

The Sun (Westerly) December 6, 1922 Wednesday

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GRANITE CO. PLANT BURNS

Columbia Concern on Oak Street Destroyed

ALARM FAILS TO RING

Officials of Company Estimate Loss at \$40,000

The entire granite cutting and polishing plant of the Columbia Granite [next line unreadable] by fire which was discovered at about 1 o'clock this afternoon while the cutters and polishers were at work in the building. One of the men noticed a blaze in the partition near the engine room where the electric wires entered the structure. John Monti, one of the members of the firm, opened a door where the wires and switches were located and [unreadable words] into the big building.

An attempt was made to send in an alarm from Box 66, corner of Oak and Haswell streets, but the alarm could not be sounded from this box. It is understood that this line went out of commission shortly before 12 o'clock (Continued on page 7)

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when one stroke sounded on the fire alarm at the engine house on Union street.

Telephone calls were sent into the central office of the Westerly Automatic Telephone company from the store of F. F. Haswell & Son, the Westerly Lumber company and from several private telephones, but the operator who has charge of the ringing of the alarm at the telephone office was unable to sound it. An attempt was also made to get someone at the fire engine house on the telephone, but this effort was also fruitless and finally the bell was rung by Barney Fain at the engine house.

When it was found that the box on Oak street would not work John Monti drove to the engine house in his machine to summons assistance.

As soon as the alarm sounded the entire apparatus of the Westerly fire department quickly responded, but when the firemen arrived on the scene the cutting shed was a mass of flames. The flames were swept by a heavy northeast wind and within 15 minutes the main building and the engine room, located east of the main building, had been reduced to ashes. There were a dozen or more men at work in the building when the fire broke out a few minutes after the noon hour. The flames spread so rapidly that the men were unable to save any of their working tools.

The cutting shed was about 30 feet wide and 125 feet long with an overhead structure outside about 100 feet long which carried the crane. The entire plant was fitted up with the most modern machinery

for cutting, carving and polishing granite. Everything in the plant was ruined, and the loss is estimated at about \$40,000.

Several pieces of finished and unfinished monuments valued at more than \$10,000 were totally destroyed by the intense heat from the fire. One cross, which had been practically completed upon which work estimated at \$1,000 had been done, lay like crumbed up chipstone after the flames had been extinguished. Another big piece of granite which had been partly cut split through the center, as if done by human hand.

The Columbia Granite company is composed of Eli Monti and his three sons, Americo, Louis and John Monti.