

Milwaukie Historical Society, Inc.

Milwaukie Museum
3737 S.E. Adams Street
Milwaukie, Oregon 97222

DISASTROUS BLAZE VISITS ROCK ISLAND

CLUB HOUSE DESTROYED BY FIRE FANNED BY HIGH WIND LAST WEDNESDAY NIGHT.

BRAVE WOMAN SAVES GRANDPARENT

BEATS DOWN DOOR AND DRAGS WOMAN AGED 82 TO PLACE OF SAFETY.

Rock Island, the Willamette river summer resort, is today but a blackened skeleton of its former self as a result of a disastrous blaze which swept the island last Wednesday afternoon.

The blaze was first noticed by Mrs. R. J. Smith, wife of the lessee, at about 3:30 p.m. At 4 o'clock the big club building was entirely consumed by the fire, the high northwestern winds and the dry timber in the building co-operating to bring about flash-like destruction.

Mrs. Smith, together with her grandmother, aged 82 years, was idling away time in the living rooms at the western end of the big building when peculiar and foreign noises first caught her attention. She had been playing the pinola and it was some time before she distinguished between the noises of the wind and the water of the past few days and the cracking of the fire. Going from the quarters to the dance hall she saw the peril in which both the grandmother and herself were in. The ceiling of the hall and room was ablaze and falling. She hastened her aged relative from the rooms through smoke and heat and into the basement, sometimes dragging the elderly woman. Exit from the front and side doors was entirely cut off and upon reaching the basement it looked for a time as if they were to be thwarted here too; the door was belted. A stick of cord wood vigorously applied broke down the door and gained for the trapped prisoners freedom and life. Mrs. Smith placed her grandmother in a position of safety and then entered the burning structure and succeeded in saving some clothing and family silverware, bed-linen and a few trinkets. A mandolin, an hierloom in the family was burned although Mrs. Smith tried repeated attempts to reach and save it.

The Smith family lost practically everything. The winter's supply of provisions and all their furniture and considerable stock of summer merchandise to the extent of \$3300 was burned. No insurance was carried on this although the building was insured.

The building was owned by the Portland Rowing Club from whom Mr. Smith leased. It was a big two story affair handsomly decorated and furnished

throughout and know far and near among pleasure loving excursionists. It was built in 1902 or 1903 by Peter Kerr for the old Rock Island Club and () sold to the present owners. The building and equipped resort was valued at \$35,000.

Mr. Smith, who was in Portland at the time, is of the opinion that defective wiring caused the fire. He says that from what he can learn from his wife the blaze started in the ceiling. Several weeks ago an inspector made an examination of the wiring and reported all well, but Smith is yet of the opinion that that was the cause. He says there no fire in the stove at the time.

It was first feared that the trees and foliage of the island were entirely ruined but Mr. Smith says that once the smoke cleared away he made an examination with the result that he has announced that only portions of the trees were touched by flames and that next season one will never know that a fire had visited the place from appearances. He will transplant and reseed where necessary.

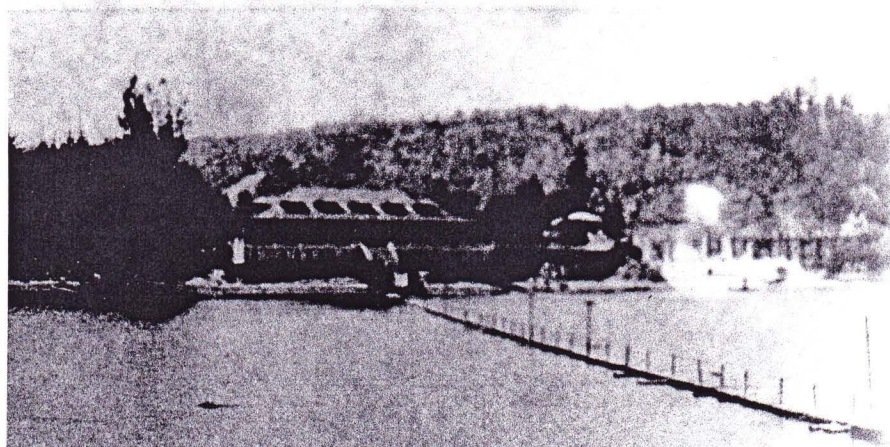
A new dancing hall, a sort of an open air pergola, will be constructed as well as numerous tent houses for camping purposes and the resort reopened in May as if nothing had happened. Fifty season reservations have already been made.

