ROOF OF THEATRE COLLAPSES UNDER WEIGHT OF SNOW

Herculean Efforts Made to Rescue Persons Crushed or Imprisoned in Ruins of Building.

(Continued From Page One)

GREAT THEATRE DISASTERS

Richmond, Va., theatre, December 26, 1811, entire audience.

Brooklyn, N. Y., theatre, May 26, 1876, 289 dead.

Opera Comique, Paris, May 25, 1887, 200 dead.

Exeter, England, theatre, September 4, 1887, 200 dead.

Boyerstown, Pa., theatre, January 13, 1908, 20 dead.

Acapulco, Mexico, theatre, February 15, 1909, 250 dead.

Chicago, Iroquois, theatre, December 30, 1903, 602 dead.

Cannonsburg, Pa., moving picture theatre, August 26, 1911, 26 dead.

tion of the building tended to minimize the danger.

A few minutes after the crash came, hundreds of volunteer workers were burrowing into the snow covered debris, searching for dead and injured. Emergency calls were sent to all hospitals for ambulances, but the deep snow which packed all Washington streets stalled several and delayed their arrival.

HEAR AGONIZED SCREAMS

Rescuers could hear the agonized screams of the injured buried in the wreckage as they wrestled with the mass of debris with pickaxes and crowbars.

Every fire department truck in the city was called to aid in the rescue when the seriousness of the disaster became apparent. Fire trucks were forced to make their way through the deep snow at a snail's pace and sometimes the powerful engines were unable to prevent a temporary stall in a drift.

The theatre is in the heart of Washington's most fashionable Columbia road residential district.

Word of the disaster spread quickly. Several congressmen and government officials were at the scene in a few minutes assisting in the rescuing.

Injured were carried into nearby homes and first aid administered.

BLIZZARD SEVERE

Severity of the blizzard added to the dangers of exposure attending the tragedy.

Work of rescue is proceeding slowly because of the extreme difficulty in getting at the victims.

All the movie proprietors, on hearing of the disaster, cleared out their theaters and set to work removing the snow from the roofs.

Rescue work proceeded extremely slow because of the difficulty in breaking through the heavy roof. Acetylene torches and sledge hammers were used to cut through the heavy steel firders and cement.

WIND IS TERRIBLE

A terrific wind sprang up and police feared that the walls would collapse, further increasing the casualties.

Residents of the neighborhood responded quickly to a call for blankets with which to wrap and carry the victims. Hundreds of blankets and overcoats were piled near the rescuers.

The heroism of Miss Ruth Posely, 19, drew the admiration of the crowd of spectators. She had gone to the movie with two other girls and was carried out suffering a broken nose and severe lacerations. She laughed as a doctor came up to her.

"Don't bother about me, look after the other girls," she begged.

Eye witnesses described the horrifying confusion which took place in the darkness just after the collapse. A huge cloud of dust thrown up by the crumbling plaster led to a report that fire had broken out, but this was found to be untrue.

Other injured included Colonel Charles O. Tucker, a prominent lawyer, and his wife; Frank Alexander, 15; Dr. A. J. Barchfeld and his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Elmer Barchfeld.

MUSICIAN IS DYING

Walter Uhl, 42, a musician, was dragged from the pit. He was dying and called upon his rescuers to put him to one side while theey worked to rescue others. Uhl's legs were broken in several places and his body was crushed.

Uhl was carried to a top shop, where he gasped out a description of the tragedy.

He died within a few minutes.

The orchestra leader escaped with slight injuries. His wife, who was waiting for him in the rear, was caught in the debris but was not fatally hurt.

A call for hacksaws, oxygen torches and other steel and concrete cutting instruments was sounded by the police. They said that from now on they were faced with a long and laborious process of burning, sawing and chopping their way to those caught under the masses of metal, concrete and wood.

CUT ELECTRIC WIRE

Electricians were summoned to cut off a 500-volt electric wire which runs into the building. It was feared some of the injured might be electrocuted.

One young woman, her legs pinned down by the wreckage, her husband dead beside her, calmly directed her rescuers and asked that her mother be notified that she was alive.

"Tell mother I am alive and not badly hurt," she said.

Near her and her husband were the bodies of three men and women. No effort was being made to get these bodies until the girl was freed.

Private Robert Woldmanese of the marine corps came from the ruins with the statement that a young mother and her baby were sheltered under the piano in the pit.

The baby was unhurt, he said. The mother is slightly injured. He believed they would be safe until rescuers got to them.

A man named Alfred Moses, 48, badly hurt, was taken from the structure.

