

The Appalling Cry of Fire

IN THE DAYS before automobiles, when most households and businesses were equipped with barns and stables full of hay, when the ordinary means of lighting and heating was with fire of one sort or another, and before the advent of running water, conflagrations were such a common occurrence that sometimes it seemed as though St. Andrews was visited by one every week. A few were of major virulence. In 1856 and 1859 major fires virtually gutted the central section of the town on Water Street, leaving a burnt district with unfenced basement holes that became as a public nuisance. In 1873 a huge conflagration destroyed the Market Wharf - in those days populated with buildings - leaving only one structure standing. The Railroad Hotel and old Market House, along with the fire hall, followed quickly in 1874, and Kennedy's Hotel, located then at the corner of Augustus and Water, went up in 1879. The American House burned in 1883; the Argyll, the town's first purely summer hotel, in 1892, only 11 years after opening. And of course the Algonquin in 1914. By this time the hotel had its own water. If it had not, the town itself might have been in danger, as embers fell as far afield as Minister's Island. Editor Magee of the *Bay Pilot*, who had a flair for drama, described some of these fires, such as those which consumed the Argyll and the railway machine shops, with Dantean effect. In those pre-running water days, underground water tanks were located throughout the town, as many as twenty-two. As in the case of the Argyll, located at Indian Point, they weren't always close enough to do any good.

Reviewing the old newspaper accounts of these fires, it is moving to see the Town turning out *en masse* in bucket brigades, and how every now and then some citizen, a child even, could distinguish themselves for bravery in this community effort. In the middle of night, sometimes, the town bell would be ringing and the appalling cry of fire would be heard in the streets. Streams of townsfolk would follow the fire companies to the scene, men occasionally fell off buildings or



Detail from
Frances Wren's
Pictorial
History of St.
Andrews

were burned; in the winter, many were frost-bitten and coated with ice, sometimes working till dawn. One old-timer, recollecting service on the hand-pumpers, said that "there was always so much gin at the fires in those days that I never knew which engine I belonged to or which one I was pumping on. I generally picked the one where the bottles seemed to be circulating the fastest." Very often, as in the case of private homes, there was little or no insurance, and without some form of public charity, the victims faced destitution.

The town's water woes seem to have ended in 1888 with the arrival of the St. Andrews Land Company, a consortium of Americans mainly out of the Boston - Portland area connected in various ways with the railway and steamship business. Their stated goal was to boom the town as a tourist resort, to build a hotel and cottage development, and to provide the town with running water and the electric light. This announcement at Stevenson's Hall was greeted with great applause, the Chamcook Water Company was formed with the goal of importing water from Chamcook Lake, and all seemed to be going swimmingly.

But alas, things were not so simple. The Water Company immediately required that the town commit to a minimum of thirty hydrants at an annual cost of \$70 per hydrant for ten years. This proposal, having been put to the ratepayers without success, the Company forged ahead with a system of artesian wells. Again, it offered to share costs with the town, this time a minimum of twelve hydrants at \$50 each yearly or \$600 per annum but again without fruit. The artesian well idea did not pay off, either. Continued expansions at the hotel, mainly the large addition of 1896 and more bathrooms generally, led to a routine series of water famines and the drilling of even more wells, both at Katy's Cove and around the hotel proper, a wearisome round which continued to plague the C. P. R. after

it purchased the Land Company's properties in 1905 and added a large wing in 1910. Finally in 1911 Manager Thomas Shaughnessy built a water line to Chamcook Lake, the line skirting the railway through Senator Mackay's property, crossing the highway just short of the Catholic Cemetery and ending at a reservoir on the top of Hume's hill, from where it was fed by gravity to the hotel.

Meanwhile, the town continued to be reminded of its second-class status. In the fall of 1913 Lady Tilley's barn caught fire and Manager Allerton of the Algonquin beat the fire department to the scene by ordering a string of hotel fire hose to be connected to the nearest hotel hydrant, assisting materially in extinguishing the blaze. Then in 1914 the Algonquin itself burned down. There could hardly have been a more graphic demonstration of the need for a water supply. "Had the wind been blowing as strongly from the north as it did blow from the southwest," a resident wrote several years later, "there would have now been no need of any discussion of the present water question."

The C. P. R. and Thomas Shaughnessy were not unwilling to assist the town in the matter but the town balked at the \$40,000 price tag for a system of hydrants, and in 1916 it was discovered that the town actually had no authority to borrow money or issue debentures for installing a water system anyway. Authority existed for lighting and for port and wharf facilities but not, oddly, for water. Another year passed and it was 1917 before a bill to grant the authority was drafted and passed by the Legislature. Finally, in July 1919 the rough terms of an agreement to furnish the town with water were hammered out. The town supply would be delivered at the existing ten-inch Y connection near the hotel, and meters would be supplied at town expense. In any breakdown the hotel requirements would have precedence over those of the town, though an effort would be made to distribute any available supply so as to meet the most urgent requirements of both parties. The hotel and cottages on the hill would continue to be supplied as they were at present and would not be connected with the town's water system. The rates would be about twenty-four cents per thousand gallons up to 40,000 gallons, with cost declining thereafter. In 1920 the town council took steps to amend its Incorporation Act to allow it to extend its debenture limit from \$65,000 to \$100,000 so as to be

able to borrow an additional \$35,000 to bring the agreement into effect. In the summer of that year four hundred ballots were printed by the *Beacon Press* for a plebiscite on the matter. The result was overwhelmingly affirmative and construction began in the summer of 1921. The total cost was \$90,657.53. By October 1921, thirty-three years after the incorporation of the Chamcook Water Company, the water system was ready to use. As had been originally forecast, water for St. Andrews did indeed come through the hotel and the Land Company - with just a little help from the C. P. R.

