

# Residents Mourn Loss Of Artifacts

Only a pile of rubble, still hot and smoking, remains of the Albion Academy Museum, following the disastrous fire that completely destroyed the Museum building, Kumlien Hall, and its valuable irreplaceable contents, last Friday morning.

Arson has been suspected as a possible cause of the fire. Tuesday Deputy Fire Marshal Frank P. Roberts, Madison, told the Reporter that nine antique guns had been found in the ruins. He said he felt that if the fire had been set to cover the theft of articles from the building, the theft would have included the guns, and therefore, he saw no reason to assume that the Museum had been deliberately burned, unless by someone mentally deficient. If other items are recovered there will be no reason to suspect theft, according to Roberts.

Remains of the glass collection, particularly the colored pieces, could possibly be found, Roberts stated, although if the glass was very hot it could have melted in with the debris so that it would be very difficult to find.

"How it started has got everybody stumped," said Roberts. "The original fire was seen in the area of the light boxes, but the building had been rewired recently. At the moment, it looks like we may never know, except that it was definitely not caused by the furnace."

He said that when the Edgerton Fire Department arrived, the major portion of the fire was in the front of the first floor and in the upper floors, with the middle hallway of the first floor comparatively free of fire. This is the normal path of a fire, according to Roberts, it spreads out laterally and then flashes when it gets hot enough.

Roberts did not see any connection between the fire and an empty gas can found on Highway 73 the morning of the fire.

The Museum, located in the village of Albion, was covered by insurance of \$13,000, according to Clifford Townsend, president of the Albion Academy Historical Society, \$10,000 on the building, \$3,000 on the contents. A conservative estimate of the loss, set by the State Insurance



## Helpless, They Watch Museum Burn

Albion and Edgerton area residents watched dejectedly Friday morning as the Albion Academy Historical Society Museum was destroyed by fire. Discovered at 6 a.m., at 8 a.m. the south wall had collapsed, but flames were still blazing inside the building. The outer walls were still standing precariously at this time, held up because the inner connecting walls were also of brick, and joined into the outside walls. Clifford Townsend, president of the Historical Society, is at the right of the picture, in cap and glasses.

-- Reporter Photo

Commissioner and the Deputy Fire Marshal, is \$50,000, Townsend said. A blanket coverage of the contents was all

the Society could get, he stated as Lloyds of London is the only company insuring articles of historical and antique value, at a prohibitive cost.

The Walton Nelsons of Albion, first to notice the fire, notified the Edgerton Fire Department at 6 a.m. Friday. According to Fire Chief Robert Stricker, Sr., the only

blaze visible when the Fire Department arrived was the burning front door and canopy.

"We thought we had it," Fireman Floyd Vickers said, "but when we got the fire out at the front entrance, we could see the inside of the building was burning, too."

Townsend said he arrived at the scene at the same time as the Fire Department. He and Fireman Norman Yeske went around to the back and could hear tim-

(continued on back page)