

Fire Destroys 1893 Fair Building



[TRIBUNE Photo]

Flames eating into the Japanese pagoda on the Wooded Island in Jackson park last night.

2 BOYS SET FIRE TO JAP PAGODA IN JACKSON PARK

One Destroyed, Other Building Damaged

A fire which police said was started by two 15 year old boys last night destroyed one of the two remaining Japanese gardens buildings on Wooded Island in Jackson park and damaged the roof of the other. The buildings were built by the Japanese government for the World's Columbian exposition in 1893 and were regarded as priceless architectural treasures.

Arrested at Scene

The two boys, who admitted to Capt. Cornelius F. Cooney of the park district police that they started the fire, are Ray Laster, 1447 E. 55th st., and Charles McLeod, 5448 Dorchester av. They were arrested on the scene by Park Police Sgt. John Fox after they were pointed out by other boys who saw the fire start.

The two told Capt. Cooney they kindled twigs and tar paper at the side of one of the buildings "just to see it burn." Then they became frightened and attempted to beat out the fire but were unsuccessful, they said. Capt. Cooney released them into the custody of their parents, with orders to return to the park police south section station tomorrow to confer with juvenile authorities.

Carved, Lacquered Structures

The Japanese group originally contained three structures, one of which was destroyed by fire June 21. They were fabricated in Japan, principally of redwood, chosen carefully to avoid knots and intricately carved and lacquered. They were erected on Wooded Island for the fair by 75 Japanese workmen brought here for that purpose.

The three buildings were duplicates of the Hooden temple at Niji, near Tokyo, and symbolized the

sacred bird of Japan. Altho nationally known for their history, the buildings were allowed after the fair to fall into disrepair until 1935, when they were restored by the public works administration at a cost of \$22,000.

From then until the attack on Pearl Harbor, the buildings were operated as a tea garden by Japanese concessionaires. During the war, before the fire last June, the park district used the buildings as storehouses for equipment.

Capt. Cooney said the buildings were not in use when the fire broke out last night.