

TWO VALUABLE BLOCKS BURNED TUESDAY

Magnificent Bruce Opera House Building and Northup Block Are in Ashes—Enterprising Merchants Put Out of Business.

GOOD WORK DONE BY THE FIREMEN

Help Sent Us from Oneida and Syracuse—Most Disastrous Fire in Many Years—John W. Stanton Will Not Rebuild the Opera House—Losses Total \$139,800 and Insurance About Half.

Canastota was visited by one of the most disastrous fires in its history Tuesday morning. In two short hours between 4:30 and 6:30, the magnificent three story Bruce block containing the finest theater in Madison county, three stores, four offices and a large hall was reduced to a heap of smoldering ruins.

The two story double brick block next south of the Bruce block was gutted by the fire and the north half is completely gone. The north half was owned by Mrs. Margaret Northup while the south half which is only partially destroyed, is the property of Mrs. William Groat.

When the fire broke out there was a stiff west wind that carried burning embers a long distance and Chief Thomas Hollinger, of the fire department, fearing that the local department could not control the fire, asked aid from Oneida and Syracuse, which was promptly sent.

The Canastota firemen worked like Trojans and by the time the visiting firemen got into action they had the fire under control.

Six of our leading merchants are out of business. In the Bruce block Frank E. Davis's big department store occupied the north front store and two smaller stores in the rear of the block. All his departments were well filled with fall and winter goods. He estimates his loss at \$21,000.

Next south was a small front store occupied by George W. Vreeland, with a stock of clothing and men's furnishings. He valued his stock at \$3,000.

The large south store in the Bruce block was occupied by Mrs. Clara N. Plopper who had a stock of ladies' furnishings and fancy goods valued at about \$3,000. Miss Mary M. Clow occupied part of this store with a stock of millinery and her loss is about a hundred dollars.

John E. Braden occupied a store in the Northup block and his loss is about \$100. This is a total loss of \$139,800.

E. J. Clark's Bazaar in the Groat block is almost a total loss from water. Seven years ago a one story addition fifty feet long was built, making the store 120 feet in length. Mr. Clark had an immense stock of dry goods, ladies' furnishings, cloaks and furs. He estimates the value of his stock at \$18,000. What the salvage will be cannot be known until the insurance adjusters get to work.

The tenants in the offices on the second floor of the Bruce building who lost their all were Hamilton Farnham, coal office; H. G. Jaquay, insurance; E. H. Rose, insurance; Geo. W. Chapman, law office; Vincent Clemente, tailor.

In the Northup-Groat block the tenants were J. L. Robertson, law office; Justice of the Peace, J. H. Bell, office; John Garlick, barber shop; Mrs. Florence Hart, living apartments. The loss of John Garlick and Mrs. Hart in the south half of the block is only partial. Robertson and Bell lost nearly everything. Mr. Robertson saved his typewriter and a few books.

There were four or five safes in the Bruce block and three in the Northup block all of which went into the basements. It is believed that the contents of all of them will be found uninjured.

HOW THE FIRE STARTED.

The fire evidently started somewhere in the center of the Bruce block, but whether in the basement of the first floor or under the front of the stage, it is hard to say. It was about half past four when it was first discovered and those who saw it first located it according to their point of view.

Paul Lovell hostler at L. W. Rousseau's stable was awakened by smoke about 4:30 and he says it looked to him as if the fire was then in the breeding rooms on second floor of the opera house. The porter at the Two House says he was watching a man in the back yard when two men ran through the alley known as

Commerce street and another "There's a fire back here! What's your fire alarm?" Patrolman Carmon who was on night duty said that he discovered the fire about 4:30 and that it then seemed to be confined to the back part of the Plopper store.

