

The Great Miramichi Fire Graphically Described

Clergyman Who Was an Eye Witness of the Terrible Holocaust Tells of the Swift and Awful Destruction Wrought By the Flames--Property Valued at \$1,000,000 was Destroyed and 169 Lives Were Lost.

(Truro Daily News.)

In view of the recent destructive fire that almost completely wiped out the town of Campbellton in our sister province, in the spring of 1910, and called forth substantial expressions of sympathy from so many of our provincial and Canadian towns and villages, the News now brings before its readers some interesting reminiscences of that former and greater catastrophe of 1825, that overwhelmed the whole northern part of New Brunswick, and is known as the Miramichi fire. Since the historian who has given us the most remarkable account of this calamity, to which he was an eye witness, was associated with the early history of Truro, we will make some reference to him, before giving a partial description of the fire itself.

Robert Cooney, a young Irishman, from Dublin, preparing

FOR THE PRIESTHOOD,

was employed in a barrister's office at Miramichi, during the summer of 1825. We think we are correct in saying that shortly after the fire, in the same year, he published a descriptive pamphlet at Halifax, and that a few years later, when he wrote and published his "History of New Brunswick and Gaspe," he embodied this pamphlet, descriptive of the Great Fire, in his history. However he had become disaffected towards the religion of his fathers, and while at Halifax, arranging for the publication of his history, he came under the influence of Protestant teachings, partly through Methodist revival services then being held in the city, and became a convert to Protestantism. He subsequently entered the Methodist ministry, and labored throughout the Maritime Provinces and Upper Canada.

The preachers of those days had to rough it in many ways, and while at Murray Harbor, P. E. I., in 1834, he narrowly escaped drowning by breaking through the ice, while trying to cross the harbor.

During the rebellious times in Upper Canada in 1837, he was removed to Odelltown, Que., where

"he saw his church turned into a fort as a strategic point in one of the severest fights of the rebellion, and found its doors, pews and pulpits perforated by the life-giving bullets, and its blood of the loyal Canadian militia."

This church was occupied by 200 rebel militia, and it was in this fray that Robert Nelson, who had just issued a proclamation of "Declaration of Independence," signed by himself as President of

NEW REPUBLIC

of Lower Canada, met his defeat, and was forced to flee across the United States border.

As may be surmised, Mr. Cooney's history of New Brunswick, contains a most vivid account of the terrible fire which swept with such devastating fury over so great an extent of Northern New Brunswick, and of which fearful calamity he was

AN EYE WITNESS

He gives harrowing descriptions of the swift and awful destruction that so unexpectedly and suddenly transformed a happy and flourishing countryside into desolate and blackened ruins; carrying death alike to the inhabitants, their cattle, and the wild beasts, birds, reptiles and fishes; destroying the crops, verdure, forests, houses, mills, warehouses, churches, and even the shipping in the stream.

Mr. Cooney was at the time residing within a mile of Newcastle. He says: "If my opinion be entitled to any consideration, this is its candid expression—a greater calamity than the fire, which happened in Miramichi, never befell any forest country, and has been rarely excelled in the annals of any other; and the general character of the scene was such, that all it required to complete a picture of the

GENERAL JUDGMENT, was the blast of the trumpet, the voice of the Archangel and the resurrection of the dead."

We shall here reproduce part of his description of the fire, necessarily omitting considerable in order to bring it within the limits of the space

at our disposal, commencing with his beautiful picture of their happy rural conditions before the tragic event:

"In this year, (1825) we were visited by a calamity, which making us popular by our misery, introduced us to a sorrowful intimacy with most of the civilized nations of the earth."

A few months before that visitation our trade was looking up and brightening were our prospects. The bosom of our river sustained a large fleet loaded with the productions of many climes; the sloping banks were anamelled with the beauties of expanding vegetation, and the end of each flowery belt was fringed by the luxuriant foliage of the surrounding forest. Our wharfs and warehouses groaned under the weight of the wealth they contained; the market was well stocked with its staple commodity; ships clustered on our sea-boards; commerce flourished in our towns; and plenty filled our hamlets. Health sat on every cheek, gladness beamed in every eye. Out late excellent Governor, too

SIR HOWARD DOUGLAS

came to fill the cup of our pleasures by favoring us with his presence."

In short we enjoyed all the blessings of a jubilee, without enduring any of the fatigues of it. *** Heaven seemed to smile upon us; and, as it to acknowledge its benignity, by an act that would hallow our thanksgiving and purchase future blessings the foundation of a Presbyterian church, was personally laid at Newcastle by Sir Howard himself. Every heart throbbed with pleasure, present enjoyment inspired coeval happiness; and future prospects opened a pleasant way before us."

