

MANY LOSE ALL

Fifteen Hundred People Left Homeless by a Conflagration on Lake Avenue.

WORST FIRE DULUTH HAS HAD

About Fifty Ramshackle Buildings Burned and Many Poor Families Destitute.

The fire fiend got in its work on Lake avenue yesterday afternoon and before the flames were gotten under control it is estimated that about \$100,000 damage was done. The fire was the largest that Duluth has experienced in years. A row of wooden buildings on the east side of Lake avenue on the lower side of the viaduct were destroyed. From No. 221 to No. 278, inclusive, the fire burned its way and for a time bid fair to take most of the south side of the street in its embrace. In addition to the damage on Lake avenue, a large number of small shacks in the rear of the burned store buildings and on St. Croix avenue were burned. Detective Troyer, who is well acquainted with that part of the city, estimates that as a result of the fire, 1,000 to 1,500 or 2,000 people were homeless last night. In some instances two and three families were crowded in one shack and beside the shacks, the upstairs parts of the saloons, stores and of several tenement houses on St. Croix avenue were occupied by one or two families each.

There were many pathetic scenes everywhere. Some people—and most of those that lived in the burned district are of the poorer working class—had lost their all, scarcely saving what they had on. The men were usually occupied in helping one another or cursing their luck, while the women gave vent to their grief in floods of tears. Mothers were seen making sure that all their little ones were safe and after assuring themselves of this they seemed to get some comfort. One woman, Mrs. Samuel Jones, whose husband is in Minneapolis, was found in a very weak condition with her 5-day-old baby in her arms. Detective Troyer, who found her sitting on a vacant lot across from the fire, had an ambulance called and the sick woman was taken to St. Mary's hospital. Mrs. Jones had been living with Mrs. O'Connor over Thomas Trevillion's store.

Mrs. John Gustafson, who had given birth to a child 21 hours before the fire, sprang from her bed when she realized the danger that threatened and ran out with her baby to take refuge in the house of a neighbor. She was in a fainting condition when the ambulance was called. She was taken to St. Luke's hospital.

It is claimed by some that the fire originated from a lighted cigar stub thrown carelessly down a crack in the sidewalk. Others say that some small boys had a playhouse under the sidewalk and the fire was started by lighted matches. However, eye witnesses say it started under the sidewalk in front of Capt. Savage's place. One man that claims to have seen the fire start said that a little smoke was noticed coming up through the cracks in the sidewalk but nobody paid much attention to it. "I walked past," continued the man, "never thinking of fire but had proceeded scarcely 25 yards when I heard a cry and looking around found that the flames were leaping up the front of the buildings and the three or four neighboring stores seemed to be all on fire at once. It was the quickest starting fire that I ever saw. From that on, the flames spread along the roofs and the buildings burned like tinder. When the fire department arrived three or four buildings had already been consumed."

The day was a perfect one for the progress of a fire. The air was dry and a stiff wind blew from the southwest making the flames spread north and east. With this wind prevailing and with the flimsy structures on fire, the firemen had a hard time of it to make any impression with the water. The men working on St. Croix avenue worked with the dense smoke and the flames blowing directly in their faces and those at work on Lake avenue could make but little progress at first. When the fire reached 251 Lake avenue, the work of the firemen, for the first time began to tell and this building was kept from completely burning down. The building next to it, The Rising Sun hotel, was only scorched but while the flames were approaching it some very exciting scenes occurred. As usual bed clothes were carried down stairs and mirrors thrown out of the window.

Meanwhile, the fire was stretching out its arms in the other direction, although on account of the direction of the wind, it did not spread so fast. Ex-Alderman Jimmy Dingwall's saloon and lodging house was soon wiped out but the stock of liquors was saved. Alderman Tom Trevillion's store followed soon after Mr. Dingwall's place but Mr. Trevillion having had a little warning managed to save considerable of his stock. He lost \$2,000 worth, however, and has only \$700 insurance on it. In this direction the fire was stopped at 278 Lake avenue.

All this time the fire was making great headway toward the lake and on St. Croix avenue a barn belonging to the Lield estate burned as well as two tenement houses that were on the edge of the lake.

