

destroyed by fire 1913

F. C. Larsen's Store · 351-355 River Street

Reported in the Manistee Daily News

“At 3 o'clock this morning the inhabitants were greatly startled by the great volumes of smoke issuing from F.C. Larsen's big department store on the corner of River and Greenbush streets. The fire alarm was turned in and the fire department made a hasty run for the store, but before the flames could be checked the mammoth 3 story building and its contents were consumed. Chief Scott stationed the fire engine at the corner of River and Poplar streets and turned on five streams of water, which were kept until 9 o'clock before the flames could be subdued.



“The building burned furiously notwithstanding all the streams of water were pouring in on the flames. The Johnson tower clock which had informed the public many years of the correct time of day or night fell in about 6 o'clock and then the walls began to tumble in. The walls fell both ways at the northeast corner into the street into the building. Two or three men barely escaped being injured when the walls fell in. The fire is said to have caught in the basement. Mr. Larsen was awakened by the presence of smoke in his home which came thru pipes from the store. When he reached the store the front window in the clothing department was ablaze and from the appearance there it looked as though the flames be quickly subdued. It just simply burned with all those streams plying until the building was completely consumed. It was a big double three story building.

“The first floor was used on the west half for dry goods and millinery departments and on the east side for clothing and shoe departments. The second floor was used for a grocery, crockery, china, and hardware departments and a meat department in the new addition to the building. The third story was used as a furniture and carpet department. The fire communicated to the basements of the Fanatorium and the adjoining building. The fire fighters were kept at this point for several hours endeavoring to extinguish the blaze which had gained considerable headway before they knew that the fire had gotten in the basement of the building. The loss is estimated at between \$60,000 and \$70,000 and is insured at between \$45,000 and \$50,000. Mr. Larsen employed between 35 and 40 persons in his mammoth store. Mr. Larsen will probably rebuild as soon as the insurance is adjusted.

“An explosion took place when one of the radiators exploded. Pieces of the radiators flew through the basement window of the Pearl Hotel and also through the south east show window of Harry J. Aaron's mammoth store building. A window in the third story was also broken. The firemen were served at lunch from the Pearl Hotel at 9 o'clock, consisting of hot coffee and sandwiches. It is needless to say the firefighters enjoyed the lunch.

“The handsome big clock which graced the tower over the big building has had rather a varying career. In 1893 it tolled off the time to the millions who attended the great world's fair in Chicago, being at that time in the Michigan building, and will be remembered by many who attended the fair. This morning at five o'clock while the big dials were being licked by the furious flames, it struck the hour of six and immediately tumbled into the ruins with the tower. The clock will be missed by the people of this city.

“Enough water has been poured into the ruins to float the Illinois, said a swarthy fireman who was laboring with the heavy hose, but the first is a stubborn one and may require as much more before it is checked.”