

The Great Fire! Twenty-Six Building Burned!

Thirteen Families Homeless!

\$25,000 worth of Property Destroyed! A Scene of Ruin and Desolation!

“On Sunday morning last, (August 3, 1879), our citizens were awakened from their slumbers by the ringing of the alarm bells, and the cry of fire proceeding from the vicinity of the business part of the town. The fire was discovered by Wm. Harrington, about 6 o'clock. Large volumes of smoke and flame were seen arising from the south-west corner of the stable attached to the Swanton building. This stable was also located in the rear of Kennedy's store, the Post-office, and the other buildings. Before many people had collected, it was found impossible to save these buildings. The stand known as the Swanton store was occupied by Estabrooks Bros., as a stove store and tin shop. They succeeded in saving a portion of their stock. The Garrison family occupying the tenement in the second story were asleep, and had barely time to arise, get their children dressed, and escape with their lives, securing none of their household effects.

Simultaneously, the flames had spread to Mrs. M. Brown's building on the west, occupied by Miss I.A. Smith as a millinery store and tenement, the double tenement building owned and occupied by Thomas Kennedy, tailor, and Robt. Gallagher, shoemaker, and the Harrington building, occupied as a dwelling and Post-office. At this time it was quite calm, with a barely perceptible breeze from the South-west, which with the progress of the fire increased in force. The flames were now threatening fiercely to the west, towards the Exchange Hotel, and heavier portion of the town, and in order to prevent this dire calamity, Madigan & Donworth's law office was torn down. This point was the key to the position, and a hard fight was made for more than an hour on the wreck of this building, fire and water contending for the fragments. After the usual fruitless efforts to work the old engine, lines of men and women were formed, who passed buckets of water from the reservoir in the Square, up along Main Street, and from a pump in

the Exchange Hotel yard over the rear buildings, then in great danger. The flames were here stopped, leaving Burnham's saloon, the only building standing east of the Hotel on the South side of Main Street.

In the meantime the flames had been spreading easterly, through a row of buildings owned by Lewis B. Johnson consisting of a large livery stable occupied by H.B. Black; tenement occupied by E. Ingraham; the old bakery, and the McMaster stable. Also, Dr. G.F. Walker's new two-story house and stable connected, the Zadock Johnson, large, two story house, ell and stables attached, occupied by Jas. K. Osgood, and by Edwin F. Doyle, tenement and carriage shop, and Eben Woodbury's fine residence, situated at the corner of Kelleran Street.

The fire was prevented from extending across Kelleran Street, by a large force of men, who kept the roofs of Almon H. Fogg's house and stable, on the opposite corner well wet down. A hot fight alone prevented the fire spreading south on Kelleran Street, and it was with the utmost difficulty the house occupied by Albert Lovejoy, 2d, near Mr. Woodbury's rear buildings was saved, as also the Congregational vestry, across this street. Had any of the buildings burned, great devastation would have resulted, as Main Street, above here is thickly lined with dwellings.

While the fire was doing its work of destruction on this side, it also crossed Main Street to the north side, taking the row of buildings owned by Charles P. Tenney, consisting of the Marble Shop, occupied by Henry F. Collins, the two-story building, in which were, on the ground floor, Nathaniel Churchill's harness shop, and A.D. Huntley's shop and tenement and in the second story, the Custom House, and the tenement house and stable occupied by Alonzo Rackliff. Also the bakery recently erected and occupied by David Edwards, and the building owned by G.S. Plummer, occupied by C.E. Lovering, as tenement.

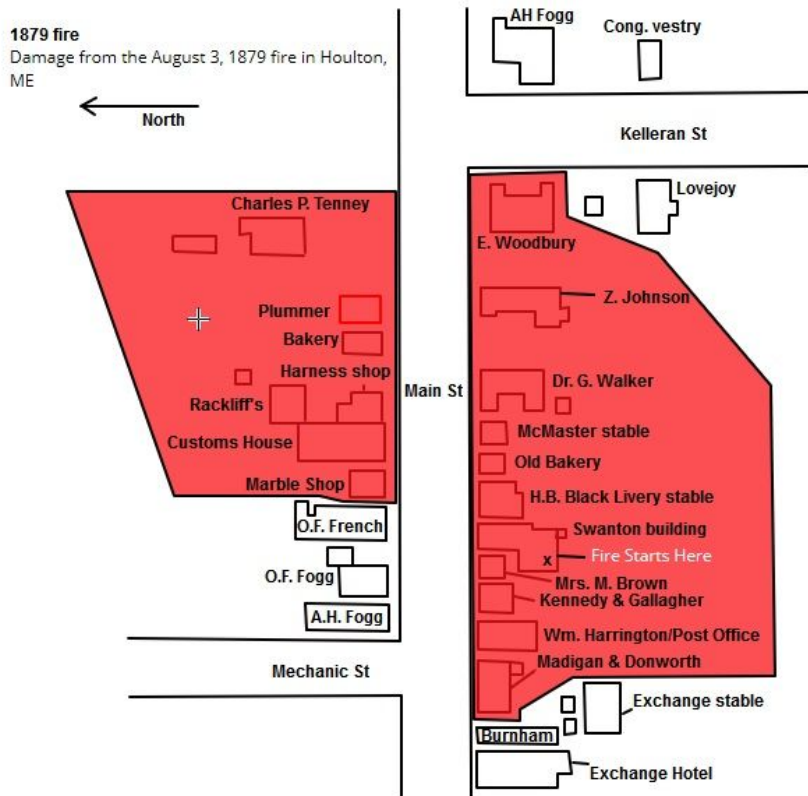


When the fire was at its height, large fragments of burning wood fell in showers on the stable and large two story residence of C.P. Tenney, some twenty rods to the north-east, in the center of extensive grounds, and within the short space of an half hour, these buildings, one of the oldest homesteads in town, were in ashes, and marked the limit of the fire in this direction.