The following selections are but a tiny sample of the many fires that have visited the Town. ~

Standard

Aug. 2, 1848

Destructive fire - Great Loss of Property

We have the melancholy task this week of announcing an awful visitation to St. Andrews - the destruction by fire of one of our largest and most valuable properties, viz. the Rope Walk and buildings owned by Messrs. J. and R. Jarvis - with their new ship, nearly ready for launching, and two dwelling houses, with the furniture, etc., one owned by Captain Peter Smith, the other owned and occupied by Mr. William Jarvis, who, we are sorry to say, has lost everything. The fire was discovered by one of Messrs. Jarvis' apprentices about half past 2 o'clock on Monday afternoon last. It appears that some tar, which was boiling for the purpose of tarring rope, boiled over, and a lad attending it threw some water on the flames, which spread to the side of the building situated at the lower end of the Rope Walk, near the water's edge, and within a few yards of the new ship. Several barrels of tar were in the building, which immediately ignited and the whole establishment, extending from Water Street to the shore of the harbour near the lighthouse, was immediately in a blaze. The alarm was given. Church bells rang, and the appalling cry of Fire resounded through our streets. The fire engines, and, we may add, the whole male population of the town, were early to the spot, but the flames had made such progress that even the workmen employed in building the vessel had not time to save their working tools. Such

was the rapidity with which the fire spread, that the boys employed in the "Walk" were obliged to save themselves by jumping out of the windows and doors.

The heat was so intense that the houses on the western side of the Rope Walk were frequently on fire, large pieces of lighted shingles, etc. were scattered over the town, and it was with difficulty that the fire was prevented from spreading.

Much credit is due to the Fire Companies and the inhabitants generally for their exertions to save the property. The military under Lieut. Wells also did good service. Great praise is due also to our neighbours in Robbinston who came over in boats to the number of 50 persons and employed themselves usefully in assisting to remove furniture, carrying water, etc.

We learn that Messrs. Jarvis' loss including the Rope Walk, rope, several suits of new sails, new ship, etc., is estimated at 10,000 pounds - no insurance on the Rope Walk, etc., and only 1,000 pounds on the vessel. We in common with the whole community deeply sympathize with these gentlemen whose labours for years have been destroyed - their hopes blasted - and their families ruined. Thus in a few hours, have these industrious, honourable, and enterprising gentlemen been deprived of everything - a large number of persons thrown out of employment, and the town suffered a loss which will not soon be made up.

Standard

April 13, 1853

New Fire Engine

The new fire engine and hose carriage, built in New York for the Firewards here, arrived last week, and was landed "in good order and well conditioned," as per bill of lading. The newly formed Company, whose services have been accepted to man the engine, took charge at once, and after having put it together, ran it down the street in gallant style and lodged it in the present, temporary building. Several trials were made of its power in throwing water, which we are happy to say have proved the engine to be a superior one. We cannot say as much for the hose, which burst in one or two places; these defects, however, can soon be remedied. The fire company is an excellent one, composed of young men belonging to

the town - with J. Little, Captain; H. Ames, 1st Lieut.; and George Moore, 2nd Lieut. Should their services be required, we are safe in saying they will prove themselves equal to the task, as the Company is composed of hale, hearty, spirited young men, who are neither afraid nor ashamed to work, and both are able and willing.

Standard

June 8, 1853

No. 1 Torrent Fire Company

On Monday evening last, the Company belonging to Torrent Engine, turned out in their new uniforms with the Engine and hose carriage, for the purpose of trying the Engine. They marched up Water street and presented a very neat and orderly appearance; the dress is a fireman's cap painted black, with a guard of triangular form in front, on which is gilded the figure 1; blue shirt with red collar and facings, dark overhauls, fastened with a broad leather belt. Several experiments were made with the Engine as to its capacity in throwing water. With upwards of 150 feet of hose a large stream was thrown over Mr. Street's two-story brick house, and with 80 feet of hose a steady stream was thrown over the belfry on the Scotch church, a distance of 70 feet. In fact, the Engine gives entire satisfaction, and we may add, that should the services of the gallant Company be called into requisition, that fine body of men will be found "ready and willing" to do their duty.

Standard

Aug. 3, 1853

Torchlight Procession

As stated in our last, want of time and space precluded an extended notice of the late Torchlight Procession of Torrent Fire Company, No. 1. We think the affair demands a more particular description at our hands, as being the first of the kind our town ever witnessed and also most creditable to the parties concerned.

Torrent Company has been organized but a few months, and has charge of one of the Smith Piano Engines, which will compare favorably as to finish and execution with any machine of its size in the province. The company is composed of young men of the

town, and we think it no unseemly boast to say that for zeal, activity and good conduct, they are excelled by none. Their willingness and endurance were, we think, sufficiently and satisfactorily tested at the fire which consumed Mr. Watt's house.

This company, a few weeks ago, resolved on making a demonstration, either by a trial excursion among the brethren on the river, or in such other manner as might be generally acceptable; and at last fixed upon a Torchlight Procession. At sunrise, on the morning of the 26th ult., the flags from the bell tower of the Town Hall gave the signal of preparation. At a hour somewhat later, the unusual display of flags across the streets excited the curiosity of our good people, most of whom could not tell why the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew, with Erin's green banner, were floating over their heads as they passed along. The heaps of flowers continually arriving, and the multifarious preparations, gave note that the "Boys of the Fire Brigade," were about.

The day, which had been gloomy all through, settled down at evening into a most appropriate darkness, and the fun commenced. The largest crowd that has been assembled in our town for the past 20 years gathered around the Engine House, impatiently awaiting the appearance of the Machine. At a quarter before 9, the Engine, most tastefully and beautifully decorated with such flowers as St. Andrews ladies know how to bestow - and drawn by two splendid white horses, made its appearance in the square, when the Procession was formed as follows:--

BANNER.

Officers, with Branch Pipes.

THE MACHINE.

Band.

Members, two and two, with torches.

Banner.

