

Fire Destroys White City Roller Rink



(TRIBUNE Photo)

Firemen battling blaze at old White City Roller rink, 63d street and Calumet avenue. A stiff wind fanned flames, hampering efforts of firemen to bring fire under control.

The last trace of a once glittering outdoor amusement mecca — White City — was erased by flames Saturday.

Firemen fought a spectacular battle with a fast spreading 5-11 alarm fire which destroyed the White City Roller rink, 63d street and Calumet avenue, the only remaining building of the million dollar amusement park that opened its doors in 1904.

Wind Fans Flames

A stiff wind fanned the flames that ravaged the nearly square block building that was once a major unit of the 16 acre amusement wonderland that was sometimes called the city of a million lights.

Many a romance was born on the boardwalks and picnic grounds of White City but there were few among the

5,000 spectators at Saturday's fire who recalled the park in its heyday.

Flames Endanger "L"

Fire Marshal Raymond J. Daley said he was suspicious of the fast spread of the fire so he asked the arson squad to investigate the ruins.

No one could estimate the loss involved. The roller rink has been closed for months. It was scheduled to be wrecked soon.

Billowing clouds of smoke from the ancient wooden beams in the structure made fighting the fire difficult. At one point, firemen feared the flames would spread to the nearby Jackson park elevated structure.

The wooden trussed roof finally collapsed. No one was injured.

In 1939, most of White City

was rased to make way for a private housing development. The roller skating rink and a sports arena were left standing. Later the arena was wrecked.

Fairylan 1 of Fun

When White City was built, a cornfield was transformed into a fairland of roller coaster rides, ferris wheels, and fun houses.

The first airplane flight from within the city limits was made from an empty lot at the park in 1906. A dirigible that crashed into a downtown building in 1919 also took off from White City.

An estimated 35 million enjoyed White City in its first 16 years of operation, but its popularity waned after World War I.

Saturday, flames removed all traces of it.