Collinwood’s Call to Action: The Collinwood School Fire Tragedy and Its Impact on Fire Safety

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On March 4, 1908, a massive fire erupted in an elementary school in Collinwood, Ohio, killing 172 children and three adults. Though the children attended a relatively new school, their building and its inadequate fire protection contributed significantly to the loss of innocent lives. This horrific tragedy in a small Ohio town awoke the entire nation to the inadequacy of fire safety practices in schools, sparking a call to action to standardize fire safety measures and impel city and state governments to implement safety features lacking in Ohio schools and schools across the country. From this tragedy, the entire nation took notice, setting in motion an era of redevelopment of fire safety measures, still credited to the Collinwood disaster today.

Collinwood was a small town established in 1874 just east of Cleveland. The town began as a single railroad stop chosen by the Lakeshore and Michigan Southern Railway Company given its central location between Buffalo and Toledo. The establishment of the Collinwood Rail Yards attracted immigrants seeking jobs in the railroad industry. Collinwood grew into a diverse ethnic community, housing large Italian, Irish, and Slovenian populations (“South Collinwood” 1). By 1899, Collinwood had its own school system, newspaper, six churches, plentiful business, and even an amusement park. In 1901, a small, four story school was built on Collamer Street in North Collinwood. Lake View School was updated in 1907, adding four rooms to the rear of the building (“In Loving Remembrance” 1-2) (See Appendix 1).

March 4, 1908, Ash Wednesday, was a typical winter day. Temperatures lingered just above freezing, as mothers kissed their young ones goodbye before leaving for school, many for the last time. Classes at Lake View School started at 8:45 a.m. Around 9:30, Emma Neibert, a fifth grader in the K-6 elementary school, noticed smoke billowing from a basement storage closet under the main staircase. She immediately notified the janitor, Fritz Hirter, who in turn rang the fire bell and opened the front and rear doors. Students and teachers began their orderly exit.
Because the fire started directly under the main stairs, it took mere moments for the front exit to become completely blocked by flame. Only Miss Ethel Rose’s Kindergarten class escaped safely, losing none to the fire. Once students realized one exit was blocked, they rushed for the rear doors. One child fell. Like dominoes, children toppled face down atop one another, forming a writhing pile of bodies nearly six feet tall (“In Loving Remembrance” 2, 5). Survivors of the fire estimate that it took approximately two minutes from the sound of the alarm for the exits to become completely impassable. By that time, the school was a death trap. Children heading for the main level exits soon realized their escape was blocked, yet could not return upstairs, propelled forward by the continuous stream of children pushing downward. In this manner, scores of children were trampled, suffocated, or crushed before the fire ever reached them (See Appendix 1).

On the upper floors housing the second through sixth grades, a different story unfolded. Fifth grade teacher, Miss Laura Bodey, led her students down the main staircase. Quickly, discovering her path blocked by flame, she re-ascended to the second story, broke a window, and escaped with her class down the fire escape. All but eight of her students survived. Most of the children on the second floor were not as lucky. Grades two through four each lost at least three-quarters of their grade. In a desperate attempt to escape, others jumped from upper floor windows, some to their death (Everett 49, 61).

On the outside, teachers, parents, neighbors, and first responders were sickened by what they encountered. Though bystanders were able to break down the rear door, the weight of the 6-foot mass blocking the exit made it impossible to extract the victims. Many parents watched as their children, only feet from safety, burned. Some even held their child’s hand as they were consumed by the raging fire. The tragic stories of the parents were innumerable and their loss,
indescribable. By 1:30, the quiet town of Collinwood was the tragic scene of an unimaginable calamity, claiming 175 innocent lives (“In Loving Remembrance” 5).

