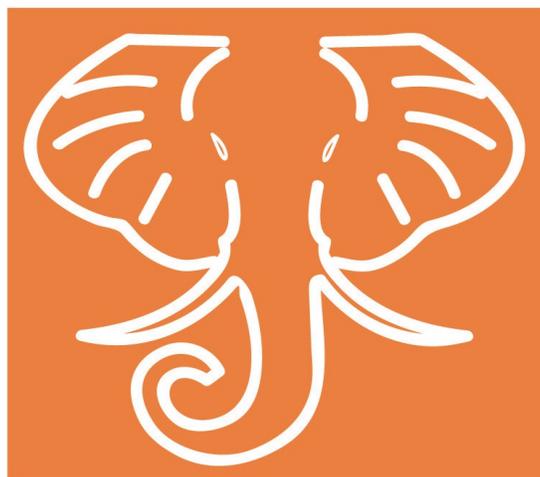


Photographic views of the great cyclone at Fort Smith, Tuesday night, January 11, 1898, giving a graphic and accurate résumé of its deadly and destructive work ...

Fort Smith, Ark., Thrash-Lick printing company [1898]

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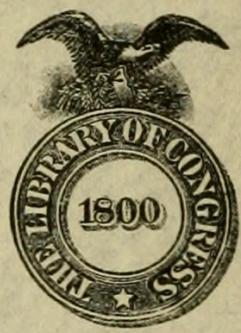
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PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWS

....OF THE....

Great Cyclone at Fort Smith

TUESDAY NIGHT, JANUARY 11, 1898

GIVING A GRAPHIC AND ACCURATE RESUME OF ITS DEADLY
AND DESTRUCTIVE WORK

PRICE 25 CENTS

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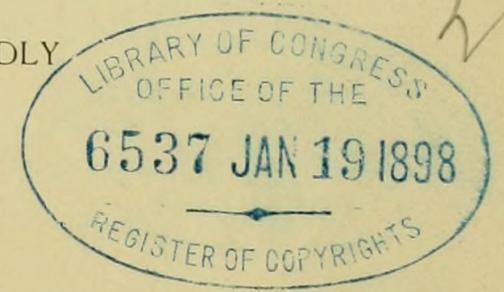
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Handwritten note in left margin: 2. 11. 1898 - 100

A CYCLONE, carrying death and destruction in its wake, visited Fort Smith at 11:15 p. m. on Tuesday, January 11, 1898, and even at this writing it is impossible to estimate the loss of life and property to her citizens. It was the most disastrous storm ever experienced in the southwest; and the destruction it worked was far more appalling than pen can tell. Block after block of business and residence property was leveled to the ground; houses were demolished to the foundations; others were left with but fragments of wall, or with the fractions of the floor of the first story remaining. Miles of electric and telephone wires and dozens of their poles were dashed to Mother Earth, adding not only to the damage and wreckage but increasing to an alarming extent the danger to life; and to avoid this impending danger it was necessary to cut off the current from the electric power house, thereby throwing the business portion of the city into a darkness that seriously interfered with the working of the relief corps, which had immediately gathered to render assistance to the hundreds of injured. Trees of half a century's growth were uprooted and carried a great distance; heavy masonry, at the approach of the terrific strength of the storm king, released its connection, for the time being, with earth, and, in fact, nothing movable was strong enough to resist the pitiless fury of the awful wind, which attained a velocity of sixty miles an hour.

One of the peculiar features of the storm is that the barometer gave no warning of its coming. After looking over the ground, Weather Observer O'Donnell has reached the conclusion that the tornado was distinctively of local origin. The first indications of its approach became apparent shortly after 10 p. m., when the atmosphere, laden with a

depressed and sultry condition, showed that at least a heavy rainstorm was brewing. No one who observed the vivid and continual flashes of lightning in the west thought for a moment that a cyclonic condition would follow the atmospheric depression, but such proved to be the fact, lamentable in its every feature. The lightning's flashes increased, and by 11 o'clock the wind was blowing a decidedly threatening gale. It was but a few minutes later when the peculiar sound of what proved to be the cyclone was heard in the west, and in the twinkle of an eye it was upon the sleeping city.

A heavy rain followed the horrible cyclonic visitation, and it was probably twenty minutes before the city awoke to the fact that it was wrapped in the folds of a fearful calamity. The fire department was called out and in less than thirty minutes the ruined portions of the city, and especially that vicinity known as "Texas Corner," was crowded with willing hands and inquiring friends, ready to render all the aid that was in their power. The scene around "Texas Corner" was something too horrible even to imagine. Hatless and shoeless men, women and children, many clad only in their nightclothes, from the neighboring hotels and boarding houses, were seeking shelter and calling for aid for some of their missing relatives or friends who failed to escape from the wreckage.

Following close in the wake of the cyclone appeared the fire fiend. As was inevitable, there were several fires, some of them serious in character, especially that of the Smith block. Several fires, causing great alarm, were put out by the rain which followed. The rainfall, in this case, was a Godsend, but on the other hand the damage done by it was very great, deluging furniture and household effects which had been blown over streets, alleys and yards, to the extent of which no one can estimate.

The course of the storm seems to have been almost due west to east, and the first place it visited was the National Cemetery, on our western limits. This, the most beautiful spot in our State, was left the most desolate. The five foot brick wall of over a mile in length was lowered to the ground as though it had been made of tin rather than solid masonry; the stately oaks are laid low, the shrubbery rolls before the wind, the lodge so badly damaged that it can scarcely be recognized. All this the work of about sixty seconds. After leaving the cemetery it took a direct eastern course, damaging Belle Point School house to a considerable extent. Next in its path were the cotton yards, three in number; here it seems to have displayed a most wonderful peculiarity by literally blowing the entire contents of bales of cotton from out of the hoops which held them, and leaving the empty shell of the sacking and ties to represent a bale of the fleecy staple. Then came the business portion of Garrison Avenue, between Eighth and Twelfth streets, and two blocks on Towson Avenue. Here the winds seem to have had as little opposition as in the thinner settled parts of the city, and large stone and brick houses were piled one upon another in huge masses of debris. Here also was where death laid claim to more victims than in any other portion. All night and the following days, scores of strong arms were delving in the ruins for dead and injured bodies, and not without success, but their efforts were mostly rewarded by the recovery of those already gone beyond the need of aid from charity and science. When it would appear that all damage possible had been done in this particular locality, the tornado still continued its course east, striking the wagon yards adjacent, and then taking in a more densely populated district.

