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Fire Destroys L.I. Mansion Used by State U. College



The New York Times

The administration building of State University College in Old Westbury. It had been part of the estate of F. Ambrose Clark, heir to the Singer sewing machine fortune.

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OLD WESTBURY, L. I., April 17—A 42-room mansion that was being used as a temporary administration building for the State University College here was destroyed by a fire this morning.

About 20 employes of the college were able to save some records and about 3,000 library books after the fire started at 9 A.M.

It took volunteer firemen from the nearby Nassau County communities of Westbury, Jericho, Bethpage, Plainview and Hicksville about three hours to extinguish the blaze. There were no injuries, and college officials were unable to estimate the financial loss.

The police said the fire apparently was accidentally started by workmen who were using hot tar on a new roof of the 56-year-old, three-story red brick building. Firemen had to stretch hoses 4,400 feet from the north service road of the Long Island Expressway near Powell's Lane to reach the building on the 570-acre estate.

Harris Wofford Jr., president of the college, which is to open in September with 75 students and a faculty of 15, said the administration headquarters would be moved to another of the 20 buildings on the estate. He said the school would open on schedule.

The state bought the estate in December, 1965, from the estate of F. Ambrose Clark for about \$4-million. Mr. Clark was an heir to the Singer Sewing Machine and the Clark Thread Company fortunes.

The college, the 67th campus of the State University system, expects an enrollment of 1,000 students by 1970 and 5,000 by the late nineteen-seventies. It will offer a four-year liberal arts program.

The only part of the mansion that was undamaged today was the one-story south wing, known as the Prince of Wales Ballroom. It was built in 1922 for the then Prince of Wales when he attended a ball at the estate.