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The German Hall Destroyed by Fire

The German hall was practically destroyed by fire shortly after noon last Sunday. A rehearsal for an entertainment to be given in the near future, was to have been held in the afternoon, and in order that the hall should be properly heated, the janitor built a fire in the furnace and then left the building. At the time of his departure everything was in good shape. A short time later the fire was discovered and reports of what happened from that time on, are very conflicting. When the fire was first discovered, the interior of the bar-room was all ablaze and those who have most carefully looked into the causes of the fire, are inclined to believe that an overheated register set fire to the floor. Some of those who arrived first at the scene opened an outside door and thus created a draft, causing the flames to spread very rapidly and soon the interior of the entire hall was ablaze. The fire alarm was sounded and although the thermometer registered in the neighborhood of zero a big crowd turned out. The fire department responded very promptly, but the history of this fire is one long chapter of troubles. A line of hose was laid from the hydrant at Third and Lane streets but no sooner had the water been turned on than the hose burst and the water had to be shut off. Another hose cart was brought and another connection made only to be followed by the same results. There was practically no water supply and it became apparent that the building was doomed. By this time the fire had gained such headway that it was possible only to remove a small part of the scenery and furniture through the stage entrance. Although handicapped by lack of water the fire boys worked bravely. Where ever water touched their rubber coats it froze instantly. Will Goldner, who was helping to handle a nozzle sustained a badly cut wrist from shattered window glass, and Fred Noah had his forehead badly cut in the same manner. Soon the flames broke through the roof, the timbers collapsed, the chimney fell in and there was nothing left standing but the bare brick walls. The crowd then dispersed, many carrying with them frozen ears as

mementos of the German hall fire. Building experts have examined the ruins and declare the outer walls are still sound and this being the case the twelve-hundred dollars insurance will be enough to rebuild the hall and after a settlement has been made with the insurance company steps will be taken in this direction.

The history of the German hall covers a period of over a quarter of a century. In 1878 a number of the German residents of Falls City organized a social club to be known as the Deutsche Gesellschaft, and having purchased lots on Morton street between Third and Fourth, they erected a small one-story building 20x30 feet in dimensions and this was the nucleus around which grew the more spacious hall that was destroyed by fire on last Sunday. F. Giese was the first president of the Deutsche Gesellschaft and among the charter members were Mr. Bertram, Wm. Mast, George Gerhardt, John King, Fred Fischer, C. Huber, Fred Weber, M. Gehling, E. Rau, F. Lange, P. H. Jussen, J. O. Wirth and Wm. Hoppe. When their first hall was finished it was here that they met for social recreation. Here at all times the mother tongue was spoken; here the tender associations of the Fatherland were recalled, old ties made stronger and the organization became in reality a Gessellschaft, or brotherhood. Others of our German citizenship sought admission and were received and the society grew and flourished until the hall became too small and an addition 20x30 feet was built. Mr. Bertram and Mr. Lange were the members of the building committee and the cost of construction was \$1375. For a few years this building proved an adequate home and then an increase in the membership and a desire to increase the scope of its social features, rendered still another enlarging of the building necessary. The new addition was 30x30 feet and was provided with a portable stage and a dancing floor. On this little stage was wrought the first beginning of the German hall theatricals which served to develop so much real ability and to produce a whole array of amateur actors. In those days it was

necessary to remove the portable stage before dancing could be indulged in—a process that proved laborious and unsatisfactory.

The constitution of the Deutsche Gessellschaft limited membership to those who could read, write and speak the German language. But others began to earnestly desire to participate in the pleasures which the brotherhood afforded its members, and in order that they might do so a sort of auxiliary association was organized. This new organization was known as the Arion Saengerbund—a double quartet of singers under the direction of Prof. Peterson. The original membership of the Arions was Wm. Albach, L. P. Wirth, Sigmund Spaeth, Peter Kaiser, Robt. F. T. Preusse, Ernest Bode, Irvin Bode and A. Diesner. The plan of entertainment adopted by the Arions necessitated a larger building and so an addition 20x30 feet with a wing 20x20 feet was constructed. What was the original German hall became only the stage in the new building. This stage was fitted with scenery and all the necessary paraphernalia. A fine dancing floor was provided, the building was heated by a furnace, and was in short, complete in every detail. The Arions were enabled to invite to these entertainments, many whom the constitution of the Gessellschaft excluded from the hall, and this together with the fact that the entertainments were always of a high order of merit, made the German hall a very popular place.

It was this hall that has been destroyed by fire and the many who have shared in its hospitality trust the indomitable courage of both the Deutsche Gessellschaft and the Arions will enable them to surmount this loss and that the German hall will be rebuilt.

LOCAL AND PERSONAL

J. S. Fuller of Verdon was in town Tuesday.

Grant Shubert of Shubert was in town Tuesday.

F. B. Huffman of Shubert was in town on business Tuesday.

Mrs. Will Wigton came down from Omaha Friday afternoon.

Lou Turner of Salem made a business trip to this city Tuesday.

On Monday and Tuesday the public schools were in session but part of the day owing to the trouble in keeping the school rooms properly warmed.

Rev. Elmer Ward Cole will close his work as pastor of the Christian church next Sunday. Subject of morning sermon "Can we Make Troubles Serve us," and the evening subject "Moses Discouragement." Rev. J. E. Holley successor to Rev. Cole, will sing a solo both morning and evening. The choir have prepared a special musical program for the evening service. You are given a most cordial invitation to attend these services.

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The ladies of the Presbyterian Kensington society and their friends will be entertained on Thursday, February 4th at the home of W. W. Leekins assisted by Mesdames. Boher and Harvey.

The cold weather has put a stop to work on the new mill, but the building is almost entirely enclosed and when work is resumed its completion will only be a matter of a short time.

The interior of Hargrave & Hargrave's clothing store is being redecorated and otherwise improved. When the workmen have finished, it will be a pretty fine looking place.

The toy merry-go-round on exhibition in the window at Kaiser & Harnacks is attracting much attention. It was made by Sigmund Spaeth and shows much ingenuity.

Frank Greenwald has had his name added to the sick list. He has been confined to his home the greater part of this week.

A big force of men has been at work cutting ice from the Culp lake. It is good ice and there is plenty of it.

Mrs. Pat Gunn was called to Chicago yesterday by a telegram announcing the serious illness of her father.

Hon. E. A. Tucker of Humboldt was in the city Tuesday attending district court.

J. H. McDowell came down from Tecumseh and spent Sunday in this city.

W. S. Metz, who has been seriously ill, is improving.