

Fire Razes Young Picnic Pt. Home

The Weather

Fair tonight and Friday. Frost in some places tonight. Somewhat warm Friday. Light winds becoming briskly. Sun rose 5:27, Sun sets 6:27.

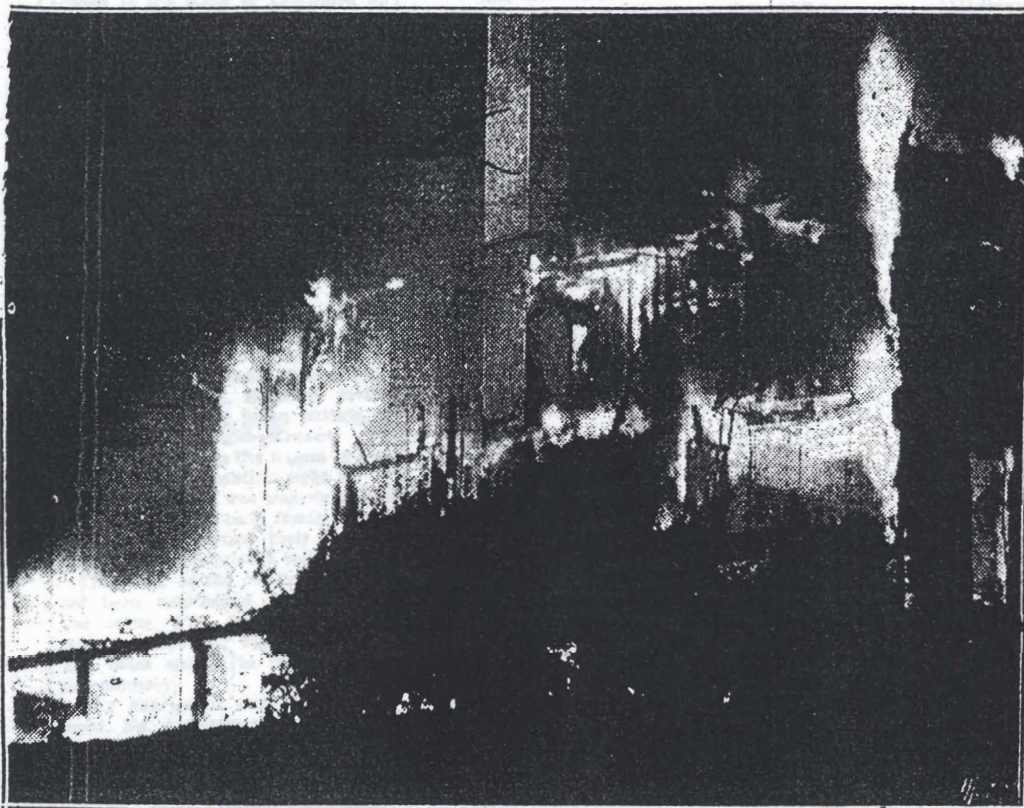
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Spectacular Fire Ruins Mansion



—Photo by McVicar Photo Service
The flame shrouded, Picnic Point mansion of Edward J. Young, lumberman, is shown here. The picture was taken last night while firemen vainly attempted to extinguish the fire which started in the attic of the 15-room house and swept through the entire building.

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Capital Times, pg 1 & 8
WHS microfilm

Family Rescued, Furniture Saved; Blaze Starts in Attic

By HERMAN P. LOCHNER
(Of The Capital Times Staff)

Fire last night destroyed the 15-room, Picnic Point mansion of Edward J. Young, lumberman, as firemen stood by helplessly, unable to secure sufficient water although Lake Mendota was but a short distance away.

The leaping flames and flying sparks were a spectacular sight for the thousands of Madisonians who rushed to the scene or who lined up along University dr., stood on hill tops or climbed to building roofs to view the burning building across University bay.

Young Escapes Death

Mr. Young and Charles F. Tomcany, member of No. 4 fire company, had narrow escapes from death in the fire.

Almost suffocated by smoke as he worked to save household effects, Mr. Young managed to stumble from the house where the fresh, outside air revived him.

Tomcany was carried from the blazing building when the oxygen burned from the air by the fire, he collapsed. Companions dragged him from the building. He also, revived quickly after being taken outside.

Beautiful Sight—Tragedy

The reflection in the waters of Lake Mendota was a beautiful sight for the spectators—but it was tragedy for the members of the Young family watching the flames destroy their home on one of Madison's famous scenic spots.

The cause of the conflagration has not been determined. After visiting the scene, Fire Chief John Lahm said electric wiring was not to blame. The blaze started in the attic near the chimney.

The Shorewood Hills fire department, No. 4 company from Madison and a pumper crew from Central station made ineffectual efforts to conquer the blaze. But after the supply of water carried in "booster" tanks on pumpers gave out, the blaze roared on practically unhindered, the single stream of water pumped through 3,000 feet of hose, from a supply source on University drive being of no more effect than a garden hose.

