

# Western Carolina Democrat

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CONTAINS THREE TIMES MORE HENDERSON COUNTY NEWS THAN ANY OTHER PAPER

## ST. JOHN HOTEL BURNED SUNDAY MORNING INCENDIARISM SUSPECTED; LOSS COVERED BY \$25,000 INSURANCE; NO FATALITIES

OFFICERS MAKING INVESTIGATIONS OF FIRE WHICH BROKE OUT AFTER 2 O'CLOCK; PROPERTY OF R. D. WARRING OF ORLANDO, FLA., WHO RECENTLY LOCATED HERE; FIRE WORST IN CITY'S HISTORY AND THREATENED MANY BUILDINGS; ASHEVILLE CAME TO RESCUE; HOTEL CLOSED LAST WEEK; FIREMEN HIGHLY PRAISED.

Fire of unknown origin destroyed the St. John hotel Sunday morning from 2:30 to 4 o'clock and threatened the surrounding buildings.

The fire is believed to have been of incendiary origin, and State Deputy Fire Insurance Commissioner Frank Jordan and local officers have been investigating the matter.

The hotel was closed to guests during the past week. It contained only two occupants and they had to leave to safety.

The St. John contained 120 rooms, was four stories high with pebbledash finish, all of which was reduced to ashes within a remarkably short time.

Mr. Jordan and Chief Powers returned Tuesday from South Carolina where they went to interview a negro said to have been in the employ of the hotel, but they gathered no evidence sufficient to warrant an arrest. Investigations continue.

### Court House on Fire.

The small portions of wooden surface of the court house were not able to stand the test of the heat and after blistering for some time caught fire and the firemen had to play a stream of water on it for some time. The damage to the court house was slight.

Across Main street from the hotel about the same distance from the fire as was the court house, buildings began to smoke and water was necessary to keep them from blazing. The plate glass fronts were shattered and the greatest damage on that side of the street was to the front of Shepherd's undertaking establishment.

### Concrete Wall a Barrier.

About the same time that the court house was standing the test and the buildings across Main street were smoking, Mrs. C. E. Wilson's residence required a stream of water on it and despite all could be done fire started in one of the rooms. One of the chimneys of the hotel fell and crashed in a portion of Mrs. Wilson's porch. The heat about this time was making the buildings between the hotel and the Blue Ridge Inn smoke considerably and there was great fear that the Blue Ridge would also blaze, but the concrete wall of the Citizens National bank building helped wonderfully in checking the flames.

Capt. M. C. Toms, owner of that portion of the bank building that adjoined the hotel, says that his part of the building suffered damages that will probably total \$500. He said that the nine-inch re-inforced concrete wall stood the test perfectly except it was so hot that the thin coating of plastering on the inside blistered and fell off. The wooden portion of the building in the rear was burned and the glass fell out. The Quality Shop merchandise was damaged to some extent but Mrs. Parker said she felt fortunate indeed that the damages were so slight under the circumstances.

The fear was general that the fire would reach the Blue Ridge Inn and it was felt that if it did then the buildings near it across the street would burn.

### Built in 1837.

On Sunday morning the large number of people who had gathered during the fire returned in company with others until the crowd far exceeded in size any of the church and Sunday school congregations. The crowd, hardly broke during the whole day for the people never tired of the subject of the fire and its various details. They enjoyed, especially the older ones, telling the story of the establishment of the first hotel on the site by a Mr. Mills in 1837 when the town was incorporated or organized. The two chimneys nearest to Main street were originally in that old building that was erected nearly a century ago. Later the building was bought by Colonel Ripley and he owned it for thirty or more years. After that it repeatedly changed hands. About fifteen years ago C. E. Wilson built the late structure, which represents an outlay of what is estimated to be in the neighborhood of \$50,000, but the property in recent years has not brought that much, the consideration the last time being it is understood, \$24,000. The site on which the hotel stood, it is believed, would bring \$20,000.

Water Fell 18 Inches.

When the blaze was at its worst and all sections were in danger of breaking out of fear was expressed as to the water capacity.

