

# FIRE DESTROYS FIVE STORES ON BRADFORD'S HOLLAND STREET

Fire levelled five stores, and the dwellings above them, last Wednesday afternoon. The alarm sounded at 1.10 o'clock and destroyed were Harry's Meat Market, the Model Bakery, Evans' Men's and Boys' Wear, Breen's Refrigeration, and the Bradford 5¢ to \$1 Store. Mrs. Bannerman, owner of the latter store, who had her apartment over the store, also lost her home, as did those residing in the rooms upstairs over the bakery and the men's and boys' wear store. The tenants upstairs in this building were Mr. and Mrs. Ward and their children, 4-year-old son Graham, and 3-month-old twins; Mr. and Mrs. Van Der Donke, and Mrs. Olive Evans, the mother of D. Arthur Evans, owner of the building in which their quarters were located. They lost everything. Mrs. Evans, who was in the restaurant, got her purse, but that was all.

Wednesday being a holiday in Bradford, it would appear that the fire gained considerable headway before being discovered, because almost immediately after the alarm billowing clouds of smoke marked the scene and this smoke spread very rapidly through the buildings. So quickly did this smoke spread that re-entry to the buildings was almost impossible, and practically nothing was saved by the occupants of the buildings. They were fortunate that the fire occurred at an hour when they were awake and thus alert to make good their escape.

The fire was first noted by a waitress in the Model Bakery restaurant, when smoke became very noticeable. Finding the 'phone out of order, Mrs. Floyd McDonnell rushed to the street to give the alarm. She called to a man, who ran to the Queen's hotel from where Russ. Tupling, who was talking to Eddie McEvoy, turned in the alarm. The impression seems to be that the fire started in the meat shop, but smoke poured so quickly from all three buildings—the meat shop, the bakery and the men's wear—and the excitement was so great, everyone seems to be confused.

Bradford firemen were on the scene within a couple of minutes of the sounding of the alarm and made a terrific fight to check the fire, but the meat market, the bakery, and the men's wear stores were so quickly engulfed in flames that very early in the fire the fire-fighters knew that the entire section was doomed and that the best they could hope to do was to stop the fire's progress at the brick walls at the west and east ends of the fire—Evans & Evans law office building and the Bank of Commerce. Holland street, in that section, was darkened by the thick smoke and, but for the fact that roofs were snow covered, the danger to buildings on the south side of Holland street, was great. A window in Bradford Bargain House broke as a result of the heat. Then the wind veered, carrying the danger away from Evans & Evans law offices, but making the fight to save the Bank of Commerce more desperate. Until the Bradford 5¢ to \$1 building toppled many thought the bank was doomed, and had it gone there is no guessing where the fire would have ended. Smoke by that time was dense along Barrie street and burning materials were falling on the roofs on the east side of that street.

Calls for assistance were sent to neighbouring firemen and their response was prompt. Newmarket,

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Aurora, Holland Landing, Cookstown and Innisfil township brigades joined the Bradford fire-fighters, and there was plenty for them to do. The amount of water pumped into the fire was a heavy tax on the water supply. As soon as the immensity of the fire was realized the water supply to the packing plants was cut off, but even with these big water users co-operating the pressure continued to dwindle. When Fire Chief Gapp learned of the water shortage, which was sure to end in water failure, he ordered hose laid to the canal, and with pumps at work, the fire fight continued with this service. By the time darkness fell, the fight on the bank building had been won, and Bradford was safe from any further progress of the fire.

The day was bitterly cold and the firemen's position was not an enviable one. When it was known that the fire was under control, neighbouring brigades went home, but the Bradford firemen's work was far from finished. There was plenty of danger in those ruined buildings. Flames shot high into the air as fuel oil tanks went ablaze and the flames reached explosive materials, and on through the night, in below zero weather, the Bradford men continued their vigil and their battle.

To name those who stood by, lending assistance in their own way, through the long hours of the afternoon, the evening, and the night, would be risky, in that someone would be overlooked, but the locals who provided a continuous service of hot coffee and sandwiches, as did the Salvation Army, gave a tremendous service, making it possible for the firemen to stay on their job throughout the long hours of cold.

Very early in the fire, the explosions of ammunition in Evans' Men's and Boys' Wear store, added to the excitement.

The only standing object, in that entire section of the Holland street north block between Evans & Evans law office building and the Bank of Commerce, today is the oven which was at the rear of the bakery. It alone "marks the spot." All else is a blackened mess, in a dark hole, beside the street. The loss is complete.