

**Fire at the County Home, 1897**

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Our friends at Olivia Raney Local History library found this article about a fire at the old county home, as reported in the August 8, 1897 edition of the *News & Observer*. The home and farm was located on what appears to be the present-day site of Brooks Elementary School, on Northbrook Drive just west of Rampart Street. See the map included after the article.

**FIRE AT THE COUNTY HOME****Barn, Stables, Horses, Hogs, Tools and Vehicles Destroyed by Fire**

Between 10 and 12 o'clock Wednesday night the northern heavens were lurid. It was evident that there was a big fire in that direction, but it was not known until yesterday, when Mr. C. B. Ray, the superintendent of the County Home, reached the city, that it was property of the county that was being consumed.

The large barn and stables, with all their contents, were burned, and but for the prompt and heroic assistance of the people who live nearby, every building on the place would probably have been wiped out. The total loss is between \$2,000 and \$2,500, with only \$300 insurance.

The loss falls upon four different parties--the county of Wake, Supt. Ray, Overseer J. L. Pugh, and Mr. W. S. Ray.

The loss to the county is about \$2,000, consisting in three fine mules and one horse, nine hogs, one feed house and stables, one shed for wagons and a shed for buggies, two corn cribs, one cow stables, sixty barrels of corn, seventy-five bushels of Irish potatoes, all the plow and wagon harness, over three thousand pounds of shucks, one hundred shocks of oats, all the plows and harrows, a mower, a corn planter, a seed drill, a top buggy and harness.

Superintendent C. B. Ray lost a hand-made carriage and a set of harness, valued at \$100.

Mr. J. L. Pugh, the overseer of the farm, had his fine horse, a top buggy and harness destroyed in the fire. His loss is \$250.

Mr. W. S. Ray, who was spending the night with his brother, lost his mule, buggy and harness-worth \$200.

The \$300 insurance was on the feed house, in the North Carolina home Insurance Company, of this city. This building had been recently repaired.

Nothing was saved, such headway had the fire made before it was discovered, but two wagons and about two barrels of corn. The crib was a log building.

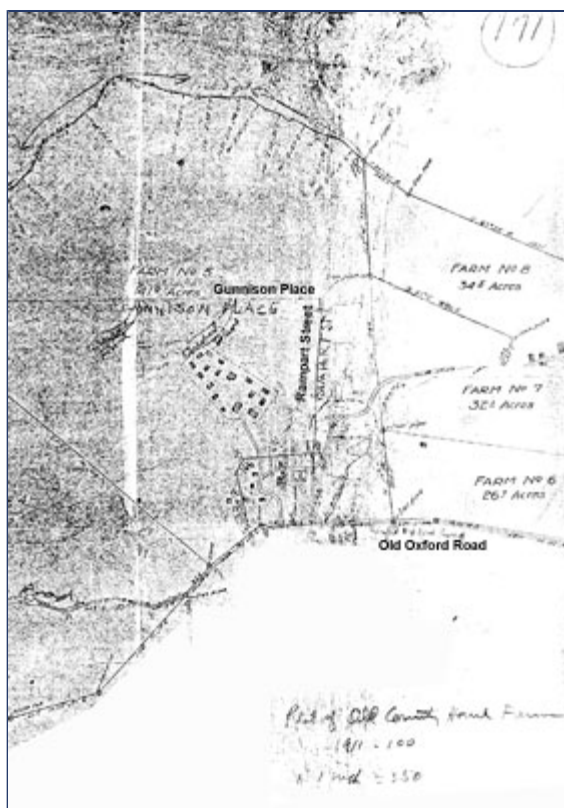
How the fire originated is a mystery. It seems to have caught among the shucks in the feed loft, as that part was wrapped in flames, when the fire was discovered, and feel in soon afterwards. And yet there had been no fire about the building, not even anyone smoking, so far as is known, and the loft was locked and no one had been in it for several days. Some suggest that it was spontaneous combustion, others think it may have been set afire by rats striking a match which they had found and carried there.

No one entertains the idea for a moment that the conflagration was the work of an incendiary. Mr. Ray says he sat in his porch, just in front of the burned building until 9:30 o'clock, and he neither saw any suspicious character around or any evidences of fire. It was 10:15 when the fire was discovered.

The first person to see it was a negro woman, who is a convict--a trusty. She called to another trusty, a man, and told him there was a fire. He rang the bell and gave the alarm. The building burned very rapidly and the fire it made was so intensely hot that no one could go near to save anything.

Men got upon the tops of the other buildings and by dint of the hardest kind of work kept them from catching fire. The tool house and house for trusties and a vary large storage house were in especial danger. The latter property would certainly had been lost had it not been for the prompt aid of the neighbors.

Click once or twice to enlarge this 1911 land map:



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**What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?**

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