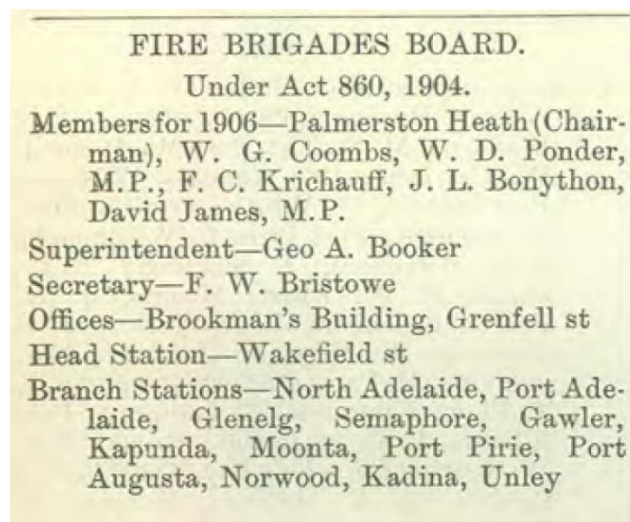


## Adelaide Fire Brigade 1907

*From the Sands and McDougall Directory for 1907.*



*Register (Adelaide, SA : 1901 - 1929), Wednesday 30 January 1907, page 4*

### FIRE AT NORWOOD.

At an early hour on Tuesday morning a fire broke out at the shop of Mr. H. W. Nairn, hairdresser and tobacconist, Parade, Norwood. The premises are situated next to the local fire brigade station, the members of which set to work to extinguish the fire as soon as it was noticed. The metropolitan fire station received an alarm at about 3.30 from Norwood, and the chemical engine was sent out. There was no need to use it, however, for the Norwood firemen had succeeded in getting the flames under control when it arrived. The shop and an adjoining room were considerably damaged—one estimate said that the loss amounted to about £50. The building was insured in the Norwich Union Office for £300 and the contents in the North Queensland Insurance Company for £264. The proprietor (Mr. Nairn) used the premises for business on the morning of the holiday, and closed them at 1.30 on the same afternoon. On Monday evening he went to Glenelg, where he has been living with his family for several weeks. No inquest will be held.

*From the Sands and McDougall Directory for 1907.*

Currie st-S side, 53, 55, 57, 59 HARROLD, COLTON & Co Ltd, merchants

*Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Wednesday 6 February 1907, page 7*

LARGE FIRE IN ADELAIDE.

DAMAGE £80,000.

TWO FIREMEN INJURED

GOOD WORK BY THE BRIGADE.

One of the largest fires ever seen in Adelaide broke out at about 4 o'clock on Tuesday morning in the large and heavily stocked premises of Messrs Harrold, Colton, & Co., at the corner of Currie-street and Topham-street, Adelaide. The brigade were summoned as soon

as the first sign of fire was detected, and in three minutes, from receiving the call the metropolitan brigade, with its engines was on the scene, and jets of water were playing on the building. But the contents of the warehouse were so inflammable and the fire had obtained such a complete hold, that the firemen could do nothing beyond confining the flames to the buildings in which they originated, and saving the adjoining premises. Fortunately the extensive establishment of Harrold, Colton, & Co., which has a frontage of about 70 ft. to Currie-street, by a depth of about 250 ft. along Topham-street, is almost entirely detached, the only adjacent building being that of Messrs Barker Bros., on the west, which was saturated with water, but not otherwise damaged. Currie-street is a splendidly wide thoroughfare, and from this position the firemen had ample room to work, with long lines of hose were run down Leigh-street to the big steamer, working on the chief mains in Hindley-street. Topham-street is only about 30 ft. wide, but both at the back and on the west, beyond Messrs Barker Bros., there are wide open spaces so that the firemen were able to get all round the building. This condition of segregation was of the utmost importance, for other-wise so intense was the heat of the fire and such a firm hold had it obtained on the wood, oils, paints, and other inflammable material, that nothing could have saved the whole street. Even as it was only by almost superhuman efforts did the firemen prevent the flames from leaping Topham-street and setting alight the three-storey building, known, as Currie Chambers.

Hard as the firemen worked under conditions which must have taken all the strength out of them, for in addition to the heat of the flames, the sun was scorching hot, they could do little but look on while goods valued approximately at £80,000 were burnt. The buildings, which were of one construction and full of material which burnt fiercely and intensely, contained such excellent fire-kindlers as axe and broom handles, with other wooden goods, oils, palms, petrol, and cartridges, and the effect as they were being consumed was that of a witch's cauldron. The fires which raged upward were green, blue, violet, purple, and yellow while over all ascended an immense column of smoke, variegated in color to a lesser degree, which told of the conflagration to dwellers many miles away. Spectacularly, however, the fire was not remarkable, for the brilliant sunlight poled the glow of the flames, which would have made a grand display against the blackness of night. The business of Messrs. Harrold, Colton, & Co. was one of the oldest and best known in Adelaide, for it was founded more than half a century ago by the late Sir John Colton, and the firm had been in the occupation of the Currie-street premises for the greater part of that time. They had been continually added to since the original portion was built, and the accumulation of miscellaneous stock in the meanwhile had been so great that probably no one knows exactly how much has gone to ashes as a result of the fire.

The Currie-street facade of the building does not show much sign of the fire which has raged behind it. The whole of the wall is intact. The shining brass plates are untarnished, and the shutters at the lower story windows are not even charred. The frames of the upper story sashes have gone, and over the triple light window in the middle is a large black patch, caused by smoke. The flag staff above the parapet is, however, standing. The long wall along Topham-street was, in its upper part, only of 9-in. brickwork, and when the joists and roof principals were burnt through and its strength had been tried by severe alternations of heat and cold as the water splashed on it, the strain was too great, and it toppled over into Topham-street. Ample notice of the impending fall was given, for it cracked and bulged out some time before it actually came down, revealing in the interior a mass of molten metal, blazing timbers, and blackened debris.

The foot and mounted police, who were on the spot with accustomed promptitude, were actively employed from the beginning. They kept Topham-street clear of everyone who had no business in that thoroughfare. Many offices abut upon it, and at the Waymouth-street end are Messrs. John Reid and Sons' stables and coaching establishment, so that some people had to be admitted to the street, but the idle and curious crowd were for the most part kept out. In Currie-street the cordon extended from the White Horse Hotel, on the east, to the John Bull Hotel, on the west, and along the northern side of Currie-street. Right opposite the site of the fire is the Wellington Hotel, and all of these hostelries did a big business as a result of the disaster, another proof of the proverb. "It's an ill wind that blows no one good."

The premises destroyed consisted primarily of a brick building, with a handsome cemented front, facing Currie-street. Its dimensions were, roughly, 70 ft. x 120 ft., and it had two floors and a basement. Behind it was a large store, with a stone front, extending about 45 ft. along Topham-street, and behind that again a capacious galvanized iron structure, also having a frontage of about 45 ft. to the same narrow thoroughfare. This last building was formerly part of Messrs. John Read & Co.'s stables, but had been added to the establishment of Messrs. Harrold, Colton, & Co. because of the need for more space. The buildings were considered, from an insurance point of view, to be "a good risk," not only by reason of the high reputation of the firm, but because the different parts of the structure were divided by high stone walls and iron doors, and there were open spaces all round. Although all danger of the fire spreading to other buildings was over within an hour or two of the outbreak the members of the brigade were kept busily employed in drenching the burning debris until late in the day. Early in the afternoon barricades were built across Topham-street, and the more dangerous portions of the wall which had collapsed during the fire were demolished.

Sir John Colton arrived in the State in 1839, and opened business as a saddler's ironmonger in Hindley-street not long afterwards. The first part of the structure burnt on Tues-day must have been erected nearly 50 years ago, and it was only the disinclination of the firm to interfere with the steady progress of their business which prevented them from pulling it down and substituting for it a warehouse of more modern construction. The fire, however, has so completely swept away the stock and fittings and all the entrails of the place that the demolition of the shell of the structure will not involve any further delay. It is pretty certain, therefore, that when the insurances have been adjusted, and Messrs. Harrold, Colton, and Co. once more secure possession of the site, a handsome, commodious, and up-to-date edifice will take the place of that which has been destroyed. The utmost sympathy was expressed for the members of the firm in the trouble that has befallen them. They have shown characteristic energy in transferring those operations to other premises, and the course of their work will be interfered with less than at first appeared likely by the greatest fire which has visited Adelaide since the drapery establishment of Messrs. John Martin & Co. was burnt six years ago.

Just before 3.30 p.m. a smart fall of rain gave considerable assistance to the firemen in extinguishing the still smouldering embers. A few minutes earlier a sudden change of wind had stirred them up into a blaze, and had filled the adjacent streets and buildings with pungent smoke.

The Alarm.

The first notification that a fire had broken out was given to the brigade at 6.1 by Mr. Alexander Alcorn, an ostler employed at the John Bull Yards. He was the first to catch sight of the huge volume of smoke issuing from the roof of the premises, and he broke the glass of the Solomon-street corner signal-box. Conflicting rumors were heard in the city during the day as to when the fire was first noticed. Mr. Alcorn, however, had been moving about the locality since 5.30 a.m. and noticed no smoke till 6 a.m. It was rumored that one person had seen smoke at midnight, another at 5 a.m. from Parkside, while two young women who clean offices in Currie-street, say they saw the flames early, but did not give the alarm, as they considered others would be certain to do so. Others, again, who were in that part of the city between 5.15 and 5.30 a.m. saw nothing to indicate a conflagration.

#### The Origin of the Fire.

The origin of the fire is at present shrouded in mystery. Neither Superintendent Booker nor the members of the firm can form any idea as to the cause of it.

