church's remains that morning

and seeing the church sign, still intact, as it said, "Count your blessings, not your problems."

With that, he spoke to the kids reassuring them that

everything was going to be all right.

He then let the church know about a number they could call, a local number, (641) 969-7999, for information concerning their church, since the communication system was down.

He also let them know about a service to be held at the Christian Life Center, another of the buildings on the church's campus, to be held at 6 p.m. Sunday night.

Concerning the actual remains of the building, he said that the state fire marshal has taken possession of it.

He also let the church know that the board had decided Thursday to nominate Childers to be their next pastor.

Auditorium-wide applause followed.

A vote for this will take place next Sunday.

Soon after, Childers got up to deliver his sermon concerning fire.

Not just physical fire, though that was indeed touched on, but the fire inside of a Christian. He warned that Christians need to keep the fire burning inside.

He told the story of the

burning bush and Moses and how God got Moses' attention.

He told of the fire on the tongues of the apostles found in the book of Acts, chapter two.

In keeping with his illustration, he hearkened back to the night before as he watched the church's steeple succumb to the flames and fall into the sanctuary.

He was reminded of the reasoning behind the structure of the steeple. A dove, which in Christianity represents the Holy Spirit, was placed at the top.

He said that the steeple falling was an example of the Spirit of God not afraid of going into the fire and making something out of the situation.

As he got near to the end of his sermon he said, "I don't know what the next step is going to be, I just know He's going to be faithful, to me and to you," he said.

Lisa Munn, a New Sharon City Council member, who's been attending the church for 25 years, seemed to agree with the pastor and said that she thinks that the church will rebuild and good will come of it.

Gary Staggs, who has been attending the church since 1979, echoes the same thoughts. He says the church was full of many memories for him including his marriage "but in the same way, it's the start of a new beginning."

12:30 p.m. press conference

Though the church was looking for a new start, the old business of the still-smoking rubble had to be attended to.

A press conference was held at the Oskaloosa Fire Department on Sunday at 12:30 p.m. where a press release was issued.

The release mentioned that 40 firefighters from five departments helped in fighting the fire: Oskaloosa, New

Sharon, Eddyville, Fremont and Ottumwa.

The release also thanked all who were involved in helping out in the process of helping with the fire fight including: the Oskaloosa Police Department, the Mahaska County Sheriff's Office, the Mahaska County Sheriff's Posse, Mahaska County Emergency Management, the Oskaloosa Water Department, the Oskaloosa Street Department, the Mahaska County Chapter of the Red Cross, the Firefighter's Auxiliary Support Team and Musco Mobile Lighting.

"No cause for the fire has been determined and the incident is under investigation," read Glandon. "The Iowa State Fire Marshal's office has been contacted to assist in the investigation."

He continued, "There is no suspicion of arson, but the fire marshal's office will provide expertise in the investigation. The church building was a total loss estimated in the millions."

When asked when such an investigation were to take place, Glandon said, "The investigator for this area has another fire that he is on right now investigating, but I hope to see him in either tomorrow (Monday) or the next day."

According to the press release, firefighters were at the scene until 5 a.m., Sunday morning.

Also, there was a report of a firefighter having to go to Mahaska Health Partnership for a puncture wound in the hand, but that firefighter has since been treated and released.

The press release concluded by saying that law enforcement will stay on the scene for the purpose of security in guarding the remains.

At the CLC, Sunday night

In the shadow of the remnants of the once-proud church building, people poured into the Christian

Life Center, or CLC, for fellowship and to get ready for the service to be held at 6 p.m. Sunday night.

When the service started, Childers got up to inform those in attendance that for the next two weeks, Jan. 29 and Feb. 5, the church is going to meet at George Daily at 10 a.m., though anything past that is still up in the air.

Not long after some singing, the district superintendent for the Nazarene Churches in Iowa, the Rev. Garey Miller, got up to speak.

His message, at least in part, had to do with "the Lord's timing."

He indicated that Childers seemed to be the right man for the job.

After all, Childers came from building stock (his father built houses, among other things), and Childers, himself, saw through a church in Pella as it was built.

Miller did add that much praying still had to be done



Herald photo by Jared McNeill

Interim Pastor David Childers delivers a message of fire to the church-goers at George Daily Auditorium Sunday morning. The church will be using these facilities for the next two weeks.

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to "Hell on Earth" as

any man could do.

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of the job he did for

people he never knew.

He puts his life on the

line every time duty

calls, always doing

what needs to be done.

Without even a pause.

— because he is a

Fireman.



Herald photo by Jared McNeill

Pastor David Childers wanted the people to pray at the Sunday night service at the Osk Nazarene's Christian Life Center. That they did.