"But appearances are often deceitful. *** In the midst of our enjoyments the cause of our approaching calamity had already commenced its operations."

The summer of 1825 was unusually warm and dry, scarcely any rain had fallen, and the forests were rendered more than naturally combustible. Very extensive fires were observed along the South side of the Baie des Chaleurs, in Gaspe, Richibucto and in Westmorland. On the sixth of October, the fire was evidently approximating to us; fitful blazes and flashes were observed to issue from different parts of the woods at the rear of Newcastle, in the vicinity of Douglastown and Moorfield; and along the banks of the Bartibog. Many also heard the crackling of falling trees and shrivelled branches; while a hoarse rumbling noise, not unlike the rushing distant thunder, and divided by pauses, like the intermittent discharges of artillery, were distinct and audible.

"On the seventh the heat increased to such a degree, and became so very oppressive that many complained of its enervating effects. At three o'clock the heat became tormenting; sultry. There was not a single breath of air. *** An irresistible lassitude seized the people, and a sleepifying dullness seemed to pervade every place but the woods which now trembled and rustled and shook with an incessant and thrilling noise of explosions rapidly following each other, and mingling their reports a discordant variety of loud and boisterous sounds. The whole country was encircled by a fiery zone.

"While the sky was absolutely blackened by the huge clouds of smoke at times illuminated by the spires of flames piercing to the sky, and showers of flaming brands, leaves, ashes and cinders falling continuously, these palpable indications of the approaching rain were unheeded in spite of the timely admonitions which Mr. Wright and others endeavored to propagate.

"About nine o'clock, a succession of loud and appalling roars thundered through the woods.

PEAL AFTER PEAL

crash after crash, came bellowing the sentence of destruction. Every succeeding shock created fresh alarm; every clap came loaded with its own destructive energy. Nothing could impede their progress; they removed every obstacle by the desolation they occasioned. Several hundred miles

of prostrate forests and smitten woods marked their devastating way. They came rushing with awful violence, devouring at every step, and hewing a frightful avenue to the spot where their fury was to be consummated."

"The earth seemed to stagger as if it had reeled from its ancient foundations. The harmony of creation appeared to have been deranged; and about to revert to its original class. Earth, Air, Sky and Sea;

ALL VISIBLE CREATION

seemed to conspire against man; and to totter under the weight of some dreadful commission they were charged to execute. The river, tortured with violence by the hurricane, foamed with rage, and flung its boiling spray upon the land. The thunder pealed along the vault of Heaven; the lightning rent the firmament in pieces. For a moment, and all was still, a deep and awful silence resigned over everything. All nature appeared to be hushed into dumbness;—when suddenly a lengthened and sullen roar came booming through the forest and driving a thousand massive and devouring flames before it. Then Newcastle and Douglastown, and the whole Northern side of the river, extending from Bartibog to the Nashwaak, a distance of more than one hundred miles in length, became enveloped in an immense sheet of flame, that spread over nearly six thousand square miles."

"That a stranger may form a faint idea of the desolation and misery no pen can describe, he must picture to himself a large and rapid river, thickly settled for 100 miles or more, on both sides of it. He must also fancy four thriving towns, two on each side of this river, and then reflect that these towns and settlements

WERE ALL COMPOSED

of wooden houses, stores, stables and barns; that these barns and stables were filled with the crops; and that the arrival of the fall importations had stocked the warehouses and stores with spirits, powder and a variety of combustible articles, as well as with the necessary supplies for the approaching winter. He must then remember that the cultivated or settled part of the river is but a long narrow strip, about a quarter of a mile wide, and lying between the river, and almost interminable forests, and stretching along the very edge of its precincts; and all around it.

Extending his conception he will see these forests thickly expanding over more than 6,000 square miles, and absolutely parched into tinder by the protracted heat of a long summer and by fires that had streamed through almost every part of them. Let him then animate the picture by scattering countless tribes of wild animals; hundreds of domestic ones, and even thousands of men through the interior. Having done all this he will have before him a feeble description of the extent, features and general circumstances of the country, which on the night I have mentioned, was suddenly buried in fire."

"What shall we say of the tremendous howling of the storm, dashing broken and burning trees, scorching and flaming houses through the air. What of the boiling surges of the river and the different tributaries, flinging their maddened foam all around them, and smashing everything that came within their fury. What of the indescribable confusion on board of 150 large vessels immovably exposed to danger; many of them frequently on fire; some burning, and others burned. O, God! merciful and just, how shuddering were the frantic cries, the wild expressions of horror, and the despairing groans of

HUNDREDS UPON HUNDREDS

of poor houseless creatures, flying from their smoking habitations, they knew not whither; and mingling the thrilling echoes of their anguish, with the yells, roarings and howlings of wild beasts and domestic animals, perishing by fire and suffocation. ***

"What tongue can express the intensity of anguish which must have

wrung the bursting hearts of men, and women, running half naked; and in wild disorder, deploring their loss, and anticipating their end. Of children looking for their parents; parents looking for their children; and mothers encumbered with their infants, urging their way through lakes of fire and volumes of smoke."

