

# The Great Fire Of Jarvis May 24, 1873

written by the late Selma Rodgers  
An eye witness account written in 1946.  
It was in 1873 on the 24th of May, my mother's birthday, also Queen Victoria's, a holiday in Canada. Mr. Jones lent his woods' clearings to all the Church Sunday Schools to have a Union picnic on the back part of his place. (The present home of Mrs. George Reynolds, Talbot St. E.) All the women and children and a few men went to this picnic.

Most all the men from Jarvis went to Simcoe to hear the Marquis of Lorne speak. He was the new Governor General. I was small, but big enough to walk a mile and a half (from the Brick Yard (The present J. W. Parsons home) and allowed to go with the other children and my aunts. Mother said she would be alright with Kate Searight, a trusty girl who had lived with mother as a helper for years. I guess they thought me better at the picnic as Kate had little John to look after.

We called on our way to Jarvis for Minnie and Aunt Margaret Rodgers. We went down Mr. Jones' lane to the woods.

I remeber it well. We were seated to eat dinner. Someone said "Fire", then "Jarvis is on fire." What an alarm and confusion, dinner was left untouched, everyone frightened. All made for home on the back road out at Shannon's (now Leonard Church's) on to the Snyder place (Bruce Robinson's). I can see it yet, the heavy smoke, the red glare up in the sky and we children afraid to go near the village.

How it happened - Mr. Armour, it seems, was the only man to stay at home in his store. At the side of the store was a small building for oil tubs and pails and other things kept away from his drygoods and grocery, a millinery shop upstairs in the front overhead, his home at the back and rooms overhead for sleeping. These two buildings were about one half foot apart, a door cut thro' and covered passage to go into the little building. From the street, this half foot space got filled up with paper and other trash and it was supposed that someone had thrown a match end or stub of cigar or perhaps a fire-cracker.

Mr. Armour said he did not discover the fire until noon. It had started in the wall and had made its way upward to the shop above. With no water and alone, except Mrs. Smith in her hotel, they could do nothing to prevent it spreading so

the business part and most of the village was burnt down. Probably the smouldering of trash gathered had hindered the fire from breaking out until it got to the air above, then it broke into flames. When the men from Simcoe got home (no telephone) all was a smouldering ruin. No home, nothing saved, all gone.

What an outlook? The stretch of land and the trees had saved the Presbyterian manse and the upper and back streets of the town, but not many homes built - save the Billy Phibbs home where there was a home, it was opened to the needy. Father gave Mr. Jones the kitchen and bedroom of his tenant house and the

front of the house John Brock got to build up for a new home. The Doughty farm today saved the Yocums and the old part of Boyd's Hotel was saved. He built a new front on it.

Newcomers were coming to build and make their homes in Jarvis. All the south side of Talbot from the

(Herbert Jones) Cross-en home was built some time after the fire.

The churches and school were not damaged by the fire. The Anglican and Methodist were not in the path of the flames and the school and Presbyterian (at that time by the school) were saved by the open space surround-

ding them. Apparently the toll-gate was damaged and never reopened.

This calamity, which it was feared would be the end of Jarvis, was really a benefit as it caused the erection of a better class of buildings. The "Atlas" of 1871 states that very few villages of its size contained so many handsome brick buildings as Jarvis.



The above picture contributed by Bill Fess shows Main St., at Norm Graham's corner after the great May 24th fire in Jarvis.



The above picture, contributed by Bill Fess, shows the Presbyterian Church and manse after the May 24th fire in Jarvis.



## VICTORIA DAY SPECIALS

# GSTEEDMANS

HAGERSVILLE STORE OPEN MONDAY MAY 21st 10 A.M. TO 5 P.M.

<b>LEAF RAKE</b> DURABLE LIGHT WEIGHT <b>.97</b>	<b>GARDEN TOOLS</b> ASSORTED FORKS, TROWELS, ETC. <b>.58</b>	<b>PLASTIC</b> <b>TABLE CLOTHS</b> PRINT DESIGNS <b>.59</b>
<b>PILLOW CASES</b> 100% COTTON 21" X 33" <b>.97</b>	<b>MATERIAL</b> <b>COTTON PRINTS</b> 36" WIDE YD. <b>.67</b>	<b>BOYS</b> <b>PANTS</b> ASST. SIZES ASST. STYLES 1/2 OFF REGULAR PRICE
<b>WILKINSON SUPER SWORD EDGE</b> <b>STAINLESS BLADES</b> PKG. OF 5 <b>.47</b>	<b>PLAY BALL</b> 20" SOUVENIR OF CANADA <b>.25</b>	<b>FLOWER BULBS</b> CANNAS GLADIOLI AND MANY MORE 1/3 OFF
<b>PANTY HOSE</b> ALL SIZES ASST. SHADES LIMITED QUANTITY PAIR <b>.27</b>	<b>INFANTS</b> <b>JACKETS</b> ASST. STYLES 12 - 18 - 24 MONTHS SIZE <b>1.97</b>	<b>TORCAN FAN</b> 20" BLADE 3 SPEED <b>14.97</b>
<b>STYRO FOAM</b> <b>COOLER</b> WITH LID <b>.99</b>	<b>THERMOS</b> <b>PICNIC JUG</b> INSULATED 128 OZ. CAPACITY <b>3.47</b>	<b>PORTABLE</b> <b>BAR-B-Q-GRILL</b> 3 POSITION BRASS FINISH LEGS <b>1.69</b>
<b>SNACK PACK</b> 20 PCS. 4 PLATES, 4 MUGS, 4 KNIVES, 4 FORKS, 4 SPOONS <b>.67</b>	<b>ALL BICYCLES</b> BOYS AND GIRLS HIGH RISER TOTS - TRIKES AND SIDEWALK BIKE LADIE'S AND MEN'S 10 SPEEDS MEN'S 3 SPEED <b>10% OFF</b>	<b>MEN'S</b> <b>T-SHIRTS</b> GUARANTEED NOT TO SHRINK ASST. COLORS S - M - L <b>1.44</b>
<b>FIRE WORKS</b> FAMILY PACKS PRICED FROM <b>.15 TO 2.98</b>		