

WITNESSES GIVE VERSIONS OF HOTEL FIRE

The coroner's jury investigating the Houston hotel fire, this afternoon returned a verdict that the victims came to their death by burning; and that there was no evidence that the fire was of criminal origin. The number of victims was fixed, but P. L. Fountain, foreman, said that only nine remains were recognizable as human bodies. He said there might have been more victims but it could not be proved by the remains viewed by the jury.

Justice of the Peace G. W. Offield, of Merrill, conducted the examination of witnesses in the city hall yesterday afternoon, more than three hours being consumed in taking testimony, the monotony of which was frequently relieved by the narrative of personal experiences by those who were among those who escaped from the hell of fire and flames which seemed to cut off their exit from almost every quarter. Some pardonable humor, and some spleen too, were injected into the proceedings but, summing it up, there were no developments which can be instrumental in tracing the origin of the fire or in placing the culpability upon anyone.

P. L. Fountain, foreman; B. S. Grigsby, K. Sugarman, Marion Hanks, John Britt and Fred Noel made up the jury, each of them aiding in the investigation with straight-to-the-point questions.

John Uhring, an employee of the street department, was the first witness called. Mr. Uhring's testimony was not vital except as an aid in determining the time the fire might have broken out, and in regard to his efforts to send in the alarm to the fire department. He told about seeing the fire, driving his truck to a place where it would not block the path of the fire engine, and then about his hurried efforts to arouse the night clerk of the Hotel Hall and cause the alarm to be turned in. When he learned that it was impossible to raise the fire department at once, he ran toward the fire station to give the alarm in person. Fire Chief Ambrose was already on his way to the fire before Mr. Uhring reached the station. He reached the Hotel Hall, he said, about 3:30.

Bert Hall, proprietor of the Hotel Hall, was the next witness. His testimony was brief. He said that Mr. Uhring came to the hotel about 3:30, and then told what he knew about the experience of the night clerk, Carl Coleman, when the latter tried to send in the alarm through the telephone office.

Operator Responded at Once
Mrs. Edna Ackley, who resides not

MICKIE SAYS

"YA NEEDNT COME IN HERE WITH AN KNOCES ON ANYBODY, 'CAUSE WE WANT PRINT 'EM! IF YA AINT GOT THE NERVE T' DANCE TH' GUY OUT 'T' HIS FACE, WHYN'T YA CALL HIM UP OVER TH' PHONE? HOW DYA GIT THAT WAY, 'N' POOR PRIMS!"



FORECAST SHOWS CROPS BELOW NORMAL

WASHINGTON, Sept. 9.—Forecasts of the country's production of principal grain crops, estimated from conditions of September 1, are announced by the department of agriculture as follows:
Spring wheat 237,000,000 bushels or 64.1 per cent normal.
Fall wheat 77,000,000 bushels, or 74.1 per cent normal.
Corn 3,131,000,000, or 86.4 per cent normal.

far from the burned section, testified briefly that she saw the fire blazing from the Second street side of the hotel about 3:30, and that she telephoned the alarm at once, the operator at central responding immediately.

Bert Cook was asleep in the hotel when the fire started, and was awakened by someone who shouted "Hey there!" through a back window. He stated that Mrs. Cook tried to get into a front to telephone an alarm, but was forced back by the seething flames which almost overcame her as she opened one of the inside doors.

Mrs. Goldie Houston, connected with the hotel management, testified that there were forty rooms in the hotel, and that they were all occupied on the night of the fire. Besides these rooms, she stated, there were seven apartments. These were all occupied. Four cots, said Mrs. Houston, were placed in a front room in order to accommodate guests who could not secure rooms.

Mrs. Houston's testimony disclosed the fact that they employed no regular night clerk, and that there was no clerk in charge that night. The register, she said, was not recovered, thus disposing of a current rumor that one of the guests had time enough and sufficient presence of mind to rescue it before he left the blazing building. No trouble had been experienced with the electric wiring in the hotel, although occasionally a fuse would burn out, necessitating replacement.

