

Chicago Tribune

Thursday, January 8, 1981

Action line

Q—Your recent comments [December 28] on the 1911 change in the Chicago numbering system may have shed some light on my family genealogical research. My great-grandfather, Aaron Mandelbaum, had a furniture store at 61 W. Van Buren St. in the 1871 Edwards Chicago city directory. I had assumed that that part of the city was destroyed by the Chicago Fire on Oct. 8, 1871. Your information leads me to believe that his store was west of the Chicago River and might not have been involved in the fire. Perhaps it was some other fire.

Richard R. Grayson, St. Charles

A—Your suspicions were correct. His business, at what now would be 524 W. Van Buren Street, apparently burned down in a separate fire. It was on Oct. 7, the day before the Chicago Fire. In "Chicago: Its History and Its Builders," J. Seymour Currey wrote: "On the night of Saturday, Oct. 7, there was a large fire which started near the corner of Clinton and Van Buren streets. A high southwest wind was blowing and the flames soon

spread beyond the firemen's control, burning north as far as Adams Street and east to the river. . . . Had the devastation not been followed immediately by a calamity as overwhelming as that which a few hours later fell upon the city, the fire of Saturday night would be remembered as one of the city's great misfortunes." A total of 16 acres were destroyed, principally coal and lumber yards along the river.