#### Superintendent Booker's Account.

In conversation with a representative of "The Advertiser," Superintendent Booker said:— "This is the biggest blaze we have experienced since the fire at Messrs. John Martin & Co's drapery warehouse in Rundle-street. I have now about 48 men engaged altogether on the fire, and they are none too many. When we arrived the place was ablaze from end to end, the flames springing to an immense height. We received the call at exactly 6.1 a.m., and at 6.5 a.m. we had two steamers at work. Within 20 minutes from the time of our arrival we had 15 jets going, and were pouring close on 7,000 gallons of water a minute into the place. We were compelled to go to the big mains in some cases for our supply, as the other mains were inadequate for the purpose. There are here the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, the Unley Fire Brigade, the Norwood Fire Brigade, and the North Adelaide Fire Brigade, with three steamers from the head station, the ladder, the chemical carriage, (which has not been requisitioned in this case), the monitor carriage, and several thousand feet of spare hose." Superintendent Booker further stated that the report being circulated of dynamite stowed in the building was absolutely false, there being only cartridges and shot.

#### A Surprise.

Mr. Longbottom, one of the partners, was first informed of the fire by a man who was driving in a vehicle in the direction of Norton's Summit. He was sitting under the verandah of a shop at Magill waiting for the tramcar which left there soon after 8 o'clock, when the man referred to approached the shopkeeper, who was outside. "I suppose you have heard about the big fire," said the man. Mr. Longbottom pricked up his ears. "No," was the shopkeeper's reply, "Where was, it?" Harrold, Colton's warehouse was gutted this morning." "What," said Mr. Longbottom, and the man repeated his words, and gave what other information he could. "You can imagine what a shock it was to me," said Mr. Longbottom on Tuesday afternoon, when he was telling the story to pressmen and employees, who were chatting with him. "I could do nothing to hurry my journey to the city, so had to wait patiently for the tramcar." How much Mr Longbottom wished that Tuesday had been the day on which the completion of the electric tram system was being celebrated instead of the day on which the great undertaking of conversion was really commenced no one but Mr. Longbottom can realise.

#### The Governor Present.

The Governor (Sir George Le Hunte) was an interested spectator of the efforts of Superintendent Booker and his men in their fire-fighting operations, and at times his Excellency sent cheerful and valuable assistance in moving fire reels or lines of hose.

Alderman Johnson, the chairman of the Fire Brigade Board, was also present early. Sir George Le Hunte was enjoying a morning ride at the time of the outbreak, and consequently he was one of the first batch of onlookers. Immediately after reaching the scene Sir George placed his horse at the disposal of Superintendent Booker as a galloper. Mr. Booker was thankful for the services of the horse, and a member of the brigade was sent several errands, which, in the absence of a horse, would have occupied much time. When it was realised that the wall in Topham-street was going to fall a number of men rushed towards a hose-van for the purpose of removing it to a place of safety. The task was laborious, but, aided by his Excellency, who vigorously worked at the end of the pole, the vehicle was transferred to a spot outside the danger zone. Soon afterwards the wall crashed to the roadway. His Excellency remained about one and a half hours on the scene, and his assistance was greatly appreciated by Superintendent Booker, and thoroughly admired by the spectators.

#### The Walls Collapse.

The fire had secured a firm hold along the Topham-street frontage and in the second story at the corner of Currie-street, and when the brigade arrived these portions of the premises were a mass of flames, which were finding an outlet through the windows of the upper story. In spite of the efforts of the firemen, the flames raged ceaselessly and devouringly in these two parts, and speedily gutted them completely. When the fire had burned for about an hour and a quarter (7.15 a.m.), a great portion of the long and flimsy brick wall fell into Topham-street. The back wall collapsed at 7.30 a.m. and another large section of the wall in Topham-street side, which had been held, tottering, for some time by a large downpipe, collapsed at 8 a.m. The sight of the falling walls was most impressive. They came down with a resounding crash that enabled one to understand and sympathize with the rapid flight of the fire-men, and spectators from the vicinity. In their fall they brought down a large number of telephone wires.

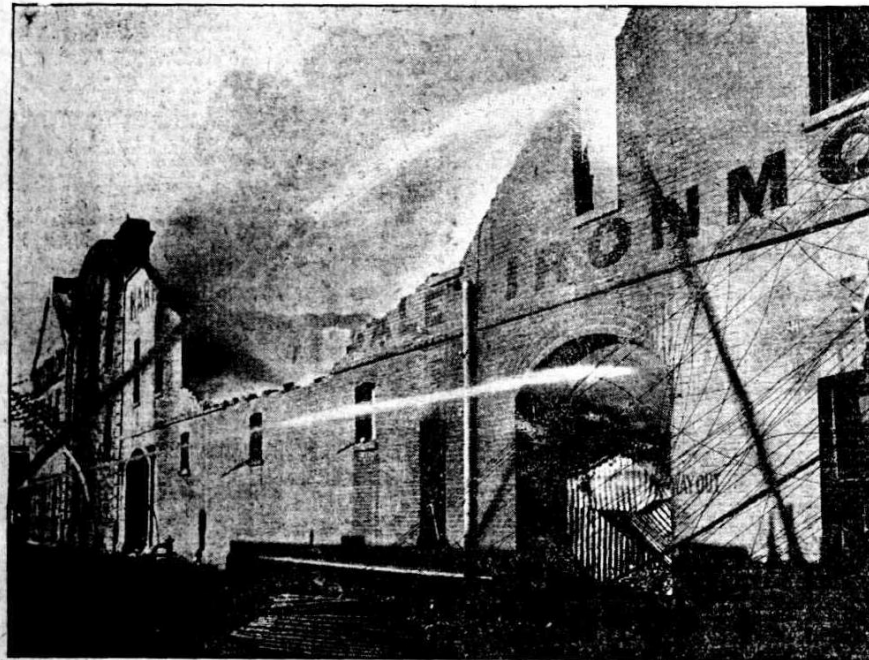
#### Crowds of spectators.

A large crowd assembled on the scene of the fire in the early morning, and some of them made their appearance in a rather dishevelled state. Later on when the spectators were reinforced by numbers who lingered at the scene of activity while on the way to work the concourse assumed immense proportions in Currie and Waymouth streets. A force of 40 police, under Inspector Burchell, however, had an easy task in maintaining order and keeping a clear passage for the brigade. A rumor that dynamite was stored in the building circulated among the crowd, but the eagerness to witness the big conflagration overcame the fear of being blown up. Fire crowds are accustomed to rumors of that kind, and have grown callous.

The smoke, which was at all times exceptionally thick and dense, varied strangely in colors. The white, black, yellow, and other lines which were shot through with the vivid red of the flames, formed a striking scene in the morning sun.

#### SCENE OF THE FIRE.

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AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE TOPHAM-STREET WALL, SHOWING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH WIRES.

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#### A Hard-worked Brigade.

At about 7.45 a.m. the fire was well under control, although dense volumes of smoke arose from the ruins of the building where the jets still played upon the red-hot debris. including the paints, varnishes and such like goods. When the brigade first arrived on the scene the extensive building, with its large stock of inflammable material, was ablaze from end to end, but the huge streams of water poured into it from 15 separate jets gradually overcame the lurid flames which had obtained such mastery and eventually quenched them. Two hoses were run down to Hindley-street near the White Hart Hotel, and these were connected with the big mains.

#### Two Firemen Injured.

Thousands of cartridges exploded, and two firemen were injured, one in the face and the other on the side of the head. Some very narrow escapes were experienced by other firemen, but, happily, no serious casualties occurred. A report was spread abroad that a large quantity of dynamite had been stored in the cellar, but this proved to be inaccurate, the only explosives being kept in stock being gunpowder and cartridges. By indomitable perseverance the premises of Messrs. Barker Brothers, on the west of the burning building, and the large structure on the eastern side of Topham-street, were saved from destruction; indeed they were not even damaged, except by water. In detached places the fire had still a firm hold late in the morning, and burned furiously, but the immediate application of the hose upon these spots soon extinguished the flames.

#### The Police Patrol.

The Inspector of Police (Mr. Burchell) said that the number of policemen originally at the scene of the conflagration proved insufficient effectively to cope with the crowd and to keep

a space for the firemen and to divert traffic. He had, therefore, been compelled to telephone for all the spare men in the barracks, and to put them on duty. Owing to the interference with the telephone service consequent on the breaking of the wires in Topham-street, the inspector was unable to find a telephone which was in working order until he reached King William-street. The orderliness of the crowd was remarkable. They gave practically no trouble but the chief difficulty was to keep the hoses clear, and see that no traffic passed along while they were at work. Some of the policemen who were on duty at the fire when it was in its early stages had been on beat duty continuously from 10 o'clock on the previous evening, and when the stress was reduced Inspector Burchell thoughtfully sent these officers home to get the rest of which they were so much in need.

#### Over 200 Telephone Wires Destroyed.

The wall which fell in Topham-street brought down with it hundreds of telephone wires, which were carried to the western portion of the city by that artery. As a result communication was cut off from many business establishments. The Deputy Postmaster-General was early informed of this interruption of the service, and he soon had men at work with the object of restoring the service, although the work had to be carried out under uncomfortable conditions, as the fire still raged along the whole length of Harrold Colton & Co.'s establishment, more than half of the block between Currie-street and Weymouth-street.