It was reported that one woman in her haste to get out of one of these tenements jumped from her back window in the lake which the house overhung. She miscalculated the depth, it is said, and came near drown-

ing, but was gotten out and resuscitated. Inquiry failed to develop who the woman was and it is believed that the report was a mere fire story.

Lake avenue, most of St. Croix avenue and the large vacant space across from the fire on Lake avenue slip were packed with people and it is estimated that from 10,000 to 20,000 saw the fire. The remarks that passed between the members of this crowd were very amusing. Everybody suggested to everybody else that "This is a bad fire" or sometimes in place of this came the query, "Bad—abn't it?" Groups gathered in every direction and discussed Chief Black's methods of fighting the fire pointing out what should have been done at such and such a time. When a homeless family passed, expressions of pity and sympathy were heard from the crowd and then the attention of the crowd would be turned to the fire again.

It was generally wondered at that in such a quick fire no loss of life should be reported. There were one or two cases where people searched wildly about in search of their children. One mother had given two of her children up for lost when one of them appeared with his fist dug in his eyes. The way that mother snatched her boy to her showed a relief as earnest as his demonstration was humorous. In a few minutes the other missing child was found and another scene ensued. No case of any person missing has been reported to the police.

Some of the dwellers in the burned section kept a horse or cow and a number of these animals were destroyed. A Hebrew teacher is reported to have had destroyed a valuable library. It contained many books in the Hebrew language that it is said cannot be replaced for a money consideration as they have been many years out of print.

Among the people that suffered heaviest were some 50 families of Jews. The Jews at the time of the fire were holding a joint meeting of their congregations in Turner hall praying for victory for the American arms in the war with Spain. As their buildings were deserted nothing was saved either from their stores or dwellings.

Many acts of heroism were performed by the firemen. No lives were lost so far as known but several persons, two of them children, were reported missing early.

Assistant Chief Boynton of the fire department was injured as a result of his carriage overturning as he neared the fire. This accident was due to his trying to avoid running over some people that got in the way. His head was bleeding freely as the result of a severe scalp wound but he stuck to his post during the fire.

The southerly end of the tenderloin district was destroyed and many of the inmates of these houses had narrow escapes with their lives. One of the scenes in the alley between Lake and St. Croix avenues was that of a woman smoking a cigarette and playing on a piano that had been moved in the street. She had to be removed from danger by force. When the fire broke over toward St. Croix avenue the people on that thoroughfare began moving out their effects toward the lake shore, and many houses were emptied to what was supposed to be a place of safety. In spite of their efforts the goods were destroyed by blazing embers that fell so fast and so thick that men could not stand the work of further removal.

A lot of goods that were carted clear to the shore were stolen by men in boats. Trunks were carried out and rifled of their contents and the trunks were then thrown overboard.

A Jew named Jake Mattson lost \$900 in gold by the fire. Most of the inhabitants of the district hoarded their money in the house and their losses are complete.

Hundreds of homeless people huddled about the blazing squares without a rag of clothing other than what they had on.

The work of relief began at once. All the charitable organizations in the city were engaged last night in caring for the homeless. Hacks, the patrol wagons and other vehicles are carrying away the women and children. Food and clothing are distributing at the Bethel. Sick people were carried to the hospitals.

The fire gained headway in a manner that was almost miraculous. The alarm was turned in a few minutes before 2 o'clock, and by the time the first of the fire apparatus reached the scene the flames had spread from the sidewalk to the saloon occupied by Smith & Savage, and from there to the adjoining structures on each side and in the rear. Second and third alarms were quickly turned in. Quite a little difficulty was experienced in getting water, and before the work of subduing the flames had fairly started they had spread for fully 50 feet each way from the starting point.

It was seen that it would be an impossibility to save the burning buildings in the center of the block, and the firemen directed their efforts toward stopping the course of the flames. At the north end of the block the men made a stand at the Rising Sun hotel, and all the

available streams of water were poured over the building occupied by Charles Kannara, adjoining it on the south.

In spite of all efforts, it seemed that the flames could not be controlled, and they had reached the roof of the hotel when assistance came in the form of an additional stream of water from the tug Lyon, which had anchored in the slip across Lake avenue and run out a line of hose. A few minutes later the flames at that corner of the district were under control.

