

GREAT FIRE SWEEPS TORONTO'S BUSINESS SECTION

TORONTO, APRIL 20.—Last night and early this morning, the greatest fire in the history of Toronto, if not of the Dominion, swept through a large section of the wholesale business district. At least thirty mercantile houses have been destroyed, and a rough guess at the loss entailed is \$10,000,000. At six o'clock this morning the flames were under control. The burned area constituted one of the richest sections, commercially, in Canada. The fire, the origin of which is as yet uncertain, started in a block on the north side of Wellington street, west of Bay street. From there the flames leaped to Front street, and for a time threatened to carry everything before it to the shores of the bay. With visions of the Baltimore disaster looming before them, the authorities early wired for assistance, and sections of the fire brigades from London, Hamilton, and Buffalo were dispatched to the scene.

WHOLESALE DISTRICT SWEEP BY FLAMES; FIRE UNDER CONTROL AT 4 O'CLOCK A. M.

Burned Area Covers Thirty Acres—Flames Swept Down Wellington Street From Bay to Yonge and Burns Through to Front Street.

Fire Chief Thompson and His Men, Cut Off by the Flames, Make a Thrilling Escape.

Brigade Handicapped by a Heavy Northwest Wind.

LIST OF FIRMS BURNED OUT

Assistance Sent by Fire Brigades of London, Hamilton and Buffalo.

[From our own Reporter.]

Toronto, Ont., April 20, 9 a.m.—The big fire is still raging, but since 4 o'clock this morning it has been under control, and is confined to the burned district. It has been the greatest fire in the history of the Dominion. The burned area covers about 30 acres, 92 firms have been burned out, and a conservative estimate puts the loss at \$10,000,000. The burned district includes the largest wholesale houses in the city, and many manufacturers, which will throw hundreds of people out of work. This most disastrous conflagration was an exceedingly difficult one to fight, and it is remarkable that not a fatal accident occurred. Chief Thompson had his leg broken and Fireman Gates was injured in the head by a falling telegraph pole.

The fire, which broke out in the warehouse of E. & S. Currie, tie manufacturers, Wellington street west, about 7:45 o'clock last night, spread rapidly, the water pressure being poor and a heavy wind blowing. The firemen, however, battled bravely and were assisted late in the evening by brigades from Hamilton and Buffalo. Early this morning Peterboro and London auxiliaries arrived, but their services were not needed.

LATEST LIST OF LOSSES.

The following is the list of houses burned out with available estimates of losses: E. & S. Currie, ties; Pugsley, Dingman & Co., Toronto Soap Company, loss \$100,000, insurance \$80,000; J. H. Peters & Co., agents; G. W. D. Ross & Co., agents; Robert Taylor, wholesale millinery; A. W. Grasset, agent; Thomas Norman, agent; Dickerson, Rafferty & Co., small wares; Gillespie, Ainsley & Co., hatters; Continental Costume Company, George Bargfeldt & Co., agents; W. R. Brock Company, drygoods, loss on stock \$200,000, insurance \$50,000; Rolph Smith & Co., lithographers; Brown Bros., stationers, loss \$300,000, insurance \$250,000; Gordon MacKay & Co., drygoods, loss \$550,000, insurance \$400,000; Atkinson Bros., fancy goods; Cockburn & Rea, milliners; Merchants Building, John C. Green & Co., millinery; Drake, Hambley & Cockburn, fancy goods; Dignam & Monypenny, woolens, loss \$100,000, insurance \$75,000; Dodd's Medicine Company, C. H. Westwood & Co., notions; Garland Manufacturing Company, clothing; Alcock, Lait & Westwood, notions, loss \$100,000, insurance \$75,000; Ritchie & Ramsay, paper; William Jessop & Sons, steel; R. B. Hutchison & Co., woolens; Andrew Muirhead, paints, loss \$200,000; Davis & Henderson, stationers; E. W. Gilmore & Bro., silverware; International Brokers, Limited; Canada Paint Company, Ontario Neckwear Company, Canada Screw Company, George H. Hees, Son & Co., window shades; Menzie Manufacturing Company, shades; H. F. Sharpe & Co., photo supplies; Crown Hotel, Telegram Building (damaged), Gutta Percha and Rubber Company, loss \$500,000, insurance \$500,000; H. E. Bond