Victims of Theatre Disaster

Washington, Jan. 29 (Sunday)—(U. P.) Names of the dead and injured, identified up to 1:30 a. m., Sunday, follow:

DEAD:

S. H. Earnest, 45, Brooklyn.
Douglas Hillyer, 29, Washington.
Dr. W. H. Straw, Washington.
Mrs. Marie Russell, Washington.
Walter Uhl, 42, Washington.
Mrs. B. A. Covall, 52, Washington.
Unidentified child of ten.
W. Schofield Jr., 25, Danville, Va.
G. S. Freeman, 35, violinist, formerly of South Bend, Ind.
D. F. O'Donnell, Washington.
Mildred Walford, Washington.
Mrs. Anna Corelle, Washington.
Hugh Glen, 15.
Mrs. C. W. Weston, wife of Colonel Weston, U. S. A.
Mrs. Martindale.
A. J. Barchfeld, former congressman for Pennsylvania.
Lewis Valentine, Washington.
Mrs. M. E. Walsh, Washington.
H. W. D. Wattell, Washington.
Paul Uslamby, asthington.

INJURED:

Miss Gertrude Taylor; leg broken.
Mrs. Breslau, internal injuries.
Elizabeth Theunisson, bruised.
Leo Theunisson, arm broken.
S. W. Richmond, internal injuries.
Hugh Nesbit, 16, Kansas City, broken arm.
Alfred Moses, 48, broken leg.
Miss Ruth Posely, 19.
Colonel Charles C. Tucker.
Frank Alexander.
Dr. V. A. Varchfeld.
Mrs. Elmer Varchfeld.
Dr. J. R. Canine and wife.
Francis Dunnan.
Jackie Dunnan.
Winifred Brosseau, 22, fractured spine.
Edward William, broken leg.
Miss Margaret Cole, 19, lacerated ankle.
Dr. Curtis Lee Hall, 33.
Mrs. Hall.
Miss Helen Hopkins.
Albert Sword.
Herman Artillo.
Frank Curley.
J. B. Dodson.
F. W. Dodson.
Mrs. Henry S. Powell.
Mrs. Edwin Wilson.
Henry Wilson.
H. T. Lay.
J. L. Durland.
Alfonso Van Pounce.
Clarence Newkirk.
Maty Rhea.
Miss McKinney.
R. J. Bowen.
Mrs. Bowen.
S. M. Lee.
Miss Hazel Buchler.
E. Nachtlo.
Mrs. Mattie Swab.
Miss Mary Chalmers.
Etta Underwood.
Mildred Bowey.
Belle Rambou.
H. B. Moses, 42, broken leg.
Miss Martha Strayer, 26, Washington, reporter for the Washington Daily News.
Nathan Underdung, 12, arm broken.
His mother, Mrs. Rose Underdung, and a brother, Jack, 19, reported still in the debris.
Moe Geld, 30, fractured leg.
M. E. Cartney, University of Maryland.
Miss Elizabeth Jeffries, 24, internal injuries.
Mrs. Raymond J. Bowen, reported dying.
Warren H. Halphef, 63, leg broken.
Gilbert Caplan, student.
Alice Pasquale, 24, internal injuries.
Imogene Hillyer.
Henry Pearson.
Mrs. E. H. Shaughnessy, 35, wife of second assistant postmaster general, Washington, internal injuries.
Ruth O'Shaughnessy, 10, both arms broken.
Colonel C. W. Weston, severely injured.

Moses was conscious and probably will live, doctors said.

Several eye-witnesses said the whole roof seemed to give way without a moment's notice. Several hundred people were sitting quietly watching a thrilling romantic story of the cavalier days in France.

Suddenly there was a ghastly sound of wrenching timbers.

Several women screamed. The spectators instinctively jumped from their seats, but before they were out of their chairs the high vaulted roof had crashed down on them with deadly force. The rear part of the roof struck the balcony projection first and tore it partly from the wall, mangling many bodies.

400 PERHAPS CAUGHT

One hour after the disaster police estimated that 300 to 400 were caught in the theatre, although they were not certain by any means. No dead had been carried out at 10 o'clock, 45 minutes after the crash, but a dozen injured had been rescued.

The crowd became so great that police barred all but a few chosen volunteer rescuers.

Police were besieged by throngs of frenzied relatives trying to get into the debris to hunt for loved ones.

Mothers and fathers were weeping hysterically, but the police held them back.

Several persons were entering the theatre just as the roof collapsed. W. R. Kelley, a business man, and his wife, were just going through the front door of the theatre.

"I heard an awful crash just as I was going in the door," Kelley said.

"Mrs. Kelley and I were thrown backward through the door by the force of the concussion. We were slightly bruised. I got up and ran across the street to the drug store and turned in a fire alarm and then called a hospital."

CONGRESSMAN SEEKS SON

Congressman Barkley, Kentucky, was among the mob of frantic relatives. His son, Merle, aged 15, was in the theatre at the time and Barkley was trying to get through the police lines to search for him.

No idea of the dead could be obtained immediately after the disaster, but first rumors that 500 were dead were doubted by the police, who did not at first believe the entire audience in the theatre totaled that number.

