

GYM FIRE!



After nine hours of fire-fighting, Archbold became an icy fairyland.

Syracuse University
1947 Gym Fire



Great care was taken to prevent spread of the fire to Carnegie Library to the left of the ruined Archbold. *

The first major fire in the history of Syracuse University broke out early on January 12, 1947, in Archbold gymnasium, the heart of the Orange athletic program. At the time of the great blaze, the Saltine basketball team was already out of Archbold, playing its home contests at the W. Jefferson Street armory.

A watchman reported the blaze at six in the morning, but when firemen and their fire-fighting equipment arrived, the flames were already out of control and roaring through the historic building.

The gymnasium, erected at a cost of more than \$400,000 was officially opened in December, 1908, with a semi-formal dance. According to a 1908 article, "the gymnasium was dedicated in a blaze of glory." Thirty-nine years later, its existence ended the same way.

This gym was set up so that the physical welfare of the student body was to be well taken care of.

When firemen, led by Chief Frank Savage, entered the building after more than nine hours of fire-fighting, they found the entire top floor and basement ruined, but the main floor and the trophy room only slightly damaged. The priceless trophies of Syracuse athletes since the earliest days of the University escaped with only a few blackened scars. This was one of the few cheery notes in an otherwise dismal day. Saving of the trophies keeps something for the students to remember the Orange's heyday in the field of athletic endeavor. When and if a new gym is erected all the students will be able to see the trophies that were won by Syracuse athletes in by-gone days, as well as a few which were won in recent years.

Equipment chief Al Zak was the man who really complained after the violent blaze. More than \$75,000 of varsity uniforms and other equipment was destroyed, and much of it could not be replaced due to reconversion shortages.



All day eleven hoses played upon the blaze.



Tom Decker interviews Fire Chief Frank Savage for Station WORK.

A great deal of money as well as time and energy will have to be expended to replace the lost equipment, since these materials are so scarce. Zak made great strides in getting materials for the teams which participated in athletics during the spring and summer terms. This meant that the pre-fab which was set up by the athletic department of the university behind the Women's gym for the handling of athletic equipment was fairly well filled with such things as baseball uniforms, lacrosse sticks, tennis rackets, golf clubs, track suits, etc.

The offices of the Athletic department were moved into a former Women's Living Center on 801 University Avenue. These offices aren't the best in the world but they are the best that were available at the time. The coaching staff of the football team is still worried about where the team is going to dress and where the equipment is going to be gotten. Plans are being made for dressing rooms to be installed in Archbold stadium.

Chancellor William P. Tolley estimated the property damage at about two million dollars, but stated that it would probably be recovered through insurance payments. The reason for the great difference between the original price of the building and the estimated cost of it today is due to the great rise in costs of construction.

The fire, which occurred only a few days after members of Syracuse athletic teams were moved out to their new living quarters on Irving Avenue, posed a great problem for all the coaching staff. They found practice facilities in the city barely adequate, and continually bemoaned the lack of a gymnasium for their pupils.



S. U. Wrestling Team. This was the last picture taken in the gym—only five hours before the fire.



Two days after the fire, smoke still rises from the ruins.