

*IRON ERA Saturday February 14, 1885*

## **A T E R R I B L E F I R E !**

**Splendid Work of the Firemen on a Bitter Night and Against Heavy Odds.**

**LOSSES, \$56,400 - INSURANCES, \$31,500**

DOVER-One of the fiercest and most destructive fires ever known in Morris County visited Dover on Monday evening last. It began about 5:20 o'clock in the clothing store of A. Simon, on Blackwell Street, one door east from Warren, and was caused by the falling of a chandelier. It is believed that two or three men, with presence of mind, could have averted the destruction by throwing some burning clothing out into the street; but in the excitement of the moment the opportunity was lost and the whole store was very soon a mass of flame. An alarm was given quickly and the fire department responded with remarkable alacrity. The Steamer suction was dropped in the Sussex Street lock, two lines of hose were laid and water was thrown on the fire while it was yet confined to the place of Mr. Simon. It seemed as if the firemen were surely masters of the situation and that the flames could go no further. But hardly had the water reached the fire before both lines of hose busted at a point near the steamer, and both streams were rendered ineffectual. Before the lost ground was regained a vast amount of valuable property was doomed to inevitable destruction. The extinguisher of the truck company, which had done such good service in checking incipient fires on former occasions, were powerless here, for a brisk westerly wind soon carried the flames into the store of Wm. H. Baker, on the corner of Warren Street, which was completely enveloped in flames before much of its contents could be removed. In fact, the main part of Baker's store was completely burned out in half an hour after the flames entered it.

Then the fire began spreading both ways - through the annex of Mr. Baker's store building on Warren street and to his adjoining building on the same street, the first floor of which was occupied by the shoe shop of John Kaminski and the meat market of Thos. Miskella, and the upper by Gilbert Moutanye as a residence. The wife and child of the latter being sick had to be carried out from their home. Over Mr. Baker's store live John Bruschi, the Italian peanut vender. Going eastward on Blackwell street from the place of Mr. Simon, the flames quickly communicated to three tall wooden buildings adjoining. The first was that of Mrs. A. Beemer, the first floor of which was occupied by her as a millinery store, the second by John F. Wood as a residence, and the third by Wm. Donaldson as a photograph gallery. The second building was owned by Peter Vanderhoof and entirely occupied by him as a toy and confectionery store on the first floor, his residence on the second, and his storage room on the third. The third building contained the general store of John A. Lyon on the first floor and the dress-making establishment and residence of Miss Libbie Gillen on the third.

When the bursting of the hose and a consequent derangement of the engine was remedied it was evident that all the buildings named were doomed and as much as possible of their contents were removed under the direction of the Board of Fire Wardens, but the amount thus rescued was very small compared with what the buildings contained.

Dispatches were sent to Morristown for the assistance of that department and a reply was received that they would not come.

When the firemen succeeded in remedying the unfortunate mishap to the hose and engine a veritable furnace of fire confronted them. The flames were leaping skyward in battalions and the town was illuminated until every part was almost as light as day. The wind that was driving the flames with such velocity was also filling the air to the westward with innumerable burning fragments. A large spruce tree in the Stickle House yard caught many of these and looked like a huge illuminated Christmas tree. The Stickle House being of stone, with tin roof, was comparatively safe, but the residence of Dr. Crittenden beyond caught fire in the cornice and the Hinchman residence still farther on took fire in the roof. Both of these were extinguished by the watchers before material damage was done.

Across the way from the business building on Blackwell Street the heat was so intense that all the buildings from the bank to the Sovereign's store were smoking and the window panes, including the heavy plate glass ones of the bank, were cracking with the heat.

The businesses that were affected by the fire included:

1. Wm. H. Goodale's drug store.
2. John A. Lyon's store.
3. Peter Vanderhoof's store.
4. Mrs. A. Beemer's store.
5. A. Simon's store, where the fire started.
6. Wm. H. Baker's store.
7. Kaminski's shoe store and Miskella's market.
8. Emory Van Gilder's saloon.
9. Park Hotel, or Stickle House.

The street fronts of the unmarked portion of the block were all compactly built up with an unbroken line of wooden store buildings, occupied by no less than twenty business firms and the residences of about a dozen families. The interior of the block is also densely built up with barns, sheds, and outhouses, a few of which were on fire. It will be remembered that all the buildings from 2 to 7 inclusive were blazing, and the only brick walls in the block were those of the two-store building (No. 1.) occupied by Wm. H. Goodale. Should the flames pass beyond this building on Blackwell Street, or beyond the little alleyway on Warren street, the whole block would have gone, and the conflagration would undoubtedly have extended to the entire business part of Dover. The merchants in other parts of the block were already frightened at the rapid spread of the flames and were removing their goods.