Soon after 9 o'clock Mr. J. B. Richards, the superintendent of lines, had a staff of workmen in Topham-street removing the old wires and preparing for the substitution of new ones. At the corners of Currie and Weymouth streets huge jarrah posts carry the wires, and there were two iron standards between the jarrah uprights supporting 150 open wires and two cables, each carrying 26 strands. When the wall collapsed it carried with it every one of the wires and bent one of the iron standards almost into the form of a letter C. The second standard was bent, but not to the same extent. It is a remarkable fact that between the two jarrah poles the wires were so numerous that if the plain wires alone were put end to end they would cover a distance of nearly 12 miles. In addition to that there were 52 lengths of wire in the cables. The first duty of the work-men was to clear away the debris and cut and roll the damaged wire. Then the posts had to be made straight, and finally the work of stretching the wires again after splicing them had to be undertaken. Only two of the wires were used for telegraph purposes, and they went to the Adelaide railway-station only, but as there is a duplicate service along King William street to the station traffic was not interfered with. The men were divided into three gangs in order to facilitate the work of repairs and both the Deputy Postmaster-General (Mr. R. W. M. Waddy) and Mr. Richards were on the spot directing operations. A great deal of inconvenience was caused to business people in Currie-street, and the western part of the city, but Mr. Richards intends to work unceasingly until communication is restored on every line. It is hoped that by noon to-day every telephone put out of gear by the collapse of the wall will again be available for use. An immense amount of work will have to be done in the meantime.

#### The Rescue of the Books.

The books, papers, and office boxes of the firm were kept in the strongroom adjacent to the office, and at about 9.30 a.m. the fire was sufficiently under control for an attempt to be made to save these. Mr. T. Medlyn opened the strongroom, accompanied by Mr. H. A. Whitehead. They found the books un-scathed by the fire, but saturated with water. An army

of clerks were then brought into action, and they speedily bore the books to the other premises of the firm on the opposite side of the road. The removal of these documents was not as simple as appears at first sight, as apart from the uncomfortable heat, the water was continually pouring down through the ceiling from the second story in a miniature hot-water deluge, and everyone who participated in the rescue of the books received a thorough wetting. Strange to say, a large framed portrait of the late Sir John Colton, the founder of the firm, a late Premier of the State, and a former Mayor of Adelaide, which was hanging in Mr. Longbottom's room, wholly escaped injury from the fiery furnace, and beyond slight damage by water was absolutely untouched. The whole process of removal did not take long, as everyone worked well and with great celerity.

#### Mr. Colton Interviewed.

Mr. A. C. Colton estimated the damage to the stock at about £80,000, of which, he thought £60,000 worth approximately was covered by insurance in various companies. The greater part of the stock destroyed consisted of general hardware, machinery, wire-netting, and other goods, and although one department upon the ground floor nearest to Currie-street had not been materially injured by the fire itself, the water, which flooded the building, had damaged the stock considerably.

#### The Firemen and Police.

At about 10.30 a.m. Superintendent Booker announced that the conflagration was practically extinguished, and further stated that all the officers and men had worked excellently. He had no hesitation in saying that they could not have done better if 1,000 men had been employed in the work.

Besides Superintendent Booker, the officials present were:—Deputy-Superintendent Rickwood, Foreman Luck, of the headquarters Foreman Oldham, of Unley; Foreman Cooper, of Norwood; and Fore-man Cleveland, of North Adelaide. Mr. Brown, the assistant staff-officer, was also present from the commencement until all danger of the fire spreading was over. Superintendent Booker left the deputy-superintendent in charge at 10.30 a.m.

The police officers present were Inspector Burchell, Sergeant Hill (in charge), Sergeant Kelly, and Corporal Maloney. Sergeant Hill reported that at 6.10 a.m. he had 17 men on hand, including the whole of the midnight and 6 am. watch. The afternoon watch was dispatched to the scene to relieve the mid-night watch at 10 a.m.

#### Carrying on the Business.

Mr. Colton stated that the fire would not interfere with the ordinary daily business of the firm at all, which would be carried on as usual, and the orders on hand would be executed without any delay. The firm carried large enough stocks both at Light-square and Port Adelaide to fulfil all the engagements they had undertaken, and the saddlery department of course was not injured at all. None of the employes of the firm would be put off owing to the destruction of the Currie-street premises. Business would have to be carried on as usual at whatever cost, and they could not dispense with any of those who had been in their employ prior to the fire, because there was enough work on hand now to keep all of them fully engaged.

From 85 to 100 employes were engaged daily at the now ruined warehouse, and they will be transferred to other premises occupied by the firm. A store has already been secured in

Peel-street, where the Currie-street business, or as much of it as the building will permit will be carried on.

#### Efficiency of the Brigade.

From time to time carping critics, who know nothing of fire-fighting, have charged the Fire Brigades' Board with unnecessary extravagance in the maintenance and equipment of the brigade. Should a new engine or other appliance, considered to be indispensable by the superintendent, be purchased, it is usually made the text of another attack upon the policy of the board. Even the expenses of members attending an important inter-State conference were objected to, some people evidently believing that an institution like the brigade is merely for ornament, and not use. Yet the splendid work accomplished by the fire-fighters on Tuesday morning, under adverse circumstances, is sufficient proof that the brigade, for its equipment and numerical strength, is one of the most efficient in the Southern Hemisphere. The Currie-street fire also evidenced the fact that when any big conflagration breaks out the utmost resources of the brigade are taxed to cope with it.

"Supposing another fire was to break out now?" Superintendent Booker was asked at 9 o'clock on Tuesday morning. "It would have to burn," was the superintendent's reply- "I could not spare a foot of hose or a man from this fire, and I have nothing in reserve. As it is, the men, who have been doing superhuman work this morning, are fairly done up now, and two of them have been injured by explosions. Every man, every engine, and every foot of hose are required here, and this is an answer to those who are always crying out that the brigade is costing too much. You would have no time to attend to districts which are not under the Fire Brigades Act, at all events?" "We could not attend to another fire even in the metropolitan area at present," was the reply. "Then there was a fuss made in some quarters about the purchase of the new steamer. Well I am depending upon that steamer to-day for all my water. It is now stationed in Hindley street, and is throwing 750 gallons per minute. There are from 8,000 to 9,000 ft. of hose in use. The fire has required our last ounce of strength."

#### Water Supply inadequate.

Superintendent Booker further remarked:—"Notwithstanding that we were able to throw a large body of water on the fire the efficiency of the jets was minimised by the long lines of hose the water had to traverse before reaching the scene of operations. It is a very serious consideration that the water had to be obtained from North-terrace to feed the engines in Hindley-street. It must be at once apparent that larger mains are required from Happy Valley. The present flow is not sufficient for the work of fire extinction in any of our very large risks. I am fully aware that the Waterworks Department did everything in their power this morning to give us a good supply, and I appreciate their efforts. At the same time the fact remains we have not sufficient water available for the larger fire risks."

#### Tremendous Quantity of Water Used.

Superintendent Booker estimates that water was thrown upon the flames from the various engines and lines of hose at the rate of 7,000 gallons per minute for five hours. Therefore, without taking into account the tens of thousands of gallons which were used later on, the brigade put 2,100,000 gallons of water into the building. Every drop of this water is, of course, run to waste in a sense, and before anything can be done in the way of salvage work in the basement the engines will have to pump out the water. The under-ground apartments

were full of water early in the morning; indeed, for many hours water was pouring out of the ventilators leading to these quarters, and by 3 o'clock the basement of the large bulk store facing Topham-street was full, but still the flames were issuing from places which it was impossible to reach with the hose. Through-out the day firemen were hosing the ruins, and it is probably within the mark to say that the fire involved the use of three million gallons of water.

#### Removing Explosives.

"When we arrived," said the deputy superintendent, "the place was ablaze from end to end. One could hardly keep his hand on the doors because they were so hot, but it was soon ascertained that a large number of boxes of cartridges occupied a position just inside the entrance from Topham-street. Our men, assisted by a few police, quickly got to work, and in the space of a short time they brought out that pile of cases you see heaped against the buildings on the eastern side of Topham-street. There are, roughly speaking, 150 cases, principally of Winchester cartridges, and they are not damaged in any way. The number rescued from the flames is nothing compared with the number which exploded, judging from the reports, but the men did splendid work in recovering the goods."

#### The Powder Magazine Safe.

Grave fears were for a long time entertained regarding the safety of the powder magazine situated at the south-western corner of the building. It is a concrete structure of small dimensions, but it contained sufficient explosives to blow up the surrounding buildings. The quantity of powder was 200 lb. In view of this fact a continuous stream of water was directed towards the danger point to keep the magazine cool. Fortunately, in this work the brigade were successful. "The magazine is quite safe," said the deputy superintendent, when questioned on the subject at about 10 o'clock. "I have just been over there to have a look at it. It was beyond danger some time ago, but owing to the great heat arising from the debris I was unable to enter the place. However, you see there are men over there now in the middle of the premises, where a tremendous blaze raged an hour or two ago. The premises have cooled down, and they are able to work there in safety now and, as you see, they are taking a mouthful of breakfast while holding the hose. I went across to the corner and had a look for myself. The magazine is quite safe. I have not heard what quantity of explosives the firm have in it, but it is said there is enough to blow up what remains of the warehouse and also the adjoining premises."

#### Barker Bros. Flooded Out.

One of the most remarkable features of the fire was the complete escape from injury by the fiery element of the premises of Messrs. Barker Bros. Nothing but a thin parapet wall divided these from the hottest part of the burning building, and yet they escaped undamaged. Had there been a strong wind, however, the building would undoubtedly have shared the fate of the neighboring warehouse. As it is, the marks can be distinctly seen in the dividing wall where the flames at one stage broke through. Fortunately, however, they were met by an opposing stream of water, which speedily checked their progress. Although the fire did not damage Barker Bros.' place, the premises were flooded from end to end by water, which found its way into the stables at the rear, and gravitated into the office block by means of the back entrance. A stream about 2 in. deep flowed through the building, and, of course, seriously inconvenienced the firm, but they cheerfully submitted to this invasion in

preference to fire. There is no basement floor in Barker Bros.' building, so that the water merely passed through it to the lower level of the Currie street footpath.

