

**DESTRUCTIVE CONFLAGRATION.—The Artisans' Building, on Ranstead Place, Fourth street, above Chestnut, was totally destroyed by fire, together with nearly all its very valuable contents, on Thursday night. Several adjoining buildings were also destroyed, and the United States Hotel was considerably damaged, and only escaped entire destruction through the energetic exertions of the firemen. The total loss will not fall short of \$350,000. We mention these facts, not because we suppose they will be new to any of our readers, but for the purpose of making a historical record of the event in our columns.**

Last night the fire blazed up briskly from various parts of the ruins. The America Hose Company was in service during the evening. Late yesterday afternoon the front wall of No. 3 Ranstead Place, which threatened to fall and demolish, was shored in.

Bartholomew Allen, the fireman injured by the falling walls during the fire, was doing well at the Hospital last night. The sufferer has a wife and two children. The Association for the Relief of Disabled Firemen have his case in hand.

The Artisans' Building stood upon the site of what was once occupied by the Independent Tabernacle Church, a Presbyterian conventicle that was quite a fashionable resort in its day. The old Church was built in the years 1805-6. In 1837, at the time of the memorable split in the Presbyterian Church, the "Old School" wing of the General Assembly left the "New School" brethren behind at the Church on Washington Square, where the Assembly was holding its session, and repaired to the Tabernacle, where they formed a separate deliberative body. The congregation worshipping there built the Church on Broad street, above Chestnut, and moved thither about the year 1840, and the old Tabernacle was rented to an Episcopal Society, who opened it as the "Bishop White Free Chapel." The Church was thus occupied for some two or three years, when the present owner of the ground purchased the property, and after demolishing the church erected the monster building that has just been destroyed.

The sparks from the conflagration on Thursday night set fire to several places at a distance from the spot, and among others to a large building on Bingham's court. The roof was burned off. This building was one of the original lodging houses of the Mansion House Hotel. The place was known soon after revolutionary days as Bingham's Mansion. It was subsequently converted into a hotel, and as Head's Mansion House Hotel, the establishment was in high repute in its day.

The following is a statement of the losses and the amount of insurance so far as we could ascertain them. Some losses are doubtless covered by insurance which we could learn of.

	Loss.	Insurance.
H. Cowperthwait, - -	\$85,000	\$25,000
P. S. Daval & Co., - -	100,000	30,000
James Burk, - - -	30,000	10,000
Edward Gaskill, - - -	60,000	20,000
G. W. Simons & Bro., - -	20,000	8,000
C. & C. P. Warner, - -	15,000	—
Fisher & Brother, - - -	12,000	5,000
Robb, Pile & McElroy, -	8,500	8,500
D. Bowers, - - -	5,000	—
S. M. Foster, - - -	3,000	—
Nathan Morgan, - - -	6,000	5,000
S. B. Updike, - - -	4,000	2,000
S. Eakins, - - -	3,000	—
Charles Williams, - - -	4,000	—
George Heppard, - - -	300	—
J. H. Camp, - - -	8,000	—
James Watts, - - -	3,000	—
Moss & Brother, - - -	1,500	1,500
B. F. Jackson, - - -	1,500	1,500
E. Jones, - - -	1,000	—
Buildings Nos. 3 and 4 Ranstead Place, - - -	6,000	—
Buildings on Merchant street, -	4,000	—
John Rea, U. S. Hotel, - -	3,000	—
C. J. Maclellan, do., - -	2,000	—
<b>Total, - - -</b>	<b>\$387,800</b>	<b>\$116,500</b>

The rear part of the splendid new structure of the Farmers' and Mechanics Bank jutted immediately upon the southern side of the blazing factory. The rear of the Bank was exposed for some time to the sea of flame that burst from the windows, but the fire proof shutters of the Bank resisted the fire, and the splendid edifice escaped almost unscathed. The roof was slightly injured by the falling walls.

There were about four hundred persons employed in and about the building. We give the names of the sufferers, the estimated amount of their losses, and the amount insured, so far as we could ascertain. The Artisans' Building was built by Mr. H. Cowperthwait, in 1848. The building, together with an 80 horse steam engine in the basement, cost \$85,000. The destruction of the building and machinery was complete. Insured for \$5000.