Many families lost several or all of their children that day (See Appendix 2). A nearby train warehouse served as a temporary morgue. Families filed down neat rows of tiny bodies, searching for any sign that one of the charred corpses was their child. Most remains were identified by trinkets not destroyed by the blaze. Nils Thompson, the first child identified, was recognized by his belt buckle; Henry Schultz, a portion of sweater; Irene Davis, a skirt; Russel Newberry, a watch chain; and Dale Clark by a pink handkerchief he had wrapped around a new green marble that morning (Everett 57-59, 70).

The reeling Collinwood community was left to wonder, how such a tragedy could happen to their children. Officials immediately began investigating the cause. Initial suspicion fell upon Fritz Hirter, the school janitor, who may have been in the basement at the start of the fire. Though officials ultimately determined the source of the fire to be an overheated steam pipe in contact with a dry joist, Hirter publically argued that the furnaces could not have been to blame because it was a unseasonably temperate day, and he was running the furnaces abnormally low. In fact, he feared that the furnaces were not heating the building sufficiently and was en route to open the furnace drafts when he met three girls (Everett 121). In Hirter’s account of the story, he states:

I was sweeping in the basement . . . when the three little girls came running through. Suddenly I looked and saw a wisp of smoke curling from beneath the stairway. . . I ran upstairs . . . and gave the signal for fire drill. . . Then I threw open all of the doors leading to the outside. These consisted of two double pairs of doors in the front and rear of the building. After that I did all in my power to aid in
rescuing pupils (Everett 120-121).

Inconsistencies surround Hirter’s story. Temperatures were actually below freezing that day ("What was the Weather" 1), questioning why the furnaces were running so low. Additionally, the girls Hirter mentioned perished in the fire, which seems odd, considering they were allegedly the first to detect the fire. Hatred for Hirter ran high throughout the town. One grief-stricken father attempted to kill him. Consequently, Hirter sought police protection. Officers stood guard at his home while he buried his children ("Police Guard" 3). He was ultimately cleared of blame when parents and officials realized three of his own children had died in the fire (Everett 120).

As investigation into the fire progressed, the building itself became a prime suspect for the heavy death toll. The school was of simple design, made entirely of wood except for its brick façade. During the fire, the brick masonry acted as a chimney, funneling the flames into the upper levels where the wooden interior disintegrated quickly. The building had three main exits: two ground level exits facing east and west and a fire escape snaking down the north side. During fire drills held three times a year, the east exit was designated as the primary exit and the fire escape was not used. As trained, the majority of the students rushed for the east exit during the fire, only to find their path blocked by flames. Consequently, the mass of panicked students bolted to the rear door. The original rear exit was approximately 10’4” wide. However, a vestibule used as a cloak room had recently been added, reducing the exit width to 5’3”. Though Hirter opened both pairs of doors at the onset of the fire, one of the rear doors became closed in the confusion, funneling the children through a space two and half feet wide. Once the exit had become completely blocked by the pile, the only remaining exit was the exterior fire escape. Ending six feet above the ground, it intimidated many children to retreat back inside from which they never returned. Due to insufficient exits and the building’s predominantly wooden construction, many
fates were sealed before the fire even reached them (See Appendix 1). Though occupancy limits were not calculated at the time, overcrowding may have also contributed to the high death toll. The third floor, originally a gymnasium, was partially converted into classroom space to accommodate growing enrollment. In the 1907-08 school year, 366 students were enrolled in Lake View School.

Another major contributor to the fire’s devastating outcome was Collinwood’s inadequate fire department, consisting of 20 volunteers (“In Loving Remembrance” 5). The department owned a single engine, hose truck, and ladder truck (Rega 1) (See Appendix 3). During the fire, the department’s only horse team was pulling a road scraper over a mile away. It took nearly 20 minutes for the Collinwood fire department to arrive. Though some criticized their response time, given the steps necessary to summon and assemble the volunteer team, their response seems reasonable for the time. To call for help that day, an unidentified person ran nearly a mile to the Collinwood Fire Station and rang the bell to call firefighters from their day jobs. The firefighters assembled at the station; gathered their equipment; borrowed horses to pull the fire engine, hose truck, and ladder truck; and then drove to the school (Nelson).

