

MINCH BODY SHOP SCENE OF TRAGEDY

A vicious flash fire which struck without warning, swept through a second floor apartment shortly after noon Wednesday and claimed the life of a 10 month-old child which was sleeping in its crib.

The victim, Patrick Allen Minch, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Minch died of third degree burns about the face, arms and legs, a few minutes after it had been rushed to the Jay County Hospital.

Apparently the fire, which completely gutted the inside of the five-room apartment above the Minch Body Shop on North Meridian street, was caused by an over-heated pan of grease which was cooking on the gas stove in the apartment.

Mrs. Minch told firemen that she had been cooking French fried potatoes, but had left the apartment momentarily to summon another son, Mike, to lunch. Mike, 4 years old, was playing next door.

As she was about to re-enter the apartment, Mrs. Minch saw smoke and flames coming out of the rear of the apartment. She rushed into the Body Shop and telephoned the alarm. Mrs. Minch and other witnesses who were close by said that there was no explosion.

The fireman who took the call said that it took him more than the normal amount of time to discover the location of the blaze because of the hysterical condition of the mother.

Fireman Injured

Jack Jones, who finally rescued the child, reported that as he entered the apartment he could see nothing but dense clouds of black smoke. Wearing a gas mask, he groped his way to the bedroom on the north side of the building and located the baby, which was unconscious in his crib.

Firemen extinguished the worst of the blaze in a few minutes, but it was almost a half an hour before it was completely under control.

The walls of the home were wood panel and their varnished surface offered a highly combustionable path for the flames to travel.