Although not so many fatalities, this portion was left in utter ruin; pianos, furniture, buggies and everything were strewn as though so much chaff had been thrown to a summer's breeze. The Central Methodist and Baptist Churches are as complete wrecks as was possible to make them, and Brownscombe Methodist badly damaged. The new High School building, costing over \$50,000, and only occupied about three months, was so badly damaged that school will probably not be held in it again this year. Now, for some few blocks there was very little to oppose the fury which would brook no opposition, and not until it reached Home Addition did it end its career, as far as the City of Fort Smith was concerned.

The morning of the 12th broke upon the unfortunate Border City with cloudless sky and the loveliest of spring weather, and but for the suffering and desolation within its limits, one would have thought it the brightest and happiest city in the south. The mayor and his assistants, the chiefs of police and fire department did everything in their power to render aid and protect the city from further damage. At 10 o'clock a. m. a mass-meeting of citizens was called to provide means for the relief of the unfortunate. Here was shown the magnanimity of Fort Smith's citizens, by the raising of a large sum without even leaving the building in which the meeting was held.

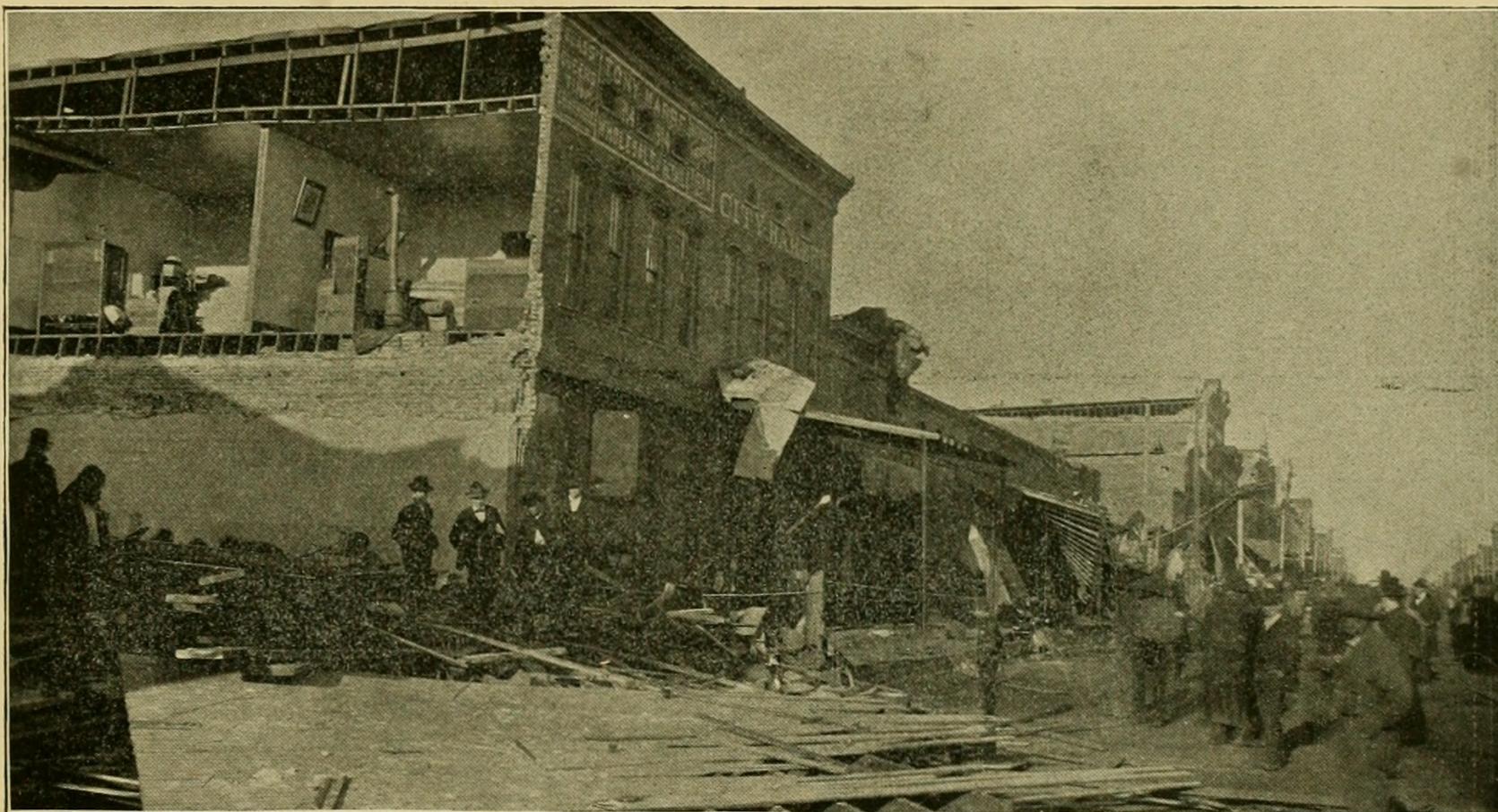
The following pages of illustrations will give to the reader some faint idea of the awful effect of the cyclone, but the "Art Preservative" will never reach that perfection which will enable it to depict to the brain the horror of one minute's work of such a horrible visitation as this one.