"What shall we say of the inconceivably awful and terrific scene, that now presents itself? Who shall attempt to describe the condition of a country, tortured and agonized by a hurricane, on every blast of which a messenger

OF VENGEANCE.

seemed to ride. Unpardonably vain would that man be—exceedingly high should he stand in his own esteem, who would for a moment think himself capable of describing the situation of a country, overwhelmed by a conflagration, whose every blast resembled the emissions of hell, and whose every billow appeared to sustain a demon."

"What eye can follow the impetuous course of a raging and consuming fire sweeping over forests, towns, villages, and hamlets, rooting up trees, ploughing the earth and destroying everything."

"The morning of the 8th came, but it was dull, dreary and comfortless; nor did the languidly rising sun bring any relief to a wretched and withering people. *** A more ghastly, or a more revolting picture of human misery, than the country now exhibited, cannot be well imagined. The whole district of cultivated land was shrouded in the

AGONIZING MEMORIALS

of some dreadfully deforming havoc. Of all its former comeliness, not a single vestige of a single lineament remained. *** Of the towns, villages and hamlets, that lately enlivened it, nothing was now visible, but embers, ashes and smoke. *** Nothing broke upon the ear but the accents of distress; the eye saw nothing except ruin and desolation and death. Newcastle, but yesterday a flourishing town, full of trade and spirit, and containing nearly 10,000 inhabitants, was now a smoking ruin, and nearly one-third of its population, reduced to the same miserable condition. Of the 260 houses that composed the town, not one remained, and of the 10,000 inhabitants, not one was left. More than 100 square miles of a once fertile and now exhibited one cheerless panorama of desolation and despair. Every thickly settled place resembled ravaged burial grounds. Thousands of wild beasts

HAD PERISHED

in the woods; and from their recent carcasses issued streams of effluvia and stench that formed contagious domes over the dismantled settlements. Domestic animals of all kinds lay dead and dying, myriads of trout, salmon, bass and other fish, poisoned by the alkali formed by the ashes precipitated into the river, now lay dead, floundering and gasping on the scorched shores and beaches; countless variety of wild

FOWL AND REPTILES.

shared a similar fate. Human bodies some with bowels protruding, others with the flesh all consumed, and the blackened skeletons smoking, headless trunks and others reduced to ashes; they died by fire, and were buried unhouseled and unanointed."

"As the anniversary of this calamity is religiously commemorated, and as everything connected with it is 'Written in hearts that have suffered too much to forget,' any further remarks from me would be like going to the waters of Babylon to weep. Be it enough then to add, that every

AMELOPATING MEASURE, which prudence and sympathy would suggest were here promptly adopted and liberally dispensed, and that the paternal Governor, who had witnessed our prosperity, came to alleviate our misery."

"Never were the tender offices of charity more indispensably necessary than on this occasion; and never, perhaps, were they more promptly and seasonably executed. Never was sympathy more active—never did human benevolence appear more amiable. ***

"We learn that the news of the disaster reached Halifax Saturday, Oct. 15, eight days after the event, and on the following day, Sunday, a public meeting was held and twelve hundred pounds subscribed, followed on Monday by £1,000 from the Province. (Continued on page three.)

GUIDE FOR TRAVELLER

INTERCOLONIAL

DEPARTURES.

No. 303—Mixed for Loggieville, 5.45.
No. 317—Suburban for Gibson and Marysville, 6.15.
No. 321—Suburban for Gibson and Marysville, 11.15.
No. 323—Suburban for Gibson and Marysville, 16.20.
No. 301—Express for Loggieville, Chatham, Campbellton, Quebec, Montreal, etc., 18.30.
No. 327—Suburban for Gibson and Marysville, 18.40.
No. 329—Suburban for Gibson and Marysville, 22.00.

ARRIVALS

No. 306—Suburban from Marysville 7.45.
No. 302—Express from Loggieville, Chatham Junction, 13.20.
No. 308—Suburban from Marysville 13.30.
No. 304—Mixed from Loggieville and Chatham Junction, 18.15.
No. 310—Suburban from Marysville 19.15.
No. 316—Suburban from Marysville 21.55.

CANADIAN PACIFIC

DEPARTURES.

