

JANUARY 16th, 1969

Zion Line W.I.

The January meeting of Zion Line Women's Institute was held at the home of Mrs. Sidney Barrett, Cobden, with a large attendance. Roll call was answered with a donation to the Mental Health Fund.

Several thank-you notes were read. A discussion on money-making projects was held and a committee was appointed to plan a euchre party in the near future. Mrs. Mac Coughlin and Mrs. Douglas Patterson will lead the spring 4-H Homemaking Club. Cards were sent to the sick.

The 4-H Homemaking Club girls were present and gave a review of the exhibit they had at Achievement Day. Miss Gail Coughlin was commentator. Miss Connie Patterson and Miss Sheila Coughlin demonstrated the arranging of a cheese and fruit tray. Miss Patricia Ross moved a vote of thanks to the leaders and sponsors of the club.

Mrs. Richard Wood convened the program on Health and Home Economics. Several readings and contests were enjoyed. Recipes for old-fashioned cookies were given.

Refreshments were served by the hostess and the committee. A social time followed.

SCOTT—In loving memory of a dear husband Mac, who passed away November 29, 1980.

As summer slowly leaves
And flowers fade away
I remember when you left
me

Two years ago today.
You'll never be forgotten
Nor will treasured
memories die

For my thoughts are often
with you
While the days and months
go by.

—Wife, Myrtle.

Great Forest Fires in Renfrew County

Reprinted from Pioneer Days in and Around Cobden, published in 1936.

May 16, 1853, was the day of the great fire which swept over three townships in Renfrew County, destroying everything before it for a space of about 30 miles long and 12 miles wide.

The morning being fine, a number of settlers in various places had set fire to the brush for the purpose of clearing the land for the spring crops. Several little fires were thus scattered over a considerable area in Pembroke, Stafford and Westmeath townships, on the upper end of Allumette Island, and in the townships of Sheen and Chichester on the Lower Canada side of the river, but no particular damage was done while the wind blew from the southwest. About one o'clock in the afternoon the wind came around to the west and blew with increasing violence. The scattered fires soon united, and a dense mass of flames swept over portions of Pembroke, Stafford, Bromley, Westmeath, Ross and Horton townships toward the mouth of the Bonnechere. Allumette Island at the same time was swept from head to foot, and parts of Calumet Island as well.

Beachburg Destroyed

The fire burnt out the whole country between the Muskrat and the Ottawa. It destroyed Beach's mills and houses, and nearly every other building around the present-day Beachburg. It did not affect, however, Pembroke village, Westmeath village, nor the land along the river between them. The southern limit of the fire was a little south of Gould's foad, in the district even then known as the Garden of Eden. On the west, it burnt out the Snake River settlement, but apparently did not extend very far west of the Muskrat Lake elsewhere. When the fire reached the Ottawa River, it was estimated that the belt of blazing pine and hardwood was fully 14 miles wide.

Two hundred families, it was said, were burnt out in Ross, Bromley, Westmeath, Stafford Pembroke and Horton, a hundred on Allumette Island and about 30 in Sheen and Chichester. A traveller on the way to Bytown on horseback had to take refuge in a clearing and remain there for five or six hours. Horses, cattle, sheep and other animals were destroyed, and in many instances settlers barely managed to save their lives. It is said that some of those along the Ottawa had to take refuge in the river till the flames passed over their clearings. So far as is known, the only person to lose his life was a man named Thra-

sher, who lived in Westmeath on the Pembroke town line. For several days the smoke of the great fire was so dense in Perth and Bytown that it caused much annoyance to the eyes.

Steamer Escapes

Jason Gould suffered severely from the fire. The "North Star," it appears, had left for Cobden in the morning, when the fires in the vicinity of Pembroke were still under control. It was overtaken by the fire in the Muskrat River, and the passengers and crew barely managed to get the boat into the open lake. When they reached Cobden, they found nearly the whole village (it was pretty small) in flames, the old "Muskrat" burned, and the inhabitants concentrating on saving their houses. It is said that none of the dwellings were destroyed, though all the sheds, stables and buildings were. In addition to the old "Muskrat," Gould lost his wharves and storehouses, with all the freight awaiting shipment.

The fire raged all the next day, May 17, but a rain which began to fall on the morning of the 18th extinguished it.

In spite of his great financial loss, Gould was able to carry on his forwarding business without a single day's interruption, thus justifying his reputation as "the most enterprising man in the counties of Lanark and Renfrew." By the end of the season he had reconstructed his wharves and warehouses, and was operating his steamboat and stage line on a larger scale than ever.

The others affected by the fire were scarcely less enterprising. David Beach, for example, by 1855 had built new mills and got them into operation, and had laid the foundation of a large frame house intended for a hotel.

The Fire of 1856

In the first few weeks of May 1856, portions of Allumette Island were on fire, and there were several large areas burning around Pembroke. These all suddenly burst into a great fire about May 22 or 23 (or perhaps it was a week later, May 29 or 30). In Pembroke the smoke was so dense that it was impossible to read a paper at three o'clock in the afternoon (we doubt very much if anyone tried to!); charred portions of wood fell thickly in the streets; and if the wind had not changed about seven o'clock in the evening Pembroke would have been destroyed. Above Pembroke, the mills at the mouth of the Petawawa River were burned. In Alice, many of the settlers lost their effects, and in Wilberforce, Matthew Libby, Miles Clarke, George Clarke, Thomas Sweeney and others.

CELEBRATE ANNIVERSARY

Beachburg (EW)—Mr. and Mrs. Charles Runtz of Beachburg were "At Home" to their many friends and relatives on the occasion of their 25th wedding anniversary on Saturday, Sept. 18, in St. Andrew's United Church Hall, Beachburg.

Mrs. Runtz received the guests in a street-length sapphire blue dress complemented by a three-quarter-length jacket. Her shoulder corsage was of white carnations and red roses.

Mr. Runtz is a son of the late Robert Runtz and his wife Matilda Webber of Lyndoch Township. Mrs. Runtz is the former Joyce Blanche Jessup, daughter of Mrs. William James Jessup and the late Mr. Jessup.

They were married 25 years ago in Lyndoch Baptist Church. Their attendants were Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Neuman of Quadeville. They lived there for a year, moved to Zion Line for six years, and have resided in Beachburg since then.

Mr. Runtz is employed by Chromasco, previously known as Dominion Magnesium Ltd. of Haley's. They

are members of St. Andrew's United Church, Beachburg LOBA No. 850 and LOL No. 340. Mrs. Runtz is a member of the UCW.

They have one daughter, Mrs. Graydon (Shirley) Moore of Kinburn. There are two grandchildren. Mr. Runtz has three sisters, Mrs. Harry (Violet) Jessup of Letter-Kenny, Mrs. Percy (Willo) Jessup of Quadeville and Mrs. Hazel Neuman of Peterborough. Mrs. Runtz has one brother, Sydney Jessup of Zion Line.

Mr. and Mrs. Runtz received many congratulatory cards and gifts. Guests attended from Ottawa, Maynooth, Oshawa, Eganville, Renfrew, Quadeville, Kinburn, Pembroke, Palmer Rapids, Schutt and Arnprior.

Paste of the WI

Minnie, Ont., requested a recipe for homemade cooked paste for scrapbook use. The following is widely used in "The Tweedsmuir History Books" by Women's Institute historians in our area. I thought others beside "Minnie" might like it:

PASTE FOR SCRAPBOOKS

1 quart water
1 cup white sugar
1 cup flour
1 tablespoon powdered alum
10 cents oil of cloves
Boil all together until clear;
bottle. Will keep well.

FIFTYISH PHILATELIST, Ont.