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DOWNTOWN OSKALOOSA

One injured in blaze

Fire chief: 'The fire at this point is suspicious'

BY DUANE NOLLEN
The Oskaloosa Herald

OSKALOOSA — A person was injured in an early morning fire Monday in downtown Oskaloosa.

The Oskaloosa Fire Department received a call at 2:15 a.m. that there was a fire in the 200 block of First Avenue East.

"The main fire started in the back of Evolutions," Oskaloosa Fire Chief Mark Neff said.

There was one injury, but there were no firefighter injuries, Neff said.

"The fire at this point is suspicious," Neff said.

"The State Fire Marshal office was contacted to assist with



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the investigation which is still ongoing. The cause of the fire is suspicious and any criminal investigation will be handled by the Oskaloosa Police Department," according to a press release from the Oskaloosa Fire Department.

Oskaloosa Police Chief John "Jake" McGee said that an individual ran up to police officers at the police department and indicated there was a fire. That person was burned.

Neff said the injured person was a suspect.

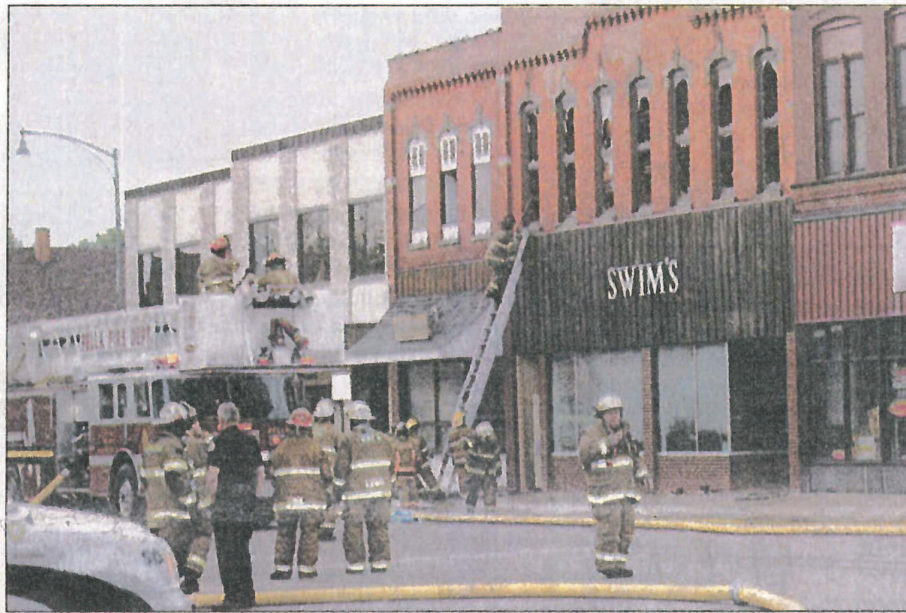
The Oskaloosa Fire Department received mutual aid assistance from five area fire departments — Pella, Eddyville, Montezuma, New Sharon and Cedar Township, Neff said.

In total, 49 firefighters from the departments battled the blaze for six hours, according to the press release from the Oskaloosa Fire Department.

Neff said that the Pella Fire Department's assistance with its aerial fire truck was greatly appreciated.

"I don't think there is fire damage to Swim's or True Value," Neff said.

However, those businesses,



Herald photo by Duane Nollen

Above, firefighters battled a fire early Monday morning in downtown Oskaloosa. **Left,** firefighters inspect the fire-damaged building as they wrap up their efforts Monday around 7 a.m.

Hospice of Mahaska County and the MidWestOne drive-up bank sustained smoke and water damage, he added.

Due to heavy smoke and water damage, Swim Sports, located below the fire floor, has cause this business to be closed until further notice. However, the drive-up bank was able to open for business, according to the

press release from the Oskaloosa Fire Department.

Oskaloosa City Manager Michael Schrock Jr. observed the efforts to extinguish the blaze.

"I'm pretty happy with the response," Schrock said. He appreciated all of the responding agencies' efforts — especially the Pella Fire Department and its aerial ladder truck.

"They did a great job — they had it contained to a couple of buildings," he said.

Firefighters stopped hosing down the building at 6:57 a.m., but Neff indicated firefighters would still be on the scene for a couple more hours.

