

March 20, 1914- Chester Times

HIGHLAND INN MASS OF RUINS

Summer Hotel at Secane, Owned by the Hazard Estate Destroyed by Fire
LOSS AMOUNTS TO \$20,000

Blaze Believed to Have Been Started by Tramps Seeking Shelter

The Highland Inn, a large three-story frame summer hotel, on Homestead Avenue, Secane, just west of Clifton Heights, was completely destroyed by fire early Sunday morning, causing a loss of \$20,000, partly covered by insurance. The fire started shortly before 2 o'clock and almost instantly the building was one mass of flames. The frame structure burned fiercely for about one hour, igniting several adjoining houses, but these properties were saved by a number of neighbors and citizens, who arrived early on the scene of the conflagration from Clifton Heights.

The residence of a Mrs. Kennedy who lived close by the destroyed building with her son were in this house and were not aware of the fire until Deputy Coroner George B. Frankfield, George Moore and Frank Black, of Clifton Heights, kicked at the door and aroused Mrs. Kennedy, her son and a boarder. A bucket brigade was formed and the building was saved from destruction.

The residence of Mrs. Louis Ladner, who resides with her sister, was also attacked by flames from the burning hotel and this was also saved by Joseph Schmitz and several citizens. Mr. Schmitz aroused the two women who were greatly frightened.

The Clifton Heights Hose, Hook and Ladder Company was summoned, and the firemen arrived with their hose apparatus, but there being no fire hydrants, the firemen were unable to do anything other than save adjoining property.

HEARD AN EXPLOSION

Joseph Schmitz, who lives about 300 feet from the destroyed hotel, was the first to discover the fire. Mr. Schmitz was awakened by a report, which he said sounded like an explosion. He arose, and looking out of his bedroom window, he saw flames issuing from the center of the building. He quickly donned his clothes, and fired several volleys from his shot gun, in order to arouse the neighbors who were slumbering. Mr. Schmitz then gave instructions to his wife to telephone to the neighbors and neighboring fire companies.

A few minutes later people flocked to the scene of the fire, which lighted the sky for several miles and which brought a number of men from Morton and Folsom to the scene.

The cause of the fire is not known, though it is believed that the building was set on fire by tramps. The property which is owned by the Highland estate, had been unoccupied for some time. Joseph Schmitz, however, is of the opinion that the fire started from the gas plant, which was located in the center of the building, and that the tremors of the explosion emanated from there.