#### The Insurances.

The insurances were as follow:—

On the building:—London and Lancashire Society, £9,000.

Fixtures and fittings: London and Lancashire Society, £300.

On the Stock.

North Queensland Insurance Company £4,000

Union Insurance Company of London Society. £4,000

National Insurance Company of New Zealand. £6,000

Norwich Union Company. £6,500

Lancashire Insurance Company .. £4,000

Commercial Union Insurance Company .. £9,000

Atlas Insurance Company. £6,500

Standard Insurance Company .... £2,500

Alliance Insurance Company .... £5,000

London Assurance Company .... £6,500

South British Insurance Company.. £4,000

Total. .. £58,000

Grand total..£67,300

#### The Aftermath.

The big building presented a pitiable spectacle after the fire and the various brigades had finished with it. A heap of smouldering ruins, a picture of desolation, was all that remained of the place which on Monday was one of the great commercial houses of Adelaide. Within the charred and blackened walls were hundreds of tons of stuff, absolutely and irreparably ruined by the combined action of fire and water. The devastating work of fire could not be more fully realised than when gazing upon a heterogeneous mass of twisted ironwork, which had but a day previously been component parts of agricultural and other machinery. Bent pillars, twisted by the intense heat into all sorts of fantastic shapes, lay among the debris in the interior. The utter ruin caused by the conflagration could be more plainly seen when one entered by the Currie-street door and saw where the flames had carried all before them—staircases, hardware material, fittings, counters, everything, in fact, that would burn. In a small space, comparatively speaking, a mass of gutted material, burnt, blackened, and shapeless, represented the loss of £80,000.

#### A Thoughtful Act.

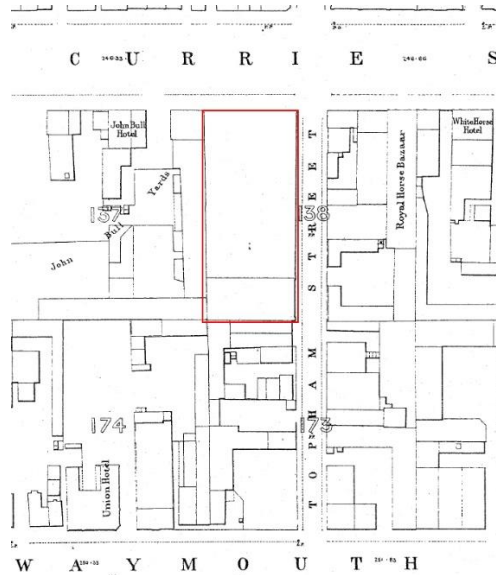
When the fire was raging at about 7 o'clock in the morning, and members of the fire brigade and police were exerting themselves to the utmost to cope with the conflagration, they were greatly assisted in their work by the kind and thoughtful action of Miss Farley, of the White Horse Hotel, who sent tea in large quantities, and had it served out to the men at their work. As the morning was exceptionally warm the refreshment was most acceptable, and the fire-fighters spoke in highest terms of praise of Miss Farley's thoughtfulness.

#### An Engine Disabled.

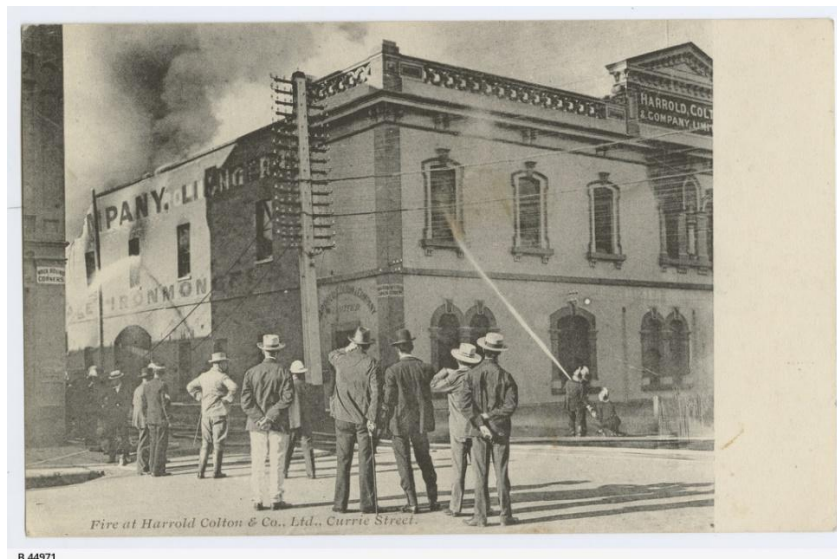
The heavy strain proved too much for one of the fire engines, and it was thrown out of gear. The nature and extent of the injury cannot be ascertained without taking the engine to pieces and giving it a thorough overhauling.

#### THE INQUEST.

An official report has been forwarded to the City Coroner, who will decide this morning whether an inquest shall be held.



Smiths Survey 1880 – Harrold, Colton, and Co.'s location of fire in 1907



State Library of South Australia - Currie Street [B 44971]. Currie Street, south side, fire at Colton's building. Approximately 1907. Part of Acre 138 Collection

**Critic (Adelaide, SA : 1897-1924), Wednesday 6 February 1907, page 12**



H. Krischock, Critic photographer

THE FIRE IN CURRIE STREET, AS SEEN AT AN EARLY STAGE.

*Critic (Adelaide, SA : 1897-1924), Wednesday 6 February 1907, page 16*





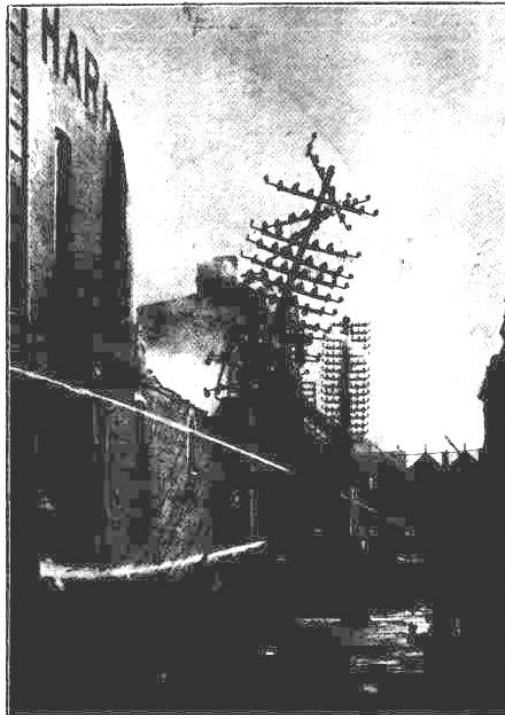
Two Views of the Fire at Harrold, Colton, & Co.'s Premises.

H. Krischock , Critic Photographer

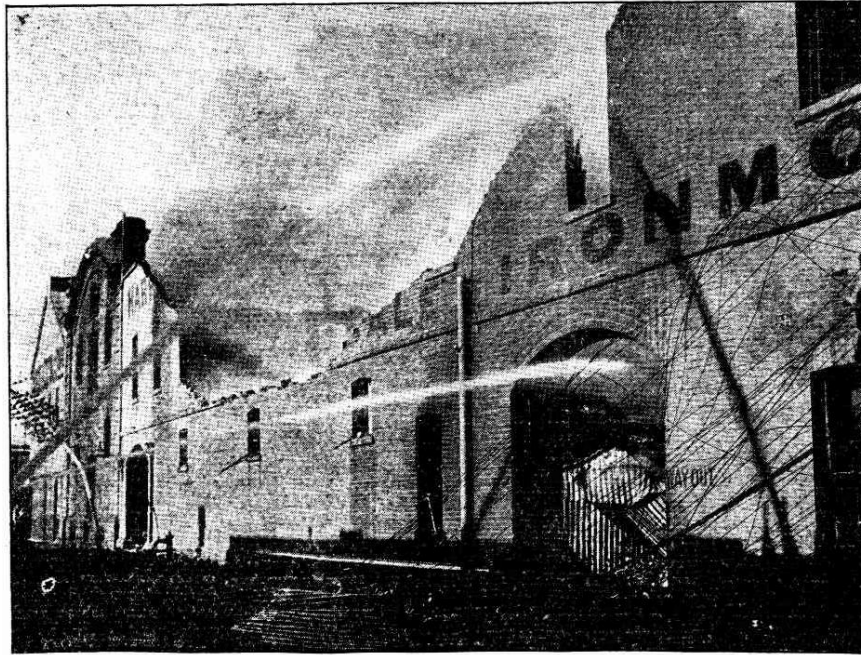
*Critic (Adelaide, SA : 1897-1924), Wednesday 6 February 1907, page 22*

**A STRONG ARGUMENT FOR UNDERGROUND TELEPHONE WIRES.**

In consequence of the fire at Harrold Colton's on Tuesday morning, dozens of business places found themselves without telephone communication.



*Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Wednesday 6 February 1907, page 4*



SCENE OF THE FIRE AT HARROLD, COLTON & CO.'S. AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE TOPHAM-STREET WALL, SHOWING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH WIRES.

***Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Thursday 7 February 1907, page 8***

THE CURRIE-STREET FIRE.

A SCENE OF DESOLATION.

