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Russ Hall Blaze Early Tragedy at College Here

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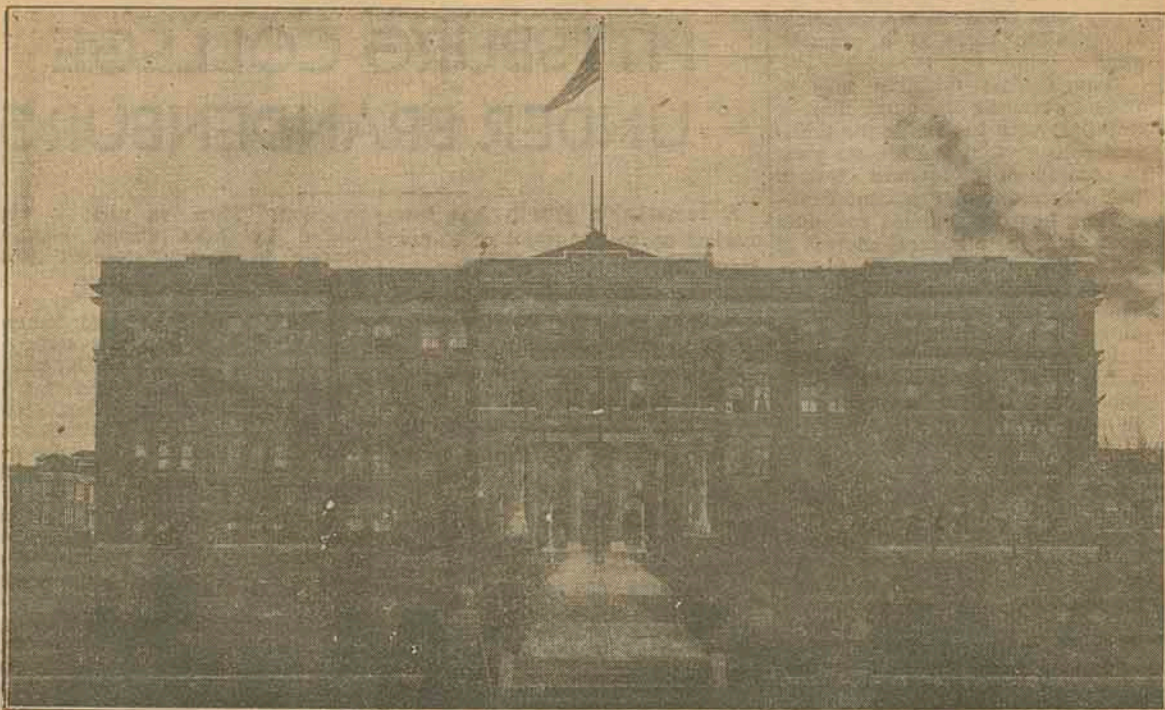
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Russ Hall



RUSS HALL BLAZE EARLY TRAGEDY AT COLLEGE HERE

One year after President Brandenburg assumed his duties as head of the College, occurred the now historic Russ Hall fire on June 29, 1914.

The fire was caused by lightning, which, according to the accepted theory, struck the building on the roof or entered the building along electric wires.

The fire was discovered at about 3:50 a. m. by J. H. Weare, a cabinet maker who was sleeping in the open air cafeteria. The fire companies made the long run to the College and aided by Mayor Skourup and about 100 citizens who rushed to the scene of the blaze, fought hours against the flames in a losing fight. Rex E. Tanner, an alumnus seeking to aid in fighting the blaze, was burned to death.

The gloom that spread at the word of the Russ hall fire was increased by the news of the Tanner tragedy.

Prof. J. A. G. Shirk, head of the physics department, said that he could not believe the fire was caused by the wiring. He held to the lightning theory. Professor Shirk said that every wire in the building

was laid in metal conduit and that wiring, because of that fact, was a highly improbable cause of the fire.

"I was awakened about 1:30 in the morning," J. H. Weare, the cabinet maker, said, "by the rain. About 3:50 I awoke again and saw an unusual glow in the sky. I went outside and saw the fire. In the southwest stairway of the main building was where the blaze seemed to be, concentrated on the two upper floors. I did not notice any flames from the roof. I hurried to the telephone and sent an alarm. When I returned, the windows of the building were breaking, and as soon as the wind caught the flames, they spread rapidly. Soon the whole interior of the building was a mass of flames."

Weare said he did not know what had caused the fire, but added that he was inclined to doubt that the building was struck by lightning because he did not hear the bolt strike and because the fire did not have its origin near the roof.

Two firemen, Clyde Miles and J. E. Sears, were underneath a falling wire, but neither man was severely injured. Miles suffered a burned

right hand, but bandaged it and continued fighting the flames. Sears was knocked over by the shock but was not badly injured.

Miles might have lost his life had not C. B. Sparks, a contractor who lived nearby, rushed up and pulled him from his dangerous position.

A loud explosion heralded the spread of the fire into the chemistry laboratories. Shortly after 7 a. m. a number of heavy articles on the upper floors fell through to the basement with a crash as the floors gave way, weakened by the fire.

President Brandenburg was one of the first on the scene. All night long he aided the firemen and did not return to his home until nearly noon to take food and obtain dry clothing.

Fire pressure used at the fire was 115 pounds, the greatest that had ever been used in the city, according to Commissioner Nichols.

The fire was followed by an immediate campaign to raise funds for the rebuilding of the hall. More than \$36,000 was subscribed in the city within 48 hours after the disaster.