

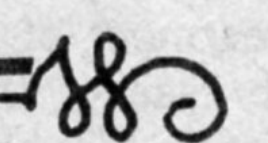
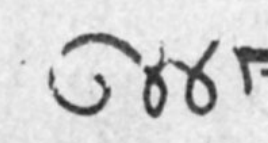
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Fire Destroys 2 Businesses, Damages 4 Others

Officials of the Edgerton Fire Department have been unable to determine the cause of a fire early Monday morning that destroyed most of the Comeback Inn and the Dairy Queen Brazier in Edgerton.

The blaze, which swept through the commercial complex in the 500 block of North Main Street, also severely damaged a floral shop and left smoke and water damage to the Blackhawk Credit Union, R&S Sports Equipment and Edgerton TV and Repair Service. The fire was reported by a passerby.

There were no injuries reported in the blaze, which fire officials say "completely gutted" the Comeback Inn and Dairy Queen restaurant. The flames completely destroyed the roof and much of the wall area surround-

ing the two businesses. Exact damage to equipment and furnishings was not yet apparent because much of it was covered by rubble and debris from the fire.

Firefighters responded to the blaze about 1:15 a.m. Monday and fought the fire for nearly seven hours before leaving the scene. Although officials have

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In a wire story released Tuesday, Edgerton Fire Chief Norman Yeske said an electrical short circuit could have triggered the blaze which broke out in the kitchen of the Comeback Inn. Yeske also estimated damages at \$300,000.

not been able to determine the exact cause of the fire, they believe the fire originated in the rear of the building.

"We believe it began in the roof over the general area of the two kitchens (the kitchens of the Dairy Queen and Comeback Inn are back to back)," said Robert Balke, assistant fire chief. "The fire had already burned through the roof when the fire department arrived. That was the only place where there was gas or heat at the time."

Balke said the fire burned only forwards and backwards once it reached the tar on the roof, citing that fire damage was basically restricted to the two restaurants and the floral shop in the center of the complex. Businesses to the left and right of the blaze received

only smoke and water damage.

"False ceilings" was a major obstacle in the firefighter's efforts to battle the fire, Balke said, as the fire spread through a crawl space between the ceiling and roof.

"False ceilings made it difficult for us to work," he said. "It made it extremely difficult to get at." Balke said the fire started between the two surfaces and there was little the fire department could do. "It just kept spreading," he added. Balke also said part of the roof would collapse and fall in and the layers of tar would act as a shield, preventing the water of the firefighters' hoses from reaching the flames.

The department, with 29 firefighters and three trucks, had the blaze under control at 6:30

a.m. and had poured about 150,000 gallons of water on the flames by 8:30 that morning.

Assistant fire chiefs Balke and Charles Edwardson agreed that it would be difficult to determine whether arson was a factor in the blaze.

"There was no way to know for sure," said Edwardson. "There was no way to get in there; everything was locked up."

Although fire officials could not estimate the amount of damage left by the inferno, Balke said the two restaurants were "totaled" in the fire.

"They are gutted right out," he said. "It totaled everything. They are out, out completely."

James North, the owner of the complex agreed with the fire department spokesman that the blaze resulted in a near total loss.

"There is not much to save the way it looks to me right now," he said.

North said he has no immediate plans to rebuild the complex.

"I really don't know how bad it is," he said, looking at the remains of the Dairy Queen. "I'll just have to wait until the fire is out and see what can be done."

North had no idea of the value of the building, but estimated the cost to rebuild would be at least \$250,000.

Parts of the Dairy Queen rubble was still smoking at 8:30 Monday morning.

"I can't really tell yet," said Ron Olestad, vice president of the Blackhawk Credit Union, concerning the damage to the Edgerton office. "There is not much as far as equipment damage, just a lot of water

damage." The credit union spokesman noted that part of the roof in a rear office area was caved in.

Olestad said the Edgerton office would be temporarily closed until the credit union can find a temporary residence. He also noted that no records were destroyed and customers will still be able to receive immediate service in Janesville.

"They will not be hurt as far as service is concerned, just the inconvenience of going to Janesville," he said.

Employees of the Janesville-based firm were removing records and equipment from the site at 8:30 Monday morning.

Fred Parkinson, proprietor of the Comeback Inn, was also unsure of the dollar amount of losses he suffered.

"I won't know until I get in there," he said. "The bar stools look good, but they are all water damaged and I can't use them. There is not much left." Concerning other furniture in the bar, Parkinson said, "I don't think there is much salvageable there."

Parkinson estimated he had over \$30,000 invested in the business and about \$3,000 tied up in liquor stock.