The premises of Messrs. Harrold, Colton and Co., which were reduced to ruins by fire and water on Tuesday morning, presented a scene of desolation on Wednesday when the firemen were able to enter all parts of the building and make an examination. When Superintendent Booker and Mr. A Adamson, who has been retained by the firm as adjuster in connection with the claims on the insurance companies, surveyed the place, they were agreeably surprised to find that on the ground and first floors of the Currie-street frontage there was an exceedingly large quantity of goods which had, in some cases, not been damaged at all, and in others had been injured by water only. This satisfactory state of things applied more particularly to the ground floor, which the flames had barely touched. On the first floor there had been considerable destruction, but still the salvage goods represent a large sum. The glass cases on the western side containing an extensive collection of guns, rifles, and other weapons, were intact, but water had reached them from the hoses, and the fire-men were set to work to dry and oil the firearms, the total value of which must be hundreds of pounds. Apart from these goods there will be many hundreds of pounds' worth of miscellaneous articles rescued from drawers, shelves, and other parts of the department, which will need cleaning only to render them almost as good as they were before the fire. It is impossible to say what salvage there is in the basement, but the flooding of the bulk store particularly will probably result in a large quantity of goods being saved. In the absence of a careful overhaul everything which was in the remainder of the huge premises appears to have been absolutely ruined, except stacks of iron, and brass bars, and piping, and such like things. The costly steel stock, which was kept, with the iron bars, has most likely been reduced to the value of iron, by having the temper taken out of it by the heat. That portion of the first floor occupying the corner of Currie and Topham streets

appears to have been used for the storage of glass and crockeryware, which, having been reduced to a molten state, has fallen through to the office below, where, probably, a couple of tons of the conglomeration is heaped up.

Colonel Freeman, of Melbourne, has been engaged by the insurance companies as adjuster, and he will arrive in Adelaide this morning to act with Mr. Adam-son. Soon after Colonel Freeman arrives the two adjusters will get to work, and they will make their investigation and announce their decisions as soon as possible in order to facilitate the carrying on of business by the firm.

The three gangs of men who are engaged repairing the telephone wires which were broken on Tuesday morning, expect to have the work completed by 9 o'clock this morning. They labored against great odds on Tuesday. Clouds of smoke surrounded them, and at times it was almost impossible for the men to see the wires. The smoke was so dense and sickening that operations were delayed several hours. Mr. J. B. Richards, the superintendent of lines, sympathised with his staff, and did not force them to continue work when it was obvious that doing so involved extreme inconvenience, if not danger. The gangs continued their duties, until 8 o'clock, when, owing to the darkness, they could proceed no longer. Early on Wednesday morning operations were resumed, and by luncheon-time 100 of the broken wires had been made good. It is anticipated that every telephone which was thrown out of gear by the accident will be ready for use as usual this morning.

There seems to be considerable doubt as to who was the first to acquaint the Adelaide Fire Brigade Station of the fire. Mr. G. Laurisch, the caretaker at the Adelaide Steamship Buildings, says that in opening the offices in Currie-street shortly before 6 o'clock on Tuesday his attention was immediately drawn to huge volumes of smoke which were blowing across Currie street. He rang the fire alarm in front of the Union Bank in King William-street. Mr. Laurisch then returned to the Steamship Buildings, but he had only just reached the corner of Currie-street when the first reel put in an appearance. He waited at the corner and waved his hands to the firemen, directing them to the scene of the fire.

The City Coroner, having made enquiries, has decided that an inquest is unnecessary.

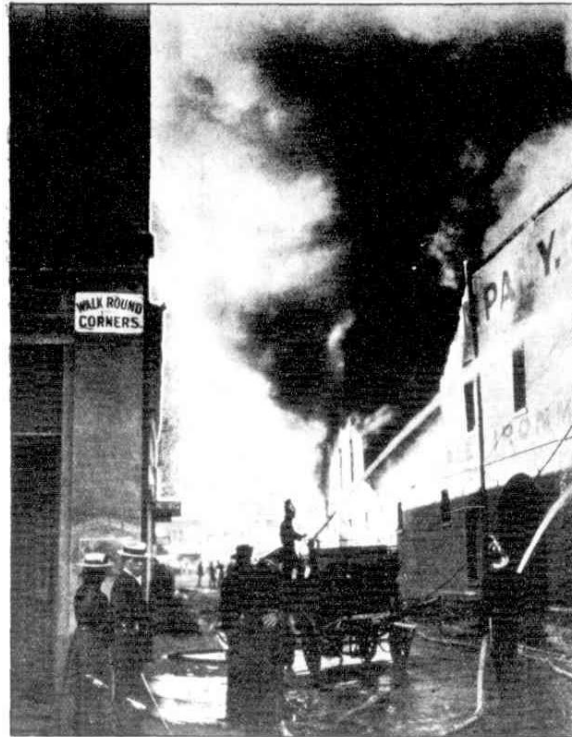
***Register (Adelaide, SA : 1901 - 1929), Thursday 7 February 1907, page 4***

**HARROLD, COLTON, & CO.'S FIRE.**

The City Coroner has decided not to hold an inquest into the circumstances surrounding the fire which occurred at Harrold, Colton, & Co.'s premises on Tuesday. The ruins were viewed by a large number of people during Wednesday, when the havoc wrought by the fire could be plainly seen. This morning Mr. Adamson. (the adjuster for the firm) and Col. Free-man, of Melbourne, who will act in that capacity for the insurance companies, will begin their work. It is stated that, notwithstanding the vigour of the conflagration, a surprisingly large quantity of goods was saved by the brigade. The repair of the telephone wires will probably be completed comparatively early this morning.

***Observer (Adelaide, SA : 1905 - 1931), Saturday 9 February 1907, page 29***

**THE EXTENSIVE FIRE AT MESSRS. HARROLD, COLTON, & CO.'S.**



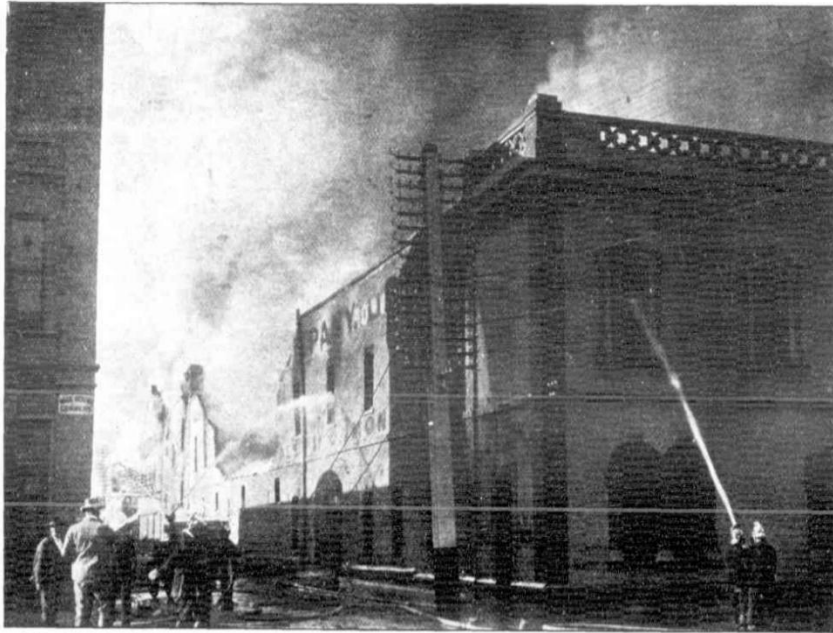
AN EARLY PHASE OF THE CON-FLAGRATION.

AN EARLY PHASE OF THE CONFLAGRATION.



A SUBSEQUENT PICTURE SHOWING THE EASTERN WALL  
FALLEN AWAY.

A SUBSEQUESNT PICTURE SHOWING THE EASTERN WALL FALLEN AWAY.



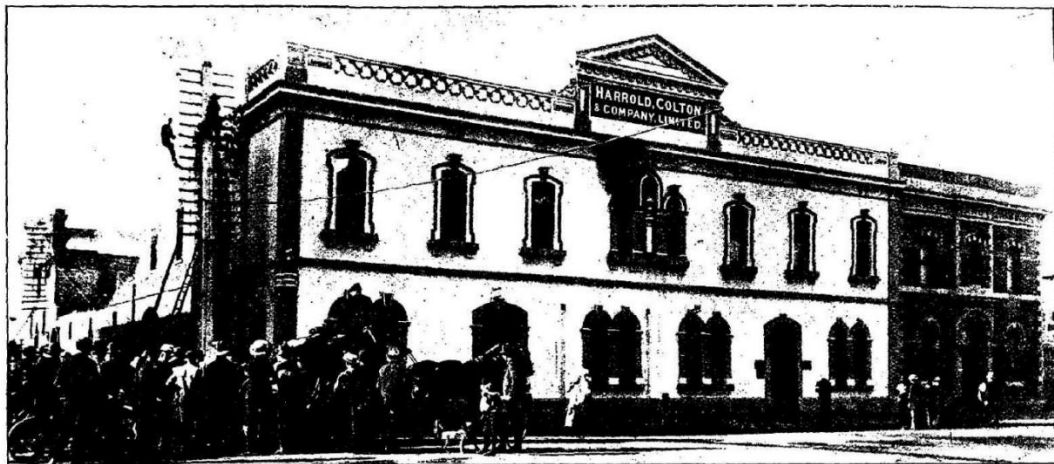
HIS EXCELLENCY SIR GEORGE LE HUNTE AT THE FIRE, NOT ONLY AS A SPECTATOR, BUT AS A WORKER.  
Photos W. S. Smith.

HIS EXCELLENCY SIR GEORGE LE HUNTE AT THE FIRE, NOT ONLY AS A SPECTATOR, BUT AS A WORKER  
Photos W. S. Smith

*Chronicle (Adelaide, SA : 1895 - 1954), Saturday 9 February 1907, page 31*

LARGE FIRE IN ADELAIDE: DAMAGE £80,000.