#### INCIDENTS

A melancholy incident of the fire was the death of an elderly lady named Miss Mary Ann Christie, living in Chestnut street, immediately east of the United States Hotel. During the height of the conflagration Miss Christie became so much alarmed that she died from terror.

#### The Site of the Artisans' Building--The Changes of Half a Century.

The site where the Artisans' Building stood, in Ranstead Place, Fourth street above Chestnut, was, not many years since, occupied by a church and a grave yard. The spot was somewhat famous in its time, the church enjoying much popularity, and some of the oldest families in the city having their dead interred within the shadow of its walls. The property belonged to the Seventh Presbyterian church congregation, and it was commonly known as the "Tabernacle," or "the church in Ranstead's court," as the passage way leading to it was then called. The writer of this article has frequently attended worship there in company with a play fellow, who was one of the heaviest losers by the conflagration of Friday morning.

The church was built in the years 1805-6. The form was a parallelogram, terminated at one end by a semi-circle in which the pulpit and choir stood. The building was sixty by ninety feet in dimensions.

In 1798 the court now known as Ranstead Place was styled Patton's alley. It took this name from the fact that Thomas Patton, who resided on the south side of Greenleaf court now Merchant street, owned the property extending to the court. In 1813 it took the name of Ranstead Place.

This church is made somewhat remarkable by the fact that in 1837, during the excitement in the Presbyterian church, which resulted in a "split," dividing the church into two nearly equal bodies known as "Old" and "New School," the party representing the "Old School," met in it. The meeting of the General Assembly had been appointed at the First church, on Washington Square, but after organizing in the First Church (which has always belonged to the "New School"), the majority of the Assembly voted to retire to the church in Ranstead Place, which they accordingly did—the "New School" remaining in the First church, and holding their regular sessions there.

The congregation worshipping in the Tabernacle subsequently built a more modern church on Broad street, above Chestnut, and after its removal thither the building in Ranstead Place was offered for sale, and it was set forth in the advertisements that it would answer admirably for a brewery. It was not sold at that time, however, and the old building was rented to an Episcopal Society, by whom it was styled the "Bishop White Free Chapel." The Rev. J. R. Goodman was for some time pastor of the "Chapel," and he had for his assistant Mr. Samuel Rose Meade, who was afterwards engaged as a reporter for the Philadelphia Press.

About the year 1845 Mr. H. Cowperthwait purchased the church and the old grave-yard connected with it, and soon after he demolished the building and commenced the erection of the mammoth structure that has just fallen a prey to the flames. What use the ground may next be applied to we are unable to say; it has already had a somewhat eventful history, and there are, probably, more changes, and perhaps greater ones, in store for it. By some it is urged that Ranstead Place should be continued through to Fifth street, now that the great obstacle to such an opening is out of the way. If another huge conglomeration of workshops is built upon the site, we trust that the building will be so contrived and constructed that it will be less liable to so destructive a conflagration as that of Friday morning.

#### CITY BULLETIN.

**Crowded Streets.—How to Relieve Them.—**Every Philadelphian has long since discovered that most of the principal streets, especially within the bounds of the old City Proper, are entirely too narrow for the amount of business and travel that are now done upon them. Wm. Penn, in laying out his "green country towns," had no idea that in a century and three quarters, it would have a population of six hundred thousand souls, who would overrun many miles of the country outside the original limits of the city.

High (Market) street was intended for the great leading avenue; but the behests of fashion were more powerful than the plans of the illustrious Quaker founder, and fashion decreed that Market street should be appropriated to the use of wholesale dealers, while Chestnut street, originally a comparatively unimportant thoroughfare, should become the centre of retail trade and the great fashionable promenade. Chestnut street was notoriously too narrow for the use to which it was appropriated, but fashion was arbitrary in its decrees, and her votaries were obliged to yield. Widening Chestnut street is out of the question, and the next consideration is how to relieve it.