Night Patrolman M. L. Barnett was the next witness. As near as he can determine he first saw the fire at 3:17, after he had gone to his room near the postoffice, having been given permission to retire earlier than usual, provided the town was quiet, so that he could be present at the Labor Day observances which were scheduled to begin about ten o'clock that morning. When Mr. Barnett first saw the fire, it had not yet burned its way through the top of the building. The fire at that time could be seen about one-third of the distance from the corner of the building up Second street hill.

Mr. Barnett also told about seeing a tall man carrying a bundle, who walked toward the hotel not long before the fire was discovered. This man was also seen by Mr. Uhring, but there was nothing in his actions to indicate that he might have been intent upon incendiarism.

After discovering the fire, Mr. Barnett, according to his testimony, hurried to the hotel, dispatched a younger and more agile man to turn in the alarm, and then did his best to arouse the inmates of the hotel. He also assisted several persons who had jumped from windows and had fallen, injured, to the street. Chief Ambrose arrived about eighteen minutes after Mr. Barnett discovered the fire or, to be exact, at 25 minutes to four. The alarm was turned in at that time, so it became evident through this testimony, that there was not a minute lost in reaching the fire.

Mr. Barnett said that he saw no joyriders in front of the hotel, as rumored, at any time, and neither did he hear any. The fire, he said, evidently had not gained much headway when he went to his room, because if it had he would have seen it.

K. F. Miller, proprietor of the Lakeside rooming house, also saw the fire in its earliest stages. While his wife called central to give the alarm, he went out to see what he could do to help the firefighters. A half-dressed man, he said, was racing madly toward him. He stopped the fleeing man and took him into the rooming house. The fire, he testified, was bursting through the back center of the building.

Grant Bilderback, of Ashland, who lost his wife and daughter in the fire, succeeded Mr. Miller on the stand. Mr. Bilderback, with his two

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FIRE HAD LONG START IF THESE TALES ARE RIGHT

If Patrolman Barnett discovered the Houston hotel fire at 3:17 o'clock, why was the alarm not turned in until 3:30? This is a question that is being asked following testimony given at the official investigation yesterday.

According to Officer Barnett's testimony he was on Main street in front of the postoffice building, within approximately 100 feet of the east end of the Houston hotel at about 3 o'clock a. m., and wide awake. At 3:17 a. m., still wide awake but in his room and not more than 100 feet from the hotel, he heard screams and descended the stairway to the street and saw the hotel was afire.

According to John Uhring and corroborating witnesses it was 3:30 a. m. when the night clerk at the Hotel Hall called central. Uhring was at Main and Fourth when he saw a man approaching from the direction of the Houston hotel. The man informed him that the Houston hotel was afire. Uhring gave his team in charge of the man and went across the street to the Hall hotel and had the night clerk call central and give the alarm, fixing the time at 3:30.

Officer Barnett says the hotel was on fire at 3:17, therefore the time consumed by the man who notified Uhring in coming from Second to Fourth on Main, and by Uhring and the Hotel Hall clerk in calling central, was 13 minutes. Uhring did not testify whether the man approached him on the run, or walked or crawled.

If Barnett discovered the fire at 3:17, the other man must have seen it as early or earlier. Then where did the 13-minute delay in getting the alarm to the fireman enter?

Mr. Barnett said he did not turn in an alarm but sent another man to attend to that. He did not go into the burning hotel because he feared to create a draft by opening a door and do more harm than good. Also he said he was too old, past 60, to move actively in a burning building. He yelled from the street at the top of his voice, he said, in an endeavor to wake the inmates.

Patrolman Barnett is supposed to remain on duty until 6 o'clock in the morning, but he says Chief Wilson gave him permission to go to bed at 3 o'clock, Monday morning so he might enjoy the Labor day celebration next day.

