

POOR DOCUMENT

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THE EVENING TIMES AND STAR, ST. JOHN, N. B., MONDAY, AUGUST 8, 1921

Fifty Houses Burned In Westfield District

Fire Does Extensive Damage in Ononette, Hillandale and Lingley—Residents Flee and All Are Safe—Peculiarity of Fire's Action Leaves Some Homes Untouched—Several Narrow Escapes.

Tall chimneys standing amid a mass of ruins, fields strewn with furniture of every description, blackened fields and charred tree stumps—these are the things which greet the traveler to the stricken area of the parish of Westfield today. Where on Saturday morning stood comfortable and in many cases beautiful suburban homes there now lies a mass of ruins, and desolation reigns. With terrifying suddenness came the flames on Saturday afternoon and many of those whose houses lay in their

track and surrounded with well-cropped hedges, the little white Methodist church, the parsonage and barns, including the Rev. Robert Smart's distant, driving home—all these and more fell prey to the conflagration.

By this time P. G. Spencer and the Macaulay estate were the heaviest losers, the former having five houses and seven outbuildings on his list of losses and four houses were listed for R. A. Macaulay. E. R. Machum's home was a heavy loss, too, and in varying degree the families of the other residents were affected.

In the great confusion and excitement of fighting the flames and saving what they could, few people were able to take special notice of the exact progress of the fire—its house-to-house visitation. There are conflicting reports as to the details. However, it is a fact that all along the Hillandale roadway, down past the church and onto the lower straightaway, the fire made rapid and destructive progress. Only when it reached the section upon which the telephone exchange is located were its ravages stayed. By that time most elaborate preparations had been made with wet blankets and roof-sprinkling owing to the added length of

Properties Destroyed

The list of those whose homes were destroyed or partly destroyed is as follows:

In Ononette
W. H. Humphrey.
Rex Gaffer.
Mack Tipper.
Mrs. A. Macaulay.
F. G. Spencer.
F. P. Elkin.
W. E. Golding.
LeBaron Jones.
Duncan Smith.
J. Hoyt.
Mr. Block.
G. Holder.
Total, 12.

At the Cross Roads
Tea House (Miss E. Furlong).
T. C. Ledingham.
Misses Crawford.
S. S. Sinton.
O. G. Branscombe.
George Whiting.
Total, 6.

In Hillandale
R. S. Stephenson.
E. Percy Howard.
Frank L. Peters.
John E. Moore.
E. R. Machum (two houses).
Rev. Robert Smart.
Miss Justice McKeown.
J. Willard Smith.
J. W. Ryan.
J. W. Kirkpatrick.
Mr. Finley.
H. V. McKinnon.
Mrs. Ballantyne.
George Smith.
W. S. Stephenson.
R. L. Skinner.
Total, 16.

In Lingley
Charles Nae.
Dr. G. N. Sancton.
G. McA. Blizard.
William Corbett.
Mrs. S. Corbett.
Joseph Doherty.
Alexander Ross.
G. H. Waterbury.
A. F. Waters.
Steen Lingley.
LeBaron Jones.
W. S. Fisher.
R. M. Magee.
Mrs. Steen.
A. Caulfield.
D. Perkins.
M. Peters.
Albert Belyea.
C. Rutherford.
Total, 19.

Across, Nerepis
W. Gibson.
Total, 1.

Sagwa District
J. Gibson.
Total, 1.

Total number families made homeless, 55.

and rendered good service. For a time a portion of the burning area was closed to motor cars. Telephone communication was cut off by the fire, and persons from the city vainly sought to get into communication with their homes. Numbers of families were separated, and everywhere anxiety as well as fear prevailed. An afternoon of horror was succeeded by a night of despair for those who had no homes to shelter them save those kind friends provided.

The residents of Westfield proper escaped damage but the ravage made by the fire at other places was severe. Such substantial residences as those of Fred P. Elkin, P. G. Spencer, Mrs. Alex. Macaulay, E. R. Machum of St. John and many others were completely destroyed, and the broken chimneys standing here and there, marking the site of once comfortable homes.

The old wooden bridge at Ononette, which was replaced recently by a modern steel one, was completely destroyed and several telephone poles also were burned. Pieces of the cross arms are still hanging from the ends of the bridge.

At the request of Premier Foster a special C. N. R. train was sent over the Valley railway from Fredericton on Saturday in charge of R. Z. Walker. The wires were downed and the train sent through to the river.

