

THE DAILY HERALD is published every evening, (Sunday excepted) by THE HERALD PRINTING AND PUBLISHING COMPANY, (Ltd.) at Fredericton, New Brunswick. Subscription, \$4.00 per annum.

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DAILY HERALD.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1906.

THE MONCTON DISASTER.

The destruction of the Intercolonial railway machine shops at Moncton, by the disastrous fire of Saturday night, would be regarded in a much more serious light, were it not for the prompt and reassuring words of Hon. H. R. Emmerson, who declares that temporary works, to be followed by permanent facilities, will be at once provided to replace the buildings and plant, which fell a prey to the relentless flames.

Over 1,000 men are employed in the Moncton shops and that city largely depends on the money thus distributed. Indeed it has been built up and owes its present prosperity largely to the fact that it is the headquarters of the Intercolonial, but the fire will be only a temporary check. It is hoped that the men who have been so suddenly thrown out of employment, will find work in clearing up the debris, and later in the construction of the temporary and permanent shops.

Mr. Emmerson has been doing great work for the Intercolonial in placing its finances on a more satisfactory basis, but while regretting Saturday night's serious loss, he is not cast down, and his telegram to Mr. Hawke shows the resolute courage and pluck of the New Brunswick minister, who no doubt, in the present trial has the earnest support of his leader and other colleagues in the government.

Mr. Emmerson will ask the parliament to provide the means for rebuilding the Moncton shops, and a larger and better plant will take the place of that destroyed by the fire.

The first news of the conflagration conveyed to the citizens of Fredericton by The Herald bulletins early Sunday morning, was heard with sincere regret here, but the expression was general that Mr. Emmerson would be equal to the occasion, and with his usual zeal and pluck would see to the restoration of the shops.

The minister of railways is on the scene of the disaster and no doubt will make early announcement of his plans for rebuilding. The Intercolonial has limited facilities for repair purposes at Halifax and one of two other points on the line, and these will be utilized until the new Moncton shops can be put in commission. No doubt the road will be somewhat handicapped by the disaster, but it will be only temporarily.

A most regrettable feature of the fire is the loss of one human life, a workman by the name of Jones, who seems to have gone to the rescue of some of his personal property in one of the burning shops, and perished in the flames.

Fredericton extends hearty sympathy to its sister city, in the disaster which has overtaken it, and to Mr. Emmerson and the government in the loss and inconvenience entailed by the conflagration.

MONCTON FIRE.

(Continued from first page.)

chine, \$500.

In the freight car repair shop were from 40 to 50 cars under repair, a steam shovel and conductors' vans, all valuable stock.

The paint shop was of wood, two stories in height. The car shop was of brick and extensive additions, including a new story, had recently been made. The total cost of this building was possibly \$100,000, but the other shops were of much cheaper grade.

ORIGIN OF FIRE UNKNOWN.

How and where the fire originated has not yet been explained. Some assert it started in the mixing room of the paint shop, others hold that it was first seen bursting through the roof directly over a small apartment known as the cushion cleaning room, not far from the mixing room.

The most generally accepted theory is that of spontaneous combustion. There was an abundance of waste and when boiled oil comes in contact with this material it has been known in the course of a few days to ignite.

Apparently several men saw the flames at about the same time. James Moody, a locomotive driver, was walking past the paint shed when he saw the flicker of a light up towards the northern end. He perceived at once that there was an outbreak and hurried to send in an alarm. About this time an old gentleman named O'Rourke was approaching the locality and, seeing a sudden burst of fire licking the upper end of the store, also sent in an alarm.

FIRE SPREAD VERY FAST.

The swiftness with which the fire spread was appalling. Those who witnessed the beginning of it claim

that fifteen minutes after discovery, the entire length of the shop was just a torrent of flames.

The buildings were saturated with grease and oil owing to the nature of the work performed in them and this served to increase the rapidity with which the conflagration spread.

From the paint shop huge billows of fire rolled across to the freight car repair shop, then on and on and higher and higher until it looked as if the homes along Bridge Street in the rear would catch.

NO WIND BLOWING.

At the commencement there was no wind. This was of vital importance for, had there been a gale blowing across Main Street, or, in fact, blowing in any direction, it is highly probable that the most of Moncton would have been leveled.

Two fire departments joined forces. These were the regular Moncton city department, numbering fifty men, under direction of Chief Ackman, and the force of twenty men in charge of Jos. Bedford, maintained by the I. C. R. The former had two engines, three hose carts, hook and ladder and chemical engine. The I. C. R. had hose reels, ladders and other appliances.

With almost superhuman zeal the men sought to prevent the ignition of the shops stretching away from the paint shop but their ablest efforts were quite futile. One great difficulty was an inferior water service. Many conflicting stories have been related in connection with this matter as to the cause of the weak flow, but it is a fact that for the first hour or so the firemen were seriously handicapped. In all of the shops were stand pipes with a stretch of hose attached to each, but before connection could be made with the outside hose the fire had eaten through, thus rendering them quite useless. It is also reported that there was difficulty in getting water from the I. C. R. hydrants in the yard. The supply of water came from two sources, the city and the northern reservoirs.

