

# The Canadian Champion

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*Spectacular all-night blaze*

## \$250,000 fire destroys Milton Inn



FIREFIGHTERS FOUGHT hard and long to combat what Fire Chief Clement refers to as the most stubborn fire he has ever had to fight, when Milton Inn was destroyed by fire Friday evening. Fire spread beneath the roof and as the roof burned, the flames curled it under, making it impossible to get water on it. There is apparently about four to six inches of tar on the roof and this complicated the firefighters' task.

(Photo by D. Pink)

Milton Inn Hotel was destroyed in stubborn, evasive fire Friday night. Damage to the century-old Main St. building is estimated at \$250,000.

The hotel's 27 guest rooms were fully booked and many of the rooms and guests lost all or most of their possessions.

While the cause hadn't been determined at press time, Milton Fire Chief A. E. Clement said there was some indication the fire may have started in a partition near the west end of the second floor. Inspector Jilkenson from the fire marshal's office is investigating.

### Long ordeal

The 21-hour battle for the Milton Fire brigade started at about 5.45 Friday afternoon and continued through the night and into the next afternoon. While the fire had been put out early Saturday afternoon, it was late that afternoon before many of the firefighters got home to bed, tired and exhausted from the all-night ordeal. Fire hoses had to be cleaned and hung to dry and other equipment prepared for the next fire.

Hundreds of people lined the streets on Main and Brown St., watching firefighters in their relentless struggle against the fire. The crowd stayed on even into the wee hours of the morning.

Former owner and acting hotel manager Don McKay said he was on the main floor near the beverage room when the fire started.

"I heard someone say they smelled smoke. It started quick then and smoke poured down the steps. We tried to get upstairs with fire extinguishers, but couldn't get through the smoke," he recalled.

### Till jammed

McKay said he took a deep breath and ran into the smoke-filled lounge on the main floor to remove cash from the lounge's cash register, but it was jammed. He was nearly overcome with smoke so he left, cleared his lungs and went back to try again. It still wouldn't open. On the third try, he said, it finally sprung open and he scooped up the cash and ran through the thick smoke to safety. All of the books and hotel records were lost in the second floor office.

"It just went, just like that," he said. A few minutes after the fire was discovered, he said he tried to call the fire department but the phone had gone dead.

McKay said only three or four people were in the lounge at the time, plus about 15 or so in the beverage room. He had no idea how many people were in the guest rooms on the second and third storeys.

### Helped others

Earl Carrigan, an employee and resident of the hotel said he also tried to get upstairs but couldn't. "People helped each other down the stairs. Some of them were ladies," he said.

Mike Grunic, one of two students at the Sheridan College heavy equipment school who stayed at the hotel, later recalled the horror he experienced.

"I was reading a book in



CROWDS GATHERED quickly when the Milton Inn fire broke out at around 5.30 p.m. Many never left and hundreds left and came back later. Even in the wee hours of the morning, crowds of people lined the streets and sidewalks along Main and Brown Sts.

(Photo by S. Dills)

### Food, lodgings, assistance

## Everyone pitches in

The tragic fire at Milton Inn Friday night left several people without a roof over their head; even though the exhausted firefighters pushed on and eventually conquered the most stubborn fire in Milton's recent history, the hotel was gutted.

As in a number of cases in the past, residents and groups in the area responded to the urgent needs of the unfortunate victims of the fire and those called to put out the blaze.

Soon after it became obvious the fire was of a serious nature, Mayor Brian Best huddled with police officials

and hotel personnel to see who needed help and where the missing residents could be found.

### Find rooms

Several people were put up for the weekend as guests of the Town of Milton in rooms at the Fifth Wheel Truck

Stop. Meanwhile Mrs. Best and a number of housewives got busy making sandwiches. Food and drinks were donated by Alfonso's Fruit Market, The Charles Hotel, and a number of other groups and individuals.

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### Possible link?

## Dog stays at fire

The dog was familiar to those who watched the Milton Inn fire through the night. It seemed to stay on Saturday as it was sleeping on the church lawn across the road. It wasn't a troublesome dog. It wasn't heard to make a sound. Yet it continued to wander aimlessly around as

the hotel fire continued. Even with the fire out, it didn't seem to leave the church lawn.

### Huddled on step

Black and tan and part German Shepherd, it was described as. As Saturday's rain fell and the levelling of (Continued on Page 16)

### Hotel fire: "stubborn"

## All-night chore for brigade

Friday's inferno that reduced Milton Inn to a massive pile of rubble was the most stubborn fire in the

career of Milton Fire Chief A. E. Clement, who has been chief for more than two decades.

The chief noted there had been bigger fires in town "but none as stubborn as this one". "There was always something keeping us from putting it out," he said.

"We put enough water on that place to float it down Main St. It was as if someone was standing on the roof pouring gas on the fire and laughing at us," Clement said.

### Millions of gallons

In all, over two million gallons of water were used over the space of 20 hours in combating the blaze. Early in the evening two Milton Hydro trucks with aerial buckets were summoned and both were manned by firefighters with hoses, supplementing those on the ground. Around midnight Oakville Fire Department was called and sent two men

and an aerial pumper here. Firemen were then able to fight the fire from a height of 55 feet and dump 500 gallons per minute from that hose. That compares with 30 or 40 gallons per minute from each of the smaller hand-held hoses the Milton firefighters use.

