

October 16, 1893

The Union Block Fire

A Houlton History Lesson

The following comes from the Aroostook Times, dated October 19, 1893, telling of the fire that destroyed the Union Block on the corner of Main and Court Streets. This building only stood for a short time, as it had only been built following the fire that occurred on April Fools Day in 1880. However, it was this fire that led to the construction of the brick French Block that still stands on the corner of Court and Main Street today.



“At midnight, last Sunday, fire was discovered in the Union Block, corner of Main and Court Streets. When the alarm was rung no fire was to be seen, but smoke was issuing from the upper story of the block, but in a few minutes after, the whole interior of this portion of the large three-story building was in a blaze and ready to break out. The firemen responded promptly to the

call and rendered most efficient service in getting out hose truck and ladders, putting the steamer in position, and in laying many lines of hose from the different hydrants. Shortly after their arrival an explosion took place, caused by the confined smoke and gases within the great roof which raised it several feet in the air, with a sound resembling the discharge of a cannon.

For many long hours the firemen worked hard and unceasingly, and finally succeeded in confining the flames to the block, staying the spread of the fire to the adjoining buildings, and preventing the loss of other valuable properties. The now standing walls on the east and south sides of their burned block are monuments to the energy, heroic services, and arduous work. The Supply of water was abundant and the firemen did their whole duty, none could do better--for which all thanks.

O.F. French & Co. druggists, whose store was on the corner, saved their stock of drugs, etc by removal.

Walter French, book store. Stock saved in a damaged condition.

J.A. Brown & Co, dry goods, saved but a small part of their large and extensive stock.

Mrs. M. Gray, stoves and tinware, saved the larger part of her stock of stoves, though damaged by water.

The second story was occupied by Dr. F.F. Innis, dentist. R.W. Shaw, lawyer. Dr H.L. Putnam, physician. Dr H.A. Green, dentist. J.A. Browne, dry goods. Miss Kate Collins, dressmaker. Geo A. Perrigo, lawyer. John R. Weed, Trial Justice, and Daniel Webster, lodging room.

In the third story were the Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias halls, both recently fitted with much expense.

Estimated Losses

O.F. French & Co. building \$6,000; insured, for \$3500. No insurance on stock, which was mostly saved.

J.A.Browne & Co, estimates their loss on store and stock at from \$12,000 to \$15,000 more than the insurance, which was between \$6,000 and \$7,000. They are heavy losers.

Mr. S.A. Gray's loss is a heavy one, estimated at \$8,000 on the building; insured for \$1,000. Mrs M. Gray's loss on stock, estimated at \$1,500.

Dr F.F. Innis lost nearly all his office fixtures, dental and optical stock and instruments. No insurance.

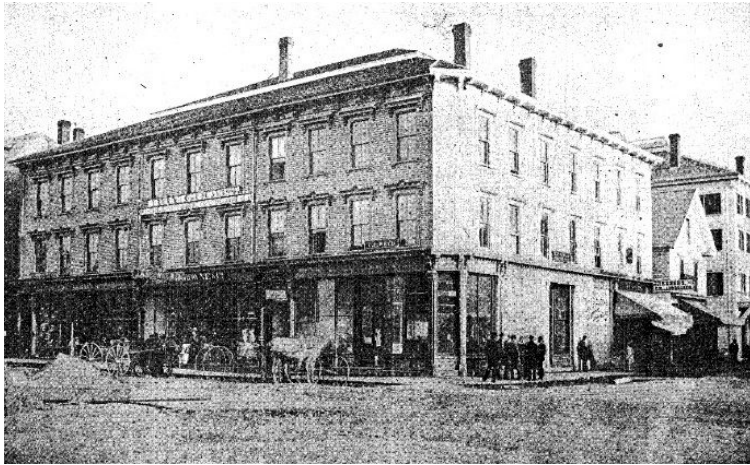
R.W. Shaw lost office fixtures, portion of his library. His safe was burned in the building.

Dr H.L. Putnam's loss was in office furniture, etc, and books damaged by removal.

Dr H.A. Green lost nearly all his office outfit. No insurance.

Miss Kate Collins lost sewing machine and furniture in her rooms. Nothing was saved.

G.A. Perrigo, Esq, books and office furniture.



Rockabema Lodge of I.O.O.F.--
loss very heavy, estimated at
\$3,000 insured for \$1,000. Their
hall had recently been fitted up in
fine style. All the paraphernalia
including many fine uniforms
belonging to members of the
Canton, were lost.

The Knights of Pythias lost everything in their new hall which was handsomely fitted up and furnished. Loss \$4,000, insured for \$500.

J.K. Osgood, in the adjoining block on Main Street, removed his stock of watches, jewelry, etc. to the brick block across the street, as also Walter A. Nickerson's stock of dry goods, which was much damaged by the removal.

It was with much hard labor that the firemen succeeded in preventing the spread of the fire on Court street, and thereby saving J.C. Harrigan's building from destruction. It was scorched on the roof and side, besides the injury to the interior by water, Mr.

Harrigan got out his grocery stock, and Mr. John Boyle who occupied the second story as a tailor shop, suffered loss in the removal of his goods.

Notes

Union block was one of the most thoroughly constructed wooden blocks in town, and was a long time in burning.

Sparks and cinders from the burning block were carried a long distance, but owing to the dampness prevalent did no damage. The wind was in a south-westerly direction and was not blowing hard.

There was more or less pilfering as is usual, at the fire Monday morning. One man was arrested by Deputy Perkins while carrying away a bundle of dry goods.

A tramp was taken out of the burning block, found asleep in an upper story, and was lodged in the lock up.

The cause of the fire is not known. It is attributed to a defective chimney.

R.W. Shaw's safe was removed from the ruins this Wednesday. It had fallen one story to the basement where it lay in the hot coals and debris for many hours. Though the safe

was ruined the contents were found to be in good condition and not at all injured by the fire.

J.A. Brown's safe has been opened and the contents found uninjured. Both of these safes were of the Morris & Ireland make.

-- From the Aroostook Times, October 19, 1893.



