

Hoadley mill fire hit Stinesville hard

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to the mill and quarry jobs available.

PERHAPS a turning point in the town's progress was the early hours of Jan. 21, 1916. Bert (B.G.) Hoadley, who was running the J. Hoadley and Sons Company at Stinesville, was returning from a business trip to Chicago. He may have been there to bid on a job, since it was his company that supplied the stone for the Chicago Tribune Tower building.

There is a Hoadley family story that B.G. could see the flames from the window on the train. But the account in the Bloomington Telephone on that date said that he did not learn of the fire until the next morning.

In a front-page story, the Telephone reported to its readers: "\$100,000 Hoadley Stone Mill Destroyed by Night Fire Big Stinesville Plant Totally Wrecked by Flames Starting From Unknown Origin." According to John Hoadley Jr., the fire started "from the rear of the saw gangs close to the engine room, about the center of the big mill, which runs north and south."

HOADLEY also noted that the mill had been down for repairs and had not been operating for several days. He speculated that the cause of the fire could have been either "combustion or tramps may have been sleeping about, as it is known several were in town."

Whatever the cause, the burning of the largest mill in town was a blow to Stinesville's economy, since it employed 50 of the men in town. The Telephone noted that although the records and furniture in the mill office were saved, there was nothing left of the mill itself except scrap metal.

Commented the Telephone: "Stinesville citizens have no method of fighting fire, and when the alarm was given by the calling of a half dozen people from as many different places, about the only thing that could be done was to gather about the fast-consuming flames and watch the fire eat up the valuable property which meant so much to the community . . ."

Next week: The Aftermath.