Some of those in the rear seats escaped through the protection of the balcony overhead.

Those in the center of the parquet had the least chance to escape.

The roof broke completely from the walls, leaving the sides of the building standing untouched after the crash.

WHOLE BUILDING UNSTABLE

Emergency hospitals were established at the Christian Science church and the Sigma Nu fraternity nearby. Nurses also established a hospital in a concessionaire store in the same building with the theatre, but were ordered out by the police. It appeared that the entire building was unstable.

That the loss of life was not greater was due to the fact that the mezzanine floor, which was carried down by the collapse of the roof, was almost entirely unoccupied.

The first connected story of the disaster came from Hutch Nesbitt, correspondent of the Kansas City Star, who was extricated from the ruins with a broken leg and lacerations of the face and hands.

PINNED UNDER DEBRIS

Nesbitt said he was seated on a chair near the orchestra pit. He said there was a terrific crash, deluge of plaster, girders and snow fell on the audience. Nesbitt was pinned under a mass of debris.

"I never heard such screaming and groaning in my life," said Nesbitt, as surgeons were setting his broken leg. "It seemed as though everybody was moaning and sighing at once. Those on the outside seats did their best to make for the exits, but I saw several of them crushed down by the falling roof and walls.

"'Christ, save me!' one woman kept crying. She was only a few feet away from me, but only her face showed in the debris. It seemed an eternity before I was helped out."

Marine rescuers reported at 2:30 a. m. that they could see many dead buried in the ruins. They were prying away at the fallen roof to get at the victims underneath with greater speed than earlier in the evening and expected to speed up the rescue work considerably as the debris was torn away.

Fifteen persons were found imprisoned beneath the large dome in the center of the roof. None were dead.

WOOD ALCOHOL FATAL

Centralia, Wash., Jan. 28.—An autopsy performed by Coroner David Livington indicated that the death of Joe McKee Thursday was caused by drinking sufficient wood alcohol to kill a half dozen men. McKee earlier in the week called at Red Cross headquarters to beg for underclothing.

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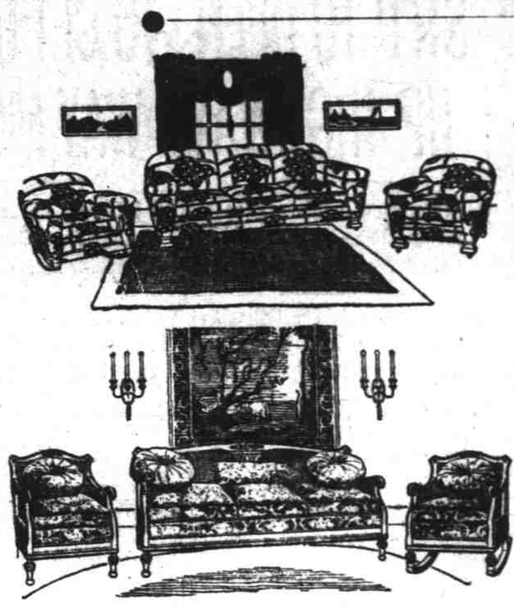

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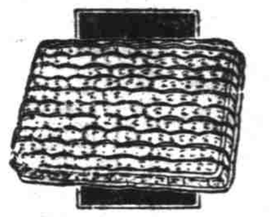

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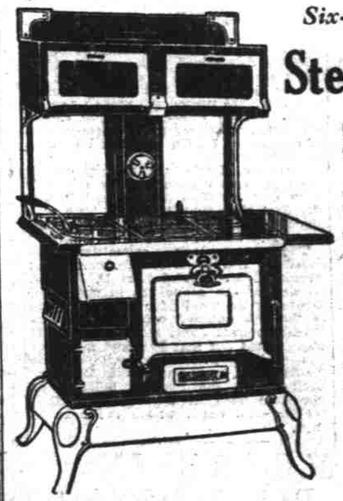

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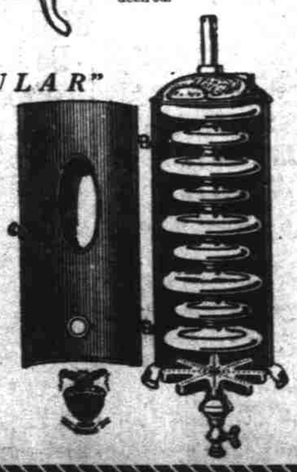

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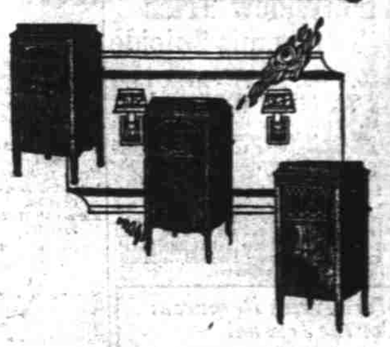

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