

*This was the extent of Stirling's firefighting resources around 1900.*

*The fire engine was housed in a building on Charlotte Street (now Church) between the public school on the east and a private home (now Jim and Denyse Moucks' home) on the west. St. Paul's United Church, steeple intact (it was heavily damaged during a "cyclone" in 1939 and was removed), stands behind the men.*



by auction after the fire. The McKee Block was built on the site but it was in turn destroyed by fire during the late 1920s and a service station replaced it. That building has housed several businesses, among them a bakery, a dairy, a fried chicken fast food outlet called John's Dairy Store and in 2007 houses a convenience store.)

A total of 18 buildings were burned that June 14. Eight families were left on the street, their homes and belongings gone. Sixteen businesses were burned out and the actual losses were almost \$84,000. However, in true and tenacious pioneer style, scarcely two weeks were allowed to pass before most of the stores were once more open for business in temporary quarters and merchants who had owned their own properties began at once to rebuild.

Of the buildings involved in the fire of 1883 only Joseph Green's store survives to this day. As mentioned, the solid limestone walls halted the further spread of the flames and remained standing although the interior was completely gutted. Prior to the fire, Stirling Masonic Lodge, A.F. & A.M., Number 69, had been using the second floor as a meeting place and in October of 1883 a contract was let for the rebuilding of the structure; the rebuilding was finished in December of that year and the building was insured for \$1,000. The business blocks which today occupy the north side of Front Street from the corner (Jim's Pizzeria) to the present West Wings store can be accurately dated to late 1883.

The Exchange Hotel, which was owned by A. McWilliams, was replaced by a two-storey brick building which at one time served as a cold storage. Other business buildings, including a Dominion store, a Bell telephone office, a harness shop and a later office of *The Stirling News-Argus*, gradually filled in the area to the side of the creek. However, all those build-

ings have since been replaced as well. The Stirling Creamery occupies most of that stretch while the new octagonal Bank of Montreal was built on the corner in 1971.

The Scott House hotel underwent several changes (names included Mason Block and Empire Block) but fire never threatened its existence again and it remains as one of Stirling's enduring business blocks.



*This is thought to be Stirling's first fire hall; these buildings stood to the west of the 1874 Stirling Public School (corner of school just visible).*

There was no loss of life in the 1883 fire other than two stage coach horses which were burned in the stables where the fire originated.

However, there was widespread outrage that some of the town "lowlives had taken the opportunity to pilfer items from the burning stores or from the street in which they had been placed for safety.