The procession started from the Engine House, passing through the principal streets and halting at different localities where stunning cheers were given for the ladies who had so liberally favoured the company with flowers and decorations. On returning to the Engine House, after three hearty cheers for the Queen, the firemen repaired to Bradford's hotel, where an excellent collation awaited them and



their guests, the firewards with other gentlemen of the town. After the usual amount of feeding and toasting, the company were enlivened by songs or speeches. But the charm of the evening was the singing of the Quartette Club of the Company, which was entirely unexpected by the guests, and was perhaps the most pleasant surprise of the whole. The company and guests separated soon after 12 o'clock, each and all highly gratified with the evening's entertainment. Some of the "boys," however, having procured a . . . and music, danced the sun up.

The decorations of the Engine elicited admiration in all quarters. The band, with one exception, was composed of members of the Company. The whole affair was the most pleasing we have ever witnessed in this place and the general impression at the close was that Torrent Fire Company were of the right stamp.

**Old Hand
Pumper trotted
out for parade
duty, 1927.
Charlotte
County
Archives
p121.2**

*Standard***Aug. 27, 1856**

We have to record the occurrence of another fire in our town which took place last Wednesday night about 10 o'clock, on the premises of Mr. T. Berry in William Henry Street. It broke out on the outside of a building occupied by Mr. Berry and our contemporary Mr. Clinch, of the *Provincialist*, respectively as a carpenter's shop and printing office; this, as well as an adjoining building used as a school house, were totally consumed, Mr. Berry losing all his tools, but the printing materials and other effects of Mr. Clinch we are glad to say were saved, with a little damage. A small building occupied by a barber [David Ross and / or Theodore Bounds] was also partly burned and then pulled down, thereby arresting the further spread of the fire towards Water Street. The wind being easterly, the flying sparks and embers falling upon the roofs of the houses on both sides of Water Street had at first a very bad appearance, but a good supply of water from the tank in the immediate vicinity of the fire enabled Torrent Engine to arrest it, after the gap had been made by removing the barber's shop. Much praise is due the Fire and Hose men, and the young men who so gallantly assisted the regular firemen to serve the Engine throughout the whole occasion. It is much to be regretted that a full company cannot be obtained and kept up for this Engine, so that at all times it may be worked by an efficient crew of its own without being dependent upon casual aid, as the time may come when this sort of parsimony (if such it is) may turn out to be a very dear saving. The letter of "Index" in another column, will we hope be carefully read by those it most concerns. We certainly think that a volunteer company is better adapted to the exigencies of a fire engine than an appointed company. With the solitary exception of this town, every other town and city in the province has its volunteer company or companies, and that they answer admirably we have every reason to know. The volunteer company which originally had this Engine was undoubtedly a very efficient body, and that the collision between them and the Firewards, which broke it up, ever occurred, is a matter of regret.

Standard

Sept 17, 1856

Fire

While the ruins are yet smoking, it is our unwelcome task to record, as far as we are acquainted with circumstances, the particulars of a serious conflagration, (the worst this town ever experienced) which happened in St. Andrews on the night of Wednesday the 10th inst. The fire as we are informed first caught in a building occupied by Mr. John Aymar, as a spar and block maker's shop - it was discovered between 12 and 1 o'clock, a most inconvenient time for waking people up, but notwithstanding which, the Engine Companies and indeed the whole town was promptly on the spot and did everything that could be done to extinguish the fire; circumstances were unfavourable, the tide was down, and it being difficult to procure water for the Engines; the whole block was consumed, and it was only by most strenuous exertions that the fire was prevented from communicating to the buildings in the neighborhood. Mr. Pheasant's extensive hotel establishment was in immediate danger, being on the opposite side of the street; and the wind blowing in that direction, the roof of his house, as also his stable, repeatedly caught and was put out again; but for the tall trees in front of his premises which partly intercepted the flaming embers, it is supposed they would have gone for it. The chief sufferers by the fire we understand are Mr. J. Aymar who has lost his stock in trade, as also his tools, and Mr. Quinn, whose building was not insured. Our contemporary of the *Standard* is also burnt out, under much the same circumstances that we ourselves were about a month ago, that is to say, materials saved, only the time and trouble of setting up again - which is no trifle.

There are now several gaps in the town caused by fire - we hope that ere long the improved state of business will cause them to be rebuilt. - *Provincialist*.

The following properties were consumed: the large range of buildings owned by the C. C. Bank on the Market Square, occupied by Mr. McElwee as dwelling and bake house; *Standard* Printing Office; Mr. Moore's tinware shop, one unoccupied store, and two barns. On Water Street, Mr. Boyd's two stores, and storehouse; a house, store,

and shed, occupied by Capt. McMaster, and owned by Mr. Street; store occupied by Mr. M. S. Hannah; the engine room, a workshop, tools, stock, foundry and blacksmith shop occupied by Mr. Aymar; store owned by Mr. C. O'Neill; dwelling house and blacksmith shop owned by Mr. Thomas Quinn; and a house owned by the estate of the late Hon. Mr. Hatch. The estimated total loss is 4,000 pounds, upon which about 900 was insured. Capt. McMaster lost all his furniture and clothes, upon which there was no insurance.

Standard

Oct. 8, 1856

Another Fire

About 10 o'clock last night, the appalling cry of "fire!" resounded through our streets. The flames were discovered issuing from a barn in the rear of Mrs. Fitzsimmons store on Water Street, in the Church block, so called. Torrent Engine was early at the scene of conflagration; but the flames spread so rapidly, owing to the combustible materials around, that it was supposed for some time the whole block of buildings would be consumed; we are happy, however, to record, that the supply of water from the tank in William Street was sufficient for the engine to throw two streams of water constantly, and the engine being well manned and worked with an indomitable will, the fire was extinguished almost on the spot where it commenced, having only destroyed the adjoining barn and woodshed on the premises occupied by Mr. Millar. Buildings in the vicinity were in imminent danger, having been on fire several times.

