

FIGHTERS *of the* **"FIRE** **FIEND"**

**A HISTORY OF SCUGOG'S
FIRE BRIGADES & FIREFIGHTERS
1861-1999**



BY J. PETER HVIDSTEN

FIGHTERS OF THE "FIRE FIEND"

Researched and Published by J. Peter Hvidsten

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Cover Painting by Peter Moore, 1999

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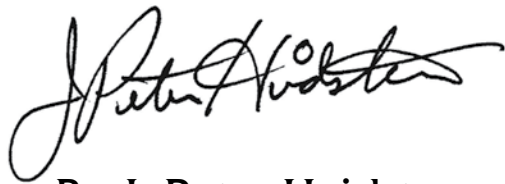
To contact publisher: 905-985-3089 Cell: 905-449-6690

email: jpeterhvidsten@gmail.com

NOTE: "Fire Fiend" was a term used during the 1800s to describe an exceedingly cruel conflagration which spread rapidly through a community causing catastrophic damage and destruction.

FIGHTERS *of the* **"FIRE** **FIEND"**

**History of Scugog's
Fire Brigades & Firefighters
1861-1999**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. Peter Hvidsten". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

By J. Peter Hvidsten

Table Of Contents

PART ONE	7
Fire Brigades 1860-1870	8
Fires of the 1860s	13
Fires of the 1870s	15
Hydrants & Water Tanks	20
 PART TWO	 7
Fire Brigades 1980-1890	21
Fire Engines & Equipment	28
Fires of the 1880s	29
Port Perry Fire Bylaws	41
Fires of the 1890s	43
Fire Fighting Equipment	46
 PART THREE	 47
Firefighters Gear	48
The Fire Chiefs	49
Fire Brigades 1900-1909	51
The Fire Chiefs	62
 PART FOUR	 65
Fire Brigades 1950-1959	66
Fire Brigades 1960-1969	73
Fire Brigades 1970-1979	77
Fire Brigades 1980-1989	83
Fire Brigades 1990-1999	89

Introduction

FIRE!

That one word instilled more fear into the hearts of most pioneers than any other during the formative years of the earliest settlers. Fire was a constant, but evil and feared companion of farmers, householders and businesses throughout hamlets of Reach Township and Port Perry every day of the year.

It was not uncommon, particularly during the cold winter months, when homes and businesses were being heated by wood heating units, to hear the clang of the fire bells and the cries of ***Fire! Fire! Fire!*** echoed throughout the community, warning that the dreaded “Fire Fiend” was at its work again.

“Fire Fiend” was a term often used by newspaper editors throughout the later part of the 18th century, to describe the conflagrations that so often descended upon their communities.

As you will read throughout this document, fires were being recorded in newspapers as early as 1854, although Reach Township did not have its first newspaper until late 1857. Other communities, primarily to the south, reported fires regularly in their publications, even reporting in 1843, a fire at the home of Reach Township’s first settler, Reuben Crandell. It was in 1843, his Queen Street home, which was also used as a hotel, was completely destroyed by fire.

During those early years, the pioneers of these small settlements had little more than muscle, determination and buckets and water to fight fires, but most structures having been constructed of wood, fared little chance of being saved once the fire took hold. Barns, houses and buildings, located far away from the built-up villages, were at tremendous disadvantage when fire struck. Most often there was no help for miles around, and with no help generally the buildings went up in blaze as the owners looked on helplessly.

Small hamlets throughout Reach Township and Port Perry, while having far more hands available to help when fire intruded, really only had the resilience of its population to fend off the flames – forming bucket brigades to douse the flames.

With the loss of commercial, residential and farm buildings mounting, by the early 1860s town leaders in both Reach Township and Port Perry began to consider purchasing “hand pump fire-engines” to stave off the full destruction of their villages. And while these fire-engines were a tremendous improvement in fighting fires, without an abundance of water they were almost useless. It was unfortunate that in many villages, water in the quantities the fire-engine required was not always readily available.

It was only after two disastrous fires in Port Perry, one in 1883 and a second six months later in 1884, that a steam-powered fire engine was purchased. This engine was capable of throwing up to 400 gallons a minute onto a fire. But once again, unless the fire was close enough to a good supply of water, sufficient water was not always available. If the firefighters could not access water from Lake Scugog, they depended on water reservoirs set up in strategic locations throughout the town. But once again, if they were drained before a fire could be brought under control, there was little the fire engine could do.

Despite all the issues related to fighting the “fire fiend”, the communities in and around Port Perry survived. The stories throughout this document will provide a glimpse of the constant threat the settlers faced, as fire razed their homes and business for much of the 19th century.

NOTE: “Fire Fiend” was a term used during the 1800s to describe an exceedingly cruel conflagration which spread rapidly through a community causing catastrophic damage and destruction.



REACH TWP. & PORT PERRY CHIEF ENGINEERS" or "FIRE CHIEFS

1878 - 1883	MARK CURRIE
1883 - 1886	WILLIAM KENNEDY (May 1883 -
1886 - 1893	HUMPHREY ROBERTS
1893 - 1894	JUSTUS ENSIGN (died in September 1894)
1894 - 1904	WILLIAM CORRIN (retired in 1930 after 45 years on the fire brigade)
1904 - 1905	JOHN T. ELLIOTT
1905 - 1912	JOHN W. MEHARRY (Chief)
1912 - 1916	WILLIAM COOK
1916 - 19??	ARTHUR J. THOMPSON
19??- 1933	WM. H. MacGREGOR (retires in February 1933 due to illness)
1933- 1949	WM. "BERT" MacGREGOR, son of W.H. MacGregor (Feb. 1933 - 1949?)
1949 - 1969	GUY RAINES (1949 - January 1969)
1969 - 1971	HARVEY MAHAFFEY (January 1969 - 1971)
1971 - 1992	JACK COOK, appointed Chief during Harvey Mahaffey's illness in April 1970. Became full time Chief in 1971
1992 - 1995	DON Steel, First Fire Chief for both Port Perry and Caesarea Halls. (October 1992 - resigns in March 1995)
1995 - 2017	RICHARD MILLER (March 1995 - February 2017)
2017 - 2024	MARK BERNEY (March 2017 - September 2024)
2024 -	MIKE MATHEWS (October 2024 - present)

CARTWRIGHT TWP. FIRE CHIEFS

1960 - 1972	CHARLES MILLER. (Jan. 1960 - 1972)
1972 - 1989	LEONARD SCOTT (1946 - March 1989)
1989 - 1992	RAY GOULD (April 1989 - October 1992)

** Please Note: Dates are as close as can be determined.*



NOTE: Fire Engineers, later known as Fire Chiefs, were responsible to ensure firefighters possessed the skills to fight fires. They were also responsible to make sure the fire brigades equipment was in good working order, and would allow firefighters to deliver water quickly to life safety systems, search and rescue ropes, hoses, and portable fire pumps.

Fire helmet featured at the top of this page is an example of the style of fire helmets used by early firemen and is not necessarily the style used by Port Perry firefighters during the 1800s.

Part One

FIGHTERS
of the ***"FIRE***
FIEND"

**Fire Brigades
of the
1860s - 1870s**

FIRE BRIGADES

Fire Brigades 1860s - 1870s

THE earliest documented fire in Reach Township takes place in 1854 when a steam and saw mill located on the Nonquon River burned to the ground consuming with it more than 100,000 feet of lumber. This undoubtedly was just one of many buildings destroyed by fire before the 1850s, when few printed records exist of the happenings in this pristine rural township.

Long before the first fire brigade was formed in Reach Township, fires were commonplace in the out-reaches of the township and fighting the fire demon during those earliest of days was primarily done with buckets of water.



A good example of how the pioneer settlers fought the dreaded "fire fiend" is given by William Corrin, who was a firefighter for 45 years before retiring in 1930. On his retirement he described how, when he was a lad, the sound of the fire alarm brought out every able-bodied man and boy from the village and surrounding area. *"Each man grabbed a pail and two lines were formed between the fire and the water supply. One line would pass the pails along the line and up to a man on a ladder, who threw the water on the fire. The other line passed the empty buckets back to the water supply to be filled again and again,"* he explained.



It wasn't until August 1861 the first serious discussions regarding the formation of a "fire company" took place. Conversations between local merchants and residents debated the merits of fire engines, with the consensus being that Prince Albert, Borelia and Port Perry would be greatly benefit from the formation of a fire company.

Of course there were many opinions and concerns surrounding the cost, quality and size required. Some were in favor of purchasing a large engine and forming a fire company, while others felt there was not enough people sufficiently interested in forming one. Among the suggestions was the formation of a "Union Fire Company", composed of men from the three villages. Alternately, many merchants felt that each of the three villages would benefit most by purchasing a small engine for their own community.

Others argued that the cost would be too high to purchase a suitable sized fire engine. Also to organize the number of men required; provide the training required to operate it, and finance the endless costs for repairs and storage. Another concern was that the lack of a

Bucket Brigades were a method used for early firefighting. It required a long line of people who would pass buckets of water hand-to-hand from the nearest water source to the site of a fire.

sufficient water to supply to operated the fire engine.

Not one of the three villages had water tanks or reservoirs from which to draw water, so there was additional concern for the cost of installing these necessities. It was agreed by most, that Lake Scugog being such a distance from both Borelia and Prince Albert, it would be almost impossible to bring water from that distance in time.

James Holden, publisher of the local newspaper, the *Ontario Observer*, suggested in 1858 that it was his opinion that two or three small "hand engines" would be preferable to a large one. He suggested that the leading merchants of each village might purchase a small engine for themselves, or small groups of businessmen work together to purchase one to share.

He also suggested that the inhabitants petition the Reach Twp. council to pass a by-law, levying a sufficient tax upon the ratepayers of the villages, to enable them to purchase three or four small engines for each village, and also the necessary articles for a hook and ladder company. Three or four small engines could be purchased with less money than it would cost for a large one, he said. There is no record the villagers petitioned council.

Seven year passed before discussions surrounding the need for "fire engines" began again. In January 1868, at the request of local ratepayers, a meeting council and ratepayers was held to discuss the purchase of one or more fire engines for the town. A committee was formed and Wm. H. Shipman was delegated to travel to Toronto to examine engines for sale in that city.

A report on his finding was never published, but more than two years later, in September 1870, the Port Perry Fire Company was reported to have made its debut at a fire in Prince Albert, but on arriving they only able to save one of two barns, due to lack of a water supply.

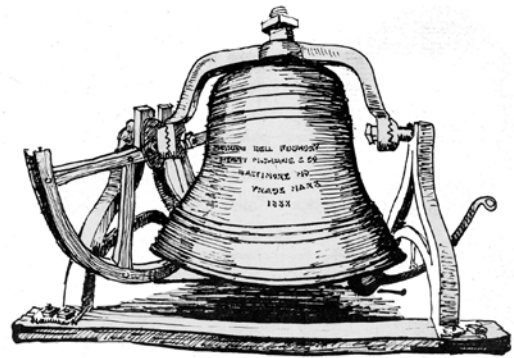
The next time mention of the Port Perry Fire Brigade is found in April 1, 1873 when firemen were called to assist in a fire in the business section of Prince Albert.

The *Observer* newspaper reported; *"The well known sound of the Port Perry Fire Brigade was heard approaching, and though under the circumstances they could not make themselves much help in saving the property – the monster having been shorn of its strength before they arrived – still their presence was highly acceptable and their generous effort most thankfully received."*

Within within three hours from the fire's first discovery it had laid in ashes a large block of stores on the north-east corner of Simcoe and King Streets, extending along Simcoe St., for 100 feet, and along King St. an additional 100 feet.



Circa 1875 Hose Cart Hazleton Fire Department.
Photo courtesy Dave Butcher



**Young boys
would head for
the Town Hall
when they heard
the firebell, and
the constable
would let them
give the rope the
last few pulls.**

December 1873

Until the new Town Hall was completed, the fire engine was stored in other buildings around the town, including Emany's Carriage Factory. On one occasion in December 1873, council was informed the engine had been "kicked out" on the street and was sitting frozen and utterly worthless in the event of a fire taking place.

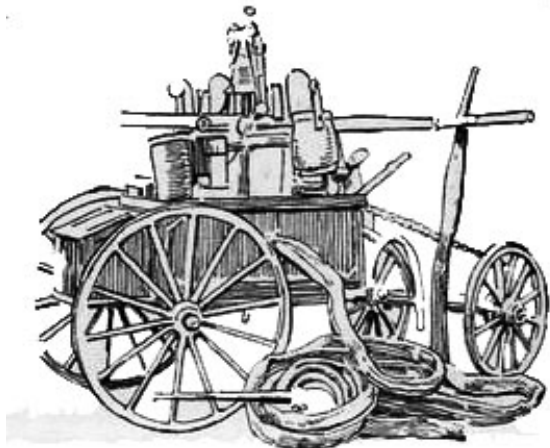
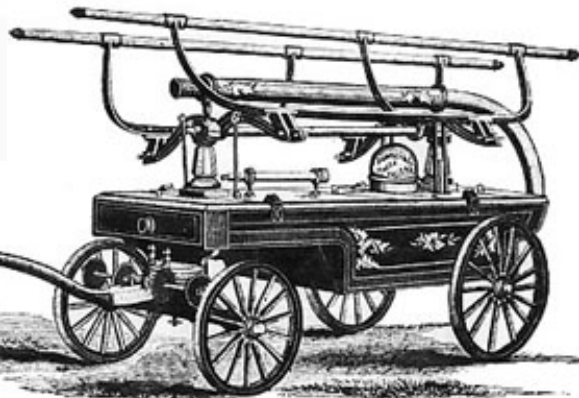
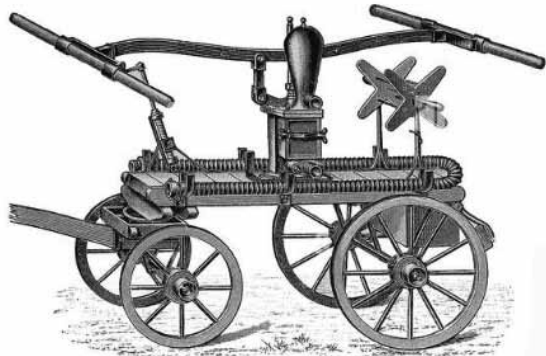
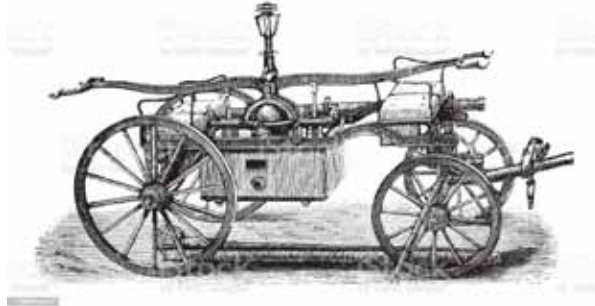
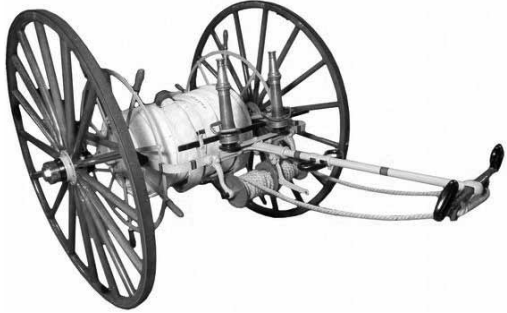
Mr. Austin Platten, the keeper of the engine, said that something must be done at once. It was finally agreed to secure a temporary shelter until the basement of the Town Hall is prepared to receive it.

~

Water, or more accurately, lack of water was a curse for the firefighters. In 1872 while responding to a fire in a schoolhouse,

Fire Engines & Equipment

1850s to 1880s



The sketches on this page are not intended to illustrate the fire equipment operated by the Reach and Port Perry Fire Brigades. They are only examples of the styles of equipment used during the 1800s by fire departments throughout Canada and the USA.

**First building
used to shelter
Port Perry's fire
engine was in
the basement
of the new
Town Hall.**

they arrived to find the well unable to supply water. Once again the *Ontario Observer* editor commented harshly, writing: "The energetic fire brigade were on hand on short notice, but what of it? They had the satisfaction of dragging the engine to the spot and standing looking at her without a cupful of water to feed her. They must have felt like kicking the old thing down the hill."

What happened to the Port Perry Fire Company first formed in 1870, is a mystery, as a few years later, it was reported that a "new Fire Brigade, the first in the village" was announced.

In February 1872, the subject of building a town hall for the new corporation of Port Perry was tabled at a council meeting, which resulted in the forming of a committee, consisting of Reeve Joseph Bigelow and councillors William Tate and Allan N. Sexton to obtain plans and the possible cost of building a suitable town hall.

The following month, Port Perry council passed a Bylaw at a regular meeting, to debenture \$10,000 – *"for organizing a Fire Department, including the purchase of an engine and the building of water tanks; for purchasing site and building Town Hall."*

They settled on a site on the south-west corner of Queen and Lilla (Simcoe) St. Almost two years later, as the new town hall was nearing completion, Port Perry council authorized the basement of the new hall to be used as a temporary shelter for the town's fire engine.

There was no further mention of a Fire Brigade for the village until July 1874 when Reeve J. Bigelow and Mark Currie were instructed to procure three, Hand Fire Engines for the use of the corporation, with the hooks and ladders necessary to fight fires. They designated that one of the fire engines would be stationed at Borelia. Reeve Bigelow was instructed by his council to organize a fire company of not more than 25 men. Time marched on and it was almost two years later before Port Perry's new Fire Brigade was announced as being the first the village had ever formed.

An *Observer* article in August 1876, announced; *"Our new Fire Brigade, the first we ever had in the village deserving the name, is thoroughly organized, fully equipped and prepared for action."* The company consisted of 25 men local businessman Mark Currie selected its chief engineer.

Members of the new fire company would meet at least once a month, and each man was paid 25 cents for attendance. When called out to a fire, if the time on the job was less than an hour, each man received 50 cents. If the firefighters were required for one hour or more, each man received one dollar.

A report on the efficiency of the fire brigade one year after being formed found that the response time of the brigade was slow. It took 15 minutes after the fire bell was sounded before a enough men could be assembled to move the fire engine. Although slow, the first trial of the engine showed it to be in good working order, but not sufficiently powerful to force water to any great distance or to send a stream of any size to the top of the buildings.

The committee also inspected the water tanks (reservoirs) around the village and found quantities of water varying from 8' to 24' in several tanks, and that of the 24 wells and tanks spread out around the village, the average quantity of water was 15 feet. Among the committee's recommendations was an additional 300 feet of hose be procured for the present engine; and they would further recommend the formation and equipment of a hook and ladder company.

The committee further recommended the purchase of a proper steam fire engine for the protection of the village and the against fire, and equipment of a hook and ladder company.

**Firefighters were
paid 25 cents for
attending month-
ly meetings and
50 cents for
attending a fire.**

**If they were on
duty longer than
one hour at a fire,
each man would
be paid one
dollar**

Port Perry council took action on the recommendation and in march 1878, they introduced a bylaw to raise \$4,000 for the purchase of a steam fire engine, but the bylaw was defeated when presented to the public. Concerns of the public was that the steam fire engine would be of no use unless more money was spent on providing water reservoirs in the west and south of the village.

Throughout the remainder of the 1870s the handled their duties without significant improvements of their equipment and fire engine. In spite of their effort – the fact that it often took too long to get to the site, and often they were faced with having no water to fight the fire – resulted in buildings being completely destroyed.

Defeat purchase of steam fire engine

Port Perry Standard: March 14, 1878

The Bylaw for raising \$4,000 for the purchase of a steam fire engine was submitted to the electors of Port Perry on Monday 11th inst., and defeated by a majority of 52, out of an entire vote of some 150, or two nays for every one yea.

No one will suppose for a moment that investing \$4,000 in a steam fire engine would have ended the matter. A considerable amount more would have been required ere the \$4,000 could be of an avail to the great part of the incorporation; a fire engine with a sufficient supply of water is only a sham and a delusion.

A large additional amounts would have to be expended in providing reservoirs in the west and south of the corporation, so that over \$5,000 may be reckoned on as the smallest sum likely to secure the necessary protection to all parts of the village.



This photo depicts six members of the Goose Island, N.Y., fire department in 1907. It is being used to illustration of what the Port Perry Fire Brigade may have looked like at about the same period.

Photo courtesy Chicago Daily News: Source: Chicago Historical Society

FIRES

OF THE 1860s

As will become evident in this section, fires during the early development of Prince Albert, Borelia and Port Perry were common. Most homes, barns and business establishments at this time were built entirely of wood, which with age became very dry.

It took little for a fire to erupt from a spark from a stove or fireplace, a candle or lamp being knocked over, or a lightning strike, to turn a comfortable home into a torch.

Firefighting methods during the early to mid-1870s was primitive. People living in rural areas often did not have fire fighting equipment at hand, so had to rely solely on the goodness of neighbours and family to form bucket brigades to try and douse the flames. Larger villages like Port Perry, by the late 1870s formed small Fire Brigades made up of local men, equipped with modest fire equipment. Unfortunately often by the time they arrived, they were too late to be of much use, or when they did get there was little or no water to feed their small engines.

Following are a sampling of some of the larger and most devastating fires recorded in local and neighbouring newspapers during the 1860s and 1870s. These are just a fraction of the fires that caused damage to homes, churches, business and institutions of this era.

~ 1865 ~

Five storey grist mill destroyed

Toronto Globe: May 6, 1865

On Tuesday 1st, the grist mill of Mr. Morris, at Port Perry, was destroyed by fire. The grist mill and the building occupied by Mr. Morris were the property of John Cameron, Esq., Ex-M.P.P. for Victoria and we believed were not insured.

The grist mill was five stories high and was built in 1856, but has been idle for the last four years; and the other building, formerly a saw mill, was recently leased by Mr. Morris for a shingle factory, and had been running but a few days.

Mr. Cameron's loss will be over twenty thousand dollars; Mr. Morris' about three or four hundred dollars.

Wesleyan Methodist Church in Prince Albert burned to ground

Toronto Globe: July 2, 1865

The Wesleyan Methodist Church in Prince Albert was burned to the ground early on Monday morning last. When discovered (about two o'clock) the flames had made so much headway that it was impossible to subdue them.

The fire must have been the work of an incendiary, and from the manner in which it broke through the roof, was probably kindled in the gallery over the vestry, where a quantity of lumbars and other articles were stored. The loss by the fire is estimated at from \$1,200 to \$1,500 – no insurance.

A tin can containing a quantity of raw pitch and pine chips was found near the building, a portion of which was probably employed in firing the school house on the previous Monday morning.

~ 1867 ~

Tannery and house destroyed by fire

North Ontario Observer: April 18, 1867

We regret that a disaster occurred in the place by fire, on the evening of the 8th inst., which resulted in the total destruction of the Tannery recently erected on Perry Street, and a dwelling house in the immediate vicinity.

The occupant of the premises, Mr. W. Armstrong, states that he examined the building as late as between nine and ten on the evening of the conflagration, at which time there was not the least trace of fire to be seen, and before eleven o'clock the building was enveloped in flames.

Every means available were used to stay its progress,

but ere half the stock could be removed, the building was burned to the ground. The house adjoining, occupied by Mr. Armstrong as a dwelling, soon fell pray to the devouring element; and despite the efforts put forth to save it, was soon reduced to ashes. The loss is estimated at \$1,200 with no insurance

Large building destroyed by fire

Toronto Globe: December 16, 1867

On Monday morning, 16th inst., the inhabitants of Port Perry were roused from their slumbers at 2 a.m. by a cry of fire, the flames of which were seen issuing from the rear of a two-story building, situated on Queen Street, the property of Mr. John W. Davis.

Every possible means were resorted to in order to check its progress; but as water was scarce, the efforts were unavailing, and before three o'clock the building was burned to the ground.

It was occupied by three tenants, who lost more or less of their household effects; and we are pleased to learn that tepees are being taken to make good their misfortune in this respect. The fire seemed to proceed from a stove-pipe; but how it actually originated is a mystery. The loss to Mr. Davis, with whom we sympathize, will be probably about \$1,000, partly covered by insurance.

People can not be too careful at this season of the year, with their stoves and stove-pipes. Perhaps it would be well to overhaul them at once, and have them fixed as securely as possible. Perhaps it would be well, too, for our "City Fathers" to take into consideration the propriety of purchasing a fire engine; for in case a fire occurred in a block of buildings, there is no knowing what results might attend it.

1869~

Fire destroys house on Christmas Eve

Ontario Observer: December 1, 1869

Our village had an exhibition of fire on Christmas Eve. About seven o'clock in the evening, a small house on King Street, opposite the Post Office, was observed to be on fire and the doors were found to be all fast, the family having gone to visit at a neighbours house.

The alarm bell soon collected the inhabitants of this and the neighbouring villages, who went to work with characteristic zeal to grapple with the devouring element and succeeded, almost miraculously in saving the fine residence of Squire Abner Hurd, and other valuable buildings.

The house in which the fire originated with nearly all it contained, was a heap of burning coal within a couple of hours from the time when it was first observed to be on fire. The fire is said to have originated about the stove pipe or chimney. People ought to be cautious in leaving their houses with large fires in the stoves.

~1868~

Fire consumes carriage factory

North Ontario Observer: February 18, 1868

"The village of Prince Albert experienced another heavy loss by fire on the evening of the 14th inst. About half-past eleven on Friday night, Mr. George White's Carriage Factory was observed to be on fire.

This must have been the commencement of it, as parties were constantly passing the building up to that time. The moment the fire was observed the bell was rung, and in very short time the building was surrounded by lots of men anxious to save the property, but all were entirely powerless to do so, there being no water within reach.

The consequence was that there were no means to doing anything except saving the loose property and protecting the houses on the opposite side of the street by means of snow.

This was gone into with a will and a large quantity of loose property saved, and doubtless some of the opposite buildings; but as far as the burning buildings were concerned it was most provoking to stand and look at them burning without being able to put forth a hand to save them in the entire absence of water, and not having the advantage of hook and ladder.

The result was the Carriage Factory was entirely consumed, with an excellent large house two stories high, the property of Mr. James Sanders and a large unoccupied house the property of Mr. Thomas Courtice, with a dwelling house attached belonging to the same party.

The loss of real estate must be about \$2,000, with the loss on loose property cannot be under \$900, of this only \$800 covered by insurance - \$400 on the Carriage Factory and \$400 on Mr. White's stock.

Mr. Sanders loses about \$1,300, no insurance; while Mr. Beatty, Mr. White's carriage building loses considerably in stock. The origin of the fire is a complete mystery.

Had there been a strong wind from the north or west the consequences to the village would have been more disastrous. Some more efficient means of fighting fires will have to be introduced into these villages."

FIRES

OF THE 1870s

~1870~

Robert Boynton's barn destroyed by raging fire in Prince Albert

North Ontario Observer: September 15, 1870

The useful but unwelcome sound of the fire-bell again rang throughout our village on the evening of Tuesday the 13th, and on turning out it was found that the barn of Mr. Robert Boynton, half-a-mile south of the village, was already enveloped in flames. The fire busting forth in every direction and licking up everything which came within its reach.



All hands went to work with a will and notwithstanding the proximity of the two barns – being only a few feet apart – one of them was saved, but not without the utmost exertion of many willing hands.

In fact, it seemed at one time to be a hopeless task, but the will was there and the fire was beaten back and building saved. Had the second barn burned, the dwelling house would have stood a poor chance of being saved.

The threshing machine had been at work all day threshing barley in the barn which was saved, and they had just turned the machine into the other barn with the intention of threshing the produce of 26 acres of wheat on the following day, but the greedy flame threshed it for them, but consumed it all and did not even spare the machine, the south barn and all it contained was licked up by the devourer.

The loss will range from \$1,500 to \$2,000 covered by insurance to the extent of \$1,250.

~1871~

Fire brought under control

Ontario Observer: March 9, 1871

The denizens of Prince Albert and the neighbouring villages were not a little startled on Sabbath evening last, when just about the time of opening evening services, the unwelcome clatter of the fire bell ran throughout our peaceful village.

The Port Perry bell soon joined the alarm and the

villagers with their accustomed energy, repaired to the spot with a moment's delay. It was found that the fire was in the loft of Mr. James Emaney's stable, convenient to his carriage factory.

Flames had already burst through the roof, but the combined effort of a number of energetic men soon subdued the flame and extinguished it, ere it had done much damage.

Had the fire gained the mastery and caught the carriage factory it would have made great destruction.

Steamer Victoria burned at Lindsay

Toronto Globe: June 27, 1871

The steamer *Victoria* was burned last Saturday evening at the lower railroad wharf in the town of Lindsay. The origin of the fire is unknown.

Considerable personal property belonging to the captain and hands was lost. The loss is estimated at from \$10,000 to \$12,000.

The steamer is owned by Mr. N. Shaw of Peterborough and was in charge of Captain Ross.



~1872~

Fire destroys Port Perry Carriage Factory operated by George U. White

Ontario Observer: September 12, 1872

On Tuesday, 10 inst., the unseemly, clatter of the Port Perry fire bell grating forth its execrable sounds about 6:30 a.m., warned the denizens to prepare to fight, the thousand, tongued demon which had reared in their midst.

It appears that Mr. George U. White, of the Port Perry Carriage Factory, being pretty well driven with business started work with all his hands at five o'clock of the morning of the fire and after having wrought about an hour and a half went off to breakfast. About this time the foreman of the wood work department, in going upstairs to his work perceived fire around forge chimney and immediately gave the alarm.

