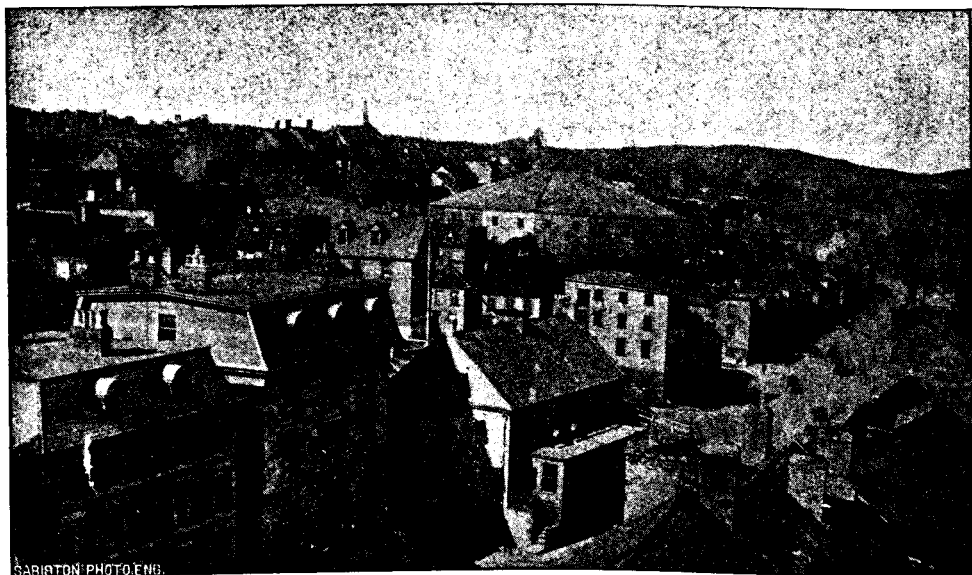




A view in St. John's, before the fire.

The event of the 8th of July last, when the press of this great Dominion announced to its people that St. John's was totally destroyed by fire with a loss of nearly \$20,000,000 worth of property, will ever be a memorable one to thousands of residents in Canada as well as to the stricken people of Newfoundland. The old disaster, that of the great conflagration in 1816, which repeated itself again in 1817 and again in 1846, seemed determined to complete the reduction of the city, rendering homeless thousands of its inhabitants. That day marked another dark period in the history of Newfoundland, and will be remembered for generations to come as were its predecessors. With a good water supply obtained from an almost unlimited source, and with considerable faith in the strength of their Fire Department, few in St. John's felt that the disaster of 1846 would ever be repeated. Such was the feeling of security, that few people paid any attention to the alarm of fire which sounded just before 5 o'clock on the afternoon of Friday, July 8th.

The weather had been extremely hot for some weeks, so much so, says the *St. John's Herald* "that the grass had withered on the high lands, and vegetation was everywhere dried up." Friday, the day of the fire, was one of the hottest days of the season, the thermometer had registered 87° in the shade nearly all the afternoon ;

at the same time a high wind prevailed. About 5 o'clock, the Central fire bell rang out an alarm and in a few moments firemen were hurrying to the scene of the conflagration to find flames issuing from a stable at the junction of the so-called Freshwater and Pennywell Roads. Owing to repairs which were being effected in the main pipes, the water had been turned off, and before a supply could be obtained, the flames had made considerable headway and as a stiff breeze was blowing at the time, the fire spread with incredible rapidity, leaping from house to house, with masses of burning wood and debris blowing hither and thither. The fire began in a few short moments to assume grave proportions, and in less than an hour, the magnitude of the fire began to attract an immense throng of citizens from all parts of the city. Whilst one portion of the flames were rapidly spreading in the east, another was swiftly destroying the buildings in its course towards the south. Though the difficulty had about this time assumed a very serious character, no fears were entertained even then for the safety of the city generally, and it was believed the more substantial stone buildings would withstand the fury of the flames. Consequently the English Cathedral and Gower Street Methodist Church were made the receptacles of large quantities of valuable property. About 6.30 p.m. the magnificent Methodist College buildings were