

Aldrich
Historical
dept

Ricketts Is Devastated

The Fire Demon Destroys Prosperous Crawford County Town.

The Business Section Is In Ruins.

Energetic People will Rebuild at Once and Flourishing Town will Arise from Ashes.

BLOCKS OF ICE SURVIVE THE FLAMES

Review Artist Presents Pictures of Burned District Showing Ice Still Intact After the Fierce Blaze.

A great calamity came upon the town of Ricketts in the northwest part of the county on Tuesday night, May 14. Of the entire business part of the place north of the North-Western railroad only four buildings are left standing after the fire which raged on that eventful night. For the first two days after the affair the people were numbed by their misfortune, then hope for the future came and new buildings are to spring up and the little town will be on its feet again.

Ricketts is a town which came into existence when the North-Western road was laid from Wall Lake through the north part of this county to a connection with the Sioux City, and Pacific at Mondamin. It is in the heart of the German settlement and while it did not have the growth of Schleswig, the sister town to the east, it enjoyed a fine trade and its business men were most hopeful for the future. It had grown to have about 200 people with two general stores, yards of the Green Bay Lumber Co., and the Nye Schneider Co. dance hall, hotel, saloons, a strong bank, doctor's office, harness shop, barber shop and other business enterprises.

Tuesday, May 14, the never to be forgotten day was cold and there was a tendency to rain and sleet. As night came on a storm of snow began to fall, accompanied by a strong wind

from the northwest and the people retired early to their beds and by mid-night there was practically no one stirring. But in fifteen minutes after, not a person was in bed for the cry of Fire! Fire! had aroused them to intense activity and a night of terror had set in.

The pictures of the burned district given herewith will make the account quite intelligible to our readers. The main street of the town runs north and south and the fire was on the east side of the street. Beginning at the south end of the block, which adjoins the railroad track the buildings came in the following order. One story saloon owned by Paul Voss, two story hotel owned by Voss, residence occupied by Gustav Rickett his son-in-law, another residence owned by Voss and then an ice house, also on land of Voss, then came a pool room and barber shop owned by Geo. Krohnke, rented by L. Goodrich, next the residence and restaurant owned by Peter C. Petersen, now the saloon owned by Petersen, adjoining a two story frame used for a barber shop and dance hall on second floor, all owned by Petersen, the harness shop was run by A. Kuhlman, across two lots and on the north corner of the block stands the brick veneered building occupied by the German State Bank. All the buildings were wood except the bank and saloon of Petersen which were ve-

neered with brick. The awful story of the fire is soon told, for in little over an hour it was all over. It would appear that Mr. Kuhlman was awakened at mid-night and looking out saw that the residence and restaurant where Peter C. Petersen and family were sleeping was on fire. It did not take him long to rush over, past the intervening brick veneered building and give the alarm.

all her own, found shelter in the room of Dr. Feuster on the opposite side of the street. Of course every house in the residence portion of the town, which happily was not injured, was opened to the unfortunate ones, and there they are today. Goodrich the barber rescued his chair and a few tools and opened up business in the little town jail or calaboose, but the rest of the business men had

Charer Oak five miles away, but could be of no help.

The North-western depot, the Nye Schneider Co's. big elevator and sheds and office of the Green Bay Lumber Co., across the track to the south did not catch fire although in danger. The brick of the veneering of the bank building at the north end of the burned block grew very hot, but kept the fire out. On the corner north of the bank is the post-office, and a general store of Timm & Son. Opposite the post-office and store the one story office of Dr. Feuster. On the other side of the street from the Voss property is the store of Mr. Baack and the blacksmith shop of Mr. Wulf. The residence portion of the town is to the north and east of the burned district.