The fire bell was rung and a general turn out of the male and partly of the female inhabitants was the result; but from the combustible materials of the second flat, paints, oils, shaving, moss etc., the fire in a few minutes gained complete mastery of the building.

For some time previous the fire engine had not been in a proper condition for work. Mr. Caleb Crandell had a few days previous called the attention of the caretaker of the engine to the fact and advised him to have it repaired, and at this time the engine had been turned up with a view to undergoing the required repairs so that it was in a bad condition for active service.

But it must be brought to the scratch and in a surprisingly short time it was brought up to the most convenient tank, but the absence of the necessary feeders, the water had to be supplied to the engine with pails; and crippled and all as it was it did noble service saving many thousand dollars worth of property. Now the fight fairly begins, the firemen on their part struggling with the monster, while the villagers each one in his own way, joins in the struggle, each one working like a bear.

But nothing could stay the progress of the fire fiend, he had already got full control of the building and threatened those on the opposite side of the street. Fortunately for the engine and tank, the fire would doubtless have consumed property to the value of at least \$20,000 or \$30,000 more. The supply of water in the tank held out till its work was done. All the well in the neighbourhood were exhausted by those who as skirmishers fought the fire.

Within an hour from the time that the fire was first seen, the Carriage Factory and Mr. Warriner's Boot and Shoe establishment were nothing but a heap of ashes. The fire is supposed to have been caused by sparks from the forge chimney lodging in a joint in the floor of the second story and setting fire to the downy stuff which had collected there from the moss and carriage trimmings. Mr. White estimates his loss at \$6,000, this includes a very large stock of paints, oils, seasoned lumber, carriages. He is insured for \$2,650.

~1873~

Fire levels Prince Albert into ashes

North Ontario Observer: April 1, 1873

On Tuesday the 1st of April about 11 o'clock at night the inhabitants of the peaceful, happy village of Prince Albert were startled by the trice unwelcome Fire! Fire!

The scene of conflagration was not long left in doubt. At eleven o'clock the fire was first discovered in the upper part of Willcox's Drug & Grocery store, a little larger than the light from a lamp, but within a very few minutes it burst forth with great fury spreading south to Mr. Joshua Wright's Boot and Shoe establishment and north to Mr. Wightman's extensive Dry Goods, Grocery and Clothing establishments.

There was a strong south-east wind blowing at the time, in the first place carrying the flame right towards the Victorian Hotel and Mr. George Currie's empty store.

As the fire progressed northward it threatened the Anglo-American Hotel, Rolph's Harness Shop and other buildings. The devouring fed was by this time at the height of his strength shooting his thousand forked tongue far up into the heavens and kissing the buildings all around.

At this stage the well known sound of the Port Perry Fire Brigade was heard approaching, and though under the circumstances they could not make themselves felt in saving the property – the monster having been shorn of its strength ere they arrived – still their presence was highly acceptable and their generous effort most thankfully received.

Within three hours from its first discovery it had laid in ashes that splendid block on the north-east corner of Simcoe and King Streets, extending along Simcoe St., 100 feet and King St., 100 feet.

We heartily sympathise with all who have sustained injury by this unfortunate event, especially with our highly esteemed and worthy townsman, Abner Hurd, Esq., who is by far the heaviest loser by this calamity.

The village tender their sincere thanks to the Fire Brigade and all other outsiders who manifested their sympathy at this time in so tangible a manner. It is comforting to know that no bodily injury was received.

~1874~

Fire at the residence of WJ. Trounce

North Ontario Observer: March 12, 1874

A lady in passing the residence of William J. Trounce, Esq., about nine o'clock last evening observed fire issuing from around the chimney on the back kitchen. She immediately gave the alarm and a general rush was made for the spot and as quick as a flash each man rushed in to do battle with the foe.

Pails were flying in all directions and the house top soon bristled with active hands, whose noble exertions succeeded in confining the fiend to the rear building.

In the meantime other parties went in search of the "Fire Bell" and after a long and painful search succeeded in discovering it hid away amongst the snow and scrap-iron in Mr. White's back yard.

After digging out his bellhop half a dozen went at it with stones and pelted way till they fairly sweat, and by their combined efforts succeeded in letting the sound be heard 100 yards distance.

The men who had gone in search of the Fire Engine found they were too late, she had retired for the night and for safe keeping the doors were barricaded inside. It equipped a large expenditure of time and force to storm her castle, but after repeated attacks the doors were smashed in and the sleepy engine dragged from her retreat. She succeeded in arriving at the spot in time to see the naked rafters fall.

Dewart's Nonquon Hotel at Seagrave devoured by fire

Ontario Observer: March 27 1873

James Dewart's Hotel, Nonquon, with nearly all its contents was destroyed by fire on Sabbath 22nd inst. Mr. Dewart was on his way home about one o'clock in the day and while yet a considerable distance from the house he observed, to his no small alarm, that his premises were on fire.

By the time he reached the building the fire had made such progress as precluded all idea of saving the buildings. He accordingly turned his attention to saving his chattels, but could not do a great deal in that, and all speedily fell a prey of the devouring element.

By sawing the shed in two halves, the shed and stable and barn attached were saved. Mr. Dewart's loss in chattels amount to some \$400, of which \$300 is covered by insurance.

~1875~

Buildings destroyed in midnight fire

North Ontario Observer: September 16, 1875

"About 12:30 on Sunday last the discordant clatter of the Prince Albert fire bell announced the presence in our midst of the fire fiend who appears to have a preference for Prince Albert above any other village and shows that preference in the most decided manner by clearing off one or two of our best buildings annually.

On this occasion it was the residence of Mr. W.H. Hayes which was consumed. This was a good house immediately south of the Victoria Hotel. The fire first developed itself from under the shingles on the roof of the kitchen.

There was a strong "south-wester" blowing at the time and it is almost miraculous that the fire was confounded to one building seeing that it was surrounded by wooden buildings in close proximity all round; but there were an abundance of willing hands and lots of pails and plenty of water which was used to good purpose.

It was impossible for men to do more, or direct their energies to better purpose, than was done on this occasion. By unroofing and removing the south shed of the Victoria Hotel the fire was prevented from spreading further in that direction, but how the stables at the back of the burning building - there being only a passage between them and the house - were saved is almost unaccountable and proves how well and skilfully the fire was fought.

Had the fire taken the stables the greater part of the village must have gone. The hand fire engines supplied by Elija Cash and James Hilborn were of the greatest service and did much towards confounding the fire to the one building.

On this as on all similar occasions there are many exhibitions of genuine pluck and true heroism. Amongst the daring ones, Mr. Elija Cash held an honourable position, he not only supplied two powerful hand pumps whose valuable serves helped save a large portion of the village from being laid in ashes.

With only a single board placed between Mr. Cash and the blazing building, he stood about three feet from the flames and keep his useful little engine playing on the most exposed part of the stable which could not otherwise have been saved. And had the stable been burned a large portion of the village must of necessity have gone.

While mentioning the heroes we must not overlook the heroines, many of the ladies were no less active than the men, they wrought the pumps and did their part nobly.



The steamer Ogemah

~1876~

Fire damages steamers Anglo-Saxon and Ogemah while docked

Ontario Observer, November. 6, 1876

The *Anglo Saxon* and the *Ogemah* were docked beside each other at the Port Perry waterfront for the winter of 1876-77. Mr. Lebare, a night watchman at the waterfront mill, while on his nightly rounds, discovered fire on the *Ogemah* at 2 o'clock in the morning of November 6, 1876.

He at once alarmed the hands on board the *Anglo-Saxon* and then rushed up town and gave the alarm. Mr. Joseph Bigelow, of course, was the first to hear the alarm and on the shortest possible notice he was seen dangling at the end of the bell rope. Councillor John Rolph too, was speedily on hand and in a crack had the fire engine underway for the scene of the conflagration, but it was found on its arrival that its services were not required.

Mr. Bigelow after sounding the alarm on the bell rushed back to the boat and with the aid of the hands on the *Anglo Saxon* soon put all idea of fire out of the question, he had so drenched the boat and everyone within his reach that the entire surroundings had much more the appearance of a flood than of a fire.

The damage sustained by the steamer is comparatively light but had it not been for the vigilance of Mr. Lebare and the active exertions of Mr. Bigelow and the crew of the *Anglo Saxon* the results might have been disastrous. Captain Clement Dawes, the proprietor of the steamer is furious and will spare no cost in discovering the guilty parties.

The origin of the fire is a mystery as there had been no fire on board for quite a time and the captain uses every precaution for her protection.

~1878~

Fire! Fire! Fire!

North Ontario Observer: July 1, 1878.

The ever startling alarm of Fire! Fire! echoed from all quarters of Port Perry about 10:30 p.m., of the 10th inst., this was soon joined by the unmusical clatter of the town bell, and presently the internal yelling of the steam whistles joined the concert making a noise hideous enough and loud enough almost to awaken the dead.

There was no trouble in discovering where the fire was though. It was the last place where fire might be expected, it was found burning forth in every direction from about the centre of Mrs. Adam Gordon's elevator opposite the railway station. The Fire Company were promptly on the spot within an hour after the alarm was given and the many tongues of the fire fiend were playing in unrestrained luxuriance up to the very heavens.

The tardiness of the fire company, however, made no difference, for from the word "go" the fire appeared at its maturity, had the upper, centre part of the building completely under control and was roving about like a giant.

From the first alarm had there even been a steam fire engine on the spot it could not have saved the property, so magnificent a start did the fire get; and if a steam engine could not have saved it what could be expected from the town apparatus which has not power enough to extinguish a lucifer match. So much dry timber made a majestic blaze towering to the heavens in all its grandeur, but it soon went down. Of course the burning of the grain within was a slow process but the blaze was spent before an hour.

It is no easy matter to get at the loss, but the total amount of insurance is \$15,500, all in the Royal. On the building \$800, on the machinery, scales &c., \$700, and on the grain \$14,000. The building, machinery &c., belonged to Mrs. Adam Gordon and the grain to Mr. George Currie.

The destruction of the property is doubtless to be regretted, but the disaster is not so great as it might have been. This Elevator has always been a losing concern to the proprietor. The very suspicious, unpromising condition of the grain market takes much of the sting out of the grain consumption. The origin of the fire will likely remain a mystery.

~1879~

Fire destroys barn and stables

North Ontario Observer: August 14, 1879

About two o'clock on the morning of the 13th inst., the startling sound Fire! Fire! roused the peaceful slumberers of the entire village, in fact the hideous shouts and incessant clatter of bells could not fail in awakening all who might be expected ever to be awoken.

People had no sooner opened their eyes than the glare of light told them there was hot work somewhere. Mr. Prince's barns and stables, on the highest point of the village were found to be in a blaze. Our fire brigade hastened to the spot but they were powerless for two reasons; first, the fire had already got so old of the premises as ensured their destruction and second, had there been a chance, there was not water.

There were any number of spectators, but all were powerless and barns, stables and their contents were soon reduced to smoking embers. The loss will be considerable; one of the barns was but lately erected. The contents consisted of a large quantity of hay, this year's crop, oat sheaves, plows, wagon and large numbers of smaller articles.

The origin of the fire is a mystery, as no fire of any kind had been on the premises for a number of days. The family retired somewhat early in the night and knew nothing of the fire till awakened by a neighbour, when the fire was coming through the building.

Lightning strike devours two barns in Reach Twp.

North Ontario Observer, June 29, 1876

We regret exceedingly to learn that during the thunderstorm on Thursday morning last, about 3 o'clock a.m. one of the barns belonging to Messrs. D. & A. Munro, Lot 8, 9th Conc. Reach, was struck by lightning and set fire. The fire soon caught their other barn which stood contiguous to the one struck and very soon both barns with all their contents were reduced to ashes, or destroyed.

They were good frame barns, one 40'x50' and the other 30'x60 feet. The barns contained a good buggy, three pair of sleighs, fifteen tons of hay, fifty bushels of wheat and considerable other property.

Nothing but the dwelling escaped the devouring element, and that caught fire frequently. Thanks to the energy and activity of kind neighbours the dwelling was almost miraculously saved.

Fire Hydrants & Water Tanks

Prior to the invention and installation of hydrants and water systems in small village like Port Perry, Prince Albert and Manchester, the "bucket brigade" was the chief method for getting water to a fire.

Firefighters assisted by local citizens would line up between a house fire and a water source, such as a pond, lake or river, and pass buckets of water up and down the line. Later some fire brigades pulled tanks filled with water on wagons to the scene of a fire.

Both methods were less than totally effective as bucket brigades were slow, required many people and depended on a nearby water source. Tanks quickly ran out of water.

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Exactly when the first fire hydrants and water tanks were installed in Port Perry is not known but as early as 1858 Reach there were discussions for the need for a fire engine. Residents were reluctant to spend the money as there were no water tanks from which to draw water for the engine.

It wasn't until 1872 that Port Perry council passed a bylaw for the organizing a Port Perry Fire Brigade. The bylaw also included the purchase of a fire engine and the installation of water tanks in strategic areas of the town.

Four years later, 24 below ground water tanks and wells had been installed around the town, and during an inspection found quantities of water varying from 8' to 24' in several tanks. The average depth of the water in the tanks 15 feet.

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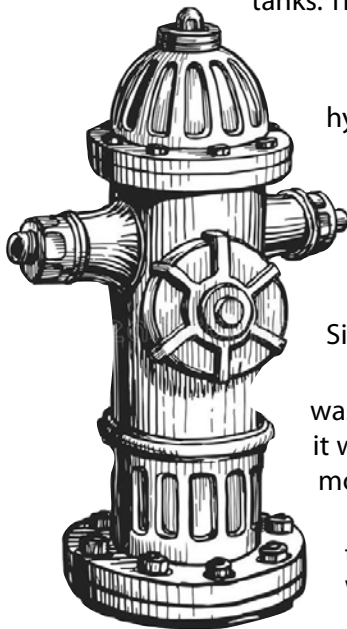
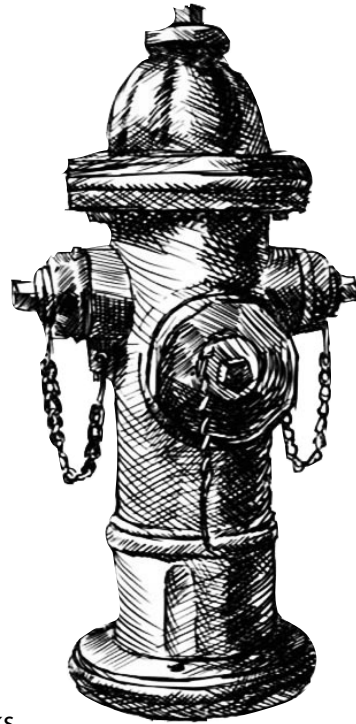
It wasn't until August 1904 that the first mention of fire hydrants having been installed in Port Perry is found

That year, council passed a bylaw authorizing the Corporation to use the Village Waterworks System, including the pumping station, water mains, water tanks and nine hydrants. The hydrants were installed along Queen St. from the railway station at the waterfront. to the water tower on Silver Street at the top of the hill.

The water tank on Silver St., in the former Borelia, was constructed by William Mills, Port Perry and when completed it was the largest tank of its type in the entire district. The "mammoth water vessel" was the pride of the town.

Due to spillage of water when being filled, In 1918 an electronic devise was installed at the tower to indicated when the tank was full.

Note: See page 23 for location of water tanks in the downtown.



Part Two

FIGHTERS *of the* **"FIRE** **FIEND"**

**Fire Brigades
of the
1880s - 1890s**

FIRE BRIGADES

1880s - 1890s

DURING the early years of the 1880s, the local members of the Rescue Fire Brigade attended numerous fires and they were often praised for their ability to hold back the flames. In February 1880 the men after tending to a fire at the home of harness maker Mr. Eck, on Lilla St., the Observer editor praised their efforts. *"Our active Brigade feared neither fire nor water, for drenched as wet as water could make them, they met and drove back the fire at every point,"* he wrote.

In April 1881, they attended a fire in a frame house the village, but were unable to save the structure as fire had all but consumed it by the time they arrived. But once again they received praise. *"Everything possible was done to save the building; the firemen fought like heroes and the fire engine behaved admirable. Certainly our fire company and their apparatus never appeared to better advantage,"* wrote the newspapers editor.

A decade later, local businessman James Carnegie provided a generous donation to the Fire Brigade for their services. He lauded their activity, perseverance and valuable assistance in saving so much of his property for destruction from fire.

Throughout the 1880s, the local fire company became known as the Rescue Fire Company, and in the capacity as a healthy institution, they became involved in more than fighting fires.

In May 1881, The Fire Brigade undertook to organize the celebration of the Queen Victoria's birthday. Months later they sponsored an Oyster Supper at the Mansion House, one of the village's best hotels. Not only the local residents were invited to attend, but also on hand was the Lieutenant Governor and Governor General of Ontario to extend their congratulations to the brigade.

Local businessman Mr. Wightman took advantage of the gathering to eulogize the firemen on their efficiency with the inadequate equipment they been supplied and encourage the council to provide better appliances with which they could fight fires.

"I would like to see the company armed with an engine that would be in keeping with the physique and activity of the company and a product of the present century," he concluded. There is no evidence that the council upgraded the fire company's equipment.

The firemen also organized Grand Steamboat Excursions, filling the boats to capacity for tours to Lindsay and beyond. They annually took part in Dominion Day Celebrations, providing grand torch-lit processions, and held Oyster Suppers annually at the end of the each year.

In May 1883, William Kennedy was appointed the Brigade's new Chief Engineer, replacing Mark Currie who had held the

Port Perry had 24 reservoirs spread out around the village to provide water for the fire engines.

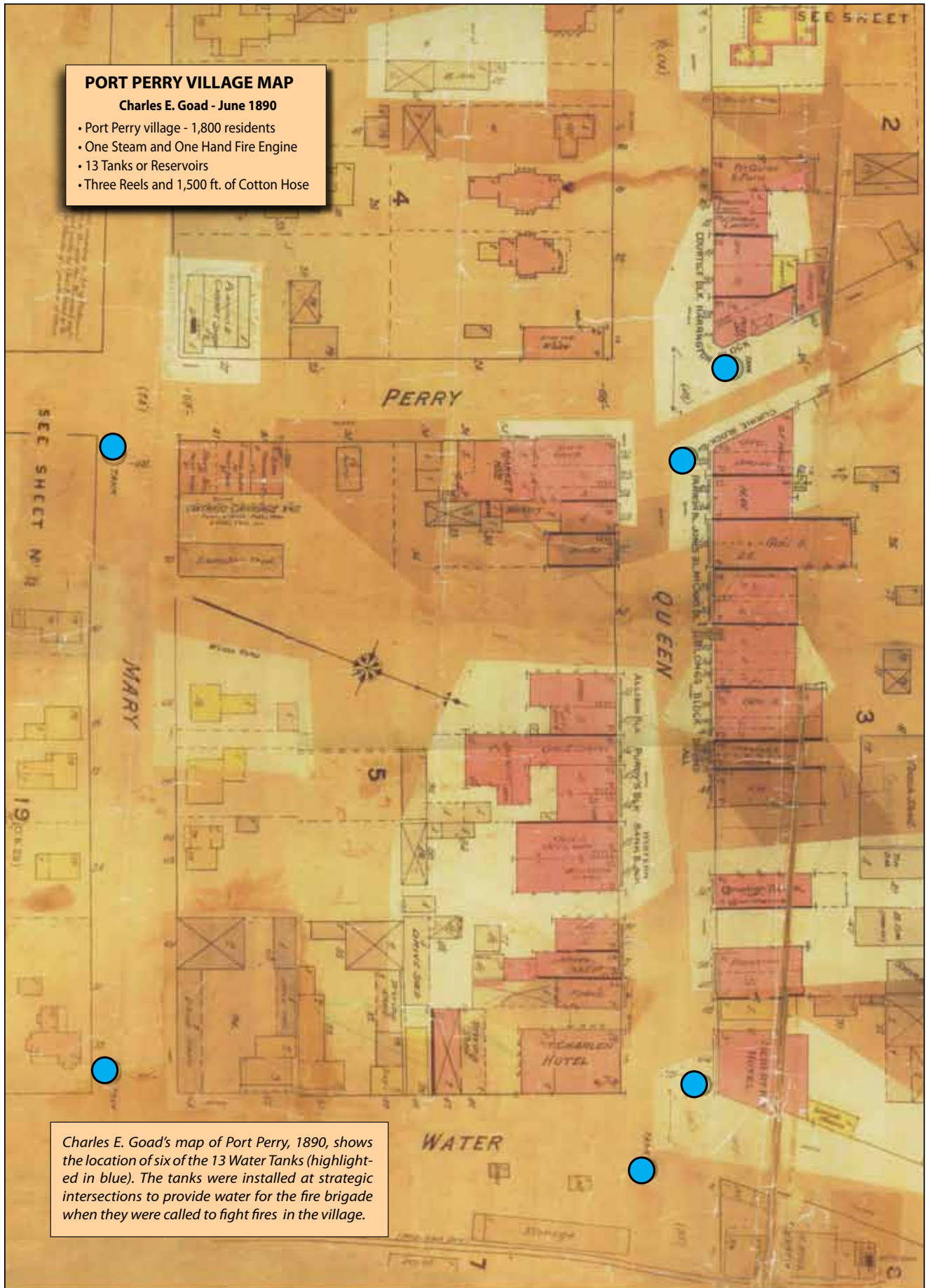
The average depth of standing water in the tanks was 15 feet.

August 1876

PORT PERRY VILLAGE MAP

Charles E. Goad - June 1890

- Port Perry village - 1,800 residents
- One Steam and One Hand Fire Engine
- 13 Tanks or Reservoirs
- Three Reels and 1,500 ft. of Cotton Hose



Charles E. Goad's map of Port Perry, 1890, shows the location of six of the 13 Water Tanks (highlighted in blue). The tanks were installed at strategic intersections to provide water for the fire brigade when they were called to fight fires in the village.

post for the previous five years. At the same meeting, councilor Caleb Crandell requested that the small fire engine be repositioned to the west end of town the former village of Borelia. He claimed that portion of the town should receive some portion of the brigade's equipment to combat any fire that might break out. He also offered to provide, free of charge, a suitable building in which to keep the engine. His motion was granted.

Seven months after William Kennedy became Port Perry's Fire Chief (Engineer), the "fire fiend" as they often referred to fires, raised its ugly head.

On November 26, 1883, fanned by a powerful blast of wind from the east, fire succeeded within three hours, in wiping out at least one-third of the business portion of the town and causing devastation and havoc in every direction.

The editor of the *North Ontario Observer*, commented that "Active and brave men flew to the rescue; our vigilant fire brigade were soon on hand but had to contend against fearful odds. Our worthy firemen were not once armed against such a foe, a common syringe is scarcely the thing against a mountain of flame; but all did their best and deserve thanks for their efforts."

Six months later, In July 1884, fire once again converged on Port Perry, which was at this time just rebuilding from the fire of November 1883. This time the fire blew in and raised the entire commercial core of the town. Firemen and townsfolk could do little to stop the beast as it roared through the town, leveling almost every building in its path.

The Port Perry Standard, reporting on the plight of the community following the fire praised the local firemen in its first issue after the fire. *"The firemen worked like heroes and with all others who assisted, deserve great credit for their bravery. Fortunately – gratefully indeed – was it ascertained after the turmoil and excitement and worry of that fearful and never to be forgotten night, that no human lives were lost, if even every resemblance to the former pretty and prosperous village had been obliterated."*

It didn't take long after the fire for the village council to craft a bylaw to act. In September, council invited John Ronald, of the Brussels Steam Fire Engine Works, to come to Port Perry and demonstrated his famous steam fire engines. The engine was reported to have impressed councilors, giving the utmost satisfaction to all who witness the display.

"The rush of water was so great than no fire could possibly live under it; wherever the stream was directed it fairly drenched everything that came in its way. It threw from 300 to 400 gallons a minute on whatever object it was aimed at. So thoroughly did it perform its work that all who saw it were unanimous in its praise and when the by-law providing for the purchase of a Steam Fire Engine came to be voted on the following day, it was carried by an overwhelming majority and the unanimous opinion of all was that the corporation should purchase Ronald's Steam Fire Engine."

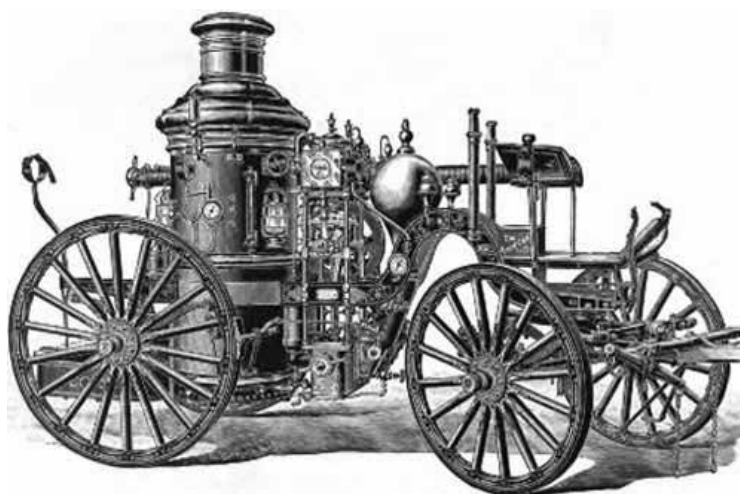
FIRE OFFICERS - Jan. 10, 1884

Election of Officers

The Rescue Fire Company elected following officers for the year 1884.

William Kennedy	Chief Engineer
John Powers	Captain
Thos. Hardell	1st Lieutenant
William Mills	2nd Lieutenant
W.H. Park	Secretary
Jas Humphrey	Assist. Secretary
Robert McKnight	Treasurer
James Wilson	1st Branchman*
William Irvin	2nd Branchman
Thomas Platten	3rd Branchman
William Bond	Captain Hose
George DeShane	1st Lieut. Hose
John Clemense	2nd Lieut. Hose
Joseph Hardell	Engineer
Robert Buntin	2nd Engineer
Peter Lansing	1st Axeman
John Mann	2nd Axeman

*The Branchman is the fire fighter directing the stream from a fire hose nozzle.



Sketch of a horse-drawn steam engine, similar to the Brussels Steam Engine purchased for Port Perry.

Bylaw 217 was passed with the following provisions: To provide for the borrowing or the credit of this municipality the sum of eleven thousand dollars to meet \$5,000 in debentures maturing 9th Sept., 1884 and for the purpose of purchasing a Shaw Fire Engine and other necessary fire apparatus and for the raising of the said sum by the issue of Debentures and providing for repayment thereof.

Whereas the Corporation of the Village of Port Perry deem it necessary and expedient to provide for the debentures amounting to \$5,000 maturing 9th Sept. 1884 and to purchase a steam fire engine and the necessary fire apparatus for the use of the Corporation.

The council passed another bylaw in December 1884:

Bylaw 224 - A bylaw to appoint a Chief Engineer and Engineer to the Fire Brigade. The Corporation of the Village of Port Perry therefore enacts as follows:

1. That William Kennedy be and is hereby appointed Chief Engineer of the Fire Brigade of this village.
2. The said Chief Engineer shall be paid an annual salary of ten dollars
3. That Martin Luther Crandell be and his is hereby appointed Engineer of the said Fire Brigade.
4. That Engineer shall be paid an annual salary of forty dollars.
5. The duties of the said Chief Engineer and Engineer shall be those set out in the bylaw of this Corporation respecting the said Fire

Brigade passed the 15th day of Dec. 1884.

Dated and passed the 15th day of December 1884.

Exactly when the village council, following the 1884 fire, authorized the construction of a hose-tower at the rear of the Town Hall is not known, but by 1889 an article in a Toronto newspaper reported the structure in place by September that year.

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There is a two-storey brick Town Hall, with square bell tower. At the rear of the hall is a fire station and hose-tower, and there is a steam fire engine and equipment required for a first-class fire department.

Toronto World,
September 23, 1889



WILLIAM KENNEDY

Served as Fire Engineer /
Fire Chief for more
than 20 years.

Despite the praise for the Shaw Fire Engine, purchased in 1884, the new equipment was not without its issues. Four years after purchasing it, in September 1889, during the monthly practice of firemen at the foot of Queen St. the engine failed. It had been running just a few minutes when it was found that the pump that supplies the water for the boiler was not working.

But even when the engine worked, efforts of the firemen were often hampered by the lack of water and their inability to save a structure which they could have if only they had enough water. This was the case in November 1890 when called to the beautiful residence of Norman Paterson on North St.

The fire brigade arrived at the scene and focused a stream of water directly on the flames. Before long, the water tanks within reach were exhausted so that the services of the engine ceased, and the fire raged on. All the firemen could do is watch the fire devour the entire home.

Local businessman James Carnegie lauded the efforts and perseverance of the Rescue Fire Brigade in February 1890, noting that their valuable assistance saved much of his property for destruction from fire. As a gesture of his appreciation he made a generous donation to the fire brigade.

Following another fire in 1890, where water again ran out before the fire could be quelled, the Ontario Observer's editor wrote following: "*Parties who had any doubt of the utility and efficiency of our steam fire engine, and witness her play with the fire*

on this occasion, so long as the water held out, will now doubtless disabuse their minds of any such doubt. She sent the water with such force as to literally rip the siding off the building. We venture assertion that no other town, or city, either in Canada has a superior steamer to ours. Our excellent Fire Brigade worked like heroes and did everything possible to save the property, but their efforts were almost fruitless owing to the insufficient supply of water."