The fire attracted spectators from far and near. A press reporter and J.E. Keck were perhaps the first on the scene. The launch, Junita, operated in the summer as a ferry between the island and Milwaukie was taken from her winter moorings and hastened to the scene bearing the two mentioned. Arriving there nothing was to be found of the two women known to be on the premises and a hurried search was made and nothing learned of as to their whereabouts. In the meantime the women had taken a rowboat and gone to a neighboring home on this side of the Willamette and later Mrs. Smith returned to the () when the fear that she had perished was banished.

The effects saved from the were taken to Milwaukie and later to Portland to the house of a relative of the family where Mr. and Mrs. Smith and little son are now stopping.

Oregonian Nov. 23, 1916

TICKET OFFICE AND WAITING ROOM FIRST AND ALDEN STS



Rock Island Club, Island Station, Oregon City Division

E | ARRIVE | LEAVE | ARRIVE



Rock Island Club House, Milwaukie, Oregon

Christa M. McDonald

659-2998

MILWAUKIE MUSEUM
3737 S.E. Adams
Milwaukie, Oregon 97222

Let Whitcomb Island - Elk Rock Island - Peter Kerr Park

(recorded at Clackamas County Court House, Oregon City)

- B - 90 Queen V. Whitcomb to John Hagenburger
\$ 150.-- July 31, 1865
- 29/212 Frederick, Theodore N. and Hattie L. Hagenburger to
Charles Fisher \$ 400.-- March 18, 1887
- 47/371 Charles Fisher to Axel Reffling, Portland
\$ 1500.-- June 17, 1892
- 80/241 Axel Reffling - Sheriff took over Oct. 21, 1899.
collection of delinquent taxes, turned over to County.
Mr. Marley being the highest and best bidder, Paid \$ 9.95
- 90/398 P.H. Marley and Jessie V. Marley to Axel Reffling.
This was a quitclaim deed and does not give amount.
August 19, 1904, recorded August 26, 1904
- 102/430 Axel Reffling and Astrid Reffling to Rock Island Club
for 190 shares of said club, par value \$ 100.-- per
share, and the club also assumed \$ 6000.-- mortgage,
which was owed to : President and Trustees of Tualatin
Academy and Pacific University.
Recorded March 6, 1908
- 114/620 Rock Island Club to Peter Kerr, Trustee
\$ 30 000.-- (Mortgage still on it.)
March 19, 1910, recorded March 29, 1910
- 125/116 Trustee in bankruptcy of the estate of A. Reffling
by Thomas Kerr, \$ 250.00
April 2, 1912, recorded Oct. 15, 1912
- 154/289 Peter Kerr, Trustee for Henry L. Corbett, and Peter Kerr
and Laurie King Kerr, his wife, to Portland Rowing Club.
No price stated - but states a mortgage to S. Benson of
\$ 16 000.-- with restrictions : not to be used for immoral
purpose, no factory, mill, construction work, or any mer-
cantile or business use for 12 years.
December 4, 1918, recorded September 9, 1919.
- 171/110 Easement to Portland Railway Light and Power Co.
Placing, maintaining, repairing and operating wires for the
purpose of transmitting electrical energy for 5 year period
for \$ 25.-- per year.
May 24, 1923 recorded June 1, 1923.

- 176/488 Portland Rowing Club to Security Savings and Trust Co.
No amount given, also mortgage no amount given.
H.K. Senour October 20, 1924
- 177/261 Security Savings and Trust Co. to Peter Kerr.
No amount given Dec. 10, 1924, recorded Dec. 20, 1924
- 188/193 Release of easement. (Notice change in firm name!)
Portland Electric Power Co.
March 31, 1927, recorded April 12, 1927
- 206/257 239/303 Kerr Investment Co. to Peter Kerr and
Laurie King Kerr $\frac{1}{2}$ interest May 28, 1937
- 239/304 Kerr Investment Co. to Jane Kerr, $\frac{1}{2}$ interest,
May 28, 1937
- 239/305 Kerr Investment Co. to Anne Kerr McDonald
 $\frac{1}{2}$ interest, May 28, 1937
- April 15, 1937 Kerr Investment Co. dissolved, this was
shareholders distributions.
All three deeds recorded September 9, 1937.
- 276/59 Peter Kerr, Laurie King Kerr, husband & wife, and Anne
Kerr McDonald and James McDonald, husband & wife, and
Jane Kerr Platt and John W.S. Platt, her husband, to
City of Portland.
Nov. 30, 1940, recorded January 8, 1941