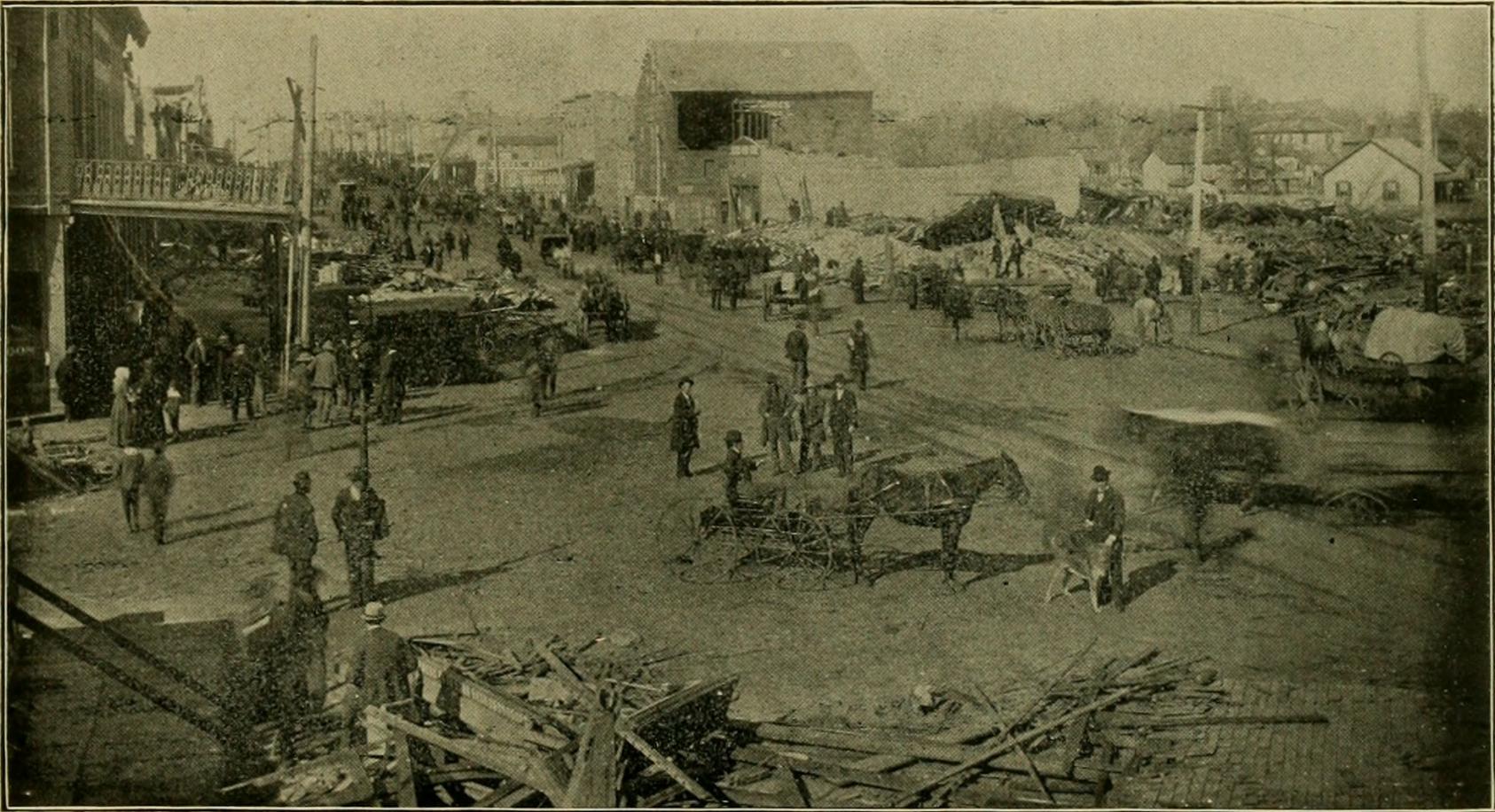
Corner Twelfth and A Streets—Looking North, showing destruction of many nice homes, and where two lives were lost.



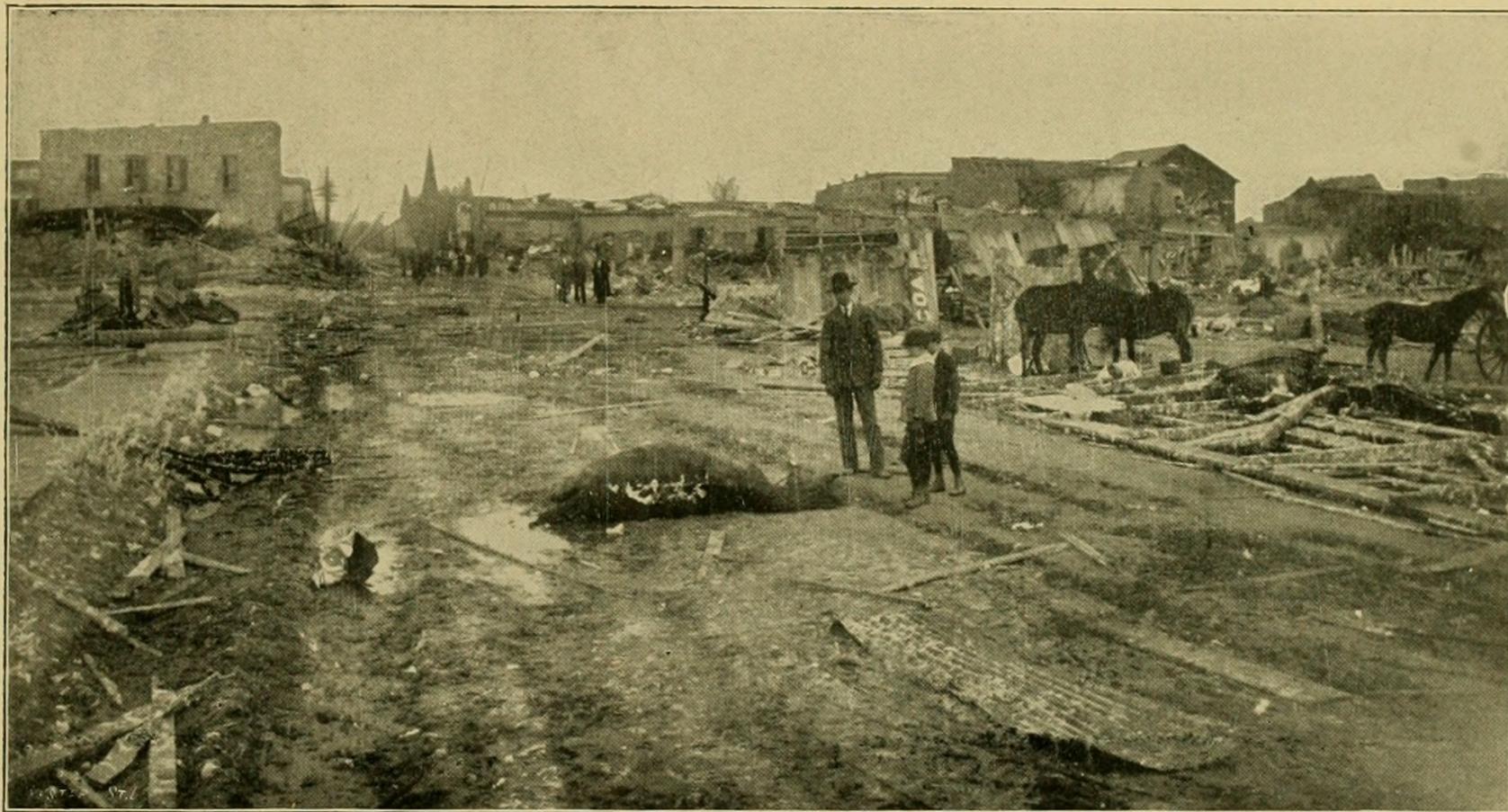
Looking Northeast from Corner Thirteenth and B Streets—Showing destruction of nice residences in the vicinity of Central Methodist church, which was totally demolished.