Fire returned to Port Perry in October 1891, this time taking in a large block of buildings on the south side of Queen St. The firemen got a rude awakening about 2:50 a.m and it wasn't long until clatter of the fire bell rang out throughout the village. The flames had already made themselves visible through the roof at the rear end of the Laing & Meharry block and very soon the prospects of saving the building diminished.

But once again, the active and energetic men of the Rescue Fire Brigade arrived at the scene on short notice and directed streams of water from both the large and small fire engines at the raging blaze, confining it to the building in which it started.

It wasn't all fighting fires for the men of the Fire Brigade. Tending to their civic duties they often organized excursion on special holidays. For the Civic Holiday in August 1894, the local brigade took a large group on an excursion which began at Port Perry railway station. They ventured to Toronto and then by a palace steamer to Queenstone, where they transferred to an electric railway to Niagara Falls.



This Ronald steam pump engine, displayed by members of the Vancouver Fire Department in 1888, would have been similar to the kind purchased by the Port Perry Fire Brigade about 1885.



Illustration of a Steam Pump Engine being pulled by a team of horses.

Rescue Fire Company Annual Report for 1892

The following report is certified to as correct. The Rescue Fire Company has been in attendance at four fires during the year.

The first fire occurred Sunday, Jan. 11th, at 8 o'clock a.m. in the Church of the Ascension, and was quickly extinguished after the arrival of the fire engine.

The next fire at which the services of the brigade were required was discovered at 10:20 on the morning of August 2nd, which proved to be Mr. Wrights grain shed. The devouring element when the alarm was sounded had complete control of the building so the efforts of the brigade were directed in saving adjacent buildings in which object they succeeded.

The next fire next fire demanding the attention of the Brigade took place at 2:30 a.m. on November 9th when Mr. Joshua Curts' extensive Egg Factory together with the entire contents were completely destroyed.

The fire when discovered had attained such headway that all the efforts of the Brigade to save the fine property were rendered fruitless.

The fourth, and last fire of the year, was located in the furniture store of Mr. John Not and was first observed about 4:20 on the morning of Dec. 10th. The building a portion of the contents were destroyed by the buildings adjoining were deluged with water and saved.

The Company find since obtaining better coats they are in position to do far better execution than when handicapped by an inferior article which, until lately they have been compelled to use.

Good will and harmony prevail in the Company.

FIRE OFFICERS - Feb. 9, 1893

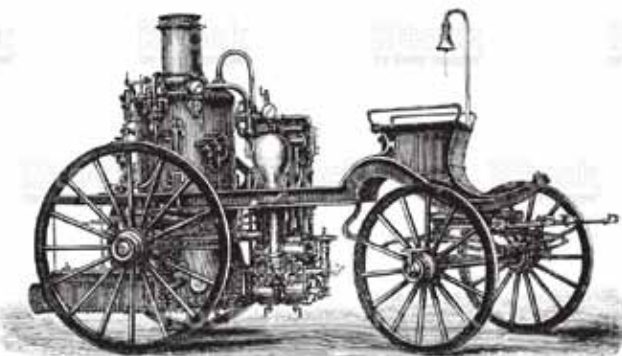
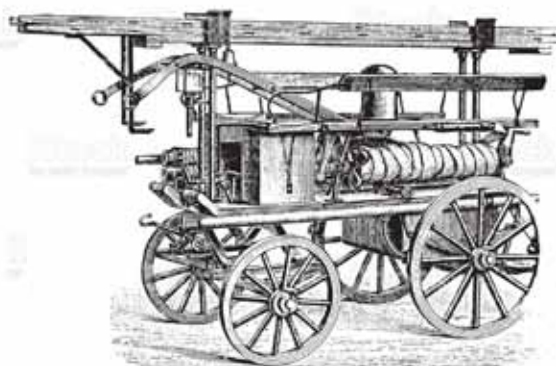
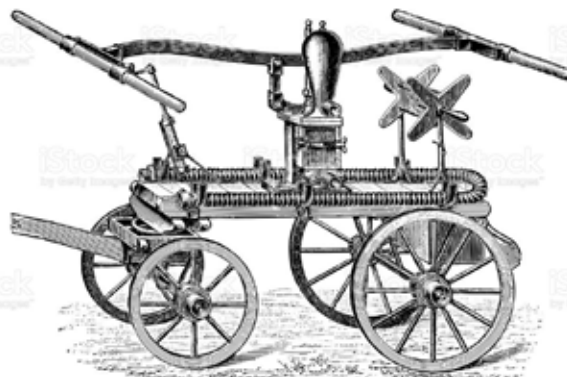
Election of Officers

At the late meeting of Rescue Fire Company the following officers were elected for the year 1893.

Wm. Kennedy	Chief
Arthur Allen	Captain
Thomas Cook	1st Lieutenant
William Mills	1st Lieut. Hose
Wesley Powers	2nd Lieut. Hose
R. McKnight	Treasurer
William Bond	Secretary
John Corrin	1st Branchman
Oren Powell	2nd Branchen
Harry Hall	3rd Branchman
Fred Smith	4th Branchman
William Clarke	1st Axeman
James Johnson	2nd Axeman
H. Roberts	Engineer
William Corrin	Assist. Engineer
Charles Powers	Pike-Poleman

Fire Engines & Equipment

1870s to 1890s



The sketches on this page are not intended to illustrate the fire equipment operated by the Reach and Port Perry Fire Brigades. They are only examples of the styles of equipment used during the 1800s by fire departments throughout Canada and the USA.

FIRES

OF THE 1880s

When the 1880s began, no one could have imagined what lay in store for this busy commercial and industrial town. Although the townsfolk experienced dozens of costly fire during the 1860s and 1870s, nothing could have prepared them for what was to come.

The 1880s became the worst time in the history of Port Perry, starting as early as 1881 when fire destroyed a block of stores near the corner of Queen and Water St.

But, that was just the start.

Fire visited the town again in November 1838, this time raging through a large section of buildings on the north side of Queen St. The result was a catastrophic destruction to that section of town, taking with it dozens of businesses.

As bad as this fire was, seven months later it was eclipsed by an second disastrous fire on July 1, 1884. In the dark of the night, the unforgiving hand of the "fire fiend" stuck with brutal force, and in less than four hours, the entire business section of the town was nothing more than a pile of brick and smouldering ashes.

Fire continued to plague the community throughout the 1880s, taking aim at the business section again in 1886 and 1887, but none were worse than the conflagration of years earlier.

Following, in this section, are recorded some of the worst fires of the 1880s.

~ 1880 ~

Midnight fire destroys Borelia hotel owned by Mr. Sheehy

North Ontario Observer: September 2, 1880

The former village of Borelia, now the western suburb of Port Perry, is somewhat notorious of late, not only for the frequency of its conflagrations but for the vast amount of damage done, now it is a private residence, next it is hotel and so on with too much regularity and frequency.

The town fathers at a late session of the council decreed that the smaller of the two fire engines with which the corporation is supplied should be located in the western, suburbs but from present appearances the large one too will have to be located in that quarter at least to the close of the burning season.

About midnight of the 31st inst, fire was discovered in that large hotel on the corner a Queen and Simcoe Streets. The alarm was given and quick as directly the small engine was hopping round the blazing walls and in process of time the large engine crept to the spot and watered the flames but all to no purpose. The flames had the mastery and they kept their hold till the pile was reduced to ashes.

The origin of the fire is a mystery. The property was owned by Mr. Sheehy* and had been lately undergoing a thorough overhaul. It was uninhabited and we may add uninhabitable, but the renovating hand of the proprietor was making itself visible in the new doors, windows, &c. We are not aware what Mr. Sheehy meant do with the building.

That the fire was the work of incendiary can scarcely be doubted, but the trouble is to find the guilty party. We have no idea of the amount of loss and should suppose there was no insurance.

Dr. Sangster's magnificent Port Perry home destroyed by late night fire

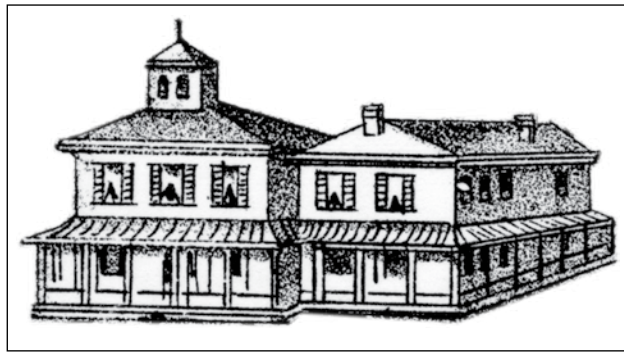
North Ontario Observer: March 10, 1881

On Monday, 7th inst., Port Perry was again visited by the unwelcome intruder, Fire, by which the residence of Dr. John H. Sangster, on the northern boundary of the town was burned to the ground. The fire is supposed to have caught from the furnace.

It was first discovered about 4 a.m. and was at first thought not to be serious, but it baffled every effort to extinguish it and within four hours the fire had completed the destruction of the building.

On short notice after the alarm was given, lots of willing hands and the fire engine were promptly on the spot but as there was not water the services of the engine could not be made available and the fire had advanced so far that nothing further could be done than to save the furniture.

We are not aware of the figure at which Dr. Sangster placed on the damage. The Tuesday's *Toronto Globe* in it wild way, placed the damage at \$18,000. It is almost a wonder that it did not add another cipher and make it \$180,000. We understand there was an insurance of \$7,500.



Beechenhurst home of Dr. John H. Sangster.

Bad week for fires in Port Perry and Prince Albert

North Ontario Observer: March 10, 1881

The fire fiend has been nibbling around our town for some days past. On Tuesday morning, the 8th inst., at an early hour fire was observed flickering over the fence of the school grounds. It was observed that the fence had caught fire from an ash box. This was soon extinguished.

Also on the 8th inst., we learn that fire caught in the residence of James Squelch, Esq., Prince Albert. We are pleased that the damage was light, thanks to the energy of those present.

We much regret to report that the school house of School Section No. 2, Reach, Vernon's school house, was destroyed by fire the morning of the 9th inst. We are not aware how it caught fire.

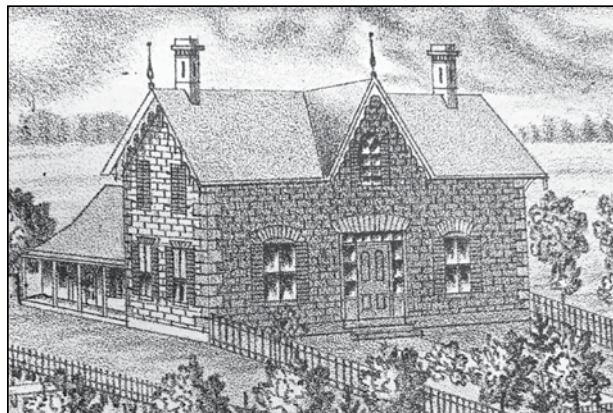
Of course the building was insured as the law make it imperative on School trustees to insure the building and if they neglect to do so, and the house gets burned, they can be made personally liable for the damages. The actual loss the section will be about \$100.

On the evening of Monday, 11th inst., the residence of Mr. Wheler, Prince Albert, took fire about six o'clock and in spite of every effort to stay the devourer it continue its work till the dwelling was reduced to ashes. The furniture was partly saved but still a lot of property was consumed. The fire was first discovered upstairs. We understand there was no insurance. All sympathize with the family in their loss.

On Saturday, the 12th inst., about 8 a.m., Dr. Richard Jones surgery building was observed to be on fire and as people were around, it was soon attacked and extinguished with slight damage.

On Sunday morning at an early hour fire was discovered in the residence of Mr. Lafayette F. Richardson. The inmates were unconscious of the fact and had to be aroused, a young person who slept upstairs had to be rescued. A large part of the furniture and other property was destroyed and the building was soon burned to the ground.

It was a handsome and very superior building and comparatively new. We learn that there was an insurance of \$1,000 but that won't cover half the loss. We sympathize with the young man on the large amount of loss and inconvenience occasioned by the fire.



Residence of James Squelch, Prince Albert.

~1881~

Another blaze in Port Perry destroys the Charles block

North Ontario Observer: June 30, 1881

The town of Port Perry which considering its extent, and the continual rush of business that is being done in it, has so far been fortunate in escaping fires especially extensive blaze, but we had a vista from the devourer on the morning of the 27th inst.

Some time near 2 a.m., Mr. James Dewart, of the Railway Hotel, observed a light under the southeast corner of Mr. Henry Charles block on the corner of Queen and Water streets. The block contained Mr. Charles grocery and liquor store, Mr. Sutherland's grocery store, Messrs. Johnston's implement warehouse and Mrs. Smith's residence in the rear of the stores.

On first seeing the fire, Mr. Dewart gave the alarm and then ran to awaken the inmates. The fire was right under Mr. Sutherland's bed, he has slept in a room at the back of his store, and in order to get him up quickly, Dewart broke in the window with a cord stick and Sutherland had only time to put on his pants and run.

Mr. Charles too had to make a hasty escape and leave all behind. By this time the devourer had full control of the premises. Lots of help were soon at work but little more could be done than protract the surround buildings. Scarcely anything within the block was saved.

The fire engine was soon on hand and our active brigade trim and ready for work, but they were much hampered in their persevering efforts by inferior fire apparatus. All can sympathize with an active energetic company who know their duty and who are fearless and determined in its performance, but who are handicapped in every effort by a worthless apparatus, especially when there is a big fire to grapple with.

While it might not have been possible for any engine to save the building in which the fire originated, yet all must see that had there been a south or southeast wind at the time, the want of a proper fire engine would have been manifest through the fearful loss of property.

The prevention of the destruction of a large portion of the town is doubtless due to the efforts of Mr. John Ruddy, of the Port Perry House, who with his hand fire engine braved the almost unbearable heat, stood and kept a constant stream of water playing on the front of the hotel which was being roasted by the flame.

All the inmates of hotel and a strong staff of active help guarded every spot on and around the building and nothing but the most determined efforts saved it from destruction, and had it gone half the village would have gone with it.

The entire loss, including the damage done to the opposite buildings, will be over \$5,000, about one-fifth of which is covered by insurance.

Mr. Charles loss will be over \$3,000, part of which discovered by insurance. The damage to the opposite property is covered by insurance. The Messrs. Johnston's loss is about \$600 and no insurance. Mr. Sutherland's losses all say \$300 and no insurance, and Mrs. Smith's loses about as much in household effects with no insurance.

The origin of the fire is unknown. The thanks of the Insurance, concerned and every friend of the town, are due to our worthy Fire Brigade and to all others whose efforts the prevention of the town from destruction by fires is due.

The Fire of 1883



An artist's depiction of Port Perry in 1883 at the height of the fire on the north side of Queen Street. Artist unknown.

Fire fiend lays to waste to Port Perry's business section

North Ontario Observer: Thursday, December 20, 1885

The Port Perry of today has certainly no inviting appearance, a large number of its finest structures having been laid waste by an irrepressible conflagration, these are now only represented by sickening heaps of ashes and piles of broken brick.

The fiend-made his appearance somewhere in the rear of the Port Perry House, on November 26, 1883, and fanned by a powerful blast from the east, succeeded within three hours from its first appearance in wiping out at least one-third of the business portion of the town and causing devastation and havoc in every direction, consuming property to the value of \$125,000 and leaving a blank of about \$80,000 on the assessment roll.

Active and brave men flew to the rescue; our vigilant fire brigade were soon on hand but had to contend against fearful odds. Our worthy firemen were not once armed against such a foe, a common syringe is scarcely the thing against a mountain of flame; but all did their best and deserve thanks for their efforts.

Some of the camp followers kept at a respectful and safe distance throughout and were so anxious for the safety of the more valuable portions of the goods that they carried them off to such distances that the

owners have not yet been able to recover them; even horses and wagons were engaged in the pious work.

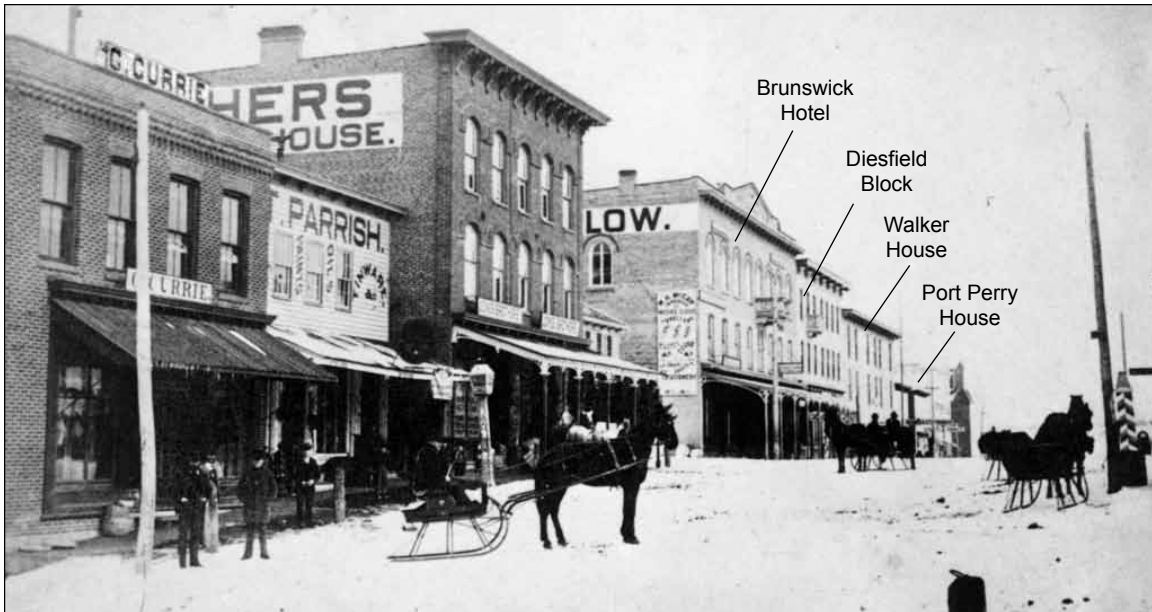
The morning after the devastation the hearts of the people quaked in gazing on the ruins, and many disconsolate one uttered dark forebodings of the future of the town. But these birds of ill-omen had reckoned without their host, they did not take into account the daring enterprise of the owners of the property. Ere the smoke of the embers ceased William.

B. McGaw, the active and energetic proprietor of the now obliterated but well known Walker House, was seen passing over the ruins and ordering the immediate removal of the bricks and rubbish with a view to rebuilding on a more magnificent scale, and in order to secure still more extended frontage he paid Mr. A. Ross \$1000 for some 24 feet adjoining his (Mr. McGaw's) property to the east.

Mr. Blong, the active and Liberal proprietor of the splendid Hotel Brunswick, now a heap of ruins, has also ordered the removal of the ruins of his famous structure in order to the erection as early a day as possible of new premises still more magnificent and costly than those destroyed.

Mr. Ruddy, the worthy host of the Port Perry House

The Fire of 1883



North side of Queen Street, Port Perry about 1878, five years before a fire leveled many of the buildings on the street.

now a victim of the flames, offers to purchase the site of the destroyed hotel from Mr. Thompson with a view to the erection of another fine hotel; if he can't secure that, he proposes building on Mr. Charles' lot on the opposite side of the street.

Messrs Diesfield, Hiscox and Worthington are all expected to rebuild so that ere the close of 1884 the fearful gap made by the unsparing devourer will be filled up to advantage and the Port Perry of that day will be better than ever. In the meantime the fugitives driven out by the flames have found shelter as best they could awaiting the erection of their new premises.

Mr. Blong has rented and comfortably fitted up the house belonging to Mr. Thomas Graham opposite the railway station where every attention is given to comfort and convenience of guests and the table and bar supplied with the choice of the market. Mr. Ruddy has leased and fitted up Mr. D. Ireland's premises (the old Queen's Hotel) where good and convenient hotel accommodation is furnished to all comers.

Mr. Laing & Meharry had to take refuge in the store they lately occupied on the opposite side of the street; but finding it much too small for their business they have built a large addition behind.

Diesfield's watch, clock and jewelry establishment

has been moved to the north side of Queen Street opposite the Observer office. Don't fail to call and see their choice stock of everything desirable in the line. Mr. Charles has moved his grocery and liquor business into the premises one door east of the barber shop.

The persevering and thoroughly active firm of Curts and Henderson lost no time in securing a lease of an important portion of the market building where they have fitted up in perfect business style one of the most convenient flour, feed and general produce establishments any where to be found; they are now rushing the business.

The Griffith Stove and Tinware business has got snugly located on the west side of Perry St. They too have pressing business with energy.

Mr. Vansickler, one of our enterprising Livery proprietors has established his livery establishment in part of the Mansion House stables and is now prepared to furnish rigs for all.

Mr. McKenzie has moved her business to the Leonard block opposite the Market.

Mr. Samuel Graham has removed his Blacksmithing establishment to the rear of his late premises and is now in full blast in a well appointed new establishment and prepared to execute all orders on short notice and to the satisfaction of customers.

Reports From Neighbouring Towns

Fire destroys one-third of business section of downtown Port Perry

Toronto Globe: November 26, 1883

A fire broke out in Port Perry between 11 and 12 o'clock last night, which destroyed about \$130,000 worth of property in the centre of town. It commenced in John Ruddy's Hotel and made a clean sweep of Queen Street on the north side from the Ross Elevator to William H. McCaw's jewellery store.

The flames had made such headway before being discovered that they were entirely beyond the control of the firemen and citizens who worked persistently, but against such great odds as to render their efforts almost unavailing. The prevailing strong south wind prevented contact with the south side of the street and saved the rest of the town.

To the existence of an alley between the Brunswick House and McCaw's jewellery store, coupled with the fact that the wall of the hotel fell inwards, is largely attributable the staying of the progress of the flames. Otherwise the whole of that side of the street would have been swept away.

A large quantity of goods were removed in a damaged condition. Fortunately no lives were lost through risks were run and venturesome attempts made to rescue moveable goods.

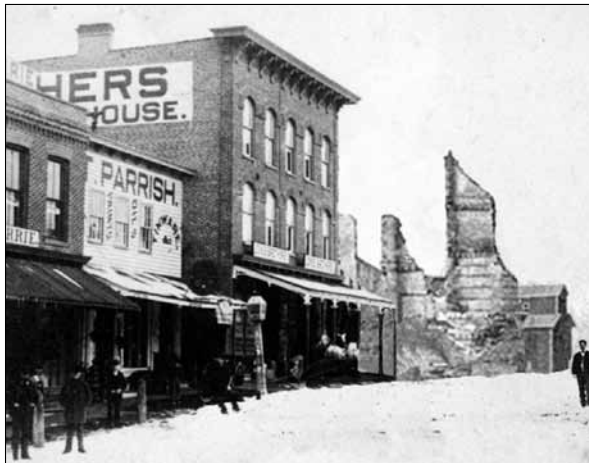
\$150,000 conflagration almost totally destroys Port Perry

Toronto Globe: November 27, 1883

Yesterday about 1:15 a.m. Alderman Farley, Chairman of the Fire and Gass Committee, received a despatch from the Reeve of Port Perry stating that the whole town was in flames and asking him to send help at once.

Mr. Farley immediately communicated with the Fire Department, and arranged for a part of the brigade, with an engine and horse, to go to the scene of the conflagration, but he found on inquiry at the Grand Trunk offices that he could not have a truck and car till 3:30.

Mr. Farley then telegraphed the Reeve to this effect, asking him if this would be of much service, and in stating that men and appliances were ready to start at that time. The promptness and dispatch shown by Ald. Farley in the exigency are worthy of great praise.



This composite picture shows the section of Queen St., Port Perry that was destroyed during the fire of 1883.

Observer silenced for three weeks

North Ontario Observer: December 20, 1883

(first issue after the November 26, 1883 fire)

This Christmas is an especially befitting season to make our annual bow to our respected readers; especially in view of our recent rough experience in passing through a too hot fire, and coming out badly scorched, with our office destroyed, our plant rendered useless and our valuable stock consumed.

The entailed a heavy loss and much annoyance; first having to find suitable premises for an office in a town like Port Perry where property to the value of at least \$125,000 had been consumed in a few hours. We have, however, been fortunate in securing convenient and suitable premises, but these had to undergo extensive repairs ere we could occupy them.

The purchase of new plant and stock was a matter of much expense and required considerable time and labour to get fitted up anew, so that however reluctantly we have been silenced for three weeks, thus missing three issues of the *Observer*.

Thanking our readers for their kind forbearance we take much pleasure in placing in the hands of our subscribers a first installment of the *Observer* in its new garb; and now having secured and fitted up suitable premises in one of the most convenient locations in town, on the south side of Queen St, nearly opposite the Post Office; and having secured a full supply of the best type anywhere to be had, we are now prepared to execute all orders in the printing line in the most satisfactory manner.

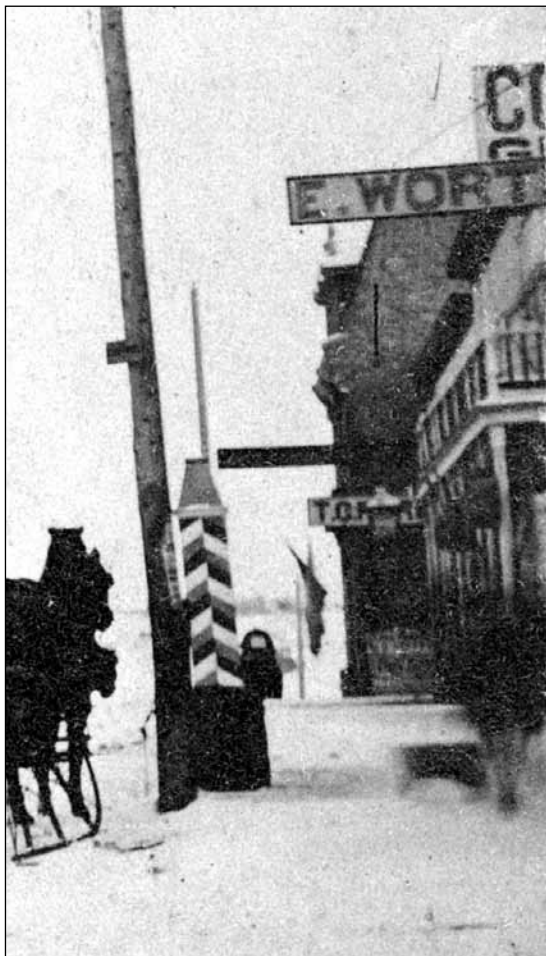
Taking our readers by the hand, we wish them all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous future.

The Fire of 1884

Devastating fire of 1884 levels Port Perry in less than four hours in 1884

As the warm days of May, 1884 arrived, Port Perry's resilient town folk had begun to put the terrible fire of November 1883 well into their past. By the end of the month, Thompson's new hotel was under construction, as was Jonathan Blong's new building in the middle of the eastern section of Queen Street. No one was prepared for what was about to happen.

At the beginning of the last week of June 1884, a heat wave hit the citizens of this part of Canada. The



The Mansion House Hotel, above with veranda, was the location of the start of the devastating fire of July 4, 1884 started. It is now the site of post office.

heat wave continued into July. As the sun set, on the evening of Thursday, July 3 a breeze drifted in from the south east. Most of the windows of the homes of Port Perry's residents would have been flung open in an attempt to catch the refreshing movement of air. A sense of relief from the intense heat would have no doubt embraced those who had opened their windows, for the breeze began to increase in strength.

In the middle of the south side of Queen Street, Neil Sinclair ran the Mansion House Hotel for its owner Benjamin McQuay. (Location of the Post Office, 192 Queen St.). Behind the hotel were the necessary stables and a blacksmith shop.

A few minutes before midnight, on the evening of Thursday, July 3, the townspeople were rudely awakened by the persistent ringing of the Town Hall bell. The Town Hall bell acted as an alarm clock for the townsfolk, ringing every day at 7 a.m., noon hour, 1 o'clock and at 6 o'clock in the evening. However, if it rang at any other time, it could only have one meaning; FIRE! The volunteer firemen made their way quickly to the Town Hall to gather the limited fire fighting equipment available to them and to find out who was ringing the bell.

A fire had been noticed in the stables behind Ben McQuay's hotel. Aided by the strong wind from the south east, it spread rapidly, first in a westerly direction, then across the road and finally, to the east. Wooden buildings in the middle of a hot dry summer, virtually exploded when sparks settled on them. The fire appliances were totally inadequate to handle an inferno of this proportion.

One can only try to imagine a scene of panic and desperation as merchants ran downtown to try to rescue their merchandise. Flames reached dozens of metres into the air and could be seen as far away as Greenbank, Oshawa, Whitby and Port Hope. Attempts to save buildings were futile.

Panic stricken merchants, most of them uninsured, or at best under-insured, smashed down the rear doors of their stores, desperate to save merchandise. Some merchandise was rescued and piled on Perry Street but the heat of the conflagration drove people away and the rescued merchandise itself caught fire, consumed as the fire spread to Perry Street. In less than an hour, the entire business section of downtown Port Perry was an inferno.

From the north side of Mary Street to the south side of North Street, from Water Street to Perry Street and on Queen Street all the way to John Street, the fire consumed every building; house, store, shed and stable with the exception of two buildings at the extremes. Tummond's store at southeast corner of John and Queen Streets, (268 Queen St.), and Currie's Grain Elevator at the waterfront were the only buildings to survive. They defined the limits of the conflagration.



Ontario Bank and Brown & Ross, south side of Queen Street.

