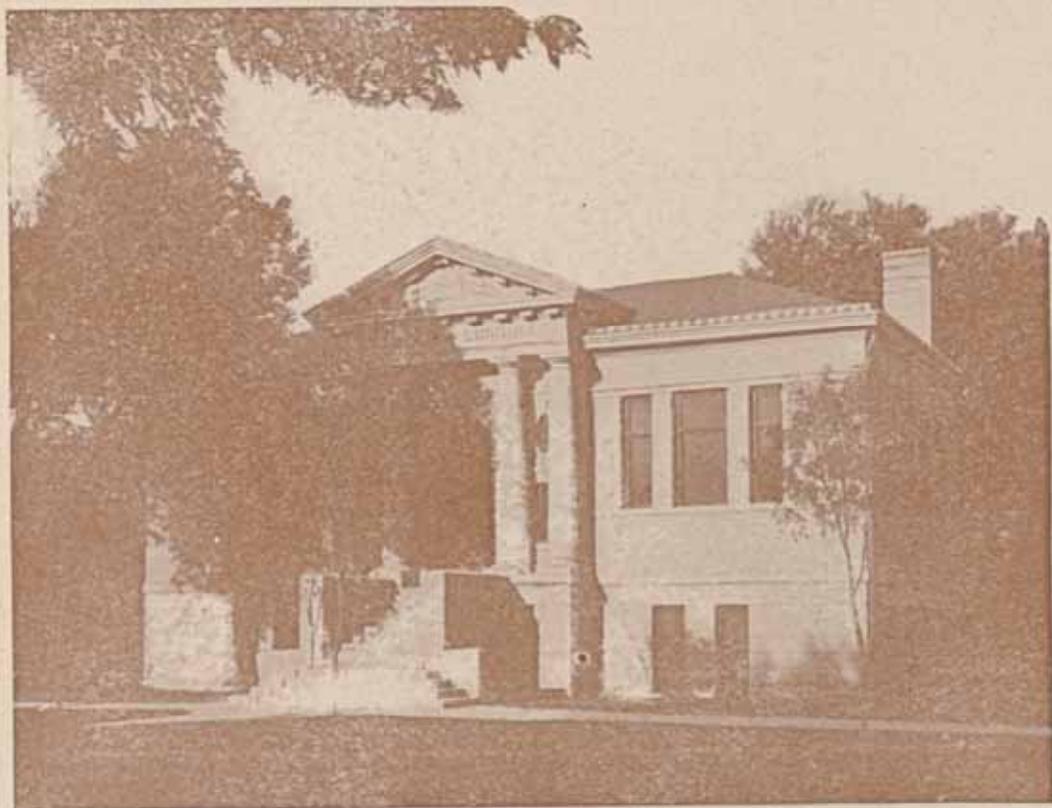




THE first volunteer fire company of Hastings was organized with good intentions but broke up in a spirit of fun after a brief but exciting experience. Joe Hansen, who was selected as foreman, conceived the idea of having his men indulge in frequent practice in the passing of buckets. At the company's first and only drill a line was formed and water was passed along from hand to hand until about two dozen buckets reached the scene of the imaginary fire. Tom Pardoe, assistant chief, gave an order to "throw water," and at this command the contents of the two dozen buckets were dashed upon the dignified foreman. So far as early settlers remember the Hansen company was not called upon to perform further service.

The first fire of any note was the one which resulted in



Carnegie Library.

the destruction of the Thompson hotel, on the east side of Kansas avenue, between First and Second streets, on the night of January 1, 1878.

Not until after the burning of this hotel did the citizens of Hastings take any serious steps towards providing adequate means of fire protection. In the fall of that year a volunteer fire company was organized with John D. Crans as chief; Ed Kennard, as foreman of hose, and Casper Fisher, as foreman of hook and ladder company. A hand engine, costing \$680, was purchased, also several patent fire extinguishers, hook and ladder trucks and hose. At that time there was not a cistern or pool of water from which water could be taken in a reasonably large volume for emergency use. Nearly all the wells were about 125 feet deep. The water was drawn from them either by hand windlass, hand pump or windmill, and for fire fighting purposes these methods of procuring water were inefficient.

One man delivered water from a wagon at ten cents a barrel, but his facilities, although he enjoyed a monopoly in the distribution of water, were not great enough to supply the demand in case of fire. The city council, realizing the hazard existing under these circumstances, decided to erect a water tank, with a capacity of one thousand barrels, to be located near the center of the business part of the city. This action upon the part of the council was the first step for the development of Hastings' public water system.

