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Transcript of letter from Henry F. McClure to Edgar McClure

Dear Edgar,

Seattle, W.T. June 7, 1889

As I telegraphed you today I am burned completely out office and room. About 2 o'clock yesterday afternoon the firebell rang and after awhile I thought I would walk up the street and see if the fire would amount to anything. It was then under full headway in the block above my room. I went up into the room and took my position in the window at first merely to view the fire, and then to be in a place where I could pack up and get out if the building should burn. It did so and we got everything out. Louie Brandes pitched in and did us great service together with other friends. Before we had everything out the room was on fire. We carried the things down to the street and put them into a wagon and hauled them up the hill and to the windward out of the reach of the fire. When we gathered them up this morning we were out only my folding chair a picture of Dan's sister and a center table cover in which were rolled a number of articles though what these were we do not now know. These things were carried off by some one else by mistake and are some where in safety now though we do not know where they are and will probably never find them.

Diagonally across the street from the brick in which we had our quarters was a magnificent brick building occupied by Toklas Singerman and Co, four stories high and well built. It was backed by a solid row of bricks two blocks in length in the extreme end of which was our office. I was sure the brick row would withstand the fire and we would escape. But by the time we had conveyed all our room furniture to a place of safety the Toklas, Singerman building was a mass of flames. The wind blew strongly from the north and lifted the flames three fourths of the way across the street. The windows of this block gave way before the fire and the whole building seemed to flash into flames. It is reported that two men who were on the roof were surrounded by the flames all means of exit cut off and they perished. The remainder of the double block was sure to go and I hastened to the office to help the boys out there. I found them well advanced towards an evacuation of the office. One half our books were already down stairs and the desks were torn apart in readiness for removal. We quickly got everything out excepting the carpet on the inner room, some signs, brooms, and a few other articles. A part of these we loaded on a wagon and got safely out of reach of the fire. Some office chairs a table the office carpet and our bookcase were left. We carried away on our shoulders

all except the table and bookcase, which were burned. The bookcase we paid \$25 for and had put it in place only two days beforehand.

After we got into safety everything we could, I took a walk around the fire as a rest. This was about 5:30, and I was almost tired out. The fire then had swept over about ten blocks the water had almost completely given out and the wind was sweeping headlong forward over the flats, composed almost entirely of one and two story wooden buildings. It was an awful sight. The flames it seemed were rising higher and higher and the front of the fire was lengthening every minute as the burnt space opened out from the initial point like a triangle from one of its angles.

After the main business portion of the town had been burned the wind changed to the north east and the fire ceased to spread to the east but between Fourth Street and the water front in South Seattle there is not a building standing. The "P.I." issued a small sheet this morning and stated that 80 acres of business property has been destroyed and 40 acres more of wharfage and small establishments in addition. You can imagine the loss. There is not a dry goods store left in the city, nor a grocery store of any size, only one bank and that one recently organized, three restaurants and only two buildings used by professional men. The Colonial block in which I am writing and the Boston block across the street from this in which is the post office and the land office. The court house and the auditor's office were saved. Newlin F[illegible] and Stratton saved nearly all their books. But many a man in this city last afternoon saw all of many years' savings go up in few minutes flame.

One of the great problems here is to sleep and eat. Many people were forced to sleep out in the open air last night. Fortunately I was well provided for in both respects. Dan took me with him to Mrs. Chamberlain's formerly of Salem, and we got our supper there and breakfast and dinner today and slept there last night. Today we got a room in the university dormitory which Prof. Gatch said we may occupy until the opening of school next fall. We moved in today and will remain there for some time at least.

We have some of our office furniture in a real estate office on this street and will probably make it our head quarters for some time. I do not have the least idea where we will finally put our office.

This is the most awful thing I ever saw. I cannot write any more and get this into the mail. If you can spare me a little money, please send it to me. A Portland draft will be the best way.

Affectionately,

Henry F. McClure