

West Side Fire Stresses Need For Low-Cost Housing



Three firemen pour a stream of water on the smoking, charred ruins in the rear of 1446 N. Missouri St.

Bewildered Victims of Roaring Flames Sift Through Ruins for Salvageable Property

By JOHN WILSON

Bewildered, homeless victims of a raging fire that swept through four West Side houses and a church today sifted through the ruins for salvageable property and sought places of refuge.

Whipped by a brisk wind, flames roared through the tinder-dry wooden structures of the 1400 block N. Missouri St. yesterday afternoon and threatened homes in a block-square area. None of the victims was injured.

Meanwhile, families probed charred and water-soaked ruins, retrieving photographs, muddy clothing and household necessities and supplied clothing to those who lost all their personal belongings.

Uncertain of Next Move Some of the victims spent the night with relatives and neighbors, but all agreed they were not sure what they would do eventually. "Guess we'll do the next best thing," one elderly man said, shaking his head.

The need for decent, low-cost housing—the objective of the Indianapolis Redevelopment Commission—is pointed up by the fire, according to Cleo Blackburn, Flanner House head, who surveyed the destruction with Mayor Peeler.

"People here live in jeopardy," said Mr. Blackburn. "This is the kind of thing we've been working for new housing for.

"I guess we must have a kind of thing like this to awaken the community. What if it had happened at night?"



Cleo Blackburn surveys damage . . . "Shows need for decent, low-cost housing."

St. a small nondescript black dog moved nervously back and forth near her charred kennel, keeping watch over her tiny puppy that died in the flames.

The mother dog kept would-be helpers away by her barking and snapping. Firemen, however, were able to remove the ruined kennel and uncovered another very much alive puppy.

Miss Mattie McGavock, 1442 N. Missouri St., was a luckier fire victim. She was able to save a few clothes, a bed and a radio.

She said she thought her house was still in a livable condition.

Worst hit were four families living in the Applied Christianity Home at 14446 N. Missouri St., where the fire apparently started. The two-story frame structure was nearly burned to the ground.

Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey Maxie said they had lost almost everything. They had been paying \$10 a week for two small rooms.

"We got to try to find us a place," Mr. Maxie said. "My wife is going to have a baby. I don't know what we're going to do."

Mrs. Leatha Yates, who lived in an adjoining room, said she was unable to salvage anything. She clutched a family snapshot she had removed from a charred dressing table.

"I guess I can stay with my mother-in-law until I can find a place," she said.

Human beings, however, were not the only homeless.

In the rear of 1443 N. Missouri

But maybe I'll go with friends," she said.

Edward Taylor, an elderly unemployed man, leaned on a trunk outside his former home at 1438 N. Missouri St. It was all he had saved except the clothing he wore.

"It seems that the city has forgotten about us all out here," he said bitterly. "I don't know of any fire inspections ever made out here."

He said his landlord came out only to collect the rent. "They don't care about the place," he said. "Only money."

Thomas Thompson, who lives

at 1434 N. Missouri St., considered his family very lucky. The fire narrowly missed spreading to his frame house.

"These people will have no place to go," he said, "but I guess there's nothing you can do about it. There's nothing better. You can only move to something worse."

The victims moved silently among the blackened remains. The question of where to go was uppermost in their minds, but they weren't sure how it was to be solved.

Police said the youngster was climbing over the side of the truck when he fell. Police did not hold Joe Kendricks, a city employee, who was driving the truck.

Survivors were the father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Everett Baldwin; two brothers and four sisters.

Police

Times State Service

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