Market street, until about a century ago, was a fine, wide, unobstructed avenue, with the exception of the spot occupied by the old Court House, at Second street, and a square or two of market shambles. Market houses were subsequently erected in the middle of the street for eleven squares, not, as has been falsely stated, to suit the views and wishes of the people along the line of the street, but in spite of their earnest remonstrances against their construction. The markets once established, they were a great convenience to housekeepers, when Vine and South streets were the extremities of the city; but the old dwellings were converted into stores, and high rents, and the rapid strides of trade, drove citizens to seek for residences farther from the heart of the city. This operation caused a demand for market houses miles away from High street, and the consequence was, that market sheds and provision stores multiplied where they were needed, and the shambles along Market street were left almost to the sole occupancy of the vendors of oyster soup, ginger bread and spruce beer. The shambles on Market street have outlived their original use and the necessity that prompted their erection, they are terribly in the road; they obstruct one of the finest avenues in the city, and they damage the City Treasury by interfering with the improvement of the street, and the increase of the amount of taxable property upon it. If Market street was cleared of its obstructions, much of the heavy travel that now ensembles Chestnut street would be diverted a square farther North. Chestnut street would be relieved, and Market street would be, what it should be, the finest wholesale business street in the Union. When will all this come to pass?

**The Roxborough Lyceum.**—This institution was founded in 1837 by a few gentlemen of Roxborough and Manayunk for the purpose of encouraging literary and scientific pursuits, by means of lectures, debates, *conversations*, &c., and held weekly meetings. Its first President and one of its most active members was Charles V. Hagner, Esq., of the Fifteenth Ward, the present Chairman of the Committee on Finance of the Common Council, who then resided in Manayunk.

At that time its meetings were held in the school house adjacent to the Episcopal Church in Manayunk, and among those who delivered lectures there may be found the following: Hon. W. D. Kelley, Peter A. Browne, Esq., C. C. Burleigh, Dr. Harper, and many others, whose names, as popular lecturers, are familiar to the public. In 1840, the Lyceum met in Manayunk and Roxborough on alternate weeks; and in 1842 established itself permanently at the Old Roxborough School House on the Ridge Road, where it still holds its meetings. The want of a convenient hall has long been a subject of conversation by the members of the Lyceum and its friends; and about three years since, the ladies took the matter in hand, and held a Fair for the purpose of procuring funds in aid of its erection, and the Lyceum obtained from the Legislature an Act of Incorporation to enable them to hold real estate, &c. The project, however, was considered rather too hazardous an undertaking, with the means at the disposal of the Lyceum, and remained in abeyance until last winter, when, by the death of Jacob Rittenhouse, Esq., a warm friend of the institution, the trustees became the recipients of a bequest of one thousand dollars, to aid in the erection of a suitable building. This aid and the fund raised by the ladies, together with the donations of our citizens, and of many friends of literary enterprises, forms the building fund.

The ground upon which the hall is to be erected has been generously donated to the Lyceum by Charles Thompson, Nathan L. and Horatio G. Jones, Esqs., and their sister Mrs. Sarah D. Levering, and is a very desirable location, being 50 feet front on the Ridge road and 125 feet deep. The plan adopted for the edifice was drawn and presented by Mr. Collins, of the firm of Collins & Antinetta, architects, and the building committee have made a contract with Mr. W. H. McNamee for the erection and completion of the hall by the 1st of December next. The Lyceum has been fortunate in securing the good offices of many gentlemen in their undertaking. Mr. Struthers kindly contributes an ornamental date stone, and Mr. C. L. De Groot the corner stone, which it is expected will be laid, with appropriate ceremonies, by his Honor the Mayor of the city, assisted by several eminent gentlemen, early in the coming month.

[Aug. 28, 1856.]

**A Hundred Years Ago.**—An occurrence took place at Germantown, on Friday last, which afforded a topic for much conversation and reflection. As Mr. Charles Weiss was laying the track of his coal yard, at Germantown, he discovered the remains of a human body, which, upon examination of a stone found near the same, proved to be that of William Lehman, who died at that place on the 29th of May, 1756.

[June 2, 1856.]



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[April 12, 1856]