

= Copenhagen Fire of 1728 =

The Copenhagen Fire of 1728 was the largest fire in the history of Copenhagen , Denmark . It began on the evening of 20 October 1728 and continued to burn until the morning of 23 October . It destroyed approximately 28 % of the city (measured by counting the number of destroyed lots from the cadastre) , left 20 % of the population homeless , and the reconstruction lasted until 1737 . No less than 47 % of the section of the city , which dates back to the Middle Ages , was completely lost , and along with the Copenhagen Fire of 1795 , it is the main reason that few traces of medieval Copenhagen can be found in the modern city .

Although the number of dead and wounded was relatively low compared to the extent of the fire , the cultural losses were huge . In addition to several private book collections , 35 @, @ 000 texts including a large number of unique works were lost with the University of Copenhagen library , and at the observatory on top of Rundetårn , instruments and records made by Tycho Brahe and Ole Rømer were destroyed .

= = Timeline = =

= = = Wednesday 20 October = = =

The exact time that the fire started is unknown . Various sources mention times between 6 : 00 and 8 : 00 p.m. , and 7 : 30 p.m. is the best estimate . However , the exact location of the origin of the fire is known . Almost directly across the street from Vesterport (the West Gate) was Lille Sankt Clemens Stræde . On the corner facing Vestervold , there was a small house on lot " Vester Kvarter 146 " (according to the cadastre of 1699) owned by Signe , widow of Boye Hansen . The lot is almost identical to the one on the corner of present @-@ day Frederiksberggade (the western end of Strøget) and The City Hall Square . Among the widow 's tenants were restaurant manager Peder Rasmussen and his wife , Anne Iversdatter . It was on the second floor of the restaurateur 's apartment that the fire started . At the inquiries held after the fire was over , both he and his wife stated that their seven @-@ year @-@ old son had started the fire by accidentally upsetting a candle , but it is more likely that it was the result of carelessness on behalf of the parents while casting candles and that they blamed the child to avoid punishment .

The watchmen were quick to sound the alarm , but given the fire department 's relatively primitive equipment , the fact that the streets of Vester Kvarter were too narrow for the fire pumps , the strange dispositions of those fighting the fire , and a series of unlucky events , the fight was nearly hopeless . The wind blew from the southwest that evening , carrying the fire along Lille Sankt Clemens Stræde , Store Sankt Clemens Stræde , Vombadstuestræde , Antiquitetsstræde and Hellig @-@ Kors Stræde . By 9 : 00 p.m the main street of Vestergade was burning on both sides . From here the fire spread along Store Lars Bjørns Stræde , Lille Lars Bjørns Stræde and Studiestræde .

Later that evening , the fire reached Sankt Peders Stræde , where the Valkendorfs Kollegium dormitory (lot " Nørre Kvarter 122 ") was engulfed in flames . Professor Peder Horrebow , who lived at the dormitory , lost most of his possessions . Presumably simultaneously , the fire also reached Professor Hans Steenbuch 's room on Studiestræde (lot " Nørre Kvarter 60 ") . Around midnight , the fire reached the priest 's residence by the church Sankt Petri Kirke .

On Nørregade , another fire started at a brewery Wednesday evening ? possibly between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m. Just prior to that the original fire had reached Gammeltorv , where people fought to keep the fire back . For that reason , help was sent late to deal with the new fire . Around midnight the wind shifted to the west , and the situation on Nørregade turned critical as the fire was driven towards the street along a wide front . At first people sought to keep the fire on the western side of Nørregade , but nevertheless it spread to the eastern side during the night . Simultaneously , the fire moved from present day Nørre Voldgade towards Nørreport (North Gate) .

= = = Thursday = = =

Early Thursday morning , a final desperate attempt to keep the flames from spreading was made at Gammeltonv . Already @-@ burning houses were fired upon with cannons to make them collapse . When that did not work , an order was given to blow up the houses with black powder charges . The building housing the wine cellar known as " Blasen " on the corner of Vestergade and Nørregade was to be the first demolition , but this dangerous undertaking failed when the gunpowder blew up while men were still carrying in the charges . While the building did go down , people were killed and injured and the explosion ignited nearby buildings , including the church Vor Frue Kirke . By 9 : 30 a.m. the church spire had fallen into the street , and soon after the whole church was engulfed in flames ; the personal property that people had brought to the church to keep them safe from the fire was lost .

