

# MENOMINEE RANGE HISTORY – FIRES – MARINETTE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

[Compiled and Transcribed by William John Cummings]

## NIAGARA

*The Iron Mountain News*, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Year 2, Number 255 [Wednesday, February 14, 1923], page 1, columns 6-7

### DEVASTATING FIRE TAKES \$100,000 TOLL IN NIAGARA

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#### BLAZE EARLY TODAY BURNS 3 BUILDINGS

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Telephone Operator Sees Flames, Turns In Alarm

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#### FANNED BY GALE

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Volunteer Firemen Direct Efforts to Saving Nearby Structures

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The town of Niagara was swept early this morning by the most costly fire in its history when three buildings, occupied by four business establishments and located on Main street, were destroyed, resulting in a loss roughly estimated at \$100,000.

The buildings and their occupants follow:

Mason's store, owned and operated by the J.T. Mason company and the largest in Niagara.

Perkins' pool room, operated by Allen Perkins. Building owned by George Bocine, Kenosha, Wis.

Gus Zimmerman's barber shop, located in same building as pool room.

Niagara bakery, operated by Fred Eckelcard. Building owned by the Kimberly-Clark paper company.

#### Started in Pool Room.

The fire started in the rear of the pool room, located next to Mason's store, and spread to the adjoining structures. It was first noticed by Mrs. John Hatton, night operator at the telephone office across the street, who turned in the alarm by telephoning the boiler house at the Kimberly-Clark plant. Employees [*sic* – *Employees*] there immediately blew the fire whistle and a short time later practically every resident of the town was at the scene of the blaze.

According to Mrs. Hatton, the pool room was open at 3:10 o'clock this morning, when she looked out of the window of the telephone office and noticed a light in the establishment. Then she went to another room and lay down on a bed to rest. In a few minutes, however, a red glare shining through a window attracted her attention. She investigated and saw the flames in the rear of the pool room.

#### Swept by High Wind.

Swept onward by the gale, the flames quickly ate their way to the adjoining structures and in half an hour the three buildings were ablaze.

Members of the town's volunteer fire department responded in a short time to the call of the whistle and connected up two lines of hose. When it was seen, however, that the structures were doomed, they turned their attention to saving buildings nearby.

To assist in checking the advance of the fire and to save other buildings from destruction, scores of persons helped to

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cover nearby roofs with snow. The wind drove the fire onward and picked up large flaming brands, carrying them long distances and depositing them in dangerous places.

Strenuous work was required to save the building occupied by the American Café, located next to the bakery, and it was drenched in water. At the corner of the block and some distance away from the fire is a drug store run by H.L. Bourdlaes, who was awakened by the sound of the fire whistle. Being ill, he was unable to leave his bed. Preparations were made to remove him on a stretcher, but his wife, braving the cold, stood at the side of the building and threw water on it, extinguishing the sparks as fast as they fell.

## **Operator Stood at Post.**

The intense heat of the fire drove spectators back and scorched the front of the telephone building. Despite this and the fact that the windows of the place were so hot they could not be touched, Mrs. Hatton remained at her post and answered all calls. Later the fire destroyed the telephone cable and communication within the city was cut off. A line remained open to Iron Mountain and at 6 o'clock this morning firemen here were asked to be prepared to come to the assistance of the stricken town as it was feared the entire business section might be destroyed. Later local firemen were notified that the fire was under control and their services would not be required.

Little was saved from the three buildings. At Mason's store, the largest in Niagara, only a basket of jewelry, a new scale, comptometer and a box containing the record of accounts were rescued. At the other establishments only the books and cash could be saved.

## **Origin Is Unexplained.**

Mr. Perkins, owner of the pool room, was at a loss to explain how the fire originated. He left the place a few minutes

before it broke out and at that time noticed nothing unusual. A large stove was in the rear of the establishment and it is thought that in some manner a spark from it ignited the floor or walls.

The fire was still burning this afternoon but there was no further danger that it would spread. The buildings destroyed were of wood construction, two stories in height, and were quickly razed once the flames had gained a firm hold. A close watch was being maintained to see that the blaze in the smouldering [*sic – smoldering*] ruins did not find fresh material on which to feed and burst out anew, causing further destruction.

The heaviest loss was sustained by the Mason company. The store had recently received a large amount of spring goods and, in addition to the heavy stock of merchandise, represented considerable money. It is understood that the loss, estimated at \$75,000[,] was about half covered by insurance.

Although it was impossible late today to get definite figures, it was said that the loss of the two other buildings and contents, about \$25,000, was covered by insurance.

*The Iron Mountain News*, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Year 2, Number 256 [Thursday, February 15, 1923], page 1, column 4

## **TOWN RECOVERS FROM BIG FIRE**

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### **Business Establishments Hit By Blaze Will Again Open**

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Niagara today has regained its composure following the fire that early

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yesterday morning destroyed three buildings and for a time threatened to wipe out the entire business district.

Revised figures today placed the loss at approximately \$75,000, and a large part of this is covered by insurance. The J.T. Mason company, operators of the Mason store, the largest in Niagara, were the heaviest losers. The building and contents, completely destroyed by the flames, were valued at about \$50,000, fully covered by insurance.

The loss of the Perkins pool room is estimated at about \$8,000 partly covered by insurance. The building was valued at an additional \$3,000, and Zimmerman's barber shop, also located in it, represented about \$1,000.

The Niagara baking company lost approximately \$2,500, while the double store building of which it occupied half and owned by the Kimberly-Clark company, was valued at \$6,000. The company carried \$4,500 insurance on the structure.

The fire, the worst in the history of Niagara, will cause only a temporary setback in business. It is understood that the J.T. Mason company intends to rebuild immediately, and the owners of the pool room, barber shop and bakery have already announced their intention of re-establishing their places. The baking company will erect a building on a lot it owns east of the bank building.

Local telephone service in Niagara, cut off when the fire destroyed the cable, has not yet been restored but work will go forward as rapidly as possible.