Once on scene, their equipment proved inadequate. The ladders were too short. Their cotton hoses leaked, and there wasn’t enough water pressure to reach the second story (“In Loving Remembrance” 5). Nevertheless, the fire crew sprayed five streams of water onto the building. Each side of the building received a single stream of water with an extra one focused on the rear side (Grant 3). Much of the fire department’s efforts were futile. It would be another hour before reinforcements from Cleveland arrived (“Department 20 Minutes Late,” 2) (See Appendix 3). By that time, the building had collapsed and there was little need for assistance.
The devastating impact of the Lake View School fire was chronicled on the front page of *The Cleveland Leader* the next day. The front page featured a list of dead, missing, and injured; a description of the horrific details of the fire and an article already questioning the safety of schools in the Cleveland area (“159 Children” 1; “School Horror” 1; “Schools Safe” 1). The *Cleveland Leader* had already investigated fire safety in several schools in the Cleveland area, observing fire drills and noting potential fire hazards. However, the results of the investigation appeared rather incongruous, in that, while potential issues were noted, all schools investigated were deemed “comparatively safe,” yet many were in worse condition than Lake View School (“School Safe” 1).

The March 5 issue devoted an additional five pages to numerous stories of personal loss, rescue efforts, and condolences from state officials. Heartrending stories described how parents watched as their young children died before their eyes, holding their hands as they perished (“Parents See” 2; “Helpless Mothers” 2; “Holds Child’s Hand” 4). Even the Collinwood police chief was not spared anguish. He watched as his son, Hugh McIlrath, ushered children down the fire escape. When several frightened children retreated into the burning building, Hugh followed to retrieve them and never re-emerged (“Chief Sees” 4).

News of the fire spread quickly across the nation, figuring prominently on the front page of newspapers in dozens of cities both big and small. Like *The Cleveland Leader*, the *Los Angeles Herald* made the fire front page news. Once again, next to the list of dead was an article describing the details of the fire (“Pupils Caught” 1-2) and a second questioning the safety of schools in Los Angeles (“Fatal School Panic” 2). However, the president of the Board of Education assured the Los Angeles public that LA schools were perfectly safe, performing regular fire drills with extreme coordination and halls wide enough for safe passage. He was confident that Los Angeles would
not suffer a similar tragedy as Collinwood. On the same day in Washington D.C., *The Evening Star* dedicated two front-page columns to the Collinwood tragedy. In graphic detail, it described failed rescue attempts, suspicion surrounding Fritz Hirter, and debated the rumor whether the rear doors opened inward ("School Fire Trap" 1). *The Detroit Times* also reported details of the fire and a near complete list of dead ("List of Dead" 1), yet was very critical of Collinwood, accusing Lake View School designers of focusing on “artistic effect” over proper fire precautions ("Sought an Artistic Effect" 1). On page eight, an editorial accused Ohio of being “so busy making presidents that it hasn’t time to prevent its school buildings from becoming ghastly funeral pyres” ("The Lake View Children” 8).

Others also blamed the town of Collinwood for the tragedy. In 1906, Collinwood considered joining Cleveland, yet voted against it. Had Collinwood been annexed by Cleveland, its fire department would have had access to Cleveland’s resources. The person who ran to the fire station would have been met by professional firefighters, fully prepared to hitch their horses and go. Cleveland owned the only steam-operated engine in the immediate area, ladders long enough to extend to the upper floors, and equipment capable of attaining higher water pressure. With such resources, firefighters could have been on site in under five minutes, giving them a chance to rescue some students. Unfortunately, Collinwood would not be formally integrated into Cleveland until 1910 (Everett 90).

