

Post 9-11-68

NAACP Asks Probe of Fire In Powhatan

POWHATAN, Va., Sept. 10 (AP)—The NAACP said yesterday it has requested the FBI, State and Powhatan County police to investigate a building fire Sunday night at the Powhatan County fairgrounds.

The two-story frame building was used for meetings of the Powhatan County branch of the NAACP, the Community Action Agency, a Masonic lodge and a 4-H Club. It also contained some exhibits planned for the fair.

The NAACP statement hinted strongly it believes the Ku Klux Klan might have been connected with the blaze, which took place five days before the fair's opening on Sept. 13.

"Activities of the Klan have been commonplace in Powhatan County for a number of years," said the statement issued by Florence Bell, Powhatan NAACP president, and State NAACP executive secretary Lester Banks.

"The Klan held a rally within a mile of the fair site earlier Sunday. It was observed that the fire started from the exterior of the building. Signs announcing the opening of the fair had been torn down and mutilated," the statement said.

The fire raged unchecked when the fire truck of the Powhatan Volunteer Fire Department stalled at the fairgrounds entrance. No estimate of the loss has been made.