

The Terrible Fire (account as published in the Canastota Herald on October 27, 1873)

Last Sunday night at about half-past 9 o'clock, when the wind was sweeping a true November rain storm over this locality, fire was discovered issuing from the railroad hay barn east of the village. In the barn and in cars on the branch track beside it were some 60 tons of hay, the property of M.M. Hess and F.W. Doolittle, all pressed and ready for shipment worth \$2000. The barn and contents soon burned down. The hay was insured for \$1000, but the insurance companies would not allow indemnity for that burned in the cars. The actual loss to Hess & Doolittle will reach \$1300.

Our citizens had hardly fallen to sleep about half-past 1 o'clock on Monday morning, the 27th, when the alarm of fire was again raised. Flames were discovered rising from a small barn of Spencer St., owned by Mrs. Bond. Peter Garner, a night watchman on the Central railroad, gave the alarm and roused the guests of the Eagle Hotel. The flames spread rapidly to the hotel and thence to the Spencer dwelling from which the people were endeavoring to remove property. It stopped in that direction probably because of the fierce wind blowing from the south; Mr. Chapman's goods were removed from his office and the dwelling adjacent to Mr. Spencer's, however. The flames spread rapidly northward, catching upon the dwelling of Mrs. Parker, that of J. H. Johnson and the stores on the canal, while at the same time to the west of Spencer St., they caught the Perry tenement and the Perry storehouse.

The Fire Department was on hand and with the engine stationed at the canal and east of the bridge, two streams of water were steadily thrown upon the fire. An engine arrived from Oneida at about this time and was posted west of the line of flame. The scene was appalling. The roaring of the flames, the crash of falling buildings, the shouting multitude of laboring citizens, all rendered our usually quiet village a scene of infernal reveling. Great efforts were made to save property. Pails were used, in fact, everything that could be thought of was used. Like a giant among pigmies stood the Beecher and Miller Blocks. Fiercely the flames lapped toward this structure, and for a time it seemed that it would go. Many brave men risked their lives to save it, and it did not burn, though the windows were broken on the west side and the casings badly charred.

The Young tenant house took fire and then the Young stores went; Perry's stores followed and the other buildings, back to the Beecher Block. But little concern was felt for the safety of Moot and Foote Blocks from fire on the southside, as there was not an opening in the brick wall on that side; but as the flames approached from the

rear, that also went, an immense sacrifice to the destroyer. Austarman's building took fire and added to the shower of cinders falling upon the doomed Canastota House over the canal. J.A. Wilson's brick store across the road from Austarman's was saved by nailing sheet-iron over the windows and balustrade. The flying brands from Clock's store lighted the Fay building and thence spread toward the hotel, the flames lighting the Burlison, Wirth, and Jones buildings. When the hotel barn burned (about half-past 3 o'clock), it was thought the orgies were over and the fiend of destruction was satiated. There was a space of four rods between the barn and the Montross dwelling; the wind had lulled, rain was falling, and a stream was being thrown upon the house from the Canastota engine.

The people were nearly exhausted, yet, as for the previous two hours, the unceasing, steady clank, clank of the engine went on. A rumor was afloat that Syracuse was going to send a steamer--indeed, it was reported at one time that the engine was almost here, and the wearied men at the brakes toiled hopefully. But no engine came from Syracuse.

There were but three buildings left to the corner of Chapel Street, and those were doomed to destruction. A tapering flame sprung out from the roof and cornice of the Plontross house, which was subdued only to start out afresh. When the Montross house took fire an effort was made to blow down the DeLano dwelling, which failed. The beautiful home of D.H. Rasbach, which has long been pointed out to strangers with pride by our citizens was destroyed as well. Across the street from the Rasbach house was the dwelling of Mr. Kilts, which was low and admitted of water being passed up in pails; ready hands, assisted by the engines, saved the place. The wind subsided at 5 o'clock, and the destruction was complete. Where four hours before stood over 30 buildings, nothing but smoking ruins and crumbling walls remained. The citizens worn out from their labors, went to their homes, many thankful that they had roofs to cover them.