What for the future? It has been decided that the town will immediately put in a system of water works. All the property owners expect to rebuild in some shape and even better than before. There is a call for teams and carpenters and masons, and part of these will have work the balance of the season. There is much clearing up to do before there can be any building. The loss has been great but the people have true grit and great hopefulness and in a short time the lots will have buildings again erected on them. It will be many a year however before the terror of that night of May 14th will be erased from the memory of those who witnessed the fire and who found themselves

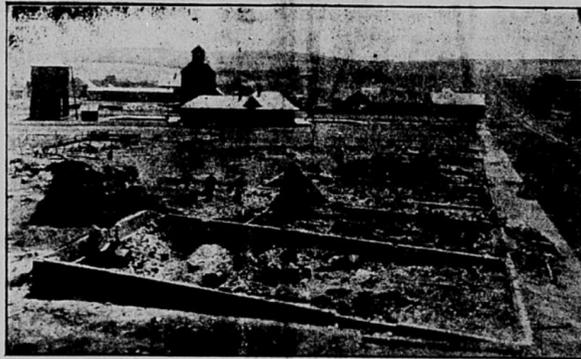
houseless and with out clothing except what was hastily put on in the cold pitiless driving snow.

Dr. Feuster will this week move his headquarters to Schleswig. He is the old time physician of the German settlement of Crawford and Ida counties, and has been at the bedside of hundreds of the sick and dying.

There seems no clew to the origin of the fire. Mr. Petersen says he came in about nine, put out the lamp and went to bed and he does not know how his building caught fire. He is one of the worst sufferers by the fire. He disposed of a good farm for the Ricketts property and has only \$1500 insurance on an \$8000 property. Besides he is badly burned on his face.

Paul Voss will immediately put up a temporary building and start his hotel and saloon. He expects to make the new permanent building of brick two stories high and to cover two lots. The two merchandise stores are still there and the blacksmith shop, also the hardware store and two lumber yards, and so the necessities of life are at hand. The people can wait for the saloon and pool halls, but there is need of a hotel and places for the homeless to live.

DENISON GIRL WINS PRIZE.
Miss Bessie Gillett whose excellent cartoons are familiar to Review readers was awarded a prize of ten dollars last week by the Chicago Record-Herald in their cartoon contest. Miss Gillett's friends are congratulating her and have faith that with perseverance she will make a fine reputation as a cartoonist.



View of Ruins at Ricketts—Looking South. (Ice is shown intact after the fire.)

Even then Petersen and wife and children came near being smothered in flames. Indeed Petersen had a very narrow escape and at this time his face is a mass of burns. The fire had caught in the wash room of the Petersen restaurant and soon it was doomed. The harness shop and dance hall had now caught from the heat although there was the brick veneered building between and it was on the side from which the wind was blowing, but the brick could not stand the heat on both sides and the Petersen saloon began to burn. From now on nothing could save the balance of the block, although the chemical engine was brought out and the entire population of the town was ready to render aid. The barber shop and pool room, building over the ice cellar, two residences, hotel and the saloon down to the end of the block were soon a raging mass of flames, fanned on by a fierce wind, the driving snow but adding desolation to the scene. Mrs. Kuhlman was overcome with terror and was helpless for nearly an hour. Mrs. Petersen and six children, not

nothing to do with and no place to go. On Friday a roof was put over the pile of ice owned by Voss and Peterson, the tons of ice standing out cold and seeming not melted at all by the intense heat was one of the curious features of the scene the next day after the fire.

Paul Voss had recently been offered \$10,000 for his buildings and four lots. He had \$2,500 insurance. The Krohnke barber shop was worth \$900 and insured for \$600. The Petersen property was worth over \$7,000 and he had \$1,200 insurance. The two story dance hall and harness shop of Kuhlman was said to be worth \$6,000 and had \$2,000 insurance.

A scene which came to the eye of the reporter will give one an idea of the feeling of the women and children whose homes are gone. A young woman was looking at the ruins when a girl of fifteen came up, they shook hands and then both began to cry violently. It was pitiful indeed. Mr. Petersen was found with his face all covered with cloth to protect his burns. Many people came over from



View of Ruins at Ricketts—Looking North. (Showing Bank and Residence District Uninjured.)

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