

Fire Razes Gar Wood Mansion

A three-alarm fire finished Tuesday night what time, the elements and vandals had left of the old Gar Wood mansion on Detroit's riverfront.

The fire began about 10:45 p.m., and by 11:30 a neighbor, Mrs. Dorothy Mitchell, said the vacant, 46-room building on Detroit's far east side was "an inferno."

FIREMEN WERE hampered because they could not drive their rigs over an unsafe bridge spanning the lagoon surrounding the mansion

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and four other homes on Grayhaven Island.

They had to connect their hoses to hydrants at the foot of Lenox and walk across the bridge. Police harbormaster boats then took the hoses across for the firemen.

MRS. MITCHELL, who lives in one of the island's three occupied homes, said the mansion had been vacant for several years.

The last occupants, she said, were a group of rock musicians who were forced out by motorcyclists.

The motocyclists and other vandals, she said, "more or less demolished" the mansion, and high water levels flooded the basement and part of the grounds.

But Mrs. Mitchell said public interest in the mansion has continued.

"There's been a steady stream of sightseers," she said. "There's been just thousands of cars."

The mansion was built by the late Gar Wood Sr., a Detroit industrialist. The mansion and much of the 67-acre Grayhaven subdivision were bought by land developer Emanuel Harris in 1965.

In August 1972, a Wayne County circuit judge ordered the house closed for a year because of alleged narcotics activity there.

Harris later was threatened with a jail term for not closing the place down.