The barn on Mrs. Bond's lot was well enclosed and could not have been exposed to fire from use at that hour of the night, and it was probably selected by a designing persons for the purpose of firing the village. No better place could have been found for such purpose and no more effectually could the work have been accomplished. The barn of the Eagle Hotel extended to the Bond barn from the south and that being brought nearer the hotel by a wood shed, the flames were upon the guests of the hotel before the furniture could be removed. J.H. Johnson saved a portion of his goods, but few articles were saved from the Parker house. William Van Horn lost everything. Prattson saved a few things. Acipio Morehan (colored) saved part of his

goods; his wife was sick and had to be carried from the house. S.C. Roberts lost nearly all his furniture. A portion of the groceries and grain in the Reeder grocery were saved. All the goods in the Bond building were saved. E. A. Perry lost heavily, still there was much saved from the store. Nichols & Skelton saved much of their stock. W. H. Vickerman was out of town, still a small portion of his goods were saved. Dr. Taylor lost his office fixtures. The goods of W.O. Taylor, in bankruptcy, were all burned. The goods of A.L. Taylor were mostly saved. J.O. Taylor lost all his furniture. Shaffer & Nellis got out part of their goods. G.A. Forbes saved some of his books and papers, the more valuable papers being in a safe, which went through all right. Brown & Co. saved part of their goods. Esq. White saved some of his effects and the official records. Little was lost in the A&P Telegraph office.

Barney Austarman saved but a part of his fixtures. John Garlic was out of town and his goods were all burned. Some of the furniture and clothing of the Canastota House belonging to Mr. Andrews was saved, yet he lost heavily; the guests saved most of their goods. Vanalstine & Fay saved nearly everything. Mr. Jones saved all his furniture; he had but just moved into the building, and is a stranger in the place. Mr. Wirth lost nearly all of his furniture and clothing. Almost everything was lost in the Fay building; the ladies nearly all their clothing was lost; as in other cases, all canned fruit and other stores for the winter were destroyed. Mrs. Fay, a lady well advanced in years, who has never known before what it is to be deprived of the common necessities of life, is now destitute; George Frodsham, boarding at Mrs. Fay's, lost much of his clothing and some money. It will be remembered that Mr. Frodsham was a loser by the fire of the inst. The hotel barn belonging to Mr. Andrews was filled with hay and a supply of feed and grain, which was burned. The goods in the Montross, DeLano, and Rasbach dwellings were mostly removed in a damaged condition.

We have used the expression "saved", but mean thereby, removed. The goods removed were mostly damaged, and in many instances ruined. A constant storm of rain during the whole time of the conflagration rendered the streets deep with soft mud, and as nearly every person laboring to rescue property was covered with mud nearly everything they handled was soiled.

There were many individual acts of bravery in which grey hairs and the vigor of manhood and youth vied in the work of saving the village. In many instances women worked like heroines. Never did our villagers work harder, and valuable was the aid from outsiders.

We have not heard of any serious accidents occurring to those about the fire although many were painfully burned about the face and hands.

We feel thankful that our village is not entirely destroyed. In a letter to the Relief Committee, Gerrit Smith says, "Let not Canastota despair. She has still more left than she has lost. She has the sympathies and prayers of her fellowman left; above all, the loving God is left to her." Mr. Smith encloses his letter with a check for \$1000. Who says he is not a great man?

LOSSES OF REAL ESTATE WHICH INCLUDE PERSONAL PROPERTY

Mrs. Young; stores & dwelling \$5000 above an Insurance of \$2000
A.S. Jones: store \$3000 no insurance
Simeon Clock: store & rectifying establishment-building \$5000 above an insurance of \$3000; goods in grocery \$2500 above insurance of \$1500
Jerry Quackenbush: Eagle Hotel and Furniture \$4000 no insurance
D.H. Rasbach: dwelling & furniture \$5000 above an insurance of \$9000
J.H. Johnson: \$1500 above an insurance of \$1000
C.A. Spencer: dwelling and shop \$6000 above an insurance of \$1500
Mrs. Lucia Fay: \$4000 no insurance
Mrs. Carrie Bond: \$2200 above an insurance of \$800
D.B. Moot: \$7000 above an insurance of \$8000
F.A. Andrews: \$4000 above an insurance of \$3000
M.M. Burlison of Rome: \$2000
N.B. Foote of Rome: \$2000 above insurance of \$4000
Mrs. Montross: \$100 above an insurance of \$2500
E.A. Perry: loss not stated
Barney Austarman: \$2000 above an insurance of \$1500
Reeder & Co: \$2000 above an insurance of \$3500
Mr. Enoch Brown: \$500 above an insurance of \$500
Mrs. Parker: \$800 no insurance
Motts Wirth: \$3000 above an insurance of \$5000

