

THREE FIREMEN MET DEATH IN CAMDEN BLAZE

Trapped in Fire at the Old
Sixth Regiment Armory
They Perished in Flames

NINE OTHER PERSONS
RECEIVED INJURIES

Three firemen were killed and nine persons injured at a fire last night which destroyed the old armory building at Bridge avenue, West and Mickle streets, Camden, causing a loss estimated at \$50,000.

The dead firemen are:

GEORGE SHIELDS, 525 Kaighn avenue, member of the Kaighn avenue chemical company.

WILLIAM HILLMAN, 229 Beckett street, of the Kaighn avenue chemical company.

WILLIAM JOES, 516 Line street, member of Eastlar Company No. 2.

The Injured

The injured, all of whom will recover, are:

Josiah Sage, 917 South Eighth street, Kaighn avenue company, cut head and face; Seth Monnell, 744 Mt. Vernon street, Kaighn avenue company, scalp wounds; George Quinn, 516 Line street, Kaighn avenue company, cut face; Martin Carrigan, 516 Clinton street, Engine Company No. 1, lacerated face and hands; J. W. Simpson, 551 Cedar street, Engine Company No. 2, lacerations of scalp and face; James Elberson, 628 North Fourth street, Engine Company No. 4, contused wounds of the legs; William Elberson, 231 Taylor avenue, Engine Company No. 2, injured about the back; Charles Worthington, 1017 Penn street, Engine

Continued on Second Page—Fourth Column

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Continued From First Page

Company No. 5, internally injured; Harry Dease, a citizen, cut about the face.

The six o'clock whistles were blowing when smoke was seen issuing from the northeast corner of the building. A moment later two boys ran out of a door, one of whom notified Policeman Isaac Toy that the structure was on fire. The officers immediately turned in an alarm. In rapid succession other alarms were given, until the entire department was on the scene.

One of the first companies to arrive was the Kaighn avenue truck. As the men drove up to the scene great tongues of flame were fast eating their way through the yellow pine timbers of which the interior was constructed. The main doors at the entrance on Mickle street were burst open and the firemen entered amid a perfect shower of sparks and falling debris. In this party were the three ill-fated firemen, Dease, and Firemen Harry Haince, Joseph Ernest, George Quinn, Seth Mounell and Joseph Gail.

After great difficulty the men worked their way into the blazing building about twenty feet. Dense volumes of smoke almost suffocated them and several dropped to the floor.

Dash for the Doors

While the firemen were waiting for the water a false ceiling thirty feet above them and composed of floor boards began cracking and bending. A shout of warning was given by Dease, and he and his companions made a dash for the doors. It was impossible to see a foot before them, and all blindly groped their way to the open doors but Jobs, Shields and Hillman. That they did not come out of the building was not known for several minutes later. Then reports were circulated that they had been taken to nearby houses, but these were found to be false. Their companions then tried to work their way back to their assistance, but by this time the interior was a seething furnace.

Subsequently, when the blaze had been somewhat subdued, firemen and policemen instituted a search for the missing men. Where the latter had been there was a great pile of blackened timbers and twisted iron. After vigorous efforts this was removed.

Finding the Bodies

First there came to light Shield's helmet, and a few feet distant his body and those of Hillman and Jobs, scorched and blackened almost beyond recognition, were found. It was then learned how they had met their deaths. Instead of going toward the open doorway they had evidently become bewildered and, turning, ran into a toilet room to which there was no outlet. There they were quickly cut off from their comrades and, becoming unconscious from the smoke, all three dropped to the floor, where death overtook them.

The bodies were carried out and taken to the Morgue.

In the meantime every portion of the structure became a mass of flames. Fed by the pine, great tongues of fire sprang into the air, across Mickle and West streets, where the dwellings were badly scorched. The families residing in these in several instances became panic-stricken and began removing their household effects. Men, women and children ran excitedly about. It is owing to the excellent work of the firemen that these structures were not destroyed.

Spectacular Blaze

Chief Elfieth quickly concluded there was no hope of saving the armory and he directed a dozen lines of hose toward the dwellings, many of which became so hot that the streams of water fairly sizzled.

The fire was a spectacular one, lighting up the heavens for miles around. Thousands of persons crowded the thoroughfares leading to the blaze, but excellent order was preserved under the direction of Acting Chief of Police Schregler, who quickly had the streets roped off and guarded by the officers.

There was considerable danger at first from falling electric wires, which spluttered among the firemen and oftentimes amidst the onlookers. These wires also fell across the Pennsylvania Railroad Company's tracks on Bridge avenue and suburban trains were stalled for over an hour. At one time the flames approached so near the passenger coaches that they had to be taken back into the yard.

Stubborn Blaze

For three hours the firemen fought the flames before they got them under control and it was not until an early hour this morning that they left the smouldering ruins.

The building was occupied by several concerns, including the Camden Bowling Alleys Company, whose loss amounted to \$6000; F. G. Hitchener, wall paper, loss \$1000; Sperry & Hutchinson, household articles, loss \$2000; William Morgenweck, lumber, loss \$500, and M. W. Taylor, theatrical scenery, loss \$500.

The houses badly scorched and their occupants follow; 102 West street, John Sharwood; 104, vacant; 106, John Ackerman; Lewis Certain; 110, Richard Carpenter; 112, and 114, Daniel Mehlin; 120, Mrs. Ida Paul; 122, Mrs. Farley; 124, John Campbell; 126, Harry Chase. 416 Mickle street, John Widden; 418, Nelson Hart; 420, H. W. Wilson; 422, Jules Bosch; 424, Gardner Corson; 426, Mrs. Borquin.

The stable immediately adjoining on

the west side of the armory, and belonging to C. M. Alcott, was flooded with water. At this place there were forty horses, all of which were rescued.

Formerly a Market

The destroyed building was erected in 1873, by a number of well-known Camden men, as the Farmers' and Merchants' Market. From the first it was not a success, and subsequently became known as the Camden Opera House. After a more or less successful season the promoters of this scheme closed the doors. In 1886 the building was purchased by the State as an armory for the old Sixth Regiment, N. G. N. J. For ten years Camden's citizen soldiers drilled and gave balls and receptions in the building. When the regiment moved to the new armory on Haddon avenue the old structure was cut up into several rooms and had been used by many different concerns. Recently it was purchased by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company to make way for the elevated railroad. All the tenants had been ordered to vacate.

The origin of the fire is unknown. Incendiarism is hinted at and Mayor Ellis declared he will detail the detectives on the case to-day to make a rigid investigation.

Speaking of the matter, he said it is very peculiar that most of Camden's fires occur about the time the firemen are at their meals. This has been the case in most every blaze if any importance in the city. The Mayor also highly commended the excellent work of the men in preventing a spread of the flames.