

Trailer Assembling Plant Burns.

A fire, the exact origin of which has not been fully determined, broke out in the assembling plant of the Highway Trailer company last Monday morning shortly after midnight and laid the entire building and its contents in ruins. The main building of the Highway Trailer with all its machinery and equipment, also the Continental Axle company building are intact, and the fire will not in any way impair the productive power of the two plants. All hands were at work Tuesday morning, not a man had to be laid off due to the loss of the assembling and storage plant, and the work will proceed without any interruption to fill orders now being worked by the company.

Officials of the company also stated that there is no grounds for any uneasiness on the part of owners of preferred stock, as that is fully protected, and that the earning power of the Highway Trailer has not been impaired by the loss of one building, as it was used purely for a storage for raw material, parts of trailers and finished trailers, and as a shipping plant.

The building which was destroyed by fire was a mammoth structure, one story high, except the first section which was two stories, with a floor space 850x165 feet, brick walls and wooden roof construction. The west portion of the third or fourth section was used for paint and paint material. According to the best information available, it was here that the fire started. It is reported that an explosion preceded the blaze and when the first flames shot out through the paint materials section there was nothing to stop the ignition in the roof construction which was already like a tinder in the broiling heat of the sun which for days had poured its rays upon it.

The fire alarm sounded, the Edgerton fire department responded promptly, and the Trailer management expressed its utmost satisfaction of the efficient work of the fire brigade. The main building was not even scorched, though there is only a good sized driveway space between the two buildings. The nearby wooden buildings were saved and the fire confined to the one building in which it started. The Stoughton fire truck came to lend assistance; it made a remarkably quick run from Stoughton to Edgerton, but all that could be done was to confine the fire to the assembling plant which by that time was wholly enveloped by flames.

The total insurance carried on building and stock was about \$100,000. The stock was amply covered, but there is a loss of approximately \$100,000 on the building. This insurance was all carried by local agencies.

Three carloads of trailers which were to be shipped out Tuesday morning were on the shipping floor. This order will have to be rebuilt at once.

There is practically no salvage in the materials stored, but the walls of the building are standing, and sufficient space to handle immediate needs of storage may be enclosed without any great outlay of money, and new sections added as space is needed.

Four hundred boxes of tobacco belonging to W. E. Hecht & Co. of Chicago was stored in the building; \$60,000 insurance on this lot fully covers the loss. This insurance was written by Henry Johnson.

As stated above, the operation of the Highway Trailer Co. will continue as before, and the productive power of the plant has not been impaired by the loss of one building. While everybody deplores the loss of this large and splendid structure, it is the one building, if one had to go, which can be spared with the least permanent loss to the Highway Trailer as an institution.

Information to the Public.

When the alarm was turned in at the time of the Trailer fire the electric pump started pumping with a pressure of 73 pounds, and this power was maintained 15 minutes. Then the current was thrown off. The steam boiler at this moment registered 60 pounds pressure, and pump No. 1 was started, shortly pump No. 2 was in service with a water pressure of 70 pounds, and the records show that this pressure was maintained during the time the fire was in progress. The shift from the electric to the steam power was immediate.

Jas. Reynolds,
Supt. City Water Works.

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The investigation into the causes of the Highway Trailer fire, when its large assembling plant was badly demolished, is officially closed. The report states that the fire undoubtedly was of accidental nature. This should set at rest any surmises and gossip about incendiarism and other unwarranted and unfounded rumors.

The second little blaze did no more damage than a fire in a waste paper basket, and it took about as much water to quench it as would be required in putting out a fire in an ordinary waste paper basket. The night watch rang the fire alarm, and the department responded, but it did not even connect the hose. The bloodhound episode in connection with this insignificant incident gave credence to the rumor that Edgerton had fire bugs, and that a near panic had seized the community. Most of this stuff is fiction. There is no panic, and the fire bug alarm is the result of too free play of a lively imagination.

The loss to the stockholders in the first fire is heavy, and it falls upon those who were the largest owners of common stock. The preferred stock is amply protected. The temporary loss of the assembling plant does not cripple the productive power of the Highway Trailer and Continental Axle Co. plants. They are intact, and operating as before. The assembling plant, or as much of it as is needed to meet the present requirements for storage and shipping, can be enclosed without heavy cost, as the walls and floor are there and in condition to serve as before. In fact the company is already at work putting in new windows and repairing roof damage of the front section of the building.

The wheels are humming, orders are received and filled, and work is progressing normally in the Trailer factories. The drag of the industrial slowdown which is universal at the present time, is felt also in the trailer industry, and for the time being, has put the Edgerton company on a 50 per cent production basis; but that is not serious. With the revival of business conditions generally, the trailer industry will pick up and find its pace.