& Co., clothing; Johnston & Sword, neckwear; Scott & Bowne, chemists; Charles Cockshutt & Co., woolens, loss \$300,000, insurance \$250,000; William Croft & Sons, fancy goods; Hach, Brown & Sheridan, clothing; George E. Boulter, rubber goods; D. D. Hawthorne & Co., shoes; J. J. Garthshore, railway supplies; Eckardt Casket Company, loss \$200,000, insurance \$100,000; Barber & Ellis Company, stationers; Tooke Bros., W. E. Sanford Company, clothing; A. A. Allan & Co., hats; Toronto Cap Company, G. Goulding & Sons, millinery; Lowndes Company, clothing; Wyld-Darling Company, drygoods, loss \$500,000, insurance \$400,000; Dominion Fence Company, loss \$125,000, insurance \$75,000; Bunting, Reid & Co., stationers, loss \$200,000, insurance \$150,000; Hendrie Cartage Company, Henderson Roller Bearing Company, R. Simpson's factory, Barber-Ellis Company, Corticelli Silk Company, Carlaw Building, Gault Bros. & Co., drygoods; Empire Cream Separator Company, Garlock Packing Company, Globe Tobacco Company, Nisbett & Auld, drygoods; A. Bradshaw & Son, drygoods; The Samuel Benjamin Company, Mercantile Manufacturing Company, clothing; Toronto Coffee and Spice Company, McLaughlin Flour Mills Company, McClary Stove Company, Toronto Pharmaceutical Company, E. B. Eddy Company, paper manufacturers; Kilgour Bros., stationery; Western Shoe Company, Standard Cap Company, McMahon, Broadfield Company, crockery.

CHIEF THOMPSON'S STORY.

The origin of the fire is unknown, though it is believed to be due to a defective electric wire. It broke out in the second floor of the neckwear factory of E. & S. Currie, 58 and 60 Wellington street west, and from there spread across the road to Brown Bros., stationers, whose fine and comparatively new building ran back to the rear of the Queen's Hotel on Front street. The story of the beginning of the fire was thus told by Chief Thompson, of the fire brigade, after his arrival at the Emergency Hospital: "When I reached the fire flames were issuing from the windows of the second floor of the E. & S. Currie's building and in the rear end of Gale's building. Finding that I was unable to gain entrance into Currie's, I ordered the men to hoist a ladder, in order to reach the fire escape attached to Gillespie, Ainsley & Co.'s building to the east. In the meantime, three lines of hose were pouring water into Currie's from Wellington street; the lane to the east of the building being too narrow to attempt to work in. Finding that the blaze was gaining headway with great rapidity, I attempted to break open the front door of Gillespie's, and after a hard tussle got on the inside with three lines of hose, but the streams did not do much good, as the fire, by this time, had fought its way up through to the third and fourth floors, and was spreading to the buildings to the north of Currie's. I had four men with me, and our next move was to get on the roof of the building.

SURROUNDED BY FLAMES.

The fourth and fifth flats of Gillespie's, which are used by Pugsley & Dingman for storing purposes, were securely locked. Breaking the locks we found the upper portion of the build-

ing enveloped in flames. A cloud of smoke filled the flat, and having no lanterns we were imprisoned and were unable to locate the stairway. The firemen on the outside, throwing streams from the narrow lane-way heard our calls for help. They raised a ladder, which, however, did not reach within ten feet of the window we had broken open to get a breath of air. One

