

## FIRES OF NOTE

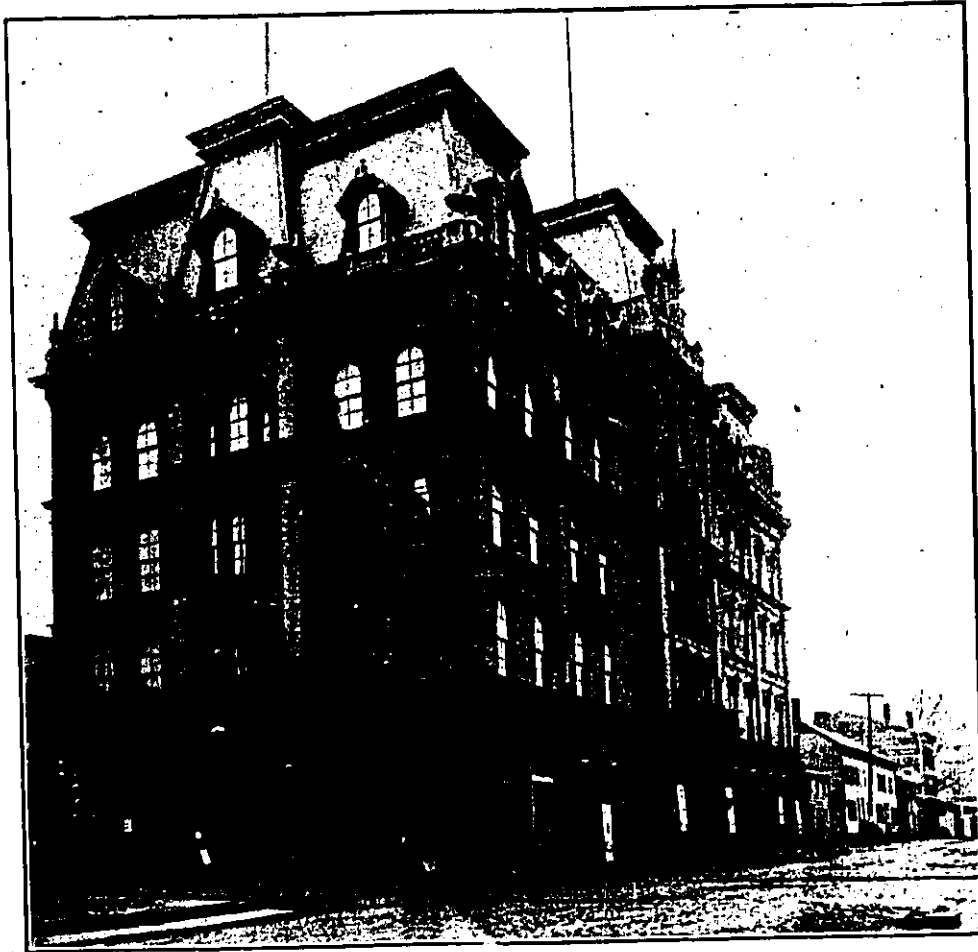
New Brunswick has had many serious conflagrations and has suffered heavy losses, both in life and property. The earliest account of fire we have is that of French's house that stood just about in the centre of George Street where Washington Street crosses.

In the dead of night on February 17, 1741, the home of Philip French, with its entire contents, was destroyed. The residence was one of the largest and most complete in the province of New Jersey, and had only been built a year. Mr. French and his family hardly escaped with their lives; two of his daughters were forced to jump out of a window two stories high. A noted conflagration was that of April 14., 1768., when a fire broke out in the house of Widow Dilldine; the residence of the widow, also the bake shop and house of John Van Nordan, Jr., were a total wreck. A high wind spread the flames across the street to the house of James Neilson, which was destroyed, with cooper shop and bottling establishment. The dwelling house and store of Peter Vandenburg and the residence of Widow Cramer were also burned; with the help of the military and citizens, adjoining buildings were pulled down to stop the progress of the flames. At one o'clock on the morning of February 28, 1771, a fire broke out in the barn of John Dennis, which resulted in the loss amounting to over £1,000. During the occupation of the city by General Howe and the British troops, the house of Brook Farmer, with adjoining residences, was completely destroyed by fire.

The first great conflagration took place in 1796, when nearly the entire city was wiped out. The State at that time appropriated \$5,000 for the relief of the sufferers. The Christ Church steeple was struck by lightning on Washington's birthday in 1802, causing the spire to burn to the base of the tower, when a snowstorm put the fire out. In 1813 the city was visited by another disastrous fire; this was of an incendiary origin. A negress nursing a real or fancied grievance against a resident of the city, fired his house in revenge. Five years later there were twenty-five wells in the city to be used for fire protection and in 1818 fifteen more were added. A fire broke out October 18, 1821, in a paint shop near Dennis and Church Streets. Two hotels and stables on Water Street were destroyed by fire July 11, 1832. The White Hall Hotel stables were for a second time de-

stroyed by fire July 3, 1834. A large fire took place May 21, 1842, when the Raritan Hotel near the depot was destroyed.