At the south end of the block the men under Second Assistant Chief Boynton were not so successful in their efforts to subdue the flames. Their first stand was made to the north of the building occupied by James Dingwall, but the fire proved too fierce for them, and they were driven back repeatedly until they reached the Empire hotel at 278 Lake avenue south. There a small building and a vacant space gave them a chance to fight the flames from the front and side, and they succeeded in stopping the fire fiend.

On St. Croix avenue the flames were subdued on lines that were almost parallel with the final stands that had been made by the firemen on Lake avenue. While the buildings on St. Croix avenue were not so large as those on Lake avenue, they were more numerous and as dry a tinder, and burned like powder, and it was here that the people suffered most, for the flames spread so rapidly that but few of them had time to save even their small personal effects.

At the north end of the block a one-story building occupied by H. Hill's grocery store formed a fort for the firemen, and the flames were stopped there, but not until the building had suffered considerable damage. At the south end of the block the fire was gotten under control after it had partly destroyed a tenement house, 262 St. Croix avenue, owned by Mayor Truelsen. The fire burned fiercely for more than two hours, and it was not until after 5 o'clock that it was fully under control, and even after that the firemen remained and poured water on the burning ruins.

The loss will be a heavy one, for the reason that insurance rates were so high in that district that but little of the property was insured, and the spread of the fire was so rapid that but few of the people had time to save their property.

On Lake avenue the buildings burned included seven saloons, several restaurants and stores and a few vacant houses. The saloons burned were owned by James Dingwall, Smith & Savage, William Poirier, Davidson & Mattson, Charles Hill, Mike Lati and August Singer. Aside from a few liquors saved, the loss at each of the saloons was total, and, as far as could be learned, little or no insurance was carried. The candy store of Maggie Davidson was destroyed, with its contents, and no insurance.

James Dingwall, at 251 and 266 Lake avenue, lost almost everything in his boarding house and saloon. He said last night that his loss would reach \$2,000, and that he had no insurance.

Thomas Trevillion carried but \$750 insurance on his \$5,000 stock of groceries, and he saved but a small part of his stock.

Among the other losses where there was no insurance were those of the Pacific restaurant, Stevenson's bakery, the Klondike restaurant, Stencil's barber shop, S. G. Christopher, jewelry store and boarding house; Louis Goldberg, clothing; Jennie Adams, restaurant; Mrs. Joseph Evrns, residence and store building; Sing Wing, Chinese laundry; Henry Cheeser, meat market, and Charles Kannara, cigar store and factory.

In all the above instances the loss was total, excepting that some saved a few personal effects and small trinkets.

Three or four vacant store buildings were destroyed. One of these was owned by Charles Banks, and was not insured. Two belonged to the Liedels, and were not insured. The building occupied by James Dingwall was also owned by the Liedels, and on this they carried \$300 insurance in the Merchants of New Jersey. The building at 210 Lake avenue was owned by Charles Ruella, and was insured for \$700 in the Queen and \$200 in the British America. The vacant building at 221 Lake avenue, formerly occupied by M. Timlin and insured by him, carries \$1,000 in the Norwich union.

The Rising Sun hotel, owned by William Lawrence, was only slightly damaged, but the contents suffered from water to quite an extent. The loss there is fully covered, as Mr. Lawrence carried \$2,000, distributed as follows: \$500 in the Insurance Company of North America, \$300 in the Philadelphia Underwriters, \$1,000 in the Queen, \$500 in the Niagara, and \$500 in the Merchants of New Jersey.

On St. Croix avenue and St. Croix alley the loss falls heaviest on Mrs. Brown, Mayor Truelsen, Johnson Brothers, Capt. Joe Lloyd, L. McLain, Charles Banks, Morris Demeke and H. Hill. As far as could be learned, none of them carried insurance. Mrs. Brown owned and occupied one of the best residences in the burned district, and lost everything. Three of the four buildings owned by Mayor Truelsen were destroyed, and the fourth was damaged to such an extent that it is almost a total loss. Johnson Brothers owned a grocery store on St. Croix avenue, and saved but a small

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part of their stock. Capt. Lloyd, L. McLain and Charles Banks lost several small buildings.

