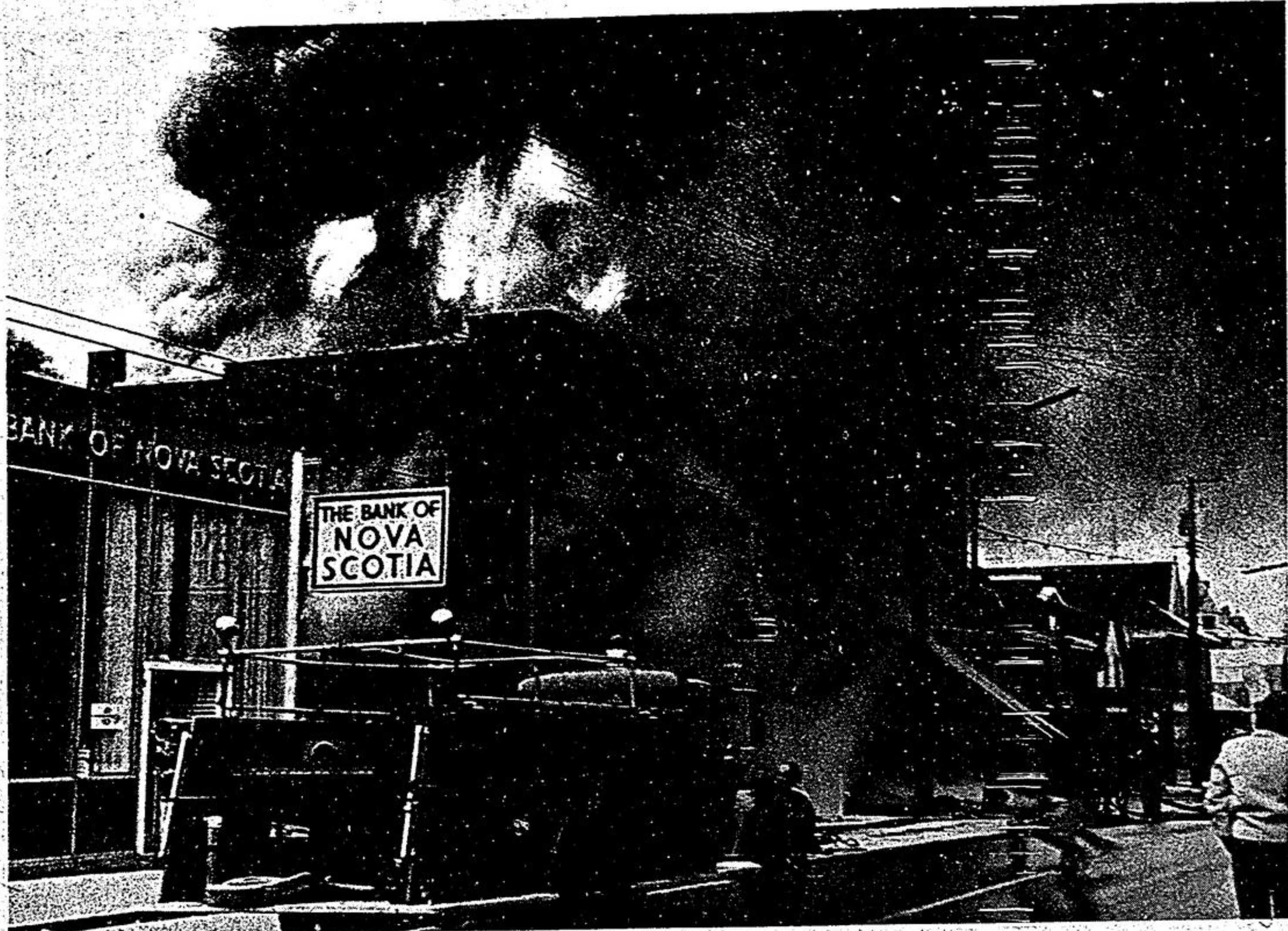


FIRE DESTROYS BUSINESS BLOCK



The worst fire in Stouffville's history, wiped out the Ratcliff Block, Main and Market Streets, Tuesday, with a loss estimated at over one-half million dollars. At the height of the blaze, smoke and flames soared 100 feet in the air. —Ted. Cadieux.

Praise for fire hero

STOUFFVILLE — Out of every tragic event emerges a hero—one individual who, in the face of danger, considers others before himself.

Nineteen-year-old Paul Florence, a resident with his mother, in an apartment above the Village Mall, has been praised by tenants for his quick response.

He was the first to notice the blaze, when he entered the downstairs premises to do caretaking duties, Tuesday morning.

