

# Fire Destroys "The Castle" Filled With Treasures



Provincetown-Boston Airline Photo

A mass of flames moved back and forth through the interior of "The Castle" as firemen fought to bring the fire under control. This picture was taken from the air in the uncertain pre-dawn light of Monday morning as the fire burned furiously in the west wing. In the background, on the other side of Commercial Street, is the Provincetown Inn.

## Owner Finally Reached In Ecuador With News - Is Returning Here

**Art, Antique Collections, Records Lost  
Faulty Wiring Expected As Cause -  
Total Loss May Reach Quarter of  
Million - Fire Had Long Start Before  
Discovery**

About 11 yesterday morning Dr. Carl Murchison, who with Mrs. Murchison is touring South America, was finally reached at Quito, Ecuador, with word that their beautiful Provincetown home, "The Castle", filled with priceless art treasures and irreplaceable scientific data, accumulated over a lifetime of search and research, had been all but completely destroyed in an early Monday morning fire, causing a loss estimated at close to a quarter of a million.

The Murchisons were somewhat behind their travel schedule and it was expected that they would reach Quito on Tuesday. Horace F. Hallett, president of the First National Bank, who had

the Cape. A great column of smoke streamed out to sea lighted with brands and sparks. The roof of one of the small cottages on the estate caught but was quickly extinguished.

the unpleasant task of conveying the word, arranged to have an agent meet each incoming plane but it wasn't until shortly before noon yesterday that they arrived. Dr. Murchison took the news of the tragedy and the destruction of his records into which he had put a lifetime of work, philosophically. He said he was leaving Quito immediately for Provincetown.

### Faulty Wiring

While there were innumerable rumors as to the cause of the fire, it is expected that worn or faulty wiring will be given officially as the reason. There is no doubt, it seems, in the minds of those who made a painstaking investigation beginning as soon as the embers had cooled sufficiently, and these included Provincetown Fire Chief Manuel White, Police Chief William N. Rogers, State Detective Lieutenant George Killen, County Identification Officer Louis Cataldo, and a number of expert insurance investigators, that the fire had started three or four, possibly five hours before it was discovered by Wallace O'Donnell, living nearby, some time after 4:30 in the morning, as he was getting ready to go fishing. A first alarm was turned in at 4:40 and the second about 10 minutes, or less, later.

When the firemen arrived the home was a mass of flames which were breaking through the roof. Chief White said that the fire had

undoubtedly started in the basement at the northeast end of the structure and in the absence of any fire-stops had funneled through to the roof and had been burning briskly for some time between the ceiling and the roof. The gates of the high iron fence surrounding the estate were chained and one of the fire trucks was used to force an entrance. Soon 12 streams of water from 2400 feet of two-and-a-half inch hose and 3200 feet of one-and-a-half inch hose leading up the sharply inclined hill from Commercial Street below, were pouring water on the furiously burning fire and before 5:30 Chief White said the fire was brought under control, but the Spanish-style building, constructed of stucco over wooden framework, was so damaged that little if any of it can be saved. Two particularly violent heat blasts blew out all of the many windows, hurling glass as far as Commercial Street below and injuring several firemen slightly. One of

the blasts lifted the high tower which was a central part of the building and dropped it into the flames. Drama was added by the periodic explosions of ammunition such as shotgun shells and cartridges and, as Chief White said, "There were times when we didn't know whether to charge or retreat."

"The Castle" with its beautiful site atop a dune in the West End opposite the Provincetown Inn, commanding a view of the entire Cape End, the harbor, bay and dune country provided a tragic spectacle in its passing for the flames were seen many miles away just as dawn was coming to



"PILGRIM'S LANDING." 25-room home of Dr. Carl Murchison, former Worcester resident, was swept by

flames last May. The psychologist and art collector is replacing it with a larger house.