



The first Mission Creek School built in 1880. The little girl on the far right, with folded arms, is Jennie (Johnson) Jackson

who, during the fire of 1894, rode out the holocaust in a rocker in a potato patch.

Jennie's rocker and doll are on display at the Fire Museum.

Mission Creek People Survive By Richard Coffey

The smell of sweet fern was strong in the great heat of the summer of 1894 and the hot dry air carried with it the smell of fresh cut hay and the voices of the men of Mission Creek. Excited voices, calling for water to fight small fires started along the railroad, fires that threatened the new hay and wood stacked for the winter to come.

Jennie Johnson played near her home during the last days of August with a few friends who hadn't gone west with their parents when the saw mill was shut down. There were only 73 people in Mission Creek.

There were only 73 people when the smoke filled the southwest sky at noon on September 1st. There were 26 homes, a hotel, a blacksmith shop and a school at 2:00 when a great wind brought close the sting of smoke and the men from the fields in fear. The sky was black as night at 3:00 when the people of Mission Creek gathered in Ed Boyle's general store to telegraph for help.

Two hours later, Mission Creek was no more.

The air filled with ashes and burning soot fell on 73 citizens led by Ed Boyles to a potato patch behind his store. There they layed low beneath the sky of fire. There Jennie Johnson Jackson waited in the family rocker, holding her china doll under blankets soaked with water.

They waited for certain death. They wondered how it would come. But they stayed low as the burning embers fell, they stayed down as the thunder of firestorm roared overhead. Jennie Johnson was but a mound of blankets wetted in a field of people prostrate ... waiting.

When the fire had passed there was, in the smoke filled silence, nothing of the world as these people had left it several hours before. The forest, the wood and winter's supply of hay, the school, the shop, hotel and store were gone. One home, 72 citizens and a little girl in her

rocking chair was all that remained.

One by one they spoke, they held each other close, and at 6:00 p.m. someone said Hinckley ought to be warned.

At 6:00 p.m., September 1, 1894 Hinckley, Minnesota was ashes. More than 400 people were dead. The world was shocked.

82 years later the people of Hinckley dedicated a museum to the holocaust that eventually persuaded people to care for their forest land. Today, more than ever before, people need to be reminded of the consequence of neglect. And, today, the Hinckley Fire Museum stands as that reminder, visited by nearly 20,000 people a year from around the world and each state of the Union. On Monday, September 1, your museum celebrates the 86 years that have passed since the fire with demonstrations of craft, song and dance. You are invited.