Inquiry has also been made regarding the whereabouts of C. C. Low, special nightwatchman retained by business men of the city, through collective subscription, to protect the business district. Mr. Low was eating at the Jewel cafe when the alarm was sounded, according to credible reports, having stopped on his rounds for lunch.

STOCKMEN'S MEETING HAD GOOD RESULTS

The executive committee of the State Cattle & Horse Raisers' association convened in open meeting Tuesday evening at the courthouse. The meeting was well attended by representative stockmen throughout the county, and resulted in uniting the local Cattle & Horse association with the state organization.

H. A. Brattain, of Paisley, Oregon, second vice president of the state organization, presided at the meeting, and gave a very interesting talk on the work of the organization. S. O. Correll, secretary of the state organization, outlined the policy of the state association and explained the various activities upon which they were engaged, seeking remedial legislation in the state legislature, looking to the improvement and development range conditions and the increase of purebred livestock on the open range. A short address of welcome was given by W. C. Van Emon, secretary of the Klamath Cattle & Horse association, and a general discussion took place along stock industry lines.

For the protection of the stockmen the state association is urging the enforcement of the inspection law in shipping cattle and horses, and the production of hides upon demand, from the miscellaneous farmers and ranchers who are butchering beef for the markets and logging camps.

James Straw was re-named as livestock inspector for Klamath county for the ensuing year.

The state association is doing excellent work in co-operation with the forestry bureau in settling disputes and making recommendations to the forestry department for the use of the forest ranges.

The various discussions were interesting and threw many sidelights on the range conditions in Klamath county, both on the public domain and in the forest. The state officers urged a stronger and closer co-operation among the local stockmen, setting forth that more can be accomplished by united action than by individual efforts.

The executive committee left Klamath Falls yesterday morning at 8 o'clock for Fort Klamath, where they expected to hold a meeting at 10 o'clock, after which they proceeded to Medford for a meeting there this morning.

BIG ODESSA RANCH SOLD TO C. E. WORDEN

C. E. Worden has completed a deal in which he bought the Frank Cortade ranch of 700 or 800 acres near Odessa. Mr. Cortade plans on going east for a visit with his parents as soon as his business affairs will allow.

CAMPAIGN FOR ORGANIZING D. A. R.

Mrs. John A. Keating, state regent of Oregon and Daughter of the American Revolution, has announced the appointment of Mrs. R. E. Wattenburg as organizing regent for a chapter at Klamath Falls.

All who are interested and are qualified to form a chapter here are requested to meet with Mrs. Wattenburg Saturday afternoon, at 2:30 o'clock at the home of Mrs. J. Fred Goeller, 234 South Riverside.

In making the announcement of the meeting Mrs. Wattenburg said that the Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution is growing in membership and influence as are few other organizations of women in this country. It is to be hoped, she said, that a large chapter may be formed here.

CITY PROUD OF NEW STORE

With practically the very last touch of completeness placed upon it, the K. K. K. Store is today standing, as it were, upon a pedestal of pride from a realization that it occupies a position as one of Oregon's finest business establishments. It is a store in which Klamath Falls and Klamath county feels a proud interest, for it marks the advancement of the community itself. If Klamath Falls were not reaching a position in the business world that makes it one of the leading business cities on the Coast, such stores as the K. K. K. would not be possible.

When the owners of the K. K. K. Store decided to change locations it became part of their plan to equip their establishment with the very best and latest fixtures. A representative of the leading manufacturers of such equipment came here and he was given carte blanc.

The result speaks for itself. Everything that would add to the effective display of merchandise, its proper care and protection was installed. These fixtures were so placed that each department has relation to its neighbor and all so arranged as to effect the greatest degree of efficiency in the service and convenience and comfort of the patron. Practically all of the merchandise is enclosed in dust-proof cases, fitted with plate glass fronts for display, so that the customer can pass down the aisles and make selection without haste or confusion. On the left as one enters the store are the collar cases, with their special display fronts, containing the drawers with an unique hanging hinge, making it unnecessary to remove them, yet exposing the contents for easy service.