The plans and specifications were prepared and bids advertised for. Of the first bids presented the lowest was \$1,250 and the highest \$1,500. A second advertisement was published and Mr. Isaac LeDioyt, representing C. N. Paine & Co., proprietors of the Badger lumber yard, offered in behalf of his employers to supply the necessary material and do all the work required for \$950. This being the lowest bid offered Mr. LeDioyt was given the contract.

The tank was erected on the rear of the lot now occupied by the Giffin grocery store, about twelve feet above the street grade, and from it a 6-inch pipe was built to connect with a 4-inch pipe running east and west through the alley from Hastings avenue to Denver avenue, and between First and Second streets. Goosenecks were provided at the four corners of the block. The council later provided cisterns at the interections

of Second street and St. Joe avenue, Second street and Lincoln avenue, South street and Hastings avenue and another on Hastings avenue south of the Burlington tracks.

These cisterns were full at the time of the disastrous fire of September 14, 1879, when the greater portion of the business district was wiped out, and but for the breaking of the engine it is thought the fire would have been confined to the building in which it started.

The Gazette-Journal, of March 17, 1888, reviewing the progress of the town up to that date, said in reference to the disaster:

"In the estimation of many Hastings owes her first boom to the big fire of 1879. We doubt this but it is quite certain that this fire, destroying as it did, the entire business portion of the city, inspired our business men with new energy. The fire referred to broke out on Hastings avenue and before it could be extinguished destroyed nearly three blocks of business houses. The embers had hardly cooled, however, before the work of rebuilding the district commenced. Substantial brick buildings took the place of the wooden fire traps."



Miles Terrace.

The loss through the fire of 1879 was estimated at between \$90,000 and \$100,000. It started in the basement of Allison's drug store, on the west side of Hastings avenue, south of the alley between First and Second streets. The building was a frame structure and on account of the inflammable nature of the stock the flames spread rapidly and had gained considerable headway before discovered. At one time the firemen seemed to have the blaze under control but the fire engine gave way under the severe strain and left the men to fight the battle with buckets. Thirty-three buildings were destroyed. From Allison's store the fire spread throughout the block, consuming



Residence of John M. Ragan.

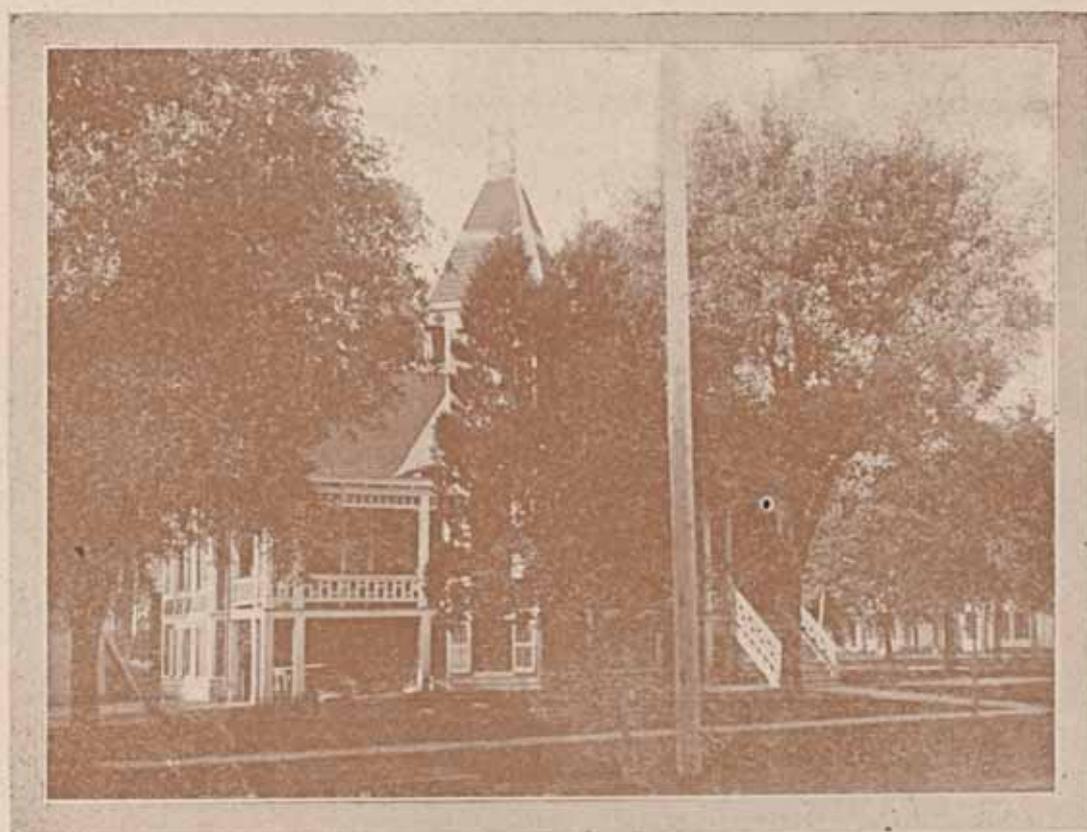
all buildings between First and Second streets, from Hastings avenue to Lincoln avenue, except the Adams County bank and a small frame structure.

