CHAPTER X.

INSURANCE COMPANIES OF BUFFALO.


The business of insurance of property against destruction by the elements, forms one of the most gigantic financial interests in the country. From almost the first settlement of Buffalo, after the burning of the village in 1813-'14, down to the present time, this great interest has been honorably and efficiently represented in the city.

In the year 1819, the Legislature of the State granted a charter to the Western Insurance Company of the village of Buffalo, for fire and marine insurance. Owing to the stringency in all financial matters during that and the few succeeding years, nothing was done under this charter until 1825, when Jacob Barker, of the city of New York, purchased the charter and opened the first insurance office in Buffalo. Isaac S. Smith was the first secretary of the company, and Captain William P. Miller was first president. In April, 1827, Mr. Smith resigned the office of secretary, and Lewis F. Allen,* who now resides in the city, came on from New York city and accepted the position. In 1828, Captain Miller also resigned the presidency, and Charles Townsend was elected to the office. The capital of this company was $100,000, and it did a good business during its existence, considering the size of the place. The charter of this company expired in 1830 and its affairs were wound up.

In the legislative session of the winter of 1829-'30, was granted a charter which was prepared by Lewis F. Allen, for The Buffalo Fire and Marine Insurance Company, with a capital of $100,000. This company was incorporated April 1, 1830. Charles Townsend was made its president. The capital stock was mostly taken by the citizens of Buffalo.

The first policy issued by this company was upon the furniture of William Ruxton, for $500; its cost to him for one year was $4.25. Other policies followed to Manly Colton, on a two-story house on Main street; on a barn on the corner of Pearl and Tupper streets, to Wray S. Littlefield; to Seth Grosvenor, on a two-story dwelling occupied by S. K.

* See biographical sketch in subsequent pages.
Grosvenor, on the west side of Pearl street; to William Ketchum, on a
two-story house on the north side of Seneca street; to William Ketchum
& Co., on a stock of hats and caps in a store on Main street; to Bryant
Burwell, on a two-story house on the west side of Pearl street, “near the
Episcopal church;” to Nathaniel Wilgus, on a two-story dwelling on the
east side of Washington street, near the corner of Eagle street; to
Horatio Shumway, Simeon Francis, Guy H. Goodrich, Pierre A. Bar-
ker, Russell H. Heywood, on cargoes and vessels.

R. H. Heywood and Horatio Shumway were presidents of this com-
pany at different periods, and Lucius Storrs was its secretary for a
number of years. A large business was done and its losses were always
paid promptly and satisfactorily. In 1844 an effort was made to engraft
upon the stock plan the mutual insurance principle; this effort failed of
success and other companies, vigorously and successfully managed, were
organized, which came into direct competition with the Buffalo Insur-
ance Company. It closed business in April, 1849, having ceased marine
insurance the previous year.

In the year 1842, Lewis F. Allen, who appears to have been chiefly
instrumental in the formation of the early insurance companies of the
city, obtained a charter for the Mutual Insurance Company of Buffalo.
G. B. Rich was made president of the company, and Walter Joy, vice-
president; Oliver Lee was given the office of treasurer, while the
secretaryship was tendered to Mr. Allen; but he declined it and Samuel
T. Atwater accepted the position. The trustees were Philo Durfee,
Heman B. Potter, Rufus C. Palmer, E. G. Spaulding, James C. Evans,
Walter Joy, S. S. Jewett, O. G. Steele, Samuel W. Hawes, Gaius B.
Rich, John D. Shepard, S. F. Pratt, Jason Sexton, Thomas J. Dudley,
William A. Bird, Ralph Plumb, Henry M. Kinne, George Coot, A. R.
Cobb, Robert Hollister, Harry B. Ransom, Harry Thompson, Richard
L. Allen and Carlos Emmons.

This company was organized without capital; the books were to be
opened for business and when approved applications for insurance were
received to the amount of $100,000, the organization was to be perfected.
Applications on hulls of vessels were promptly made for the stipulated
amount, and the company was accordingly organized. The first twelve
policies issued were to John Aublett, E. G. Spaulding (2), Gaius B. Rich,
Henry Wells, Robert Hatfield, Thomas M. Foote, Philo Durfee, Smed-
ley & Marcy, Baker & Pease, Judson Harmon, O. G. Steele.