At one point there was some concern about the town's water reservoir holding out until morning. Works superintendent Bruce McKerr made five trips to the reservoir and the pumps at Kelso, checking the pumps (Continued on Page 15)

## Youth, 17 crushed by farm tractor

A farm accident Monday afternoon west of Campbellville claimed the life of a 17-year-old youth who was crushed beneath a farm tractor.

Dead is Robert William (Willie) McLaren, son of Mr. and Mrs. James McLaren of 109 McLaren Rd., Campbellville. Milton O.P.P. who investigated the incident said he was attempting to remove a fence post with the tractor when the tractor flipped over on top of him.

The incident happened around 2.30 p.m. Monday. Const. Ron Barrett of Milton O.P.P. investigated and coroner Dr. W. T. Kellington of Freeleton pronounced him dead at the scene.

McLaren was a student at Milton District High School until last year but had quit to work on the family farm. He is survived by a brother Chris and sisters Elizabeth and Kate, all at home.

Funeral service is scheduled for 3.30 p.m. Wednesday at the McKerris Funeral Home, to be followed by cremation.

### Sorry, boys bar's closed

Perhaps under the impression business in the Milton Inn would carry on as usual, two local youths were noticed frequenting the charred pub Saturday night.

Thinking, too, it might be the bartender's night off, the lads helped themselves to some draft ale. The boys had also made provisions to carry out a number of bottles of spirits, neatly packed in cardboard containers for removal.

Members of the Milton constabulary came across the young gentlemen as they were quaffing the warm brew and made it a point to tell them the bar was closed. Police are presently going out of their way to educate the pair that drinking in the ruins of burnt out hotels is not socially acceptable.



AN EXHAUSTED FIREFIGHTER, Harold Penson catches 40 winks Saturday morning after an all-night battle against the fire which gutted the Milton Inn. Several of the firefighters put in a straight 20 hours on the fire—after a full day's work at their normal occupations—so Harold had a good excuse for relaxing against a parked car when the fire was finally extinguished. Local photographer G. F. MacPherson of Rand Studios snapped the poignant photo.

### In business by Christmas

## Build new hotel

Ted Jaskula, owner of the Milton Inn, spoke to The Champion by phone Tuesday from his hospital room in Grimsby.

Mr. Jaskula suffered a slight stroke Oct. 7 and was in Grimsby Hospital at the time of the fire. His doctor gave him permission to visit the scene briefly Saturday morning.

Planning to demolish the remains and build again, Mr. Jaskula said, "We'll try to use some of the bricks for the front of the new building, but

we can't build another hotel of that size. I figure, we'll have maybe 20 rooms."

The rebuilding will begin in two weeks, Mr. Jaskula said he hopes to be in business again by Christmas.

Unsure of coverage Although he had adequate building insurance he wasn't sure if the roomers' losses would be covered. The hotel was occupied to capacity, 27 people, at the time. "I don't know where they are all staying," Mr. Jaskula said. "It's hard to get rooms in Milton."

The owner debunked rumors of an attempted sale of the building prior to the fire. Under contract to not sell before three years, Mr. Jaskula said, "We've only been here two years in February". He had recently spent \$50,000 on renovations to the lounge, dining room and kitchen.

Although arson investigators have given the premises a 'clean bill of health', Mr. Jaskula commented, "I really have my doubts, it went too fast".

## Hotel 109 years old

The Milton Inn, destroyed by fire Friday, was a Milton landmark for the past 109 years.

In February 1864, The Champion commented on the new hotel erected by John Wallace on Main St.

"The main house is 50 x 36 feet and presents a handsome appearance without any extra ornaments. The bar, dining room and several

parlors are spacious and cheerful and there is large accommodations in the way of sleeping rooms. The stables and sheds in the rear are extensive and well built.

Built in winter "These buildings were erected by the Messrs. Van Allen, contractors, and it tells well for their energy as workmen to mention that the entire work of building in all

its branches has been put up in the space of four months—and in four cold winter months too. The plastering was done by Messrs. J. Clement and R. McDowell and is a neat job."

In 1877, according to a Halton Atlas published that year, the Wallace House was one of four hotels thriving in Milton, a town with 1,400

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## Region inaugural

The inaugural meeting of Halton's first regional council will be held in the area's largest hall and even that won't be large enough to hold all those invited to the ceremony.

The event is planned for Thursday night, Oct. 18 at Burlington Central High School. The school auditorium holds about 600

people and those who do not get into the main room will watch the event on closed circuit television in the cafeteria.

The Hon. W. Ross Macdonald, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario will conduct the swearing-in ceremony. Provincial Treasurer John White and MPP's Jim Snow and George Kerr will attend

the function at the school and the reception at the Holiday Inn later. The swearing-in and inaugural meeting are expected to take less than an hour.

### Cut list short

Mrs. Susan Jacobs, secretary to regional chairman Allan Masson said all of the newly elected councillors as well as those

now serving on municipal councils in Halton have been invited, along with some industrial VIP's, representatives of the various Chambers of Commerce and ministerial associations in the county.

She noted the invitation list had to be cut a little short of what organizers had hoped to

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