As daylight came, a scene of utter desolation confronted the townsfolk. Cries of disbelief and despair would no doubt be heard for miles around. This was a time when few places of business had adequate insurance, the majority would have had none at all. Thirty-three commercial buildings housing almost 50 businesses, as well as factories, warehouses, stables, six lodges and a dozen homes were turned into soot and embers. According to the *Port Perry Standard*, there was a loss of over \$350,000 but only \$150,000 was covered by insurance. Those estimates are in 1884 dollars. Today, the value of the buildings alone would be in the tens of millions.

The only consolation was that the tragedy wasn't accompanied by death. Today, the upper floors of the downtown core are almost entirely occupied by apartment dwellers. At the time of the fire, the upper floors were occupied by the street level businesses or rented out to other businesses. Most of the dry goods and clothing stores which dominated the downtown core, devoted their upper floors to millinery and (cover your eyes gentlemen!)...ladies undergarments.



Currie, Worthington and Jones Bros. blocks on Queen Street

A few people received burns as they tried to save merchandise. A number of valuable animals were lost. In the stables at the Mansion House Hotel, where the fire started, one horse valued at \$300 was destroyed along with other horses and a cow. A similar fate befell other animals in the stables of the other downtown hotels.

Fortunately, the contents of 26 vaults in various buildings were found to be undamaged in spite of the intense heat.

Mr. Tummonds survived the fire but his reputation stumbled momentarily. Whether through envy, mistrust or malicious lies, or a combination thereof, he was accused of inflating his prices. The *Ontario Observer* said that he was "taking advantage of the adverse circumstances in which the town has been placed by the late fire because being the only store in this place, advanced the price of many of the necessities of life as high as 50, 75, and 100 per cent."

He advertised an offer of \$100 to anyone who could prove that he charged more for an article after the fire. There is no evidence to show that anyone claimed the reward.

The tragedy of the 1884 fire was largely an economic

The devastation was so sudden and overwhelming, that comparatively little was saved. Laid to ashes were: the Ontario Bank; 3 Law Offices; 3 Doctor's Offices; 1 Broker's Office; 2 Printing Offices; a Dentist Office; 2 Photograph Galleries; a Grist Mill; 3 Cabinet Factories; a Carriage Factory; 2 Blacksmithing Establishments; 2 Drug Stores; 3 Harness Shops; 2 Boot and Shoe Shops; a Marble Works, the Livery Stable; Masonic Lodge; Orange Lodge; Oddfellows Lodge; Sons of England Lodge; United Workmen's Lodge; Royal Templars Lodge and the contents; a Bakery; 2 Tinsmith Shops; 2 Hotels, 22 Stores and 12 residential dwellings. The entire loss amounted to more than \$300,000 of which only one-half was covered by insurance.

The Fire of 1884

one. Dreams of financial success and entire life savings were lost. For those on the north side of Queen Street who were just beginning to get themselves re-established after the 1883 fire, the tragedy was even more devastating. This second fire was too much for W.B. McGaw. He had run the Walker House for Dan Ireland and the hotel had been destroyed in the 1883 fire. Rather than stay in Port Perry and re-invest in its future, in October 1884, he moved to Bowmanville and invested in a hotel there. Fortunately for Port Perry his case was the exception.

The Victorian age was one of optimism and hope. The people who lived in it had a resiliency and determination. They had heard from their parents, of an earlier age when nothing but hardship and disease prevailed. Some of the older

citizens could relate those experiences first hand. If they could survive the perils of pioneer life, they could rebuild their lives again; and so they did. The townsfolk rallied.

The newspapers themselves were knocked out of business for three weeks, but on July 24, 1884, the editor of the *North Ontario Observer*, James Baird, commented in his editorial:

"We have to apologize to our patrons for this second interruption to our business during the past eight months. It would almost appear that the fire fiend has a dislike to the *Observer* office. It has hunted us from pillar to post and driven us around town and came precious near to

driving us out of it. No matter in which part of the town the fire starts it is sure to rope in the *Observer* ere all is done. During the past eight months we have twice been driven to the street by fire..."

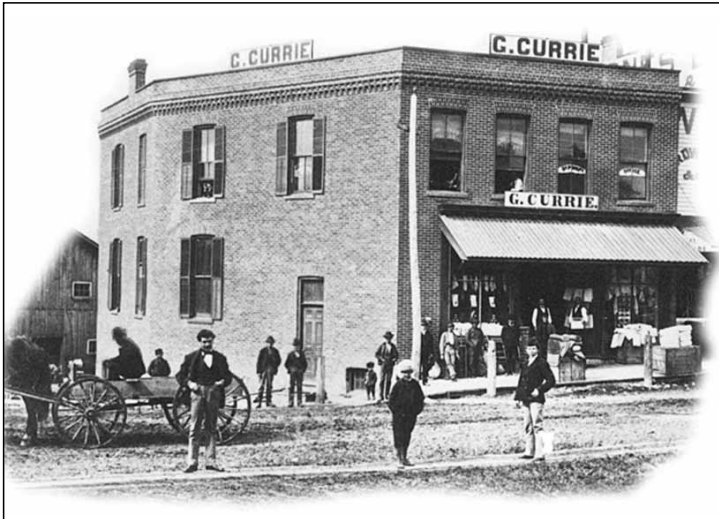
Mr. Baird then went on to relate that:

"...The entire village is one grand scene of busy life, whole armies of carters, labourers, stone masons, brick layers and carpenters, are combining their efforts for the restoration of the town and the work is progressing with amazing rapidity."

Immediately following the editorial was a list of businesses which had started up in new temporary locations. Various basements, barns, warehouses and other storage facilities provided temporary accommodation for the displaced businesses. Davenport and Jones set up their general store in the Town Hall basement. T.C. Forman, a staunch Presbyterian was even able to convince his congregation to allow him to set up his store in the basement of the church.

By July 31, the *Ontario Observer* was able to report: "The perfect rush of industry which now prevails in the village of Port Perry is highly commendable to the enterprise and manly courage of those who so recently passed through the fire, the burned district is one scene of rush and activity and hosts of busy men are hurrying hither and thither in every direction while the perfect babel of hammers, saws, axes, trowels... is highly pleasant...there are 17 permanent brick blocks under construction, these blocks will afford accommodation for 20 stores, one hotel...etc."

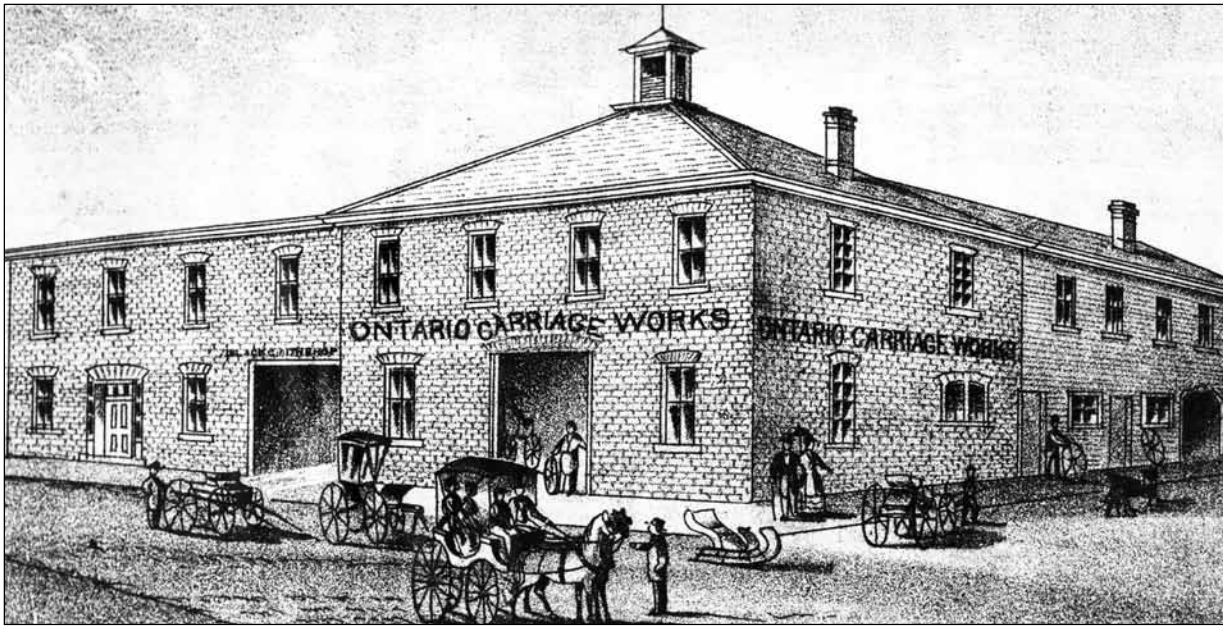
Progress reports of the buildings appeared in the newspapers on a weekly basis.



George Currie's block on north side of Queen and Perry St.

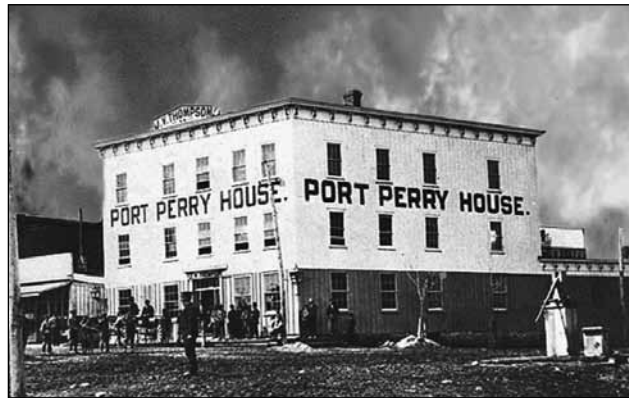


Curtice & Trenbeth blocks, north side Queen St., at Perry St.



The massive Ontario Carriage Works building, located at Perry and Mary Street, was destroyed by fire in July 1884.

Buildings Destroyed in July 1884 Fire



The Port Perry House hotel corner of Queen and Water Streets.



The home of Wm. Sexton, on Water Street



Carriage Works buildings on Perry Street.

The Fire of 1884



The charred remains of the town of Port Perry is all that was left when this picture was taken July 2, 1884, a day after the fire.

The following newspaper report, written by Edward J. Mundy, publisher, was published in the Friday, July 4, 1884 issue of the Port Perry Standard.

DISASTROUS FIRE! **BUSINESS PORTION OF PORT PERRY TOTALLY DESTROYED.** \$350,000 Worth of Property Consumed

This romantic village, so recently the pride of its people, and the admiration of travellers, is now a thing of the past and exists only in the memory of those who beheld it.

During the night of Thursday, the third instant, the alarm was given by voice and bell, and in less time than it takes to write or relate it, many of the inhabitants were awakened with the sound and horrified at the sight.

The flames were already leaping high in the air; and, long before they could be surrounded it was a foregone conclusion with many that the south half of the town was as surely doomed to destruction as had been the north half only a few months before. Nor were they agreeably disappointed, for in less than ninety minutes the whole of the remaining business part of the town was reduced to ashes, involving in the destruction some forty-five or fifty places, and incurring a loss of over \$350,000.

The fire sprang up so suddenly, and spread so rapidly that men, women and children, struck with consternation, were actually terrified. A still breeze blowing from the south-east when the fire began aided the devouring element immensely in its spread and purpose. In their madlike fury the flames were driven, in every direction, over the tops of all the buildings in the south-east block and ignited them almost simultaneously as they passed.

The flames burst through the buildings on Perry and Queen Streets, and reaching to the blocks west and north,

their fiery tongues soon ignited these also. The terror stricken owners fondly hoped to the last moment, that their buildings as well as their contents would escape; but they were suddenly undeceived.

Once the fire obtained a hold all hope was gone. The doors and windows were opened and entered in, defiance of all efforts to stay its progress. The sight was terrifically grand, and yet awfully devastating, as the flames arched the streets, and played havoc with everything in their reach.

All the buildings from Benajmin F. Ackerman's harness shop to Johnstone & Hobbs, in the south-east block, from Davis & Son's cabinet factory, to the vacant lot east of William Tummond's, in the south-west block; from William McGaw's temporary retreat to Reynold's blacksmith shop, in the north-east block; and from Shaw's marble works to Diesfeld's jewellery shop in the north-west block, were swept out of existence.

Rush after rush was made for back-door entrances, and though willing hearts and ready hands did everything that humanly speaking, could be done, they were driven back by the fire fiend with only a small measure of success. Many of the determined efforts were successful, though fighting against fearful odds, and yet a very small percentage of the moveable goods was saved. This will be admitted when it is known that not a pound of any of the necessities of life could be had in the place, except at the store of Mr. William Tummonds, the next day.

The firemen worked like heroes and with all others who assisted, deserve great credit for their bravery. Fortunately – gratefully indeed – was it ascertained after the turmoil and excitement and worry of that featful and never to be forgotten night, that no human lives were lost, if even every resemblance to the former pretty and prosperous village had been obliterated.

The fire originated in the stables attached to the Mansion House. The cause is enveloped in mystery, though it is very generally attributed to incendiarism.

PUBLIC MEETING

A public meeting of the ratepayers was called by Reeve Henry Gordon, on the afternoon of the following day (Saturday, July 5, 1884), at the Town Hall, for the purpose of ascertaining the amount of loss occasioned by the fire and for suggesting ways and means of relief.

The Reeve was called to the chair and Norman F. Paterson, Esq., was appointed secretary. The chairman, after a few explanatory remarks, called upon any one present to address the meeting.

After a short discussion, the following resolution, moved by Mr. James Baird, seconded by Mr. James Prince, was passed: – That the following gentlemen be appointed a committee consisting of Messrs. Joseph

Bigelow, Wm. M. Jones, P.A. Hurd, Joshua Wright, Norman F. Paterson, Henry Gordon, J.W. Isaacs, Aaron Ross, Thomas C. Forman, John H. Brown, Dr. John H. Sangster, William T. Parrish, John W. Davis, Jonathan Blong, George W. Dryden, Thomas Courtice, James B. Laing, James Baird and W.J. McMurtry, to ascertain, as nearly as possible, the amount of loss sustained by the present fire, and to place the same before the Provincial Government, with the financial standing of the Corporation, and solicit such assistance as the Corporation requires under the circumstances.

A motion moved by Mr. Norman F. Paterson, seconded by Dr. Richard Jones, was passed, requesting the losses by the fire to furnish the committee at the Reeve's office, not later than Monday, the 7th inst. at 2 p.m., an approximate statement of their losses and insurance, to enable the committee to submit a statement to the Government.

A motion was also passed approving of the by-law of the village respecting stone and brick buildings within certain limits, and recommending the Council to extend the same. The meeting adjourned, the committee to meet on the following Monday at 2 p.m. in the Reeve's office.

ANOTHER PUBLIC MEETING

A similar meeting of the ratepayers was held in the Town Hall on Monday evening last (July 7th). Reeve Henry Gordon occupied the chair. The Secretary, Mr. Norman F. Paterson, read a statement of the losses and insurances.

The Chairman stated that outside assistance had been offered, and he asked the meeting if it was their wish to accept the same.

Mr. Hurd said he was greatly in favor of receiving aid, from neighboring municipalities or otherwise, so as to render immediate assistance to those who were now in want, by having all they owned destroyed, and being thrown out of employment.

He did not wish by any means to ignore the committee appointed to wait on the Government, but he would suggest that another committee be appointed, consisting of persons not affected by the fire, to solicit immediate aid from outside.

He therefore moved, seconded by Mr. John W. Davis, that Messrs. Gordon, McMurtry, Major, Davis, Trounce, Hurd, C. Crandell and N.F. Paterson be a relief committee to solicit immediate subscriptions.

Mr. Paterson was heartily in sympathy with the resolution, but he wished to be informed as to how and to whom the money raised would be distributed. He for one, though a heavy loser, and many more he could name, were too independent to accept of such aid.

Mr. Hurd said all such matters could be left with the committee. The motion was then passed unanimously. After a short, informal discussion the meeting adjourned.

A meeting of the Relief Committee then held, when Mr. Gordon was appointed Chairman, Mr. Paterson, Secretary, and Mr. McMurtry, Treasurer. Messrs. Hurd and Paterson were appointed a committee to draft the necessary circular, collecting the required aid and to report at a meeting to be held on Wednesday at 10 a.m. Committee adjourned.

Port Perry Fire Bylaw

passed after the July 1884 fire

Bylaw 207:

A bylaw to amend the fire limit bylaw and to make further provisions.

The Corporation of the Village of Port Perry enacts as follows:

1. That from and after the passing of this bylaw no building shall be constructed of material other than such as the outer walls of which shall be of solid brick, stone or iron or partly of tow or more of such materials within that certain area described as follows: Water Street on the west side from Mary St. to Queen St.; Queen St. on both sides from Water St. to John St.; and Perry St.. on both sides from North St. to Mary St. or within one hundred feet of the limits of the said portions of streets within the said area.
2. No building of wood shall be constructed within thirty feet of any buildings that may be constructed within the said area, nor shall any of such last named buildings be carried or constructed to within thirty feet of any wooden buildings.
3. Wherever any wooden building shall be or hereafter be constructed upon any lots or part of lots fronting on the said parts of streets there shall be placed upon the outside of all windows and doors of any building that may be constructed in conformity with this bylaw, and facing any such wooden building - solid iron shutters or doors as the case may be.
4. No wooden building shall be in any way connected by wood with any such brick, stone or iron building.
5. Any building constructed in violation of this bylaw shall be forthwith removed by the owner thereof upon notice upon behalf of this Corporation or by any rate-payer and in default the same may be removed under the direction of the council of this Corporation by any officer thereof who may be directed by resolution of council with such assistant and assistants as he may require and the costs thereof shall be borne and paid by such owner and in default of payment the same shall be charged against the lands upon which such building or buildings may be constructed and shall be collected in the same manner as other municipal taxes.
6. The former bylaw of the Corporation respecting Fire Limits is hereby repealed except only as to matters done thereunder or in violation thereof and for such last named purposes the said Bylaw shall remain in full force and effect.

Dated the 9th day of July 1884

(This bylaw was passed five days after the fire which destroyed the entire business section)

Port Perry Fire Bylaws

passed after the July 1884 fire

Bylaw 217

A bylaw to provide for the borrowing on the credit of this Municipality the sum of \$11,000 to meet \$5,000 in debentures maturing 9th Sept., 1884 and for the purpose of purchasing a "Shaw Fire Engine and other necessary fire apparatus and for the raising of the said sum by the issue of Debentures and providing for repayment thereof.

Whereas the Corporation of the Village of Port Perry deem it necessary and expedient to provide for the debentures amounting to \$5,000 maturing 9th September 1884 and to purchase a steam fire engine and the necessary fire apparatus for the use of the Corporation.

And whereas for the purpose of aforesaid it will require an expenditure of \$11,000 dollars repayable in 12 years.

(very long bylaw) Dated October 6, 1884

Bylaw 223

A bylaw for the establishing and regulating of a Fire Company.

The Corporation of the Village of Port Perry therefore enacts as follows:

1. There shall be one Fire Company for this Village to consist of not less than ten men nor more than twenty five men.
2. The officers of the said company shall consist of (list of officers) to be elected by the said company annually from their own members at the first regular meeting in each year after the first year and for the first year to be elected at the meeting regularly called for that purpose by the Chief Engineer.

(very long bylaw consisting of 26 clauses)

Dated and passed the 15th day of December 1884.

Bylaw 224

A bylaw to appoint a Chief Engineer and Engineer to the Fire Brigade.

The Corporation of the Village of Port Perry therefore enacts as follows:

1. That William Kennedy be and is hereby appointed Chief Engineer of the Fire Brigade of this village.
2. The said Chief Engineer shall be paid an annual salary of ten dollars
3. That Martin Luther Crandell be and his is hereby appointed Engineer of the said Fire Brigade.
4. That Engineer shall be paid an annual salary of forty dollars.
5. The duties of the said Chief Engineer and Engineer shall be those set out in the bylaw of this Corporation respecting the said Fire Brigade passed the 15th day of December 1884.

Dated and passed the 15th day of December 1884.

FIRES

OF THE 1890s

As will be shown on the following pages, the disastrous fires of 1883 and 1884 did not stop during the next decade. Firemen were kept busy throughout the 1890s with fires that once again threatened not only the commercial centre, but also the homes of residence and industrial building throughout the town. As before, the following stories, are just a small example of the fires which occurred over this 10 year period.

~1890~

Paterson's home destroyed by fire



Norman F. Paterson's home at North and Lilla Street.

North Ontario Observer: November 6, 1890

On the morning of Tuesday last, 4th inst., Port Perry was again visited by the unwelcome intruder, fire, by which the palatial residence of Mr. Norman F. Paterson, Q.C., on North Street, was burned to the ground. The fire originated outside the northern addition. It was discovered about 3:30 by a party coming to town for medical aid. He drove directly to the burning building and gave the alarm.

The fire brigade was soon at the scene and on short notice had a stream of water directed where it would effect the most good and very soon had the flames under control. When it was ascertained that the water tanks within reach were exhausted so that the services of the engine could not be made further available, and the fire soon advanced so far that nothing could be done but save the contents.

~1891~

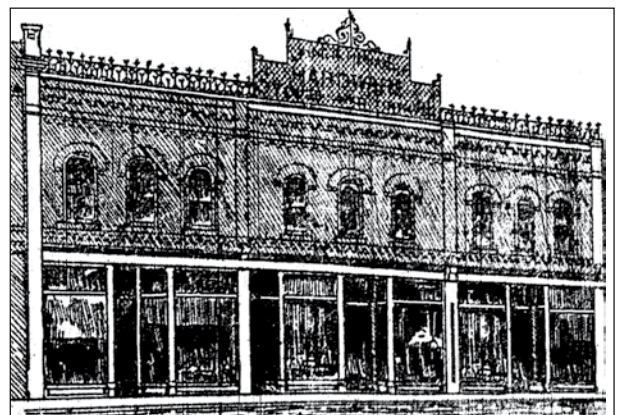
Fire returns to Port Perry in 1891, destroys Laing & Meharry's block

North Ontario Observer: October 22, 1891

Once again, on October 22, 1891, residents of the town were awakened in the middle of the night by the dreadful clatter of the fire bell when a huge blaze was discovered underway in the heart of downtown.

The flames had already made themselves visible through the roof at the rear of the Laing & Meharry hardware store. All the buildings were new brick structures, which had fortunately been built with fire walls, and the fire was brought under control by 4 a.m. due to the extraordinary efforts of the local fire company and its excellent fire engine, which poured tons of water onto the blaze.

Laing & Meharry's establishment was completely gutted and their stock completely destroyed. Mr. Allison's Block west of the burned building was damaged to quite an extent.



Laing & Meharry block of stores, 1886.

~1892~

Joshua Wright's grain elevator near the railway station leveled by fire

North Ontario Observer: August 4, 1892

There are few places in the province in which there are as many fire to the square mile as there are in Port Perry and when we have fires they are blazers. The destruction of Mr. Joshua Wright's elevator on Tuesday last was another scorcher.

There was no difficulty in locating the devourer, for thick volumes of smoke mingled with the incipient flame, were seen issuing from Mr. Wright's elevator. Within a very few minutes after the alarm was given the fire had the complete mastery of the premises the building was full of smoke and flame.

Our faithful and vigilant fireman were promptly on hand but the fire was too rapid for firemen or any other power. Water was supplied and the men showed what they could do by confining the destroyer to the building in which it originated.

It is satisfactory to see our active firemen, our vigilant protectors dashing around where they can do most good and making no fuss or splutter, but the elevator was doomed, from the first appearance of the fire, and within the brief space of a couple of hours the elevator and its contents were converted into smoke and ashes.



St. Charles Hotel, Queen Street, Port Perry.

~1894~

St. Charles Hotel fire averted

Whitby Chronicle: May 4, 1894

The St. Charles hotel took a bad roasting on Sunday morning. About 2 a.m. the servant girls were awakened by smoke in the third flat. The place was full of smoke, some became terror-stricken, and when it was found that the smoke was becoming so thick in the hallways that a passage down the stairs was next thing to impossible, a panic struck the place.

Still no fire was visible – however, some of the men managed to get down to the first floor and found that there was a big blaze in the cellar, which had made its way through the floor of the dining room and kitchen. It then rose through a dumb waiter, which was formerly in use to the third story, where the smoke entered the servants' room and awoke them as mentioned above.

~1893~

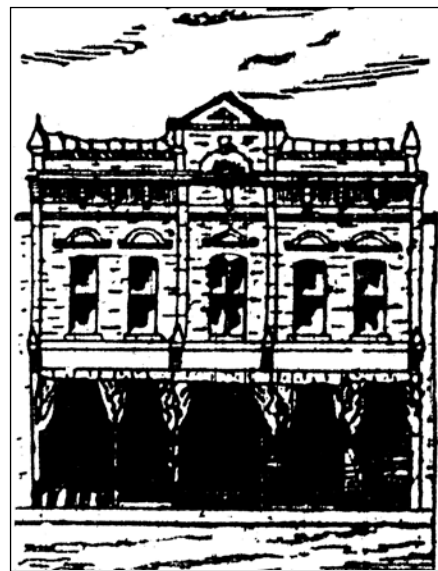
Jones & Company block reduced to ashes

Toronto Globe: April 27, 1893

A disastrous fire occurred here on April 23 inst., between 3 and 6 o'clock in the morning. Mr. Charles Hiscox was awakened by a noise resembling an explosion, and seeing a reflection upon his windows arose, and to his astonishment he saw that the store occupied by Jones & Co., as well as the one occupied by Phillippo & Meharry, were one mass of flames.

The firemen responded promptly to the call, but of course were powerless beyond preventing the fire from spreading to the store of William Brock, on the one side and T.H. Philp & Co. on the other.

It is not known in which store the fire originated and the prevalent opinion is that burglars were at work and either fired the building intentionally or accidentally. One thing is certain – the building occupied by Jones & Co., dry goods, and Phillippo & Meharry, general commodities, are in ashes.



The Bedford block, 1886. Occupied by Jones & Co.

~ 1895 ~

Willard's store gutted by fire

Whitby Chronicle: March 22, 1895

On Sunday 17th inst., our citizens were awakened from their peaceful slumbers at 3:45 p.m. by that unwelcome cry of fire! fire! and the clang, clang, clang of the fire bell, and when it became known that the fire was in the Willard block a feeling of anxiety was felt by every businessman in town.

Willing hands went to the help of the firemen, the fire engine was placed on the ice, and quickly the "toot" "toot" from the engine was followed by a powerful stream being forced into Mr. Willard's dry goods and grocery store. In less than 50 minutes from the time the alert was rung word was given "the fire is out!"

This fire should be a warning to businessmen as well as private person not to leave their stores and residences at night with a lot of fire in them.

Workmen are already busy repairing the store, and in a week or two Mr. Willard again expects to open out in business.



William Willard's block on south side of Queen Street.

~ 1896 ~

Fire strikes Port Perry, young man killed

Uxbridge Journal: March 21, 1896

On Saturday night last, Port Perry was again visited by a disastrous fire which destroyed both life and property. The firemen were promptly on hand, but could do nothing except put forth their efforts to save the adjoining buildings. In less than an hour the entire block together with all the contents of the tailor shop, the millinery store and the printing office, were in ashes.

The firemen deserve praise for saving the livery stable, for if it had got a fair start the entire north-east portion of the town would have been burned to the ground.

While the fire was in progress a young man assisting in removing the goods from a store, when one of the walls fell, crushing him to the ground. Nothing could be done to save him as one leg and one arm were broken, all the ribs on the left side and also his thigh were broken and his skull badly fractured. He passed away about four o'clock.

~ 1897 ~

Fire destroys Charles Allison drug store

Whitby Chronicle: December 3, 1897

Yesterday morning, Thursday, at 3:30 a.m., our citizens were awakened by the cry of fire and the dong of the fire bell. On arriving at the business part of town, it was found that Charles H. Allison's drug store was on fire and so far gone that flames were bursting from the front, rear and roof.

The firemen were soon on the spot and did good work; the citizens worked like Trojans and nobly assisted Charles Hiscox in helping to save his property at the rear.

The building was occupied upstairs by Dr. John H. Sangster and Wm. A. Sangster, as a dental office and the first floor by Charles Allison, as a drug store..

How the first started is a mystery as everything was alright when each on left his place the night



Allison's Drug Store building destroyed in 1897 fire.

before, but it is thought the fire started from a defective flue. Several plate false windows on the opposite side of the street were cracked in the Currie block, Parrish block, Jones, block and McCaw block. This is the first fire in Port Perry in a number of months.

Fire Fighting Equipment

Prior to the advent of horse drawn fire devises fire brigades responded to fire calls with hand drawn devices. These manual appliances typically required at least two personnel to operate and were essential for transporting firefighting equipment to the scene of an incident.

Hose reels provided the means to easily transport several lengths of hose and the required fittings and tools from the station to the scene of the incident.

The appliance was first taken to the fire and then to the hydrant, unfurling the lengths of hose on its way. The standpipe was then removed and the hose end connected.

The hose was wound onto a freely rotating drum on the main axle, which could be locked in place from the drag



handle. Once the brake was released, the lengths of hose could be effectively be 'unwound'.

At minimum, two firefighters were required to pull and operate the hose reel, but this number could be dramatically increased.

Information provided by the Museum of Fire

The most efficient fire fighting appliance was the horse-drawn steam pumper. This comprised a vertical water tube boiler providing steam for a pumping engine to force water through the hoses onto a fire.

In small town's like Port Perry, it was common for local resident to rush their teams to the hall when the alarm sounded, hoping to arrive early enough to be of service for a fee provided by the council.

