

Edgar James Pullman

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Fire In A Photograph Gallery

An Exciting Scene on Pennsylvania Avenue Early This Morning

Narrow Escape of Mr. and Mrs. Pullman and Their Daughter--

Their Lives Saved By The Exertions of a Printer--

Complaint of the Inefficiency of the Firemen

Screams of fire from the third-story window of No. 935 Pennsylvania avenue about 6:30 o'clock this morning was the sensational beginning of a chapter of exciting incidents. Mr. E.J. Pullman, the well-



known photographer, and his wife and daughter were in their apartments in the third story of the building at the time, and they escaped from the burning building with considerable difficulty and only after assistance had reached them. Mrs. Pullman had got out of bed but a few minutes before the fire started and her husband and daughter were still sleeping when her screams aroused them. Mr. Pullman was on the third floor, while the daughter, Miss Olive Pullman, a young lady eighteen years old, was in her room on the floor above.

Where the Fire Started

The fire started in a small room on the third floor, where there was a quantity of ether and other chemicals, and it took but a short while for the flames to cut off the only avenue of escape.

Owing to the nature of the material in the photograph gallery and supply room it was evident that the inmates of the rooms above were in great danger, and Mrs. Pullman well understood her perilous position. After arousing her husband and daughter she screamed from the front window for help. Although so early in the morning it took but a few minutes for a large crowd to appear, but they seemed to be overcome by the condition of affairs in the burning building and Mrs. Pullman saw no evidence of an attempt on the part of those in the street to lend assistance. Seconds to her seemed as hours, but No. 2 Engine Company responded to a call for help before an alarm had been turned in, and just four minutes after they left the house an alarm was sounded from box No. 152.

Mr. Matchett Goes to Work

In the meantime the screams of Mrs. Pullman had attracted the attention of Mr. H.B. Matchett, the printer at 10th street and Pennsylvania avenue, who did such good work rescuing persons from the Star building fire, and he hastened to the scene of the conflagration. Arriving there he discovered that the crowd was doing nothing to help the imprisoned persons, and so he set at work without delay to rescue them if possible.

He went to Ellis' music store, adjoining the burning building, for the purpose of breaking open the door, so that he could get to one of the upper floors. "Don't do that," the crowd shouted, but the printer, seeing that the only means of doing any good, broke open the door and ran to the upper floor.

In a Perilous Position

By this time Mr. and Mrs. Pullman were at the front windows, with the flames only a short distance from them. It was getting warmer and warmer for them and in a short time Mrs. Pullman knew she would have to make a leap to the sidewalk if someone did not reach her. Such a leap meant sure death, but there was no other alternative. While the husband wife were at these windows the daughter was at the window on the floor above them. She, too, was in an exceedingly dangerous position. If she should leap she would have twelve or fifteen feet further to fall than would her parents, but the flames had reached her room and something had to be done, and there was but a short time in which to do it.

Miss Pullman's Rescue

Mr. Matchett proved her mascot, for he appeared at the window of the adjoining building and by stepping out on the fancy work of the building he reached over and took the young lady by the hand. It was a dangerous place and a critical moment, but she made the journey in safety and entered the Ellis building through the window.

Having succeeded in the rescue of the daughter, Mr. Matchett proceeded to the floor below to do what he could for the older people. Mrs. Pullman was at the window next to the Ellis building, while Mr. Pullman was on the sill of the middle window. No. 2 Engine Company had arrived. It seemed like half an hour to Mrs. Pullman before the life line was taken off the hose carriage.

Mr. And Mrs. Pullman Get The Line

The fireman with the line hastened through the door of the Ellis building, which Mr. Matchett had broken open, and between Mr. Matchett and the firemen the life line was handed to both Mr. and Mrs. Pullman. They managed to fasten the line about their waists and were ready to jump or get away from the flames in the best possible manner, for by this time the heat was intense. At the window where Mr. Pullman was, the flames had begun to touch the moldings. He drew himself out on the window sill and closed the window behind him, hoping to be able to keep off the flames until a ladder could be raised upon which he could descend to the pavement.

A Jump for Life

"Don't jump," shouted the crowd, excitedly, but behind him the window glass was breaking from the intense heat and the flames were scorching his beard. He could stand it no longer, and in the absence of a ladder he made a leap for life.

Fortunately he did not go all the way to the sidewalk, but landed over the front door, where the sign, awning and cornice make a narrow landing. From there it was a comparatively easy task to reach the pavement.

A Pet Dog Saved

During the exciting and trying times, Mrs. Pullman did not forget to save her pet dog, which she handed across to Mr. Matchett, and although shouts of "Throw him out the window" were heard Mr. Matchett gently handed the canine in the window and again turned his attention to Mrs. Pullman.

Suspended By A Rope

The rope around her waist was securely fastened, as it must have been to hold her, for she is a heavy woman, weighing not far short of 200 pounds. The flames had about reached her, and in the absence of any better way of escaping them she dropped from the window sill and was held, suspended in the air by Mr. Matchett and the firemen. The rope was slackened as speedily as possible, until Mrs. Pullman was landed on the little portico over the windows. She was not badly injured, but the excitement was almost more than she could bear.

