

June 17, 1964

Jackson: Jimmy Bolton
gotten from Cornelius Sleade and Curtis Cole (Neshoba County)

Mount Zion Methodist Church was burned last night ^{June 16} (Tuesday) around 9:30pm. The church is located 8 miles east of Philadelphia, Miss. Three people were beaten and are in critical condition in the Neshoba County hospital. The ones beaten are Georgia Rust, Bud Cole, and J.T. Rush. A mass meeting had been held on Tuesday night and steward board meeting. The three beaten and several others had remained after the meetings to lock up the church. The church was burned by white men and those there believe they could recognize them, though they have no names. UPI and AP in Jackson have been contacted. The FBI will be called.
(we do not know the extent of the damage from the fire).

Hattiesburg: Sheila Michaels

At 11am on Tuesday, the Holy Rosary Catholic Church, 902 Babbs st., Hattiesburg was burned. Unknown persons crawled beneath the frame recreation hall behind the church building and set the fire there. The priest, Father John C. Kersten, was out of town. The fire destroyed the inside of the ~~brick~~ structure, but was extinguished by firemen before the roof was destroyed. The cross on top of the recreation hall roof was burned. Apparently someone crawled to the top of the roof and poured kerosene and tar on the cross and lit it in a second fire. The flames from the recreation hall also burned the back of the church. Three window fans were stolen from the recreation hall.

The Holy Rosary Catholic Mission has been used for mass meetings for the voter registration drive in Hattiesburg and Forrest County. Negro business leaders have met there privately to discuss this situation and present requests to the mayor and other officials. A meeting was held at the church last night which ended about 11pm.

Msgr. John T. Martin is the priest at the all-white Sacred Heart Catholic Church.