The magnitude of Collinwood’s devastating tragedy cannot be voiced without acknowledging some measure of resulting triumph. The Lake View School fire turned local and national attention to fire safety and emergency response. Many building codes were put into practice immediately following the fire. The January-June, 1914 edition of the journal, *Safety Engineering*, documented schoolhouse-construction legislation passed from 1910 to 1914.
According to the table, Ohio passed laws in 24 categories, all before 1910, the most of any state at the time (Cooper 182). As an immediate response to the Collinwood tragedy, the panic bar exit device was developed in 1908 and dubbed “The Von Duprin Device” in honor of its inventors, Clemens Vonnegut Sr., Henry DuPont, and Carl Prinzler. The device was first sold by the Vonnegut Hardware Company (Sweet’s Indexed Catalogue 592) (See Appendix 4) and remains in use today in most public buildings with minimal modifications to the original design.

Despite immediate fervor for fire safety in the wake of the Collinwood fire, implementation of safety regulations was slow. Retrofitting old schools with new fire safety technology was expensive and not always effective. In addition, many across the country still believed that fire safety in schools was adequate, even a decade after the Collinwood tragedy. In 1921, one reporter questioned that view by exposing an unidentified high school, constructed in 1919 with a mechanic shop in the basement containing open barrels of turpentine, varnish, and gasoline, as well as padlocks barring the fire escape. By my calculation, the gasoline alone had the explosive equivalency of over 380 pounds of dynamite. Shocked by the findings, the president of the Board of Education in Cleveland immediately had experts evaluate 62 schools in Cleveland, checking for fire weaknesses (Fleming 15).

The Collinwood school fire was undoubtedly a tragedy; yet, the triumph to arise from this horrific event was the call to action to address fire safety in schools. The Collinwood fire’s legacy has had a lasting impact on building construction, emergency preparation, and emergency response time throughout the country, learning through past mistakes so that the Collinwood children did not die in vain.
Appendix 1: Lake View School

Lake View School Before Fire. Lake View School, built in 1901, located on Collamer Street in North Collinwood. Photo from Cleveland State University archives.

Lake View School During the Fire. Firefighters spray the east side of the building in vain. Photo from the Western Reserve Historical Society Digital Archives.

Diagram of Lake View School Fire Egress. Diagram explaining how the children and teachers attempted to escape from the fire. Photo courtesy of Western Reserve Fire Museum and Education Center.
Appendix 2: Laying the Children to Rest

Children Buried at Lake View Cemetery. Each family was given $5,000 for funeral expenses and personal loss. Starting on Friday, March 6, and ending on Sunday, March 8, there was an average of 4 burials per daylight hour (Taylor 1). Photo from Western Reserve Historical Society Digital Collection.

Burial Plot of Miss Grace Fiske Adjacent to Collinwood Fire Memorial. A large plot of land was purchased in Lake View Cemetery where the 19 unidentified bodies were interred, along with Miss Grace Fiske, one of the two teachers who perished in the fire. Photo by Ehren Collins.
Collinwood School Fire Memorial Today. A memorial to the Collinwood School Fire stands at the place where the 19 unidentified children are interred in Lake View Cemetery. On the front (left) is the inscription, “In memory of the teachers and children who lost their lives in the Collinwood School fire.” On the back (right) is a list of the then known dead. Photos by Ehren Collins.

**In Memoriam**

Collinwood Memorial Garden. The memorial garden was built on the footprint of Lake View School. Parents and students did not want another school to be built atop the site of their former school. Photo from Collinwood School Fire Repository.
Memorial School built in 1911. A new school was built adjacent to the former site of Lake View School and was named Memorial School in honor of the children and teachers lost to the fire. Photo from Collinwood School Fire Repository.