CROWDS RUSHED TO SCENE.

Within twenty minutes after the alarm became general literally everybody in Moncton was hurrying toward the works and all possible assistance was given the firemen.

It was quite useless to attempt the saving of the paint shop's valuable contents. The structure was just a succession of crimson billows crested with smoke clouds. People fully a quarter of a mile distant heard its roaring and in Sussex, 45 miles away the reflection was plainly discernible.

Some of the earliest work done was in endeavoring to run out of the fire zone as many cars as possible and the efforts to save the "Alexandra" the private car of Earl Grey, the governor-general, were successful. The car is one of the most luxuriously appointed in the dominion. It stood between the end of the brick car shop and a car laden with coal. Such a position made the work of saving it doubly difficult, especially when at such a time no locomotives were available. But a party of firemen citizens and store employees took hold and by main strength ran her to safety in a far end of the yard.

Besides the cars in the paint shop which have been already mentioned, was an upholstering department containing seats, chairs, cushions and a burnishing apartment. There was no shafting, but there was installed an expensive heating plant. All of this was totally destroyed.

FIREMEN DID GOOD WORK.

The direction taken by the fire after being seen first was directly east after which, fanned by a wind of its own creating, it veered to the south and fastened on the freight car repair shop. The building crumbled and disappeared in the waves of fire. Then the flames soaring yet further south swept upon the car shop in which was the boiler room, and where power for the most of the works was contained. The firemen were fighting from all sides and considering the several disadvantages under which they labored, exceptionally creditable work was performed.

The fire was severe enough to have tested the efficiency of a much larger department. From all of the most advantageous points streams were kept playing, but notwithstanding the most persistent and gallant efforts it seemed, an hour and a half after the outbreak, that the entire works would be swept.

To come at all into close quarters with the fire required courage of a high order. The heat was intense and there were many blistered hands and faces. But every inch of the conflagration's progress was stubbornly contested and at last it was possible to hope with some assurance that the flames would be checked at the turning shop and checked they were.

Close to the boiler shop stood the stores department, and though the fire burnt all around here, it was saved. The wall between the eastern end of the stores and the car shop arrested the further advance of the fire.

MACHINE SHOP LOSS HEAVY. One of the most expensively equipped shops was the machine shop. Half of this was destroyed and the damage here was particularly heavy.

The office of the master mechanic, A. B. McHaffie, was situated in the eastern end of the boiler shop, and the entire establishment is now in ruins. Valuable papers were destroyed. In the main engine room of the boiler shop the main driving engine and a small electric light plant for the shop, also a compressed air plant were very badly affected. In the loft over the boiler shop an especially heavy loss was sustained in the total destruction of patterns. The space between the paint shop and freight car repair shop was about twenty feet, and along this a track ran. Between the latter building and the car shop the space was about thirty-five feet.

TRAIN CAUGHT FIRE.

The railway station house all but caught. A string of box cars became ignited and about the only course left open was to make a dash past the depot, and in the more roomy space beyond try to extinguish the flames. But the blazing train had barely commenced to go past ere the eaves outside the windows of the dispatcher's and Western Union off-

ces were seen to catch, and to prevent, if possible, the interior of the rooms from becoming afire, the windows were shut down. All hands about the station were then organized into a bucket brigade, and the train having backed away again, the station was saved.

By midnight there was every reason to believe that the worst of the fire was over, and by one o'clock it was under control.

ABRAHAM JONES' DEATH.

The tragic details of Abraham Jones' death can only be surmised. That he perished, however, is a certainty. He was forty-five years of age and leaves a wife and three daughters. He boarded with William Stevens on the opposite side of the street. Mr. Stevens, interviewed by a Telegraph reporter, says that Mr. Jones, who had been for thirty years an employee of the shops, was at his home on Saturday night and had supper. Once during the evening he took out his pocket book and appeared to be examining the contents. He was in the house when the government horn blew, and, realizing at once that it meant a fire in the works, started up, and exclaimed that he must hurry out and ascertain if his shop (mean-

(Continued on fifth page.)

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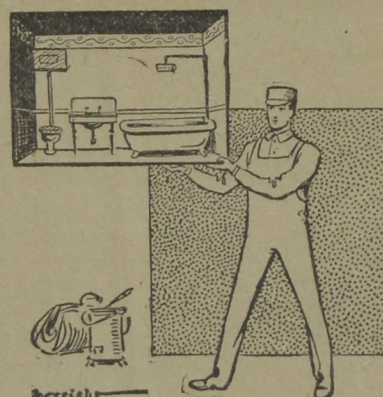
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