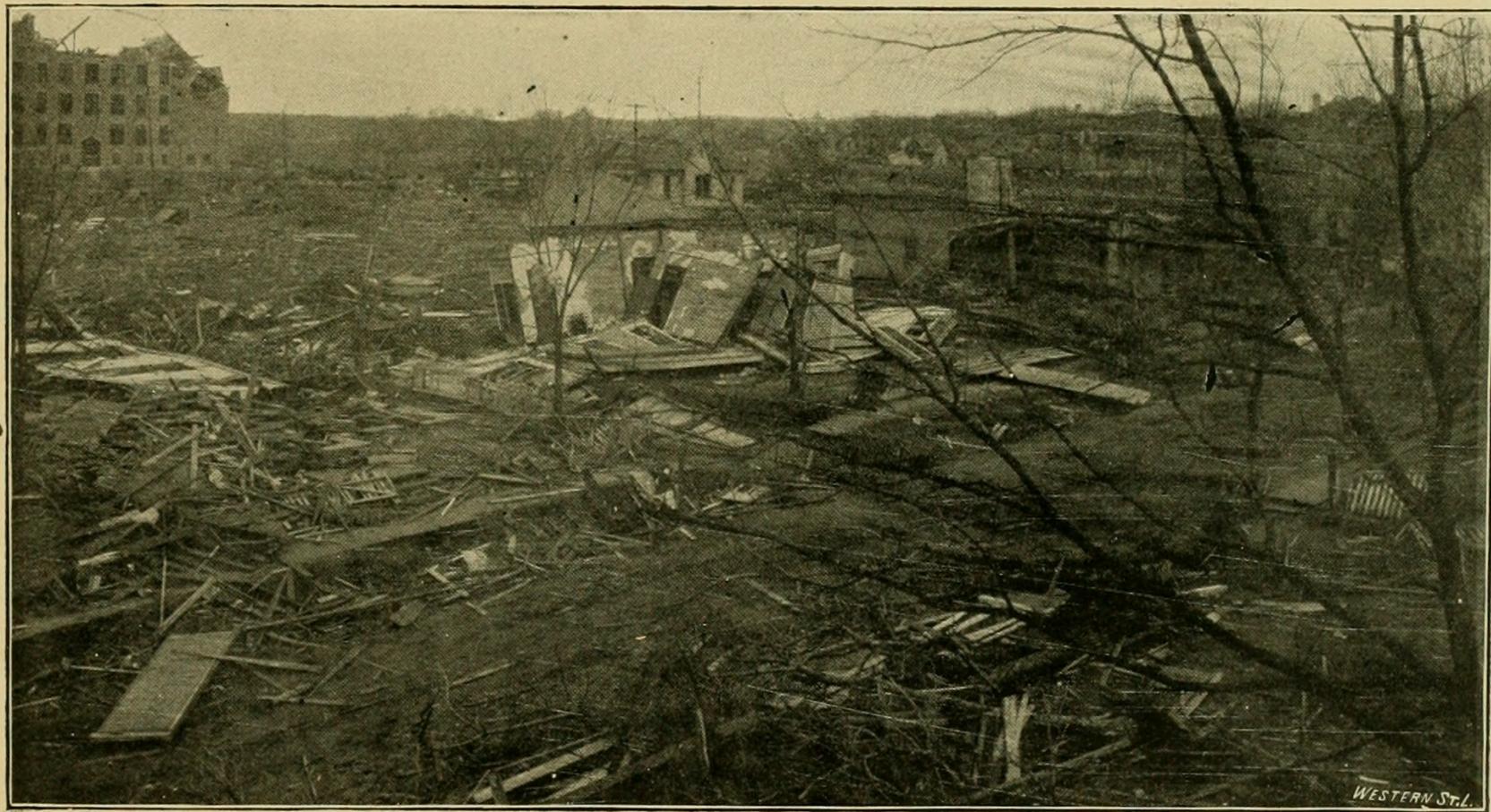
Garrison Avenue—Taken from corner of Tenth street, looking West.



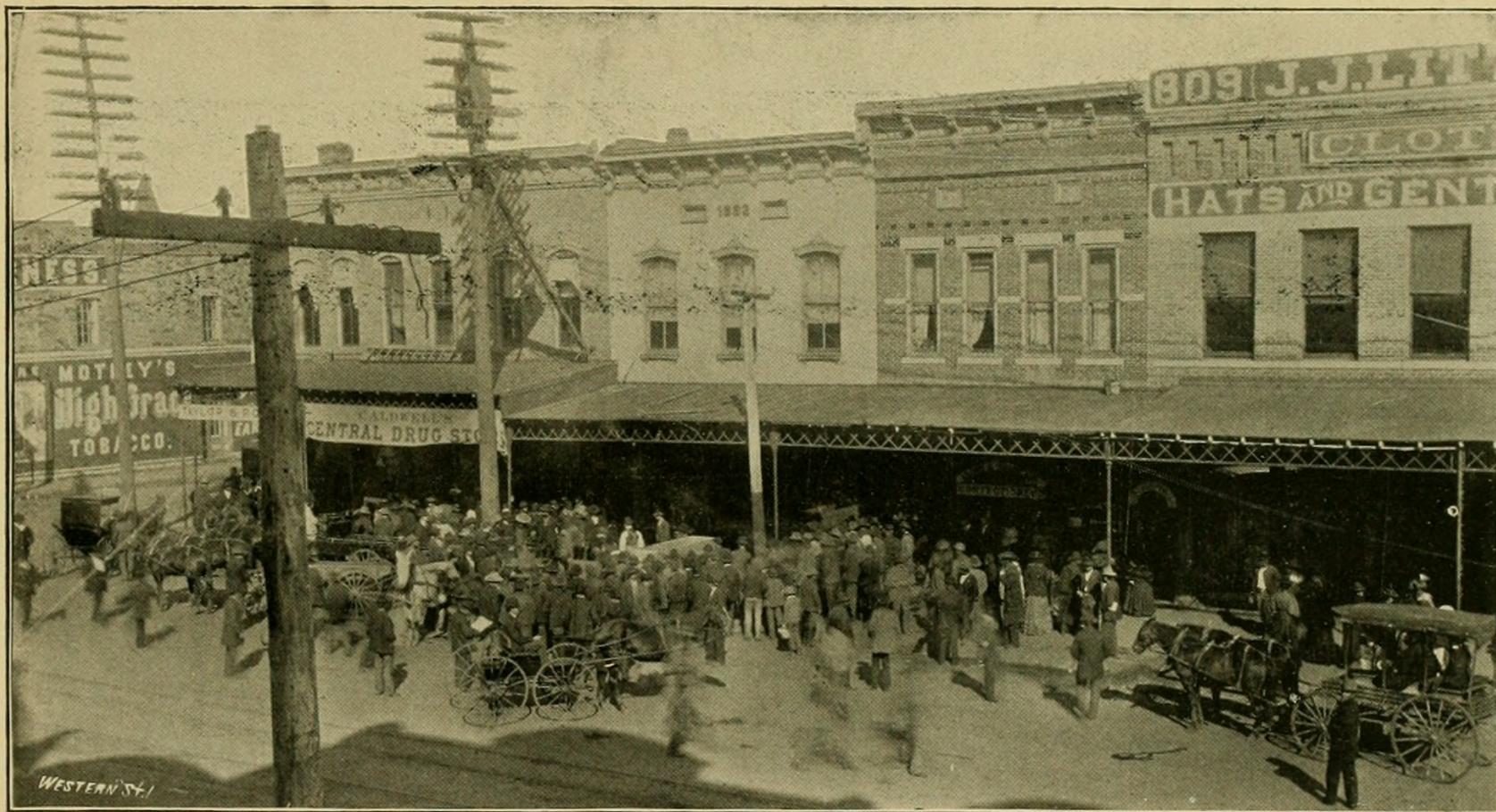
Locking West from "Texas Corner"—Showing that part of Garrison avenue that suffered most.



