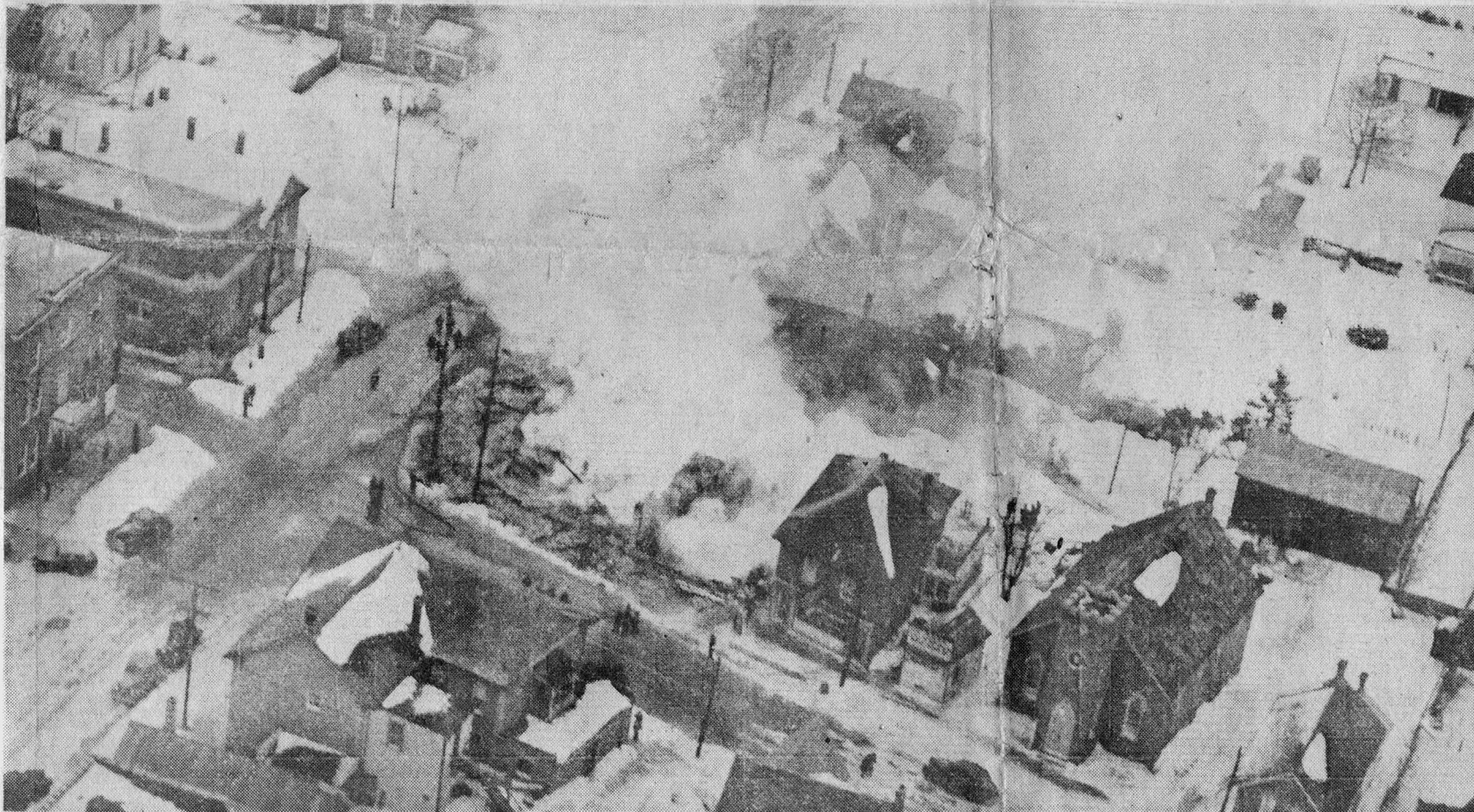




WIN \$150,000 FIRE BATTLE



Aerial view shows how fire razed buildings in Sunderland today at corner of Brock and Main streets, where No. 7 Highway turns.

Chris Woods, Telegram



Telegram

General store, restaurant and post office fell before the flames. Site of their ruins is shown here.

5 Brigades Of District Fight Sunderland Blaze 3 Injured, 11 Homeless

**Firefighters Collapse From Exhaustion as Flames
Fed by 50-Mile Gale Devour Store-Apartment
Building—Water Pumped From River—
Phone Operator Sticks to Post**

By CLEM SHIELDS and FRED JONES

Sunderland, Jan. 6—Firemen and citizens today saved this prosperous farm town from destruction when their heroic work in a 50-mile-an-hour bitter wind held a \$150,000 blaze to a corner block of general stores.

Eleven persons are homeless; all they have left is the clothes on their backs. Three of the fire-fighters were hurt, as they fought to check the spread of the flames.

Believed to have originated at 9:30 a.m. from an overheated stove in the restaurant operated by George Clay, the flames appeared from a plane to be under control shortly after 1 o'clock.

From the air, firemen could be seen playing hose on the smoking ruins as the strong wind carried the dense smoke off to the east. Although battling under great difficulties, it was obvious they were obtaining the upper hand over the stubborn blaze.

Firemen were helpless to stem the progress of the flames, it was reported, because of lack of water.

When brigades arrived from neighboring communities they found that the wells were dry. They ran hose from a nearby river, but the nozzles reached only as far as the egg-grading plant, next to the burning building.

The flames raced through the restaurant and in a matter of a few minutes it was a blazing inferno, the building housing four families on the second floor, a combined barber shop and pool room, post office and a combined grocery and butcher shop being left nothing but a smoking ruin.

