

THE LATE FIRE AT PYRMONT.

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An Inquiry concerning the origin of a fire which consumed part of the Denominational Schoolroom, Pyrmont-street, Pyrmont, was commenced before the City Coroner, at the Royal Oak Hotel, and, after the examination of the following witnesses, adjourned till 10 o'clock on Thursday morning.

Teresa O'Tool deposed: I reside at Ways Terrace, Pyrmont, with my parents ... On last Wednesday night between half-past 11 and 12 o'clock, I had occasion to go down that street by the School. I saw a very bright light in the school-house. I looked in through the door, and I saw flames at the upper end of the building, near the back door. I at once gave the alarm of fire. I met a young man named Toole, and we both went back to the school. A Mr. Creed had by this time burst open the door. I went inside and saw Mr. Creed putting out the fire. I saw pieces of rag burnt on the door, and smelt kerosene oil. The large front gate loading to the yard attached to the school was closed. When I first saw the fire the front door was closed. I saw no person about. I did not hear dogs.

William Creed deposed: I am a publican and reside at Pyrmont. I remember last Wednesday night. Between half-past 11 and 12 o'clock I heard that the Denominational school house was on fire ... I ran there as fast as I could. I saw some ladies in the street in front of the school, I looked in, and saw that the place was on fire. I tried the front door, and found that it was locked. I burst it open and entered, and found that the fire was at the end of the school near the back door. The fire was burning on the floor, and flames running up the partition. There was a large ball of fire on the floor. I removed that first, and then put out the fire, which had taken hold of the partition, and the ceiling, and afterwards the ball of fire. The smell of kerosene was perceptible from the ball of fire, which was about two or three foot in from the back door, and near the partition lined with paper, I saw that there was a whole pane of glass out of the back window. The back door was locked. There was a curtain over it. I found no one in the school-house. The gates were shut, but I cannot say whether locked or not. The property belongs to Alexander Downie.

Alexander Downie stated: I am a blacksmith, residing at Pyrmont. I am the proprietor of the premises ... which I let ... to the Roman Catholics ... paying 8s. weekly ... Last Wednesday night I went to bed at about a quarter to 10. My stepsons, Edward and Shepherd Buchan, my wife, and Tom Hall slept in the house that night. Tom Hall and my stepsons slept in the same room. I was awoken by the dogs barking. The time was then 11 or 12 o'clock. I looked out and saw a light in the yard. I then called the men. They went down into the yard. ... Neither of my stepsons are in partnership with me. They have no interest in the business. The property belongs to the family, among whom are my stepsons. I produce my policy of insurance ... this building used as a school-house, was insured for £100 in the name of Alexander Downie and Sons. My stepsons and Tom Hall were not in bed when I went to bed but

they were indoors ... I always keep kerosene oil in the house. I take the Sydney Morning Herald daily. ... I am not aware that any one in Pymont has a spite against me. I do not believe anyone would burn my property. I am pretty well off in money. I am not in debt. I do not keep a bank account ... I keep dogs in the yard. On Wednesday night there were four in the yard. One was a bulldog, which would fly at strangers ... There is a communication from my shop to the school-house without going out into the street. I cannot say whether the Pymont-street gate was locked ... It was closed when I first saw the fire. I could not see the school-house - I mean the door and window. I could see the top of the building. I have not reported the fire to the insurance office. I intend to do so

Shepherd Buchan deposed: I am an apprentice to a wheelwright, I reside with my stepfather, Alexander Downie. I am eighteen years of-age ... I am not a partner with my stepfather. I am not aware that the school-house is insured in the name of Alexander Downie and Sons. I have an interest in the school house. The sons mentioned in the policy refer to me and my brother. The school-house was insured for £100

The jury... returned the following verdict: "We find that the premises were feloniously and maliciously set fire to on the night of 5th June, by Alexander Downie, and that Edward John Buchan was an accessory."

The Coroner: ...By "accessory" you mean, I presume, that Edward John Buchan was a participator in this matter?

The Foreman: Yes.

The Coroner then remanded Alexander Downie and his stepson Edward John Buchan, to the custody of the police....

There was considerable interest by the inhabitants of Pymont, a large number of whom congregated in the vicinity of the Royal Oak.