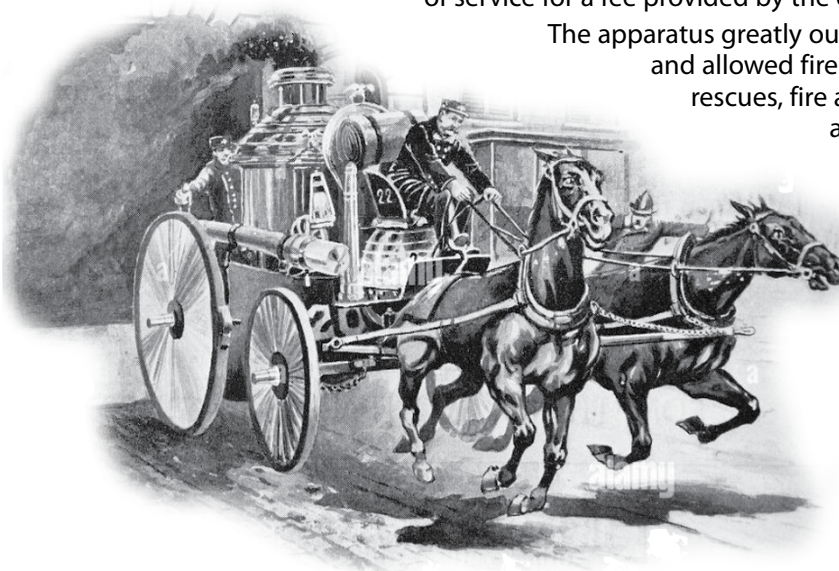


Illustration of a horse-drawn steam engine racing to a fire.

The apparatus greatly out-performed hand engines and allowed fire fighters to concentrate on rescues, fire attack, etc. Much heavier apparatus required the use of horses to move the machines to the scene quickly. Once at the scene of a working fire, the horses were unhitched and led away from the area.

Part Three

FIGHTERS
of the ***"FIRE***
FIEND"

**Fire Brigades
of the
1900s - 1950s**

Fire Fighter's Gear



Photo, courtesy of the Canadian Fire-Fighters Museum,

There are no known photographs of firefighters during the formative years of the Port Perry Fire Brigade, and the above picture is published only to present the type of equipment the local brigade may have worn during the late 1890s into the early 1900s.

Firefighters originally wore uniforms consisting of thick wool pants and red shirts. Wool was chosen because it was able to shield the firemen against both heat and cold, plus it is mildly resistant to water and flames. They also wore rubber slickers over their wool uniforms.

Early gloves used by firefighters were typically made of leather as were their boots which were knee-high. The protective clothing worn by firefighters was called turnout gear.

During the early 1900's rubber-lined duck coats and rubber boots became universal and were considered more practical for firefighting in Canadian climates. The colour of the gear slowly changed from the all black coats to something more visible over the years.

*Picture and information courtesy of the Canadian Fire-Fighters Museum.
www.firemuseumcanada.com/history/*

THE CHIEFS



Township of Reach & Port Perry CHIEF ENGINEERS & FIRE CHIEFS 1878 to 1904

1878 - 1883 MARK CURRIE
1883 - 1886 WILLIAM KENNEDY
1886 - 1893 HUMPHREY ROBERTS
1893 - 1894 JUSTUS ENSIGN
1894 - 1904 WILLIAM CORRIN

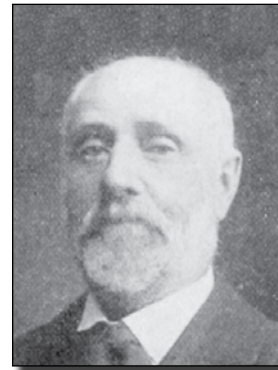
Mark Currie

Mark Currie was born in the Township of Scarborough on September 30, 1823, the son of John and Hannah Currie. The family left Scotland in 1818, settling in New York for about one year before moving northward to Canada. They settled in Toronto, then known as Little York, but after the death of his father in 1830, the family moved to Whitby.

Mark Currie entered into the carriage building in Oshawa and operated a successful and respected enterprise for about ten years. He retired and moved to Prince Albert, where he entered into the mercantile business with his brother George. In September 1861, the brothers dissolved their partnership, with Mark taking the business into his own hands, and later becoming a partner with his son-in-law John H. Brown.

When he was about 50 years old, Mr. Currie retired from business and moved to Port Perry, where he built a fine new residence in 1873. In Port Perry he became a active member of town council for a number of years, served on the Board of Education and became Chief Engineer of the Port Perry Fire Brigade.

Mark Currie passed away in Port Perry on February 23, 1882, at 58 years of age. He was a loving husband, affectionate father and a useful member of society. He left behind his wife Agnes (Dickie), son William and one daughter. He was interred at Pine Grove Cemetery.



WILLIAM KENNEDY

William Kennedy

William Kennedy was born in Scotland in 1837. He came to Canada when he was 12 years of age, and for a number years lived in Quebec, before moving to Port Perry in 1861.

Eight years later he moved to Uxbridge to begin a lumber business, but returned a few years later and continuously lived in Port Perry until his death. He was one of the longest residing, and deeply beloved citizens of the town.

Mr. Kennedy was connected for several years with the Sexton Milling Co. He built the first flouring mill in the town in 1878, and later became a grain buyer. His career in the grain business spanned more than 30 years, as an expert buyer and judge of grain. Throughout his life he was seen every day, faithfully at his duties on the market or in the elevator.

Mr. Kennedy was a Presbyterian in religion, and a staunch conservative in politics, and throughout his life was dedicated to his church and community. He was also an active and enthusiastic member of the Orange Order for 51 years; a member of the Board of Education for 15 years; and Chief of the Rescue Fire Company of Port Perry for 20 years, and served on the village council.

He was described as a "great souled man", who even at a ripe age was filled with the joy of life. In 1863 Mr. Kennedy married Elizabeth McConnell, of Manchester, and the couple raised nine children.

Mr. Kennedy passed away on Monday, March 26, 1923, at the home of his son-in-law in Toronto, at 86 years of age. His remains arrived on Tuesday morning via GTR and were conveyed to his home. A funeral was held at St. John's Presbyterian Church and interment took place in Pine Grove Cemetery. He was predeceased by his wife.

THE CHIEFS



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47

Humphrey Roberts

Humphrey Roberts was one of the oldest residents of the village, and a most popular and familiar figure in the community life before his death in 1929. He was always enthusiastic for the well being of the town and its organizations, and very fond of his home and home life.

In 1870 Humphrey and Elizabeth Roberts came to Canada from England about 1870 and settled near Cobourg. In 1873 they came to Port Perry. Here Mr. Roberts secured work at the Port Perry station as a baggage handler where he worked for many years.

He was dedicated to his home, becoming a caretaker of the Methodist Church, and being an Englishman, he helped with the formation of the Sons of England, becoming a charter member of Old England Lodge. He was also a music lover and was a long-time member of Port Perry's bands. He was also a volunteer fireman and served as Fire Chief of the Port Perry Fire Brigade for about six years.

Humphrey Robert was born in England in September 1849 and married to Mary Elizabeth Bright, of Devonshire, England in October 1869. To this union were born ten children, three girls and seven boys.

The residents of Port Perry were shocked on November 1, 1929 on learning when they heard that Humphrey Roberts had died. He was interred a Pine Grove Cemetery, Prince Albert.

Township of Reach & Port Perry CHIEF ENGINEERS & FIRE CHIEFS 1878 to 1904

1878 - 1883 MARK CURRIE

1883 - 1886 WILLIAM KENNEDY

1886 - 1893 HUMPHREY ROBERTS

1893 - 1894 JUSTUS ENSIGN

1894 - 1904 WILLIAM CORRIN

Justus Ensign

Justus Ensign was born about 1839, a son John and Sarah Ensign, farmers in Reach Township. As a young man he worked on the farm, but later moved to Port Perry where he married Lilly Thorn on December 30, 1867, and set up home on Mary Street.

He later became a mechanical engineer, and it was this occupation that led him to become the caretaker and Chief Engineer for the Port Perry Fire Brigade. He served in this capacity only for a short time, before taking his own life in September 1894.

No further details on the life of Justus Ensign have been located.

William Corrin

William Corrin was born on May 24, 1858, in Hastings, Ontario, to parents William and Nancy Corrin.

William was working as a blacksmith in Port Perry when he married Isabella Lennie on May 23, 1883. As young man he worked in the Port Perry Foundry operated by Paxton & Tate, and was later employed by local merchant, Edward H. Purdy.

He became a volunteer fireman about 1885 and spent the next 45 years working with the local brigade, serving for ten years as its Chief "Engineer" Chief, 1894-1904. He retired from the fire brigade in 1930, and documented the history of the brigade during his time as a firefighter. (See page 51)

After retiring he moved to Myrtle, where he passed away on May 23, 1942 at the age of 83 years.

FIRE BRIGADES

The Twentieth Century

1900 - 1909

Heading into the 1900s, one of the first mentions of the fire brigade is found in April 1900, when council members Dr. Mellow and Wm. Bateman gave notice that they would introduce a bylaw at the next meeting recommending an increase from \$10 to \$12 to members of the Fire company. Members of the Port Perry Fire Brigade countered that with a request for a their salary to be increased to \$15 per year.

The first major fire of the new century came in September 1901. It was a disastrous fire that sprung up about midnight on September 18 in the Purdy Block on the south side of Queen St. Fueled by a strong wind, in only a few minutes the Purdy and Allison blocks were in flames. During the fire a loud explosion took place wrecking three of the stores and scattering debris upon the street, all but dooming the buildings to complete destruction.

Once again the firemen were praised for their efforts, with the editor of the *Ontario Observer* writing: *"The firemen did themselves credit and the noble and persistent efforts they put forth saved further destruction of valuable property. We regret to learn that more than one of the brigade are suffering from injuries sustained while in action and thus exposed to danger. It is to be regretted there is no provision made for such casualties to the company."*

This fire was the last major fire to deface the stores in the downtown, although other potentially dangerous fires in the central core occurred at Hogg & Lytle grain elevator, and the Carnegie's Ford dealership at the rear of Carnegie Hardware store on Queen Street.

Village Council suggested the Fire Brigade should attach runners to the fire engine for the winter months.

February 1902

Firemen praised for their efforts to save three blocks of stores destroyed on Queen Street.

September 1901



Fire in September 1901 destroyed this block of brick buildings on the south side of Queen Street, but thanks to the fire brigade it was prevented from spreading further.

Following the fire, an article in the *Oshawa Vindicator* accused the Port Perry businessmen who were burnt out by the fire on of profiting from the fire. The editor of the *Vindicator* commented: "Those burnt out on Sept. 18 always make big money out of fires by placing more value on their property than the building or stock is worth."

Nothing ever came of the accusations.

Bylaw 523:

To appoint a Fire Brigade for the Village of Port Perry for the year 1904.

The following officers and men are appointed as members to the Port Perry fire Brigade for the year 1904 subject to the Port Perry Fire Company bylaw.

Chief Engineer, John Elliott; Engineer, William Corrin; Fireman, Wm. Mills; members of fire company H.G. Lucas, John Powers, Mr. Vincent, Walter Hockins, John Davidson, Fred Brown, Rex Harper, Geo. Vansicker, Robt. McKnight, B.F. Crandell, W.A. Marshall, Fred Smith, D.D. Adams, Angus McGregor, Wesley Powers, William Cook.

Dated the 15th day of December, 1903.

Entering into 1902, all remained quiet until June that year, when another late night fire was found under-way at Carnegie's Flour Mills at the lakefront. Despite the fire brigade arriving in short notice, the fire had taken hold of the wood structure and within a short time the fire had reduced two structures to ashes.

During August 1904, council authorized the corporation to use the new village waterworks system including pumping station, its staff and equipment, mains and tank and nine hydrants installed from the station at the waterfront.

They also enacted that the present fire engine shall be sold as speedily as may be done; that William Corrin and Fred Smith be appointed Engineer and Fireman respectively, and that the salary of the Chief be fixed at \$25.00 per annum and of the Captain at \$15.00 per annum.

Fire visited the community again in November 1904 with what was described as one of the largest, most imposing and most important buildings in Port Perry being on fire. The Fair exhibition building was discovered to be on fire and within a short time it was nothing but a pile of ashes.

The building was said to have been one of the best in Ontario for capacity for fair exhibits, and it was thought to have been started by vandals. Since there was no access to water at the fairgrounds, the fire brigade could do little more than watch it crumble into a pile of ash.

Fire Chief John W. Meharry presented the annual report of the Port Perry Fire Brigade to council in December 1904, and during the meeting the following members were appointed for 1905:

John W. Meharry, Chief

Robert McKnight Treasurer

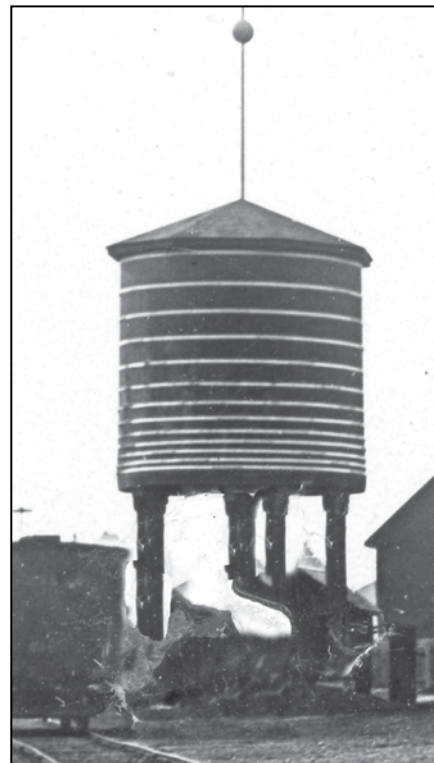
Rex Harper, Secretary

John C. Dennison, Captain

Fred Smith, Secretary

Firemen - William Vincent, James Vincast, Charles Dennison, Hugh Lucas, W. McGregor, William Cook, Charles Powers, John Powers, G. Vansickler, Walter Hockins, Fred Smith, William Corrin, Benjamin Crandell.

A water tank constructed about 1903 for fire protection began leaking in six years later due to the tank not being kept full and the boards shrinking. The top five hoops encircling the wood tank were removed and shortened about eight inches and the tank refilled. To prevent the problem



Fire water tank near lakefront.

Procedure for sounding the fire alarm

Until 1914, the procedure for notifying the firemen and community of a fire underway was one that was established years earlier. This entailed the first person who notices a fire, to run to the Town Hall, break the glass in the door and pull the rope. The firemen and citizens would converge from all parts of the town, change into fireman's uniforms, and rush to the fire, dragging the reels unless a horse could be found, which could be pressed into service.

This procedure was handed down from a time when telephones were unknown, but by 1914, with telephones scattered through out the village, council was urged to find a better system.



occurring again, a float was put in the tank, making it easier to see when the tank required more water.

The remainder of the early 1900s appears to have been quiet in terms of fighting fires, although the members of the Port Perry Fire Brigade continued to provide entertaining events for the townspeople, including "Grand Excursions", to Niagara Falls; and in 1901 an excursion aboard the steamship Crandella from Port Perry to Fenelon Falls.

1910 - 1919

Tragedy struck the village just a few days into 1910. The familiar clang, clang of the fire engine broke the silence of night as firemen rushed to a fire at the home of one of the village's oldest residents George Real. He was found unconscious on the floor of his Cochrane St. home, and removed before the fire consumed the home. Unfortunately the elderly gentleman passed away from smoke inhalation.

In April 1912, William Cook was appointed Chief of the Port Perry Fire Brigade. At the same meeting of council the Fire and Light Committee assumed management and control of the Fire Department and was given full power and authority over it. The committee was also given control of the buildings, engine houses, hose carts, trucks, ladders, apparatus, equipment, alarms and all other property and furniture belonging to the Department.

Port Perry fire protection perfect!

The provincial Fire Inspector slid into town yesterday, unknown and almost unseen, proceeded to the hall and gave an impromptu fire alarm. In an instant our Fire Brigade were on the spot.

He ordered the Brigade to prepare for action, which they did, and gave a practical illustration of grand water pressure Port Perry possessed by throwing two large streams almost out of sight, at 60 lbs. pressure.

At the close of the exhibit the Inspector in addressing the Brigade gave them credit for rapidity in the performance of their duties and possessing all the requisites necessary to fight fire as it should be fought.

And that the hose and other appliances are in perfect order and everything in good shape to speed operations in the hour of danger, from the destroying element - fire!

November 26, 1914

Council offers a reward for hauling fire hose reels to fires

Port Perry council is offering two rewards to the persons who upon the ringing of the fire alarm are first at the Town Hall with horse or motor vehicle to haul the hose reel to the fire. The first person who succeeds in reaching the hall and taking the reel to the fire will receive \$5.00, and the second person, with suitable vehicle for the work, who arrives at the hall will be awarded \$3.00.

Both these persons and their vehicles must remain at the service of the Fire Brigade for at least an hour. The object of this reward is, of course, to get the hose reel to the fire as rapidly as possible.

Port Perry Star: March 17, 1917

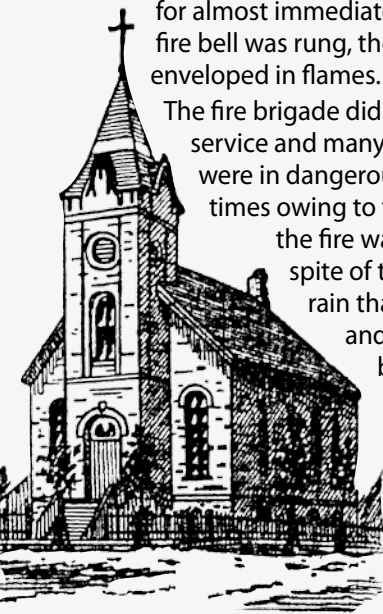
~ 1915 ~

Church steeple struck by lightning

Port Perry Star: July 7, 1915

In the big electric storm on Friday of last week, the steeple of the Catholic Church was struck by lightning, and the church caught fire.

It was some time before fire was discovered although it must have been burning steadily for sometime before the alarm was given, for almost immediately after the fire bell was rung, the steeple was enveloped in flames.



The fire brigade did excellent service and many of the men were in dangerous positions at times owing to the fact that the fire was so high up. In spite of the torrents of rain that were falling, and in spite of the best efforts of the fire brigade, the steeple was totally destroyed.

This procedure was handed down from a time when telephones were unknown, but by 1914, with telephones scattered through out the village, council was urged to find a better system.

Throughout this decade the fire brigade responded to many fires, but nothing on the scale of the fires tended to years earlier in the commercial sector of the town.

They attended a doused a chimney fire at A.J. Carnegie's home in January 1915. In November the same year they were credited with saving the Sebert House hotel when it looked as though the building were doomed. The firemen were reported to have done "splendid work" and with steady water pressure on the flames saved the building.

The following year, on a Friday afternoon in December, the Fire Brigade were on the scene at the hardware store of Carnegie Bros, which caught fire in the cellar. Ten minutes later and it would have been beyond control, and totally destroyed the building but the firemen with their fire engine doused the fire and saved the building

The premises of Samuel Jeffrey & Sons on Queen St., was discovered on fire in June 1918, and the Fire Brigade responded quickly, and efficiently and saved the building, but not before immense damage was done to the large stock in the building.

In August 1919, a fire broke out in an implement shop beside the grain elevator of Hogg & Lytle near the lake. Prompt action, and good water pressure put on the elevator by the Fire Brigade were all that saved the structure from being destroyed.



Fire in the office of the Hogg & Lytle grain elevator at the foot of Queen St., in August 1919.

1920 - 1929

January 1920 started off with criticism from George Davey about the condition of the fire engine. He suggested to council they should sell the fire engine, which he felt was a "piece of junk".

A deputation from the Fire Brigade attended council in May 1920 requesting new hose for the hand reel, a chemical fire extinguisher, and an increase in salary. A committee was appointed to look into the requests, and to immediately purchased a new hose for the hand reel.

In April 1922, an delay in calling out the fire brigade could have spelled disaster for a family who escaped fire in their house in their night clothes. The delay was caused due to the fact that those who went to give the warning did not know where to locate the fire bell rope. To reach this rope at any time when the town hall is locked, it is necessary to break the little glass in the side door on Lilla St., open the door, turn to the right, to access the fire bell rope which is past the steps leading to the main entrance. Despite the delay, the firemen arrived quickly after the alarm was rung, and quickly had the fire under control.

The worst fire of the 1920s came in April 1922, when Port Perry's beautiful high school was burned to the ground. See report on opposite page.

The fire brigade was at work again in October 1922, at a fire that threatened the downtown. Had there been a little more wind, or a little less water, Port Perry might have suffered one of the worst fires since 1885. The fire brigade was called to the Jeffrey Harness company on Queen St., but even with the equipment at their disposal, the fire quickly gained headway and all firemen could do was prevent it from spreading to adjoining buildings. Despite the loss of his building, Samuel Jeffrey praised the fire brigade for excellent work and donated \$50 to the fire company.



Courice & Jeffrey Harness Shop, Queen St., Port Perry.

On a cold day in January 1923, the fire brigade was called to the Union Milling Co., at the lakefront when fire broke out in the engine room. Firemen found themselves helpless when they arrived finding the fire hose frozen, due to lack of heating in the town hall. Thankfully the work of a bucket brigade provided the water and the building was saved.

In the dead of the winter, about a month after the mill fire, firemen were called to a house fire, but once again ran into problems. This time it was the operation of a frozen fire hydrant, and also the length of time it took to get hose from the town hall to the scene of the fire due to road conditions. The house was destroyed by fire, and once again it was suggested that the hose reel should be changed from wheels to sleighs in the winter.

Council addressed the need for a new gasoline pump to be used for fire protection, and by September 1923 a new pump had been purchased. The local fire brigade tested out the new gasoline engine and were pleased with the results. The engine threw two streams of water to a height higher than the tower of the Methodist Church.

It was not often that the Port Perry Fire Brigade was called out of town, the distance to get to a fire made it difficult to be of much assistance. But in September 1925 they were called to Manchester to help contain a house and barn fire, located near the Reach Town Hall and the Primitive Methodist Church. At one point, it looked as if these historic structures would not be saved, but with the help of the fire brigade the fire was prevented from spreading.

The remainder of this decade appears to have been quiet for the fire brigade, but at a meeting of council in December 1929, a committee was appointed to consider the advisability of purchasing a fire truck. No action was taken on the matter. Council did authorize the purchase of 100 feet at a cost of \$1.25 per foot at the same meeting.

~ 1926 ~

"Union" High School destroyed in a spectacular three-hour fire

Port Perry Star: April 15, 1926

Port Perry suffered one of the most severe losses in its history when the combined High and Public Schools were destroyed by fire on Wednesday evening of last week. The main building and all its contents were a complete loss.

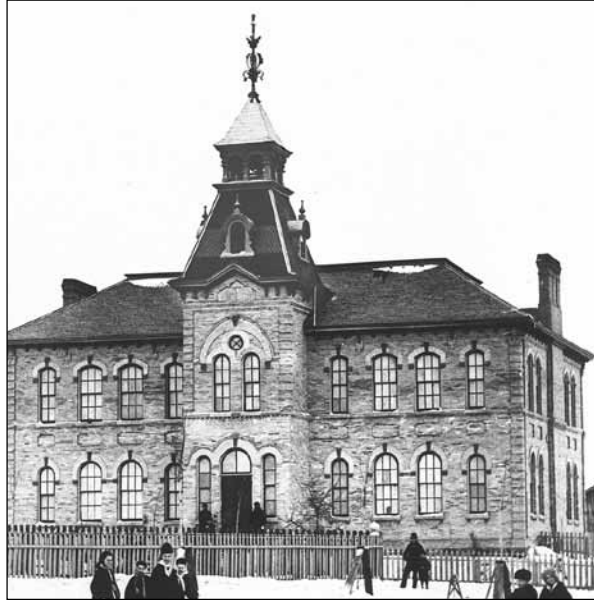
The fire was discovered by the caretaker, Mr. A.W. Allin, when he went to open the school for a meeting of the Board of Education. He had put on a fire in one of the furnaces, and had arranged the registers so that the heat would be directed to the room in which the Board was to have met. He then went home for a time. When he returned about half past seven, the building was burning briskly, and was even then doomed to destruction. The alarm was given, and the fire brigade was soon on hand, and, while every effort was made to save the property, the fire had too big a start, and the firemen were powerless to save anything.

It was a wonderful spectacle. That roaring furnace of flame, situated as it was at almost the highest point in town, lit up the whole countryside. The walls had been splendidly built, and retained fire like the sides of a huge furnace. The flames would leap high above the walls, where the wind would at times catch them, and whirl them forward in quest of new fuel.

How Mr. Albert Orchard's house escaped is a mystery, but it did escape, even to the windows, which were saved by hanging wet blankets over them.

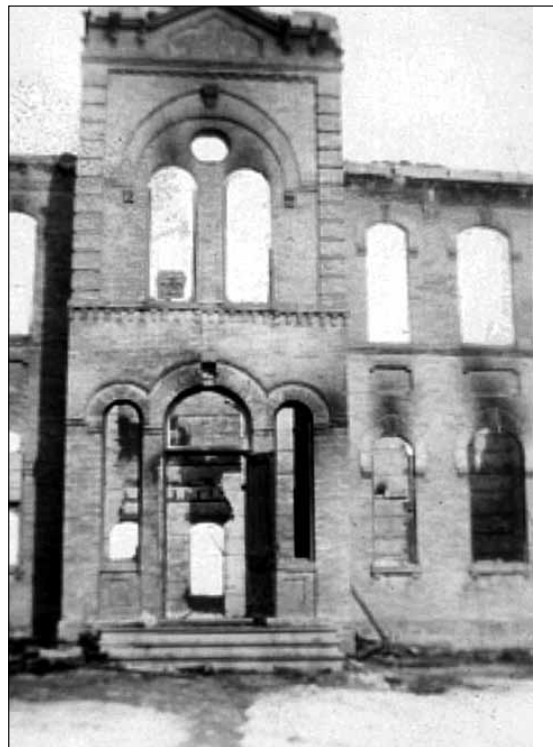


The Port Perry High & Public School after the fire of 1926.



The beautiful Port Perry Union School, about 1875.

It is a blessing that nobody was hurt, although some of the firemen did have a narrow escape when the tower fell. Even in the wrecking of the walls subsequent to the fire, there have been no accidents. This is very remarkable when one considers the recklessness of both children and grown folk.



The entrance and tower of the Public & High School.

1930 - 1939

At a public meeting held in early January 1933, Mr. Williams representing the Fire Brigade reported that the village has an efficient company but they required a chemical outfit. It was pointed out that the Avenue has 16 houses without fire protection. The clerk pointed out that the water mains have been extended and that two more mains would give complete protection to the area.

In November 1930, the old "Yellow School" at the north edge of Port Perry was burned to the ground as the result of a fire around the chimney in the roof. There was no fire fighting equipment available so the crowd just stood by and watched it burn.

Fire broke out in the heart of town in January 1931 when Carnegie Motor Sales, located behind Carnegie Hardware store was found to be on fire about midnight. The structure and contents, including a number of cars were destroyed. Praise was given to the Port Perry Fire Brigade for a long, hard fight to put out the blaze, and for saving adjacent buildings.

A caravan of twenty four General Motors trucks made its way through Port Perry in August 1931. They paraded to the waterfront where displays and demonstrations took place. Of interest to local residents was the Bickle Fire Engine, valued at \$3,000. It was agreed that Port Perry should have one of these.

At a public meeting of townfolk in December 1932 W.M. Letcher, Chairman of the Finance Committee defended criticism regarding the use of a truck, belonging to Archer Motor Sales, for hauling fire hose and other fire equipment to fires in the town. He felt the town's insurance rates were lower because of the efficient use of services rendered by Mr. Archer.

William H. MacGregor tendered his resignation as Chief of the Fire Brigade in February 1933 owing to ill health. His son, Wm. E. MacGregor, who was a fireman in the brigade for many years, was appointed the next Fire Chief, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of his father.

Later that month a testimonial dinner was held to honour William H. MacGregor on behalf of the community. His fellow firefighters praised their former fire chief, pointing out his courage and good leadership, coupled with his knowledge of construction of buildings which had been instrumental in keeping the "fire fiend" in check in Port Perry for so many years. He was presented with an armchair in appreciation of his service.

On June 27, 1933, former Fire Chief Wm. MacGregor passed away.

A fire in June 1933 which destroyed a home, prompted a call for a more rapid and accurate system for notifying the firemen of a fire and its location. "We have a good brigade, but the men should not be expected to sleep with one eye open in case of fire", the writer noted.

Fire visited Port Perry again in July 1933, this time destroying the Port Perry Bottling Works building on Perry St. In less than two hours the building was in ashes, but good work by the firemen confined the fire from spreading to Mr. Goode's new home. Following the fire there was a demand for a fire hydrant to be placed in that section of town.

A surprise visit by an inspector from the Underwriter's Association had firemen hustling in August 1934. At the sound of the fire alarm the men reacted quickly attaching a hose to a hydrant within four minutes and had water running. There was no fire, but it was a good test for the men.

In October 1939, when considering renovations and repairs to the Town Hall in 1939, one suggestion was to remove the old fire hose drying tower and construct a new wing for the hall on the south end.



The Yellow School House, located at the intersection of Simcoe St. and Concession 8.

A Hook and Ladder Company consisted of a cart with ladders and long hooked poles attached, which was pulled by men or horses to a fire.