Memorial School and Garden Today. The current Memorial School was built in 2005 and also sits adjacent to the Lake View School Footprint. Atop the footprint sits a small memorial garden. Photos by Ehren Collins

Inscription:

“On this site, Ash Wednesday, March 4, 1908 172 children, 2 teachers and 1 rescuer perished in the Collinwood, Lake View School Fire, the worst school fire this nation ever witnessed. A stunned nation mourned. A caring community remembers. Rededicated in their memory.”
Appendix 3: Battling the Fire

Fire Engine Circa 1905. This fire engine is similar to that used to fight the Collinwood School Fire. The engine was attached to a hydrant and ten men per side would pump the rails up and down, forcing water out of the tube. Photo by Ehren Collins with permission of Western Reserve Fire Museum and Education Center.

Turn of the Century Engine Hitched to Horses. This engine is the engine used by the Collinwood Fire Department. Photo by Ehren Collins with permission of Western Reserve Fire Museum and Education Center.
Cleveland Fire Department Dispatch Log Book for March 4, 1908. The entry reads: “Still [Alarm] at 10:14 am. Location at Collinwood & Lake Ave. Collinwood Public School. Miles run 7. Hours worked 7 ½. Used 800 feet of 2 ½” hose. 172 children & 1 teacher lost their lives. [List of Cleveland firemen and engine companies that reported to the fire and assisted in taking bodies out of the ruins.]” Photo by Ehren Collins with permission of Western Reserve Fire Museum and Education Center.

Rail Road Workers Fighting Fire. Workers from the Collinwood Rail Yard responded to the fire alarm, bringing their own roll of cotton hose. They attached the hose to a hydrant across the street. Photo courtesy of Western Reserve Fire Museum and Education Center.
Appendix 4: The Von Duprin Exit Device

Von Duprin Device Advertised in 1909 Catalog. This entry describes the device and the exit catastrophes it is meant to prevent. It even alludes to a scenario similar to that of the Collinwood Fire. (Sweet’s Indexed Catalogue 592)
Primary Sources

“159 Children are Burned to Death.” *The Cleveland Leader*, 5 March 1908, Vol. 62 No. 65, p. 1.

Cleveland Public Library Archive.

This newspaper column provided a list of the names and addresses of the victims of the Collinwood School Fire, separating the dead, missing, and injured. In retrospect, this list provided me insight into the difficulty of identifying the victims’ bodies. One day after the fire, officials listed 159 children dead, 49 missing, and 3 injured. It would take significant time for officials to identify bodies to reach the ultimate death toll of 172 children, 2 teachers, and 1 neighbor.

“C-3 Fire Diagram.” Western Reserve Fire Museum and Education Center. Photo.

Diagram of fire egress as occurred during fire.


Cleveland Public Library Archive.

The heroic actions of Hugh McIlrath, the son of the Collinwood police chief, who ushered children down the fire escape and re-entered the fire to save others, all while his father looked on were described in this article. This is one of many stories of failed rescue attempts.


Cleveland Public Library Archive.

Describing the meager Collinwood Fire Department, this short article portrayed the troubles they faced before and during the fire, in part contributing to the heavy death toll.

Written in the same year as the fire, this book provided a detailed account of every aspect of the fire, including the daring efforts of the teachers to escape and exactly what went horribly wrong, killing so many innocent children. However, since this book was written immediately following the disaster, it does not include any of the event’s long term impacts. For me, this book offered numerous details, accounting for the bulk of my initial research.


Published in the *Los Angeles Herald* the next day, this article assured the Los Angeles public that schools in Los Angeles were safe. As fire drills were held regularly with extreme precision and coordination, and schools had many exits and the halls are wide, the author was confident schools in Los Angeles would not suffer the same fate as Collinwood.

“Graves of Schoolchildren, Lake View Cemetery.” Western Reserve Historical Society Digital Collections. Photo. Photo of burial plots for the 19 unidentified bodies.

A description of the unthinkable agony of parents watching their children die, this article illustrated the horrific toll on Collinwood families.


Cleveland Public Library Archive.

This story was one of several accounts demonstrating the inability to rescue the children and the extreme loss families faced in the aftermath.