The reservoir keeper didn't know of the fire until considerable water had been used but after his attention was attracted the water went down eight

teen inches in the reservoir. Some thought that at one time the pressure was weak, but the trouble was occasioned by having three hoses on one water line, which could not accommodate but two lines of hose with sufficient pressure.

### Firemen Highly Praised.

Nothing but praise has been heard with reference to the efficiency of the Hendersonville firemen in their efforts. They were put to the supreme test. It was a trying time for water in its greatest volume and to the best advantage was needed in many directions at the same time. The heat was intense but the firemen braved the situation with the result that some of them are suffering with blisters caused by the heat. No criticism of the firemen was heard whatever on the streets for the opinion prevailed that the test to which they were put was a crucial one.

### Rumors Float While Hotel Burns.

While the firemen were bravely fighting, their effort being supple-

There were no wind currents and heavy rain late Saturday afternoon had considerably dampened the wooden structures so as to somewhat check the flames. The re-inforced concrete walls of the Citizens National bank building, though they adjoin the St. John building and became intensely hot, stood the test and the bank building apparently was little damaged except for the rear of the store room occupied by the Quality Shop, a military establishment, the stock of which was slightly damaged by water which poured through the rear of the building, where the windows and doors were on fire.

### Call for Aid.

At one time when so many streams of water were needed in four directions where buildings were smoking from the intense heat, it looked as if the entire block would be burned and that the flames would spread across Main street, across Second avenue and to Mrs. Wilson's residence, and the near was so great that the city author-



Scene of the St. John hotel fire, showing corner on Main street and 2nd avenue after other parts of the building had fallen. After the alarm had been turned in at Asheville the blaze was observed from the watch tower of the Langren hotel. This picture and several others were produced by Photographer G. F. Donahoe.

mented by numbers of willing citizens, and the flames were lighting the skies so that the fire could be seen from Asheville, the people were discussing the origin of the fire. The belief was general that it was the work of incendiaries. Various rumors began to float through the large crowds during the day. The story went that five men were seen to leave the hotel from the front in an automobile that rolled up about 2:30 o'clock in the morning. Another man is reported as saying that just previous to this he saw a large light in the hotel. The fire bell rang about 2:30 and by 2:45 the central portion of the building was well enveloped in flames. Amazezment was expressed at the rapidity with which the flames spread in the earliest stages of the fire.

The rumors were so persistent that soon after the fire was placed under control officers were gathering information and State Deputy Fire Insurance Commissioner Frank Jordan of Asheville was soon on the scene.

Much Property Not Insured.

U. G. Staton, owner of the Blue Ridge Inn; Mrs. Wilson, and Captain Toms who owned property across the street in addition to a portion of the bank building, and Mrs. Parker, owner of the Quality Shop, are understood to have carried no insurance and they naturally didn't feel in high spirits when the blaze was in its most threatening stage.

\$25,000 Insurance.

The hotel was closed to guests during the past week. The owner is said to have recently made an effort to increase the insurance from ten or fifteen thousand dollars to \$30,000. A local agent is understood to have refused further insurance and to have given notice that if an aggregate insurance of \$30,000 was placed by others his company would cancel \$5,000 on the building. This is said to have been cancelled.

ties communicated with the Asheville fire department, which arranged to send a special train of fire fighters with their apparatus, but within an hour's time after the local department appeared on the scene the fire was practically under control. Despite this fact eleven men, mostly representing the Asheville fire department, came over in an automobile and a motorcycle and assisted the Hendersonville firemen.

The fire is believed to be the biggest in the history of Hendersonville. It was casting a bright glare over the city when first discovered and the central part of the big structure, which had a frontage of 150 feet on both Main street and Second avenue, had fallen in before the fire department arrived. The building was a wooden structure except for the outside surface, which was pebble dash. It did little good to play water on the main blaze and the firemen were busy trying to save nearby buildings, therefore within an hour's time the fire had done its greatest work and the huge chimneys were falling along with collapsing walls. One chimney crashed in on the porch of Mrs. Wilson's house.