MESSES. HARROLD, COLTON, & CO'S CURRIE-STREET PREMISES DESTROYED.



FRONT VIEW OF THE PREMISES.



AN INTERIOR VIEW, SHOWING THE DISASTROUS EFFECTS OF THE FIRE.



J. Marshall, photo.

IN TOPHAM-STREET, WHERE THE WALL FELL OUT, BREAKING DOWN HUNDREDS OF  
TELEPHONE WIRES: THE FIRE BRIGADE AT WORK.



*State Library of South Australia - Firemen attending a fire at an Ironmonger's warehouse in Adelaide [PRG 280/1/15/197], Firemen attending a big fire at an Ironmonger's warehouse thought to be in Topham Street, Adelaide. Approximately 1918 [1907]. Part of Searcy Collection*

***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Thursday 14 February 1907, page 1***

#### THE CURRIE-STREET FIRE

The Enquiry.

No Cause Discovered.

The inquest on the fire which occurred at the premises of Harrold, Colton, & Co., Currie-street, on February 5, was opened by Alderman Wells, Acting Coroner, at the John Bull Hotel on Thursday. Mr. G. M. Evan represented the insurance companies, Superintendent Booker the fire brigade, Mr. C. Johns, Harrold, Col-ton, & Company.

The Acting Coroner explained to the jury that the fire was duly reported to the City Coroner by the police immediately after the occurrence, and he decided that an inquest was unnecessary. On Monday, February 11, the insurance companies applied for an inquest under clause 61 of the Fire Brigades Act of 1904. The Coroner had, therefore, to issue a precept for an enquiry for the purpose of finding the "cause and origin" of the fire. It would be his duty to con-fine the evidence to this point.

Mr. Evan said that, on behalf of the insurance companies, he wished to explain that there was not the slightest suspicion concerning the bona fides of Harold, Colton, and Co.. The companies were perfectly well satisfied on that account. The only reason for the holding of the inquest was the desire to find out the origin of the fire, if possible, and to discover something that would prevent similar disasters.

W. I. Dawkins, secretary to Harold, Col-ton, & Co., deposed that he left the premises at which the fire occurred at 6.20 p.m. on the day preceding the fire, February 4. The meter which supplied gas to the lower warehouses and the strongroom was turned off. Everything was in the usual order.

By Mr. Evan—The gas lights were Welsbach.

A. Rosevear, cellar-man, stated that it was his duty to go round the building occupied by Harold, Colton, & Co., turn off the gas, and see that all was right before the warehouse was locked up. He left the premises at 5.25 p.m.

By Mr. Evan—There was neither sulphur nor phosphorous in the cellar. There were rats in the warehouse. Smoking was not allowed on the premises. No oil was stocked for machinery, and no old rags were kept about for cleaning the machinery.

Foreman Luck, of the City Fire Brigade, deposed that the call was received at 6.1 a.m., and that when the full brigade arrived on the scene the fire was well alight. By Mr. Evan—It had been burning for some time by the time the brigade arrived.

Constable Ellis stated that he examined the premises at 3 a.m., 4.30 a.m., and 5.45 a.m. on the day of the fire. Everything appeared to be quiet then, and there was no sign of any fire. He tested the windows and doors.

A juryman, at the conclusion of the evidence, intimated that he wished to ask Superintendent Booker some questions.

Superintendent Booker—You can't question me. I'm not here as a witness.

The Acting Coroner—Mr. Booker need not answer any questions.

The Juryman—I want to ask whether the brigade is strong enough to cope with a big conflagration. If another fire had broken out while Harrold, Colton, & Co.'s place was burning, would it have had to blaze away?

Superintendent Booker—Well, I have spoken so often on that question that I do not think it is necessary for me to say anything here.

The Acting Coroner—I think you need not go into that matter. It is nothing to do with the present enquiry.

The jury, without retiring, brought in a verdict that there was no evidence to show how the fire originated.

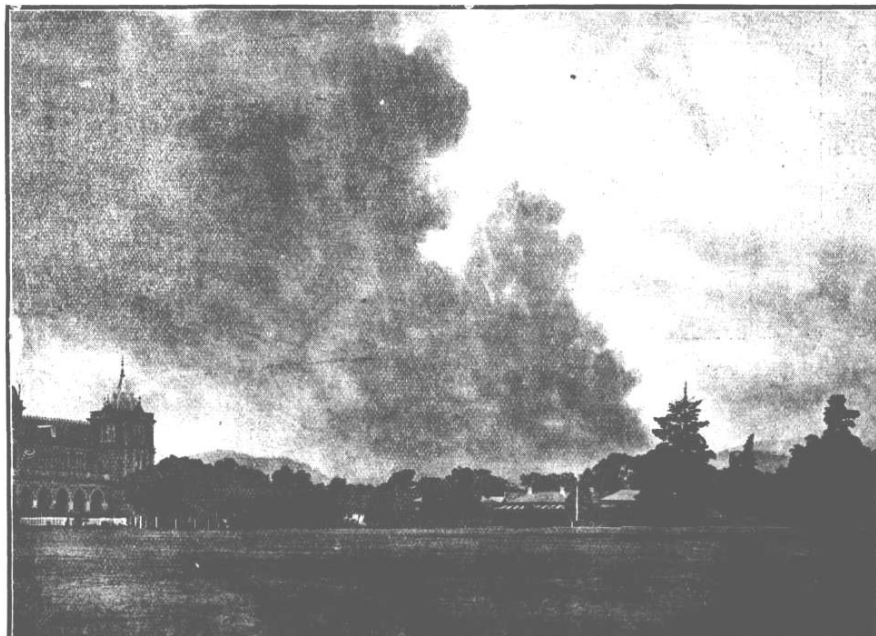


PRG 631/2/219

*State Library of South Australia - Currie Street near Topham Street [PRG 631/2/219]. Currie Street, south side, frontage of Colton's is 31 yards. On the left is Topham street. Harrold Colton and Company Limited, ironmongers, stands on this corner. The building suffered a huge fire in 1907. Dated 1908. Ernest Gall. Part of Acre 138 Collection*

***Critic (Adelaide, SA : 1897-1924), Wednesday 27 February 1907, page 4***

THE BUSH FIRE NEAR ADELAIDE.



On Sunday evening a thick pall from the bush fires in the hills hung over the City of Adelaide.

H. Krischock, Critic photographer.

***Port Pirie Recorder and North Western Mail (SA : 1898 - 1918), Saturday 3 August 1907, page 3***

## Fire Brigade Trouble.

### SUPERINTENDENT BOOKER RESIGNS

At the request of the Fire Brigade Board Mr. G. A. Booker, Superintendent of the South Australian Fire Brigades, has tendered his resignation of office. [Mr G..A. Booker has been Superintendent of the South Australian Fire Brigade for about 17 years. He holds the rank of Lieutenant in the navy and is one of the few Australian local naval officers qualified to the navigation standard of the Royal Navy. In April last Mr Booker left Adelaide on a four months' leave, during which time he visited England and the Continent studying Fire Brigade affairs. He only returned a few weeks ago. A notice appeared in an Adelaide daily a few days ago to the effect that there were alleged irregularities in the Fire Brigade management.]

***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Tuesday 20 August 1907, page 4***

#### THE FIRE BRIGADES

##### Why Mr. Booker Resigned

##### The Board's Report

##### Extraordinary Disclosures

Early this month we stated on the authority of the secretary of the Fire Brigades Board, that, in response to a request by the board, Mr. George Booker had resigned his position as superintendent of the fire brigades, and it was also added that a report would be supplied to the different contributing bodies. Since then the Chief Secretary (Hon. A. A. Kirkpatrick), who is Ministerial head of the department, has been asked repeatedly. by representatives of the press if he had received the report, but his answer invariably was, "I can only say I have not received it, and I can tell you nothing about it officially." On Monday the Minister said: "This afternoon, between 3 and 4 o'clock, I received what is called an interim report of the Fire Brigades Board. After reading it I sent a letter to the board, asking what further action it proposed to take. I hand you the report, which you can publish."

The report reads as follows: Resignation of the Superintendent.

"As announced by the daily press on August 2 and 3, 1907, the late superintendent, Mr. G. A. Booker, at the request of the board, tendered his resignation as Superintendent of the Fire Brigades, and his resignation was accepted. It was further stated that the reasons that led the board to make this request would be embodied in a report, which would be supplied to the contributories, and in compliance with that promise this report is issued. Advantage is taken of the opportunity to refer to other subjects, which have occupied the attention of the board since they took office on February 1, 1907.

##### Purchase of Supplies.

"The first matter to attract attention was that contracts were entered into for the supply of uniforms, boots, and horse feed only; all other supplies were purchased by Mr. Booker, the board being ignorant of the purchases and the prices paid until accounts were rendered for payment. A notable instance of this method was a large purchase in January, 1907, from a Port Adelaide firm of sundry stores for use at the head station. The prices paid were much in excess of Adelaide prices, and, in addition, carriage had to be paid to the city. The board upon learning the position immediately instructed Mr. Booker that all future supplies must

be requisitioned, and that no purchases would be permitted until such requisitions had been approved by them. Although strong objection was offered by Mr. Booker, who intimated that it would be impossible to maintain the plant and appliances in a proper degree of efficiency under the posed system, the board adopted the method, and have continued it up to the present, with the result that considerable economies have been effected, and the efficiency of the brigades has in no way been impaired.

#### Leave of Absence to Mr. Booker.

"At their second meeting Mr. Booker, supported by a recommendation from the previous board, made an application for four months' leave of absence on full pay. This application was refused. At a sub-sequent meeting Mr. Booker produced a medical certificate from two leading doc-tors, stating that he was in a serious nervous condition, and urging that extended leave was imperative. The board there-fore granted him the leave asked for, and the deputy superintendent was placed in charge of the brigades.