Carry Out Household Effects

While firemen and volunteers, under the direction of Lieut. Cecil Chase of No. 4 company, directed their attentions to the fire, another group, led by Dr. William J. Bleckwenn, chairman of the Shorewood Hills police and fire commission, safeguarded the household effects carried from the blazing building and lined up on the spacious lawns.

Dr. Bleckwenn at first directed fire fighting but, as he received reports of souvenir hunters looting among

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Young's Picnic Point Home Is Razed by Fire

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the saved effects, he organized a guard, deputizing several members of the crowd as special officers. The looting stopped.

Wife Smells Smoke

The fire was discovered about 7 last night. Mr. Young, his wife, three sons and daughters were sitting downstairs carrying on a general family conversation when Mrs. Young suddenly remarked:

"I smell smoke."

Moving about, she detected a stronger odor in the den on the first floor. Mr. Young, victim of a cold, was unable to smell the smoke until he went into the basement.

Then, he thought the furnace was the cause of the odor but he decided to investigate further.

He went to the second floor and found it rapidly filling with smoke.

The three fire fighting units and numerous friends in Shorewood Hills responded to his calls for help.

Rushes Family Out

Mr. Young rushed his family to the garage and then returned to the house to aid in salvaging furniture and personal belongings. His daughter, who had been counting the money in her little bank, wanted to return to the building to rescue her savings but she was required to stay in the garage.

The volunteers succeeded in carrying out most of the furniture and rugs on the first floor but none of the furnishings on the second and third floors were saved.

Members of the Young family escaped with only the clothing they wore, the balance of their garments being lost in the flames.

When it became apparent that the house was lost, Mr. Young took his wife and children to a local hotel. While he was en route to the hotel, Shorewood Hills residents sought him to offer him and his family sanctuary in their homes.

Can't Estimate Damage

Mr. Young declared he could not estimate the damage caused by the flames.

"No amount of money can replace what has been lost," he said.

The property was partially insured. When fire fighters arriving upon the scene, the blaze was confined to the attic although it was starting to break through the ceilings of rooms on the second floor.

The Shorewood Hills and No. 4 company pumpers were equipped with tanks containing 200 gallons of water each.

Lieut. Chase said the firemen slowly were gaining headway against the fire—and then the water supply gave out.

First, the Shorewood Hills pumper tank went dry and the No. 4 pumper continued in action while the Shorewood crew, led by Dr. Bleckwenn, sought a spot along the lake shore where a pumper could be placed in action to draw water from the lake.

But no such spot could be found. The Shorewood Hills unit then went to University drive half a mile from the blazing home.

Along University drive and along the night blackened, tree shaded lane leading to the Young home, the firemen stretched 3,000 feet of hose.

Flames Roar Unhindered

But, in the meantime, the No. 4 company pumper's tank went dry and, for several minutes, the flames roared on unhindered.

Before water again could be turned upon the house, the flames burst through the roof, advertising to the surrounding country and the city of Madison that the Young home was ablaze.

Then, the crowds began to gather. At first, only small groups stood about the lawns but the number of spectators increased until the Young estate was surrounded by a throng of persons—with a liberal sprinkling of Madison society.

Town and university folk took advantage of the opportunity to wander unhindered about the grounds which had been a favorite picnic spot until its acquisition by Mr. Young who barred the general public because, he said, shrubbery and trees were damaged.

But last night shrubbery close to the home was scorched by fire and holes were trampled in hedges lining drives as spectators broke through the bushes to seek favorable points from which to watch firemen throw their puny little stream of water upon the roaring flames.

Little Pressure Left

By the time the water went through 3,000 feet of hose, little pressure was left at the nozzle's end. The water from the hose barely cleared the housetop.

About the only part of the house that was saved was the kitchen. Firemen for a time, directed their entire attention to saving the kitchen wing because it was the last to catch afire and because it was apparent their meager water supply could not cope with the flames at other points.

Sparks Fly In Air

Piece by piece, the roof fell, causing thousands of sparks to float high in the air. Bit by bit, the walls succumbed to the flames.

But above all except the chimney, standing in defiance of the flames, was a steam radiator on the third floor of the central section of the house. It stood directly above an inside wall which ended at the ceiling of the second floor and caught the fancy of the crowd as it protruded above the blackened shell of the house after the roof above it plunged into the inferno below.

Then, to the accompaniment of gasps from the crowd and the whispered words, "There it goes," the radiator leaned over as its supports were burned away. It toppled, tearing loose from its connecting pipe and plunged into the flames.

After purchasing the Picnic Point property, Mr. Young eight years ago remodeled the old red farmhouse which stood upon it. Using only the frame of the old structure, he practically rebuilt the house, covering its frame sides with shingles.

Last night, Mr. Young said he could not tell what his future moves with regard to the property would be, that he had had no time to consider the matter.