

# Planned Blaze Levels Cliffside Building

By CHRISTOPHER HAPNER  
The Cliffside Country Club's main building was leveled in a quick but dramatic blaze set by Burlington firemen as a training exercise Monday morning.

Firemen ignited kerosene and gasoline in the clubhouse's main dining room on the first floor at 9:15 a.m.

The fire spread slowly until it reached the kitchen area "and then the whole thing went up," an observer said.

The massive building was engulfed by flames within a half hour and an hour later it was on the ground, Fire Chief Patrick T. Brown reported.

Preparations for the fire included watering down nearby trees for about a half-hour before the clubhouse was torched.

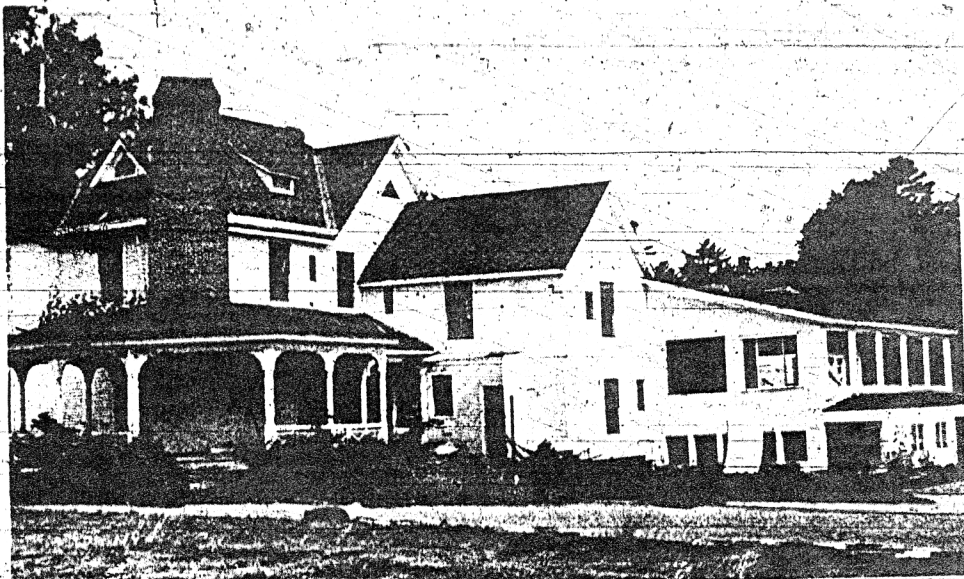
Firemen were aided by an ideal day without wind, Brown said.

If weather conditions had been adverse, he said, the building would not have been destroyed until today.

By Monday afternoon, the fire was out but park workmen remained on the site through the night to be certain it did not blaze up again.

Early plans called for the clubhouse to be razed because of its deteriorating condition but officials said late last month they had almost ruled out intentionally burning it down because of several factors.

However, necessary clearances for the fire were obtained and the burning was quietly scheduled.



THE FORMER mansion stood abandoned just before firemen torched it.

The fire remained a secret and newsmen were asked to hold advance stories so the crowd watching the fire would be minimal.

Brown termed the exercise a success and said he was "very pleased" because "it gave us quite an idea on how to contain a fire in a building that size."

Officials said they were happy because the fire ruled out demolition costs, which could have run as high as \$10,000 to

tear down the clubhouse to make way for the Cliffside park facility.

Park Supt. Sidney C. Baker said Monday he was glad the department took precautions to save surrounding trees which were expected to be lost in the blaze.

Baker explained that, after inspecting the site, it appears work crews from his department can clean up the fire's debris.

That will begin as soon as

possible, he said, but no definite schedule has been set.

The only discordant note to the fire came from Aldermen President M. Robert Blanchard who represents the south end ward in which the fire took place.

Blanchard said apparently every city official knew the blaze would take place "except for the two aldermen in Ward 5" and he was "just as surprised about this as the residents down

here." He noted, however, he preferred not to comment further on it "at this time."

The smoke generated by the blaze attracted citywide attention and some concern because there were no fire sirens heard.

The Burlington Free Press switchboard was besieged with calls seeking information about the blaze and what was being done about it.

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*Burlington, Vermont, On Beautiful Lake Champlain*

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