The scene was indescribable. When it became clear that nothing could be done some people left the shore in motor boats, some went in cars up the beach, and some were carried up river by the steamer Ononette. Other craft came from the

homeless refugees from that area were at Public Landing. The people across the Nerepis, from Woodman's Point up to the Reach, felt safe, although a very heavy pall of smoke lay over the river, completely shutting out the farther side. By six o'clock, however, when P. G. Spencer's Ononette arrived at Public Landing, refugees were there from below the Nerepis, the density of the smoke had become so great as to be painful to the eyes, and people were growing very nervous. Several families of Jewish people, at the Landing, with a large number of children, became so excited that they hurriedly packed their clothing and asked the captain to hold the Ononette, and rushed on board to seek safety at Bedford or the Cedars, on the other side of the river. The Ononette had already on board a group of refugees from Westfield, where the steamer had great difficulty in finding the wharf, so dense was the smoke.

Approaching the fire zone from the city the first ruins one encounters in the wake of destruction ploughed by the fire are at the south end of the Ononette bridge where all that remains

is a few handfuls of ashes on the sites where on Saturday morning stood the houses of W. H. Humphrey and Rex Gaffer and the house occupied by F. G. Spencer's gardener, Mack Tipper.

Crossing the Bridge.
Crossing the bridge and going up the hill one comes to Ononette where heavy destruction was wrought. Standing like the ruins of an ancient castle are the cobblestone columns of the old Ononette house. The loss of his home is a serious one as Mr. Spencer said yesterday that he could not replace it for \$25,000 and that he had about \$12,000 insurance on it. Altogether Mr. Spencer lost five houses and seven outbuildings. The other four houses were fairly well covered by insurance. The devouring flames in seeming mockery at all consuming power attacked the wind mill in the rear of Mr. Spencer's house and flames shot up through the supports to the air, water tower itself fifty feet in the air.

The third house of Mr. Spencer's was the one which was occupied by J. Hoyt and his wife, both of them old people who made their home there for the last eighteen years. The aged man and his wife were kindly cared for by neighbors.

Two other farm-houses owned by Mr. Spencer were burned, the first being vacant and the second occupied by Robert Block.

Nothing but the fire-place and the isolated chimney remain of Fred P. Elkin's summer home. W. E. Golding, A. B. Gilmour, Duncan Smith, Mrs. Alexander Macquay and Charles Holder all lost their houses.

By heroic work the houses of P. D. McAvity, E. A. Thomas, Mrs. P. Leonard, W. J. McCordick and the Bachelors' Club, belonging to R. Macaulay, all on one side of the road, and on the other side the houses of D. Ledingham, S. S. McAvity, George R. Ewing, G. L. Warwick, Harry Warwick, Charles Warwick, C. P. Humphrey, H. Evans and F. A. Dykeman were all saved.

Ralph Hayes and Percy McAvity worked like Trojans to save Mr. McAvity's home. Whenever a cinder alighted they made haste to extinguish it and in this manner their heroic efforts were rewarded by a home intact when the danger had passed.

To the east of the Ononette bridge and bordering on the river lies Riverdale Park. Here L. E. Rolstad, W. Husain and A. Harrod saved not only their own houses but about ten others in the vicinity by attacking and extinguishing the flames so soon as they observed them.

Five houses in a row, just beyond the Spencer property and extending down into Hillandale were saved by the heroic efforts of E. A. Thomas, F. N. Robertson, Harry Warwick and Frank Gilliland. Mr. Thomas' house and Mr. Gilliland's were the keys to the situation and had either one of them become ignited the whole row might have gone. Messrs. Thomas and Robertson worked on Mr. Thomas' house and Messrs. Warwick and Gilliland on Mr. Gilliland's

house. So choking were the smothering fumes at times that the men had to lie down in the ditch on their faces to escape somewhat their distressing effects. The men worked all night and the dawn rewarded them with the assurance that the danger for the time at least was passed.

Next along the line of march one comes to the junction of the main and the backlands roads where once stood "The Corner Tea House," owned by R. A. Macaulay, and conducted by Miss Elizabeth Furlong. The tea house was burned completely to the ground and so definitive was the destruction that there was scarcely an inch of ashes left surrounding the few ice cream containers which were all that remained of the house and its contents.