There being no further danger of loss of human life the minds of the crowd and firemen were at ease and the firemen soon had the building flooded with water and succeeded in confining the flames to the rooms occupied by the Pullmans. All of their rooms in the front part of the building were completely gutted, but, strange to say, several purses and pocket books in which there was money were found in the debris with the money not destroyed. Mr. John F. Sexton aided in the rescue of the Pullmans.

Howard Wright, a fireman, member of No. 6 company, did some good work in saving more than \$3,000 worth of diamond jewelry, which he turned over to Mrs. Pullman. On the third floor of the building were the offices and rooms of Messrs. Ira H. Johannes, manufacturing jeweler, and Charles B. Bacon, plate printer. In the former establishment the floor was wet, but no damage was done, while in Mr. Bacon's considerable work was rendered valueless by the water.

Damage to Mr. Teel's Stock

With the exception of Mr. Pullman, the principal damage was done to Mr. Teel's furnishing store, on the ground floor. Almost the entire stock was soaked with water, which had been poured through the ceiling, and Mr. Teel moved about in the store beneath an umbrella answering questions and telephone calls. The damage to his stock he estimated at between \$5,000 and \$7,000, which is fully insured.

Mr. Pullman has lived in that building for twenty years and has never had his place insured. The damage to his household effects and furniture will amount to several thousand dollars, although he said today that he could not estimate the damage.

The building also suffered considerable damage although it is possible that none of the walls will have to be taken down.

Complaint Against the Fire Department

About the burned building loud complaints were made about the time of the arrival of the fire department and of the manner in which they worked after arriving there.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Pullman complain that the firemen were slow in reaching the burning building, and Mr. Pullman thought that the damage would not have amounted to more than \$50 had the department made a prompt response and done effectual work. They also complained that the ladder was worked ineffectually and slowly and that it was partially raised and lowered several times before the firemen finally succeeded in getting it to the window, which was after they had jumped. Concerning Mr. Matchett's work they were loud in their praises, Mrs. Pullman declaring that he saved their lives.

Chief Parris and Mr. Pullman had a lively tilt over the affair, during which language more forcible than elegant was used and although it appeared at one time that their discussion would end in something worse, no violence was attempted.

What The Firemen Say

On the part of the firemen it is claimed that No. 2 company went out on a local at 6:40, and that truck C was on its way out of the house when the alarm sounded at 6:44.

The firemen think that they should not be condemned for what they did, as they do not think any time was lost or that their work was ineffectual. They claim credit for assisting Mrs. Pullman from the building, as their life line was used and they were there to use it. In this connection they give Mr. Matchett credit for assisting them.

Chief Parris ordered the foreman of No. 2 Engine Company and truck C to have affidavits made concerning the work done at the fire and turn them over to him tomorrow.

Mr. E.F. Simpson, who saw the fire from its breaking out, said the engine company took a long time in getting to work, and it seemed to him at least ten minutes before a ladder was run up. An effort was made, he said, to put up a ladder at the rear, but the perfect network of wires prevented.

Pullman. Thursday, June 21, 1923, at his residence, 420 9th street n.w., Edgar J. Pullman, in his 87th year, beloved husband of Emma M. Pullman. Funeral from the chapel of John R. Wright Company, 1337 10th st., n.w., Monday, June 25, 1923, at 10 o'clock.

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E.J. Pullman, Pioneer Photo

Merchant of Washington, Dies

Beloved By Trade for Readiness to Aid Beginners

Native of New York But Lived Here Last 50 Years

E.J. Pullman, pioneer among local photographers, a resident of Washington for more than half a century, died at his apartment, 420 9th street, yesterday, where he had lived for the past twenty-five years over his photographic supply house.

Mr. Pullman came here when Washington knew virtually nothing about paved streets, trolley cars and concrete sidewalks. He was the oldest photographers in the city.

Beloved by the trade, there are scores of local photographers here who owe their start to him. Whenever a man wanted to start a business, his friends say, provided the applicant was of good bearing and reputation, all he had to do was to stock up at the expense of "E.J." as Mr. Pullman was known, and not worry about the money.

Born in New York

Born on the shores of Lake Erie in New York state. Mr. Pullman received his rudimentary education in schools of that state and a degree at Oberlin University, Ohio, where he later was a professor. After his arrival in Washington during the civil war crisis, he set up what is believed to have been the first photographic show in the city, and according to local photographers, sold the first camera brought to this city.

Later he studied law at the old National Law School, and was admitted to the bar, but never took up active practice. He devoted his time to research work in photographic lines and to the conduct of his business.

His first shop was located on the third floor of 935 Pennsylvania avenue. He stayed there for twenty-five years, removing to the present 9th street location.

Was Ill Four Months

For the past four months Mr. Pullman had been in ill health, and to friends and intimates the approach of the end was indicated. Mr. Pullman is survived by a widow, Mrs. Emma Pullman, who was his second wife, and two children by a first wife -- E.H. Pullman and Mrs. Olive Pullman Kefauver.

He was a thirty-third degree Mason of the United States jurisdiction and a member of the Mystic Shrine. Active in Masonic circles, he also was a civic worker and a member of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants.

Funeral services will be conducted next Monday from Wright's undertaking establishment, at 10th and O streets. The funeral will be in charge of the Masonic fraternity.