

Newhall House Fire

(The Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection does not include a transcription of this song as sung by Ella Mittelstaedt Fischer)

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by Peters, p. 245.

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

The Daily Journal, Milwaukee, Wed. eve Jan. 10. Vol. I, No. 46.

“The calamity that has for years been predicted has at last been visited upon Milwaukee bringing with it scenes of horror beyond the power of pen to portray.”

Headline “Eighty People Perish in the Roaring Flames.”

“Tom Thumb company have cancelled their engagements at the Opera House and Academy of Music, owing to the death of some of the members of their companies.”

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Actual number of dead is now 50, believe list will be swelled to between 70 and 80. Information received at The Journal up to 5:30 o’clock indicates the number will reach 100.

Mrs. Rischer as a girl of 12 was a witness to the fire. She was in Milwaukee having her confirmation dress made. She still cannot sing the song without being overcome with emotion.

Alternate titles/related songs: “Milwaukee Fire.”

Sources:

Cox, John Harrington, *Folk-songs of the South*, collected under the auspices of the West Virginia Folk-lore Society. New York: Dover Publications, 1967.

Laws, George Malcolm. *Native American Balladry; A Descriptive Study and a Bibliographical Syllabus*. Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1950. text only

Neely, Charles, coll., and John Webster Spargo, ed. *Tales and Songs of Southern Illinois*. Menasha, Wis., G. Banta, 1938.

Peters, Harry B., ed. *Folk Songs out of Wisconsin: An Illustrated Compendium of Words and Music*. Madison, WI: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1977.

Pound, Louise, *American Ballads and Songs*. C. Scribner's Sons, 1922.

K.G.