

High School Completely Destroyed By Fire In 1911

Building Located On Grade School Site; City's Worst Fire.

(Nov. 3, 1911)

In all of Mt. Pulaski's 75 years of existence it has never been the scene of such a big fire as the one which destroyed the Mt. Pulaski High School building last Saturday night, Oct. 28, 1911. The school is located in the east part of the city. The fire was first discovered by Mrs. George Schafer, who lives across the street south of the school grounds. She hurried to the home of G. E. Clendenen, superintendent of the schools, across the street west of the grounds, and gave the alarm, and he telephoned Central to notify the electric light plant to give the fire alarm. This was 8:15 o'clock, and the fire department was immediately on the scene.

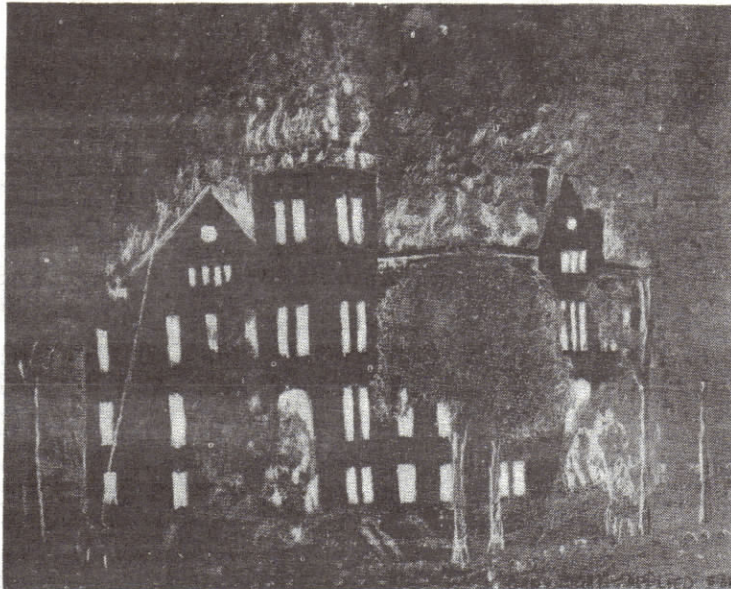
The colored man known as "Paulas," who stays at the home of Charles Anderson, also had noticed a blaze in the basement at the northwest corner of the building, and he and the young son of the superintendent rushed to the Gamewell fire alarm system box at the southwest corner of the school yard and turned in an alarm. People passing the building at 7:30 noticed a light, but only thought it was a reflection, as often an electric light has been burning in the basement, and then the electric lights on the streets have made reflections on the windows.

The fire department responded with two hose carts, one having 500 feet of new two and one-half inch hose that had been placed on the reel Thursday of last week. They had 1700 feet of hose in all, and had three streams of water working on the fire. They first started to fight the fire on the west side of the building, and then rushed to the north side where flames were leaping up the air shaft; then another lead of hose was taken on the east side, and finally the firemen entered the basement from the south side. They also got on the floor above the basement, and by 9 o'clock thought they had the fire under control from all appearances. Ira Veail, Frank Snyder, perhaps others went to the top floor occupied by the high school at this juncture, but the floor was so hot and the smoke seemed to become so dense that they had to retreat. Then suddenly flames began to issue from the attic and roof, and was soon seen that the building was doomed, for the fire departments of either Decatur or Springfield could not have then saved the big structure.

The fire had eaten its way up between the large studdings, and shot up the places that had been installed for the heating system, and this the firemen could not see until it was too late. It was shortly after 10 o'clock that the roof commenced to fall in, and then the floor in the high school, and before midnight the building was a mass of ruins. The east wall was the only one to fall, and the firemen and on-lookers were fortunate to escape injury. The fire confined itself within the walls, and shot high in the air, the reflection on the sky being seen for many miles. The trees near the building were scarcely scorched. It was a scene that the citizens will ever remember, because we seldom witness a fire of that proportion.

