

# ASHES!

## A Fine Mill in This County Reduced to Ashes--Vast Cloud and Flame Pile High in the Air--Heavy Loss For Williamsport District--A Dwelling House Nearby is Also Destroyed.

Fire swept away a lot of valuable property including the large flouring mill, grain elevator of E. M. Baker, the feedhouse and stable and other small buildings occupied by the mill, in Williamsport at 11:40 p. m. Thursday night. The loss is estimated at between \$10,000 and \$12,000, mostly covered by insurance. The buildings were located in the south part of town along the C. & O. canal, near Steffey & Findlay's wharf. The mill and were formerly owned by F. H. Darby. There were about 600 bushels of flour in the elevator and 150 barrels of corn and as many barrels of corn meal besides a quantity of un-burned flour, all of which was burned. The building was insured for \$10,000 with the "Millers' Mutual Insurance Co. of Hagerstown. There was

\$1,000 insurance on the contents placed with the McComas agency in this city, but no insurance on the two small frame buildings, also belonging to the firm. Except the Byron tannery fire, which occurred four or five years ago, this was the most destructive blaze that has occurred in the town in many years and blots out a flourishing industry. The origin of the fire is a mystery and may ever remain such. About 11:40 o'clock John Ream, a member of the firm and the miller, discovered the fire from his residence across the street. The fire started in the cupola and when first seen by Mr. Ream and others the flames were bursting from the windows. Mr. Ream hastily dressed and ran to the mill and opened the door, but there was no fire anywhere below. Mr. Ream, and those

who arrived first on the scene, at once began rolling barrels of flour from the mill and about thirty of them were saved. By this time the fire had spread rapidly and was feeding upon the timbers with voracious tongues. The building was doomed. Alarms were sounded by the engines on the W. M. and C. V. railroads blowing long and loud while the big whistle on Byron's tannery and the one at the electric light plant added to the din and woke the residents of the town, many of whom were asleep. A large crowd of men was soon on the scene and a bucket brigade was formed and ladders brought into use. No efforts were made to save the stable and tenant house, which was formerly the office building. Both caught fire from sparks falling upon the roofs and the intense heat and were completely wrapped in flames. Mr.

Preston, aided by neighbors, saved all of the household goods except a few articles. The fire fighters mounted the roof of Mr. Ream's residence and kept it wet and covered with blankets soaked in water though sparks were falling in showers upon the building. In the same manner the office building of Steffey & Findlay and two frame buildings across the road belonging to the same firm and the residence of Joseph Taylor were saved. The bucket brigade worked heroically and principally through the efforts of these men the flames were prevented from communicating to the surrounding buildings. A number of Contractor Elmore's men, who are in Williamsport, joined the bucket brigade and did valiant work. The mill property belonging to Steffey & Findlay on the wharf just

above the burned mill was not in danger. The hay sheds in the rear of Mr. Ream's residence caught fire from sparks, but the flames were quickly checked. Mr. Ream and Joseph Taylor were forced to move their goods out, but later they were taken back. When the fire was at its height and most threatening former Burgess G. W. McCardell telephoned to police headquarters in this city for aid. The request was communicated to Mayor Mish, who sent word back that the fire department was at the service of the citizens of Williamsport. Later a message came from there that the fire was under control. The night was perfectly calm lessening the danger of fires being started in the town from the myriad of sparks and burning embers that shot up from the blazing buildings. A carload of coal belonging to Steffey &

Findlay on the W. M. track close to the mill, caught fire and was partly burned. The car was pulled away and the fire put out. The same firm has about 700 or 800 tons of coal stored on the wharf and blazing timbers fell upon it when the mill frame crashed in. The firefighters turned a stream on the coal pile from the derrick engine and saved it. The mill was a frame structure and burned rapidly and when the other buildings were blazing the fire made a tremendous light. The reflection was seen here and for miles around. E. M. Baker & Co. purchased the mill, elevator and other buildings from the Mechanics' Saving Institute, of this city, who became the owners after F. H. Darby left. The firm had been conducting a growing business and the loss falls heavily upon them.

Mr. E. M. Baker is a resident of Hagerstown while his two sons, W. T. and Chas. N. Baker, members of the firm, and Mr. Ream, reside in Williamsport. The business was in their charge. The mill was three stories high and equipped with the latest roller process and other valuable machinery. The entire plant, which was built by F. H. Darby, cost about \$30,000. The Messrs. Baker or Mr. Ream could not account for the origin of the fire and are entirely at a loss to know how it started. It is thought that a spark lodging in or on the cupola may have smoldered there until fanned into a blaze or spontaneous combustion from dust in the elevator caused it. This is the third time Mr. Ream has suffered heavily by fire, and he is unfortunate in this respect. His mill at Falling Waters was burned some years ago and later the old Hager mill, in this city, which he operated, was burned.

RECORD. 144 HOURS

KILLED IN STRANGE MANNER.  
Floyd Rarmy Dragged Half Mile by