All buildings between First street and the Burlington tracks, between Hastings and Lincoln avenues, and several south of the tracks, were also destroyed.

The principal individual losses were recorded in newspaper reports as follows: J. S. Allison, stock, \$5,000; J. W. Davis, building and stock, \$6,000; H. Lepin, hotel and fixtures, \$8,000; C. Cameron, stock and building, \$13,000; Thomas Scale, building, \$800; A. W. Cox's stock and two buildings, \$2,300; J. Wein-

gart & Bros., elevator and 1,800 bushels of wheat, \$2,200; Kelly & Hahn, building and contents, \$2,300; Dr. Naulteus, building and stock, \$3,000; Wolbach Bros., building and stock, \$15,000; N. F. Damron, hotel and furniture, \$6,000; D. H. Ballard, building and stock, \$4,000; G. F. Work, office, \$125; Exchange bank, furniture, \$200; O. Oliver, lumber, \$100; Wigton Bros., office and type, \$600; Millet & Mulford, stone works, \$1,000; C. H. Manker's carpenter shop, \$200; Prindle & Burke's tailor shop, \$50; Mrs. Mow, two buildings, \$450; Mrs. Higgins' building, \$300; Langevin & Plamondon, two buildings, \$1,500; J. B. Seridge, building, \$800; W. A. Smith, stock, \$900; George Volland, livery stable, \$1,200; J. Kohl, building and fixtures, \$1,500; E. Stout, building and stock, \$800; A. J. Nolan, stock, \$300; Forcht & Co., damage to building, \$100; Lowman & Fisher, office furniture, \$150; Charles Carmichael, personal property, \$300.

The work of rebuilding started immediately and within a short time nine brick buildings were in process of construction.



Residence of John Pickens.

The circumstances attending the destruction of the Burlington depot by fire on November 25, 1879, were never fully explained. On that night Allen J. Yocum was murdered in the station by William B. Baldwin, a telegraph operator, who sought to cover the traces of his crime by burning the depot. Baldwin was convicted on May 18, 1880, and sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary. The evidence showed that Yocum, Baldwin and others had been playing cards in the station and the general supposition was that a quarrel ensued over a division of stakes.

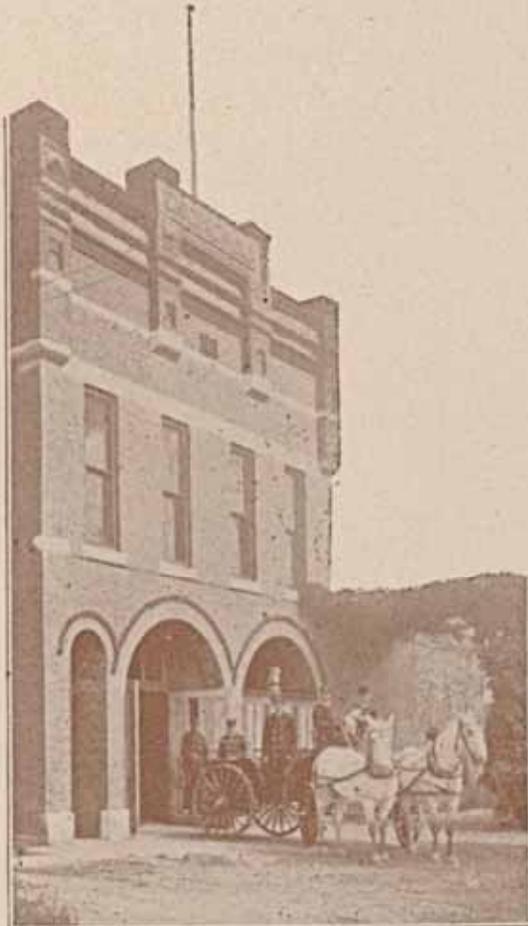
The second disastrous fire in Hastings occurred on July 16, 1881, originating in Davis' drug store on the north side of Second street, between Hastings and Denver avenues. The fire spread rapidly throughout the block, the Forgy building at the east corner, a small building adjoining it on the west and a livery stable on the north being the only structures saved. Cole's circus was in Hastings on that day and several of its employees joined the firemen in their efforts to extinguish the flames, but the engine and the water supply were inadequate and the firemen considered themselves fortunate in saving even the corner buildings. Much of the merchandise in the various buildings, however, was removed, the circus men and citizens joining in the work. The Davis building, Altschul's, Binderup's, Jorgensen's and Dietrich's buildings (the latter occupied by Nowlan), the postoffice and Halloway's pool hall were destroyed, besides several smaller structures.