Saturday night was a clear one, and the stars were shining brightly, and the air was chilly. The wind was almost a calm, and came from the west. Therefore the homes east of the school yard were in the path of the smoke and sparks and had to be watched constantly until about 1 o'clock to prevent them from catching on fire. The News edit-

Artist's Conception of Burning School



THE ABOVE DRAWING of the fire which destroyed the school here in 1911, reminds one of the pictures of the burning of Rome. We understand some of the kids were sad - some glad.

or's home was right in the worst part of the shower of sparks, and he was compelled to leave the school yard and climbed on his house with buckets of water to watch the roof, and was unable to watch the progress of the flames to an advantage and cannot give everything in detail as it occurred. The other residences endangered were those of George Stoll, Sr., Henry Wachter, Christian Wagner, Wm. Simpkins, Mrs. Elizabeth Schafer and Mrs. Marie Schahl, and the house being erected for George Schafer.

Following is the list of teachers, and the places they occupied in the old school house:

Prof. G. E. Clendenen, superintendent.
W. T. Skinner, principal high school.
Miss Eva Perrin, assistant teacher in high school and 8th grade.
Miss Anna Leisch, 7th grade.
Miss Florence Wynd, 6th grade.
Miss Jennie Hassett, 5th grade.
Miss Katie Volle, 4th grade.
Miss Lucy Tutwiler, 3d grade.
Miss Elnora McDonald, 2d grade.
Miss Annetta Rigdon, 1st grade.

The city council met Sunday and arranged to let the board of education have the large upstairs room in the old court house building above the postoffice, to use as the high school and 8th grade, and they were indeed glad to accept this thoughtful and kindly offer. This old building, which we herewith give a picture, was the old Logan county court house in the early 1850's and within its walls Abraham Lincoln had several times attended court as one of the lawyers. When the county seat was located in Lincoln, this building became the school house, and remained so until the large one just destroyed was built in 1877, and had been used for that purpose ever since. The locally historic old structure in the public square since it was discontinued for school purposes, has been used by the city council, for the old jail in the basement, band room, and of late years the postoffice headquarters. The library has been using part of the upstairs for some years.

In re-using any part of this building for school purposes again, brings back forcibly to the minds of many of our citizens the happy school days that they passed in that old place. Many of them are now the parents of the pupils that will continue their studies there this winter.

The board of education was offered the use of the Christian church for the high school and

8th grade until the room above the postoffice could be fixed up for school use and new desks arrive, so the pupils started back to their school duties Monday morning without losing any time at all.

As for the remainder of the grades, the board of education members have arranged for locations. The 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades will be located above the C. F. Schafer hardware store and W. W. Snyder's moving picture theater in the two rooms formerly occupied by the Masonic lodge. The 3d grade will occupy the Wm. Bienefeldt building on the north side of square, formerly occupied by Gingry's confectionery, while the 1st and 2d grades will be located in the Herbert N. Capps' building on the same side of square until recently occupied by the C. E. Mueller hardware store. The grades will commence school as soon as the new desks come and heating arrangements perfected.

The present board of education is composed of George H. Hubbard, president; John M. Rothwell, H. B. Capps, Edward J. Anderson, John Zah and G. J. Loberrecht. On account of the recent death of one of the members, the late James Edward Copeland, an election will be held on the afternoon of Saturday, Nov. 10th, to elect a new member to fill the vacancy.

SUPT. W. H. STAFFORD SUPPLIED PLENTY OF WATER DURING BLAZE

Illinois Central Also Furnished Water at Pumping Station.

At the pumping station on South Spring Street, Supt. W. H. Stafford, and two assistants were kept busy all night, and a good even pressure of 75 pounds was kept up during all that time; that is the usual tank pressure which shows that the tank was kept full all during the fire. A direct pressure of 110 pounds, or as much more as the pipes would stand, could have been given any time by merely closing a valve under the big steel tank in the public square. Mayor John W. Seyfer, who was at the fire all the time and rendered efficient aid, as well as the firemen, said that at no time during the fight were they in need of any more pressure than the tank was giving them.

The Deane pump at the city plant has a capacity of 500,000 gallons of water a day, and for about three hours was kept running at a lively clip. By that time the wells began to show the effects of the heavy drain made upon them, and at the rate the pump was running would not have held out over an hour longer. Mr. Stafford had telephoned out to the Illinois Central pumping station on Salt Creek, located just west of the bridge, about 9 o'clock to the engineer, August Olson, to get up steam and hold himself in readiness to cut in whenever he called for him.