George Lunn who has been janitor of the Bruce block since Nov. 1st says that he visited the building about nine o'clock Monday night and banked the fires under the two hot water boilers, which furnished heat for the block. Everything was all right then and he does not think the fire could have come from the boilers. Just how the fire started will probably never be definitely known but from the different stories told it appears that it originated in an inclosed alley or hall in the rear of Vreeland's store and between the stores of F. E. Davis and Mrs. Plopper.

This hall formerly extended to the rear of the block but a few years ago when Davis rented the south rear store partitions were put up cutting this hall in two parts and connecting the two rear stores. This left part of the hall shut off from the rear except that there were doors through the Davis partition used by occupants of the other stores in gaining the rear hall.

At any rate the fire had made such progress when it was discovered that there was no stopping it and the fine Opera House block was doomed. It took but a few precious minutes for the seething flames to envelop the whole building. At 5:50 the roof fell in and the rear wall tumbled outward just missing J. H. Lewis's livery barn. At the same time the south wall fell outward on the Northup block. Twenty-five minutes later the front wall fell inwards down to the first story thus relieving the firemen from the peril of being crushed under the tons of brick and stone.

With the falling of the Bruce block it was certain that J. H. Wilson's three story block next north would be saved, thanks to the thick fire wall. Just then flames began shooting up from the Northup block and the firemen turned their attention toward that building. With the roof broken through it was a hard fight but by climbing to the roof of the one story Ferry block occupied by Jones the druggist the firemen were able to get a stream directly above the fire and stayed its progress.

At 5:30 when the factory was closed look up the street at the opera house was situated with people running from the destruction.

the country for miles around was lighted up and many people thought the whole village was on fire.

That the disaster was not greater was due to the efficiency of the firemen and the fact that it had rained during the night and the flying brands did not readily ignite buildings on which they landed. The old Fiske and Gay houses directly across the street were in the greatest danger, but they have passed unscathed through every fire that Canastota has had and are pronounced fireproof.

Great concern was felt by most of our residents when they heard the alarm because of the dearth of water in our reservoir which is being cleaned. It so happened, however, that water had been turned into the reservoir last week and Frank Vibbert had been engaged Monday to

run the pumping plant nights to thus give continuous service. J. M. Barker, superintendent of the water works, and E. B. Jones, the regular engineer in charge of the pump, started for the pumping plant as soon as they heard the fire alarm. Jones was a foot but Claude Ellis hitched up and drove him to the place on the Lawyer farm where the pump is located in quick time. The pump was worked steadily to its full capacity till about noon when an accident occurred to the gasoline engine used for furnishing power which necessitated shutting down for repairs.

THE OPERA HOUSE BLOCK.

The Bruce block was built 21 years ago by Edom N. and Joseph W. Bruce who were the sons of one of the pioneer residents of Quality Hill. Its dimensions were 60 by 125 feet, three stories high. The Opera house had a seating capacity of about 1000 and was planned to be one of the finest theaters in Central New York. It was opened in the fall of 1888 by one of A. M. Palmer's companies direct from New York in "Jim the Penman." It was managed first by Will E. Grant, then for a term of years by E. J. Preston of Oneida and last season and this season by Dan J. Keene of Canastota. The last play in the house was Tempest and Sunshine Saturday evening. "St. Elmo" was to be presented there Thanksgiving eve.

The opera house part of the block was never a very paying investment and it is doubtful if Canastota will have another grand theatre for many long years.

The block was insured for \$100,000 and the insurance has been made from the fact that it has been built of fireproof material.

has been a great increase in the price of building materials and labor so that it could not be replaced today for less than \$60,000.

Some years after the block was built J. W. Bruce sold his share to his brother Edom N. and the latter on his death left it to his son-in-law John W. Stanton. Mr. Stanton said Tuesday morning that he should never rebuild the block.

SOME NARROW ESCAPES.

Howard King, one of the Oneida firemen received a bad scalp wound by falling brick. Only his heavy helmet saved him from what might have been a fatal blow. He was taken to the apartments of J. C. Skaden in the Bemiss flats and attended by a physician. He was taken home in J. H. McMahon's ambulance Tuesday afternoon.

