



*1946 Four Men Die in Lobdell-Emery Fire  
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FOUR MEN ARE BURNED TO DEATH AS DISASTEROUS FIRE RUINS BUILDING OF A. W. R. CO.

Fire breaking out at about 8:30 a. m. this morning swept thru the main buildings of the American Wood Rim Company's Automobile Steering Wheel and Bicycle Rim manufacturing plant and completely destroyed those departments before it could be brot under control.

A full crew of men and women were at work when the blaze started and of the number, four were trapped in the buildings and are believed to have been burned to death. The missing men are Fred Van Pfoff, Lorenzo D. Smith, John Tate, Eugene Precour.

Late this afternoon the bodies of three were discovered in the ruins. Stephen Heil, who at first was reported among the missing was later found at his boarding place.

The four missing men are well known and respected residents of the city and their sudden call while at their daily post of duty has cast a shadow over the entire community. The sympathy of all goes out of their bereaved families.

Manager Edward Lobdell, Jr. and the Superintendents and foremen are at a lose to explain how the missing men became caught in the blazing building as all made an effort to see that every employee was sent from the departments as soon as the alarm was given and there was time enough for all to have made their escape.

Mr. Lobdell stated he believed the fire to have been caused from a spark of static electricity which was caught up from a shaft and becoming drawn into the blowers of a sanding machine caused the explosion in the blower system and the pipes breaking up released the fire in several places in the room at once.

The alarm was immediately answered by the city fire department which worked in conjunction with the employees using the plant's equipment in fighting the blaze. But the fire driven by the strong south wind, which developed blizzard velocity during the morning spread steadily north thru the wood working sections of the plant and defied all efforts to control it until the concrete and steel walls of the foundry building furnished a check to its progress and enabled the firemen to hold it there. The Saw Mill and lumber yards were continuously in danger of being ignited from sparks and heat by a large crew of men kept the fire from gaining any foothold there. A call for help to the City of Cheboygan brot a section of their Department with additional hose but they failed to reach the city until the blaze had already been halted. The plant and City officials appreciate the prompt spirit in which our neighboring city answered the call.

The long battle against the fire completely exhausted the reserve water reservoirs and necessitated the shutting off the city water for about four hours during the afternoon while the pumps were again bringing up the supply in the reservoirs.

The loss sustained by the A. W. R. Company in the fire is a heavy one but estimates of the total are not available as we go to press.

Mr. E. J. Lobdell, Sr., President of the Company has been in the east on a business trip and was reached this afternoon with news of the fire. No statement of the plans of the Company for replacing the destroyed departments will be available until he returns to Onaway, although officers here felt it was very probably that the plant would be rebuilt in the near future.

Onaway Outlook, January 14, 1926 pg. 1

[Return to Home Page](#)