He said the fire, located near the west wall, seemed small, but spread quickly. "Suddenly, the front window blew out—like a bomb," he said.

He turned in the alarm, then raced from room to room, warning the people to get out. By this time, the stairway leading to the street was cut off by smoke and flames. Escape was possible only by a rear exit.

Mr. Florence said some of the tenants were reluctant to leave without some of their personal belongings, but there was just no time to save anything.

Loss could exceed half million dollars Fund is established

STOUFFVILLE — An entire business block, including eight second and third storey apartments, were destroyed, Tuesday, in what has been described as the worst fire in Stouffville's 94 year history.

The landmark site, at Main and Market Streets, contained a ground floor music shop, two offices, a beauty salon, a clothing store and a restaurant. Within a period of four hours, all were wiped out.

While the blaze appeared to start in the west side of what was called The Village Mall, Fire Chief Walter Smith declined to speculate as to the cause. The loss in buildings and contents could exceed a half-million dollars.

The fire was first observed by Paul Florence, caretaker of the premises. He turned in the alarm, then assisted by Fred Jackson, Blake Street, aroused the tenants upstairs. All escaped by a rear exit, leaving their personal possessions behind.

Brigade units from Uxbridge, Claremont, Markham and Vaughan, plus all volunteer personnel from Stouffville, waged a valiant but unsuccessful battle against the flames that soon developed into a raging inferno.

For a time, it was feared that the Post Office too, might go, when the collapse of the mall's west wall, sent a shower of sparks onto the roof. At one point, the heat was so intense, it broke the plate glass window in the Betz building, a hundred yards to the south.

Mayor Ken Laushway and Chief Smith had a miraculous escape from serious injury when the front of the main structure suddenly crumpled to the street. Police immediately cordoned off the area and all stores and business establishments were closed for the day.

Three firemen were hurt. Don Lehman suffered a cut across the nose; Don Doner required five stitches to close a gash on one hand and a Markham volunteer required hospital treatment when he accidentally struck himself on the foot with an axe.

For Len and Norma Wilkes, the scene was one of sadness. Next week would have marked their 22nd anniversary in business at the same site. Their store was destroyed along with the Pine Tree Restaurant operated by Mr. and Mrs. David Ku. Mr. and Mrs. Ku lived in the apartment above. They, like other tenants, lost everything.

To assist in meeting the immediate needs of fire victims, Mayor Ken Laushway has announced the setting up of a fund. Donations will be received at the Toronto-Dominion Bank in the Plaza, The Bank of Nova Scotia and the Imperial Bank of Commerce, Main Street.

Mr. Laushway said offers of assistance had already come from all parts of town. "It just goes to prove that people do care about other people," he said.

Slashed with razor

MARKHAM — A 24 year old Markham, R. R. 2, resident, was slashed across the face with a razor, after he accosted two persons, he felt were the same ones who had beaten him up in a Markham restaurant, one year ago.

Albert Huntrods told York Regional police, he recognized the men in Richmond Hill and followed them to Bathurst Street. When he confronted them, one attacked him with a fire iron and the other with a razor.

He was treated in York Central Hospital, Richmond Hill, and later released.

Nine Ontario Scholars

STOUFFVILLE — On Friday evening the spotlight of attention will be focussed on the academic accomplishments of students and student graduates of Stouffville District Secondary School.

Graduation exercises begin at eight o'clock.

Included in the platform promenade will be nine recipients of Ontario Scholarships, each with an average of 80 percent or higher on seven Grade 13 papers. They are Brian Baker, Gerard Egberts, Allan Fuller, Charles Lynde, Jill McWhinnie, Wayne Morris, Bridget Ramsey, Judith Reesor and Sally Schell.

There will be no guest speaker. However, remarks will be made by the principal, Wm. E. Duxbury and Arthur E. Starr, chairman, York County Board of Education.

The valedictorian is William Bodgers.

Bomb threat closes Markham plant

MARKHAM — There wasn't much work done at the plant of Chesebrough-Pond's (Canada) Limited, Bullock Drive, Markham, on Friday.

A bomb threat, against 50 American-owned businesses, was received by the R.C.M.P. It was supposedly in retaliation for the then-planned nuclear test at Amchitka. Chesebrough-Pond's was included on the list.

Firm president, Donald Houston said all the female staff had been sent home, with 16 work hours lost in the factory.

"With 230 people on the premises, most of them married, we couldn't afford to take the chance."

Mr. Houston was notified at 11:30 p.m., Thursday, and arranged for security at the site to be tightened. A search of the property was carried out by police with negative result.

