

The Great Fire Of Jarvis May 24, 1873

written by
Selma E. Jones
count written in 1946.
It was in 1873 that the
mother's story of the
Queen Victoria Hotel
today in Canastota.
Jones' last name was
clearing in the
Church Street
to have a building
on the back of his
place. The great
rooms of Mr. George
Reynolds (J. E.)
All the women and
children and men
went to this place.

Most all the men from
Jarvis went there to
hear the story of
Lorne Spaulding, the
new Governor General. I
was sent 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 aunt. Mother said
she would take us with
Kate Scarsdale and a
girl who had been with
mother as a helper for
years. I guess they
thought we better see the
place as Kate had little
John to look after.

We called to our way
to Jarvis for Lorne and
Aunt Margaret and Mrs.
We went down Mr.
Jones' lane to the
woods.

I remember it well. We
were seated to eat
dinner. Someone said
"Fire," that Jarvis
is on fire. We had an
alarm and ran on,
dinner was left on the
ed, everyone frightened.
All made for home on
the back road to at
Shannon's (now Lorne
Church's) on the
Snyder place. I saw
Robinson's). I saw
it yet, the heavy smoke,
the red glare up in the
sky and we children
afraid to go near the
village.

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 dama-
ged 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 re-
opened.

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 build-
ings. The "Atlas" of
1871 states that very
few villages of its size
contained so many hand-
some brick buildings as
Jarvis.



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



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

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