~1930~

Joshua Curts family home "Lakeview Lodge" destroyed by fire

Port Perry Star: November 6, 1930

On Tuesday afternoon, November 4th, the fine brick house on the Joshua Curts property, at the west approach to Scugog bridge, was totally destroyed by fire.

The house is so far to the outskirts of the town that there was no water supply for fire protection. The fire brigade did all that was possible to save the property.

An alarm was sent to Brooklin, and the fire brigade came with their chemical fire engine; but the fire had gained too great a headway.

Our townspeople are very sorry that this great loss has come to Mrs. Melinda Curts and her family, and that this fine brick house has been destroyed.

The house became known as Lakeview Lodge, a fittingly named, as the waters of Scugog are spread out before it.



Lakeview House, the home of Joshua and Melinda Curts was located near the corner of Water St. and Hwy. 7A.

~1936~

Fire destroys second floor of Carnegie Hardware building

Port Perry Star: February 13, 1936

One of the worst fires in Port Perry for many years brought a loss estimated at \$15,000 to the Carnegie Hardware Co., on Monday night, February 10th, 1936

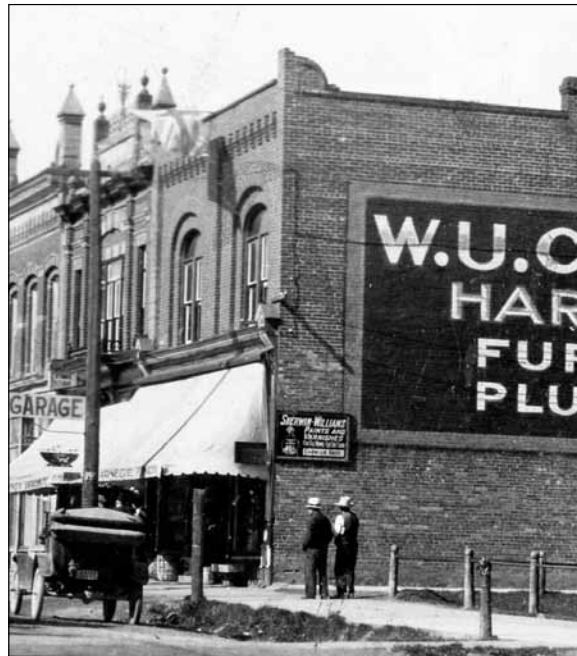
At 6 o'clock, when the store was closed everything was in apparently in good order, but within twenty minutes smoke was seen issuing from the rear of the building and the fire alarm was turned in. When the firemen arrived the fire was found to be around the freight elevator shaft.

The blaze spread all over the back part of the building and to the upper storey and workshop. Within a couple of hours the roof fell in.

The rear and upper portions of the building are totally destroyed, and what fire and smoke did not destroy the water did. Very seldom does one see such a mess as that which was caused by this fire.

The work of salvage is now going on, and the stock is being removed to the store formerly occupied by Alix Gilboord.

Hall's Restaurant suffered badly from water and smoke; and Caruso's Fruit Store suffered a loss through water in the cellar. Fortunately much of the very in-flammable material, such as oils, etc., was covered by water before the fire could reach it.



The Carnegie Hardware block (centre) was a two-storey building before the fire in 1936. It was re-built as a single-storey building.

William Corrin was a fireman for 45 years

His recollections of the Port Perry Fire Brigade over half a century

Published in the Port Perry Star

December 18, 1930

Recently Mr. William Corrin has retired from the local fire brigade after forty-five years of service. He has had some interesting experiences.

Sixty years ago in Port Perry, when Mr. Corrin was a lad, a fire alarm brought out every able bodied man and boy. Each grabbed a pail and two lines were formed between the fire and the water supply. One line passed up the pails to a man or men, on a ladder, who threw the water on the fire. The other line passed back the empties.

Shortly before the big fire of 1884, a hand pump – “The Rescue” – was bought. It was a back breaker. It took 24 men to man the pump, and five minutes tuckered out most of the pumpers. At that time Joseph Hardell was the engineer and Thomas Hazelhurst was captain.

The fire of 1884 burned the town to the ground. We have a picture of the town after the fire, just inside the door at the Star Office. As Andy would say, it was “a mess.” But the brave old pioneers had plenty of faith and courage, and they rebuilt the town better than most Ontario towns have been built. We have no old shacks on our front street.

Naturally better fire protection was the crying need of the day after the great fire. A steam engine was bought for \$6,000. Unfortunately the sellers did not have Beare Bros.’ motto—“after we sell we serve.” They sold the engine to the town but gave little or no instructions as to how to run it. The result might be expected. The engine was burned out two or three times, repaired, and finally abandoned. For many years this useless engine was listed among the “assets” of the town, and was finally sold for scrap.

Mr. Corrin ran this engine for a time; but was succeeded by the man who was not instructed and who burned the engine out. This steam engine required water and lots of it, so tanks or wells were dug at strategic points in the town. There was one at the four corners by Prentice’s barber shop. Another was up opposite the house where John Bradley used to live. Another was at the creek near Dave McMillan’s and two on the Avenue.

They were abandoned and forgotten until a few years ago when they started to cave in, and then they were filled up because they were dangerous. The south one on the Avenue still remains.

The hand pump – “The Rescue” – was sold and went to Morgan, Manitoba. Next came the reels, the standpipe, the water mains, the hose, and later the auxiliary gas engine for emergency work in pumping water.

Now we have water main from Borelia to the Lake, from Beare’s garage to the forks at Union Avenue and Ontario Street; from Lilla to Perry street, along Mary; and from Queen along Cochrane to Mr. Parrish’s corner. We are hoping for an extension of this service. The town owns about one thousand feet of serviceable hose, with necessary reels.

It is a rare thing for a man to give such continuous fire service as that given by Mr. Corrin, and the thanks of the townspeople are due to him for many a hard fight to save property from destruction by fire.

One of the immediate needs in the fire equipment is a chemical fire engine for first aid.

1940 - 1949

The 1940s appears to have been a relatively quiet time for the Port Perry Fire Brigade. They did attend a large number of small fires, which caused considerable damage to property, but there was no major conflagrations to tend to during this decade as there had in years past.

During this decade the Port Perry Fire Brigade were called on occasion to assist with fires in outlying areas of the township, answering calls for help in Cartwright, Greenbank and Seagrave.

In September 1943, William Cook, who had served as the Fire Brigade Chief from 1912-1916 retired, after a long career as town constable and caretaker of the Town Hall.

"Billy" as he was known to his friends and the public had served as a member of the fire brigade for more than 60 years, four of those as Fire Chief, and had many memories of real fires that created big holes along Queen St., including the dramatic conflagration which leveled the business section of the town in 1883 and 1884.

Although not in the numbers or severity of earlier years, fire did visit the community. In November 1946, the rabbitry of Miss Audrey Kent was discovered to be on fire. More than prize Angora rabbits were housed in the building, but it was soon a mass of flames.

The town fire truck, which was equipped for clean water was powerless in trying to pull water from the lake, not having enough hose to reach that source. It was speculated that it was unlikely to have been able to do so anyway, as the hose would have been plugged by weeds and mud. The fire fighters turned their attention to ensuring the Kent home was not destroyed by forming a bucket brigade.

In April 1946 issue council hired Leonard Leahy to remove the old hose drying tower at the south end of the Town Hall. The tower had been built a short time after the devastating fire of July 1884.

Len was reported to have hooked a block and tackle was hooked onto structure and then fastened it to his truck. As soon as the truck started moving, the once state-ly tower lurched forward and crashed full length onto the tennis courts beside the town hall.



Behind these two large wood doors, on the east side of the Town Hall, is where the fire truck was kept.



The Port Perry Fire Department fire truck, above, in its bay at the Town Hall, where the local fire department's truck and equipment was kept until the 1960s.



As near as can be determined, this picture shows what the lower east side of the Town Hall looked like before the large doors were cut into the brick to allow storage of the town's fire truck.

It was during 1946 that the council of Port Perry finally purchased a "modern" fire truck. The date it arrived and the style of truck was never mentioned, but in the fall of that year, a bylaw was passed by council to have a special doorway installed in the Town Hall to house the new Fire Truck.

The bylaw also called for the retirement of all firemen at the age of 50 years, and the Fire Chief at 60 years, due to regulations of the Fire Underwriters. By December that year the large door to allow the new fire truck to be stored at the town hall, had been completed.

In January 1947, a large crowd of businessmen and politician gathered at the Sebert House for a dinner to honour four former members of the Fire Brigade who had resigned in the past few years.

Honoured were William Cook (60 years) Weston Cawker (40 years) Ted Brooks and Charles Bowerman.

Old fire hose tower erected after the 1885 fire was torn down during renovations to the town hall.

During a storm in August 1947, the Hogg & Lytle elevator was struck by lightning. Although the damage to the elevator was minimal, water pumped into the elevator soaked some then thousand bushels of wheat causing a great loss.

During the winter of 1948, the Fire Brigade were called to Arthur Brunton's farm, just west of the town on the 6th concession. A fire which started from a blow torch being used to thaw water pipes, cause minor destruction thanks to the quick response from the firemen, and the new fire truck. It was said that without the fire truck, it was almost certain that the barn would have been destroyed.

A year later during the summer of 1949, fire broke out in the office of Dr. George Rennie and Dr. Matthew B. Dymond on Queen St. The fire which started in the base-

ment spread to the upper part of the building and firemen had to pour water into the building through a hole in the roof. Fortunately due to the prompt response from the fire brigade the main part of the building was not completely destroyed.



Brunton's Hatchery where fire destroyed the large brooder house and about one 100 young chicks.



PLEASE NOTE: The illustration of a hose-tower used at the top of this page, and in the composite picture, above, behind the old town hall are not the Port Perry hose-tower. These illustrations are of the hose-tower in Pella, Iowa, and are being used only as an example of the style of wood structure that may have been constructed behind the in Port Perry Town Hall.

THE CHIEFS

1904-2000

1904 - 1905	JOHN ELLIOTT	1916 - 19??	ARTHUR J. THOMPSON
1905 - 1912	JOHN W. MEHARRY (Chief)	19??- 1933	WM. H. MacGREGOR
1912 - 1916	WILLIAM "BILLY" COOK	1933- 1949	WM. "BERT" MacGREGOR

PORT PERRY - FIRE HALL #1



*Fire Chief
Guy Raines
1949 - 1969*



*Fire Chief
Harvey Mahaffy
1969 - 1971*



*Fire Chief
Jack Cook
1971 - 1992*



** Fire Chief
Don Steel.
1992-1995*



*Fire Chief Richard
Miller
1995 - 2017*

CAESAREA - FIRE HALL #2



*Fire Chief
Charles Miller
1960 - 1972*



*Fire Chief
Leonard Scott
1972 - 1989*



*Fire Chief
Ray Gould
1989 - 1992*



*Fire Chief
Mark Berney
2017 - 2024*



*Fire Chief
Mike Mathews
2024 - present*

* NOTE: Don Steel was the first Fire Chief for both Port Perry and Caesarea Fire Halls.

William “Billy” Cook was a fireman for more than half a century

**Billy also served Port Perry as the Town Constable,
County Constable and Caretaker of the Town Hall**

*The following story was published in the Port Perry Star at the time of his
retirement on September 2, 1943.*

William Cook, more congenially known to a host of friends and the public, old and young, as “Billy”, has given up his position as town constable and County constable, also as caretaker of the Town Hall, firefighter for 50 years, and the numerous petty duties associated with town affairs.

As Billy is 79 years young, he shows good “ judgment in taking some leisure in the autumn of life.

Billy came to Port Perry as a small boy when his father, the late Joseph Cook, moved his large family from the ‘Bay of Quinte’ district, where Billy was born and christened in the historic Anglican Church at Tyendaga, which boasts the Queen Ann Communion Service, to Port Perry and took up residence on Lilla Street, on which street Billy has resided ever since.

Billy likes to talk of earlier days in Port Perry when paddlewheel steamers churned the not-so-muddy waters of Scugog; tugs drew huge rafts of logs from the lower lakes to our buzzing sawmills and 20 lb. lunge came to the foot of main street and barked for bait. Then we had a railroad with five trains a day and a telegraph office. Now the fleet has been scuttled, the sawmills burned down, the railway track torn up, the Jewish carp have driven out the gentile lunge and our telegrams come by mail. It is not uncommon for a visitor, who has wired ahead, to reach town before his telegram arrives.

Sixty-three years ago, Billy started handling express and cartage and is still giving courteous service and we hope he keeps on for another sixty-three.

Speaking of trains, four of them were through trains and the fifth was a local that went to Whitby in the morning and came back again at night at the same time that the train came from the north.

It was a custom, or a sort of religious duty, for about one half of the population to go down to the station every evening to see the train go through, crowding the platform at the little brick station at the foot of Mary street, so that passengers had trouble in getting off, while porters from the St. Charles, Oriental and Queen’s Hotel and Railroad, Mansion and Walker House fought for possession of commercial travelers.

After the train had gone south and the engineer and fireman had turned the

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

diminutive engine around on the turn-table and put it in the roundhouse-for the night, the crowd turned and sauntered up street.

The leaders filled the bar of the Railroad House, and the procession moved on to the St. Charles and taxed the capacity of its bar, the Oriental came next and so on till all got their quota.

Good liquor and good fellowship flowed freely under the treating system as one after another "set them up". Unfortunately, occasionally, though not as often as some will tell you, good fellowship went into reverse gear and a fight started but when constable McKnight arrived and asked in his rich brogue, "What's the racket about?", quiet was restored.

Billy has been a member of the fire brigade for more than 50 years, four of those from 1912-196 as Fire Chief. He has many reminiscences of real fires that burned big holes in our front street, to say nothing of the conflagration that burned the whole town down.

The installation of waterworks slowed down the fires and curbed the tendency to sell out to the insurance company when business was bad, and to-day membership in the brigade is a white collar job.

Billy recalls the time when November 5th, Guy Fawkes Day, was still observed and celebrated by a procession ending by burning that traitor, in effigy, on the vacant lot where the Post Office now stands, while youngsters set off fire crackers.

It was Billy's delight to be allowed to head the procession on horseback, provided he could get a horse that would stand for fire-crackers.

Another amusing story is how he was paid 50¢ a week to ring a hand-bell up and down street to warn merchants that it was closing time. As there were no War Savings Stamps then, one wonders what young Billy did with his wealth.

Fifty-two years ago he married Miss Rosa Alice Moore and two years ago, surrounded by their four daughters, the Cooks hail the pleasure of celebrating their golden wedding, which was particularly fortunate as on May 3rd this year, Rosa Cook passed to her reward.

The Star wishes Billy long life in happy retirement after years of conscientious service in the village, in fact we hope that Billy lives to see a real airport in Port Perry where his "through trains" will be air trains on their way from Europe to Asia, and the townsfolk again make it a religious duty to turn out every evening to see them go by.

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Note: After retiring as the Town Constable in September 1943, Billy continued to work, driving a delivery rig around town delivering goods to the merchants. It is said he would get 50¢ for delivering a stove from a store in Port Perry to Prince Albert, and he paid for the extra help.

Two years later, Billy decided it was time to relax, so retired from his delivery business.

William "Billy" Cook celebrated his 86th birthday on July 10, 1952. His exact date of birth is unknown.

Part Four

FIGHTERS
of the ***"FIRE***
FIEND"

**Fire Brigades
of the
1950s - 1970s**

1950 - 1959

The 1950s saw the volunteers fire fighters from Port Perry begin to travel distances into the surrounding township to help control fires. The Fire Brigade were often called to fires at farms and hamlets in Reach and Cartwright Township, as well as to Uxbridge.

Often the distance to cover to get to a fire, prevented the firefighters from saving the structure called to assist, but they put their efforts to ensuring the fire did not spread beyond the initial building. This was the case in November 1950 when the Port Perry Fire Brigade was called to the general store in Nestleton, but unfortunately their efforts were unable to help, as the home was completely destroyed.

Insurance was always a topic of discussion and in May 1952, the Maple Leaf Farmer's Fire Insurance co. notified Reach council that their company would only pay the municipality \$40 for the first hour of the Fire Brigade services, and \$20 for each addition hour.

At the same meeting of council, an agreement was entered into between Port Perry and the Township of Scugog by which the Fire Brigade will provide service to Scugog residents when needed.

First meeting of Mutual Aid brings together fire brigades from across Ontario County in 1952.

One of the first meetings of Fire Brigades under the Ontario County Mutual Aid and Civil Defense plan took place in October 1952. Port Perry joined brigades from Oshawa, Ajax, Whitby, Uxbridge, Sunderland and Brooklin in an effort to coordinate efforts of the nine departments. Among the initiatives was to standardize hose couplings throughout the district. Oshawa Fire W.R. Chief Elliott, who organized the meeting, said this would be the first test of the mutual aid fire plan since its formation.

Fire Underwriter's quite often came to town unannounced to check the efficiency of local fire brigades. In October 1952 the Port Perry Fire Brigade was called into action. They quickly answered the call and laid down hose at the residence of councillor Harry Peel, before discovering it was a test for the Canadian Underwriter's Association.

The reason given for the test was that Port Perry had undergone a change in the waterworks system, taking water from lake to well, since the last report in 1947. Following the test, a flow test was made at a hydrant at the corner of Lilla and Queen St., and to the dock, where a lengthy test of the pumper was undertaken.

In January 6, 1955 Fire Chief Raines gave a report to council for the preceding year. He said that the Brigade had answered 22 calls in 1954, of which only three were in Port Perry. The other 19 calls were attended in surrounding villages and townships. The largest of the fires was in town at the Port Perry Dairy.

He also reported that current fire brigade consisted of 14 volunteer fire fighters, and that in the past year purchases included a new Scott air pack; 200 feet of hose and a number of new coats, boots and helmets.

Up until 1957, Cartwright Township used the fire services of Port Perry and Bowmanville for their fire protection, but this changed in January when the township formed a Volunteer Fire Brigade.

The Ontario Fire Marshall attended the January 1957 meeting of Cartwright Council to present the regulations governing fire brigades. The new volunteer fire brigade, which would be stationed in Caesarea, would initially consist of a Fire Chief, Deputy Chief, two Captains and 12 firemen. It was required to have to be insured for \$3,000 at a cost of \$3.00 per man.

The following month, a Bell Telephone representative attended Port Perry Council to explain the new method of activating a fire alarm, where the dial system is installed. Fire Chief Guy Raines announced the telephone answering locations for fire calls would be in the homes of W.G. Raines, Harry DeShane, Mervin DeNure, George Parry, Keith Mark, Charles Lown and the fire hall.

Realizing there is a benefit from working together, rather than on their own, Fire Brigades from nine communities united in Port Perry in June 1957 for a massive training exercise. Mutual Aid was the aim was to coordinate equipment and services in the case of disaster. Brigades from Beaverton, Sunderland, Uxbridge,

Cartwright Twp. forms its first fire brigade to be known as the with its fire hall in Caesarea.

Ajax, Whitby, Pickering, Oshawa and Brooklin took part in the exercise held along the strip of abandoned railway north of Water Street to Beach St.

At the request of Fire Chief Guy Raines, council authorized Mr. Raines to increase the Port Perry Fire Department from 14 to 16 men.

Cartwright Township renewed its 1957 fire fighting agreement with Port Perry in January 1958. The stand-by agreement provides \$200 to cover up to four calls per year, with \$50 for each additional call, plus \$2.00 per man.

A modern emergency reporting system was implemented in Port Perry in June 26, 1958. The emergency system consists of seven special telephone installed in the homes of members of the fire brigade. The seven telephones with the special line will all ring simultaneously, and the first fireman to answer will obtain the location and details of the fire and will start the siren wailing.

A fire in November 1958, in which a building in

Cartwright was destroyed resulted in a deputation to the local Council requesting both Port Perry and Caesarea fire brigades being called to all fires in the township. Council was unanimous in agreeing for the need, and Bell Telephone was to be contacted with a request that both of the fire brigades be called to every fire in Cartwright Township.

The Caesarea Fire Brigade petitioned Cartwright council in April 1959 for an increase in the funding for the brigade, and also for upkeep of the new hall. Council authorized \$250 for the brigade and announced the firefighters group would be called the Cartwright Volunteer Fire Brigade. They also granted \$200 to the fire hall, which also acts as a public hall.

November 26, 1959 - For the first time the Port Perry Fire Brigade have undertaken to back the drive for funds for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Citizens were asked to keep their eyes open for donation containers placed in the various stores throughout the town.

Fires of 1950s

Fire guts Morrow Farm Equipment building

Port Perry Star, May 21, 1951

At one a.m. Sunday a fire was noticed burning in the building occupied by Morrow Farm Equipment and Lakeshore Knitting Mill on Perry Street. It was reported almost instantaneously by Jack Whitmore, who rang the alarm bell and by Miss M. Clark who called the local telephone exchange.

The brief time it took the volunteer Fire Brigade to arrive, the blaze had made rapid headway and it required

many hours of effort to extinguish the fire.

Surmise has pointed to two possible causes of this great loss; boys were seen earlier in the evening tossing firecrackers at the building and it is believed on may have slipped under a door to explode among eerily ignited material, smouldering away to blaze up later. The other possibilities urged spontaneous combustion.

Valiant effort on the part of the Fire Brigade brought the blaze under control about an hour after it was report and prevented its spread to nearby buildings, but firemen were keep busy for hours by smoldering wool and burning debris.

Seven tractors were removed from the premises by Gordon Morrow, the owner, and volunteers who drove them to the DeNure bus yards.

Unfortunately the Knitting Mill was unable to rescue anything of value and many papers as well as thousands of dollars worth of machinery, raw material and finished garments were destroyed.

Total loss of building and equipment is estimated at from \$100,000 to \$125,000, which is partially covered by insurance.



Burned out shell of the Morrow Farm Equipment building after the fire in May 1951.

~1951~



James Goodall mill at lakefront destroyed by fire

Port Perry Star: October 18, 1951

Port Perry suffered another severe loss to its business area when a sudden blaze leveled the mill of James Goodall & Co. on the waterfront today.

In an interview, Mr. Ira Aldred said that the plant was empty of all save one workman who was doing repair work on a diesel engine. The worker was using an extension cord with an electric light and while busy around the machine he accidentally dropped the light smashing the bulb, which caused a spark that touched off the oil that was being used to clean the parts of the machine.

The man hastened to get help to extinguish the flames, but in the few minutes that help was arriving the whole front of the building was enveloped in fire and the lumber yard next door was threatened.

Although the local fire brigade was at the scene ten minutes after the alarm was turned, in the storage room of the Lake Scugog Lumber Co. was already starting to burn and two streams of water were immediately turned upon it. The damage to their building was estimated at \$2,000.

The blaze in the Grist Mill had attained such proportions that it was apparent that the building could not be saved and all efforts were

turned to prevent the spread of the blaze to the lumber yard nearby. Two streams of water were turned upon it from the water main and five more strains were obtained by using the pumper in the lake.

As the fierce heat of the fire mounted a call was sent to the Uxbridge fire brigade for help and they responded promptly with their fire engine. At this time it was feared that the fire would get into the lumber yard and become uncontrollable. However by the time the Uxbridge truck had arrived the crisis had passed and after waiting until they were sure that the blaze was in hand they, our good friends from Uxbridge, returned home. Their promptness in coming to our aid was much appreciated and had the wind freshened a little more, then likely their help would have been much needed.

The James Goodall Co. Ltd. have suffered a 'heavy loss. The value of the building is estimated at \$60,000 and the contents \$35,000. It is only partially covered by insurance.

There have been several grist mills in Port Perry. The original building at this location was built by the Paxtons. It was destroyed by fire many years ago and later replaced by James Carnegie and Sons by the present brick structure which was razed today. The loss of this business will be severely felt by Port Perry and the farming community around it.

~1952~

Woman dies in Caesarea hotel burned to the ground

Toronto Globe & Mail, July 17, 1952

An elderly woman, partly cripple in one arm, was trapped by flames any burned to death just before dawn at Caesarea on Sunday, after she had rushed into her flaming wooden hotel to save some valuables. Her 13-year old dog, Lucky, followed her into the house and perished with her.

Eight Toronto people, holidaying for the weekend, got out of the hotel it the nick of time. Four had to leap from a second-floor window to save themselves. One man made the 20-foot jump with his son in his arms as the flames raced through the house.

The woman who was burned to death was 67-year old Mrs. Tilly Harran, wife of Fred Harran, proprietor of Kenosha House, a tourist hotel, about nine miles from Port Perry.

Everything was quiet and everybody was asleep when we got in," Mrs. Skene said. "Suddenly, after we'd been asleep for a couple

of hours, Marjory woke me and said 'I'm sure there's a fire somewhere.' I jumped up and ran down stairs."

"I ran up stairs and into the old couple's room and shouted, 'Madam, the hotel's on fire', and then I ran into our room and told Marjory to getup, but quick. We grabbed our things and left."



Kenosha House hotel in Caesarea, circa 1915 post card.

~1954~

Port Perry Dairy damaged by fire and water

Port Perry Star, March 25, 1954

At 1 p.m. Sunday afternoon a flash fire occurred while the co-partners of the Port Perry Dairy were making alterations to refrigeration storage space. Heating hydrolene with a blow torch, to seal cork lining on the wall, it took fire and efforts by George Parry and Don Pargeter could not extinguish it.



Fire underway at the Port Perry Dairy in 1954.

The fire department was called and as the fire had reached the inside of the ceiling above it was quite apparent that it would take a lot of water to get it under control. Four lines of hose were laid from the corner hydrant and thousands of gallons of water were poured into the building, mostly through upstairs windows so that it would soak down through.

The heavy smoke kept the firemen out of the building for quite some time during which the interior of the front apartment and its contents were completely ruined. Downstairs the fire was held to the front of the building and the damage included the refrigerator storage and milk bar, both a total loss. Pasteurizing and bottling equipment in the rear section received only water and smoke damage. The water on the electrical equipment will be the biggest hold up to getting under way again as it will have to be thoroughly dried out.

No valuation has been placed on the damage as yet but it will be high and it will take a lot of work to repair the damage to the building.

~1955~

Blaze spreads rapidly destroying Utica's Memory Hall

Port Perry Star, April 14, 1955

The entire community of Utica, six miles west of Port Perry, turned out to assist the Port Perry fire Brigade Saturday afternoon when fire for a while threatened the whole hamlet.

When the fire, which is believed to have started in the roof from a spark of a nearby grass fire, was over, the villagers were without their Memorial Hall, a one-storey building which had stood on the four corners of the village for more than a half-century.

Firemen, hampered by roads which were almost impassable because of spring thaws, arrived to find that the building was beyond saving. Volunteers had managed to save a few chairs and the piano. A large portrait of the donor of the hall, the late Walter Horn, was not saved.

Frank McGregor and Charles Lakey, proprietors of "The community hall burned right to the ground in less than a half-hour. Five minutes after the fire started, you couldn't get inside the building. It burned like a match-box", said Frank McGregor.

Firemen's efforts were not wasted, however, for the

fire from the hall on the south side of the road, leaped the road and began in the grass on the north ditch. It also leaped a cross-road and burned along the south ditch and through a rail fence and volunteers were hard put for some time to keep the flames from ravaging the fields to the north of the village.

The building was insured for \$3,000.



Gas fire at Haugen's Drive-Inn Restaurant at Manchester

Port Perry Star, November 3, 1955

Haugen's Drive-Inn Restaurant at Manchester was almost the scene of a bad fire earlier this week. Only the prompt action of a number of folk prevented the total destruction of this new building.

While the Ontario Shore Gas supply truck was filling the tanks used for cooking Tuesday morning, gas leaked from one of the connections and was apparently set on fire by a spark from the exhaust fan that was running above the spot where the tanks stood.



Picture shows flames coming from Haugen's Restaurant.

A spout of flame shot up to the eave which started to burn; this jumped through a small window and ignited the grease in the deep fryer.

Mrs. Frank Johnson, a nearby neighbour, was out getting an armful of wood for her stove when she saw the first burst of flames. Without a moment's hesitation she dropped the wood and put in a call for the Port Perry Fire Brigade which responded promptly, due to the co-operation of the Port Perry Telephone Girls. At the same time others were hurrying to help.

A mechanic from the Manchester Garage brought a fire extinguisher, and a crew of Hydro men who were passing stopped and brought their extinguisher.

Then the fire brigade arrived and quickly had a spray of water turned on the hot tanks, to cool them, so that other fire men could approach and were able to push the tanks away from the building with pike poles, after which they were doused with CO2 foam.

It is indeed fortunate that these tanks did not explode while they were so hot. The driver of the gas truck had his hair badly scorched and received light burns on his face, but he remained on the scene until the fire was out, after having removed his truck to a safe distance from the blaze.

~1957~



Port Perry Fire Department, 1957

Members of the Port Perry Fire Department in front of old Town Hall, where the fire truck was kept. The truck was a 1945 International Air Force crash truck, the first motorized fire truck for the local department. Members are, from left, Harvey Mahaffy, Charlie Lown, Bill Gibson, George Parry, Merv DeNure, Jack MacGregor, Jack Cook, Chief Guy Raines, Bruce Beare, Harry Deshane, Ben Pickard, Howard Gibson, Bev Kent, Don Carnegie, Ray Webster and Keith Mark.

Blaze ignites in engine room at Master Feeds elevator

Port Perry Star, February 5, 1959

That it pays to co-operate with your neighbours was definitely proved when fire was discovered in the engine room of Master Feeds on Tuesday afternoon.

The situation had the makings of a disaster. The hydrants at the east end of Queen St. were frozen, a strong wind was whipping across the lake, which would blow any blaze across the street if it were to break out into the open, and if the fire were to have reached the grain bins, the problem would indeed be serious.