A.H. Fogg & Co's large two-story hardware store, across the street from the Post-office, was on fire several times and only by the greatest exertion was saved; at one time it was doomed. Here the Little Giant engine did good service, by playing on the front of the store, and on the iron store house, adjoining. The fire was stopped on this side of the street at French's building, occupied by Wm. Palmer, as a saloon, and situated west of the Marble Shop. A hard fight was required to accomplish this; a number of men working here were prostrated by heat and over exertion. Had not the fire been checked here it would doubtless

have spread across Mechanic Street and the extent of the destruction that would have followed is fearful to contemplate.

The wind carried the fragments of burning wood and large cinders for a mile or more distant from the fire in an easterly direction. Several buildings on Main Street caught fire, but with the precautionary efforts of hose-holders, they were extinguished without doing any damage. J. Burnham's house and barns caught fire on the roofs. Mark Gray's buildings took fire several times, and in one place burned a hole through the roof. Dr. Donnell's house caught fire on the roof, and also in a place near the stable, a fire was kindled. Some loose material near G.B. Page's barn took fire. The cinders set fire at R.B. Estey's residence in a number of places. Mr. J. Braden's barn on Summer street, caught fire in the haymow from a spark which blew through a window. Geo. S. Plummer's barn on Pleasant Street took fire on the roof. Also, at Albert A. Burleigh's, a half mile up Pleasant Street, fire caught in two places near his house, and a stump in a field was set on fire.



We here present a rough diagram, showing the extent of the fire, the burnt district being indicated by the dark (red) surface on either side of Main Street, and the buildings therein, marked by white lines. The black blocks in white space, indicate buildings near the fire saved from burning. Main Street runs east

and west, Kelloran Street leading from it to the south, and Mechanic Street to the north.

In less than three hours from its outbreak, the fire was fully under control, but the smouldering remains required constant attention during the remainder of the day and the services of a strong special police, through the following night.

Notes and Incidents

The origin of the fire has been, as usual, a matter of much discussion and some controversy, but is generally believed to have been caused by smoking in the Swanton Stable, as a fishing party had started out from there, some fifteen minutes before the fire broke out.

The several clergymen in town, distinguished themselves by heroic work in removing goods and fighting fire, and as a consequence no services were held in their churches that Sunday morning.

The exertions demanded at the fire came doubly hard upon empty stomachs, and many suffered severely, till thoughtful ladies provided supplies of coffee and other refreshments, and circulated them bravely all among the workers.

The Custom House safe is the only one that was left in the burnt buildings, all the others being on the ground floors were easily put into the street, and all the valuable contents were removed from this one. This safe has been opened since removal from the ruins and presented its contents in good condition. Papers

were somewhat charred and account books loosened from the covers, but not materially injured.

No goods were removed from the hardware store, except the powder canisters, which set near the front window, and the tins had become so hot as to blister a man's hand in taking them away.

No serious injury occurred to a man or beast during the fire, but minor falls and wounds were received by several individuals. Beverly Earthy cut the back of his hand badly, in breaking through a pane of glass. Another man received a wound on his head by a falling pail, and bled profusely.

On information of the fire being sent to Woodstock, the hand fire engine of that city was got in readiness to come to Houlton by rail, but the telegraph bore the news of our safety, just in time to stay the company from starting. Nonetheless, however, will the kind intentions of our Provincial neighbors and friends be remembered by our citizens.

The scene of the fire presents a picture of desolation long unfamiliar to our town and attracted numerous visitors from the neighboring towns and Province during the remainder of Sunday and since.

The loss of trees on Woodbury's lot and injury to trees on Tenney's place is much to be regretted.

In Brief

-The fire is still smouldering on the ruins.

-A light shower this morning served to lay the dust in the streets.

-The Methodist camp-meeting in Hodgdon commenced on Tuesday and will continue one week.

- The Republican county convention will be held at the Court House in this town on Thursday, Aug. 21.

-Peter C. Keegan, Esq., of Lewiston, is in town today , on his way to his former home in Van Buren.

-Mr. Tenney's new wagon, which was supposed to have been stolen has been found. Edwin Doyle had removed it to a safe place.

-A Greenback Mass Meeting will be held this Wednesday evening at Frisbie's Hall. Hon. Alex Troup of Connecticut is announced to address the meeting.

-David Edwards, the baker, is plucky and enterprising. He has built a temporary structure over the oven, which was left by the fire, and on Tuesday supplied his customers with fresh baked bread. He has lumber on the spot to rebuild his bakery.

-We came very near having another fire Tuesday. A spark of hot iron from the forge, caught in some loose papers in Taber's Blacksmith shop n Mechanic Street, and the flames spread along the studding of the buildings. Fortunately water was at hand, and with a few buckets full, the fire was soon distinguished."-- From the *Aroostook Times*, August 7, 1879.

Sources: Aroostook Times, August 7, 1879 and 1877 Roe and Colby Houlton Village map.