We regret to state that one of our most active firemen, Mr. George Moore, met with a serious accident by falling from the roof of one of the houses, fracturing and dislocating both joints of his left arm. He was immediately conveyed to his residence and placed under the medical care of Dr. Gove. Mr. Moore has a wife and several children depending on his labour, and as he will be for some time unable to work, it is to be hoped that the public will render that assistance which the wants of his family require. We understand Mrs. Fitzsimmons lost a valuable cow, and about two tons of hay. Mr. Miller lost all his hay and a quantity of wood.

*Standard***Sept. 16, 1857**

We beg leave to direct the attention of the Magistrates to the present dangerous state of the Market Square, and that part of Water Street immediately in front of the Railroad Hotel. The cellars of the buildings destroyed by fire a year since are left open and exposed and are nothing less than "man traps," endangering the lives of the community, and more particularly strangers. We have been in expectation, day by day, to hear of some life sacrificed; such a nuisance would not be tolerated in any other town in the province. But a day or two since, a gentleman passing along Water Street in the evening, would have been precipitated into one of these cellars, had not a resident of the town warned him of the danger. Such a state of things is disgraceful to the town; and we call upon the Magistracy to have the nuisance at once abated by compelling the owners of the property to fence it in order that loss of life or limb may not occur. Should any accident take place which might be compensated for - no Jury would hesitate to award damages against their Worships. A highly respectable correspondent has sent us a letter upon the subject, in which he handles the Magistrates without gloves for the "dereliction of duty."

*Standard***Sept. 14, 1859****Destructive Fire. Six Buildings Burned**

On Saturday morning last, between 3 and 4 o'clock, one of the largest and most destructive conflagrations took place with which this Town was ever visited. The inhabitants were aroused by the appalling cry of "fire" at half past 3 o'clock. It was discovered to have originated in a building in the Church Block on Water Street, occupied by T. G. Bounds [Bounds was married to Almira Stewart, daughter of Moses and Elizabeth Stewart] as a barber's shop, and James Butler as a dry goods store. Owing to the dry weather for several weeks, the flames spread so rapidly, that notwithstanding the efforts of the fire companies and populace, the fire was not extinguished before six buildings were consumed, viz. - the premises owned by J. Butler and J. Dougherty, the adjoining house owned

and occupied by R. T. Fitzsimmons as a store and dwelling, and the large building on the corner of Water and William Henry Streets, owned by Thomas Berry, occupied by J. Ingram as a grocery store and dwelling. Fears were entertained that the entire range of stores on the east side of Water as far as King Street would be destroyed, and the occupants were ready "packed up" for a hasty removal; this however they were spared through the energetic exertions of the firemen; with a bountiful supply of water from the public tanks, the fire was got under, not however before it injured the house owned by Capt. James McMaster. The heat was so intense that the new brick building recently erected by D. Bradley on the western side of Water Street was slightly damaged, the casings of the windows having been blackened and the glass broken.

Mr. Berry's house was insured for 250 pounds; Mr. Fitzsimmons for 300; his loss on goods uninsured is about 60; Messrs. Butler and Dougherty's house was insured for 250, on Mr. Butler's goods 300. The total estimated loss is about 1,500. The goods and furniture saved are considerably damaged.

We cannot close this brief account of the fire, without adverting to the unwearied and successful exertions of the firemen, who are entitled not only to the thanks of the town and the Insurance companies, but to something more tangible. When they work as they did on Saturday morning, until they were almost worn out with fatigue, refreshments such as coffee, tea, and accompaniments should be provided for them.

It will be admitted that another tank is required at the foot of Edward Street near Irwin's corner, and that as soon as practicable, another fire engine should be procured; this, we think, will not be denied by our townsmen.

Standard

August 20, 1873

The Fire [Market Wharf Destroyed]

On Monday morning was the most destructive fire which has taken place in St. Andrews for many years. At a few minutes to 12 o'clock Sunday night last, the inhabitants were aroused from their slumbers by the ringing of the fire bell and the appalling cry of fire! Flames

were seen issuing from the roof of Messrs. O'Neill's building at the head of the Market Wharf fronting on Water Street. The fire originated between Mr. James Stoop's premises and the forward portion of Mr. O'Neill's building. Everything was so dry that the flames spread with fearful rapidity, although the fire companies and engines were early on the spot, and the populace assisted and worked indefatigably. To save the buildings was impossible and their efforts were directed to confining the fire to the row in which it commenced and playing on the buildings contiguous, which happily they succeeded in doing. Nearly all the goods and furniture were saved excepting in the upper rooms of Mr. Stoop's house where the fire had made such headway that it was not safe to enter the rooms. Mr. Stoop's loss of personal property is considerable. The heat was so intense that one time Mr. M. Faul's roof took fire, but was promptly extinguished by the intrepidity and daring of a young lad, son of Mr. James McKinney, who ran up the ladder and clambered along the roof with a small bucket of water. The Market Wharf has now but one building left - Mr. William Hicks' store and dwelling, which owing to being a few yards distant from the Dougherty house, did not catch fire. The whole row of buildings was burnt to the ground by 2 o'clock am on Monday morning. The loss is estimated at nearly \$3,000. The properties in the vicinity were in imminent danger as the sparks were carried to the roofs. Had the old Market House in the Square adjoining Clarke's hotel and Mr. J. S. Magee's store caught fire, there is no doubt the principal part of the town would have been destroyed. It is high time that the old, dilapidated building was pulled down and a new building erected on the site which would answer for public offices and a large Town Hall, a building much needed, as has frequently been expressed.