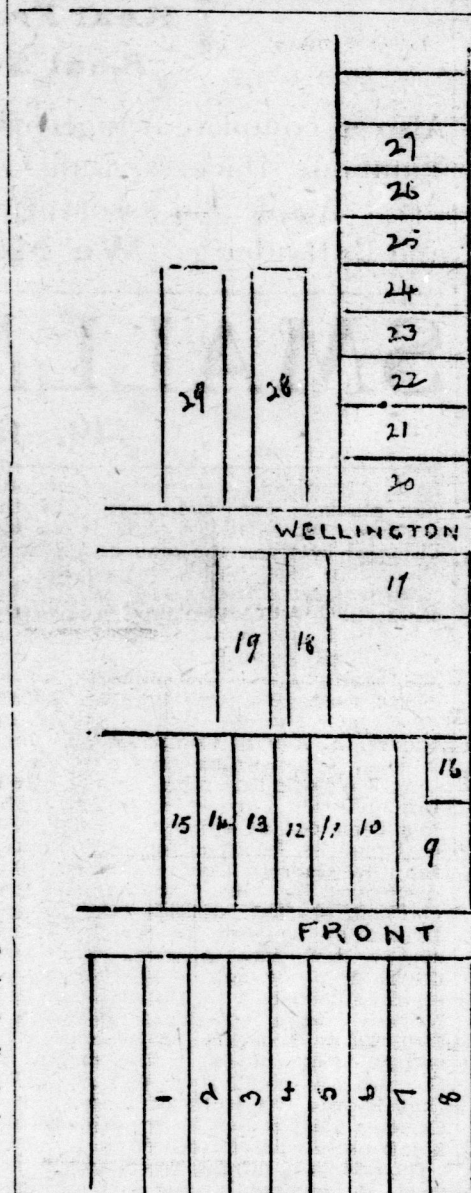


CHART SHOWING DISTRICT SWEEP BY THE FIRE.

of the firemen dropped a rope out of the window and the men below attached a line of hose to it. The nozzle was fastened on the interior of the window sill, and one by one the men descended to the pavement. I was the last to leave the burning structure. In endeavoring to grasp the window sill, my left hand slipped, but I managed to get a firm hold on the hose. I slid down very fast my right leg striking the asphalt pavement first with great force. I thought I escaped injury, but when I put my left foot down I dropped in a helpless position. I was hurriedly carried to the hospital, where it was found that the ligaments of my right ankle had been torn away and several bones broken. By this time an alarm had been made to a general alarm, but the efforts of the firemen were partly fruitless. Owing to the lack of water pressure the great water tower did not work well and the streams were not able to reach the top of the higher buildings. In the big Brock building at the corner of Bay and Wellington streets, the fire started in the top story and the firemen were powerless.

After the fire leaped from the Currie building into the Ainsley building the proportions of the fire became appalling. With their chief disabled at the first, the brigade bravely kept up the fight under the leadership of Deputy-Chief Noble. The men made a gallant rescue of the water tower, which was threatened with destruction. It was a risky task, in view of the tottering appearance of the towering walls and the intense heat, but half a dozen made the run. Firemen Tomlin and Gates taking the pole, and the appliance was saved. In doing it, the men received several shocks of electricity, which flooded the streets, having be-

come charged from the broken wires which were now strewn the ground in all directions, and in themselves constituted a serious menace.

A SEA OF FLAME.

Simultaneous with the breaking out of the fire in the Brown Bros. building, Suckling & Co.'s building, to the east, and adjoining Currie's, caught fire. Then the roof of Dignam & Monypenny's building, on the north-west corner of Bay and Wellington streets, became ignited, necessitating

