

THE CARROLL CHRONICLE

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FIVE ADMIT GUILT IN BURNING OF SCHOOLS IN PERRY TOWNSHIP

Revolver Bullet Furnishes Clue Which Solves Mystery of Triple Arson

The mystery of the cause of the burning of three Perry Township school houses in less than that many months was cleared up this week with the confessions of five Perry Township men, who admitted that an organized attempt had been made, and was quite successful in burning the three buildings.

The men are:

William Grimes, 54, married, who lives on the old Tipton farm of 150 acres.

Charles Grimes, 34, his son, highway employee, married.

Franklin Tomazin, 42, married, who lives on a farm of 87 acres.

Clarence Rush, 39, unmarried, living on a 20 acre farm.

David Shearer, 34, saw mill operator, living on a farm of 80 acres.

With the exception of Shearer, who is a native of the community, all the others are West Virginia natives.

The picking up of a bullet, supposed to be from the gun of one of the men who fired at a guard at the Perrysville High School was the key, which unlocked the mystery. John ("Doris") Flory, the guard shot at after challenging a prowler around the high school building, about midnight Tuesday of last week made a search of the grounds later. He found a bullet of 38 caliber. One of the men later arrested, Clarence Rush, was known to have this kind of a revolver. He was arrested on suspicion, his premises searched, and the gun found. The gun and bullet were taken to Cleveland, where a ballistic expert said the bullet picked up was fired from Rush's revolver. Rush was arrested Saturday.

Shearer was arrested at 3 a.m. Sunday. The arrest of the two Grimes, father and son, followed on Monday. Tomazin was arrested Tuesday morning. The men after repeated quizzing by Prosecuting Attorney Saltsman, Sheriff McFadden and Michael Mellilo, assistant fire marshal, admitted their parts in the three firings, and implicated the others. The two Grimes were the last to hold out, the son signing a confession at 7 p.m. Tuesday and the father two hours later.

The Chronicle representative heard the younger Grimes tell his story in the sheriff's office Tuesday evening to Prosecuting Attorney Saltsman, his brother, Isaac, the sheriff and assistant fire marshal. Young Grimes admitted firing the elementary building at midnight Tuesday-Wednesday of last week. He told how he prepared a bucket stuffed with old sacks and excelsior. He carried this to the school building, pushed out a stone from the foundation of the building, put chain from an old Ford through the bail of the bucket, tied a knot in the chain, and placed the bucket under the building. The object of the knot in the chain was to have the bucket fire trap near the floor of the building. The junior Grimes even went into detail in his statement, saying he used two matches to fire the oil soaked sacks and excelsior.

After the junior Grimes had signed his statement which was taken down by a stenographer, the Chronicle man asked him what was his motive in setting fire to the school building. The word "motive" was a little too much for the former West Virginian, but after an explanation of the word, Grimes replied, "It was the way they used my little girl. They made fun of me when I talked to them about it."

There was not time to talk further to the junior Grimes, for he was being led back to the jail, but it is understood that he was referring to the board of education, and his complaint was that his little girl was compelled to walk two miles before she could board the school bus.

At the very hour junior Grimes was firing the old Perrysville grade building, Tomazin was prowling around the "annex" near the high school. It was Tomazin who was challenged by Flory, the guard, and who fired the bullet from Rush's revolver. The "black mask" which the guard said the intruder was wearing, Tomazin has admitted was a bandana handkerchief.

The three school buildings fired were the Rock Springs school, burned July 26, the Arabia school burned Sunday night, August 19, and the Perrysville elementary building, burned August 22~23.

The Rock Springs school was fired by Clarence Rush and Frank Tomazin, the men admitted in their signed confession. The building was partly torn down, preparatory to being moved. The two men took along a gallon of kerosene, which they poured over the building and lumber, each striking matches to fire the two parts.

The Arabia school was fired by William Grimes, Frank Tomazin, and David Shearer. According to their confession, the trio went in Tomazin's car by way of Waterloo. The building was found unlocked. After soaking the floors with kerosene the building was fired. The men then returned to their homes by way of Petersburg on a back road.

The county authorities are to be highly commended on their unraveling of the mystery. The assistant fire marshal highly commended the Saltsman twins and the sheriff on their shrewd detective work and the worming of confessions from the quintet. When asked by the Chronicle man if he ever had a case like this, his reply was that a short time ago a similar firing of school houses in Columbiana County after a fight over centralization.

The five men had a preliminary hearing before Judge S. M Myers Wednesday afternoon. All five entered pleas of guilty and were bound over to the grand jury under bond of \$1500 each.