Chief Guy Raines sized up the potentials quickly and decided to summon assistance at once, rather than wait until the fire got out of hand.

The Uxbridge and Oshawa Brigades who belong to the Mutual Aid program for Ontario County were prompt in their response. The Reach pumper truck was also brought to the scene of the fire and with the assistance of extra, pumpers and extra hose, water was taken from the lake and the blaze

confined to the engine room where it started. The hydrants, which were left open – thawed out in about half an hour, and was used later.

When Mr. Mahaffy discovered the ceiling of the engine room on fire he at once put in a call for the local fire brigade who were soon on the scene. A quick evaluation of the conditions sent them back for the Reach tank truck which is housed in Port Perry. This pumper carries some 1,000 gals of water and was promptly put into action.

Citizens assisted firemen to cut holes in the ice, which meant cutting through about two feet of ice & snow. The Port Perry truck was hooked up to pump water from the lake, as was the Uxbridge truck which arrived soon after the hole was cut.

The Oshawa brigade was also very speedy in their response, but when they arrived it was found that the situation was pretty much under control, and they stood by until it was considered that the danger of spreading the blaze was at a minimum.

Caesarea dance hall goes up in a "great ball of fire"

Bowmanville Statesman, September 10, 1959

A fire completely destroyed the Holiday Inn, a restaurant and dance hall, in Caesarea last Wednesday evening, September 2nd. Several cottagers were evacuated from their homes near the burning dance hall.

The fire started soon after 6 p.m. and threatened a line of cottages in the vicinity for more than an hour as it tore through Lake Scugog's oldest dance hall, gutting the building.

The blaze was battled by fire trucks from Caesarea and Port Perry for more than two hours, but by the time the firemen had gained control of the flash fire, the building was totally wrecked.

The Caesarea Fire Chief, Charles Miller, said afterwards that the dance hall went up like a great ball of fire. "One spark and the cottages would have gone as well," he added. The restaurant and dance hall was owned by William McLenachan, Blackstock, and Albert Ellis, Nestleton. They bought the place last winter, and remodelled the building completely before re-opening early in May.

It is believed that the renovation work of the structure cost \$20,000, and that the restaurant and dance

hall were probably worth almost \$30,000. In addition to the building, much expensive equipment was lost.

One of the owners, William McLenachan, gave the alarm. He had gone to the restaurant and closed the door, and then suddenly noticed that flames were pouring out of the upstairs rooms. He re-opened the door to be met by a wall of flames sweeping through the building.

Mr. McLenachan called the fire department, and disconnected three tanks of propane gas, rolling them across the street to safety. The 80' by 80' structure burned rapidly. The Caesarea fire truck arrived at the scene within minutes of the fire breaking out, but it was already too late.

Despite the efforts of loyal firemen and those from Port Perry the dance hall and restaurant were consumed by the flames. They succeeded in preventing the spread of the fire to neighbouring buildings.

Ontario Provincial Police from the Bowmanville Detachment attended the fire. It is thought to have started from faulty fuses in the kitchen which might have been damaged in the storm the previous night.



The Holiday Inn resort, Caesarea goes up in flames September 1959. This building was originally known as the Kenosha House Resort and during the 1940s, it was called the Scugog Inn.

1960 - 1969

At the inaugural meeting of Cartwright Council in January 1960, Fire Chief Charles Miller informed the council that a newer fire truck was need, as the old was slow and unsafe. He told them that if they had a good pumper that passed specification of the Ontario Fire Marshal, they would then qualify for Mutual Fire Aid. He explained that this would give them free exchange of neighbouring brigades equipment when necessary.

At the same meeting, a motion was made instructing the Fire Chief, once a fire call was received start the fire siren, then proceed directly by car to the scene of the fire with whatever small equipment, such as a portable extinguisher they have in the possession. The fire truck would then follows as soon as possible.

At a meeting of Cartwright Council in October 1960, council approved the installation of the Bell Telephone Fire Call system.

A fire at the Utica General Store caused considerable damage.

May 1961

In February 1961, Port Perry Council passed bylaws authorizing the clerk to sign fire agreements with the Township of Scugog and the Township of Cartwright. In April the same year, Reach Township agreed to supply Port Perry Fire Brigade with two hose nozzles and shovels, to be used on the Reach Fire Truck, which is located at the fire department in Port Perry.

April 1962, Don Popert and Don Forder were added to the Port Perry Volunteer Fire Department on a six month probationary period.

August 1962, Councillor Aurther Cox suggested that the former Legion Hall at the rear of the Post Office, and now the property of the Village of Port Perry, could be used to house the old fire truck, and as a meeting place for the Port Perry Fire Brigade. Council passed a resolution to install a 9'x10' high door in the old Legion building so it could be used for truck storage.

September 1962, Clive Boyd was recommended as a new member of the Fire Brigade, to fill the space left when D.A. Carnegie, resigned from the force.

September, 1962 the Port Perry Fire Brigade joined a Mutual Aid Drill, when a two storey house was burned at the top of the ridges. Sixty firefighters, representing seven volunteer brigades took part in the drill. Four

Firecrackers cause fire which causes \$32,000 worth of damage to Carnegie warehouse

May 28, 1964

Youngsters throwing firecrackers was the cause of a fire on Queen Street which completely destroyed a storage warehouse of Crest Hardware and an old blacksmith shop behind the Bank of Commerce.

Several people at the arena used a hose to wet down the inside wall of the arena, that was on fire, while firemen from both Port Perry and Uxbridge worked outside to control the blaze.

Thanks to the efforts of firemen the fire was confined to the immediate area. If it had spread to the stores, only a few feet way, a considerable portion of the shopping area could have been lost in a short time.

Gordon Carnegie of Crest Hardware estimated their loss at approximately \$25,000 or which \$15,000 was stock. Frank Godley, chairman of the Arena Board estimated the arena suffered about \$4,000 damage to the roof and side of the building.

Bill Carnegie, who owned the old blacksmith shop estimated the loss to his building to be about \$1,500.



The Crest Hardware's warehouse, at the rear of their Queen Street store, was completely destroyed by fire in May 1964. Due to its proximity to the Port Perry arena, the arena also sustained some damage from the fire.



The Port Perry Fire Department's new three-bay fire hall on Caleb Street, was constructed during 1964, and was officially opened on Saturday, September 11, 1965. The siren, seen on top of the hall, replaced the bell in the old Town Hall, which had been used for more than half a century.



pumpers were present, and two tankers from Pickering and Port Perry. The two tankers hauled water from Cedar Creed to a reservoir constructed of tarpaulins which held 9,000 gallons.

September 1964, Mr. F.S. Wotton, Coordinator for the Emergency Measures Organization, came before Port Perry Council making suggestions for emergency services. For the Fire Department he suggest: 1. A 24 hour operated centre to received fire calls and to alert and divert fire brigades. 2. Increase the number of trained firemen for large emergency by purchase of equipment. 3. Instal radio control in all fire stations and pumpers, and \$. Establish and equip additional fire halls and brigades.

January 1965, the Port Perry fire Brigade released its calls for the past year. Out of town fires for the year totalled 3, an increase of three over the previous year. In-town fires dropped from seventeen to six calls.

February 1966, following a request from the Fire Chief, council endorsed an increase in pay for the brigades 16 members, to \$3,000 per year, based on the number of meetings attended, expenses for time lost on jobs, and cost of living.

May 26, 1967 - The use of firecrackers is blamed for the destruction of the Port Perry fairgrounds historic grandstand. Firemen responded quickly but by the time they arrived the fire had spread from end to end and nothing could be done to save large wood structure.

1968

February 1968, Anna Forder and Richard Stephens, home from after competing in the Olympics in Grenoble, were met by the Fire Brigade, who hoisted them to the top of the firetruck. With sirens screaming, and horns tooting the fire truck lead a cavalcade of cars through the town to the Masonic Hall for celebrations.

May 1968, the third annual Fireworks Display sponsored by the Port Perry Fire Departments attracted about 325 carloads of residents to enjoy the fireworks.

October 1968, The Ontario Fire Marshall attended a council meeting to give his report of the local fire department. He informed council that Port Perry has a good, average department and highly recommended that at least two men attend "fire school" at Gravenhurst ever year.

November 14, 1968 - Firemen Harvey Mahaffy and Jack Cook requested council to authorized the fire department to join the Ontario Firefighters Association at an annual membership fee of \$10. Approved by council.

1969

January 23, 1969 - Following the appointment of Harvey Mahaffy as Fire Chief, firefighters Jack Cook was promoted to Deputy Chief, and Charles Lown and Mervin DeNure became Captains of the fire brigade.

It was further recommened to make former chief, Guy Raines an Honourary Chief of the department, which was approved by council.

February 1969, the Port Perry Chamber of Commerce held a Testimonial Dinner for a number of men who had served the community well for many years.

After 35 years of service on the Port Perry Fire Department, chief Guy Raines resigned

January 1969



Port Perry Firemen were honoured, from left, Harry DeShane, 23 years; Don Carnegie, 11 years; Bev. Kent, 19 years and William Gibson, 11 years. Fire Chief Guy Raines who served for 35 years, was unable to attend.

Among those honoured were J.J. Gibson, former reeve of Port Perry, retired Fire Chief Guy Raines and four firemen with long service - Beverley Kent, Harry DeShane, William Gibson and Donald Carnegie.

March 1969, Scugog Township's unwillingness to share

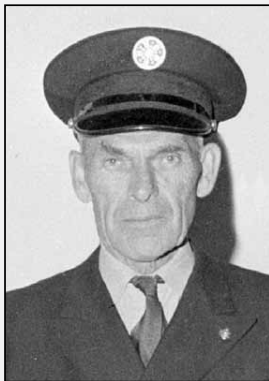
the cost of a new tank truck to service the two township came to head. Contracts with the two townships and the Port Perry Fire Department were up for renewal and Port Perry council said unless Scugog goes along with Reach, they may be left without fire service. Council passed a motion which stating that they would not sign a fire fighting agreement with Scugog council unless their equipment meets with approval of the Port Perry Fire Department.

March 1969, A combined meeting of the councils of Port Perry, Reach and Scugog have agreed that the operation of the local Fire Brigade would become the responsibility of the three municipalities. The cost will be spring with Port Perry and Reach carrying about 40 percent, and the remaining 20 percent covered by Scugog.

A Fire Commission was appointed consisting of Bruce Beare, chairman, Joseph Podres, Port Perry; Al Bertrand and Arthur Catton, Reach, Scugog and William Bell, Scugog.

June 1969, the three municipalities decided that the name for the new combined fire brigade, would be "Port Perry, Reach and Scugog Fire Department".

Halloween night in Port Perry turned ugly when more than 300 people covered upon the town with intent to do damage. During the height of the activity, the local fire brigade was called out and with the help of powerful water hoses managed to disperse most of the crowd.



Fire Chief Guy Raines



Fire Chief Harvey Mahaffy

Guy Raines resigns after 35 years, Harvey Mahaffy selected new chief

January 9, 1969

After faithful service for 35 years on the Port Perry Fire Department, 20 of them as chief, Guy Raines has decided to retire. His decision was made at a meeting at the fire hall.

Firefighters at the hall held an election and deputy-chief Harvey Mahaffy was elected Chief, and Jack Cook selected as the new deputy chief. Charles Lown and Mervin DeNure were selected as captains.

Mr. Mahaffy has been a member of the department since 1946, when he came to Port Perry to work for Hogg and Lytle and Master Feeds in the grain elevator. He was promoted to manager 13 years ago.



Firefighters from Port Perry and Uxbridge fight San-Man motel fire

March 21, 1968

A three alarm fire on March 15 destroyed the living quarters of the San-Man Motel at Manchester and badly damaged all the remaining units in the motel.

The fire started as a result of a blow torch blowing up and fire quickly spreading throughout the entire living quarters of the owners, Mr. and Mrs. H.D. Santer.

Both Port Perry and Uxbridge fire departments responded, and Brooklin fire department sent a water tanker.

Lack of water and dense smoke hampered the firemen from saving the living quarters, but firemen stopped the progress of the fire by cutting through both sides of the building with a chain saw.

They managed to save the remaining units of the motel, but large portion of the motel itself was also badly damaged.



Port Perry, Scugog & Reach Fire Department with new fire truck. From left, Captain Bill Harrison, Deputy Chief Charlie Lown, Chief Jack Cook and Captain Merv DeNure.

1970 - 1979

In his annual presentation to council in January 1970, Fire Chief Harvey Mahaffey reported a slight increase in 1969 compared to the previous year, being called out 39 times compared to 32 in 1968. Breaking it down, he reported 19 calls to Reach Two, 11 in Port Perry and nine to Scugog Island. They also responded to a single call to Cartwright, Uxbridge and Mariposa.

The 1970s started out much like other years, with the department being called to duty numerous times over the course of the decade with many of them to barn fires.

The Department was called to a barn owned by Don Crosier in March 1970, but were unable to save the structure as the fire spread rapidly throughout the barn. Eighteen head of cattle were lost in the blaze.

Cartwright Fire Chief Len Scott attended Cartwright Council in April 1970 seeking information regarding construction of a new Fire Hall. A quoted rate for a metal clad building was \$10 sq. ft. finished and insulated. Council decided to enquire further for estimates for a 32'x40' building with three bays and a small office facility.

In June 1970 - Eleven member of the Port Perry Fire Department received certificates from the Ontario Department Of Communications, qualifying

Fire Protection to cost \$35,000 in 1970

March 19, 1970

The estimated cost of fire protection for the combined municipalities of Port Perry, Reach and Scugog for 1970 will be \$35,320.74. The largest single amount this year is the purchase of a new fire truck to the amount of \$18,800.

Remunerations to firemen are estimated to \$6,000. and new supplies required by the fire department during the year \$4,585.

The proposed budget was passed by Port Perry council at the last regular meeting.

The total amount is shared between the three municipalities, Port Perry 40%, Reach Township 40% and Scugog Township 20%, or in dollars it will amount to \$14,000. each for Port Perry and Reach with Scugog paying \$7,000.



Deputy Chief Jack Cook assumes position of Chief of the Port Perry, Reach, Scugog Fire Department due to illness of Chief Harvey Mahaffy

October 1970

Cartwright Twp. fire agreement

June 14, 1972

Port Perry Council signed a new Fire Protection Agreement with Cartwright Twp. The \$400 annual retainer covers two trips to Cartwright, and additional trips will cost \$200 per trip, plus \$4 per man per fire.

The new agreement doubles the fees to be charged Cartwright for the additional fire protection. Prior, the retainer fee had been \$200 for the first two trips, and \$100 plus \$2 per hour per man, for each additional trip.



January 17, 1973 - The local Fire, Bade, sponsor of the Muscular Dystrophy fund raising campaign received two welcome contributions recently. Arthur Cation, reeve of Reach Township and an employee of Bell Telephone Company presented the firemen \$100 on behalf of the Bell Employees Welfare Fund. Mr. Cation is seen at left in the picture. Presenting a cheque to Firechief Jack Cook in the amount of \$27. is Mrs. Roberts who operates Ridgewview Snack Bar on Oshawa Road. She raised the money from selling tickets on a Christmas cake.

them as Radiotelephone Operators following the five week course. Certified were: Jack Cook, Charlie Lawn, Bill Harrison, Don Forder, Ray Penny, Clive Boyd, George Parry, Bob Brinkman, Ben Pickard, Howard Gibson and Bob Rodd.

November 24, 1971 - Fire Chief Jack Cook reported that 19 panes of glass in the door windows of the Fire Hall were broken. A youth "spinning circles" with his car in front of the hall threw up the gravel striking the windows. Cost to replace the windows was \$60, and was paid by the youth.

1972

September 27, 1972 - Council received a request from the local fire department for a number of new fire hydrants and repairs to others was brought forward at council. Council approved the purchase of the hydrants and a request to raise all hydrants 24 inches above ground to allow for easier access.

January 10, 1973 - Port Perry Fire Department made its report to council, declaring it was a busy year

in 1972, with 70 calls answered. Most of the fires were of minor character, and Port Perry topped the list with 31 calls. Reach had 27 calls, Scugog Twp., 11 and one call was answered in Cartwright. The firemen also attended and assisted in two drownings, and one death occurred from asphyxiation during a fire.



April 23, 1970 - The Port Perry, Reach and Scugog Fire Department received the long awaited new fire truck from the La France Company on Thursday, April 9th. The truck which will mainly cover the two townships has a 1200 gallon water tank but also has a 550 g.p.m. pump for use on the hydrants in the village. John Majcher (centre) owner of Majcher Pontiac-Buick, presents the keys to Port Perry's Deputy-Reeve, Bruce Beare (right) who is chairman of the fire commission. On the left is Deputy-Chief Jack Cook, who is in charge of the department during the illness of Chief Harvey Mahaffy.

1973

January 31, 1973 - Employees at Beare Motors were fortunate to push a car clear of their building after fire started in the undercarriage of a customer's car before it damaged the garage. The local fire department arrived too late to save the car which was engulfed in flames.

March 28, 1973 - Volunteer firemen in Caesarea requested council to number all farms and houses in the township, for quick identification in case of fire. Council will consider the request, but one councillor thought that number was unnecessary since, in his opinion, all the firemen know everyone in the township anyway.

\$200,000 flash fire destroys Cy Wilson Ford dealership

April 3, 1974

Fire swept through the premises of Cy Wilson Ford Sales during the early hours of April 1, completely destroying the landmark at the corner of Manchester.

Estimates of the damage ranged into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, one estimate going as high as \$300,000.

Firemen from Port Perry answered the call at 12:45 a.m. after an OPP officer turned in the call. They quickly summoned help from Caesarea, Whitby and Uxbridge fire departments. At one point five trucks were racing to and from the scene drawing water to the fire.

Two trucks from Brian's Towing were kept



busy towing cars away from the side of the building, some of them already damaged severely. At least 20 cars and trucks were completely destroyed. Among those was an antique Ford in the showroom of the building.

1974

February 1974 - Scugog Council approved an interim Fire Department budget of \$61,262, a fifty per cent increase over 1973 when the amount was \$40,830. Much of the increase was attributed to providing equal pay to volunteers for both Port Perry and Caesarea firemen. Chief Cook head up an 18 man volunteer unit at Hall #1; and Chief Len Scott leads a 35 volunteer at Hall #2. Also in the budget was \$8,000 for a new panel truck fully equipped for emergency service.

March 13, 1974 - A request to have Jack Cook appointed to the position of full-time Fire Chief of the entire Fire Department was turned down by Port Perry



Fireman Len Nixon shows off one of the township's fire trucks to Michael Toye during the Port Perry Fire Hall Open House in October 1974.

Fireman off flood duty

October 8, 1975

Firemen will no longer be obligated to pump out flooded basements in times of flood or heavy rains. It was suggested instead, that the township's works department take on the task and that a charge be applied for such calls.

The decision came after Fire Chief Jack Cook approached council Monday night on the matter.

The fire department is called out regularly to pump basements because they are the only ones in the community with the equipment, according to the fire chief. He said some officials frown on the practice, and think the equipment should be used only for fighting fires.

Councillor Bob Kenny agreed. "If a pump is broken down from fighting a fire, that's bad enough," he said. "But if it breaks down from pumping basements and there's a fire call, that could be disastrous."

Councillor Kenny said it was hard enough getting volunteers now, and that employers have to agree to let their employees go to fight fires at a considerable loss of time and money. Burdening them with the additional service of pumping basements would only make matters worse.

Caesarea women to join fire department

July 14, 1976

In an unanimous vote by Scugog Township Council, three women were accepted along with three male applicants as members of the Scugog Township Fire Department #2, ending a six-month effort by a group of Caesarea women to overcome what they described as "sex discrimination" by fire chief Scott.

According to a letter to council signed by Scott, all the applicants have passed the necessary aptitude, practical and oral tests to join the department, but Chief Scott wants council's acceptance of the applicants into the department.

There have been indications from within the department that there would be "mass resignations" if women were allowed to join the department. But according to Councillor Reg. Rose, council is "damned if they do and damned if they don't" since the Caesarea women have threatened legal action of the "discriminatory" practices at Caesarea are allowed to continue.

"It has been recommended to us, and all the applicants have been properly tested and have met all the requirements. How can we refuse?" Rose asked. There was some doubt whether the resignations en mass would materialize, as it seems to only a few instigating the threat and have been less than successful in gathering whole-hearted support from the majority of the members.

Council. Caesarea Fire Dept. #2 asked council to hold off on the request for one year before making a decision. It was the feeling of Hall #2 firemen that the added expense of Regional Government, hiring a full time chief would be another unnecessary cost at this time. Council agreed and passed a motion to defer the request.

1975

April 23, 1975 - The Caesarea unit of the Scugog Fire Department will get a new \$22,000 fire truck to replace the vehicle lost in an accident recently. The truck will be equipped with a portable pump and 1,200 gallon tank. Council opted for the cheapest of three quotations submitted.

July 23, 1975 - Spontaneous combustion in a tinder dry manure pile was determined to be the cause of a \$70,000 fire owned by Don Hoekstra. Scugog Fire Chief Jack Cook reported that the 11,000 chickens alone were worth about \$14,000 alone. When firemen arrived the barn was completely engulfed in flames. All the firemen could do was to prevent the fire from spreading to an adjacent building which contained 22,000 chicks.

July 23, 1975 - Fire Chief Jack Cook reported that thunderstorms and heavy



Scugog Township Number 1 hall firemen held their annual banquet and dance Saturday at the Legion Hall. Part of the activity included the honouring of two members of the department who have retired after giving many years of service to the department and community. Bob Kenny, township representative (left) and fire chief Jack Cook (right) present commemorative plaques to firemen Ben Pickard (right) who has given 25 years of service and Don Forder, who is retiring after 12 years of service.



Firetruck Victory Parades

April 14, 1976

Scugog Township decided to investigate the practice of allowing winning teams to ride on the local fire trucks for victory parades or celebrations. The issue came up after complaints that the township was unfair about who was allowed to ride on the fire engine.

The complaint came after council allowed the Midget "C" champions to ride the truck, but refused a ball team the same honour.

rain caused a great deal of flooding and water damage to homes in Port Perry on Sunday. He said that the firemen were kept busy for more than seven hours pumping water out of several basements, and a sewer backup at the new Port Perry Nursing Home. They also pumped three feet of water out of the Simpson-Sears basement and a new house near the Scout Hall.

1976

January 1976 - Sexual discrimination reared its head when a group of Caesarea women who applied to become volunteer firefighters were passed over by Fire Chief Len Scott, who claimed women were not strong enough to wear air packs. After a contentious meeting, Scugog Township Council upheld Caesarea Fire Chief Len Scott's authority to set his own hiring policy for the department, despite claims by a number of female applicants that the department is discriminatory.

April 21, 1976 - The familiar wail of the fire siren in Port Perry will soon become a thing of the past as men from Scugog Fire Department No.1 will be carrying "beepers" in their pockets shortly. Council authorized the purchase of the system at a cost of \$9,264.00. the siren atop of the hall will remain, to be used only in the case of emergency should the "beeping" system break down.

July 14, 1976 - A report from the Ontario Fire Marshall suggested sweeping changed to the municipal fire protection for the township. One of the most important suggestions is the appointing of a full-time chief of the fire department. Also, among the many recommendations, was a stand-by emergency electrical power supply for the fire alarm equipment and a program of fire prevention inspections;

October 20, 1976 - Members of Scugog Fire Department halls one and two met with council to discuss the Fire Marshall's report on municipal fire protection. The contentious issue of a full-time Fire Chief to head the two halls was raised and some testy discussion amplified the discord between the two departments. No conclusions were reached after a long, and sometimes heated debate, but council got a commitment from both side that joint training sessions would be held in future.

1978

April 19, 1978. In attempting to lower the proposed operation budget for the township, council slashed the Scugog Fire Department budget proposal of \$82,769 by \$14,000. The department had asked for an increase of \$1,3000 in wages for its 22 man force, and a \$2,000



October 3, 1977 - It was Open House for Scugog Fire Department Unit Two at the Fire hall in Caesarea on Saturday afternoon. Deputy Charlie Miller, left, Captain Gord Gettins and Chief Leonard Scott with a portable generator purchased by the department.

Ontario Fire Marshal recommends hiring a full-time Fire Chief for Scugog's Fire Department

July 1976



October 17, 1979 - Mayor Jerry Taylor offered retiring Howard Gibson the appreciation of the community for his thirty years of service with the Port Perry Fire Department last Saturday evening at the Scugog Fire Hall No. 1 dinner and dance. The mayor then presented Mr. Gibson with a certificate of appreciation from Scugog Township for his dedication. Pictured above are from left, Mayor Jerry Taylor, Howard Gibson and present fire chief Jack Cook.

increase in wages among the officers. Council approved no increase to the officers, and only \$1,500 of the \$13,000 request for the firemen, bringing their total budget to \$68,946.

July 19, 1978 - Two Port Perry families were left homeless following an early Sunday morning fire which gutted a two storey house on Union Avenue.

September 1978 - Chief Jack Cook and eight members of Scugog Fire Department attended the funeral for Brock Township Fire Chief Carl Umphries who died while fighting a fire near that community. Almost 200 firefighters attended the funeral held at the Sunderland United Church. Chief Umpires, 51, suffered a heart attack and fell from the roof of a burning two storey house.

1979

February 14, 1979 - A house fire early Sunday morning claimed the lives of a Caesarea man, John Harper, and his 16-year old daughter. The Caesarea unit of the Scugog Fire department attended but by the time they arrived the house was in total flames. Mrs. Harper and her son Brian managed to escape but suffered from cuts and burns.

September 26, 1979 - Scugog Fire Chief Jack Cook told council that his department is ready to

take over responsibility for an area in the northwest corner of the township which gets its fire protection service from the Uxbridge Fire Dept. He said that he feels the present agreement with Uxbridge is costing Scugog too much and his department is capable of providing the same level of service.

Scugog currently pays Uxbridge a \$1,500 retainer fee, as well as \$250 and an hourly rate per man for each call the Uxbridge department answers in that area of Scugog. Council passed a resolution that the agreement be terminated as soon as possible after January 1, 1980.

October 24, 1979 - Scugog council unanimously rescinded a motion made a month earlier to opt out of an agreement with the Uxbridge Fire Department. Under pressure by a delegation of 70 residents, representing 150 homeowners who live in that section of the township who said their fire insurance premiums would be hiked because of the distance to fire protection. Council decided to continue under the original agreement.

October 1979 - A fire early Saturday morning completely destroyed a horse barn and equipment at the Pinewood Equestrian Centre on Highway 12, south of Manchester.



PORT PERRY FIRE DEPARTMENT - 1973

Front left, Captain Bill Harrison, Chief Jack Cook, Deputy Chief Charles Lown, Captain Mery Denure. Centre left, Pete Caudle, Bob Rod, Howard Gibson, Don Forder, Len Nixon. Back left, Ray Penny, Leo Donnelly, Don Raby, Bob Brinkman, Ben Pickard, Kieth Mark, Clive Boyd

1980 - 1989

The 1980s proved to be a busy and progressive time for Port Perry and Caesarea Fire Departments.

During this decade the two Scugog departments joined forces to fight to some of the worst fires the community had witnessed in decades. In addition to fires, the two departments were also attended to drownings and numerous vehicle accidents.

It was also a progressive time for the firefighters as the community rallied to improve the fire equipment needed to respond to the new challenges. Following are just some of the fires, equipment and issues the fire department faced during this period.

February 1980 - An Ontario Fire Marshall investigator said that a fire January 26 at a luxurious home owned by Fritz Woud, just west of Port Perry was caused by arson. Lloyd Boucher, who investigated the fire said the blazed was deliberately set, but stressed the homes owner is not considered a suspect in the incident.

The blaze broke out in the basement of home, and Mr. Woud was hospitalized with burns to his feet and a broken hip after the fire forced him to jump from a second storey balcony. Damage to the home, and furnishing was estimated a close to \$100,000.

June 4, 1980 - Scugog council agreed Monday afternoon to purchase a new fire truck for the Township at an estimated cost of \$75,000. The decision came about after both Port Perry and Caesarea units of the Scugog Fire Department recommended to council that the combination pumper and tank truck is needed at this time for fire protection in the township.

Fire Chief Jack Cook said the truck, would have a 1,500 gallon tank for fighting fires in the rural areas, and a pumping capacity for fire in areas where there are hydrants. It will be used by both Port Perry and Caesarea departments.

1981

January 21, 1981 - Lack of water and a driveway clogged with snow hampered efforts of Scugog firefighters to battle a blast which eventually destroyed a Scugog Island home valued at more than \$100,000. The home, located on the 7th concession of Scugog, almost directly across the lake from Port Perry was owned by

John Bolahood. The home was not occupied in the winter. Attempts to get water from the lake were futile as ice near the shore was so thick that the holes cut went right into the mud, making it necessary for the tanker truck to return to Port Perry for water. Cause of the blaze was not known.

1982

May 1982 - Over 30 firefighters from four departments in Port Perry, Caesarea, Uxbridge and Whitby battled a stubborn brush fire that rushed through fields and wooded areas on the east side of Durham Road 23, just south of 21.

May 1982 - Damage could be as high as \$25,000 following an early morning fire at Club Annrene on Scugog Island. The fire, which was believed to have caused by a cigarette in a garbage bag, caused heavy smoke damage, with soot covering the walls and ceilings, but burned out before flames could spread.