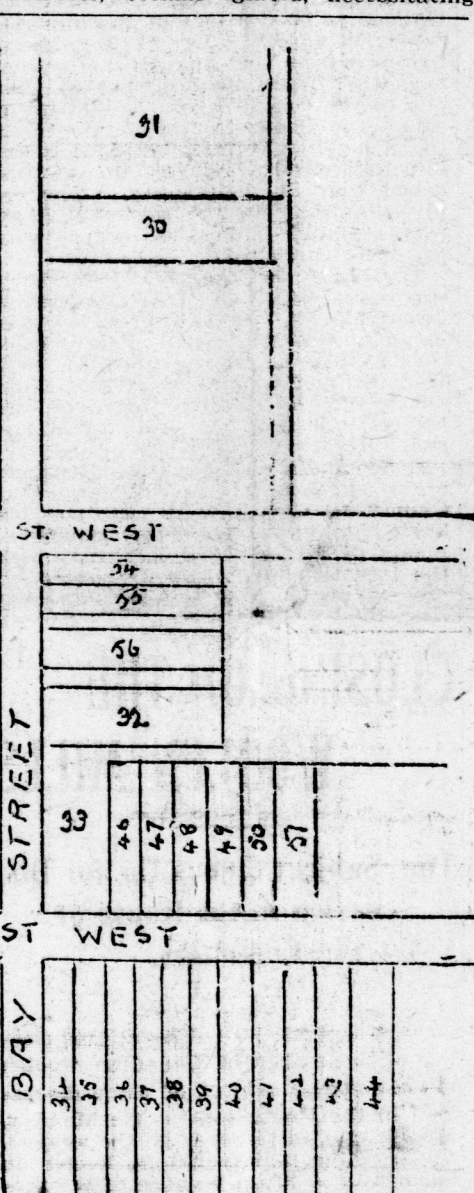


CHART SHOWING DISTRICT SWEEP BY THE FIRE.

a further division of the fire-fighting appliances. In an incredibly short space of time Suckling's, Currie's, Brown's and Dignam & Monypenny's were all a mass of flames and the streams of water seemed but to add fuel to the conflagration. The Goole Manufacturing Company's immense premises on the north side of Wellington, next took fire. The heat being sufficient to start flames in the Office Specialty Company on the east side of Bay street, and next door to the Telegram. By splendid fighting this was saved, as was also the Queen's Hotel, though the fire spread south to the rear of the hotel, and burned Warwick Bros. & Co. By this time the flames had spread to the Brock building, and then across Bay street to the big wholesale house of Wyld, Darling & Co. The fine house of Gordon McKay & Co., who have been established on the corner of Bay and Front streets

WEATHER BULLETIN.

TOMORROW—FAIR AND MILD. Sun rises at 5:27 a.m., sets at 7:07 p.m. Moon rises at 8:55 a.m., sets 11:56 p.m. Toronto, April 19-8 p.m.—The pronounced cold wave from Manitoba has spread over Ontario and Quebec, while in the Maritime Provinces the weather, although somewhat milder, has been unsettled, with falls of rain and sleet. The weather continues quite mild in the Northwest Territories, and these more favorable conditions will now spread eastward. Minimum and maximum temperatures: Dawson, 26-54; Victoria, 46-52; Calgary, 30-48; Medicine Hat, 44-60; Qu'Appelle, 24-40; Winnipeg, 14-42; Port Arthur, 15-32; Toronto, 25-30; Ottawa, 25-32; Montreal, 25-45; Quebec, 22-35; St. John, 24-42; Halifax, 24-45. Wednesday, April 20, 8 a.m. The highest and lowest readings of the thermometer at the observatory, Tuesday, April 19, were: Highest 41, lowest 21.

TORONTO'S BIG FIRE.

Buildings burned, 123. Area covered by fire, thirty acres. Losses of buildings and stock, from 10 to 17 millions. The number of firms burned out, 92. Estimated insurance, \$7,000,000. Time of fire, 10 hours.

Queen's Hotel, the saving of which was a marvelous piece of work and on the north the Telegram building, with the flames also checked at the east by the Bank of Montreal on Front and the Union Bank on Wellington street. The saving of the customs house was the turning point, and at 5 o'clock it was announced that Toronto's most disastrous fire was under control.

A SPLENDID SPECTACLE.