### Prisoners Escaped.

About the time the court house caught on fire, the jail which also was opposite the hotel, appeared to be in danger and in order to avert a panic among the prisoners Sheriff Drake gathered them into the hallway which went dark when the Hendersonville Light and Power company cut off the lights of the city by reason of the many falling wires. When the lights went out, David Canath, who had been convicted of larceny at the past week of court, also went out, and he kept on going. The sheriff's force caught the prisoner Sunday afternoon near Sunda. The heat then became so intense at the jail that the sheriff marched his prisoners to the rear of the jail and

(Continued on last Page.)

## FRANK ISRAEL WANTS OFF THE CHAINGANG

Attorneys Vainly Plead for Change in Records so as to Afford Relief Pending Appeal; Ask for Thorough Investigation of Carter's Escape From Cell Which Israel Shared; Sheriff Drake Sticks to Original Statement; Also Want Shackles Removed.

Who got that \$500 Sheriff Drake said Frank Israel was heard to talk about in connection with A. Arthur Carter, who sawed out of jail.

Last week Sheriff Drake told the Democrat that Mrs. Drake heard Frank Israel who shared Carter's cell, say that he would "get that \$500 from Carter, buy his way off the chain gang, return to Hendersonville and do as he damned please."

That assertion threw fat in the fire but the sheriff is not taking any back water. No sir, he didn't say that the newspaper lied about it. He relies on what Mrs. Drake told him and he stands firmly by it despite the sharp replies he is said to have received from various sources, including one from Israel's attorney right out in open court.

### A Vehement Denial From Israel.

On Thursday Judge Ewart, representing Israel, who was then on the chaingang, having pleaded guilty to illicit whiskey operations as well as being found guilty by a jury, asked the court to make an investigation of the matter, and a very searching and thorough-going one he wanted. Judge W. F. Harding told Judge Ewart that he would hear him later in regard to the matter, and on Saturday Judge Ewart was given a hearing. Judge Ewart was very emphatic about the matter. He jerked up his coat sleeves about to his elbows and on behalf of Frank Israel and his wife "positively, emphatically and vehemently" denied any such statements from Frank Israel about the alleged \$500.

### Israel Doesn't Like Shackles.

He credited Carter with being able to deliver himself from the jail without the assistance of Israel, declaring that the former was one of the most notorious characters that had ever lighted in these parts. He said that his client had been persecuted, tortured and chained to the earth and greatly handicapped in his road service for the county by having to wear chains, which he wanted taken off. The judge wanted a thorough investigation of these matters. Judge Harding said that he was not inclined to bother with the chaingang affairs and in reply to some of Judge Ewart's remarks stated that he had not ordered the chaingang overseer to place chains on Israel but told him that it was his duty to be careful and take precautions against the escape of prisoners, thus exonerating himself and Solicitor Schenck in this matter. Judge Ewart having said that somebody had made himself or themselves mighty busy in having the chaingang overseer to come in and take a lecture as to keeping chains on Israel, who, he said, had been denied a "chain" bond. Judge Harding didn't order any investigation of the \$500 matter and the escape of Carter from the jail by sawing the bars. It was intimated that the grand jury had been discharged and that such if taken up, would have to be done at the next term of court. Sheriff Drake says he would welcome an investigation.

### Israel Wants Off Roads.

The odds are against Frank Israel and it seems as though he will have to build good roads, despite all his attorneys may do. They tried to get him off by changing the records, etc., but Judge Harding wouldn't order any changes. There was quite a noise in court about it Saturday and Solicitor Schenck stubbornly opposed any changes that would release Israel from road duty. The officers have been chasing Israel for a long time in connection with liquor troubles and about a year ago he was convicted and fined \$300 and required to furnish a \$1,000 bond to guarantee good behavior. By entering pleas of guilty at the last term of court his bond was automatically forfeited but since Israel submitted and the end sought had been gained, Solicitor Schenck agreed to relieve the bondsmen, but he declared Saturday if the matter had to be re-opened then he would re-open the bond matter and require the payment of the \$1,000. The talk of paying \$1,000 sounded none the best and the fury of the storm subsided somewhat.

