

Family And Neighbors Rally To Aid Of Homeless After Sunderland Fire

Sleeps Downstairs Now Says 'Frightened Mother Nearly Trapped In Fire

One of Two Sisters Who Lost All Describes Horror of \$150,000 Sunderland Blaze

By ALLAN KENT

Sunderland, Jan. 7.—(Staff Special)—It was hardly surprising that Mrs. Howard Brethour, a farmer's wife who lives a couple of miles outside this fire-swept village, had a splitting headache last night.

Both her daughters had lost their homes and most of their possessions in the \$150,000 blaze that demolished five stores and five apartments on Sunderland's main corner yesterday, and one of the girls with a six-month-old baby might easily have been burned to death.

"I wish I could have taken both the girls in to live with me, but there just isn't room," Mrs. Brethour said. "They've both had a rough time today, and I've no business getting this headache now when there's so much work to do."

The younger daughter Kay—Mrs. William Sheldon, 22—brought her husband and her baby Jean home to the little grey farmhouse to live, but the other daughter Helen—Mrs. Douglas Gerrow, 24—is staying in the village with a friend.

PREFERS FIRST FLOOR

"I guess I was selfish when I asked if I could have the room at mother's house," Kay Sheldon said. "But back in town I'd have had to be in a second-floor room, and here I can have the front bedroom on the ground floor. I never want to sleep upstairs anywhere again."

She revealed that for a year she has had a horror of second-story rooms—ever since a small fire broke out in the same restaurant which set off yesterday's blaze. At that time villagers were able to put out the fire, but she was living in the apartment directly above the restaurant then and enough smoke came upstairs to give her a good fright.

"My husband and I have been trying ever since to get a place somewhere else where we can be downstairs, but we haven't been able to find anything," she said. "Three months ago we moved down the hall in the same apartment block, but that was the best we could do."

WERE FAST ASLEEP

When yesterday's fire broke out, Mrs. Sheldon and her baby were both fast asleep. The baby was sick with a cold, and had been awake most of the night, so when her husband went off to work she slipped back into bed.

"I suppose I'd have been burned to death, or suffocated, and my baby too, if Marge Henderson (Mrs. Clayton Henderson who lived next door) hadn't come in and wakened me. She took the baby down the stairs and I got down through the smoke somehow by myself."

As Mrs. Sheldon left, she seized her purse, her rings, a coat, and a blue sweater, but nothing more. She said for some reason she had tried to carry a bunch of the baby's diapers too, but her hands were too full.

Everything else was lost—the furniture and the stove and the crib and carriage, her new washing machine that was a Christmas present, and all her husband's things except the clothes he was wearing.

"Yes, and your nice new rolling pin too," said her mother across the kitchen. Mrs. Brethour was rolling dough for a couple of apple pies, while Aunt Velma from across the road was cutting the apples, and she picked up her own rolling pin and shook it menacingly at her daughter. "You knew I've needed a new one for years," she laughed. "This one is only one handle on it."

WOMEN GIVE AID

Sheldon needn't have worried much about the baby's diapers. The Red Cross women of Sunderland met in emergency session in the afternoon to collect presents for her. She was given a large bundle of the baby things, and promised a crib and a carriage and whatever else the sympathetic women could find.

The branch, headed by Mrs. M. C. Maclean, bought emergency furnishings, clothing and bedding for all the families and ascertained that the homeless had found temporary shelter with relatives.

The weather was cold and snowy outside, and the road to the Brethour farm was very icy, but inside that kitchen it was warm and peaceful, and the air was quickly filled with the tantalizing odor of apple pies baking.

In the front room, in a crib that the mother had used 20 odd years ago when both her girls were at home, the little baby was sleeping. She breathed with some difficulty on account of the cold she had, but she was sleeping soundly.

STAYING WITH FRIEND

It was just as warm and comfortable at the home in Sunderland where Mrs. Brethour's older daughter Helen was staying with her friend, Mrs. Lester Keeler. Cooking was in progress there too, but a kitchenful