From the tops of large edifices in the central district, the spectacle was the most stupendous and magnificent that it is possible to conceive. This was particularly the case when the Comfort Soap building was burning. Immense masses of clear flame were seen to leap 75 to 100 feet into the air. Then there would be showers of small, burning particles that the heavy draughting carried far up into the air, shining like a vast galaxy of meteors. The sight of men seen through a mist of smoke and steam busy on distant roofs taking preventive measures lent a human significance to the battle. The struggle to save the Telegram building was heroic. It was in the very path of the fire during the early part of the night. Buildings were burned all around it, but fire after fire was extinguished. Particularly striking was the manner in which the office building on the northwest corner of Bay and Wellington streets caught fire. It was thought to have been saved and did not catch fire until long after the buildings north of it were gutted. The firemen were devoting themselves to saving the building on the east side of Bay street, when the hundreds of spectators on distant points of vantage could see little serpentine tongues of flame running over the roof unchecked. Presently there was a great burst of flame and the edifice was doomed. When Brock's warehouse, which had withstood the flames for three hours, took fire the first part to catch was the elevated water tank which made a weird sight in the red sky. Presently the falling cinders set fire to the roof. A unique feature of the spectacle was the brilliant manner in which the far-away buildings were illumined. Looking to the north from high buildings every window in the city glimmered like topazes and rubies.

FLAMES WERE IRRESISTIBLE.

Most Solid Buildings Licked Up by the Fierce Blaze.

The scene presented to the observer from an elevated stand on the Confederation Life building was immense in its wildness and its ferocity. The flames swept onward to the water front, carrying everything with them. While the firemen were fighting the flames on Front street, other streams were being poured on the buildings on Bay and Wellington streets. By 1 o'clock the fire had worked its way up the rear of the east side of Bay street from the Barber & Ellis Company to the Wyld-Darling Company at Bay and Wellington. The firemen made a brave effort to keep the flames from spreading to the Wyld-Darling building, but in vain. Following an explosion, the front of the structure occupied by the M. & L. Samuel Benjamin and Buntin, Reid & Co. crashed to the ground, taking with it the telegraph poles and wires on Bay and Wellington street. A falling arm of a telegraph pole on which the wires are attached struck Fireman Gates, of the Bay street section, on the head, inflicting a severe scalp wound. Several of his comrades, who were throwing a stream of water into the Goulding building, were knocked down, and it was with great difficulty that they were extricated from the network of wires which came down with the crash from the Buntin-Reid warehouse. The water tower which had just been moved to Bay and Wellington streets, barely escaped destruction. The Calaw building on Wellington street, and the Corticelli Silk Company's warehouse adjoining, caught fire at 1:45 a.m. When the blaze reached the northeast end of the Wyld-Darling structure, the firemen directed their attention to the Nisbett & Auld building in hopes of saving that structure from destruction. At 2 o'clock every building on Front street from the customs house at the corner of Yonge across Bay street to Lorne street was fiercely burning.

It was fortunate that the wind carried the flames towards the bay, and it was only this that saved the fire from spreading up Yonge street and north of Wellington, and in fact from setting the whole city on fire. At 3:30 o'clock the handsome Board of Trade building, customs house and Bank of Montreal, were in imminent danger. Next to the Bank of Montreal on the north side of Front street is the Minerva Building, which was gallantly saved by the firemen fighting it on the very roof. At the same time the wharves and buildings there were threatened, but were fortunately saved. The fight to save the customs house was one of the most desperate in the whole fire. The McMahon Block, shot up volumes of flames, which the strong wind drove with terrific fury against the southeast corner of the customs house. For over two hours two streams were kept playing on the building, and for a time it seemed that the efforts of the dauntless firemen would prove of no avail.

The water converted into steam dashed in the men's faces, but still they held on. At 4:10 o'clock the wall gave away, and to the crowd it seemed that all the men had perished. Fortunately Policeman Dent saw the wall giving way, gave the alarm and all the men got away in safety. Fireman Nicholas Sweetman was slightly injured, but otherwise all escaped unscathed.

On the west boundary of the burned district was Lorne street and

in their terrible whirlings, while building after building fell a prey to the all-devouring element. The action of the flames was most remarkable when resisted for a time by a solid building like that of the W. R. Brock Company. They did not halt in their furious rush, but seemed to run round the structure and redoubled their rage whilst attacking the edifices beyond. It was remarkable how swiftly the flames spread, despite the gallant and strenuous efforts of the firemen, who held their post till the very last moment, and had barely time to evade the falling walls.

HEAT WAS INTENSE.

Fire-Fighters Driven Back and Overcome On Bay Street.