Standard

July 29, 1874

Serious Fire

[Destruction of the Market House and Clarke's Hotel]

We regret that St. Andrews, hitherto so fortunate in escaping fires, should have recently been visited by the destructive element. Between two and three o'clock on Saturday morning, fire was discovered in

the barn attached to Clark's hotel, between it and the Engine House. The alarm was at once given by Mr. Magee, whose store and residence is within a few yards of the premises. The Engines and hose carts were immediately removed, and the fire companies went to work with a hearty will to save the property, but the fire had made such headway, owing to the hay and straw having caught, that the flames leaped from the barn to the Engine house and the old Town Hall, which were in a few minutes on fire, and it was impossible to save the buildings already in flames. Fences and sheds were pulled down, and the efforts of the fire companies and populace were directed towards saving the residence of Sheriff Paul, the Record Office and the premises occupied by Mr. Magee, which we are happy to report were successful. Had Mr. Paul's house caught fire, it is probable that the whole Church Block of buildings on the eastern side of Water Street as well as the houses on the opposite side would have been destroyed, and no one can calculate the injury which such a calamity would have entailed upon the town, as the houses on King Street would also have been burned, and there is no knowing where the fire would have ended.

The hotel owned by Mr. Clarke with the barn and sheds were consumed. His loss is certainly large; in addition to the Hotel he lost four horses, all of his sleighs, several sets of harness, hay and oats, a supply of wool and coal. The carriages and horses were saved. Sheriff Temple of Fredericton lost a very fine mare. Mr. Ludgate, of St. George, lost a hired horse, and Mr. McMann, of Calais, a horse, all of which were in Clarke's stable. One of his horses which had been hired returned while his premises were on fire. In the Town Hall were stored 60 stands of rifles belonging to the Militia department, which were destroyed. The Hotel was insured for 3,000 pounds and the Engine house for 100. It is generally believed that the fire was purely accidental. Mr. Clarke informed us that he intended rebuilding without delay.

*Standard***Dec. 23, 1874**

The new engine house with tower is finished, and the bell recently imported has been rung for the past few days at the usual hours. In common with many others, we believe the bell to be too small. Some persons living in the town have not even heard it, and those who have think the sound a dull one. Certainly, it is neither loud nor musical, nor has it the sharp and clear sound of the one formerly used.

*Standard***Jan. 22, 1879****Kennedy's Burns**

[Kennedy's Hotel was first located at the corner of Water and Augustus Streets]

One of those unwelcome occurrences from which St. Andrews has been happily exempt took place on Wednesday afternoon, 15th inst., after the *Standard* was issued. The weather was intensely cold, and the ringing of the fire bell caused a thrill of terror, as its tones were distinctly heard at half past four o'clock in the afternoon. The engines were quickly brought to the fire, which was discovered in the attic of Kennedy's Hotel, near the Railway depot, lower end of Water Street. The engines were early at work, and the populace were busily engaged removing the furniture and supplies, but the flames had made such headway that it was plain the fine building and large ell would be burnt to the ground as there was a strong wind blowing from the northwest. The firemen, noble fellows that they are, labored with a will, and displayed great endurance, for the water froze on them while working at the fire, notwithstanding the intense heat from the burning building. The old Watson house, within a few feet of the hotel, was with difficulty saved; its being so near the burning building made it difficult for the firemen to get at the side and rear. Mr. O'Donahue's house in rear of the hotel was also in danger and narrowly escaped; had the Watson house caught, the Foundry adjoining and other buildings would have been destroyed; indeed there is no telling to what extent the fire would have spread, had it not been for the excellent management and labours of the firemen.



New Engine House and bell, built 1874. This photograph 1927. The building had its own bell now, the old bell in the Market House having been destroyed by fire. Charlotte County Archives. p246.18

During the fire, several had their hands and feet frostbitten, and two persons, Joseph Shaw who fell from a ladder, and James Henan, were slightly injured by the bricks from a falling chimney. Mr. Kennedy must have suffered a great loss, as but a short time since he made an addition to the hotel by the erection of a well finished ell, and put in new furniture, and made other improvements, all of which cost him a large sum of money; he also had a valuable stock of liquors. The house was largely patronized and well kept, as has been admitted by the travelling public. Mr. Kennedy and his family have the sympathy of the people in their great loss. We are informed that the establishment and furniture was insured for \$6,500, which will not cover the loss, as much of the furniture was damaged, and the business temporarily destroyed. We learn that Mr. Kennedy has been looking up a new site, with the intention of erecting a large hotel. The building was burning for upwards of four hours.

*Pilot***Dec. 15, 1881****Disastrous Fire****Destruction of the Railway Machine Shop with its Contents**

Monday evening about a quarter past eight o'clock the cry of fire resounded through our streets. Almost simultaneously with the cry the heavens were lit up with the lurid glare, clearly indicating where the greedy flames were working havoc and ruin. The railway machine shop is in flames! resounded from a hundred throats, a grand rush was made for the fire engine station and in less time than it takes us to write the statement the fire apparatus were being hauled down the street at a lively pace in the direction of the point of danger. On arrival at the scene of the conflagration, the building was found enveloped in flames; so complete a grip had they that it was useless to attempt to check their progress; men were forced to stand helplessly by and witness the destruction of this valuable property. It was a grand but awful sight; the tongues of flame shot from beam to rafter, and in their hellish glee soon reduced the buildings to a heap of smouldering ruins amid which, with the flames wrapped round them like a golden winding sheet, stood four locomotives and tenders, one of them with steam escaping; only requiring the hand of the driver upon the throttle and lever to enable her to escape, but the hand of man could not reach her through the overwhelming flames. The air was filled with sparks and flying embers that presented the appearance of a golden shower; many of them were carried in the direction of the Manager's residence which stands about four hundred feet east of the machine shop; they lit in and set fire to trees, the grass in the fields adjoining took fire and burnt as briskly as though it were a dry summer night. Number One fire engine was stationed alongside Manager Osburn's house and from it a stream was occasionally played, which extinguished the threatening sparks that poured in a continuous shower upon the roof. Fortunately for the safety of the town the wind was blowing west-south-west, and the only building endangered was the residence of the Manager. The Argyll Hotel loomed up grandly, the windows presenting the appearance of sheets of burnished gold. About ten o'clock a drenching rainstorm

set in which removed any cause for alarm of the fire spreading in any direction. It is supposed the fire caught in or about the stationary engine room which was situated on the west side of the building, but how, is now and must ever remain an unsolved problem. The engine cleaner, Mr. Thomas Richardson, was all through the works about half an hour before the fire was discovered. When the first discoverers of the fire reached the building, it seemed to be all ablaze inside. The only thing saved was the tool chest of Mr. Wm. McLeod, carpenter, which a couple of lads succeeded in dragging out.