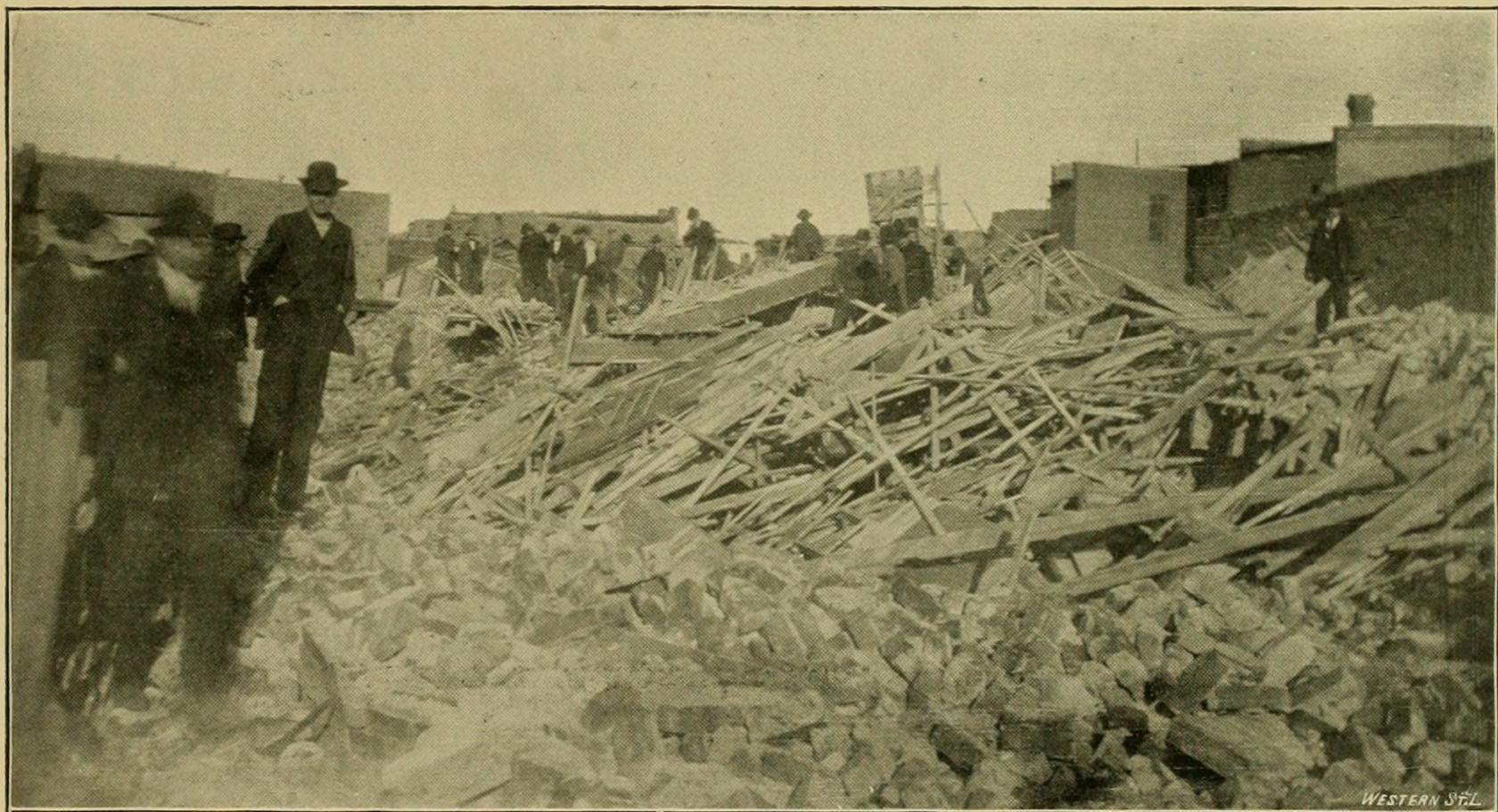
Looking North on Reserve Addition—Showing the ruins of a wagon-yard, one of the cotton warehouses and rear of damaged business houses.



