

Seattle, Wash, June 8 / 89

Mr. Edward Hartmann
Munich
Bavaria
Germany

Dear Uncles and Aunts,

I write to inform you of the terrible disaster which has befallen us, and our beautiful city.

We are all in sorrow now. The business portion of Seattle is in ruins. Seattle which the day before yesterday, was a beautiful city, today is in ashes. The Opera House was consumed, so you will know Papa's Office & shop went with it, situated as it was in that building. He lost all his machinery, books, and stock ---everything. He only saved about 7 books belonging to the Court House. Those were the Assessment Rolls (books) and very expensive books (\$50 a piece). They were wanted just now, and were finished. They lost all the time in carrying them away to a place of safety, (each book weighs about 30 lbs) (Papa's arms are still sore today,) during which time they had to let their stock go. The fire started in the Denny Block (a wooden structure) almost opposite the Opera House, by the overturning of a gasoline stove in a paint shop. It was thought to be only a little fire at first, and as the Opera House block, with its solid looking walls, looked as if it could defy the flames. Not much thought was given to it; anyhow young Mr. Frye was on top of the building & gave it a good drenching, which proved to be of no avail, then suddenly came the cry "the Opera House in on fire," and an arrow of flames shot up from the roof of the building. Papa's office being in the furthest corner of the building, on the second floor, was the first office to catch fire. Papa was the first to move in the Opera House 5 yrs. ago (only half completed). Papa & his workman seen the fire from the start, & had not the least idea that they were to share its fate. Papa carried those books away immediately (which I named) and his workman some others. By the time they returned the heat & smoke was so great, they had to rush back. Papa was the last man who entered the building and on opening the door of his shop, a cloud of black smoke rushed out, all he could do was to run for his life. He was almost suffocated, he could not see or hear – scarcely.

Papa is now without a bindery, and a fine and well-equipped bindery it was – his joy and his pride. Many artistic, as well and solid bound books were turned out of his establishment. He also possessed the confidence in the community as an honest and industrious man. Although, lately he had too much concurrence, there were 4 binderies in a small town like this. (2 besides his burned out). He really does not know what to do. – to start again for the fourth (4th) time, (which seems pretty tough for him) or to go away.

We have a home – that is all, but we are thankful for that. Mama says, the ruins remember her of the great Chicago fire, --the destruction and devastation being so great. About sixty (60) block burnt which equal 120 acres. All the beautiful brick blocks are swept away, including the

following: Opera House built 5 years ago, San Francisco (Store) built 6 months ago, Yesler Leary built 7 years ago, New Yesler block, built 6 months ago, the Beautiful Occidental, completed 8 months ago, and many, many more. (I think Mama sent you the Christmas no. of the "Press," which has all the buildings in). It took only 8 hours to destroy the entire portion. There are thousands of people, homeless, with only the canopy of Heaven as their shelter. The night before the fire, our citizens held a mass meeting at the Opera House for the relief of the sufferers of the great flood at Johnstown in the Pennsylvania valley (of which I suppose you have heard). The next evening we ourselves were in a similar circumstance. Imagine yourselves in a beautiful city one day, and the next a city of ashes. It is dreadful to think back only two days.

It was a "sea of fire," and yet it is so smoky no one is allowed to go near the ruins. We have Martial Law, and no one is allowed on the streets after 8 P.M. – without a Pass. The Militia is here also.

The fire in its course swept away many Churches. The one which was in the midst of the flames and was saved is our beautiful Catholic Church, built about 6 yrs. Ago. It was saved only through a miraculous power – no human power saved it. The Altar's were strip[p]ed, and the organ taken apart. The Blessed Sacrament was carried up to the Academy of Holy Names, -- but God spared it.

The Court House, District Court & Jail were saved by tearing down of a shanty across the street. The Boston Block is the only brick block left. It was on fire several times, but was saved by organizing of the "Bucket Brigade". The Post Office is in the latter building. The Colonial Block, which is a wooden structure, was saved by shade trees.

Now, today is Sunday, and everybody is building up tents and shanty's, for grocer's, shoe stores and the like. It hardly seems like Sunday at all. The people are hauling lumber, building, delivering Merchandise, etc. Sunday is always well observed in American cities, -- and especially in Seattle. Two saw mills were burned there being only two left to supply all the lumber, for the present. There is only one wharf, for all the vessels and steamers to land. There being over 50. The Electric Motor Line (Street car) which is run by electricity was stopped, but is now running again (of course not through the burned district). It makes one feel encouraged to see it run.

The two Cable roads are stopped. The Front Street cable cannot run for a long time till all the debris is cleared away, as it runs through a large portion of the burned district. The cable was saved by constantly turning the turn table.

The Yesler Avenue, (which go[es] to Lake Washington, & is such a beautiful ride), will run soon as it does not run through much of the burned district, but its turntable is entirely ruined.

It is dreadful to think of our beautiful city all in ruins, -- with all its stately brick blocks -- to be in ashes. Many a heart is broken over its destruction. Many a one is without a home or employment.

[Following sentence struck through] They talk of rebuilding the city immediately but (as I said before) the ruins are smoking so and some are still fiercely burning, that it be impossible for at least 2 weeks. [end strikethrough] While the flames are still active, and while the embers are still glowing, preparations are making for reestablishing every line and department of business.

Papa received several letters, and telegrams from kind parties, who are willing to help him to establish again. Did I tell you Papa had an insurance [strikethrough] no, I do not think I did [end strikethrough] of 500 // 00. He has an insurance of \$500. 00/100, although it does not cover 1/8 of the loss, it is better than none at all.

Papa thinks with the \$500.00 ins. and what Aunt Dora left to Mama, he may be able to establish again.

Papa left last evening for Portland, Ore., and will then go to San Francisco. Mama thinks he needs a few months rest and distraction, and he has gone to take it. Papa & Mama send their kind regards, so does Julia & Robert.

Your loving niece,

Helen Anthony

N.B. -- Please address your letters in future to the house -- 1522-7th St. Though Papa retains his P.O. Box 633.