Continuing around the store to the left are the cases for the sweaters, clothing, the shoe department, the heavy wearables, such as overalls, jumpers, slickers, etc., then the hats and caps. Down the center of the store are the cabinets and solid plate glass show cases, containing the shirts, neckties and all of the haberdashery to be found in a store that is the last word in men's merchandising. A large basement is used for the storage of surplus stock.

The store is a real show place, one that must be visited to be appreciated and one that is sure to be a point of interest not only to the permanent resident, but to the transient visitor, who wishes to take away with him a complete knowledge of the city's business development.

Not the least of the interesting features of the K. K. K. Store is its growth. With an almost insignificant beginning it has reached its present pinnacle of success. Back in the early days of Klamath Falls it was the typical country store of its kind—good for the size of the community, but lacking everything in the way of modern equipment. By gradual development and moving into new quarters, it finally reached the stage attained when it occupied the rooms in the Odd Fellows building, where for nearly ten years it was the Mecca of men, women and children from all over the vast territory tributary to Klamath Falls. Then came the big idea, the one big, final step, the opening of a new establishment that would be the last word for a man's store. And its full

STATE OFFICER ARRIVES FOR FIRE PROBE

Gilbert W. Allen, deputy state fire marshal, arrived last night from Salem and today began an investigation of the Houston hotel fire. Mr. Allen said he would go thoroughly into the situation and if any laxity in enforcement of the state law or local ordinance was responsible for the tragedy the responsibility would be fixed.

A year ago, said Mr. Allen, the fire marshal's office prepared a report on fire conditions here and submitted it to the city council and part of his investigation will be directed toward ascertaining whether the council took action after receiving the report.

Councilman Brandenburg said to a Herald representative after Monday night's council meeting that he brought the whole matter of fire risks before the council a year ago but that no definite action resulted.

Mr. Allen held a conference this morning with District Attorney Duncan regarding the enforcement of the state law. One statute requires all hotels of three stories or more to be provided with fire escapes of iron or incombustible material. Two-story hotels must have knotted rope escapes, one for every window.

Conferences with city officials, the fire chief and general investigation of all circumstances that might tend to fix responsibility were part of the deputy's program today. He will remain here as long as the situation requires. Outside probe of the Houston fire, he will devote attention to a general inquiry into fire hazards and is especially instructed by Governor Olcott to look into housing conditions here and if an emergency exists the state will take relief measures.

Mr. Allen indicated a belief that there had been negligence, saying: "Someone is responsible for the loss of life in the Houston fire and we are going to probe the entire matter thoroughly."

BANK ENLARGES DIRECTORATE

At a recent meeting of the board of directors of the First National bank of Merrill, George W. Offield was elected director.

Mr. Offield is one of the substantial citizens of Merrill who has also been interested in good schools; good living conditions, and other things tending toward the development of the Merrill section.

The Merrill bank has grown steadily with the developing of the community and now has deposits totaling \$290,000, having total assets of \$350,000. Two officers, George J. Walton, cashier, and Warren Fruits, assistant cashier, are employed regularly and additional help is required at heavy seasons.

The officers of this substantial little bank look forward to a greater development as the great Tula lake section is largely tributary to Merrill and is being linked up with the Merrill territory.

TWO SUITS TO COLLECT ON PROMISSORY NOTES

Suits to collect a note for \$300 has been filed in the circuit court by the Bonanza lodge of Odd Fellows against J. O. Hamaker and son.

Another suit to collect on a note is that of F. H. Tobes against Mike Pudoff and William Checkoff, involving \$82 interest and fees.

fruition is found in the present store, a dream of plate glass, and oak, enamel and modern equipment, fronted with display windows that are wonders in themselves.

Klamath Falls is justly proud of the K. K. K. Store, because it is a milestone in the city's development and because it marks with success the careers of the young men, whose indefatigable energy, industry and integrity have made it possible.

EVERYTHING BUT THE CROWD