6:20 a. m.—Express for St. John, Portland, Boston, Woodstock, etc.
8:15 a. m.—Mixed for Woodstock and points North. Leaves St. Marys at 8:35.
9:45 a. m.—Express for St. John and points east.
4:30 p. m.—Mixed for Woodstock, La. Gibson branch. (Daily.)
5:45 p. m.—Express for Montreal, St. Boston, Woodstock, St. Stephen, etc.
9:00 p. m.—Express for St. John and points east.

ARRIVALS.

9:10 a. m.—Express from St. John and points east.
10:30 a. m.—Express from Woodstock (Daily).
11:30 a. m.—Express from Montreal and St. John.
1:30 p. m.—Express from Woodstock, etc.
3:30 p. m.—Express from St. John and points east.
5:30 p. m.—Express from St. John and points east.

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Stage line for Meductic and point on western side of river leaves the post office Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 7:30 a.m.



SEALED TENDERS addressed to the undersigned, and endorsed "Tender for Extension to Breakwater at Lorneville, N. B.," will be received at this office until 4.00 p. m., on Wednesday, November 23, 1910, for the construction of an Extension to the Breakwater at Lorneville, Reed's Point, St. John County, N. B.

Plans, specification and form of contract can be seen and forms of tender obtained at this Department and at the offices of E. T. P. Shewen, Esq., District Engineer, St. John, N.B.; Geoffrey Stead, Esq., District Engineer, Chatham, N.B., and on application to the Postmaster at Lorneville, N. B.

Persons tendering are notified that tenders will not be considered unless made on the printed forms supplied and signed with their actual signatures, stating their occupations and places of residence. In the case of firms, the actual signature, the nature of the occupation, and place of residence of each member of the firm must be given.

Each tender must be accompanied by an accepted cheque on a chartered bank, payable to the order of the Honourable the Minister of Public Works, for the sum of two thousand eight hundred (\$2,800.00) dollars, which will be forfeited if the person tendering decline to enter into a contract when called upon to do so, or fail to complete the work contracted for. If the tender is not accepted the cheque will be returned.

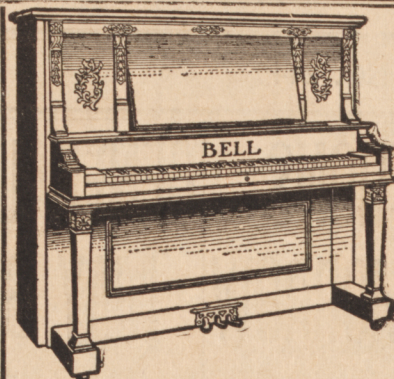
The Department does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.

By order,
R. C. DESROCHERS,
Secretary,
Department of Public Works,
Ottawa, October 25, 1910.
Newspapers will not be paid for this advertisement if they insert it without authority from the Department.

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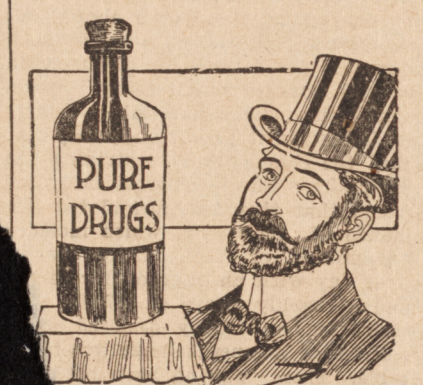
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SEALED TENDERS addressed to the undersigned, and endorsed, "Tender for Warehouses, St. John Harbour, N. B.," will be received at this office until 4.00 p. m., on Monday, October 24, 1910 for the construction of Warehouse No. 7 and the extension of Warehouse No. 6.

Plans, specification and form of contract can be seen and forms of tender obtained at this Department and at the offices of J. K. Stummell, Esq., District Engineer, St. John, N.B., and Geoffrey Stead, Esq., District Engineer, Chatham, N.B.

Persons tendering are notified that tenders will not be considered unless made on the printed forms supplied, and signed with their actual signatures, stating their occupations and places of residence. In the case of firms, the actual signature, the nature of the occupation, and place of residence of each member of the firm must be given.

Each tender must be accompanied by an accepted cheque on a chartered bank, payable to the order of the Honourable the Minister of Public Works, for the sum of three thousand (\$3,000.00) dollars, which will be forfeited if the person tendering decline to enter into a contract when called upon to do so, or fail to complete the work contracted for. If the tender is not accepted the cheque will be returned.

The Department does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.
By order,
R. C. DESROCHERS,
Secretary,
Department of Public Works,
Ottawa, September 25, 1910.
Newspapers will not be paid for this advertisement if they insert it without authority from the Department.

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