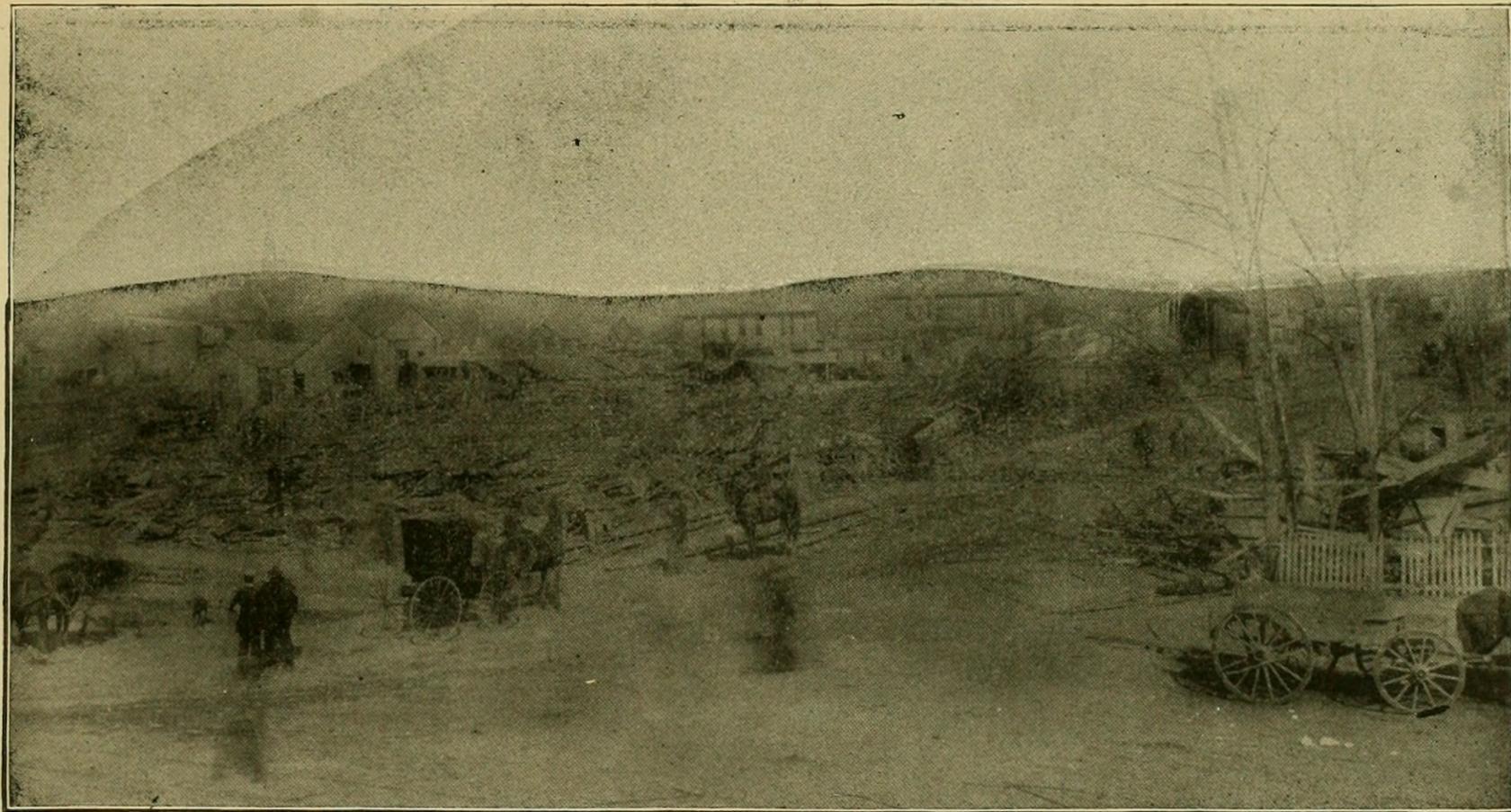
Looking East from North Thirteenth and D Streets — Showing total wreck of First Baptist church, and High School building in the distance.



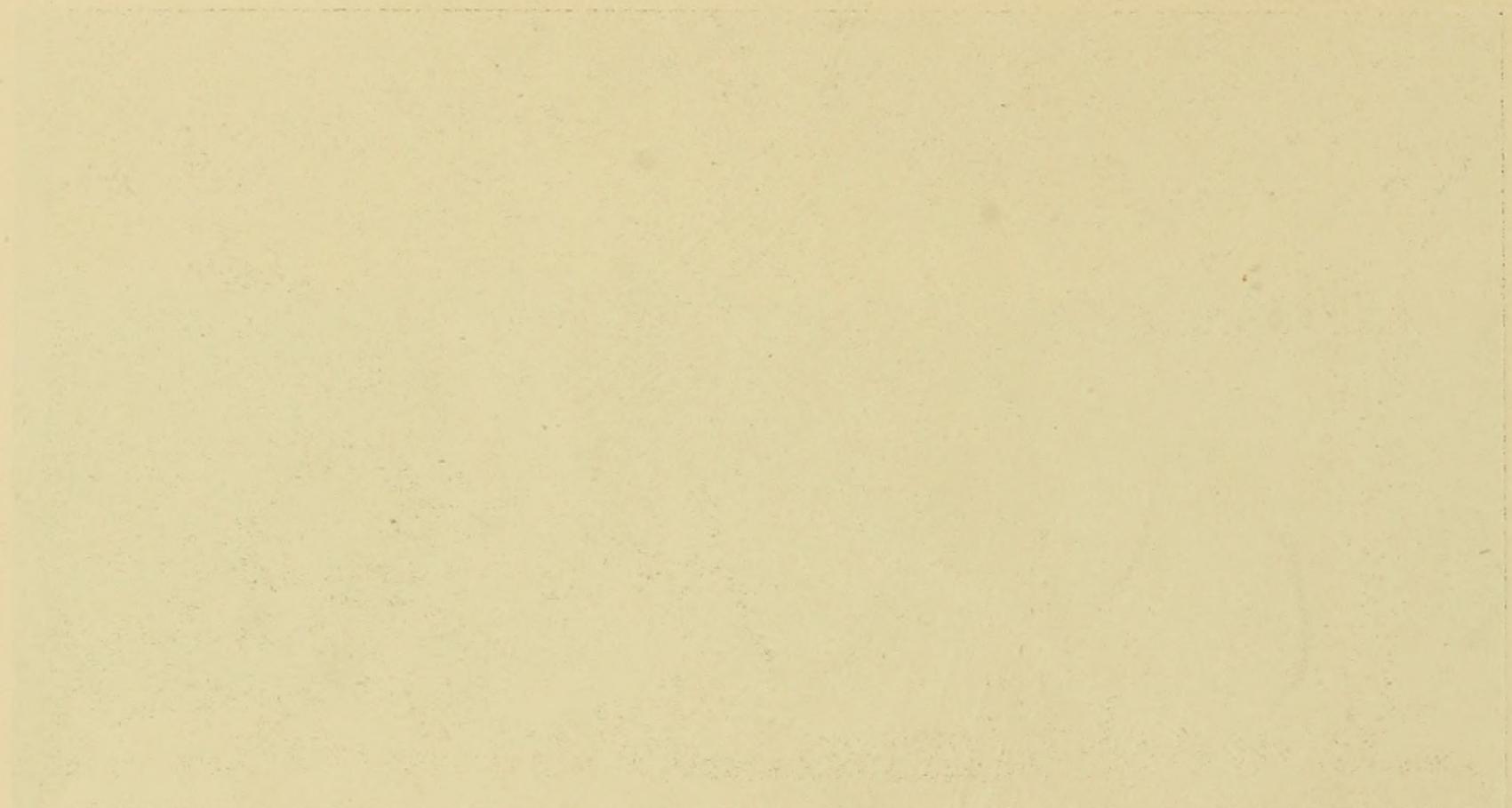
Exciting Scenes at the Morgue—Anxious crowds searching for dead relatives and friends.