Friends and fellow firefighters held a party in November 1980 in honour of Charlie Miller, second left, who is retiring after 30 years service with the Caesarea Fire Department. Seen with him are, Gord Gettins, left, Scugog Mayor Jerry Taylor, Chief Len Scott and Captain Ray Gould.

Fire Department to be increased to 25 men

August 3, 1983

The finance committee of Scugog Township council has recommended that the Township volunteer fire department based in Port Perry be increased to 25 members, effective January 1 of next year.

A delegation of fire department officers met with the finance committee July 19 and made the request for the increase in the manpower compliment. The department currently has a compliment of 21 men, and although there is not a large turnover of staff with the volunteer brigade, it is expected that there could be at least one and possibly two retirements this fall.

At the July 19 meeting, the department had requested that the staff compliment be increased to 25 men.

Captain Bill Harrison said the department currently has several applications on file from men interested in joining the

volunteer force, which serves wards one, two and three in the Township, from the hall in Port Perry.

The finance committee also recommended that the Township honour retiring fire department personnel with a plaque and a gift valued at \$5 for each year of service. The department recently had three retirements - Keith Mark with 30 years service, and Leo Donnelly and Gib Grabowski each with ten years volunteer service.



The Scugog Fire Department took delivery of a new truck in March 1981. The Ford 840 combination tanker-pumper is the newest addition to the department and is capable of pumping 840 gallon of water per minute. Outfitted with a 1,500 gallon tank, and riding room for seven men the truck weighs 18 tons when fully equipped. Firemen Ray Penny, left and Bill Harrison are seen with the new \$67,103 truck.

Warehouse destroyed in \$1.5 million fire

March 17, 1982

Investigators suspect that spontaneous combustion in bags of charcoal was the cause of a major fire last week which destroyed the warehouse and offices of Gerry's Produce on Scugog Street in Port Perry.

The loss of the building and contents was total, and owner Gerry Jonkheer says damage may reach \$1.5 million.

The fire broke out about 4:50 p.m. and thick smoke soon drove employees out of the building. Flames worked their way through the entire building. Mr. Jonkheer said almost all his company records were lost, as well as some recently purchased computer equipment.

It was the worst fire in many years in the community and at one point more than 50 firemen, three pumpers and three tankers were on the scene. Firefighters from Port Perry, Uxbridge and Caesarea departments responding to the call.

Officials estimate that more than 200,000 gallons of water were used to fight the blaze.



1984

January 17, 1984 - Katharine Kurz was in a state of near shock the day after she watched a fire destroy the Kurz Foods plant at Myrtle Station. Mrs. Kurz is well known to Port Perry residents as the operator of Kurz Cold Cut Centre and Bake Shop on Queen St.

The fire is believed to have started in the centre of the two-storey 3,500 sq. ft. Building, used for processing



and storage of meat products. Damage to the building and equipment is estimated to be more than \$800,000. Port Perry Fire department attended the fire with a tanker truck to assist the Whitby department.

May 23, 1984 - Damage could run as high as \$150,000 in a fire which destroyed Beacock's Hardware on Scugog St., in Blackstock. Firefighters from both the Caesarea and Port Perry answered the alarm when the fire broke out about mid-afternoon on May 16th. According to the owner, Al Beacock, the fire started when fuel exploded in the repair shop. The store, repair shop, stock and equipment were all lost in the fire.

Firemen pump basement

February 26, 1985 -

Port Perry firefighters spent several hours over the weekend pumping water from the flooded basement of a home on Bigelow St. It is not the policy of the department to respond to calls for flooded basements unless it is life-threatening, or dangerous.

In this case, more than five feet of water had filled the basement and there was a threat of electrical fire from the fuse box. At one point the flow into the basement was almost as fast as the water could be pumped out with a 300 gallon per minute pump.

The flooding took place when water flowed over an ice clogged culvert and poured down the driveway and into the house.

Fire claims lives of two young children

January 31, 1984

The Ontario Fire Marshall's Office is continuing an investigation into the cause of a fire early Sunday morning which claimed the lives of two young Epsom brothers.

Three-year old Michael and six year old Jeffrey, died when the blaze gutted the inside of the two storey brick home of their parents John and Darlene Begin.

An investigator with the Fire Marshall's office was at the scene most of Sunday and Monday, but no details as to the cause of the fire were released. It may be several weeks before the thorough investigation by the Fire Marshall has been completed. An investigation is also being carried out by the Durham Region Police.

According to officers with the Scugog Fire department, the blaze broke out about 2:30 Sunday morning. The two children were sleeping in an upstairs bedroom. Mrs. Begin was visiting at a neighbour's home at the time and the boy's father tried without success to get the two children to safety.

Mr. Begin was taken to hospital for treatment of cuts, burns and shock.

This was the first fatal fire in Scugog Township in almost a year. The last fire involving loss of life was early last winter on Highway 47 where three persons were killed in a fire which destroyed a garage and small apartment.



Three members of the Scugog Fire department (Unit One) who retired recently were honoured in December 1983 for their many years of service to the force. Chief Jack Cook (left) presented plaques and gift certificates to Captain Ray Penny (14 years), Doug Metcalf (12 years) and Keith Mark with 29 years service.



The top brass of the Scugog firefighters, Station #2 proudly pose in front of their newest acquisition at the Caesarea hall in October 1986. The modern, up-to-date fire truck will help cut precious minutes off firefighting time. Front left, Chief Len Scott, Captain Gord Gettins, Chester Pedzidowski and Harry Vanderheul. Behind in cab, councillor Harvey Graham, Neil McLaughlin and Howard Hall.

October 1984 - Damage was estimated at more than \$30,000 after an intense fire at the office of the Trailer Place at the intersection of Water Street and Highway 7A.

1985

March 1985 - A fire caused an estimated \$100,000 damage at the DeLong farm on Highway 7A, just west of Blackstock.

September 24, 1985 - Fire Chief Len Scott, of the Caesarea Unit of the Scugog

Fire Department appeared before council urging council to move on a new truck they had been promised almost two years earlier. He noted the money for the truck had been in the budget for two years.

Firefighters say 'Thanks'

July 3, 1985

Firefighters from Caesarea and Port Perry held an Appreciation Dinner for local employers for whom they work. The dinner was there way of showing appreciation to their 'bosses' who allow their employee to drop whatever they are doing when the alarm sounds to attend the fire call. Sometimes this leaves the business without that employee for hours, if not longer.

Mayor Jerry Taylor said that too often the cooperation of the employers is overlooked. About 20 employers of forefathers attended the dinner and were presented with an engraved plaque for their ongoing support of the fire departments.

April 29, 1986 - Scugog firefighters were busy for more than seven ours fighting two separate fires that broke out in heavily wooded area of the township.

The first fire was on the west side o the Oahwa Rad near Conc. 4. Firefighters were unable to get their truck to the fire and had to pull hoses more than 1,500 feet through rough terrain to fight the blaze.

A second fire was in a wooded area just north of the Chalk Lake Rd., east of Durham Red. 23. The fire burned through several acres of shrub bush, being fanned by flames. Twenty-four firemen from Port Perry and Caesarea took part in the fires.

Council in fact had ordered the truck, but the company went bankrupt, and the township lost the down payment of \$10,000. Council agreed to take steps to order a new truck.

1986

May 6, 1986 - Scugog Township set its local budget for the year at \$3,744,346. Of that \$360,000 was budgeted for fire protection.

June 3, 1986 - Scugog Fire Department was ordered by Scugog council not to respond to any emergency calls from Mariposa Township. They ordered the issue until a formal agreement can could be made between Scugog and Mariposa Townships. Scugog normally responds

to about seven calls a year, mainly to homes in Robinglade Estates, near Seagrave.

October 1986 - A new fire truck was delivered to the Caesarea Fire Department. The modern, fire truck was purchased at a cost of \$112,000, (see above).

March 3, 1987 - Scugog Fire department issued a warning to Township council it is prepared to lay charges if there are any further Fire Code violations at the Scugog Arena, following inspections that found emergency exits doors chained from the inside while the building was being occupied. On two occasions Fire Prevention Officer William Harrison attended the arena and found the emergency doors chained during Minor Hockey tournaments.

1987

May 5, 1987 - Firefighters were called to what they described on of the worst fires in recent years. The department was called to Platten Island after a home erupted into flames, causing an inferno that burned two homes to the ground destroyed a cottage and caused considerable damage to two other cottages. Firefighters from Port Perry and Caesarea were called to the fire, which is estimated to have caused more the \$250,000 in property damage.

May 12, 1987 - Firefighters from Port Perry, Caesarea, Oshawa and Newcastle worked from noon to well past midnight, fighting a fire that swept through 200 acres of mature white pine, seedlings and scuba about a mile away form Shirley Rd., near Summerlea golf course. Fanned by high winds, flames were carried over a huge

amount of ground littered with dry brush. Damage is estimated to be about \$50,000.

November 10, 1987 - A Scugog landmark for nearly a century was destroyed when fire raced through the barn owned by Cliff and Helen Redman on Scugog Island. The fire had advanced inside 10,000 bales of hay making it impossible to save the barn. More than 30 firefighters from Port Perry and Caesarea responded to the call. Estimates of the damage pegged it near \$200,000, but fortunately efforts by the Redmans, friends and firefighters there was no loss of livestock.

1988

January 26, 1988 - Scugog firefighters were called to a fire on Rosa St. After a neighbour noticed smoke pouring from a semi-detached home. Two children were rescued from the fire by garbage collectors working on the street. After hearing screams from an upstairs bedroom window. The two children were dropped into the arms of the men from the upstairs window by Mrs. Savage. Five family members suffered smoke inhalations and were sent to hospital.

September 1988 - Fire Chief Jack Cook of the local fire department, took delivery of its new \$122,000 Emergency Rescue vehicle with state of the art technology. (see photo below)

1989

February 1989 - An early morning fire in the Reach Industrial Park completely destroyed a 40'x140' building and its equipment owned by Jerry Taylor. Total value of the loss was in excess of \$400,000.



Port Perry Unit #1, of the Scugog Fire Department took possession of its new Emergency Rescue Vehicle in September 1988. The new truck, ordered 14 months earlier, replaces the department's 1974 rescue van. Cost of the International cab and chassis was \$122,000. Seen with the Rescue Van are Chief Jack Cook, right, and Captain Don Steel.

March 1989 - Firefighters from the Caesarea Department have signed a petition asking for the retirement of Chief Len Scott.

April 1989 - Fire Chief Len Scott of Caesarea was bitter over councils request for him to resign or be fired. Chief Scott had served 43 years on the department.

August 1989 - Damage and loss of equipment and stock topped \$1.25 million in a spectacular fire near Blackstock which destroyed a 500' long chicken barn and over 40,000 laying hens.

December 1989 - An early morning fire over the Settlement House shops claimed the life of an elderly woman, and caused considerable smoke and water damage to the building.

Elderly woman dies in Queen Street apartment from smoke inhalation

Port Perry Star: December, 5 1989

A fire broke out in one of Port Perry's most iconic buildings early Tuesday, December 5th, claiming the life of an elderly lady, Kay Onyshak-Potrebka, and sent at least two residents of the same building to hospital for observation and treatment.

The fire, which broke out about 1:30 a.m. was first noticed by Tammy Emond and Dave Smith who occupy apartment five, above Settlement House. Tammy told the Star in an early morning interview, that she awoke from her sleep, and although she didn't smell any smoke, felt there was something wrong.

Going to the door, they noticed the faint ringing of a fire alarm, so they opened the door to find the hall was completely engulfed with smoke. They quickly vacated the apartment, and when Dave knew Tammy was safe, he ran back up the stairs into the smoke filled building to try and warn other residents.

He told the *Port Perry Star* he pounded on some of the doors, but he could not make it to the apartment where the elderly lady lived because of thick smoke. He then ran back to his apartment, grabbed their coats and shoes and got out of the building.

When he was informed later that the lady had died, Dave broke down in tears, saying he had really tried, but couldn't get through the thick smoke.

Captain Bill Harrison of the Port Perry Fire Department told the Star Monday that investigators with the Fire Marshall's Office removed parts of the fridge and stove from the apartment on Queen Street. But as of late Monday afternoon, he said the investigators had not determined the cause.



Fireman scale a ladder to get at a fire which started in an apartment above Settlement House, in downtown Port Perry. The fire threatened to destroy one of Port Perry's landmark buildings, constructed in 1885.

1990 - 2000

Fire Marshal recommends one Fire Chief for Scugog Twp.

March 27, 1990

Scugog Township should have one Fire Chief to oversee the operations of the two fire halls in Port Perry and Caesarea.

This was one of 36 recommendations handed down from a survey of the Township's fire protection services conducted by Ontario Fire Marshall's office.

Scugog Councillors agreed that taking the steps to have a single chief over the department should be a priority. "Having one chief is one of the first recommendations we (council) should pursue, and it should be done soon," said Mayor Howard Hall.

Other major recommendations in the report included a computerized system for record keeping, and the construction of a new fire hall in Greenbank.

The report makes it clear that Scugog's present system of two halls (Port Perry and Caesarea) each with its own chief and chain of command, is unacceptable, and contrary to provincial statutes.

A committee was appointed to study the report and implications of the recommendations. Members of the committee are: Mayor Hall, councillors Marilyn Pearce (chairperson), Neil Hunter and Glenn Malcolm, administrator Earl Cuddie, present chiefs Jack Cook (Port Perry) and Ray Gould (Caesarea) and the deputy fire chiefs.

1990

August 28, 1990 - A report from the Scugog Fire Committee, formed in March 1990, has suggested it was time to consider engaging the services of a Fire Chief on a full, or part-time basis at an estimated minimum cost of \$40,550-\$50,000 per year.

Most members of council agreed that the time had come to hire a Fire Chief, although they all had reservations about the costs. How to finance the expense was the only obstacle in the decision. Mayor Howard Hall said it was time to make the move on the issue, with both present Fire Chiefs agreeing there was a need for either a full or part time Chief.

October 16, 1990 - A team of firefighters from Scugog Fire Department Hall #1 left for Seminole, Florida to test their extrication methods with the best in the world. The six member team consists of Dave Ballingal, Don Steel, Roy Teer, John Foster, Dean Town and Robert Cook. They will compete against 20 rescue teams from Canada, Great Britain and the United States.

1991



Service Awards

Three members of the Scugog Fire Department Hall 1 were honoured at a ceremony at the Holiday inn in Oshawa, for their years of service with the department. Recipients, from left; Charles Lown, Deputy Fire Chief Hall #1, received a 25 year medal, plus five year pin, for his 31 years of service. Jack Cook, Fire Chief, Hall #1, a 25 year medal, plus five year pin, for 31 years service and Capt. William 'Bill' Harrison, a 25 year medal for his 27 years of service. *October 16, 1990*



January 8, 1991 - Five members of the Caesarea fire department were presented with long service certificates by the Ontario Fire Marshall. Certificates were presented to retired Chief Len Scott, 30 years; Chief Ray Gould, 30 years; Harry Vanderheul, 25 years; Doug Day and Chester Pedzidowski 25 years.

May 14, 1991 - A retirement dinner was held for two veteran firefighters, Doug Day and Chester Pedzidowski, who had served on the Scugog Fire Hall #2, Caesarea for a combined 50 years of Service. The two men receiving plaques on behalf of the township from Mayor Howard Hall.

June 4, 1991 - Scugog Township and Manverse Fire Departments entered into a mutual fire protection agreement. In the event of overlapping services, the resounding fire department, will immediately notify the correct department. As soon as the correct fire department arrives, they are to be in charge regardless of the rank of the fire member arriving on the scene.

September 1991 - Scugog Fire Department Hall 1 hosted Durham Region's first extrication competition in Port Perry. Scugog's Hall 2 took top honors

December 1991 - An early evening fire at the Casteels chicken barn on Concession 11, Scugog Island resulted in up to \$500,000 in damage.

1992

February 1992 - Township of Scugog Mayor Howard Hall said it is time for a full-time fire chief to look over the operation of the township's two halls.

March 1992 - Scugog Fire Department Halls one and two report reported the firefighters responded to 198 emergencies in 1991, up 59 from 1990. Among the calls made by the firemen, Hall #1 responded to 19 structure fires, 21 vehicle, 12 chimney, 17 grass/brush. They also responded to 24 vehicle accidents and on boat. Hall #2 reported five structure fires, 10 vehicles, four chimney, 11 grass/brush; and 11 vehicle acci-

Don Steel named new Fire Chief

September 29 1992

Don Steel, an 18-year veteran of the Scugog Fire Department, was named the new Fire Chief for the townships two fire halls. Council confirmed the appointment Monday night.

Mr. Steel is a 17-year veteran of the Township's volunteer department and he held the position of captain for a decade before being appointed deputy-chief in January.

The decision to promote Mr. Steel to the position of Fire Chief was made by council's Fire Protection Committee, consisting of Mayor Howard Hall, and councillor Ken Gadsden and Harvey Graham.

The Fire Chief's job description call for the position to be part-time, about 20 hours per week, with a salary of \$17,500. Mr. Steel will take over responsibility for Scugog's two fire halls and about 60 volunteer firefighters.

With Mr. Steel's appointment, Chief Jack Cook will retire after serving the local fire department for more than 35 years.



Don Steel becomes Scugog Fire Chief.

dents.

September 1992 - Lieutenant Matt Stephenson, a firefighter from Hall #2 in Caesarea, was named Fireman of the Year at the hall.

October 1992 - Jack Cook and Ray Gould, two long-time members of the Scugog Fire Depart. retired after 35 and 33 years of service respectively.

1993

November 1993 - The Scugog Fire Department began interviewing recruits for the department. More than 70 applications were received

1994

March 1994 - Firefighters took delivery of a new pumper. The \$230,000 vehicle was delivered to Hall 1 in Port Perry.

April 1994 - Firefighters were kept busy the last weekend of April. More than 45 firefighters spent more than 200 hours fighting fires.

September 1994 - The township faced a huge and unexpected expenditure when it was revealed one of the fire department's pumper trucks was declared unfit for use.

1995

January 1995 - A new pumper truck valued at \$164,000 arrived at the local fire hall to replace one considered unfit and was removed from the road last year.

March 1995 - Scugog Fire Chief Don



Three members of the Scugog Fire Department were honoured at a retirement dinner in June 1993. The three men, seen here wearing their fire helmets are, left, Deputy Chief Charlie Lown, Chief Ray Gould, and Chief Jack Cook. Both Mr. Cook retired after serving 33 years at Hall #2, Caesarea; and Mr. Lown and Mr. Cook after 35 years service at Hall #1, Port Perry.



December 1996 - One of Blackstock's historic buildings, the grandstand at the fairgrounds went up in a spectacular blaze. The old grandstand, constructed of wood, was engulfed by flames by the time firemen arrived. Cause of the fire is suspected have been arson, with damage estimated at \$80,000.



Fire Chief Don Steel retires.



Richard Miller new Fire Chief.

Steel resigned from his position with no reason for stepping down. Deputy Chief Richard Miller will assume the Chief's duties until the Township appointed a new permanent Chief. William (Bill) Harrison was appointed acting Deputy Chief. Mr. Steel's resigned suddenly after only two years as head of the department without giving reason for the unexpected departure.

May 1995 - Richard Miller was appointed as chief of the Scugog Fire Department beating out four candidates for the position, including Deputy Chief Bill Harrison.

1997

October 1997 - Long-serving Deputy Fire Chief Bill Harrison officially retired after spending almost 35 years on the local fire department. More than 100 friends and colleagues of Deputy Fire Chief Bill Harrison gathered to bid him farewell, after serving for 35 years on the local fire department.



Deputy Chief Bill Harrison resigns.

1998

February 1998 - Scugog fire chief Richard Miller submitted a bill for almost \$15,000 to the township to cover the costs incurred by his department from rescue services provided during last months snowmobile accident.

December 1998 - Chief Richard Miller informed council that hes' concerned that the Caesarea fire station is a dozen firefighters short.

December 1999 - Fire Chief Richard Miller petitions council for a full-time day staff for the local fire department.

\$2 million fire destroys Catholic Church

Port Perry Star: June 2, 1998

Firefighters from three Durham halls fought in vain early Sunday morning as fire ravaged the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church in Port Perry.

The fire was first spotted by passersby about 3:30 a.m., who alerted 911 and knocked on the adjacent door of the Parish Priest, Father Charles Faleiro, to warn him of the danger. By the time firefighters arrived at the scene on Hwy. 7A flames, fanned by high winds, were visible from east windows and the roof area.

Firefighters from Port Perry and Caesarea halls responded and a ladder truck from Oshawa battled the blaze, but the structure was fully involved by the time they arrived and the roof collapsed quickly.

Scugog Fire Chief Richard Miller was on scene with his men. "Once the roof collapsed we just fought to contain the fire within the walls and protect the adjacent structures."

OPP officers closed Hwy. 7A on either side of the church and it remained that way through most of the day. As daylight arrived, it was evident that the loss was almost total.

The Ontario Fire Marshals office would not speculate on cause for the fire, but initial fire department reports put the damage to the building at \$2 million.

By noon on Sunday weary firefighters were lying on the grass or sitting with heads in hands, catching cat naps. Chief Miller praised the effort put in by his crews. "I could not be prouder of these guys and the job they did here," he said.



Flames leap through the roof of Immaculate Conception Church in what was described as one of the worst fire in many years.



More than 20 firefighters from Port Perry, Caesarea and Oshawa fought in vain early Sunday morning as fire ravaged the church.

THE CHIEFS

1904 - 1949

1904 - 1905	JOHN ELLIOTT	1916 - 1918	ARTHUR J. THOMPSON
1905 - 1912	JOHN W. MEHARRY (Chief)	1918- 1933	WM. H. MacGREGOR
1912 - 1916	WILLIAM "BILLY" COOK	1933- 1949	WM. "BERT" MacGREGOR

JOHN W. MEHARRY **Fire Chief 1905 - 1912**

John Wesley Meharry was born near Peterborough and moved to Port Perry about 1875, going into a business partnership with John B. Laing.

For many years they carried on an extensive and successful hardware business. In July 1884 they lost their business in a fire that destroyed downtown Port Perry, but they immediately rebuilt a larger and more magnificent block.

J.W. Meharry was public spirited and always took a leading part in supporting improvements to the town. He served a Chief of the Port Perry Fire Brigade for about seven years, 1905-1912.

He was also a member of the Board of Education for many years and a member of the Board of Directors of the Agricultural Society.

He later owned a brokerage business in real estate, in which he negotiated an immense number of sales and was acknowledged to be the best salesman in the district.

Mr. Meharry was 70 years old when he passed away at his daughter's home in Ottawa on October 2, 1915. He was interred in the family plot in Pine Grove Cemetery.

WILLIAM HENRY MACGREGOR **Fire Chief 1918 - 1933**

William (Bert) Egbert MacGregor was born in Port Perry on July 10, 1895, one of four children for his parents William Henry and Phoebe Jane (Wells) MacGregor.

He took up the trade of butchering, before volunteering for war duty in 1916. After the war he returned home and 1920 he purchased a butcher business at 176 Queen St. He operated from this location for remainder of his working career. In addition to his busy butcher business, Bert took an active part in the betterment of the community.

He joined the local fire brigade as a young man, when his father was Chief of the brigade, and served on the department for many years, including 16 years as Chief. In 1933, members of the brigade honoured their Fire Chief, W.E. "Bert" MacGregor, for his years service to the community.

He was also an active member and president of the Port Perry Businessmen's Association for many years.

William MacGregor was 69 years old when he died in 1964. He was interred at Pine Grove Cemetery, Prince Albert.

THE CHIEFS



1949 - 2023

WALTER "GUY" RAINES

1949 - 1969

When Walter "Guy" Raines was born on August 7, 1898, in Reach Township, the second oldest of five children for his parents George, and Marietta Raines.

He was married Georgina Vipond in 1921 and they had one child during their marriage.

Guy became a member of the Port Perry Fire Department about 1934, and became Chief of the local brigade in 1949. Mr. Raines was 71 years old when he retired as Fire Chief 1969, after spending 35 years with the department. Although unable to attend he was honoured by the local Chamber of Commerce at a Testimonial Dinner.

He was an electrician by trade, but also served his community as a councillor during the 1950s. As a young man he was very active in sports, particularly hockey at which he excelled.

Guy Raines died on November 17, 1978, in Port Perry, Ontario, at the age of 80, and was buried at Pine Grove Cemetery.

WILLIAM "BERT" MACGREGOR

1933-1949

William (Bert) Egbert MacGregor was born in Port Perry on July 10, 1895, one of four children for his parents William Henry and Phoebe Jane (Wells) MacGregor.

He took up the trade of butchering, before volunteering for war duty in 1916. After the war he returned home and 1920 he purchased a butcher business at 176 Queen St. He operated from this location for remainder of his working career.



*Fire Chief
William 'Bert'
MacGregor*

In December 1921 Bert married Mona Alberta Rodman and raised two children,.

As addition to his busy butcher business, Bert took an active part in the betterment of the community. He served on the local fire brigade for many years, and served as Chief. In 1933, members of the brigade honoured their Fire Chief, W.E. "Bert" MacGregor, for his years service to the community.

He was also an active member and president of the Port Perry Businessmen's Association for many years.

William MacGregor was 69 years old when he died in 1964. He was interred at Pine Grove Cemetery, Prince Albert.

HARVEY MAHAFFY

1969 - 1971

Harvey Mahaffy was born near Seagrave and spent his entire life in the area now known as Scugog Township.

As a young man he worked for Hogg & Lytle at the Port Perry grain elevator as a truck driver. In 1955, after the elevator was taken over by Master Feeds he was promoted to manger of the facility. He remained there until reitiring in the 1980s.

Harvey took a keen interest in his community, joining the Port Perry Volunteer Fire Department in 1946. Only four years later he was promoted to Deputy Fire Chief. He served in this position until 1969 when he became Chief of the local fire brigade. Due to poor health he only remained in the position for less than three years before retiring in 1971.

In addition to his involvement in the fire department, Harvey also was a loyal member of Fidelity Load, No. 428, Port Perry. He also served as a director and membership chairman of the Port Perry Chamber of Commerce for more than a decade during 1950s and 1960s.

PORT PERRY - FIRE HALL #1



*Fire Chief
Guy Raines
1949 - 1969*



*Fire Chief
Harvey Mahaffy
1969 - 1971*



** Fire Chief
Jack Cook
1971 - 1992*



*Fire Chief
Don Steel.
1992-1995*



*Fire Chief Richard
Miller
1995 - 2017*

CAESAREA - FIRE HALL #2



*Fire Chief
Charles Miller
1960 - 1972*



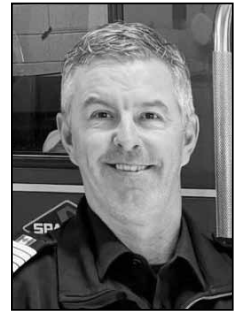
*Fire Chief
Leonard Scott
1972 - 1989*



*Fire Chief
Ray Gould
1989 - 1992*



*Fire Chief
Mark Berney
2017 - 2024*



*Fire Chief
Mike Mathews
2024 - present*

* NOTE: Jack Cook was the first Fire Chief for both Port Perry and Caesarea Fire Halls.

JACK COOK 1971 - 1992

Jack Cook was a life-time resident of Port Perry. Born on August 22, 1926, the only son for Ray and Alice (Williams) Cook. The family included Jack and six sisters.

After finishing school, he enlisted in the Canadian army, training at Camp Borden and in Toronto, but the war ended before he saw service overseas.

When the war ended, he returned to Port Perry where he apprenticed as a mechanic at his uncle Murray Williams Ford Mercury dealership. Years later, he continued as a mechanic with Bob Archer Motors.

Jack was married to Mabel (Ferneyley) on May 26, 1945 and the couple raised five children. Mabel and Jack enjoyed bowling and dancing and could often be seen floating around the hall at the Port Perry Legion or bowling a Centennial Lanes.

Jack Cook, proudly served as a volunteer fireman for more than 35 years, was chosen to be the first Fire Chief of the amalgamated Port Perry, Reach, Scugog Fire Department in October 1970. He was awarded a service medal for his years on the department, in 1992, and retired in October 1992 after 35 years in the department, 22 of them as fire chief.

As a veteran of World War II, Jack became a member of the Port Perry Legion, Branch 419, serving many years on the executive and as President of the Legion.

Jack passed away peacefully on Saturday, August 1, 2015 at Port Perry Place Nursing Home, at age 88. He left behind his dearly love Mabel, and children Marie, Leanne, Robert, and Lynn. His son, Jack Cook Jr. predeceased him.

A service to celebrate his life was held on, August 5, with interment Pine Grove Cemetery.

Epilogue

This book was researched and written in an attempt to provide an overview of the formation and advancement of local fire department, fire equipment and the fire fighting methods over a span of 138 years for Port Perry and Scugog Township.

In addition, the book chronicles some of the largest and most destructive fires over the past century, but does not attempt to document all of the fires and emergencies the firefighters of their day were summoned to attend.

Politics always played a part in the advancement of equipment for firefighters, and often became the obstacle to having the best of equipment. Councils of a century ago, like those of today, worked within budgets. They had to balance the expense of the latest and greatest fire equipment, with the many other demands of the public, including taxes, improved roads, water systems, sidewalks, hydro, telephone and other essential services.

Every effort has been made to be as accurate as possible with the information contained in the document. Due to lack of details in available records, some dates have been estimated, but are believed to be realistic, within a few years.

It is my hope that this book will provide insight into how far Scugog's fire departments and firefighters have come since 1861.

J. Peter Hvidsten

March 2023



FIGHTERS *of the* **"FIRE** **FIEND"**

By J. Peter Hvidsten