The volunteer fire company which was organized in 1878 became demoralized soon after the fire of 1881, principally because the citizens rewarded the employees of Cole's circus with a purse of \$300, without showing any substantial appreciation of the services performed by the home company. In the latter part of the year the department was reorganized and the following officers elected: J. C. Williams, chief; J. Cherry, foreman of engine; Casper Fisher, foreman of hook and ladder. Mr. Williams brought about the reorganization of the department and secured a small appropriation from the council for the compensation of firemen for actual services rendered. Since that time the volunteer department has been regularly maintained.

The roster of volunteer firemen in good standing in 1882 contained the names: J. C. Williams, O. Oliver, J. N. Lyman, D.

M. McElHinney, James McWade, F. J. Benedict, Carson Hamot, C. K. Lawson, Edward Quinn, J. M. Strickland, J. J. Wemple, J. C. Craig, Edward Havens, Frank Coy, H. Cherry, S. M. Wright, all of engine company No. 1; C. Fisher, Edward Kennard, H. Allison, George W. Houck, W. H. Snider, John Dugan, O. H. McNeil, William Cutler, J. L. Finley and N. P. Eckles, all of hose company; H. C. Haverly, M. Stern, Charles C. Cline, J. B. Dallas, F. Browning, Frank Stein, Charles Wahlquist and Alex Meyer, all of hook and ladder company. J. C. Williams continued as chief until in the early 90's.

In July, 1890, the dry goods store of H. A. Fyler & Co., in the building now occupied by A. Pickens & Son, was com-



City Hall and Fire Station.

pletely destroyed by fire. The loss was reported at the time at between \$90,000 and \$100,000.

In value to property destroyed the fire of November 3, 1905, was probably the most disastrous the city ever suffered. The flames originated in the basement of Stein Bros.' Department store, 606-614 West Second street, and the fire was so far advanced when discovered that the firemen were unable to save any part of either building or stock.

The total damage was estimated at about \$140,000. Stein Bros.' stock was valued at between \$95,000 and \$100,000. The building occupied by this store and one adjoining it on the east, occupied by Miss Stewart, milliner, were owned by C. H. Dietrich, whose loss was about \$30,000. Dennis Cormier, who owned a building adjoining the Stein Bros.' store on the west, sustained a loss of about \$4,000. This building and the one occupied by Miss Stewart were almost completely destroyed, and the remaining walls of both were torn down to make room for the new building now occupied by Stein Bros. Co. Henry Spotts, who occupied the Cormier building, suffered a loss of about \$5,000. The damage to Miss Stewart's stock and the buildings across the street aggregated several thousand dollars.

For a number of years Hastings has had a paid fire department. Ed Mead is chief and A. F. Copeyon, W. Vance and J. Tilger are regularly employed. The members of the volunteer department are: L. Brinkley, C. H. Hansell, M. Reed, J. M. Tenant, C. W. Jacobs, J. Lowman, C. Rutherford, R. Jacobs, M. M. Haynes, H. Cowton, L. O. Preston, C. W. Nelson, R. A. Williams, E. M. Gilbreth, D. Breede, L. D. Cramer, E. P. Haynes, F. W. Raney, E. J. Parker, L. B. Hoagland, W. C. Dycus and S. A. Haynes. E. P. Haynes is assistant chief and J. Lowman is secretary.