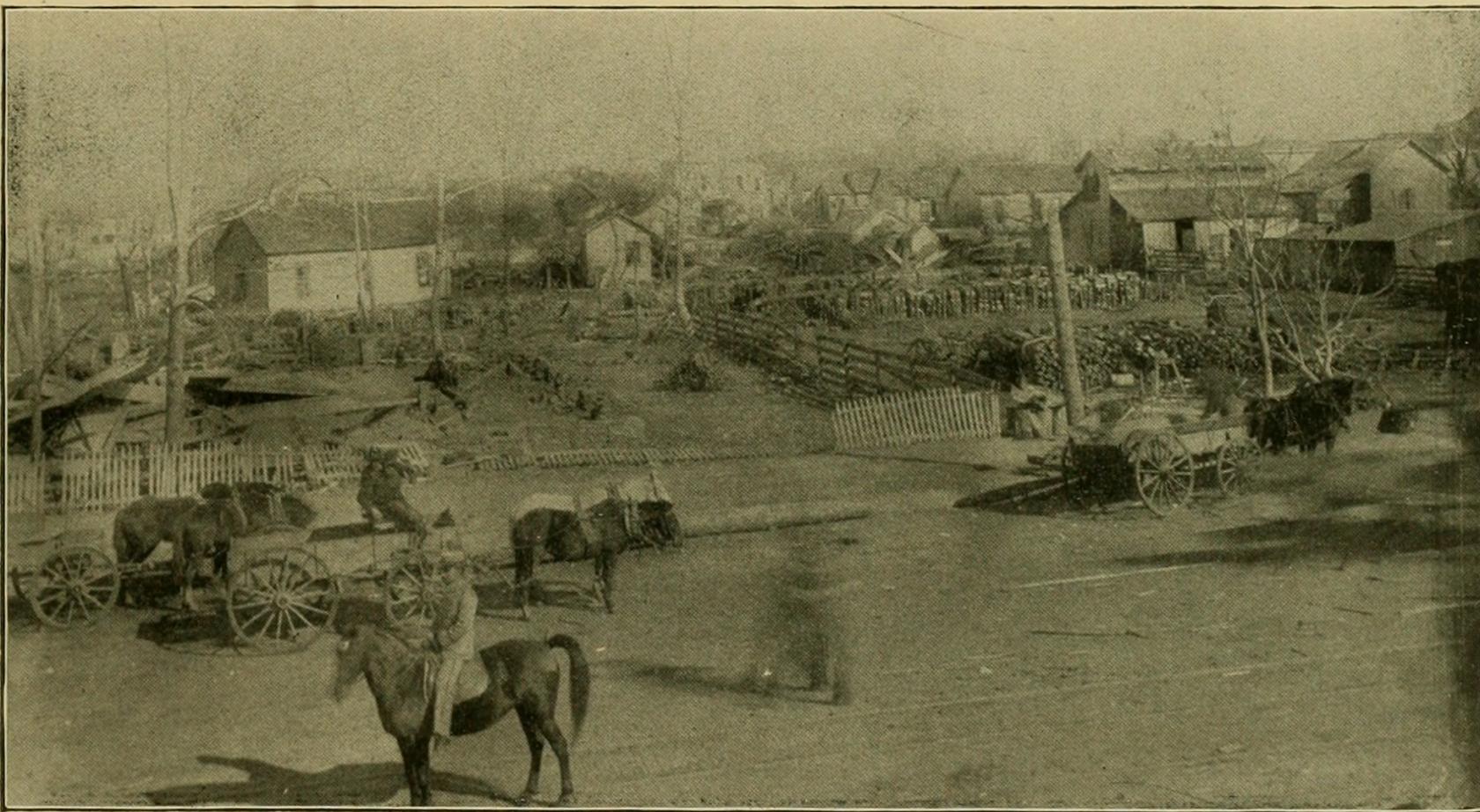


Ruins of the Brogan Building, on Towson Avenue—This building was used as a hotel, and here eight dead bodies were recovered.

