

The

EXTRA

Times-Gerald.

EXTRA

BURNS, HARNEY COUNTY, OREGON, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1903.

FLORAL HALL BURNS TO THE GROUND SUNDAY.

Three Small Boys Find Coal Oil And Start a Fire on the Floor.

FAIR WILL NOT BE POSTPONED.

President Donegan Called a Meeting of Fair Board Yesterday Afternoon and a Suitable Building Now Under Way for Exhibits.

At 10 o'clock yesterday morning an alarm of fire was turned in and the quiet Sunday with the people mostly indoors or at church, assumed a very exciting and lively appearance with men running hatless in the direction of the Fair grounds, while the firemen with the clanging engines and hose cart were tearing toward the scene.

Great columns of smoke could be seen raising from the burning building and before the firemen reached the place the roof of Floral Hall had fell in and was a mass of flames. In less than 5 minutes after the alarm sounded the building was falling.

There was considerable speculation at first as to how the fire originated. Harry C. Smith, the owner, was of the opinion it was of incendiary origin, and later it was reported that children had set the fire. The two little sons of M. FitzGerald aged 5 and 4 years, told Mrs. Elizabeth Riggs and others that they, in company with a little son of Robt Moffet of about the same age, had found coal oil in the building, turned some out of a can on the floor and ignited it with a match. They said they were unable to put it out, so climbed out of a window and ran away.

Floral Hall was a large building 125 feet long and 25 feet wide, being lined and ceiled with building paper which burned rapidly. The Times-Gerald representative ran three blocks when hearing the alarm before he could see the building and at that time the whole roof was one mass of flames. It burned in a flash and it seems almost a miracle those children were not caught in the flames before reaching the window.

Fortunately there was nothing in the building at the time except a set of carpenter tools belonging to Joel Smith who was employed in making repairs, building new pens and stalls for stock, etc. for the Fair Association preparatory to receiving exhibits next week. His loss will not exceed \$75. The local

dramatic club had some scenery in the hall but that loss is slight.

The building is a total loss as Mr. Smith had allowed the insurance policy to lapse on account of a raise in the premium which he considered unreasonable. His loss is in the neighborhood of \$1800. Mr. Smith had worked very hard and put money into the building that might have been used to a much better advantage, but he had hopes of making the annual county fairs not only a permanent thing, but one day a paying proposition. He could ill afford the loss.

Fair Will be Held.

With the usual energy so characteristic of the business men of this wideawake, little city steps were at once taken to arrange a suitable building for exhibits at the Fair next week. Coming just at this time it placed the Fair Association in bad condition. With the opening of the fair one week away, it was impossible to rebuild the hall in that length of time but to give it up, never once entered the head of any one.

President Donegan called a meeting of the Fair Board at 2:30 yesterday afternoon and after discussing the best and most economical plan to arrange for the exhibits the Board finally decided to build a temporary building for this season and leave the rebuilding of the hall to be considered later. A building 30 x 48 feet was considered large enough for exhibits exclusively and a force of carpenters under the supervision of Hon. I. S. Geer, who was selected from the board to oversee the work, were put to work on the structure this morning. It will be finished in ample time and exhibitors are assured protection from the elements of their produce and stock.

H. M. Horton of the Burns Milling Co. came forward at the proper time with a most generous offer and told the board they could have rough lumber for \$6 per thousand, and single surface for \$8.50.

Teams were started to the mill for more lumber today. C. A. Sweek has offered a team free of charge for the purpose of hauling lumber,

also Hank Anderson.

Racers in Danger.

Several running and trotting horses are stabled at the fair grounds a short distance from where the Floral Hall stood and for a while it looked as though the stables would catch as the wind was blowing in that direction and the heat was intense. The horsemen finally got their stock out and in a few minutes the wind shifted to another direction.

Their Second Fire.

The same boys that admit starting the fire at Floral Hall previously set fire, in three places, in a wagon box standing in front of the White Front Barn, the same day. A. M. Byrd happened along on his

way from the race course and extinguished the blaze. There are several wagons standing there belonging to the hardware firm of Geer & Cummins, who also have much machinery, hacks and buggies in the building, which they have been using as a warehouse. This firm intended moving all their machinery to Floral Hall immediately after the fair. Had the fire got a start in this wagon box, which was partly filled with straw, the whole block would have burned including the French Hotel and Red Front Barn with all probability spreading to the opposite side of the street, in which case practically the whole of the business portion of our city would have been destroyed.

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