

10 Homes Razed, Store Damaged In \$250,000 Fire at Beachburg

BEACHBURG, April 9.—(Staff) — Ten homes were razed and damage estimated at \$250,000 caused when fire raged through the north and west ends of this Westmeath township village of 600 this afternoon and evening.

The estimate of damage was given by Reeve John D. McLean of Westmeath township.

Services Disrupted.

Telephone and Hydro communications were disrupted, but telephone and Hydro service was restored shortly after 9 p.m. when the fire was reported under control by firemen from Pembroke and Cobden and Beachburg volunteers. The fire, however, continued to burn for several hours.

Hydro workers were at the scene attempting to repair the damage while firemen were still trying to bring the blaze under control.

The general store operated by James Bennie was partially burned, two nearby were untouched by the flames licking at the roof tops, but the remainder of the business section was threatened for an hour by the flames, driven by a 25-mile-an-hour wind.

From Renfrew, Pembroke, Cobden, Westmeath, Lapasse and other centres nearby came several hundred carloads of curious on-lookers who milled around the main street of Beachburg from late afternoon until far into the evening.

Smoke was visible as far away as Pembroke and the wind-driven flames could be seen 10 miles from the village. The entire population turned out to help fight the flames in bucket brigades, drawing water from the mill creek until Pembroke's new pumper arrived just after four o'clock.

Reeve John D. McLean of Westmeath township told The Journal the fire was the worst ever to sweep through any community in the Beachburg area. About 30 persons were left homeless but, he said, neighbors had rallied around to offer assistance as soon as their plight was known.

Many of the families were able to save clothing and furniture which they piled along the south side of the main street.

Some of the homes were covered by insurance, others partly, while about five householders had no insurance whatsoever.

Joseph Beach, widely known dairy farmer throughout Renfrew county, was the heaviest loser, although his property was believed to be well covered by insurance. His attractive, two-storey, white frame home was razed to the ground as well as several barns and stables and a large machine shop. His Holstein dairy herd was saved but valuable farm equipment was lost. His property is close to a mile from where the fire broke out.

Started After 3 p.m.

The blaze originated just after three o'clock in the small frame home of Lowell McLelland at the west end of the town. His wife had started a fire in the kitchen stove and noticed the blaze when she was standing outside the front door.

Mrs. McLelland ran to the general store nearby, operated by James Bennie and notified several men talking inside the brick building.

By the time the men reached the house it was ablaze and flames, fanned by the strong west wind, had spread to a home owned by Osborne Johnston, on the main street. The Johnstons had only time to save a few household articles and clothing before the fire was raging through the upstairs.

Living in the same house with Mr. and Mrs. Johnston and their three children, Brian, Garry and Mary, were Mr. and Mrs. Sam Holmes and their children, June, 10, and Clark, 13.

By that time volunteers had arrived to help fight the flames, but the wind had spread fire to the home of Mrs. Roy Moore who with her two sons, one daughter and daughter-in-law, lived in a house next door.

The Johnston and Moore homes,

two of the oldest landmarks of the town, were destroyed.

From there the fire headed towards the main business section farther up the street but a sudden change in the wind saved the Bennie store and the rest of the homes across the street. Fire began at the rear of the store but was quickly extinguished.

It swept instead through two frame homes, one occupied by Mrs. Archie Crozier and another by Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Severin, whose home was owned by Reeve McLean.

The wind changed again to threaten the business section a second time when it shot flames into the home of Mrs. A. M. McLean. Mrs. McLean was away in Toronto and no one was living in the huge brick building.

From there sparks set fire to the grass in the exhibition grounds but several buildings were saved. The grass fire spread a half mile across fields to ignite barns and stables on the Beach property and in no time even the huge frame home was ablaze.

Mr. Beach was away in Renfrew and arrived home shortly after five o'clock to see the roof of his home cave in. By that time the rest of his property had been destroyed as well as a quantity of modern farm equipment. His livestock was saved by neighbors.

From the Beach farm, situated at the east end of town and back off the main street, fire spread through fields to farms and buildings of Herman Werle and Holly Anderson. Both homes were destroyed as well as farm equipment housed in the barns and stables.

No Water Available.

There was no water with which to extinguish the fire at the three farms and spectators, eager to help but unable to do so, grouped around the front of the homes moving furniture to a safe distance.

Just after six o'clock the wind began to subside and it was only then that firemen from neighboring towns and fire fighters of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests were able to bring it under control.

Mr. Bennie, greatly relieved when only the rear of his store was slightly damaged, was given a second scare when informed his large stone home on the main street was burning. He returned to help neighbors battle the flames on the roof of the house. The fire fighters had the small blaze under control within minutes.

Fire Chief Robert P. Dey, of Pembroke, led the firemen at the scene until after midnight.

Gananoque Man Reported 'Much Better'

MONTREAL, April 9.—(CP)—Condition of two Ontario visitors seriously injured yesterday when their automobile struck a slow-moving train was reported "much better" today.

The two are Alfred MacLennan of Lindsay and Howard Ball of Gananoque. They were taken to St. Mary's Hospital and it now is believed they are on the way to recovery.

The accident occurred at a Canadian National Railways crossing in suburban Ville St. Laurent.

Boy, Three, Victim Of Gasoline Explosion

SUDBURY, Ont., April 9.—(CP)—A three-year-old boy victim of a gasoline explosion in his home, died today in hospital.

The youngster Raymond Baurvéau, was playing in the kitchen when his grandfather placed an open basin of chilled gasoline on a cook stove to warm. The boy was a mass of flame after a blast rocked the house.

The coroner has ordered an inquest.

BAIL FORFEITED.

HAMILTON, April 9.—Bail of \$10,000 each was estreated by the court this morning for 19-year-old Elaine Peltier, and James Jamieson, 37, salesman, when they failed to appear before Magistrate H. A. Burbidge on charges under the Narcotics Drug Act.

1948 Beachburg Fire

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