### Did Lawyers "Slip-Up."

It appears that there was a bad "slip-up" in Israel's case. He was found guilty on Saturday, Oct. 10. He shared Carter's cell from Saturday until Monday and on Sunday night Carter escaped. On Monday Israel was sentenced to the roads for four months. He entered pleas of guilty in two other cases and some witnesses were introduced to show something about Israel's

## CITY CHURCHES UNITE IN GREAT REVIVAL TO BEGIN ON SUNDAY

REV. C. L. EVARTS, MEMBER OF CHAPMAN-ALEXANDER PARTY IN ASHEVILLE, TO LEAD MEETINGS WHICH WILL LAST FOR THREE WEEKS; SEASON OF SPIRITUAL PREPARATION NOW ON IN HENDERSONVILLE.

Preparations are in the making for the Chapman-Alexander meetings to be held in Hendersonville, beginning October 24. The program has been outlined, as will be seen below. Rev. C. L. Evarts, a member of the Chapman-Alexander revivalists, who opened a meeting Sunday at a big tabernacle built for the purpose in Asheville with the result that there were at the services on Sunday about 8,500, will conduct the meetings. In order that spiritual preparations may be made for the big meeting, prayer meetings are being held this week at the churches of Hendersonville. The first was held at the Presbyterian church of the city Tuesday night, another at the Methodist church on Wednesday night. It will be held at the East Baptist Thursday night and at the First Baptist on Friday night. Those who have arranged for the revival feel proud of the opportunity to have such an able man to take charge and the churches will make a united effort to make the meeting the most successful ever held in Hendersonville. It is understood that Dr. Chapman and Mr. Alexander will visit Hendersonville during the meeting. The program follows:

### TELEGRAM BEARING CARTER'S NAME RECEIVED FROM N. Y. C.

Advices Attorney Will Pay Him Later and Regrets Sudden and Unceremonious Departure.

A. Arthur Carter, the man wanted in various parts of the world under a number of aliases, and who sawed out of the Henderson county jail recently without taking time to tell his friends good-bye, has been heard from.

A telegram purporting to be signed by Carter and sent from New York has been received by Carter's attorney, requesting him to look after his interests, assuring him that pay will be coming later and expressing his keen regrets for such a sudden, unfriendly and unceremonious departure from Hendersonville.

Deputy Sheriff Allard Case covered the distance from Hendersonville to Macon, Ga., in an automobile, believing that he was on Carter's trail. He had nothing to give the press. In connection with the story of Carter's escape in last week's Democrat it was stated that the Philadelphia office said that he had offered his services to watch the jail, Sheriff Drake requests the Democrat to state this was true but that his services were offered for Friday night and not Sunday night, when Carter made his get-away.

### EAST FLAT ROCK NEWS.

We are glad to see Lloyd Goodman at school again after an absence of about two weeks on account of illness. Mr. R. K. Harris of Forest City has been visiting his daughter, Mrs. L. E. Fisher. Mrs. J. F. Goodman entertained very delightfully in honor of Misses Caldwell and Miller, two of our teachers. Mrs. Goodman also entertained the Philatheta-Baraca classes of Hendersonville last Friday night. About 30 people making the trip in automobiles enjoyed Mrs. Goodman's hospitality. Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Farr and son, Lloyd of Asheville are visiting friends here in their old home town.

Mr. J. F. Goodman spent one day last week in Tryon and Columbus, making the trip in his Overland. Miss Lella Ray of Woodruff, S. C., spent the week-end with Miss Caldwell at Mrs. J. F. Goodman's. Miss Belle Corriher of Hendersonville spent Saturday and Sunday with

All who will sing in the chorus choir please notify Dr. A. H. Morey, chairman Music Committee, and be present 30 minutes before the 7:30 p. m. services Sunday October 24th.

Officers Revival Committee. Rev. K. W. Cawthon, Chairman. F. E. Durfee, Sec'y and Treasurer. Chairman of Committees. Ushers—T. L. Durham. Music—Dr. A. H. Morey. Publicity—Vance, Norwood. Prayer Meetings—Rev. W. F. Womble.

Miss Miller at Mrs. J. F. Goodman's. Miss Katharine Goodman, who is attending the Normal in Asheville, is at home for a few days. Miss Sarah Caldwell visited in Hendersonville last week-end.



For a few seconds the court house was ablaze during the hotel fire.