At Nørregade , the fire reached Sankt Petri Kirke around 8 a.m. By 9 a.m. , the flames reached bishop Christen Worm 's residence (lot " Nørre Kvarter 112 ") , which burned to the ground . The bishop who was travelling , was left with the clothes on his back and three prayer books .

At Nytorv , the flames consumed Det Kongelige Vajsenhus (The Royal Orphanage) (now the location of the Copenhagen District Court) . The City Hall of Copenhagen ? then located between Nytorv and Gammeltonv ? was now in peril . Around 10 a.m. , the flames had taken hold of the building and it was soon added to the list of buildings lost . From Gammeltonv the inferno made its way down Klædeboderne , Skindergade , Skoubogade and Vimmelskaftet , heading towards Amagertorv , while from Nytorv the fire found fuel on Rådhusstræde towards Frederiksholms Canal and Slotsholmen .

New fires were reported : Count Adam Christoffer Knuth 's house in Pustervig , a cellar in Købmagergade (Market Street) and a haystack at Nørreport (Northern Gate) all broke out in flames ; the latter likely ignited by embers carried by the wind .

When the fire had consumed Vor Frue Kirke , the University of Copenhagen saw one building after another burn . The Community Building (Kommunitetsbygningen) , which was used to help support students by giving them free meals ; the university 's head building (Studiegården / The Study Courtyard) , at the same location as the current head building ; and the Anatomy Building (Domus Anatomica) and Anatomy Theatre (Theatrum Anatomicum) were all lost . Aforementioned , Professor Hans Steenbuch had sought refuge at Professor Hans Gram 's home , where both he and his possessions found temporary safety . But now the fire reached Gram 's home next to Vor Frue Kirke (lot " Klædebo Kvarter 245 ") , and there was not enough time to save Steenbuch 's possessions , although Gram saved most of his own from destruction . Along Kannikestræde , one by one University of Copenhagen professors ' homes fell prey to the flames . Several more student dormitories were lost but along Købmagergade a wing of buildings were saved including the church Regenskirken .

The next notable victim of the fire was the church Trinitatis Kirke , which housed the University Library in its attic . The flames got a hold the church around 5 p.m. and when the ceiling gave around 10 p.m. , the entire library 's collection was delivered into a sea of flames . Rundetårn was left for the most part undamaged , but the observatory at the top burned out .

From Gammeltonv , the fire spread out to Ulfeldts Plads , now Gråbrødretorv , around 4 p.m. The monument that shamed traitor Corfitz Ulfeldt lost a few letters in the heat . A few hours later , the fire closed in on the church Helligåndskirken and at 8 p.m. its carillon bells came to life as they did every half @-@ hour ? playing Thomas Kingo 's Vreden din afvend , herre Gud , af Naade (Eng . Turn your anger , Lord , by mercy) ? just before they crashed into the fire below .

From Trinitatis Church , the fire continued down Landemærket towards Gothersgade . Here , the fire met up with the other branch of the fire which ate its way down present day Nørre Voldgade . Around midnight , the church Reformert Kirke was ablaze . The only place in the city where there was some control over the fire was around Vandkunsten .

= = = Friday = = =

Friday morning the wind shifted again , this time to the north . The firefighting finally started to show

some semblance of organization , and efforts were waged to stop the fire in the neighborhood around Magstræde . This failed , though , when the fire took the soap factory on Magstræde around noon . The wind was now blowing northwest and the firefighting moved via Snaregade to Nybrogade , Naboløs and Gammel Strand , but failed to save Nybrogade .

Further east , the fire proceeded south to Klareboderne and Møntergade . Poul Fechtels Hospital on Møntergade was drowned in flames with some of the residents still inside . Close by , Professor Ludvig Holberg left his home on Købmagergade (lot " Købmager Kvarter 18 ") . Around midnight , the blaze was close to Silkegade and Store Regnegade .

= = = Saturday = = =

Over the course of the night the wind settled and stopped the forward march of the fire . Thirty @-@ six homes were selected for demolition to create a firebreak , which did stop the fire at the corner of Store Regnegade and Gothersgade . Further west , Amagertorv and the church Sankt Nicolai Kirke had been threatened , but the blaze was stopped close to Amagertorv , where only the three houses furthest north (" Frimands Kvarter " lots 8 , 10 and 11) were lost .

