

FIRE WITNESSES

We arrived in Seattle the day after Thanksgiving 1888. We came on a ^{Homeseekers} Homeseekers Excursion, one of those trains which boasted of a coal range in one end of the sleeping car where food was prepared. My father, Albert Gardner Keene took his family into the dining car for their Thanksgiving dinner, a rare treat. The family consisted of my mother Lura Ella Kelly Keene and two daughters, Mamie Luella now Mrs. Melvin Albert Weed; and Alberta Isabel, now Mrs. Martin Dwayain Ford.

We lived in an upper apartment at what is now Ninth and Washington Sts. It was then seventh Avenue, the streets having later been renamed. And it was from there that we viewed the destruction of our City. I remember plainly when the flames crossed Columbia St. on Front street and the buildings folded over like so many cards. We were terribly anxious about the approach of the fire towards the Gas Tanks.

My father went down immediately when the fire seemed out of control and helped where he could.

The day before we had sent all our household belongings down to the dock to be shipped to a new home in Alameda, California. They were to be shipped on the S.S. Alameda, so when the fire approached the wharf my father hurried there and found that not an article had been loaded aboard, so he found a hand truck and managed to get a few items on board. He was just going down the gangplank with our BEAUTIFUL organ when the Captain hollered from the bridge that he was pulling out as they were then in a shower of sparks from the fire. So my father rushed back to the dock and from there saw the gangplank, organ and all go into the Sound.

My father then hurried to Stetson & Post Mill where his brother, Abner P. Keene was and helped him throw belting and saws into the Bay to try and save them. While doing this they were cut off from land and finely had to escape by poling out on a raft of logs. They were out there all night and it was not until the next morning that they were able to land in Bell town and make their way home. The Keene families were about frantic, hoping for the safety of their men in that awful fire.

The next day I was taken down with typhoid. That was the last straw of disaster. So we remained here, and my parents started all over again; hundreds of other did the same.

We are glad that we are pioneers.

My father passed away Nov. 11 1926 and my mother passed away in 1929.

Surviving are the two daughters, Mrs. M.D.Ford and Mrs. M. A. Weed, both members of the Seattle Historical Society.