The officers of the department, under the cool and admirable direction of Chief Engineer Bennett, determined to make Goodale's brick building and the alleyway the objective points for arresting the flames. One line of hose was carried over the top of the brick building to get at the fire in the rear, and was manned with great peril by the firemen stationed on the slippery, ice-coated roofs. The other line attacked the fire in front at the same point. At one time it seemed as if the fire would drive the men from the roof of the brick building, but they held their ground nobly till the adjoining wooden building fell in and the fire was under control in the direction. Meanwhile, the firemen, with the help of a number of citizens, mounted the roof of Emory Vangilder's restaurant on Warren Street, to stay the flames there while the streams were fighting the fire at the more critical point. This they did by hanging blankets and carpets over the side of the building and keeping them wet with buckets of water.



Although the building constantly steamed from the heat they held their own till a stream could be spared from in front to come to their assistance. During this time citizens gave the firemen valuable assistance in preventing the spread of the flames among the barns, sheds, and outhouses in the interior of the block. The fire was under control a little after seven o'clock, but was not fully put out until after eleven o'clock.

During the progress of the fire the light fall of rain of the evening increased to a pour, pelting the worker mercilessly and coating streets, sidewalks and buildings with ice. So slippery was everything that it was only with the greatest difficulty that the apparatus could be returned to the house.

**LOSSES AND INSURANCE**

The estimated losses and the insurances may by summed up as follows:

	<u>LOSS</u>	<u>INSURANCE</u>
Wm. H. Baker	\$20,000	\$11,700

Wm. H. Howell	500	300
John Bruschi	200	-
John F. Wood	1,200	500
Mrs. Vanderhoof	10,000	3,000
G. Montanye	200	-
Mrs. A. Beemer	8,000	5,500
Thos. J. Miskella	100	-
Mrs. T. B. Tone	5,000	2,500
John A. Lyon	3,000	3,500
Miss L. Gillen	250	-
John O. Kaminski	100	-
Owners opposite	250	-
Wm. Donaldson	4,500	2,000
A. Simon	3,100	2,500
	-----	-----
TOTALS	\$56,400	\$31,500

#### HOW THE FIRE STARTED

A great many reports have been started respecting the origin of the fire, and there is no doubt that a number of unjust and untruthful ones have been circulated. Mr. A. B. Simon gives the following statement as to the facts. About twenty minutes past five o'clock he was engaged in lighting the lamps in his store. He had reached the last handler, containing two lamps, in the extreme rear of the store, and standing upon a chair had lighted the lamps. While putting on the globes the ceiling above suddenly gave way and the lamps went to the floor with a crash, breaking them and causing the oil to ignite in the flames of the wicks. In this part of the store the goods were packed to the floor under the shelves, and a box of light Summer goods stood near. Into these the oil ran and they ignited in an instant. Mr. Simon says he seized an overcoat and tried to quench the flames, resulting in his being quite severely burned about the face and hands. The flames spread so rapidly that he saw he could not succeed, and so he ran to the door and gave the alarm. Several looked in, but immediately started in the direction of the engine house. Two gentlemen from Succasunna saw the fire start, but as they were on their way to the depot to catch a train did not stop. Mr. Simon was completely overcome by his burns and the excitement of the fire and had to be removed to his house.

Up to last night he had not yet got out, owing to his eyes being affected by the flames.

A number of rumors have also been flying about in reference to Mr. Simon having had previous mishaps by fire. It has been stated that he was burned out in Boston, Newton, in Pennsylvania and in other places. Being questioned about it last evening Mr. Simon informed us that in over twenty years business experience he has never been burned out before and has only had one previous mishap by fire. That was about fifteen years ago, on the corner of Blackwell and Sussex Streets.

#### NOTES

While there are doubtless some who may feel inclined to blame the firemen for the unavoidable mishap that was occasioned by the breaking of the hose at the outset, yet we believe that the great majority of our townspeople are warm in praises of their excellent work, and the splendid fight made at the brick drug store, on Blackwell Street, and the alleyway on Warren Street. Had it not been for the work done there it is certain that the whole block would have been burned, and it is more than probable that the business portion of the town would have been swept away. It may therefore be safely assumed that the work thus done saved hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of property. In reference to those who growl it may be said that some of them stood unconcernedly by and steadily refused all appeals to assist in the work of trying to arrest the flames on Warren Street with buckets and blankets.

To all those who contend that the fire department should be made more efficient we have only this to say: There is need of more material in the department and they can assist to remedy what they claim is a fault by connecting themselves with it and sharing the burdens which the members assume gratuitously for the benefit of the people of the town. These people should also reflect that very few favors have been granted the members of the Dover Fire Department. While other towns have taken pride in their departments and have assisted them in getting up parades, etc., the citizens here have resisted all appeals for a parade of the department here, while they have expected them to turn out on all other public occasions when other besides themselves were benefitted by it. The firemen give their services gratuitously, at considerable cost and trouble to themselves, and on many occasions have made the people of the town their debtors.