Also, five locomotives, the "Earl Fitzwilliam," "Shamrock," "Houlton" and "St. Stephen," all standing in the shop and the "Rose," which was dismantled, preparatory to rebuilding a new boiler for her, were amongst the articles destroyed by the fire. In addition to the above was the old hand fire engine "Faugh-a-gallagh," which many of the men of the present day, when they were boys, manned and worked at fires. Some years ago the Firewards gave her to the Railway Company with the understanding that she should be kept in working order, and manned by a company of railroad employees for the protection of the railway buildings and for use in the town should her services be required, but owing to the press of work at the machine shop, the needed repairs were not completed, and the poor old engine, relic of a bygone day and fashion of engines, perished by the element she had in many a hard fought fight helped to subdue.

So rapid was the progress of the flames that Mr. Thomas Armstrong, Mechanical foreman, although on the ground almost at the first, was unable to get into his office, situated in a wing attached to the eastern side of the workshop, which with all the books, papers and other property therein was destroyed.

The property destroyed is roughly estimated at \$75,000, which was only covered by insurance to the extent of \$11,600 dollars, so that the Railway Company are heavy losers.

An erection of a temporary character will be put up immediately as a shelter for locomotives. Arrangements have been made with Mr. Andrew Lamb for the use of the blacksmith shop at the foundry, together with the stationary engine and the wareroom, adjoining which will be fitted up as a repair shop. Two of the damaged locomotives will be sent to the Portland Locomotive Works to

be refitted and repaired. The destruction of the N. B. and Canada Railway Co.'s machine shop is the greatest calamity that has occurred in St. Andrews in recent times.

Beacon

Aug. 29, 1889

Water System Needed

The most pressing need that St. Andrews has at the present moment is an improved water system. The time has arrived we think when such should be provided, no matter what it costs. The present old-fashioned system of obtaining the supply from wells is dangerous to health and offers but a very limited protection in the case of fire. Besides, it seriously retards the progress of the place. We may boast of the healthfulness of our town, but while its inhabitants are compelled to obtain their water for domestic purposes from wells that have been in use for one hundred years almost, the boast appears an empty one. The adoption of a system of water works would remove, to a very material extent, danger from fire and danger from epidemics. It would tend to the development of the place, by encouraging outsiders to come in and build; it would enhance the value of property and reduce insurance premiums, without adding much to our present taxes. The Firewardens, on whose shoulders, we believe, rests the responsibility, should proceed in this matter at once. The coming winter will probably be a quiet one, so that if the work was entered upon now, it would furnish remunerative employment to many men who would otherwise be idle.

Beacon

March 24, 1892

Argyll Hotel Burned

The Argyll Hotel - the pioneer summer hotel of St. Andrews - was reduced from a stately structure to a pile of smouldering ashes on Sunday evening last.

After the closing of the hotel season last year, Mrs. Herbert, widow of the former proprietor, went to the United States for the winter months, leaving the house in charge of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Williamson. They were careful people, and everything went well about the house until Sunday last.

About 1 o'clock on that day a fire was lighted in the gentlemen's parlor, a large room on the ground floor to the right of the main entrance. The fire was kept alive in the fireplace all the afternoon, without anything occurring to arouse the suspicions of the inmates of the house. As Mrs. Williamson sat down to tea in one of the rooms a short distance from where the fire was burning, she heard a noise as if two doors had slammed together. Going out to ascertain the cause she smelt a strong smell of smoke. There was a little smoke visible in the gentlemen's parlor, but nothing of any consequence. Going upstairs to the second floor, she threw open the doors of the ladies' parlor, which was located just over the other parlor, and a thick cloud of smoke thrust itself in her face. Thoroughly alarmed, she seized a dinner bell and ran to the residence of Mr. Thomas Armstrong, about 200 yards distant. As quickly as possible, a general alarm was given.

After alarming the neighbors, Mrs. Williamson flew back to the hotel and, running upstairs again, groped her way through the blinding smoke in the ladies' parlor to obtain possession of a box belonging to her which contained some valuable papers. She found the box, and when she was coming out of the room, the flames were making themselves manifest through the hall floor on the second flat.

Although the firemen made a quick response to the alarm, it took them almost twenty minutes to drag the lumbering old machines honored by the name of fire engines to the scene of the fire. When they got there, there was no water to be had nearer than in a well across the track alongside the railway tank, and in another in the rear of the Company's cottage. What seemed an hour was consumed in getting connections made. By this time, the fire - which might have been stayed if water had been got on it in reasonable time - was burning fiercely alongside the chimney on the three floors, and the blinding smoke made it almost impossible for the men to live inside. They stayed and fought the flames for about half an hour, when the water gave out, and they were reluctantly compelled to give up the struggle.

In the meantime, scores of willing hands in various parts of the house were engaged in removing the furniture. All the furniture on the lower floor was taken out. On the second floor, with the exception of two or three rooms, which were so full of smoke that nobody could stay in them a minute, nearly all the rooms were emptied of their contents. Some furniture was also taken out of the fourth floor, the men working in the rooms until the approaching fire compelled them to lower themselves to the ground by means of ropes. There were fourteen rooms in the second floor of the ell over the dining hall and billiard room, and they were all divested of their contents before the flames took possession. The upper floor of the ell did not fare so well, very few things being rescued. An organ belonging to one of the last season's guests, was taken out in a slightly damaged state, but the hotel piano was almost ruined before a rescue was effected.