Some doubt having been expressed as to the company being able to
pay possible losses, eight of the directors loaned their notes for $5,000
each, secured by bond and mortgage, at five per cent. interest. This
indebtedness was cancelled by payment of the notes, with five per cent.
interest the first year, and three per cent. the two following years. The
company was very successful and enjoyed a high reputation in all of the
towns along the lakes for prompt payment and fair dealing.
Mr. Rich resigned the presidency of this company in 1847 and A. A. Eustaphieve took the office. He resigned in the spring of 1863, and was succeeded by J. S. Weatherly. This company changed its character to a stock company and its name to the Buffalo Fire and Marine Insurance Company. It suspended business through heavy losses incurred in the Chicago fire of 1871.

In April, 1842, a charter similar to that of the Mutual Insurance Company of Buffalo, was granted to the Atlantic Mutual Insurance Company of New York City. It is mentioned here from the fact that it immediately solicited business in Buffalo and other interior cities, and was immensely successful. Its career has been referred to by excellent authority as "unparalleled in marine underwriting in the world."

The next local insurance company was the Farmers' Mutual Insurance Company of Erie county. This company was incorporated May 14, 1845; Thomas C. Love was the first president, and Richard L. Allen, secretary. The company did a comparatively small, but a safe business.

The Merchants' Mutual Insurance Company was organized under the State law in 1849-50, beginning business in the latter year. It was prosperous for a short period, but suffered heavy losses and finally suspended.

The Western Insurance Company of Buffalo was organized under the general law in 1862. Its corporators were: John L. Kimberly, Henry Martin, A. J. Rich, Geo. C. White, H. E. Howard, P. L. Sternberg, Wm. O. Brown, Oscar Cobb, John G. Deshler, Jason Parker, Thomas Clark, Dean Richmond, Elijah P. Williams, Wm. G. Fargo, David N. Tuttle and S. V. R. Watson. Dean Richmond was made president of the company, Gibson T. Williams, vice-president, and Joseph Stringham, secretary. The capital of the company was placed at $150,000, which was subsequently increased to $200,000 and again to $300,000. This was probably the most successful and strongest insurance company, all things considered, that was ever organized in Buffalo. The premium receipts grew from 50,000 in 1862, to 563,000 in 1868. During its operations of nine years, it received nearly $4,000,000, while it paid out for losses and expenses about $3,000,000. It did a very large fire and inland marine business.

The Buffalo City Insurance Company began business on the 1st of May, 1867. The officers of the company were: Wm. G. Fargo, President; A. Reynolds, Vice-President; Henry T. Smith, Secretary, with a board of twenty-eight directors. The capital of the company was $200,000, which was afterwards increased to $300,000. The business of this institution seems to have been largely under the control of Mr. Reynolds during the first four years and to have been successfully managed. During that period forty-five per cent. of the capital was paid in dividends and it was then a very prosperous organization. Mr. Rey-
nolds left the company in the spring of 1871; there was then a surplus of about $100,000. Mr. P. S. Marsh was elected in place of Mr. Reynolds, and in the fall of 1871, owing chiefly to heavy losses in the great Chicago fire, the company suspended. The first policy issued by the Buffalo City Insurance Company, was for $5,000, on the Central Presbyterian church; it was dated May 1, 1867.

There are four insurance companies now doing business in Buffalo which were organized here, all of which have had successful and honorable careers. The Buffalo German Insurance Company is one of the most successful institutions of the kind in the whole country. It was chartered and incorporated on the 15th of February, 1867, with $100,000 capital. The first officers of the company were: E. G. Grey, President; Philip Becker, Vice-President; Alexander Martin, Secretary. The first board of directors were Philip Becker, E. G. Grey, F. C. Brunck, Jacob Dold, Julius Fuchs, Solomon Scheu, Andrew Grass, F. A. Georger, John Hauenstein, Wm. Hellriegel, Stephen Bettinger, O. J. Eggert, H. Schanzlin, Paul Goembel, Jacob Hiemez, Philip Houck, Nicholas Ottenot, Henry C. Persch, J. F. Schoellkopf, Albert Ziegele.

This is one of the few companies doing business in the State under what is known as the surplus law. This law gives fire insurance companies the privilege of limiting dividends to stockholders to seven per cent. per annum on the capital and earned surplus. The profits in excess of such dividend is divided into two funds known as the guarantee surplus fund and the special reserve fund. The first named fund is liable, with the capital, for the payment of all losses by extraordinary conflagrations, while the special reserve fund would be used for the payment of other policy-holders who might suffer subsequent fire losses, without tedious delay. This plan places the company upon a basis of unquestioned security and has rendered it very popular with property owners.