The village power supply is cut off and only means of illumination left for the residents is lamps and candles.

One of the heroes of the fire was telephone operator Jessie Pinkham, who in a nearby building remained at her switchboard and kept up a flow of outgoing calls requesting assistance. Her work brought aid from Cannington, Lindsay, Uxbridge, Beaverton and Port Perry.

With the arrival of a fire crew from Lindsay, the decision was made to break through the ice of the Beaver River and set up a pumping system. This decision was a vitally important factor in keeping the water supply going.

Mr. Clay was gone from his restaurant only a few minutes, he said, before the fire broke out. He had gone to a nearby store for a pound of butter, but did not even have time to make the purchase.

"I can't understand how it happened," he said. "I was out of the store only a minute. There is nothing in my store which could have caused an explosion. The stove burns only coal or wood, nothing explosive like oil."

William Doyle, owner of the grocery and also of the egg-grading station involved in the fire, was at church when he was informed his place of business was burning. He dashed from the church, fearful that his wife, in bed with the flu, might

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(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

be in danger. When he arrived, however, he found that she had already been roused by his brother, Frank, and with her child had made her way to freedom.

ROUSED BY NEIGHBOR

Mrs. William Sheldon, occupant of one of the apartments, and her six-month-old baby were in bed asleep when the fire broke out. Unaware of the pending danger, mother and child slept on until Mrs. Clayton Henderson banged on her door.

Mrs. Henderson, whose husband operated the barber store in the ruined building, was with her husband when she smelled smoke. Fearing for the safety of the tenants, Mrs. Henderson ventured into the building, which by this time was becoming rapidly filled with smoke. Awakening Mrs. Sheldon, Mrs. Henderson then grabbed her baby and carried her to safety with the mother following.

Mrs. Henderson made a second attempt to enter the building but was driven back by smoke.

From the time he first noticed the fire, Clay worked tirelessly trying to extinguish the flames and finally collapsed under the strain. He was removed to his home and placed under the doctor's care.

Tolling of the church bells warned the community of 500 of the catastrophe and business came to a standstill as all dropped what they were doing and rushed to the scene to give assistance.

Tenants were Mr. and Mrs. William Sheldon and their daughter Jean, six months; Mrs. Sheldon's brother-in-law and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Doug. Gerrow and their children, Mary, 2, and David, nine months; Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Henderson and their 10-year-old daughter Betty; Nell McFadden, whose war bride and baby are in Britain on a vacation trip.

Firefighters were able to save the mail in the Post Office, located on the main floor.

EQUIPMENT USELESS

Mr. Anderson, the druggist, reported that the Sunderland fire equipment was useless to cope with the blaze.

"All we have is a chemical engine and it was not nearly adequate to do any kind of a job," he said.

He recalled that after a serious fire two years ago which destroyed the Sunderland Co-Operative grain elevators and warehouse and did \$200,000 damage, the city went up for more adequate fire equipment.

That's as far as it went, he said. No person or group pressed for action.

Mr. Anderson said that after gutting the building, the fire weakened one of the walls and it crashed through the roof of the egg grading station next door.

"No one was in the building when the wall went through the roof," said Mr. Anderson. "Everybody was fighting the fire next door when it happened."

The egg grading building is owned by William Doyle and the building where the fire started by the Bodley brothers of Pepperlaw.

escaped with minor injuries when he fell off the one-story building while fighting the fire before the wall collapsed. Clayton Henderson, like Clay, collapsed from exhaustion.

Throughout the blaze guards kept a vigil on nearby schools as sparks, carried by a strong wind, threatened to ignite everything and anything in their travels.

Some sparks fell on other Main street buildings, but were smothered by the occupants.

Citizens who played their role in assisting professional firemen agreed that, if the wind had been from the east instead of the west, the town could not have been saved from destruction.

It almost seemed as if the hand of an unseen power intervened to save the beautiful church. Only a few yards from the core of the fire on main street, it remains untouched except for the now-begrimed wall which faces the ruined leftovers of a corner block.

The rapidity with which the flames licked and set ablaze a building adjoining the restaurant where the fire started, was a constant source of anxiety. When the local wells dried up and the local fire engine broke down, prospects of saving the east end of the town seemed remote. But the tenacity of the firemen and volunteer citizens won out.

George Shier, hotel proprietor, said that from the roof of his building the street appeared to be "a wall of flame and heat with tongues of fire leaping across the street."

Today's disastrous blaze is the second serious fire in the small village in a month. Last month, another business building a combination pool hall and barber shop, about 400 yards from the scene of the present blaze, was totally destroyed.

ONCE TRADING POST AS JONES' CORNERS

Great historical interest is attached to the area swept by today's fire at Sunderland. One of the first buildings constructed in northern Ontario County, a log tavern, once stood on the spot. J. A. Waddell, of Wanstead ave., Toronto, recalled today.

In 1804, his great-great-grandfather, a Welshman named William Jones, came to Canada by sailing vessel and built a log cabin on the site. The settlement which grew up around it was known as Jones' Corners. It was a trading post, a link between Toronto and the rich fur country to the north, Mr. Waddell says. Jones had six sons and three daughters and they did much to aid new settlers in the area.

When the Lindsay railroad went through in 1867, one of Jones' sons, named Lorenzo, named the centre Sunderland. The original tavern was burned down about 1870, and a man named Porratt built the buildings which were destroyed in today's blaze. It was called the Porratt Block, then the McDermot Block and was a famous landmark,