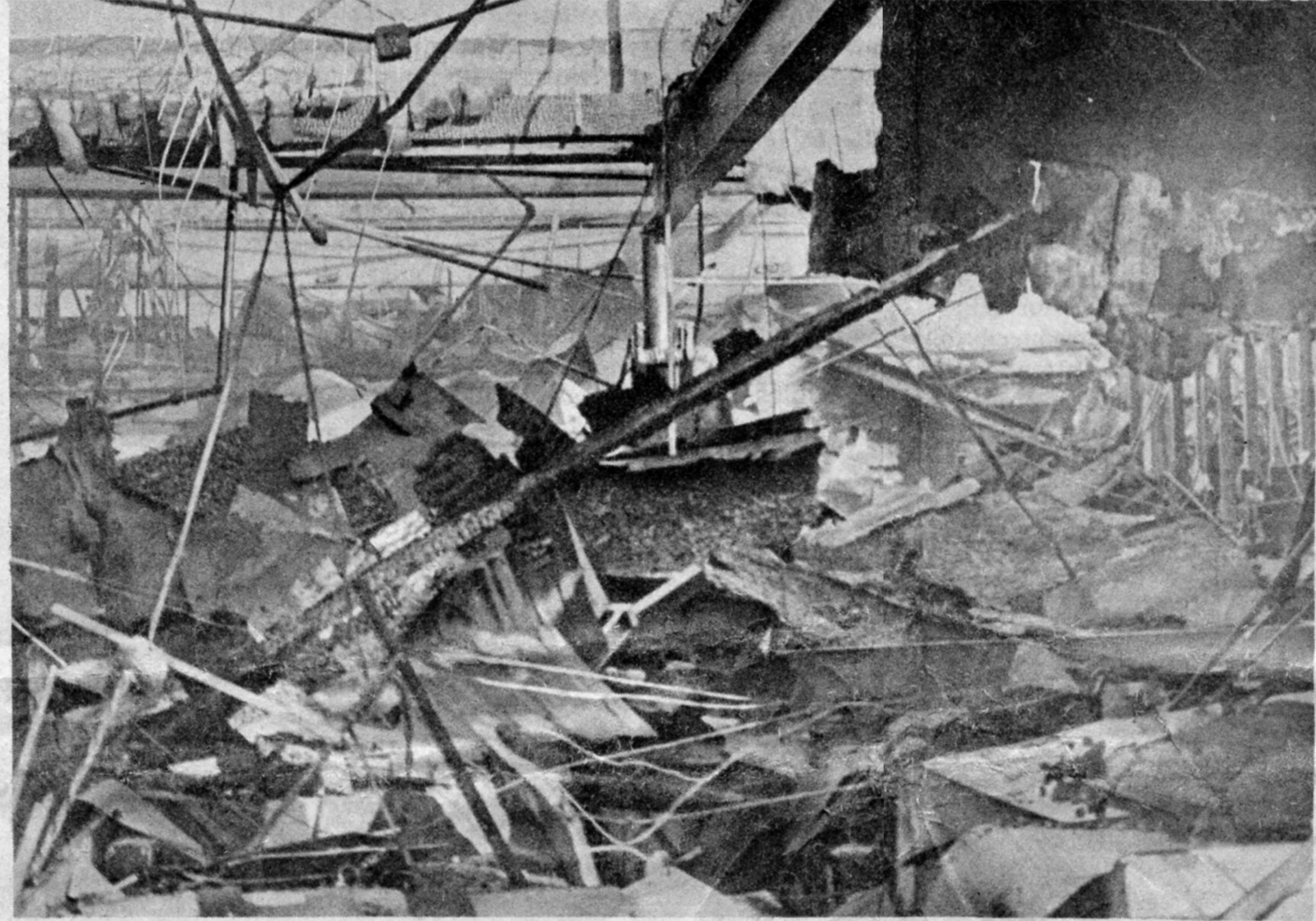
"I will have to check with the liquor commission, but I don't think you can use anything that was in a fire," he added.

Parkinson agreed that the fire probably put him out of business. When asked if he planned to rebuild the business, he said, "I

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Edgerton firefighters struggled with the blaze that virtually gutted the Comeback Inn and the Dairy Queen Restaurant for nearly seven hours Monday morning.



Probably hardest hit in Monday's fire was the Dairy Queen Brazier, 520 N. Main, which was nearly destroyed in the fire. After the roof crumbled, it became almost impossible to distinguish anything inside the restaurant.



The Comeback Inn was also left in shambles after the flames swept through the commercial complex housing five city businesses. Edgerton TV Repair Service, in an adjacent building, also received smoke and water damage in the blaze.