“Little Bodies are Known by Trinkets and Clothes.” *The Cleveland Leader*, 5 March 1908, Vol. 62 No. 65, p. 3. Cleveland Public Library Archive.

Identifying the bodies was a difficult task. This primary article described the process. The article gave personal stories of how the parents recognized their children’s remains from various objects.


*The Detroit Times* recounted the horrific facts of the tragedy the previous day.

“Memorial Garden.” Collinwood School Fire Repository. Photo.

Photo of memorial garden built atop the footprint of the former Lake View School.

“Memorial School.” Collinwood School Fire Repository. Photo.

Photo of Memorial School built in 1911 adjacent to the footprint of the former Lake View School.

“Mrs. Kelly Sees Children Burn.” *The Cleveland Leader*, 5 March 1908, Vol. 62 No. 65, p. 3.

Cleveland Public Library Archive.
Mrs. Walter C. Kelly’s agonizing tale was captured in this article. Mrs. Kelly was crossing Collamer St. when she noticed smoke coming from the schoolhouse. She hurried to the sight immediately where she attempted to save as many children as possible. For me, this article provided a firsthand account of a bystander’s role in the fire.

“Narrow Door Between Two Vestibules Cause of Jam.” *The Cleveland Leader*, 5 March 1908, Vol. 62 No. 65, p. 3. Cleveland Public Library Archive.

Pinpointing the cause of the jam at the rear exit, this article provided background information on the construction and architecture of the school and the how it affected the building’s fire safety.


One of many personal accounts of the horrific details of the fire, this article included personal stories of parents and teachers recounting the horror of watching their children die, while being unable to free them from the flames. This and other similar articles demonstrated the tremendous personal loss of the victims’ families.


Just days after the Collinwood disaster, this article discussed the numerous burials of the school fire victims. It described the steady stream of burials, reaching 50 per day, and announced that the burial of the 19 unidentified bodies would be held on Monday. Included in the burials was those of Fritz Hirter’s three children. Though sentiment against Hirter ran high and police protection was necessary, protesters parted to allow the caskets of his three children to pass.

Published in the *Los Angeles Herald* the next day, this article demonstrated how quickly news of the Collinwood spread fire across the country. However, it did contain several inaccuracies, including the urban legend that the doors opened inward.


Published in a scholarly journal two months after the fire, this article described exactly what fire prevention measures the school was lacking. Had the school been equipped with more fire safety equipment or the city’s standards been higher, many lives would have been saved.


Washington D.C. newspaper article recounts the Collinwood disaster in the next day’s paper. It provides a snapshot of the sentiment surrounding the tragedy. It also debates whether the rear doors opened inward as rumored.


This article describes in vivid detail the events of the fire in those fateful minutes.

Only 24 hours after the fire, this article appeared on the front page of *The Cleveland Leader* questioning whether Cleveland’s children were safe at school and describing an investigation by *The Cleveland Leader* into local school safety. Much of the article is devoted to a description of the condition of specific schools in the Cleveland School District. The president of the Board of Education welcomed the investigation and even suggested that fire drills be conducted in the presence of *The Leader* investigators.


*The Detroit Times* accuses the designers of the Lake View School of focusing on artistic elements over safety.


This catalog of building materials includes an entry advertising the Von Duprin Device.


Ohio Republicans officially offered their condolences for the people of Cleveland and everyone involved in the fire. This article demonstrated the immediate impact of the fire well beyond the Cleveland area.

Upon hearing the fire whistle, a telephone chief and his employees rushed to the scene and attempted to force an exit into the building.


*The Detroit Times* accused Ohio of prioritizing politics and their presidential campaign over the safety of schools.

“Two are Saved by a Teacher.” *The Cleveland Leader*, 5 March 1908, Vol. 62 No. 65, p. 3. Cleveland Public Library Archive.

A brief description of Ethel Rose’s experiences during the fire, this article provided a first-hand account from a teacher’s perspective.