After the pump at the Creek settled down and began to throw water, Mr. Stafford slowed down his pump and let the Illinois Central furnish the greater amount. The city wells then held their own and gradually gained. Both the city and the Illinois Central pumps were kept running together until 2 o'clock Sunday morning.

The Illinois Central people have a pump of about the same capacity as ours and had all the upper Salt Creek back of them, so that no time was there any danger of a shortage of water.

The Illinois Central agent and Homer Smith, Supt. of the water supply of the Peoria division (now Indiana division) of the Central, thought it would be a fine thing to have the two plants connected so as to help each other out in an emergency. They got busy and put it through. The two mains cross each other at the northeast corner of the city plant, and pieces were cut out of the different mains and two valves put in; the city had one valve on hand that had been given them, and they bought one. The cost to the city for the connection was \$12.00, and the Illinois Central men did the work

in two and one-half days. To cut them in on our mains, the superintendent closed the valve going to the two Illinois Central tanks, and opened the other one, which allowed the water from Salt Creek to enter the mains. This is a sort of reciprocity plan between the Illinois Central people and the city. Last December the city furnished the Illinois Central 25,000 gallons of water while their boiler was out of commission. Last Saturday night the Illinois Central pumping station gave us about 30,000 gallons or a little more.

Fine Job by Waterworks

Our Deane pump and three wells from the beginning of the fire up to 5 o'clock Sunday evening, supplied 118,200 gallons of water, 105,000 of which had been pumped by daylight Sunday morning. The 8x36-inch Cook pump on an 8-inch well, with a capacity of 197,216 gallons per day of 24 hours, was run three hours Sunday forenoon, but no record was kept of the number of gallons it supplied. This pump is across the street east from the pumping station, and is connected with an 8-inch well entirely separate from the three wells to which the big Deane pump is connected. The Cook pump was given a general overhauling this past summer and is in first class condition, as is everything else connected with the waterworks.

Cloe and County Superintendent of Schools D. F. Nickols each made addresses, followed by music from the high school chorus and Glee Club. The school was opened for inspection after 3 o'clock.

As the services were carried thru, one could not help but be impressed by the solemnness of the occasion. What doth Dedication mean to you, citizens of Mt. Pulaski, and where were the great majority of you? Ask yourself the question, "Should I have been there?"

When that beautiful new building was set apart last Monday for its intended use, a new epoch in the history of Mt. Pulaski was beginning. Educational advantages for the children, interest on the part of the people, enrollment in the class room; all these were increased. It is interesting to look back over the past and try to comprehend the great mission that was performed in the old building—but is it not of far more importance that we become impressed properly with the present, and what it means in the invigorating of our school spirit? Think of the many boys and girls of today, and future days, that will get their start in that building. Think of the real life and earnest endeavor that will originate within those walls.

If it were possible to take a panoramic view of the future years with reference to that institution, do you realize what it would unfold?—Young men and women of the future ages, trodding the paths of educational advancement, marching in a steady stream from the cradle to the school house, from the eighth grade to the high school, some going further and graduating from college, and all at last finding their places in this great world. There in that building is where they shall receive their most important training. There is no question but what that period of the child's growth is most lasting for it marks the time of his greatest elasticity, both mentally and physically. The entire organism is more susceptible to being moulded along the proper channels, and it is then that the child receives a greater amount of real development for the making of true citizenship than at any time later. If they start well, their foundation is well built, and they have a fairer chance for further advancement than does the boy who receives no training during his early years.

NEW SCHOOL WAS DEDICATED OCTOBER 14, 1912 OPENED NEW ERA

(October 18, 1912)

On Monday afternoon, October 14, 1912, the new Mt. Pulaski Public School was set apart for its intended use—that of aiding in the educational development of our boys and girls. Even tho the dedicatory arrangements were not completed until late, many were out to witness the occasion. The day was ideal, and

everything went off smoothly. Null's Mt. Pulaski Band led the procession from the public square, followed by the Mt. Pulaski Township High School students and faculty. Upon arrival at the grounds, President George H. Hubbard gave a short talk, after which the "Junior Glee Club" sang. Rev. J. Newton

NEW SCHOOL WHICH WAS BUILT IN 1912