#### Whisky and Rum Audited.

"In attending to a query by the Audit Department, which necessitated the summarising of all the purchases from one firm, it was noted that the amount appeared ex-cessive. viz.:—£60 7/7 for the one item represented in the accounts as 'disinfectants.' Enquiries were made, and it was ascertained that the goods invoiced as disinfectants" were, in fact, whisky and rum, and that the firm who supplied same were complying with the instructions of Mr. Booker in thus describing them. Immediately upon the return of Mr. Booker to Australia he was requested to furnish an explanation of the matter, and in his reply, whilst admitting the facts, he endeavored to place the onus upon the late board by stating that it was tacitly understood that refreshments should be obtained, and to avoid constant objection by the Audit Office, he presumed that he was fulfilling the intention of the board by debiting the cost to such account as he thought advisable. There is no doubt whatever that the late board were unaware that such practices were being carried on. In fact, during the time that the purchases were being made Mr. Booker made a formal request for an 'entertainment' allowance, which he afterwards withdrew, and he accepted from the late board a cheque for £25 to compensate him for amounts he stated it had cost him to entertain visitors at the head station, described as 'additional services' rendered during the year. Mr. Booker's explanation of this was regarded as most unsatisfactory.

#### Excessive Prices for Inferior Hose.

"Probably the most vital question that engaged the board's attention was the supply of hose, the most important item in a fire brigade equipment. Mr. Booker has always assured the various boards that a standard make of hose, known as Rob Roy,' admitted by experts to be the best obtainable, has been used by the brigade. Before the departure of Mr. Booker on his leave enquiries had already been made from the brigades in the other States to ascertain the prices paid by them for hose, in order to check those paid by the board. After his departure the attention of the board was directed to the inferior quality of the hose in use, and to the new sup-plies which had just come to hand bearing German brands on the packages. On enquiry it was ascertained that the hose, was of German manufacture, and on samples being submitted to experts in the other States, the board were confirmed in the opinion that it was of inferior quality and unreliable. A Sydney expert stated of the rubber-lined hose:— "The sample sent is one of the worst specimens of fire hose that I have seen

for a long time. Another Sydney expert reported, on the hose submitted to him:—"All the rubber-lined hose, not of the Rob Roy brand, is entirely unsuitable for fire brigade work. It is heavy, made of very inferior materials, and appears to be a cheap German manufacture.' The inferior quality of the unlined hose is best exemplified by the fact that 1,000 ft. used for the first time at the demonstration of the file float at Port Adelaide in March last was by that one test rendered totally unfit for further service. For the supply of this inferior German hose, purchased at the beginning of this year, the sum of £610 12/6 was paid. The price for rubber-lined was 2/4½ per ft., and for unlined 1/4½ per ft. The reliable 'Rob Roy' hose can be landed in Adelaide at 2/4½ per ft. for rubber-lined and 11½d. per ft. for unlined. It has been ascertained that hose equal in quality to the inferior German make as used by the brigade can be landed in Adelaide at 1/7 per ft. for rubber-lined and 6½d. per ft. for unlined. Mr. Booker, in his explanation of this matter, stated that he was not aware that the price charged in any instance was excessive, also that until his recent visit to England he had not had any opportunity to make comparisons, and thereby gain a knowledge of the various hoses on the market at the time, and his choice had necessarily been limited to the samples obtainable here. He had never seen any 'Rob Roy' unlined hose. In contrast to Mr. Booker's statement, it is pointed out that the board have gained all this information within the last four months, and the facts were already in the possession of the deputy-superintendent. Mr. Booker was in charge of the brigades for 20 years. It will be noted that the board have for years been paying an excessive price for an inferior article.

#### Too Much Rubber-Lined Hose.

"Another matter in connection with hose that exhibits gross mismanagement is to be noted us regards the quantity of rubber-lined hose purchased in comparison with that of unlined hose. The latter hose will bear just as great a pressure of water as the rubber-lined hose, and is, besides, very much lighter and more easily handled; a greater quantity can be stowed on the reels, and it is considerably less than half the price. The unlined hose can be used for all fire brigade purposes, with the exception of a length or two that may be necessary; to carry through buildings to minimise any probable damage from sweating. It is agreed by experts that about 10 per cent, of rubber-lined hose is sufficient wherewith to equip brigades. Of the 7,500 ft. of hose purchased by Mr. Booker at the beginning of the year no less than 3,200 ft. were rubber-lined. If the purchase had been on the above basis of 10 per cent, rubber-lined and 90 per cent, unlined, and the reliable 'Rob Roy' brand procured at the prices quoted, viz., 2./4½ and 11½d. per ft. respectively, a saving of over £250 would have been effected. When inspecting the country fire stations recently more than enough rubber-lined hose was found at Port Pirie to equip the whole of the brigades in the State, while some of the stations had more than the staff could handle when under pressure. The Port Adelaide fire-float was supplied with 500 ft. of rubber-lined hose, whereas for its particular class of work unlined hose alone is needed. The result of this mismanagement is that the board have been compelled to order reliable hose to the amount of £535 to partially equip the brigades. This will arrive in a few weeks.

#### An Improper Practice.

"A very disturbing fact came to light in connection with the shipment of hose paid for at the beginning of the year. An ac-count for £720 12/6 for hose and couplings was passed for payment by Mr. Booker, and a cheque drawn for payment of same on January 3. For reasons connected with finance the cheque was not handed over till January 18, but in the

meantime repeated requests had been made for payment, of which Mr. Booker was aware. It was afterwards discovered that the whole of the rubber-lined hose included in the account, amounting to £380, was not delivered until March 18, so that payment had been made eight weeks before it was received. Mr. Booker's explanation was that he had always been in the habit of passing for payment the accounts of the firm who supplied the goods upon presentation of the bills of lading, but the practice is most improper and unbusinesslike.

#### Reports from Experts.

"In consequence of the disturbing nature of the reports received as to the condition of the hose and various appliances, the board, whilst having confidence in their staff, considered it advisable to seek the advice of an expert from one of the brigades in the other States to confirm or otherwise the opinions expressed by their own officer. The Sydney Fire Brigades Board appointed their deputy superintendent (Mr. N. G. Sparks) to visit Adelaide and report. Mr. Sparks is an officer with 26 years' fire brigade experience, 16 years having been spent with London brigades and 10 years in the Sydney brigade. He made a thorough investigation of the Adelaide, Port Adelaide, and suburban brigades, and his report in every particular confirmed that of the local deputy superintendent.

#### Missing Goods.

"An Adelaide firm were paid in September, 1906. for branches and nozzles the sum of £10 3/6. Exactly similar goods formed part of the accessories of a large steam fire engine imported in 1905, but as they were not satisfactory to Mr. Booker new ones were purchased locally, and the imported goods were placed in stock. Later on they were taken from stock and forwarded to the Port Adelaide firefloat, and they are the only goods of a similar nature that have been received at Port Adelaide for more than two years. The firm who supplied the goods cannot produce a receipt for their delivery, and the board's officers state that they have never been received. Mr. Booker's explanation is that he received the goods, and they must be at the head station now if they have not been sent away during his absence. As Mr. Booker debited the goods on the account to Port Adelaide, they should be there, but they are not.

#### Dear Couplings.

"The board have for years been paying £1 and over per pair for couplings, Mr. Booker having purchased them through an Adelaide firm, whilst they could have been procured direct from the makers in Sydney at 10/3 per pair. The couplings procured are of most inferior quality, and fit the appliances very badly, the delivery thread on fire engines having to be filed down to make them fit.

#### £144 Too Much.

"On the recommendation of Mr. Booker, a chemical engine was procured last year from a Melbourne firm and mounted on the salvage van. The engine consists of two cylinders, and they were placed in a vertical position, the outlet for the chemical solution used for extinguishing fires being at the bottom. The principal chemical used, viz.. bicarbonate of soda, does not remain in solution if kept standing, but de-posit, with the result that a hard mass is formed over the outlet, thus preventing the engine from being effective. This grave defect has now been remedied by placing the cylinders on separate vehicles in a horizontal

position. The cost of this engine (which has a capacity of 34 gallons) in Melbourne was £186. whilst a superior engine, with a capacity of 35 gallons, could have been procured in London for £42.

#### Forty Uniforms Not Required.

"The attention of the board has been directed to the supply of uniforms, and it is apparent that the design and material are of such a nature as to cause un-warranted expenditure in this direction. As an instance of the extravagance, it is pointed out that the board are paying 25/6 for a garment that the board of one of the other States procures for 12/. It is noted that Mr. Booker has ordered uniforms for all members of brigades, without having ascertained if they are required, with the result that for this year alone 40 garments were supplied in excess of requirements, at a cost of £85.

#### Funds of the Band.

'The board have had rendered to them an account for £63 for brass band instruments purchased last year by Mr. Booker for the Firemen's Band at the head station. A fund, termed the Firemen's Re-creation Fund, is known to exist, but it is a matter to which no attention has been paid by the board, and no control has been exercised over it. The board are informed that money has been received by Mr. Booker within the last two or three years on behalf of the fund from business people, amounting to over £70, and that many of the insurance companies contribute yearly towards same. Mr. Booker cannot produce a statement of receipts and expenditure of the moneys of this fund, and he states that no books have been kept. He further states that the fund has been in existence for 18 years, and the as-sets consist of a billiard table and accessories, two pianos, and brass band instruments.