So great has been the success of the Buffalo German Insurance Company that it found itself in position previous to the year 1876, to erect one of the handsomest and costliest structures in the entire city—the splendid building standing on the corner of Main street and Lafayette Square. It is an iron structure of symmetrical design and elegant in architecture, costing, with the ground on which it stands, $275,000. In this building are located the offices of the company, the German Bank of Buffalo, and many other offices. The present officers and directors of the company are as follows:—Philip Becker, President; Julius Fuchs, Vice-President; Oliver J. Eggert, Secretary; Frederick C. Haupt, Assistant Secretary; George A. Reinhardt, General Agent; Chas. A. Georger, Special Agent. Directors:—Louis P. Adolph, Philip Becker, F. C. Brunck, Charles Boller, Adam Cornelius, John P. Diehl, Jacob Dold, Julius Fuchs, F. A. Georger, George Goetz, E. G. Grey, John
LOCAL INSURANCE COMPANIES.

Hauenstein, William Hellriegel, Jacob Hiemenz, Philip Houck, Michael Mesmer, Nicholas Ottenot, Henry C. Persch, J. F. Schoellkopf, Albert Ziegele.

The Union Fire Insurance Company was incorporated in Buffalo, in 1874, with a capital of $100,000. The first board of directors were as follows: — Joseph Churchyard, President; Joseph Bork, Vice-President; Simon Bergman, Michael Doll, Joseph A. Dingens, Jacob P. Fisher, Jacob A. Gittere, Henry Garono, Henry Hellriegel, Joseph L. Haberstro, Henry D. Keller, John Kelly, Jr., Pascal P. Pratt, John Henry Smith, George Sandrock, E. G. Spaulding, William Scheu, Joseph W. Smith, Arnold Weppner, George Zeiler, George W. Zink. Alexander Martin has occupied the office of secretary since the incorporation of the company.

The capital of this company was paid in cash and business begun by it as a stock company. It has met with excellent success in all respects. The present officers of the company are:—Joseph Churchyard, President; Henry Hellriegel, Vice-President; Alexander Martin, Secretary. The directors are as follows:—Joseph Churchyard, President; William Cochrane, Jacob P. Fisher, Charles Georgar, Henry Garono, H. Hellriegel, Jos. L. Haberstro, Edward Heron, Robert Keating, Alexander Martin, Pascal P. Pratt, Frederick Persch, George Sandrock, Thomas P. Sears, E. G. Spaulding, William Scheu, Henry M. Watson, Arnold Weppner, Dr. William Volker, George Zeler, G. Frederick Zeller. The offices of this company are located at 420 Main street.

The Erie County Mutual Insurance Company was incorporated March 14, 1874. John P. Einsfield was the first president; John G. Lengner, the first vice-president, and M. Leo Ritt, the first secretary. The capital was $100,000, with 20 per cent. paid in. The business of the company is fire insurance only. The present officers are:—August Beck, President; Wm. Henrich, Vice-President; Joseph Timmerman, Secretary. Trustees: August Beck, Casper J. Drescher, Louis Freund, Peter Frank, Emil Gentsch, Ambrose Hertkorn, Wm. Henrich, Chas. Hammerschmidt, John A. Miller, Louis Rodenbach, Sebastian Schwabl, Ambrose Spitzmiller, Philip Steingoetter, Frederick Wagner and G. Frederick Zeller.

The Buffalo Insurance Company was organized in July, 1874, and is second in importance and business in the city only to the German Insurance Company. Its first officers were: P. P. Pratt, President; James D. Sawyer, Vice-President; Edward B. Smith, Secretary and Seneca A. Clark, Assistant Secretary. The original board of directors were: James G. Forsyth, Solomon Drullard, A. P. Wright, P. S. Marsh, Edward L. Stevenson, S. K. Worthington, and Henry C. Winslow. The capital of the company was placed at $200,000, and has remained so since. The capital is invested entirely in United States government
bonds and the balance of its assets consists principally of cash in banks. The amount of premiums received by the company in 1874, the first year of its existence, was $90,000. In 1882 the amount had increased to $115,000. The total amount of premiums received is $1,318,000. Total amount of losses, $917,700. The company has now about thirty agencies, all located in this country. The present officers of the company are: P. P. Pratt, President; Jewett M. Richmond, Vice-President; Edward B. Smith, Secretary, and Townsend Davis, Assistant Secretary. Office, 200 Main street.

