

Ontario Forest Fires of the Past Summer.

Many Towns Threatened and Much Property Destroyed.

The forest fires of the fore part of the past summer will make the season memorable to the residents of Fort William, Port Arthur, Rainy River, Fort Frances and other towns and districts of the western part of New Ontario. Many rural dwellers lost crops, buildings and other possessions, in some cases all they had, and even some of the towns were in peril, help in one instance having to be summoned from Winnipeg.

The fires of the early part of June (noted in the June number of the *CANADIAN FORESTRY JOURNAL*) showed no abatement during the latter part of the month. The weather continued dry, the only rains that came being very light. The force of fire rangers was greatly increased, whole train loads being despatched to some danger points. The losses were confined, according to Hon. Frank Cochrane, almost wholly to limit-holders and settlers, little of the provincial land having been burned over. Many limit-holders suffered severely. According to reports received at the provincial department of Lands, Forests and Mines, Toronto, the fires were almost invariably caused by railways.

The first of July found the village of Lavallee in great danger. At the request of the inhabitants of the village, the town of Fort Frances sent down a fire engine to protect the buildings. The women and children were sent to Fort Frances, the contents of the houses packed in box cars ready for removal, and the men of the place joined the railway section gangs in fighting the fires. The fire was finally fought off.

At Devlin much loss was caused the provincial government of Saskatchewan, which lost a great many telephone poles that were piled there, and to the Canadian Northern railway company, which lost several thousands of poles and ties and a large quantity of cedar poles. The hotel and station were burned, also a sawmill and the schoolhouse.

Throughout the townships of Burris, Dance and Crozier, there were many fires, and the village of Stanley had a narrow escape. Silver Mountain, twenty miles from Fort William, also reported large fires. The village of Emo was also threatened, and several construction camps were consumed.

The Canadian Northern Railway is reported to have lost a hundred boxcars and a number of stations throughout New Ontario, besides many water tanks and other buildings.

Along the line of the Algoma Central railway half a dozen construction camps and large quantities of explosives and supplies were consumed. Residents in O'Connor and Conmee townships, according to returns furnished by forest rangers, lost in the aggregate over \$20,000.

In the Nipigon reserve a good deal of loss was caused by the carelessness of laborers on railway construction. As the flies were troublesome, many 'smudges' were lighted to keep them off, and quite a number of the 'smudges' developed into serious fires.

A telegraphic despatch stated that about a hundred miles west of Cochrane a construction camp on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway was burned on July 10, and the men had to take to the Vallentyne (?) river and stand up to their necks in water to save their lives.

During the third week of the month, Kenora became a fire centre, though the fires did not result very seriously. Fires were reported on the west bank of the Winnipeg river, north of Keewatin, considerable timber being destroyed. On the afternoon of the 30th a settler near Ostersun, who was fighting fire, was unable to check it, and had, with his wife and children, to get into a near-by lake in order to preserve their lives. About a week later, at Keewatin Beach, a summer resort near Kenora, two cottages were destroyed by a fire which caught from the woods, and some children with their nurse had a narrow escape.

The worst fire of the month, however, occurred at Rainy River on July 21 and 22. During the two days the town was in imminent danger. For a distance of two miles on the north side of the town only the main track of the Canadian Northern Railway separated it from a fiercely burning tamarack forest. At four p.m. on July 22 the wind changed and the town was relieved. Assistance was summoned and received from Fort Frances, Beaudette (Minn.), Kenora and Winnipeg. Backfiring was successfully resorted to in order to save the Canadian Northern railway station and roundhouse. The Rat Portage Lumber Co.'s mill was in great peril and was saved only by the efforts of a large number of men. Fortunately a heavy rain came on July 23 and the following days, extinguishing the flames.