#### Improvements by the Board.

"The board will make considerable alteration to the Port Adelaide firefloat, for the purpose of enabling same to pass under the Jervois-bridge, and carrying a larger quantity of hose, than is now possible. At present this appliance is overburdened with cabin accommodation and deck fit-tings. There are many other matters that have engaged and are engaging the attention of the board, such as the defective or lack of training of firemen, especially in the higher branches of the calling, the sys-tem of running the fire engine at Port Pirie as a first turn-out appliance, to all fires, when it should be used as a stand-by for serious fires; the want of uniformity of hose couplings and connections at Gawler and Kapunda, which should have been remedied years ago, the cost being very slight; the utter lack of check upon the issue of stores at the head station; and, in addition, the conditions under which premises have been leased from individuals. The necessary steps have been taken to remedy most of these defects, and the board are already feeling more at ease concerning the efficiency of the brigades.

#### Present Staff Efficient.

"The board, in closing this report, desire to state that they have most excellent material in their staff of officers and fire men (a fact specially referred to by Mr. Deputy Superintendent Sparks); and it must be recognised that the present efficiency of the brigades (in spite of great disadvantages) is due to this fact. The board, in addition, desire to express their entire satisfaction with the manner in which the secretarial work is performed."

***South Eastern Times (Millicent, SA : 1906 - 1954), Friday 23 August 1907, page 3***

FIRE BRIGADE SCANDAL.

When the Chief Secretary received a report from the Fire Brigades Board, concerning the resignation of ex-president Booker—which the Board was led to to invite on being made aware of certain instances of gross mismanagement of their affairs—he sent a letter to the Board enquiring what action they proposed to take in the matter. The secretary to the Board has formally replied that the affair would be considered at the Board's next meeting.

***Chronicle (Adelaide, SA : 1895 - 1954), Saturday 7 September 1907, page 31***



LIEUTENANT W. G. RICKWOOD. R.N.,  
The newly-appointed Superintendent of Fire Brigades.

***Chronicle (Adelaide, SA : 1895 - 1954), Saturday 9 November 1907, page 42***

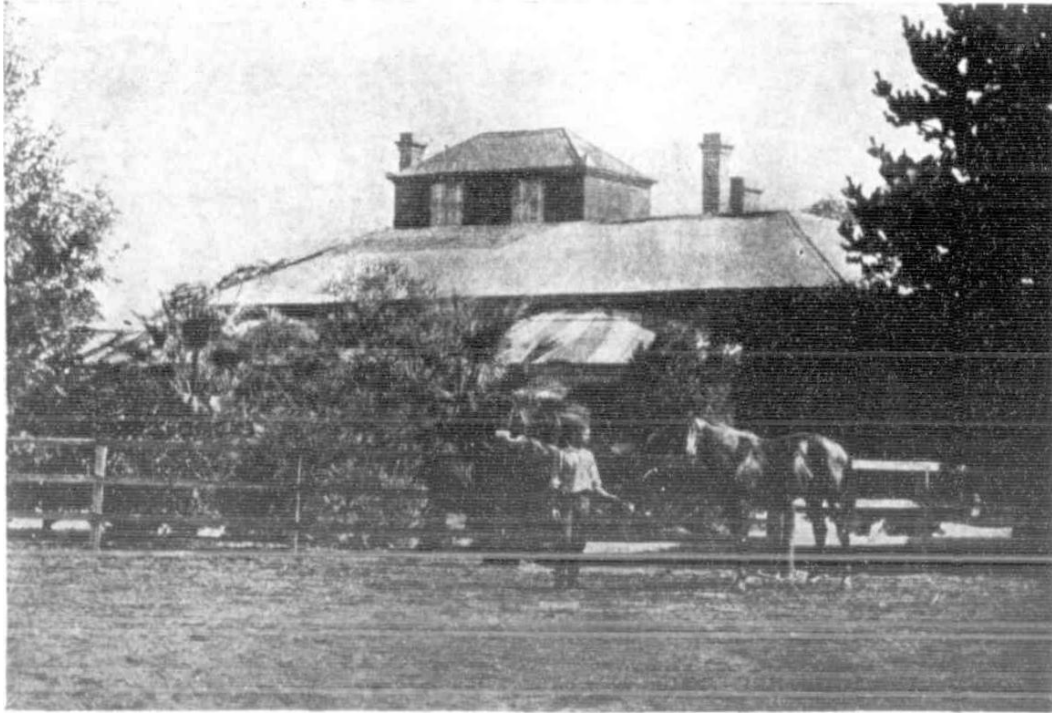
FIRE AT RICHMOND.

The fire at Richmond Park early on Monday morning almost completely destroyed Mr. J. H. Aldridge's fine residence, which was one of the landmarks of the district. The dwelling consisted of 11 rooms, 10 of which were totally destroyed. A piano, a couple of bedsteads, and a few chairs were the only articles saved. Mr. Aldridge says that all the inmates retired at 11.30 p.m. on Sunday and everything was then apparently right, but at 1 a.m. on Monday he was called by his daughter, Miss Margaret Aldridge, who told him that the kitchen and sitting-room were on fire. When he rushed out he found those two rooms burnt down, and, in consequence of the strong wind, the fire spread with great rapidity to the main portion of the building. Owing to the great heat the electric bells started ringing. He immediately telephoned the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and called the inmates of the house. The brigade managed to save one room. Miss Margaret Aldridge says she retired at 11.30 p.m. At 1 a.m. on Monday she was awakened by the heavy wind and rain and a crackling noise. She got up and after looking through the window called her father. There was a fire burning in an open fireplace in the sitting-room before the family retired on Sunday night. Constable Barrien says that at 2 a.m. on Monday he was called by Constable Ryan, of Thebarton, who informed

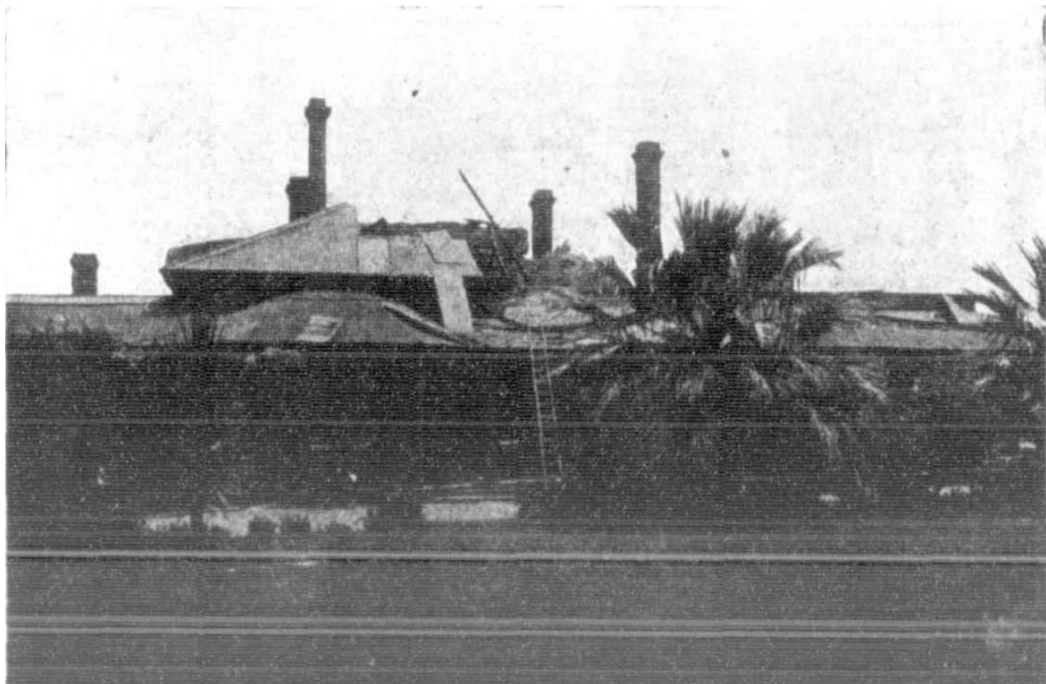
him that a fire had broken out at Richmond. He proceeded to Richmond Park and found the residence of Mr. Aldridge burnt down. Ten rooms of the dwelling had been completely destroyed. He made a careful search, but could not trace the origin of the fire, although he was strongly of the opinion that owing to the strong wind blowing a spark escaped from an open fireplace on to some mats which were on the floor and caused the outbreak.

***Observer (Adelaide, SA : 1905 - 1931), Saturday 9 November 1907, page 27***

DESTRUCTION BY FIRE OF MR. J. H. ALDRIDCE'S RESIDENCE, RICHMOND PARK.



BEFORE THE FIRE. THE WELL KNOWN HORSE PISTOL IS AT THE FENCE;



the ruins.

***Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Friday 6 December 1907, page 4***

#### THE STREET FIRE ALARMS.

About ten years ago a letter was forwarded to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Board, suggesting that a red light should be fire alarm in the city. The suggestion was forwarded by two citizens, who saw flames placed in the immediate vicinity of every burst through the roof of a building in Grenfell-street, and desired to communicate with the brigade, but had no idea where the nearest alarm was situated. Subsequently they discovered that at the time they saw the fire first they were within a few yards of an alarm. The board in reply recognised the importance of the suggestion, and expressed regret that the finances were not in a condition to permit of its adoption. There were then only a few alarms scattered over the city. Now there are 53, a dozen or more having been installed during the last month, but probably not one person in ten could state without looking where an alarm is situated. In the day time it is comparatively easy to discover the whereabouts of the alarms, but at night time it is difficult, and the question of improving the system might with advantage be considered by the board. In most instances it will probably be found that there is a street lamp near the telegraph post on which the alarm is fixed, and if arrangements could be made with the City Council to substitute red glass for the ordinary glass of the lamps the presence of the red light would indicate that there was an alarm in the immediate neighborhood.