The fire on Magstræde at the soap factory was still a threat . The fire ate its way along Snaregade . At the end of Snaregade was the house (lot " Snarens Kvarter 2 ") of the vice mayor , Christian Berregaard , which the people tried to save . The houses around it were torn down , and the houses on the opposite side of the street were blown up with black powder . The outcome was hardly any better than that of the earlier attempt at the wine cellar , though . The gunpowder went off , people had to run for their lives and the vice mayor 's house was set afire and burned to the ground . After the failed attempt to save the house , the fire was stopped from spreading further , though , and among other things the weigh station of Christoffer Valkendorf was saved .

In line with Christian interpretation of the day , the slowdown of the fire during Saturday was seen as a result of divine intervention . To thank God , king Christian VI introduced on 23 October as a new annual holiday in 1731 on which every church in Copenhagen held a service of thanksgiving . This holiday was abolished at the holiday reform of 1770 .

= = Losses = =

Property losses from the fire can be accounted for with relative certainty as detailed surveys were made immediately afterwards . City surveyor Søren Balle submitted the first survey on 1 November 1728 and on 13 April 1729 the Magistrate of Copenhagen finished a second , made according to a royal request of 12 December 1728 . The differences between the two surveys are limited to the extent of the damages on 43 lots , so it is fairly certain that 1 @, @ 227 lots containing about 1 @, @ 600 buildings were lost in flames . All of Copenhagen consisted of about 4 @, @ 500 lots (per the cadastre of 1699) , so about 28 % of the lots were lost . For the medieval part of town the ratio is 47 % .

The magistrate also made a survey of the spared parts of town from which it appears that 8 @, @ 749 former residents of the parts touched by fire had found new lodgings . It is estimated that as many as 15 @, @ 000 had become homeless . This is about 20 % of the population , which is estimated at 70 @, @ 000 . However the number of dead and wounded is unknown . It is possible to deduce some information from parish registers and other sources , but the number remains uncertain . It is probably low in comparison with the extent of the fire , though .

While the human and property losses were staggering , the cultural loss is still felt today . The University of Copenhagen library was without a doubt the greatest and the most frequently mentioned of such . 35 @, @ 000 texts and a large archive of historical documents disappeared in the flames . Original works from the historians Hans Svaning , Anders Sørensen Vedel , Niels Krag , and Arild Huitfeldt and the scientists Ole Worm , Ole Rømer , Tycho Brahe and the brothers Hans and Caspar Bartholin were lost . Atlas Danicus by Peder Hansen Resen and the archive of Zealand Diocese went up in flames as well . The archive of the diocese had been moved to the university library the very same day the fire started .

Several other book collections were lost as well . Professor Mathias Anchersen made the mistake of bringing his possessions to safety in Trinitatis Church . Árni Magnússon lost all his books , notes and records , but did manage to rescue his valuable collection of handwritten Icelandic manuscripts . At Borchs Kollegium 3 @, @ 150 volumes burned along with its Museum Rariorum containing collections of zoological and botanical oddities . The burned out observatory in Rundetårn had contained instruments and records by Tycho Brahe and Ole Rømer . The professors Horrebow , Steenbuch and the two Bartholins lost practically everything . And on top of all that a large part of the city archive of records burnt along with city hall .

In the library on top of Trinitatis Church were many things which the world no longer owns ; the damage cannot be helped .

= = Consequences = =

When the reconstruction of Denmark 's capital was begun a number of changes were introduced . A commission was appointed to regulate the streets . After surveyings among the ruins this commission submitted a suggestion to create 12 to 15 @-@ metre wide main streets with 10 @-@ metre wide side streets with none of the surrounding houses being half @-@ timbered .

This plan was not followed in the reconstruction . Although half @-@ timbered houses were banned at first , the ban was lifted in 1731 as brick houses were considerably more expensive . Medieval Copenhagen , however , had changed permanently when the reconstruction was complete by 1737 . Streets and alleys no longer followed the original paths and some even ceased to exist .

= = = The fire houses = = =

The term ildebrandshuse (English : fire houses) today refer to a type of townhouses that was built in large numbers in the years immediately after the fire . Many of them were modelled on generic renderings made by Johan Cornelius Krieger with inspiration from Christof Marselis . The houses are two or three storeys high , five bays wide and have a prominent wall dormer . The façade towards the street is in brick while the rest of the house has timber framing . They are typically painted in bright colours . Well @-@ preserved examples are today found in locations such as Gråbrødretorv and Gammel Mønt .