But all our citizens are not of the grumbling, do-nothing kind, and many of them deserve a meed of credit for the aid they gave on Monday night in removing goods and in assisting the firemen to hold the flames in check at the Warren Street alleyway and in the rear of the burning buildings. Their efficient services counted for much in the general result.

Considering the slippery condition of roofs and street it is remarkably fortunate that some of the workers were not seriously injured. Besides the danger of falling from buildings they were a number of times in danger of being caught by the flames. The position of those on the roof of Goodale's Drug Store was at one time particularly critical. They were hard pressed by the fire and were in great danger of their retreat being cut off. Had they wavered at that time the fire would have passed the drug store, and the disaster would have been general. But they never faltered until the Lyon building fell and gave them the control of the flames. The only fireman severely injured was Benny Cain, of the truck company, whose hands were badly burned while working an extinguisher in Simon's store, from which he had a very narrow escape.

Among the pleasant things which firemen will remember in connection with the fire was the action of Mr. I.B. Jolley, of Jolley's Hotel, in providing the men with coffee and sandwiches. He bought all the bread he could find in town, supplied meats from his own larder, and kept large bowls of coffee constantly boiling. As the fire broke out before supper, the firemen were more easily exhausted by the fight against the fierce flames, and by the pelting of the pitiless ice storm, making the pails of coffee and piles of sandwiches very acceptable indeed. Mr. Henry Kennedy also rendered favors to firemen in this way and there were doubtless other who contributed to their relief.

The fierceness of the fire is impressed upon visitors to the ruins by the broken windows in the bank building, and Kennedys Restaurant, and by the scorched condition of the building across the way.

The fire caused a suspension of all business throughout the town, and many of the business firms packed their goods for speedy removal in case of necessity. Manager Lamb closed his skating rink, and the Common Council and religious meetings throughout town were not held.

During the fire a young man from near Port Oram was arrested by Fire Wardens on suspicion of pocketing some gloves, but as he proved himself of good character it was believed he was the victim of unfortunate circumstances and he was released.

The refusal of the Morristown department to respond to the call for help is generally and unfavorably commented upon. But it so happened that the crisis of the fire was passed before they could have arrived and all are glad that they were not put under obligations to them for a service they grudged.

Many of the goods from the burning buildings were removed to the bank, post office and store buildings across the way, and many adjoining places were filled with them. The Fire Wardens did good service in looking after the goods, as well as by keeping the way of the firemen clear, thus demonstrating the utility of their organization.

Mr. Wm. Donaldson, the photographer, was absent from home and did not learn of his loss until Tuesday afternoon. He had only recently placed a very valuable instrument in his gallery.

The safe of Mr. Wm. H. Baker was filled with many valuable papers, but when it was recovered from the ruins and opened on Tuesday morning all were found to have been well preserved.

The brisk wind of Tuesday evening stirred up the fire in several places about the ruins, necessitating the calling out of the department again, when all the ruins were washed over. They were also called out for the same purpose at an early hour on Wednesday morning, when the thermometer stood several degrees below zero.

Architect Botticher was in town on Tuesday. The burned district is one of the best business localities in town and it is hoped substantial brick buildings will be erected on them, adding much to the appearance of the town, and giving much greater security in case of fire.

Many of the people in town are advocating the purchase of another steamer. A better investment could not be made, and the town could never buy one better than now. Accidents to steam fire engines are of frequent occurrence, and a town is never safe while it is at the mercy of one alone.

Small precautions to prevent fire are often productive of great results. A few months ago Mr. Wm. H. Goodale had an open window in his brick wall next to J.A. Lyon's store. A friend convinced him that it would

be safer for him to have it walled up, and he had it done. If he had neglected to do so the flames would have entered into his store, filled with chemicals, paints and oils, and where it would have stopped, no one can tell.

Yesterday afternoon Chief Engineer H.C. Bonnell, of the Newton Fire Department, and Mr. Chas. S. Steele, of the same place, agents for the Harden Hand Grenade, gave an exhibition at the ruins of the good work the grenades will do in extinguishing fire. We understand that a considerable number of them have been ordered for business places and residences. They cost but a trifle, can be used by anyone, and are invaluable for putting out incipient fires. Orders may be left with Jas. P. Kelly.

In the store of Mr. Wm. H. Baker was a barrel of 130 test McKirgan kerosene oil, and yet there was no explosion when the flames reached it, proving the claim of the company that their oil is non-explosive.