

Buehler Fire 1930 Part 2

Several updates about the Buehler fire were added to the newspaper later in the day. The fire hydrant at the Turner Hall corner was found useless because of frost accumulation. Shriner Brothers had ordered another hearse, which they were expecting to arrive already on Tuesday.

The elevation south of the building afforded a natural amphitheater where hundreds watched the fire while looking right down on the roaring roof while being comfortably warmed. As usual some daring spectators pressed close to the burning structure until a warning pop of some gasoline tank would send the line of curious waving backward. In the old days there would have been terrifying cries from burning horses. During this fire the counterpart noises were the weird sounds of doomed auto horns, set screeching by short circuits caused by heat.

One man who lived just south of the fire hooked up his garden hose and kept wetting down the wall of his house. Another resident just north of the fire stood on top of his roof with a bucket of water, weirdly outlined in the glare. Nearby walls, cool in the 13-degree temperature, steamed in the heat of the flames; many mistook the steam to be smoke.

Friends of the firemen lugged great kettles of coffee to the fire lines from the Waffle Shop (current home of Sunrise Donut Cafe) and the Moose Lunch (currently Amy's Corner Cafe). There were plenty of calls for the hot stuff from spectators who went to the restaurants to warm up.

Officer Sam Jones said at the time he discovered the smoke he had no idea that the fire would take the entire building. He said that it all seemed to be in the west section, but while he was pulling the alarm the smoke traveled to all parts of the building.



This photo, cropped from one belonging to the Green County Historical Society, shows the Charles H. Buehler Company garage building that was destroyed by fire on February 17, 1930. This building would have been built after the William Becker fire in 1912, which was described in three columns in April of this year. The former George Spangler home is shown on the far right with the new William Becker building to the north of that.

Warren F. Turner, local manager of the Wisconsin Power and Light company, was a very busy man directing linemen to turn off dangerous current and snip wires here and there. Between times he had occasion to bemoan the loss of the "fine new Orange line bus owned by the company." Another bus was sent from Janesville and on the job the following morning to make the run from Monroe to Janesville.

Charles H. Buehler, owner of the building and a member of the fire department, did not even hear the siren and was late getting to the fire that leveled his property. Fortunately, Buehler's important records were kept in his safe and were not damaged.

This was the second alarm calling firemen to the Buehler garage within a two-week period. On Saturday, December 6, gasoline had spilled in the street as underground tanks were being filled; it ignited and set two curb pumps to blazing and cracked the garage window.

Charles H. Buehler, Jr., who operated the Pine Gardens indoor golf course in his father's building, happened to be out of town at the time. He and Wilbur Deininger had gone to Pontiac, Michigan, to drive

out the new GMC truck purchased by the county for snow removal and other purposes. Young Charles took much pride in the snappy little golf setup, so must have been disappointed when he got back to Monroe.

Chief Blumer was thankful that no men were seriously injured while fighting the fire. He gave orders against entering the smoking hot inferno. Some firemen ran nails through their boots, but the injuries were not believed to be serious. In addition Cap Mitchell, assistant police chief, got a disconcerting sock from a stream of water. He was floored and the impact of water against the side of his head impaired his hearing.

Chief Blumer was also president of the water board and was proud of the showing made by the city's new water pumping plant. He ordered the Diesel engine turned on at the start of the fire to supplement the electric pumper. With four leads of hose operating, the two waterworks pumpers still kept the Lincoln Park supply tank full to overflowing.

The Wisconsin Automobile Insurance Company, Monroe's home institution, was not especially hit hard by the garage fire, according to G. W. Wilkinson, president. The company expected to have no more than six losses in it, and Mr. Wilkinson stated that practically every day brings larger losses to the company from some point in the large area in which it serves.

P. J. Weirich, of the United Telephone Company, noted the size of the fire and was prepared for any emergency. He left orders to give preference on toll lines to any calls for outside fire department help, which were fortunately not needed.

Many thought that there was an injury to a fireman when a shout came into the crowd for Dr. W. B. Gnagi, Jr. He was rightly presumed to be at the fire when phoning his office and home did not reach him.

Three horses of the William A. Becker company were taken out of their stalls when the flames were dangerously close to them. They were treated during the day for the symptoms that they suffered because of the smoke. By afternoon they seemed to be recovering. It was feared that the reaction on their lungs could be damaging if they had been worked that day. They were being closely watched again on Tuesday. One of them, which they thought had been close to death from pneumonia on Monday, was doing better on Tuesday. Another that seemed fine on Monday was not doing so well on Tuesday.

The Tuesday edition of the newspaper predicted that the ice-encased ruins would probably remain undisturbed until spring. Mr. Buehler was busy with adjustments, but thought "there may be arrangements for rebuilding" in the spring.

Three injuries from the fire were known on Tuesday. Police Chief Mitchell suffered a broken ear drum from the spray of water. Sheriff Myron West had a lame back as a result of stepping off a roof. Fireman John M. Feifel injured his ankle.

The Wisconsin Cheese Group factory was at that location until mid-1972.