On this backlands cross-road an ice-house belonging to R. A. Macaulay was destroyed as were also the home of T. C. Ledingham and the old Crawford home—stead which was occupied by the Misses Peters and S. N. Sinton. A newly constructed summer camp of O. G. Branscombe, which was on the Crawford property, also succumbed to the flames. The astonishing thing about the fire

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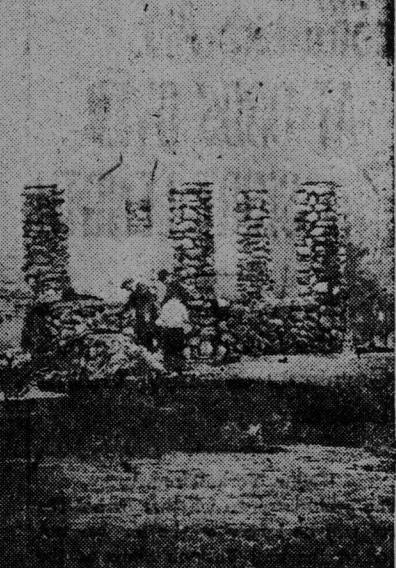
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Blizard. Nothing but two chimneys left in pathetic isolation remained of this house. An automobile belonging to Mr. Corbett, together with some wagons and farming implements, were also burned. Mrs. Sam Corbett, the mother of Mr. Corbett, also lost her home. Mr. Corbett estimated his loss at between \$8,000 and \$9,000 and said that his mother's property had been valued at about \$2,800.

The Macdonald mill, owned by the Macdonald Bros. of Wolford, was also burned. G. H. Waterbury's house is gone. A. F. Watters, a permanent resident of the district, lost all his property, including his house, a large barn, a milk room and a store room. He had only a little insurance and estimated his loss at about \$5,000. A few articles of household furniture littered up in a vacant field across the road were all that Mr. Watters saved from his home.

The house and barn of Steen Lingley a barn of Howard Lingley were destroyed. The permanent home of LeBaron Jones was also burned, as was



—Photo by F. A. McKay, Lugin Studio.

that of A. Caulfield, who conducts the post office here. The summer homes of R. M. Magee and W. S. Fisher went to feed the flames, as did also the houses of Albert Belyea, G. Rutherford and the house of Mrs. Steen, in which G. D. Perkins also lived. The property of the Misses Peters was likewise destroyed. Lingley Station was literally wiped off the map and for about half a mile along this section of the C. P. R. the ties were burned, many of them so badly that they will have to be replaced.

A house belonging to Arthur Crandall and occupied by Joseph Doherty and Alexander Ross was also destroyed.

The Nerepis Bridge.
Flying embers ignited the far end of the old Nerepis bridge and a short space of time the fire had reached the other side. A. Day, a farmer, fought the fire with splendid success for some time single-handed until help arrived. Under the direction of Howard Lingley an effort was made to dynamite the bridge.

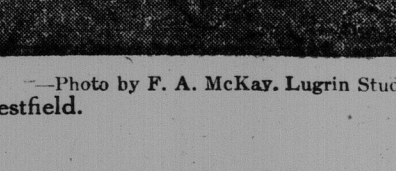
The house of W. Gibson across the Nerepis was burned, as was also that of J. Gibson in the Sagwa district. A pig and a piglet, it was said, perished in the flames in the Lingley region.

**A SERIOUS BLAZE
NEAR LOCH LOMOND**
The woods about seven miles east of the city and to the south of the main highway going to Loch Lomond were on fire at noon on Saturday and all the residents in the vicinity turned out with buckets to fight the flames. Men of the city water and sewerage department, who were at work at Lake Robertson, were pressed into service as fire fighters. Teams were used to haul barrels of water to the scene and after a stiff fight the fire was under control about 7 o'clock Saturday evening. Commissioner Jones and Superintendent Sewell went to the scene of the fire Saturday evening to look after city property.

**FATAL MOTOR CAR
ACCIDENT IN N. S.**
Wolfville, N. S., Aug. 7.—One man dead, another dying, a third seriously injured and two others badly bruised, as a result of an automobile accident here today. The victims are: Dead, Wiley Smith, Kentville (N. S.); injured, Harry Huntley, Kingsport, Norman Campbell, Bruce Carroll and Horace Card, Kentville.

The five were discovered about three o'clock this morning a few hundred yards from the Wolfville post office, near a curve in the road. They had been traveling at too great a speed to make the turn, with serious results.

Mayor Schofield has received word from Captain J. D. D. Stewart, of H. M. S. Cambrian, saying the vessel will arrive here August 15, and will remain until August 25. Captain Stewart's letter was written at Bar Harbor (Me.) on August 4.



—Photo by F. A. McKay, Lugin Studio.