Mr. Houston admitted he was puzzled by the threat. "We're run by Canadians and we supply employment for Canadians. I guess some people don't always think of that."

Sale of closed public schools remains controversial issue

YORK REGION — The sale of closed schools continued to occupy the Board of Education at its meeting Nov. 8; and, according to Reg Fairbanks, "It (the purchase of Lemonville school) looks a lot more hopeful than it did a week ago."

A scheduled confrontation between the Board and the Lemonville residents was cancelled when a private meeting Nov. 4 brought certain explanations. The Board members maintained that their reserve is based on the assessed value of the land, and the loss of provincial grants if the schools are sold. In the case of Lemonville, the land is assessed at \$11,800 and sale of the school

would mean the loss of a \$17,500 grant.

The Board feels that this assessment is far too high, and has stated "the possibility of appealing it is now being studied". A first step in this is to survey the property in question.

According to Mr. Fairbanks, a recent conversation with trustee Morley Kinnee revealed that two larger schools, Vandorf and Ringwood, are assessed at \$7,800 and \$4,800 respectively.

Mr. Fairbanks also reported that Mr. Kinnee said his committee, in charge of the sales, has been authorized by the Board to negotiate directly with potential buyers. It is felt this will give the Lemonville

residents a better chance to secure the school for a community centre.

During the Nov. 8 meeting, Mr. Kinnee announced that many enquiries had been received about the closed schools for which tenders were rejected. Accordingly, the schools at Pottageville, Bloomington, Melville, and Hagerman will be sold by public auction on Nov. 27.

At the same meeting, Board members voted to accept an offer of \$16,500 for the Pine Orchard school. Those at Pefferlaw and Ringwood, where offers were \$7,500 and \$30,000 respectively, were rejected.

Narrow escape from fire

STOUFFVILLE — A narrow escape from fire which engulfed the Ratcliff Block left Mrs. Stan Miller shaken, but thankful.

Mrs. Miller was apparently the last person to leave the building. She was alerted by Paul Florence, who went to all the apartments giving the alarm.

"It's a good thing I was washing my hair at the time," she said, "otherwise I might have slept right through."

Trying to escape by the front stairs, Mrs. Miller was confronted by a wall of flame and clouds of smoke. She left by a rear exit.

In her haste to escape, Mrs. Miller was not able to save any of the contents of her apartment. Her household effects were not insured.

"I'm just glad I got out, never mind the furniture," she said.

Offers of aid

STOUFFVILLE — Offers of assistance to victims of Tuesday's fire poured in all day, Mayor Ken Laushway told The Tribune. All have been accommodated, he said. A fund has been established at the three town banks.

Eight apartments destroyed

STOUFFVILLE — Seven apartments above the gutted Village Mall and one over the Pine Tree Restaurant, were soon emptied, Tuesday morning, following discovery of the blaze, about 8 a.m.

Ushered down a rear fire escape were Mrs. Wm. Risebrough, Mrs. Wm. Davidson, Mrs. Stanley Miller, Mrs. Wm. Dougherty, Mrs. Jean Reesor, Mrs. Betsy McLeod, Mrs. Charlotte Florence and son Paul. Mr. and Mrs. David Ku

and family reside above the restaurant.

Check for cause

STOUFFVILLE — Officers of the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office arrived in Stouffville, Wednesday, to begin their investigation into Tuesday's blaze. The west wall of the main building was left standing for this purpose. It is believed the fire started in this area.



In an effort to halt the spread of the fire, an aerial ladder truck from the Town of Vaughan was pressed into service. Sixty volunteers from five brigades tried unsuccessfully to check the blaze that was first noticed about 8 a.m.

Mayor has close call

STOUFFVILLE — Mayor Ken Laushway came as close as anyone to being a casualty in the Ratcliff Block fire, Tuesday.

He was standing on Main Street with Fire Chief Walt Smith, when the entire front section of brick building collapsed. No one was hurt although the area was littered with debris. Two volunteers were saved from injury by their 'hard hats'.

Paper delayed

STOUFFVILLE — With no hydro, Tuesday, The Tribune's typesetting machinery ground to a halt.

Page paste-ups were completed by kerosene lamp.

Offers of assistance came from neighboring weeklies at Aurora, Markham and Newmarket. Era publisher, David Haskell took copy for setting at the Newmarket plant.

Gas leak area cleared

STOUFFVILLE — A natural gas leak, in the area of the Pine Tree Restaurant, prompted police to cordon off an entire section of Main Street, from Civic Avenue to Market.

All business places, including the Bank of Nova Scotia next door, were closed and employees sent home.