

The General Conference

OF

Seventh-day Adventists

267 West Main Street.

*LL*  
A. G. DANIELLS,  
President.

H. E. OSBORNE,  
Secretary.

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Treasurer.

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Cable Address,  
Adventist,

Battle Creek, Mich., U. S. A.

Elder A. G. Daniells,  
1059 Castro Street,  
Oakland, California.

*B. C. Sanitarium*  
*Paul*  
February 18, 1902.  
*Battle Creek*  
*Sanitarium*

Dear Brother Daniells:--

I regret that my first letter to you must convey the particulars of such a serious calamity as has overtaken us. I have already advised you by telegraph of the bare facts in the case, and I suppose you have seen quite complete reports in the daily papers. I do not know that I can do better than to give a statement first of what I saw myself in connection with the affair.

I was awakened about 5 o'clock this morning with the word that the Sanitarium was on fire. I hurried out, and when I reached there, found that the old main building was one mass of flames from top to bottom. The fire department was there, and playing some water upon the flames; but I saw in a moment that the whole building was doomed. In the meanwhile they were removing the patients from the building, and such furniture and outfit as they could take from the north and south ends. It was a fearful sight, as you may imagine; and I felt at once that the only thing was to save other buildings, if possible.

I interviewed the chief of the fire department with reference to sending out of town for help; but he said it would be of no use, there was not sufficient water supply for more help than they had at hand.

When I saw that all their efforts to save the main building would be fruitless, I urged him to do everything possible to save the hospital; but I could not seem to get him to pay any attention to

from the ground up on the roof of the Hospital building and the tower, as they were already steaming with the heat. They could not reach the top with the stream, and I urged them to try some other plan, and to put up their aerial ladder. The chief said it would be useless, and I could not get him to make the move.

Pretty soon the fire began to start on the roof and tower. I then urged him again to put his letter up, and he consented to do so; but by the time they had moved it and got it up, and got the stream going, it was too late. The fire soon reached the elevator well, and dropped down, starting the blaze from the first floor, and then we all knew it was a hopeless case.

Attention was then given to save the adjacent buildings, and to remove the remainder of the property from the Hospital. W.K. Kellogg decided not to open the vault, as he thought the records would be safer there than to have them scattered out.

In the meantime all the patients had been removed from both buildings, the most serious accident being that one lady patient had leg broken by jumping, and one or two others received some minor injuries. For a time it was thought that one patient was missing, but I understand that he has since been found. *No, an old man lost his life. Not known.*

By 7:30 the fire was practically over; and the buildings destroyed were as follows: The Sanitarium main building and all connections; the original wooden building known as the Annex located just behind the Sanitarium; the Hospital building; the Salisbury house on the corner of Lincoln Street, and the barn connected with the next house on Lincoln Street.

No doubt the Nurses' Dormitory would have burned had not the Sanitarium employees stood guard on the roof, and put out one or two small blazes. The wind was generally from the east, sometimes varying a little toward the north.

We held a council meeting at 9 o'clock, which was really a meeting of the Sanitarium Board, with other brethren invited to be present. Resolutions were adopted looking toward an effort to hold everything in as good a condition as possible, and various committees were appointed to take charge of lines of work which needed immediate attention. Of course all felt that it was a terrible blow, but there was a spirit of courage in the meeting.

In the meantime Brother Spicer met the helpers in the Nurses' Dormitory, and gave them a good talk. He says they showed excellent courage, and a determination to stand by in every way possible.

The citizens have proposed, through Mr. Potter, the Presbyterian minister, that a public mass-meeting be held in the Tabernacle to-morrow evening, to give expression to their sympathy, and possibly the meeting may turn in the direction of more substantial help.

I think they have located Dr. Kellogg on a train which will arrive in Chicago this evening, and we expect him here to-morrow morning. We are trying to do what is necessary to be done, but not to take any action that will embarrass further plans after his arrival.

I telegraphed to Oakland at the same time that I sent the first message to you, and also sent a cable to London, informing them of the disaster. I felt that it was no ordinary occurrence, and that it was due to our brethren that they should hear the news from us, and not be in suspense through any newspaper report which they might think a possible mistake.

Brother Spicer started to go to Berrien Springs by the early train, and was among the first on the ground. He rendered much assistance in removing patients and otherwise looking after affairs. This has delayed him one day, but he will go to-morrow morning. In the meantime I will talk with him and Brother Osborne about giving him the best chance

possible to help them during the remainder of the term.

I might add that I have not heard any trustworthy statement yet as to the origin of the fire. I first heard that it was an explosion in the laboratory. Later I have heard that it was caused by an electric light wire coming in contact with some inflammable material. I understand that the watchman discovered it when it first started, but while trying to get suitable help to extinguish it, precious time was spent, and the flames soon got beyond control. Without regard to the cause, I am told by Brother Spicer that it started in one of the additions to the old main building on the east side. As it began on the ground floor, as soon as it reached the elevator well and the hallways, it soon enveloped the whole building from bottom to top.

*One life was lost!*

I learned from Judge Arthur that the approximate insurance is \$160,000. This is on both buildings and contents. This I suppose will be not to exceed one-half of the inventoried value.

I feel thankful that no lives have been lost; but on the part of many of us there is a strong feeling that the chief of the fire department, through his inefficiency, is largely responsible for the loss of the Hospital. Of course the papers praise his heroic efforts; but I have told you the facts in the case. This affair is the all-absorbing subject in everybody's mind and on everybody's tongue, and so there is little else to mention.

I am glad to tell you that I hear through Leon that Brother Smith is somewhat better to-day.

This occurrence has rather unfitted me to settle down to serious work; but I am ~~inclined~~ <sup>trying</sup> to start in as best I can.

My sister is very much improved to-day, and I think will now recover rapidly.

I have received your letter from Chicago, and will do the best I can to carry out your suggestions. Of course this affair has upset

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everything at the Sanitarium, so that I can not well take up the matter there. I will try to reach Brother Sutherland at once, and state to him the situation in Illinois, and ask him if he can render them any help.

I hope you will have a comfortable journey, and a good time with the brethren on the Coast. I shall write you from day to day of any special developments.

With best wishes,

Yours faithfully,

R.

*W. W. Crockett*