Among the other important fires of the city was that of the Baptist Church in 1849; the previous year the steamboat "Raritan" on its passage from New Brunswick to New York was totally destroyed; the machine shop of Randolph & Holmes, July 15, 1850; the rubber



MASONIC HALL

It stood on the site of the present Post Office

factory on the corner of New and Drift Streets in 1853 also suffered loss by fire. The fire on Commerce Square occurred January 15, 1862; the Star Linseed Oil Works were a total loss November 21, 1871; was rebuilt and burned again in September, 1875. The Canal stables suffered a loss by fire October 24, 1873, and were totally destroyed by another fire March 16, 1874. The grocery stand of Suydam & Nevius succumbed to the flames in November, 1875, and in the same year the old Swan stables near Washington street were

destroyed by fire. The Augustus Hyatt Rubber Company's works on Neilson Street suffered a complete loss of property and machinery on August 15, 1876; the same year fire broke out in Charles Lemon's dwelling on the corner of Suydam and Drift Streets, its owner being consumed in the flames.

The Pennsylvania Railroad's wooden bridge was burned November 9, 1878. Its successor was an iron structure which in turn was replaced by the present stone bridge, the first train passing over the

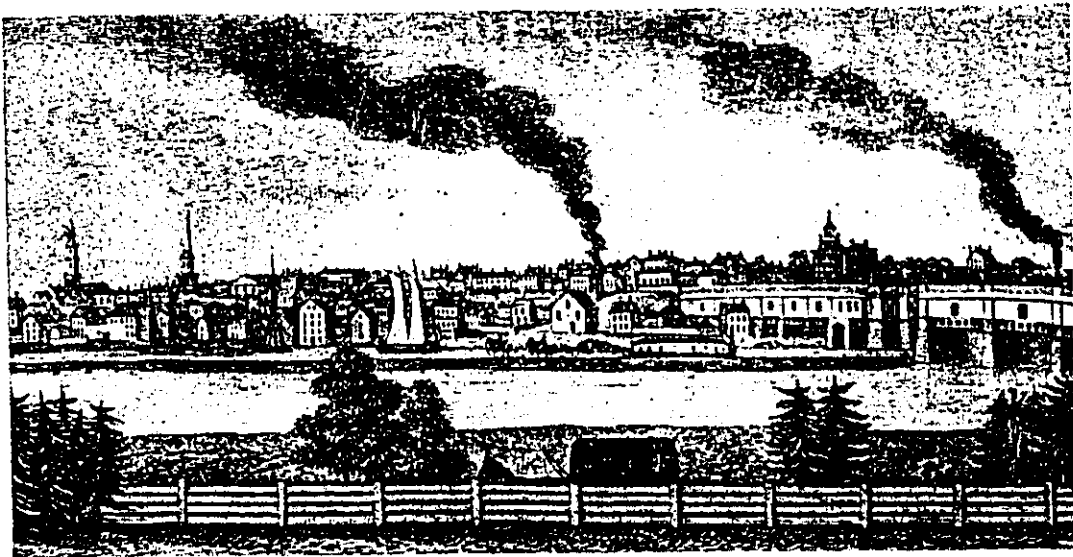


MASONIC HALL AFTER THE FIRE OF DECEMBER 21, 1896

latter May 11, 1903. The railroad shops on Easton Avenue were the scene of a fire November 22, 1879. The next year, June 30, Hammell's store was reduced to ashes and George Robotham was killed: the same year, November 20, the old ice house at the upper lock was destroyed. The important fire in 1882 was February 28, when the Holmes canning shop, foot of Albany Street, was a total loss; the following year, on May 6, Jarrard's cigar factory was burned. The great oil train fire occurred February 7, 1883, Frank Deeman, brakeman, and Patrick Dougherty were burned to death. The fire was caused by two oil trains colliding on the Pennsylvania Railroad bridge. The flaming oil ran into the sewer and reaching the buildings of Jane-

way & Company, completely destroyed the building. The well known landmark "The Rink," was burned July 28, 1891. August 4, 1894, a large fire at the steamboat dock completely destroyed the freight company's stables and consumed large quantities of hay, straw and oats. Twenty-one mules and one cow were also burned to death. The steamboat "New Brunswick," when on its regular trip between New Brunswick and New York was consumed by fire August 7, 1902. It was a total loss, and the remains were towed to Gregory's graveyard at Perth Amboy. On April 10, 1892, the Pennsylvania Freight House on the block of George, Hamilton and the Railroad, was destroyed. This was a big fire. The Masonic Hall, corner George and Albany Streets, was destroyed by fire December 21, 1896. The large factory of Janeway & Carpenter, corner Schuyler and Paterson Streets, was burned in 1907; the present factory was then built in Highland Park. Fire swept the Empire Foundry Company plant on Jersey Avenue, March 19, 1909, causing a loss of \$100,000, the pattern storage house, the engine house and one or two other small buildings were destroyed. The plant was originally built by the New Brunswick Foundry Company in 1897. Gray iron castings, gas and coal stoves and automobile cylinders were manufactured.

The Ballantine Gymnasium fire occurred January 7, 1930, destroying the entire building, with the exception of the swimming pool, which was rebuilt.



THE WATERFRONT OF 1846—ON THE RIGHT, THE WOODEN RAILROAD BRIDGE  
The bridge was burned November 9, 1878. All the other buildings on the waterfront were consumed by the great oil fire of February 7, 1883.