

FLAMES WRECK BIG CAMDEN ELEVATOR

*Sitley & Son's Plant Destroyed by an Early
Morning Fire of Mysterious Origin, Entail-
ing Loss of \$150,000*

Fire of mysterious origin destroyed the grain elevator and warehouse of Sitley & Son, Sixth street, Chelton avenue and the West Jersey and Seashore Railroad, Camden, early yesterday morning, resulting in damages amounting to \$150,000, fully covered by insurance. The elevator was the largest in New Jersey.

It was twenty minutes after two o'clock when James Cahill, the watchman, heard a muffled report coming from the centre of the building. Almost immediately a sheet of flames burst into view and so rapidly did the blaze gain that Cahill, before he could turn in an alarm from the plant, was badly burned. He succeeded in turning in a general alarm, every fire company in the city responding.

A strong northwest wind was blowing at the time and, although this fanned the flames until they leaped hundreds of feet, it had a tendency to shift them from

the recently erected plant of the Camden Brewery Company to the southwest of the burning structure.

Firemen's Work Unavailing

Under the direction of Chief Elfreth the firemen made every effort to save the structure, but the fire had gained such headway that their work was unavailing. Thick volumes of smoke of a pungent odor nearly blinded the men. Firemen Joseph Maxwell, of No. 2 Fire House, was taken to the Cooper Hospital for treatment.

As the flames were reaching the stables containing eight horses a crowd of men, headed by John Hites, broke in the door and succeeded in taking the animals to a place of safety. Two hours after the fire was discovered the entire elevator was a mass of ruins.

Frank B. Sitley, a member of the firm,

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RUINS OF THE SITLEY GRAIN ELEVATOR FIRE IN CAMDEN

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said he could not account for the fire, as Frank Sagers, the engineer, had gone through the building a few hours before. C. Oscar Brown, head bookkeeper, was in the office until 11 o'clock Saturday night, but there was no indications of fire at that time. Further, Mr. Sitley said there was not a fire in any part of the structure or anything that might have cause for spontaneous combustion. These facts, in connection with the statement of the watchman concerning the muffled report, seem to indicate outside agencies.

Report Like an Explosion

The story of the watchman is borne out by William F. Thompson, of 768 South Second street, the towerman at the junction of the railroads and within twenty feet of the building, who also heard a report like an explosion before the flames burst into view. An investigation will be made as soon as the ruins cool sufficiently.

The burned elevator was five stories in height and was part of a two-story brick structure 460 by 165 feet. There were thirty bins containing grain of all varieties. Each bin had a capacity of 4000 bushels and altogether nearly 100,000 bushels of grain were burned. Beside the grain two carriages, a sleigh and many farming implements were destroyed. There were ten freight cars in the building, three of them being burned. Twenty men were employed.

Mr. Sitley said the elevator will be rebuilt at once.