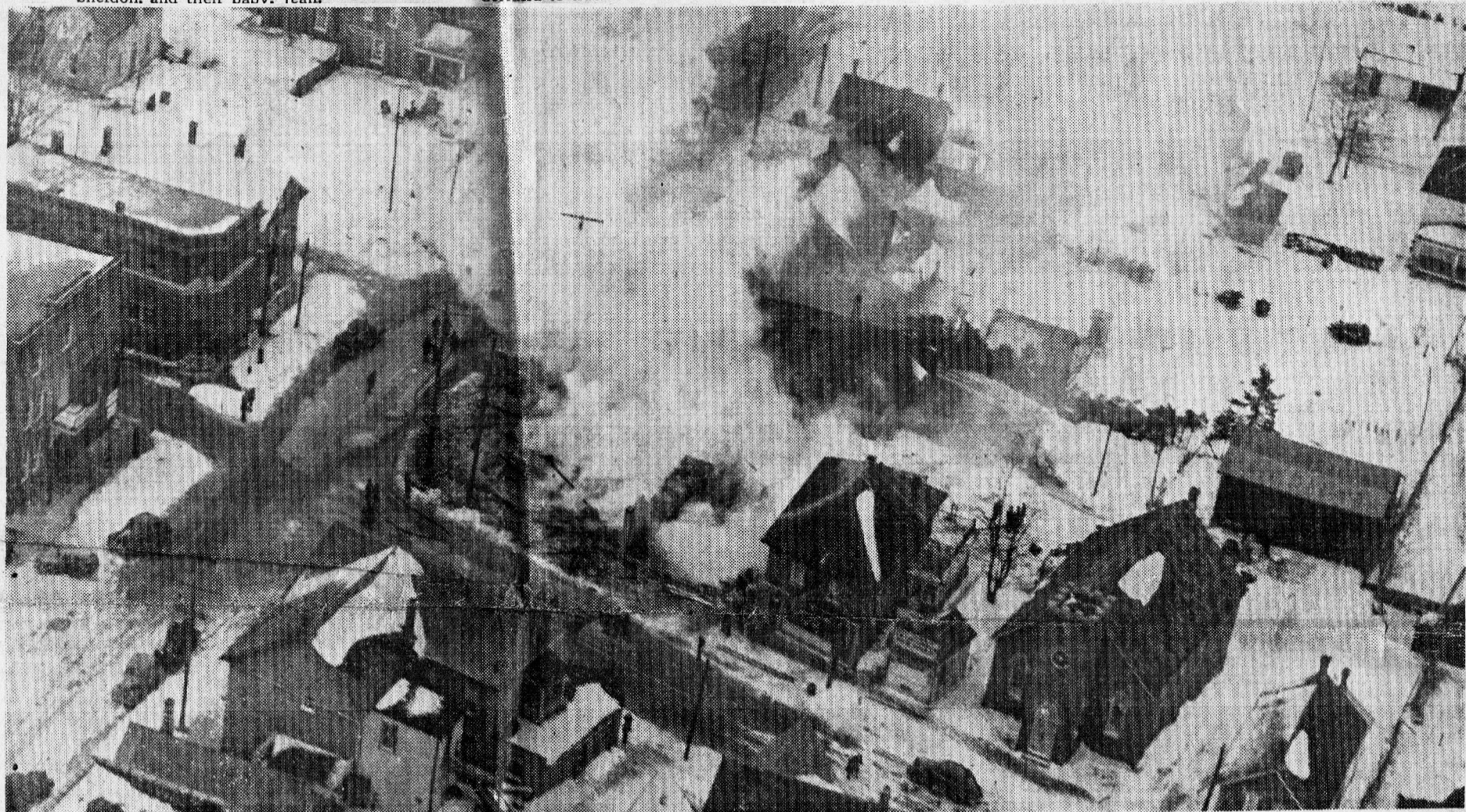
Sunderland's \$150,000 fire yesterday took the home and most of the possessions of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Sheldon, and their baby, Jean.



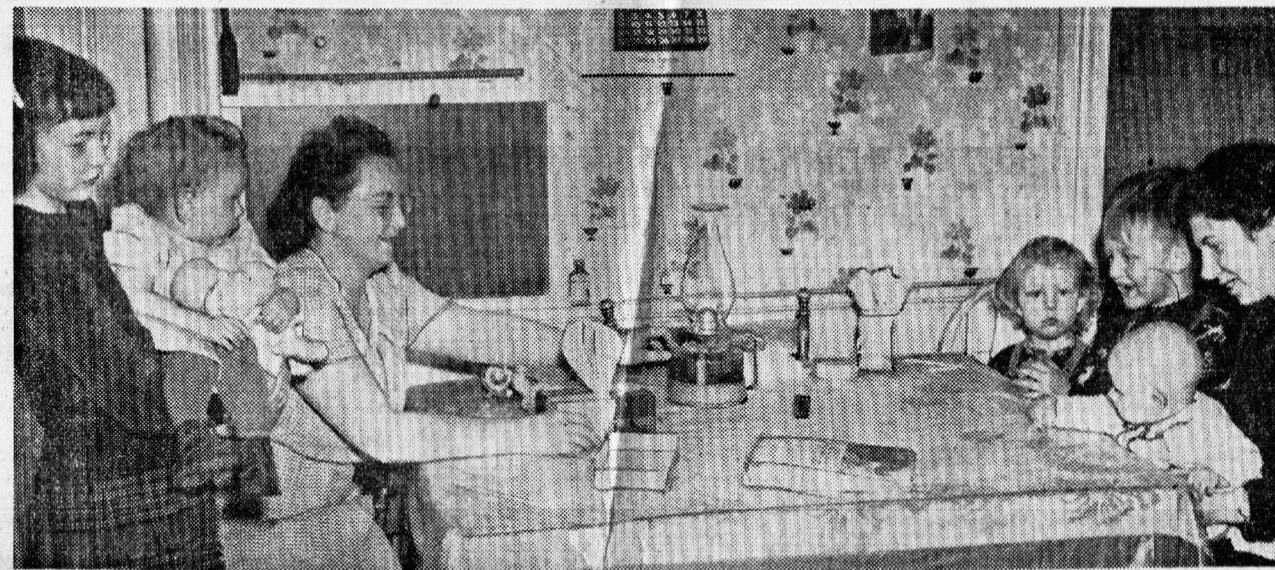
Mrs. Sheldon's mother, Mrs. Howard Brethour, and her aunt, Mrs. Earl Brethour, sort clothing collected by Red Cross women of Sunderland to tide over families who lost their homes in the fire.



Mrs. Douglas Gerrow, Mrs. Sheldon's sister, is also homeless through the fire. Here she holds David, five months, and Mary, 20 months, in home of neighbor.



Destruction of this corner block in the village of Sunderland left 11 persons homeless and resulted in loss of general store, post office and a restaurant.



While her sister and family are living with Mrs. Howard Brethour, Mrs. Douglas Gerrow and her family are made to feel at home by neighbor Mrs. Lester Keeler. Gathered around table are Mrs. Keeler, at lamp; Mrs. Gerrow and baby David, and Faye Keeler, holding Mary. Young visitor Judy Martin and Bobby Keeler complete the group.



Post office fell before the flames but brick wall and sturdy door saved the mail, here shown in pigeon-holes ready for collection.