Trustee William Dobson and several other men were removing books from J. L. Robertson's law office in the Northup block when the roof of the Bruce block fell in and the south wall fell outward crashing through the Northup block. It was a narrow escape for Mr. Dobson and the others and they made a hasty exit.

THE LOSSES

	Insurance	Value
J. W. Stanton, block	\$60,000	\$16,000
Margaret Northup, blk.	5,000	3,200
Mrs. W. R. Groat, blk.,	6,000	5,000
Frank E. Davis, goods	23,000	13,000
E. J. Clark, goods	18,000	12,000
G. W. Vreeland, goods	8,000	5,500
J. C. Skaden, goods	5,000	3,700
Mrs. Flepper, goods	3,000	1,500
Miss Clow, goods	1,500	700
J. L. Robertson, office	2,000	500
Hamilton Farnham, office	100	100
H. G. Jaquay, office	175	none
Geo. W. Chapman, office	200	none
E. H. Rose, office	300	300
V. Clemente, tailor	400	none
J. H. Bell, office	200	covered
John Garlick, barber	500	300
Mrs. Hart, furniture	300	300
J. W. Wilson, block	500	covered
J. W. Wilson, goods	500	"
J. J. Ingraman, Est., gds	2000	"
F. L. Hakes, goods	2000	"
Dr. F. B. Hewett, office	100	"
Dr. A. L. Reynolds, "	75	"
Bemiss & Co., block	200	"
L. D. Williams, furniture	50	"
J. L. Lewis, block	300	"
Total	\$139,800	\$62,100

SPARKS FROM THE FIRE

Before the fire was under control Farr Bros. protected the glass front of their block by covering it with large sheets of galvanized iron.

The Smith Premier Typewriter Company of Syracuse lost a new visible typewriter in Geo. W. Chapman's law office which had been sent him on approval the latter part of last week. Mr. Chapman also lost his typewriter

Canastota's fire chief was fortunately in prime condition and was placed on the north side of the canal in front of Frank Waldo's store with Magimer Harrington and Charles Lindley in charge. It gave good service and supplied enough water to keep the fire from spreading.

Canastota clergymen were early at the scene of the fire and were active in rendering such aid as they could. Rev. Father Flynn of St. Agatha's was first on the scene and Rev. V. S. Britten came shortly afterwards.

The sympathy of every Oneidan and of thousands of people elsewhere go out to their neighbors and friends in Canastota in the great loss which they sustained by fire Tuesday morning. It is a heavy blow to the village from which it will take a long time to recover. But the indomitable energy and well known courage of the Canastotans are assurance that they will take heart, and with still greater enterprise rebuild the burned district with structures better than before.—Oneida Dispatch

J. W. Wilson removed a large portion of the stock from his drug store before the fire was under control. He was burned out in the same location 25 years ago and he decided to save all he could this time. Fortunately however, his building escaped with little damage and the largest loss is by goods broken and injured in the hasty removal from the store. This is fully covered by insurance. Mr. Wilson started to move his safe out the back door but it broke down the rear steps and when the walls of the Bruce block fell it was covered with debris. C. J. Fowler, the jeweler, who occupies part of Wilson's store also moved out the most of his goods. The first outside assistance in response to Chief Hollinger's message for help came from Oneida. Chief Ernenwein and a detachment of ten men came in quick order with 1000 feet of hose. The hose and some of the men drove here with a Watson dumping wagon while most of the men came by automobile. The call to Syracuse was soon answered by sending steam fire engine No. 6, a hose wagon with 1000 feet of hose and 33 firemen in command of Assistant Chief Thomas F. Ryan. A special left Syracuse at 6 o'clock and made the run to Canastota in 35 minutes on track No. 1 on the Central. The engine was quickly unloaded and placed on the canal bank near the office of the Canastota Ctery Co. and by 7 o'clock two streams from it were being played on the fire.