

Campbellton wiped out by fire in mid-July 1910

Mid-July of 1910 brought disaster to the north when Campbellton was leveled by fire. The blaze started on the afternoon of July 11 at one of the thriving lumber town's mills, and gale force winds created an instant wildfire.

"Campbellton is wiped out," said a July 12 report from Dalhousie. "Every industry is gone, the great lumber mills, with all the piled lumber, are destroyed; every store and professional office, the Royal Bank of Canada, the Bank of N.B., and the I.C.R. depot and shops, all hotels and the grammar school, the convent and the large concrete hospital and every church."

The conflagration left 5,000 homeless, and aid trains were sent from other cities and towns. Tents were in short supply, and many remained without shelter.

"The thousands of homeless people here are having a hard time today with a heavy rain falling," said a July 13 dispatch. "It is estimated that almost 3,000 refugees spent the night in the woods about here, and there have been some pathetic scenes.

"Last night a baby was born to the mother of a homeless family who are in the woods."

Damage was estimated at more than \$3 million, including the new Intercolonial Railway station, freight sheds, round house, machine shops and rolling stock.

Every patient in the new hospital had been rescued, but their benefactors risked their own lives to get them out. Among them was Campbellton Police Chief Robert Crawford, who "very narrowly escaped from meeting his death in the burning building, having gone so far as to have his hat and coat burned from him."

Within days, officials added to their worries the fear of outbreaks of smallpox, diphtheria and typhoid.

The Campbellton fire The Mowat home, at the top of the hill on Patterson Street, burned in the Campbellton fire in 1910. I have heard a story about trying to save some of the contents of the home from several sources so believe it to be true.

A trunk packed with winter fur coats and other valuables was so heavy that Jack and Earl who were to get it down the stairs had a big argument about letting it slide down the stairs. It is said that Earl prevented Jack from doing that because he didn't want to see the beautiful stairs in the 'doomed' house damaged. The goods that were saved were loaded on horse drawn wagons and eventually traveled down the coast to Escuminac, the family summer home on Quebec's Gaspé peninsula.

Below: Jack Mowat house with Restigouche River in the background.