When the firemen deserted the building, the southern portion of it was a mass of fiercely burning flames. There was a strong northwest wind blowing, which, while helping to feed the fire, also retarded its progress in the northern half of the building. But inch-by-inch, it increased its fiery grasp, until at eight o'clock the entire building was in a seething, roaring flame. It was a magnificent sight, but the majority of the spectators were too full of regret at the destruction of the house to appreciate the grandeur of the scene before them. The front chimney, which had no doubt been the cause of the conflagration, fell about 8:30 o'clock, the bricks being scattered far out amongst the crowd. No one was injured, though some people had very narrow escapes. All the other chimneys, with the exception of one leading from the dining room, fell as the woodwork was burned away from them. The latter maintained its erect attitude until the following morning, when it was thrown down to prevent its descending on the heads of those standing about.

It was after midnight before the fire had exhausted itself. After that time all that was standing of the once handsome Argyll hotel were the chimney above mentioned, two or three other pieces of brick-work, and an outhouse, which had been attached to the main

building by a covered passageway, familiarly termed "the bridge of sighs." This bridge was burned, but the small building was unscathed. The barn and its contents escaped.

There was very little insurance on building or contents. The Western and British America had policies on the building for \$6,000, which just covered outstanding mortgages. On the furniture, most of which was saved in a damaged state, there was an insurance of \$1,000 in the North British and Mercantile office. The total loss is estimated at about \$15,000.

The furniture, which was removed from the hotel, was left out all night in the fields, a guard being placed over it by the insurance agents. The Land Company's cottage in the Park was in imminent danger of destruction, but by careful watching its destruction was prevented. John Rooney had his head injured by a chair being thrown upon it from a third storey.

Beacon

Dec. 31, 1903

Santa Claus In Danger

Santa Claus had a hot time in the Baptist church on Saturday evening last. The children of the Sunday school, with their teachers and parents had gathered together for a little Christmas entertainment. A pleasing programme of song and recitations was carried out. Then Santa Claus (Mr. Theodore Holmes) with fur coat and trailing beard made his appearance, and proceeded to distribute gifts from a Christmas tree. He was assisted by some of the older children. Suddenly one of the candles on the Christmas tree brushed up against the tissue paper ornaments. At once there was a blaze. Santa Claus made a dash for the burning paper and his beard caught fire. Others rushed in and the burning ornaments were quickly pulled down. Little damage was done, but for a moment there was some excitement.

*Beacon***May 25, 1911****Chamcook Lake Water****Now Connected with Algonquin Hotel**

A very important event in the history of St. Andrews occurred on Saturday last, when the last pipe in the water works system was laid at Chamcook Lake and the waters of this beautiful lake were for the first time brought within immediate reach of the town.

The construction of this waterworks system was begun last Fall by the C. P. R. , the contract with Messrs. Joseph McVay and Son, of St. Stephen, requiring it to be completed during the present month. Mr. Hugh Lumsden, an engineer of large experience, planned and carried out the work. The primary object of this system was to provide an abundant supply of good, pure water for the Algonquin hotel and cottages, and to give connection with the town in case a satisfactory arrangement can be entered into. It is hoped and expected that this will be done.

An analysis of the water, which was made before the work was begun, shows it to be of remarkable purity and softness. It is absolutely free from bacteria and is about as perfect a drinking water as can be procured anywhere.

The pipe enters Chamcook Lake at its southwestern extremity, a few rods north of the track. An eight inch pipe follows the course of the track for 8,500 feet, and then by the aid of a 40 h. p. gasoline engine is forced up the hill, a distance of something like 7,900 feet, through Senator MacKay's woods crossing the Saint John road a few rods north of the Catholic cemetery to a concrete reservoir on the top of the hill overlooking the town. This reservoir has a capacity of 250,000 gallons. Provision has been made for its enlargement should the Town make a permanent contract with the Company. From the reservoir the water is brought in by gravitation in a 12-inch main, following the highway almost the entire distance. A 10-inch pipe, 1,100 feet long, carries the water to the hotel. The entire distance traversed by the pipes is about 23,250 feet.

St. Croix Courier

April 16, 1914

Algonquin Hotel burned to the Ground

Property Valued at Three Quarters of a Million Dollars. Made Spectacular Blaze at St. Andrews on Saturday

If it had not been for the concrete additions which were made in recent years there would be nothing left of the stately Algonquin Hotel today but a heap of smouldering ruins. Every atom of woodwork about the great building, including the central section, the roofs of the concrete wings, the wooden stairways and partitions, etc., was completely destroyed in the fire which began at noon on Saturday and raged throughout the afternoon.

The fire originated from a charcoal spark which had gone beneath the shingles on the northeast concrete wing whilst some repairs were being made by workmen. Smouldering on the tarred paper, it worked its way to the woodwork while the men were at dinner, and a great conflagration was the result.

The water supply, which had been turned off for the winter, had not been restored, so that there was little to fight the fire with except buckets. In less than an hour after the fire started, fanned by a westerly gale, the flames had eaten through to the four-story central section of wood. Being highly inflammable it burned with great fierceness, the sparks being carried miles away. Some of them even set fire to the grass alongside Sir William Van Horne's summer home on Minister's Island. George Chase's farm buildings a mile away were fired by these wind-blown sparks, but the fire was speedily extinguished. Half an hour after the flames had taken hold of the wooden section it was completely destroyed, together with the board verandas in front.

Then the fire penetrated the western concrete wing which was built two years ago. Everything of an inflammable nature in its five storeys was burned. It was feared that the explosion of the ammonia tanks near the refrigerator would result in possible accident to human life, but happily this did not occur. The fire burned in this section like a great furnace for several hours. It was a spectacular conflagration, and had it occurred at night would have been seen for many miles.

Construction men say that the concrete wings have suffered little damage, and that they can be used again when the hotel is being restored. There were many beautiful summer cottages within the fire zone, but with the exception of No. 1 Algonquin cottage, which stood immediately the north of the hotel, all the cottages were saved. The summer cottage of George B. Hopkins of New York, which was separated from the hotel by only the width of the street, was on fire several times, but the firemen by desperate efforts succeeded in saving it. Had it burned, the summer houses of Mr. Gill, of Ottawa, Mr. Southam, of Ottawa, Mr. Douglas Seeley, of Montreal, Prof. Smith, of Cambridge, and possibly the summer residence of Sir Thomas Shaughnessy would have been destroyed.

