

Pullen Memorial Baptist Church Burns, 1921

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Raleigh Times, April 23, 1921

FIRE DESTROYS PULLEN MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Rex Hospital and Wake County Clinic Endangered

FIREMEN PRAISED

Mayor's Automobile Badly Damaged In Race For More Gasoline To Feed Pumping Engine

RALEIGH had its biggest fire scare of the year Friday night when a spectacular blaze destroyed the Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, at Fayetteville and South streets, and for a time threatened to envelope the Wake county clinic, Rex Hospital, and residences in proximity to the church. Aided materially by the wind and rain, the firemen were able to confine the flames to the church by some of the best fire fighting seen in this city in some time. The damage to the church is estimated at \$20,000 with insurance about \$7,000.

Originating in the roof from probably defective electric wiring, the fire gave the firemen a stiff battle as flames had got a good start by the time the trucks arrived on the scene. The first alarm was sounded from a box that calls for a response from only two trucks. A second call, however, brought all the fire fighting apparatus.

Built partly of wood long ago, the church building burned rapidly and the first arrivals at once realized that the clinic and hospital were doomed unless unusually hard work of the firemen turned the tide. A hard rain fallen shortly before and a stiff wind from the south turned the roaring flames in another direction. The course of the wind, however, endangered the nurses home of the hospital and other large residences on Fayetteville Street.

Sizing up the situation quickly, Fire Chief Hubert Horton turned his attention to the clinic and hospital and centered nearly all his lines of hose on the adjoining buildings and the side of the church next to the apparently doomed structures. Half an hour after the alarm sounded, the clinic and hospital were out of danger and then the firemen poured water on the church building. An hour after the fire started, the church was in smoldering ruins, nothing but a shell remaining.

The blazed furnished RALEIGH people an opportunity to witness their first spectacular fire in several years. The high flames with large sparks shooting far into the sky attracted hundreds to the scene. Early arrivals, fearing for the safety of Rex Hospital, volunteered their assistance and helped the hospital authorities in transferring patients to a safety zone. All sick people on the second floor were carried to a part of the building where they could easily be removed in case the hospital caught fire. Commissioner Mooneyham was among those who helped at the hospital, while Sherwood Upchurch assisted in keeping automobiles off the fire hose.

King "8" Damaged

Although scores of automobiles violated the speed laws in rushing to the fire and endangered the lives of pedestrians, only one accident was reported. The King "8" roaster, used jointly by Fire Chief Horton and Mayor Eldridge, was driven against a telephone pole by Fireman J. C. Beck to avoid colliding with a Ford at the intersection of Martin and Salisbury streets. Beck was sent to headquarters for an additional supply of gasoline for the engine pumper as an emergency measure. Returning to the fire, a Ford dashed in front of him at the corner. It was either a case of hitting the Ford or dashing against the pole. Beck did the latter. The King roadster was badly damaged, but Beck was uninjured and only hesitated long enough to transfer his gasoline supply to another car in which he proceeded to the fire.

To Build a New Church

The destruction of Pullen Memorial Church will be followed by the early erection of a new house of worship by the congregation in the Western section of the city. Plans had already been completed for a new church on the corner of Hillsboro Street and Cox Avenue, but the construction program will now be hastened.

The burned church was originally erected by the late John Pullen and several additions were made in the past ten years. The congregation planned to use it as a mission after moving into the new church.

The work of Chief Horton and his firemen was highly praised. Miss N. P. Davidson, superintendent of Rex Hospital, thanked the department when she and the nurse called the firemen together after the fire. Citizens including ex-Chief Sherwood Brockwell and John Jones, former firemen, also showered their praise upon the chief. Brockwell and Jones aided in fighting the flames by controlling one line of hose while on top of the clinic building adjoining the church.

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