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Ashes of Three Homes at Picturesque Lingley. The Road and path were forced to flee for their lives taking with them only what they could carry. The beauty spot of the St. John river, the resort to which all pointed with justifiable pride, the summer dwelling place of many of St. John's prominent men is today a sacrifice to the goal of fire. What buildings are standing are testimonials to the energy and courage of small bands of fighters who resisted the flames to the last ditch and concentrated their energies upon one house at a time until the danger was thought to be past.

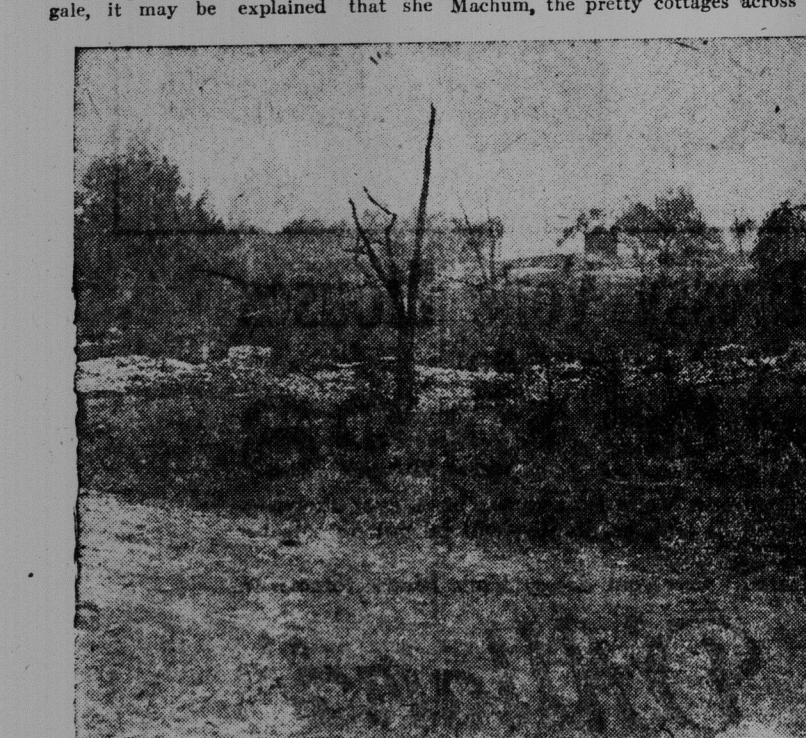
Saturday afternoon was to be a fete day in Westfield. Extensive arrangements had been made to hold an aquatic meet. Two hours after the meet was scheduled to begin scores of houses were a mass of flames and a few minutes later a heap of smoldering ashes. Men with handkerchiefs tied around their mouths, eyes red rimmed and faces blackened were dashing hither and yon endeavoring to do their best to save what little furniture could be salvaged. A strong west wind sprang up early in the afternoon and fanned the fires in the backlands into roaring furnaces. On they swept to the brow of the hill back of the pretty villages and the first impression the residents had of immediate dangers was seeing the woodland at the crest of the hill burst into flames dancing hideously and licking up everything in their path. Many thrilling rescues were effected. The suddenness with which the fire came caused much confusion and excitement and there was little time to do anything.

The alarm spread along the river rapidly and much consternation reigned. From Westfield to South Bay residents began packing their belongings in order to make a hasty exit if necessary. Fortunately for those below the wind held to the south and thus avoided danger to residents of Ingleside, Pandemonia and Grand Bay. Nevertheless much the career of personal effects left those resorts and sought safety in the city.

In retrospect there are several things for which to be thankful. The fire came in the daytime. Had it come at night there would have been still more confusion and probably some loss of life. The fighters would also have been hampered in their efforts. The fire came on Saturday afternoon when the majority of the men were at home to assist in protecting their homes or in saving what few belongings they could gather together. A programme of sports was scheduled for the afternoon and a large number of non-residents were in the villages to give what ever assistance was possible. And there was no loss of life.

Though the fire broke out in several places simultaneously it appears that the first structure to fall a prey to the flames was The Corner House, a tea house almost opposite D. W. Ledingham's residence. The tea house was conducted by Miss Elizabeth Furlong. Take in Life K—Westfield.

Miss Furlong came all alone and to indicate the rapidity with which the flames spread, driven before a regular gale, it may be explained that she



—Photo by F. A. McKay, Lugin Studio.

A Striking Scene Among the Ruins at Hillandale

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