Nearly all the interior furnishings on the lower floor of the hotel were taken out before the fire reached it and were safely removed to the casino, but with this exception little of the contents of the hotel were saved. Manager Allerton was away at the time, having gone to Boston on Friday night to engage his help for the season. It is the prevailing belief that while the destruction of the hotel has been a great loss to the town, it will lead to the construction of a more modern and more beautiful hotel.

St. Croix Courier

April 26, 1945

"Shiretown Items"

Water Supply - Old aqueduct discovered in St. Andrews

It may be news to the younger generation here in St. Andrews that we had a system of waterworks long before a public supply was introduced in St. Stephen. In looking over some old papers sent to me by a friend I came across an editorial in the *Courier* of May 2, 1872, which strongly advocates the introduction of a water supply for the Town of St. Stephen along the lines suggested by William Cananagh. This plan was to lay aqueducts of Norway pine from a suitable point on Dennis Stream in a direct line to Church Hill and thence through the principal streets, with branch pipes made of the same material with smaller bore. The editorial goes on to say: "There is an aqueduct of this description in St. Andrews which we believe has been in use for over forty years, by which almost half the town is

supplied with water from one spring." As far as I can learn no records exist of this original system of water supply for St. Andrews. When our present system of water and sewers was introduced here in more recent years the remains of the old aqueduct were found in various places throughout the town. No one with whom I have talked seems to know anything very definite about the matter. If any readers here or elsewhere can supply any scraps of information I should be pleased to hear from them. Unfortunately, two of our citizens, Eber Polleys and James Cummings, who were noted for their knowledge of local history, have long since passed to their reward. Contrary, however, to the statement quoted from the *Courier*, I think there was more than one source or supply here. I am told that the well on the property now belonging to Robert Stinson supplied the district immediately below and extended up and down Queen and Water Streets. On my own property which was built in 1859 [258 Montague] a circular opening about a foot in diameter was provided for the entrance of the aqueduct to the cellar. The wood has long since rotted away and the entrance is still there. The supply in this case must have come from the head of Princess Royal Street or possibly the head of King Street where it is known there was a spring with a good flow of water.

St. Croix Courier

May 3, 1945

"Shiretown Items"

The Aqueduct

A reader has furnished me with the following interesting information about the water system which existed here a hundred or more years ago. Appended here is a copy of the Act passed on March 8, 1830, which my good friend copied from "Acts of the General Assembly, 1786-1838," one of the interesting old books in her library. She also states that an aqueduct of wood, which evidently was installed at a later period when the machine shop was built here, extended from a well on the Andrew Lamb property at the head of King and Princess Royal streets to the railway machine shop which was located just south or southeast of the station. This wooden pipeline crossed Augustus Street near Montague and the wood was still sound when

the street was opened there about 20 years ago. The John Aymar who is mentioned in the Act was a block and spar maker who had a shop at the corner of Water and Frederick streets and who lived in the house now occupied by Robert Stinson and family at the corner of Princess Royal and Montague Streets. Many the evening I spent as a youngster coasting on what we called “Marr’s” (or Meagher’s) Hill without knowing or caring about the origin of the name. The first, and unaccented syllable of the name “Aymar” had been dropped by the boys of that period and the name thus abbreviated or corrupted, although perhaps Mr. Aymar had not been dead for more than 20 years.

“Cap. XVIII Acts General Assembly 1786-1838

“An Act to grant John Aymar the privilege of supplying the Town of St. Andrews with water by pipes. Passed March 1830.

“Whereas the conveyance of water by pipes to the several houses in the Town Plat of St. Andrews would be highly beneficial to the public and is a measure universally desired; and John Aymar, an inhabitant of the said Town, is desirous to obtain the privilege of supplying the same by pipes as aforesaid:

“Be it enacted by the President, Council and Assembly, that the privilege of carrying water to the houses of the inhabitants of St. Andrews in pipes, through the several streets thereof, be and the same is hereby granted to John Aymar, so long as he shall keep the same in operation and good repair, provided always that the said John Aymar, shall at his own costs and charge, and without unnecessary delay, repair and make good any and every injury or damage thereby done to said streets or any part thereof.

“And be it further enacted that the said John Aymar shall make and keep in good repair proper openings and (plugs to be used only in case of fire) in all such places where his pipes extend, as the Firewards of the Town of St. Andrews may direct or approve, the said Firewards to be accountable for the actual expense thereof.

“And be it further enacted that if the said John Aymar should neglect so to make and adjust proper plugs on the requisition of the said Firewards, that it should be lawful for them, the said Firewards, to cause the same to be done and completed accordingly.

“And be it further enacted that this Act shall continue and be in force for the term of fifteen years, and no longer.”

St. Croix Courier

May 1, 1947

"Shiretown Items"

When Gin Flowed as Fast as Water from the Old Hand Pumpers in St. Andrews

One of the old hand pumper fire engines has been sitting on the square in front of the town hall for a week or two. One day I asked an old fellow who I am sure has attended hundred of fires to tell me which engine it was, No. 1 or No. 2. "I don't know" said he, "there was always so much gin at the fires in those days that I never knew which engine I belonged to or which one I was pumping on. I generally picked the one where the bottles seemed to be circulating the fastest." Where that liquor came from at any hour of the night, and in such quantities, was always a mystery to the younger men of the company. There was always a race and a money prize between the two engines for first water but before the hose could be run out the gin would have circulated a couple of times and every man on the pumper would be feeling as if he, single-handed, could pump that water over the moon. The old engine is quite a curio now and will be greater in years to come. It is to be cleaned, sandpapered and varnished and kept under cover for future generations to marvel at. It is made from mahogany inlaid with walnut and is really a fine piece of work.