The general insurance interests of Buffalo are well represented by numerous agencies some of which are so extensive in their operations and control the business of such strong companies that they may be briefly referred to as a prominent feature of the business of the city. The handsome offices of Smith & Davis are located at No. 200 Main street. The reader has already learned that Mr. Smith is now and for many years has been prominent in the insurance business of Buffalo. The firm was formed in 1870 and besides doing a very heavy fire insurance business, have also the largest lake business of any agency in the United States.

The insurance firm of Fish & Armstrong, No. 36 Main street, was formed in 1861 and does a very large business which extends from New York to Chicago, on the canal and lakes. The firm has remained as it now is since its first formation, with the exception of a short time in 1873, when it was styled Fish, Armstrong & Co.; the present offices have always been occupied by the firm. The individual members of the firm are S. H. Fish and C. B. Armstrong.

Worthington & Sill, No. 46 Main street, established in 1868, are one of the leading insurance firms in the city; they have offices also at 16 Central Wharf. They occupied their present commodious offices in the spring of 1871, the offices having been fitted up by the Western Insurance Company; they will soon remove to still more elegant quarters on the ground floor of the new Board of Trade Building. The firm do both fire and marine insurance. The firm is composed of Henry S. Sill and C. G. Worthington.

Flint & Dorr are a strong firm which has existed in its present form since 1881; but the business of the agency was formerly in the hands of Captain E. P. Dorr, who died in March, 1881. He was one of the most prominent men in the business here for many years.

There are many other insurance agencies in Buffalo that transact considerable business, and over fifty agencies of all classes. Among those who have been in the business for many years, besides those already referred to, may be mentioned Nathaniel Hall, an insurance agent of more than forty years experience in Buffalo; O. T. Flint, of the firm of Flint & Dorr, has been engaged in the business since 1852, and others.
On the 7th of October, 1856, a local Board of Underwriters was organized in Buffalo for the first time. Its officers were A. A. Eustatphieve, President; Edward Brewster, Vice-President; William Lovering, Jr., Secretary and Treasurer. Ten years later, a new board was organized with E. P. Dorr as President; E. B. Smith, Vice-President; D. V. Benedict, Secretary and Treasurer. From that time to the present, except at comparatively brief intervals, a local board has been in existence in the city.

The Buffalo Association of Fire Underwriters, as at present existing, was organized in the fall of 1879. For a period preceding that time, losses by fire had been unusually heavy, not only in this city, but throughout the country, and it became necessary to obtain higher rates for insurance; this organization was the result. The Association was formally incorporated in 1881. The officers are:—C. B. Armstrong, President (since organization); Alexander Martin, Vice-President; C. H. Woodworth, Secretary (since organization); L. T. Kimball, Treasurer.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHURCHES OF BUFFALO.

The First Preacher in Buffalo — Early Missionary Work — The First Buffalo Church Society — The First Church Building — Organization of the First Presbyterian Society — Names of the Members — History of the Church — Other Presbyterian Churches — Their Pastors and Officers — Episcopal Churches of Buffalo — History of St. Paul’s — Other societies of this Denomination — The First Baptist Church and its Successors — Separate Church Societies — Catholic Churches — The Israelites and their Religious Societies.

The first preacher in Buffalo was undoubtedly the Rev. Elkanah Holmes, who was sent to the Seneca Indians by the New York Missionary Society, and "preached to the inhabitants of New Amsterdam." Meetings were held at irregular intervals in private houses and in the school-house, after it was built in 1808–’09. A son of Rev. Mr. Holmes married a daughter of Dr. Cyrenius Chapin, the conspicuous Buffalo pioneer. Other missionaries followed Rev. Mr. Holmes to labor among the Indians, and occasionally preached in Buffalo.

Turner is authority for the statement that a Methodist church society was founded in Buffalo in 1809, under direction of Rev. James Mitchell, but "it had no permanent organization;" it was re-organized in 1818, his "primitive materials being eight persons who called themselves Methodists, mostly transient and poor." In January, 1819, the society had