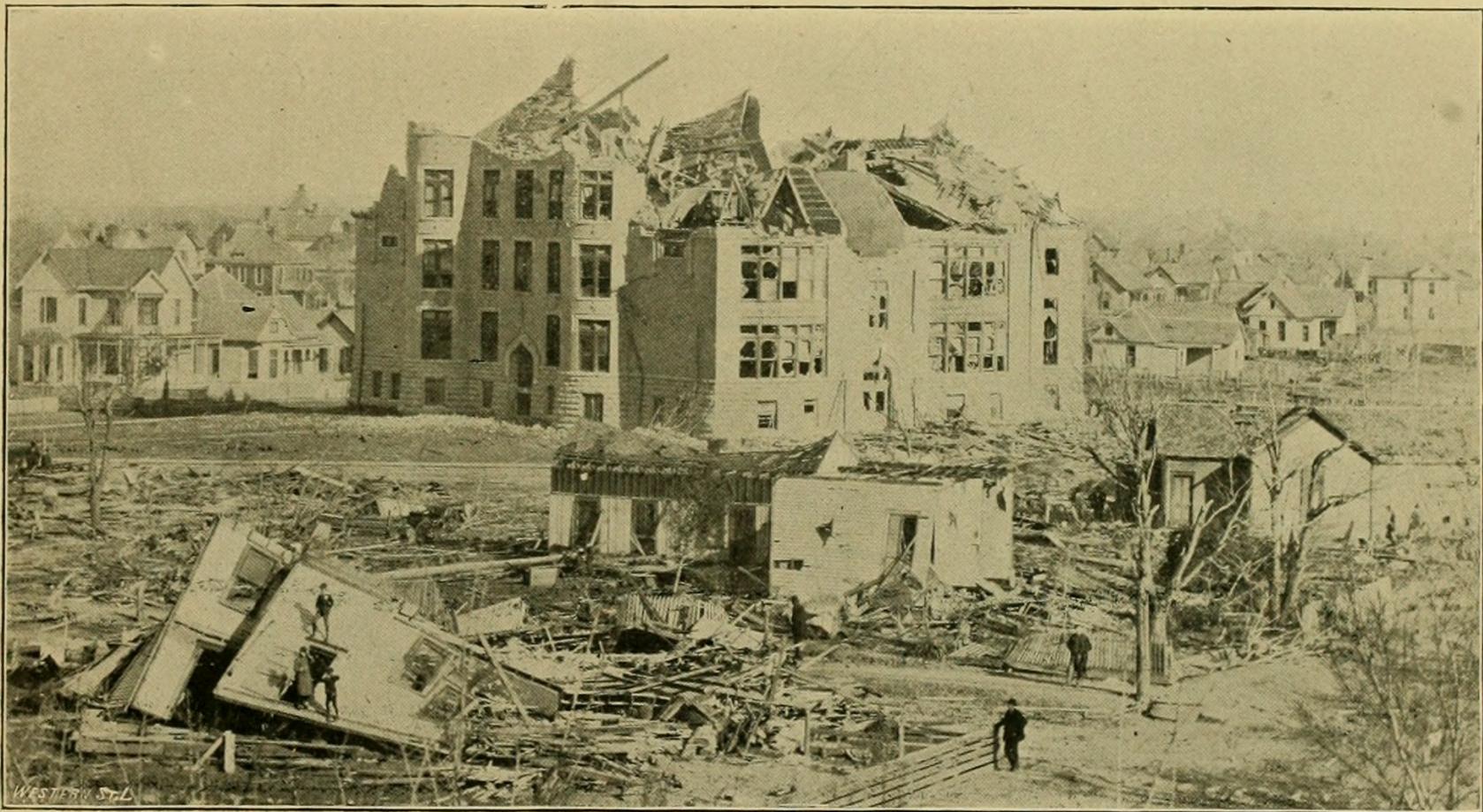


Looking North from "Texas Corner" — Showing wreck of entire block between Garrison avenue and A, Tenth and Eleventh Streets.

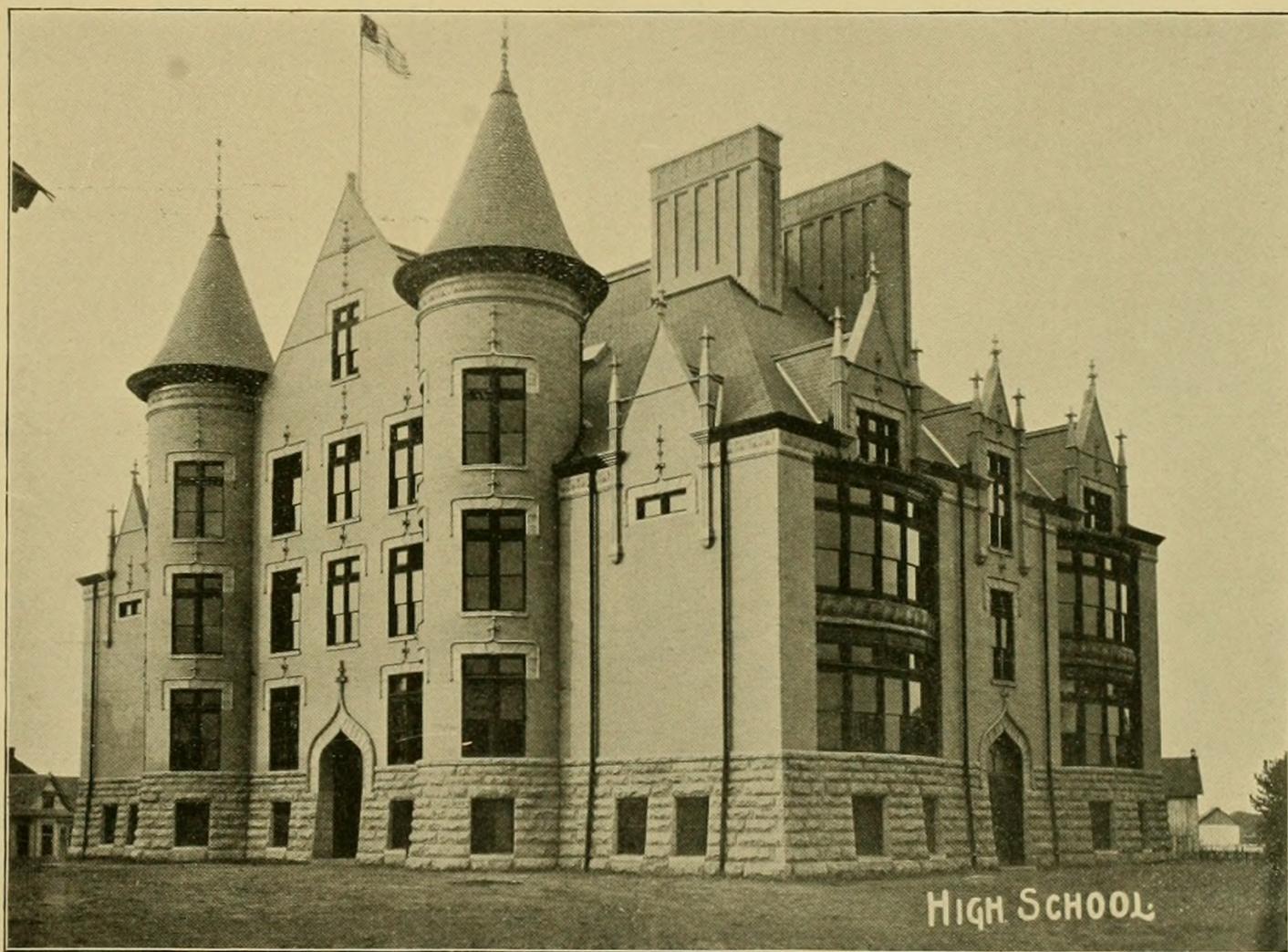




Looking Northeast from "Texas Corner"—Showing ruins of Catholic hall and near-by residences.



Ruins of the High School Building—As seen from Peabody school.



New High School Building—As it appeared when the day faded into night.

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