“Volunteers and Railroad FD.” Western Reserve Fire Museum and Education Center. Photo.

Photo of railroad workers fighting the fire with cotton hose from the railyard.

“Witnesses and Firefighters around School.” Western Reserve Historical Society Digital Collections. Photo.

Photo of Collinwood School with firefighter and witnesses looking on.

**Secondary Sources**


This article included an important table showing the status of regulation of school construction in the US, by state, up to 1914. Ohio had passed 24 schoolhouse construction
laws, all passed before 1910, presumably a reaction to the Collinwood School Fire. For me, this article provided evidence of the Collinwood fire’s impact on fire safety regulations and offered leads for further research.

*Smithsonian National Museum of American History.*
A blog featuring twentieth-century items in the Smithsonian Museum related to fire safety, including several ornate doorknobs and panic bars, this article directly connected these items to the Collinwood fire’s long-term impact.

Providing information on the overall events of the Collinwood school fire, why so many were killed, and a brief description of its impact, this website gave further detail on the events of the fire and descriptions of personal stories at the time.

This article provided an update on the progress of fire safety measures 12 years after the Collinwood fire. In it, the reporter gives statistics emphasizing the frequency of school and home fires across the country. He also demonstrated flaws in modern fire safety (1920) through a high school brought to his attention by the President of the Board of Education. For me, this source provided evidence of the slow improvement of fire safety over time and suggested that the Collinwood Fire’s effects were slow to reach other schools, in part
because many Board of Education members were naïve about the poor fire safety measures in their schools and the cost of implementing modern safety measures in schools.


A centennial article, Grant gives an overview of the events of the Collinwood fire. He also provides in-depth description of the conditions of the Collinwood fire from the current perspective of fire prevention.

"In Loving Remembrance: Collinwood School Fire Commemorative Booklet." Pamphlet.


A companion document to the Cleveland Public Library exhibition honoring the centennial anniversary of the Collinwood School fire, this source contained a condensed summary of the facts, investigation, and legacy of the fire, including photos. This document provided me with an overview of different aspects of the fire and its impact.


This infographic provided detailed information on how the events unfolded, individual stories, and impact over the century. This single diagram introduced the “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” of the fire and why some survived and not others.

Nelson, Paul. “Re: Collinwood School Fire Project.” E-mail to historian, Western Reserve Fire Museum and Education Center. 9 April 2019.

This is an email correspondence with a historian who was an expert in the topic. He is currently preparing an upcoming exhibit on the Collinwood School Fire for the Museum.

This scholarly journal article is divided into three sections: Pre-Disaster, Disaster, and Post-Disaster. The Pre-Disaster section provided me with historical context on the history of Collinwood, the architecture of the school, and the state of building codes at the time.


Comprised mostly of pictures and captions, with a small introduction paragraph preceding them, this source showed every aspect of the fire, from the fire department, to diagrams of the schools exits, to pictures before and after the fatal fire. This source helped me better understand why so many were crammed against the door and the damage that the fire did to the building.


The Western Reserve Historical Society’s online resource for history and facts regarding Cleveland area neighborhoods provided facts and brief history of the Collinwood area.

Taylor, Tray. “I had to leave my little child to die.” *American Hauntings.*  
troytaylorbooks.blogspot.com/2013/03/i-had-to-leave-my-little-child-to-die.html, 

This web page gives a description of the events of the fire, focusing on the janitor, Fritz Hirter’s role in the fire. Hirter had done everything he had been trained to do, by ringing
the bell and opening doors, yet the doors were allowing a draft in, increasing the fire’s fury so they were soon closed.

“What was the Weather Like on the Day You were Born?” *Midwestern Regional Weather Center.* Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. https://mrcc.illinois.edu/CLIMATE/birthday/birthday_out2.jsp, Accessed 10 May 2019. This website provides historical weather data. I used this site to verify the weather on March 4, 1908 and that of the days leading up to the fire.