About 1 o'clock the fire between Wellington and Front streets on Bay street seemed to take a new lease of life. The entire street was wrapped in flames, and tons of water that poured in torrents on it had no visible effect whatever. The Canada Velling Company, immediately north of Gordon-Mackay's, burned most fiercely, and the firemen playing the hose upon it were repeatedly driven back on account of the intense heat. Several of them were overcome by smoke and fell to the pavement, but a few moments of the fresh air revived them, and they were able to resume their duties.

THE FIRE INSURANCE.

Fearful That Some Companies May Be Badly Crippled.

An exact or even approximate estimate of the total fire losses it was impossible to obtain from officers of the fire insurance companies last night, as they did not know the extent of the devastation nor the amount of risks carried by each other, but the total damage was enormous and several leading insurance men placed it at eight or nine millions. Even twelve million dollars was not considered an extravagant statement to make regarding the values of the property that was destroyed. Every insurance company conducting business in the city was a heavy loser, and it is almost certain that many will sustain crippling blows, from which they will take all the resources of far-seeing and enterprising business men to pilot them safely over. The district covered by the fire was considered the best risk in the country, for any fire insurance company to take, hence the property was written up to almost its full value in many instances. What will probably increase the estimates is the fact that a number of the manufacturing establishments burned had recently put in new machinery and in some cases whole plants. It is highly probable that much of this machinery will be worth anything after being heated to such a great extent.

London Sent a Contingent To Fight the Toronto Fire

City Was Called Upon for Help and Responded With Ten Men—Went on a Special Train, but Services Were Not Needed, the Fire Being Under Control—Fast Run Made.

At 11:10 o'clock last night Chief Clark, of the local fire department, received the telegraphic message from Mayor Uruhart, of Toronto, asking for assistance. The chief immediately notified Mayor Beck, who instructed him to take ten men from the different stations, the steam engine and the hose wagon loaded with a thousand feet of hose. Arrangements were at once made with the Grand Trunk for a special train, and in less than ten minutes the firemen were at the Wellington street sheds, with No. 3 and No. 2 departments at the Central station, but it was nearly 1 o'clock before the flat cars were ready.

Assisted by citizens, among whom was Ald. Judd, the firemen got the wagon and heavy engine loaded in quick time. Then they were fastened in their places. When they were considered safe the train moved up the siding. A caboose was attached, and at London East orders were given for a through right of way, as the second section of No. 8, which carried the special signals.

The crew that had charge of the train were J. Nolan, conductor; H. Bourne and A. McCallum, brakemen; Harry McInnis, driver, and A. Johnston, fireman. The crew were most obliging, and did all in their power to make the passengers comfortable, even providing refreshments.

An exceedingly fast run was made, and the train flew through all yards, arriving at the Union Station, Toronto, shortly after daybreak. Water was taken at Paris, the train only stopping for a few moments at Harrisburg and Hamilton. The chief anxiety of the trip was the security of the fire engine, as the speed down grades, and around curves was very great.

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HEAVY FIGHTING IN FAR EAST

Battle Said To Be Raging at Port Arthur—Japs at New Chwang.

London, April 20, 2:02 p.m.—A dispatch to the Central News from St. Petersburg says it is reported that a Japanese force has landed near New Chwang.

The hull in news from the far east continues, there being nothing new this morning beyond a vague report from the Standard's correspondent at Che Foo that heavy fighting was heard last night and that searchlights were observed working. None of the numerous reports of Japanese landings is yet verified.

GREAT AVALANCHE BURIES MINERS

One Hundred Men Swept to Death Near Turin, Italy.

Turin, Italy, April 20.—About 100 miners have been buried by an immense avalanche near the village of Pragelato. A violent storm is sweeping over that locality and it is feared that other avalanches may fall, but the whole population of the village and a detachment of 40 soldiers have gone to the scene of the disaster, hoping to save some of the buried miners.

NOT AS COLD.

Last night was not as cold as the preceding night, the thermometer at the local observatory only dropping to 21 degrees above zero, or one degree below the freezing point.