LOSSES OF PERSONAL PROPERTY ONLY

H.C. Lower: \$200 insurance \$250
A.L. Taylor: \$500-1000 no insurance
W.O. Taylor: (Bankrupt) \$2800 insurance \$2000
Shaffer & Nellis: \$2000 above an insurance \$5800

G.A. Forbes: \$1200 above insurance of \$1600
 S.C. Roberts: \$1000 no insurance
 W.T. Northrup: \$3500 above an insurance of \$3500
 Brown&Co: \$7000 above an insurance of \$10,000
 E.R. White: \$200 no insurance
 Masonic Lodge: \$300 above insurance of \$500
 Mott, Reeder & Co: \$500 insurance \$1000
 Mary Clow: \$30 no insurance
 George Breling: \$45
 George Frodsham: \$200 no insurance
 Charles Nash: \$175 no insurance
 John Garlic: \$500 above insurance of \$575
 E.H. Odell: \$100 no insurance
 Lorina Fowler: \$1800 above an insurance of \$1000
 Van Alstine & Fay: \$50 no Insurance
 W.H. Vickerman: \$500 above an insurance of \$1200
 W.H. Plank: \$500 fully insured
 Dr. William Taylor: \$100 no insurance
 Plank & Benjiman: slight loss
 Nichols & Skelton: \$1200 above insurance of \$2000
 Scipio Morehan: \$40 no insurance
 Hi Lewis: \$150 insured
 I.L. Roberts: \$150 insured
 H. Beecher: \$300 insured
 William Madison: \$300 fully insured
 William Van Horn: lost all his furniture
 James Prattson: lost all his furniture

DONATIONS

Hon. Gerrit Smith, Peterboro	\$1000
J.D. Ledyard, Cazenovia	500
G. S. Ledyard, Cazenovia	100
L.W. Ledyard, Cazenovia	100
John Crouse, Syracuse	200
M.T. McConnele, Syracuse	25
Young Ladies, Vernon	15
C.H. Waite, Watertown	5
T. S. Faxton, Utica	100

Turner Bros. , bankers, New York	100
J.D. Hawley, Syracuse	25
L.M. Bates & Co, New York	25
D. Crouse, Utica	100
W.E. Lansing, Chittenango	100
Dr. N.C. Powers, Syracuse	25
George Berry, Oneida	60
C.A.& D.H Walrath, Oneida	100

BUILDINGS BURNED

Brick dwelling of D.H. Rasbach
 DeLano dwelling, occupied by Mrs. DeLano and Wm Madison
 Montross dwelling
 Hotel Barn
 Canastota House, F.A. Andrews, pr. basement store oc. by Vanalstine & Fay (grocers)
 A. Jones, dwelling and market
 Union Hotel, M. Wirth.
 Hotel barn
 Burlison store, vacant
 Fay dwelling
 A small barn
 Barney Austarman's market, C. Nash harnessmaker, John Garlick, barber.
 Brown & Co. (dry woods and grocery)

Moot Block

W. T. Northup (stationery, groceries., etc.
 Barlow & Fowler's Law Office
 E. R. White, Justice
 D.A. Kimball, deputy sherriff and auctioneer
 Mary Clow, milliner
 Canastota Band

Foote Block

Shaffer& Nellis grocery & crockery
 G.A. Forbes, District Attorney and counselor
 Canastota Lodge 231 F&AM
 Young Store, A.L.Taylor (tinware), W.O. Taylor (bankrupt stock), J.O.Taylor dwelling
 Young store, W.H. Vickerman (grocer), Dr. W. Taylor's office.

Perry Block

E.A. Perry (drugs and notions)

Nichols & Sketton clothiers

Plank and Benjamin Photographers

Perry Building, housing the H.C. Lower Inn.

Bond Building, housing Carrie Bond, milliner, and E.H. Odell, barber.

Beecher Block, brick, not burned

Eagle Hotel, Cross lessee.

Hotel barn

Bond barn, (Fire originated here.)

Perry tenant house, W. VanHorn, F. C. Mingo, J. Prattson (colored), tenants.

Perry Storehouse

Young tenant house occupied by S Morehan

Reeder Store and warehouse

Brown's Warehouse, occupied by goods of W.H. Plank.

S. Clock, rectifying establishment and grocery, S.C. Roberts dwelling

C. A. Spencer, dwelling and optical works

Mrs. Parker, dwelling

J. H. Johnson dwelling