

Republican Progress

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ANOTHER DISASTER!

BLOOMINGTON'S FIRES ARE
ALWAYS GREAT.

THE ENTIRE ORCHARD
BLOCK SWIFTLY AWAY!

On Tuesday morning of last week, at about 3 o'clock, an alarm of fire was sounded and people hurried from their beds to find the Orchard Block, which extended from College Avenue to Railroad st. and was bounded by 5th street and an alley running east and west, to be on fire. The fire began in a wood-shed belonging to the Orchard House, just west of Dobson's shop, and spread with startling rapidity. In fact it burned so quickly that there was no time to save the clothing of Mr. Beneckart's family. The ground was covered with a network of framework and wooden houses up to Beneckart's bakery block (at the east end of the Orchard building) and those frames being very old and dry, burned like paper. The wind was blowing freshly from the southwest, thus fanning the flame and driving them up to the Orchard block or south buildings occupied by Beneckart and the hotel. The fire was too large for a small department like ours to fight successfully, so the firemen turned their attention to the saving of the buildings adjacent on the north. By their persistent work the buildings which constituted the boundary line (Sodbury's and Stockwell's) were kept from taking fire, and thus the north half of the block was saved. The whole mass of buildings, frame and brick, seemed to be on fire in less time than it takes to tell it, and the heat was so intense that the firemen were driven from the eastern College Avenue to the little stream near Waldron's Tannery. George Beneckart's bakery and confectionery was on fire so quickly that nothing was saved excepting his father's tailoring tools and goods in the second story were also destroyed. Mr. B. had but \$700 of insurance on his stock, which alone was worth with tools and fixtures about \$3,000. The building was purchased by him of the Wilcox sisters, several years ago, for \$5,000, and he was just finishing its payment. He had no insurance on the building.

Frank Dobson's shop, with tools and material was total loss, and with but a \$400 insurance.

H. S. Bates, city treasurer and shoe shop, had no insurance. All the papers of his office were in a safe, and with a small amount of money, came out all right.

On the Orchard House there was not one dollar of insurance.

The firemen were exhausted by their long and arduous fight, but were cheered up by a noble band of ladies, who brewed coffee for them. The men who handle the nozzle have no pic-nic on an occasion like this, and take risks while others stand about with their hands in their pockets and refuse to carry light articles to places of safety, no matter how much women may plead with them to do so.

People seemed to be paralyzed, and did not act with that judgment that the occasion demanded, and so clothing, furniture, carpets, bedding, etc., were permitted to burn, and but a few dollars' worth were saved. Thus in a few moments almost everything that had accumulated in a large hotel through years of business and labor was swept away. It is a most complete and disheartening wreck. Mr. Orchard sr. is 26 years of age and he saved nothing—clothing nor bedding.

It is stated that a stove had been temporarily placed in the wood shed to keep warm some creatures that were being detained there till morning, and that the fire was in some manner communicated from that. At all events the stove and these "gentlemen" were there.

This is really the most disastrous fire that has ever occurred in the town, for the reason that the destruction is almost total and the insurance comparatively nothing.

Mr. Beneckart will erect a temporary room to do business in till spring, Dobson will build a shop, but the probability is that the Orchard House will never be rebuilt.

The losses are about as follows:

S. M. Orchard & Son, \$8,000
Geo. Beneckart-building, 3,500
" stock, 2,500
Frank Dobson, 1,400
H. S. Bates, 100
Chas. Hughes, 100
Jas. Thornton, 60
John Stockwell, 50

Total, \$15,600

AMOUNT OF INSURANCE

Geo. Beneckart, stock, \$700
Frank Dobson, 400
Chas. Hughes, 100

Total, \$1,200

Our readers will be interested in the re-publication of the fact that on the 16th of August, 1872, the entire north half of this block was destroyed by fire. At that time the block was constructed almost entirely of wood. The fire began in the first story of the building on

the corner which now belongs to Geo. Beneckart, and found its way into the Democrat office, in the second story; then it rapidly ate out the entire half square, leaving the huge walls of the Orchard Block intact from College Avenue to the depot front. Substantial brick buildings have taken the place of those destroyed, an ordinance being passed the week of the fire prescribing the first limits. From the Democrat, printed at the Progress office a few days afterwards, the following account of the fire is taken:

From the Democrat Extra of Aug. 17.
GREAT FIRE!

Small Square of Buildings
Destroyed:

Democrat Office among the Uniformates:

\$20,000 WORTH OF PROPERTY
BURNED:

On Friday morning last about 3 o'clock an alarm was sounded from the alarm at the Court House. The alarm was caused by the discovery of the fire in the second story of the building in which our office was situated on the corner of Fifth and Railroad Streets. It soon became evident that the entire building would be destroyed, and efforts were immediately made to prevent the spreading of the fire, but to avail. The fire spread from the frame building fronting on College Avenue, and from the large three story brick of Moran, Howe & Small, on the corner of College Avenue and Fifth Street; thus completing the destruction of the entire square between the College Avenue and the Railroad, and Fifth street, and the alley running past the Orchard House, containing fourteen business rooms.

The fire originating in the room immediately under the Democrat, the smoke and heat kept any one from gaining an entrance to that room, and the entire building was entirely destroyed. By the efforts of the Fire Company, a ladder was placed against the wall, which enabled them to get to a window near where our books were located, and by this effort they were saved. The front room of the second story was occupied as a sleeping room, the other two were vacant.

The first floor front room was occupied by H. Knauer as a confectionery and bakery. Most of his goods were saved; but the room fronting the depot was occupied as a saloon by O. Soudt. A large part of his goods were saved; but the room in the corner was burned; irretrievably.

The frame buildings on the east were owned by Joe M. Howe. The first room was occupied by Mike Smith as a hardware shop; the second by W. L. Bates as a shoe shop, and the third by C. A. Mobley as a notion store. Nearly all their goods were saved. The frame on the south fronting the depot, was owned by the Old Gold Estate. The first was occupied as a saloon by O. Soudt. A large part of his goods were saved; but the room in the corner was burned; irretrievably.

The frame buildings on the west were owned by Joe M. Howe. The first room

was occupied by Mike Smith as a hardware shop; the second by W. L. Bates as a shoe shop, and the third by C. A. Mobley as a notion store.

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