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Thomas Mason	P Jones	Jakob Turner	Earl Allender	Rick Walraven
JL Kenworthy	Ott McCorol	C Hartman	Herbert Gillet	Captain Danny R. Fetters
John McKey	James Gibbons	D Vanderlinden	Chief William Pyle	James Willoughby
James Capp	Jo Gibbons	M Scully	Fred Barnhill	Charles Lockard
Buck Capp	J Lyons	Frank Bronson	Captain John Chitwood	Rick Kelderman
GW Watkins	T Herr	Will Davis	Captain Harry Griffis	Colen Frush
Thomas Mcgee	W Maness	C Rose	Chief Marion Whitmore	Shannon Pugh
JC Stewart	T Vanderlinden	Sam Shafer	Roy Kime	Richard Biddle
John Martin	Charley Leon	August Link	Leo Kirk	Dennis Shepherd
WL Neagle	Steve Stewart	Andy Wymore	Earl Allender	Micheal L. McCall
GH Price	Richard Cricket	Abe Homes	John Muhivihill	Kevin L. Vande Wall
JB Stewart	Frank Long	G Siberth	Clifford Hartness	Micheal L. Brewer
Thomas Marew	Doug White	George Yardan	Kenneth Whitehead	Ernest M. Brees
Jim Ball	Miller Brickhart	Harvy Carr	Paul Donnelly	Ronald D. Padgett
Melvin George	Nelson Cook	Y Carr	Captain Robert Schultz	Micheal W. Pritchard
L Bush	W Chin	Will Yashee	Captain Joe Townsley	Captain Tim Nance
SB Leemass	Perry Byrd	Grant Daniels	Chief Willard Ellis	Robert J. Miller
W Castor	George Carr	H Daniels	Joe Beal	Captain Chris W. Milburn
ED Siiman	Chaz Carr	L Palmer	Donald Beach	Craig E. Brown
Phil Hirline	BT Dutton	G Gordan	Paul Robbins	Mark Hall
George Burton	Sam Hendryx	AW Mitvhel	Robert Horn	Scott Howard
JH Brown	Jud Lyon	Sherman Taylor	Ronald Oetjen	Captain David Christenson
JH Mendwall	LH McCall	C hief WJGochee	John Gasper	Rocky Stevens
Buck Ball	Alt McCord	Irv H. McCracken	Captain John Plate	Christopher Widmor
HB Waters	John Martin	Frank Bridges	Pat Burke	Russell Farnsworth
GL Cook	Henry Myers	Homer Little	Melvin Sanders	Michael Davidson
Lem Mason	WM Richie	George Gordan	Harry Kennedy	Daniel Rozendaal
W Ballinger	George Sandrager	Ralh Palmer	Richard McCulley	Rodney Minter
G Sondrager	Mike Schully	Ed Simmons	Larry Fleener	Thomas Whitehead
Fred Leomis	Robert Coose	Henry Sandrager	Donald Russell	Christine Wright
WL Martinstein	Robert Seaser	Nelson Cook	Jerry Ver Steeg	Carl Cook
E Simmons	John Townsman	Captain Elmer Patterson	Charles Lowry	Captain Tim Besco
Rifenberry	Frank Bronson	Walter Radcliff	Captain Dean W. Bone	Steven Gursky
W Dryburgh	West Spencer	Fred Daniels	Kenneth Guthrie	John Lynch
W Harvey	Gus Link	Fred Sandreger	Jack Tucker	Chief Mark Neff
Henry Sandrager	CH McClean	C Young	Marvin R. Strasser	Burdette Brown
George Edwards	Isaac Bush	Hsatchett	Chief Francis R. Glandon	Craig Ver Hul
Will Mitchell	Al Mickelback	Johnston	Chief David P. Miller	Mark Tennison
T Ballinger	John Bradberry	Frank Bush	James Welsh	James R.H. Gillespie
Dave Baxter	CS Phillips	Elmer Munsel	Steve F. Westra	Shane Glandon
R Holtman	Van Hall	James Donnelly	Larry R. Davis	Adam Haroldson
C Rikett	Will Martinshine	Stanley	Theodore Stair	Captain Daniel Hoy
Levi Cook	Frank Card	C Carroll	Dale B. Johnson	Thomas Warndahl
JW Laffallett	Harry Broswell	Marrion Whitmore	Lee Grandia	Eric Martin
John Bird	Allen Pyle	Otar Herbig	Charles Fred Helmick	Josh Johnson
Chas Northap	Smith Celender	Leo Dowd	Mark Schenk	Isaac Allmaras
BT Dunten	Grant Brown	Leo Kirk	Gene L. Castor	
L McCall	Sam Jones	C Richmond	Pat McCormick	
F Barnhart	Will Richie	Herbert Koger	David G. Green	
T Coby	Ralph Watkins	Frank Spats	Raymond Wipple	
W Drybird	Burt Wells			

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