In addition to the above, there were fully 20 small shacks along St. Croix avenue and alley, occupied by Poles and Jews, that were wiped out of existence. The ground on which they stood is almost all owned by the Western Land association, but has been leased out in small lots, and it was impossible to find the owners of the buildings that had been erected. In most instances they were mere shacks, but they served as homes for the people, who not only lost their homes, but in many cases all their belongings. It was rumored that one Jewish family had left a small boy locked up in its home, and that the boy had been burned, but a diligent search among the people failed to confirm the report.

In many instances the flames spread so rapidly that people were compelled to abandon their belongings even after they had been taken out of the houses. In one case a lot of furniture had been piled on a wagon and as it was being hauled away it caught fire and had to be thrown off and was burned. Bed clothing caught fire as the owners were carrying it out of their homes and had to be thrown back in the flames.

Thieves were abroad during the fire and the police received several reports that goods had been stolen. In the midst of the fire two men in row boats rowed to a pile of goods that had been piled up near the water's edge. The goods were quickly placed in the boats, the people on shore not interfering as they supposed the stuff belonged to the men, and the men rowed away. A few moments later the owners appeared but the men were out of sight and no trace of them could be found.

Two or three of the firemen were slightly injured but none seriously. A Mrs. Christenson, who lived on St. Croix avenue, was removed to St. Luke's hospital suffering from hysteria. She had given birth to a baby but a day or two before. There were a number of narrow escapes from electric wires which burned through and fell to the ground but nobody was hurt and the danger was quickly removed by the linemen cutting the wires.

The scene of the fire last night was a desolate one. The electric light current had been destroyed and the only light came from the burning embers in the midst of the ruins. Between 8 and 9 o'clock a few drops of rain fell and it was believed for a time that the burning ruins would be quenched in that way but the hopes were not realized and until a late hour this morning the firemen were busy throwing streams of water on the ruins. Once or twice the flames broke out fiercely but were subdued. Thousands of people visited the ruins after the supper hour but there was little to see. The people that had saved their belongings were engaged in carting them away to a place of safety and others that had lost their all stood about in groups talking of the fire.

All possible efforts to help the people that had been burned out were made last night by the police department and charitably inclined citizens. A number were cared for at the Bethel and several carried their goods to Turner hall and passed the night there. Many had friends in the Jewish settlement on the hill near Fourth avenue east and spent the night there and others moved their belongings to vacant rooms in various parts of the city. Mayor Truelsen issued instructions to the police to provide a place for all that applied but there were only a few that asked help from the police.

The Bethel has assumed the work of providing for those that lost all their belongings and it is asked that everybody that has bedding or clothes of any description take them to the Bethel and they will be distributed among the people from there.

A number of complaints were heard last night in connection with the fighting of the fire. Many people were heard to say that the fire should have been stopped at the south end of the block before it reached the Dingwall house. Ex-Alderman Trevilion, in speaking of the matter, said:

"I am fully convinced that that fire should have been stopped before it reached the Dingwall house and had the men been properly directed it could have been done. There was a vacant lot just north of Dingwall's place and had the firemen gone in there and fought the fire from the side it could have been stopped. It was useless to fight it from the front for it was impossible to save anything in the middle of the block but the men persisted in remaining in the street and while they threw streams of water there the fire was eating its way along behind and before it was discovered had gained such a headway that it could not be controlled until it had burned at least four buildings that should have been saved."

Chief Elack did not take kindly to the remarks made by ex-Alderman Trevilion.

When seen he said:

"I think we made a very fair showing against this fire, although it is undoubtedly a bad one. I did not have hose and did not have men to fight such a blaze. I cannot understand how it obtained the headway that it did before we reached it. It hardly seems possible that an immediate alarm was turned in after the discovery for we made a quick run and when we reached the middle of the district that is now burned at least five of the fronts were blazing fiercely and the flames were spreading to the sides and to the rear at a rapid rate. Practically speaking we had only the streams from the three engines to fight with for the pressure was poor and the other streams from the hydrants would have been absolutely useless without the engine streams. We fought the fire to the best of our ability."

The telephone wires were knocked down on Lake avenue yesterday during the fire, and communication was cut off with the Singer tug office and other places in that part of town near the canal. The tug company established a temporary office on the Northwestern coal dock. It is expected that the wires will be working as usual today.

Mrs. P. H. Oswald, president of the Ladies' Hebrew Aid society, was active yesterday afternoon in directing relief and arranging for further assistance in connection with the other relief societies.