

# DESTITUTE REFUGEES ARRIVE IN TORONTO

## Seventy-five Survivors of Northern Ontario Fires Met by Mayor—Thrilling Stories of Escape From Raging Inferno

Seventy-five survivors of the Northern Ontario fires reached the Union Station here yesterday morning, where they were met by the Mayor and other representatives of the city, who saw to their comfort and disposal. The refugees all arrived on a G. T. R. train from Cobalt. There were about 150 people on the train when it left Cobalt, but before it reached here about half of them had dropped off at points north of Toronto, where they had their homes.

Mayor Church and Mr. J. W. Somers of the City Clerk's staff were at the station with a number of taxicabs, and those who live in Toronto were taken to their homes without delay. Nearly five hundred people were at the station to meet the refugees, and many of them were those who have relatives or friends in the devastated district, seeking by anxious questioning to learn something of the fate of their friends.

### G. T. R. Helps.

After leaving Cobalt the survivors were entirely in charge of the G. T. R. officials, who attended to their wants and gave them food. Those who had no money or tickets had no difficulty in obtaining transportation. Many of the people in the party were burned or singed, and their clothing plainly bore the marks of the fire. They all had thrilling stories to tell of their escape from the inferno that raged in the north, which they described as the most terrible experience that man could go through.

### Thanked by City.

Mr. George Wright, manager of the Walker House, was one of the party. He received the thanks of the Mayor for the assistance he had lent on the trip in caring for the members of the party. Mr. Wright was spending a holiday at New Liskeard, and left his family there.

The Mayor left instructions that all later arrivals in this city be attended to in every way, regardless of cost.

From survivors of the terrible northern fires who have reached this city many tragic stories of ruin and thrilling escapes are told.

"Yes, I am one of the refugees," said Mrs. F. E. Bevins, who comes from Iroquois Falls and is staying with Mrs. Mary Robinson, 261 Wellesley street.

"God knows how we got out of it," she said. "It was a perfect inferno. Just one wall of fire. I lost everything, and the smoke was paralyzing. I had a feeling of safety as I saw the fire approaching Iroquois, but the wind came up so suddenly it swept into the Abitibi district and chased us all to the mills. My husband was fighting the fire to save the plant and it was saved because it was fire-proof. But the flames surged around it. The flames loked up 40,000 cords of wood like so much hay, and then our house went up. We ran for the mill and stayed in there from 1 o'clock Saturday till 6 in the morning while the men fought the fire. Every one was a hero. They took awful punishment, the smoke, heat, cinders, embers and dust were beyond comprehension.

"We were in the mill, and every time the door was opened to let another survivor stagger in with his wife or children, the smoke shot in in clouds.

### Wall of Flame.

"We stayed there till 9 at night, while a wall of flames surrounded us and took everything in sight. Then the wind changed and the rain started. When we went out, to my surprise the two hotels and store were standing. The hotels were crowded. I assisted in Dr. Dorsey's house, and let me tell you of one hero, Dr. Frank Mahoney. He worked with the sick and burned ones like one possessed, and did wonders. The engineer and Fireman Walter O'Connell, an Irishman, of the engine crew, should get recognition from the Government. They ran their engines and cars up and down from Iroquois Falls 100 times, bringing out the refugees in fact of a terrible fire. The station

was blocked by a car of dynamite, and there were flames on three sides. Their faces were burnt and they were blinded from smoke, but the engineer saved Miss Scott, a nurse in the hospital. He left his engine and raced to the hospital and rescued her and another woman, and they were nearly dead. It is up to the Government to see that these men are given some recognition. If it had not been for them scores would have been burnt to death."

### Enveloped in Flames.

Mr. W. I. Bishop, General Superintendent of the Canadian Stewart Co., who lives at 321 Jarvis street, is said to have done heroic work in saving his men from the flames.

"I have nothing to say about it," said Mr. Bishop, "but I want to tell the relatives and friends of the men who were trapped at Twin Falls that they are alive and safe, every man without a mark on him. They are now in Matheson and are being outfitted. I came to Toronto to get a new plant, and we will start back. The forty-two men are saved, that's all."

"We were completely enveloped in flames. The flames ran sky high, and the roar was like a tornado. The men took to the river and submerged themselves on logs and anything they could get their hands on. The fire came upon us so quickly that we were surrounded before we knew it. There was not a soul hurt; not a man needed medical attention. We were caught by the flames for three hours before we could move, and you can imagine what we went through."

### Mother's Gallant Fight.

A mother's gallant fight against flames, smoke and water to save her two and three-year-old children is the story of Mrs. Mary Honeyford of Matheson. When the fire reached the town Mr. Honeyford rushed home, took his wife and two kiddies, William and Katherine, to the river and put them on a log with blankets. The flames came on and Mr. Honeyford went back to help the settlers. The mother with her two children sat on the log with wet blankets over their heads, waiting against hope for the flames to pass by. They had no other avenue of escape but the water. The flames came on, leaping sky high. The blanket and the log took fire, and the river was twenty feet deep. The mother kicked the water about the babies and kept them cool.

### A Soldier Hero.

A returned soldier, John Gregor-leff, of 81 Oxford street, a member of the Toronto 3rd Battalion, who was wounded at Festubert and discharged on account of his injuries, saved a woman and her four children on Sixth avenue in Cochrane. Gregor-leff, who is a surveyor, was sitting in the hotel reading a book. He knew fires were raging about Cochrane, but paid no attention either to the flames or the wind. He says:

"I got out when the hotel took fire. A man named Brown asked me if I realized the town was on fire. Then I rushed out into the street, and you should have seen it. It came up in five minutes, so fast that I started on the run down Sixth avenue. I met a woman struggling through the smoke with four children. She seemed dazed and weak, and would not move. I took two of them in my arms, and took her arm, and chased the other two kids in front of me. The woman was crying and seemed frozen to the ground. I got her to the train and put her aboard with the youngsters. Then one of the vestibules of the coaches caught fire, and we chopped it away with an axe. On Sunday I assisted in looking for the dead. We found Mrs. Pierce's body. She was the wife of Mr. Pierce, a Government official. We also found ten other bodies, seven children and two women and a man. All the way down through the fire zone dead horses, cattle and sheep were lying on the railroad tracks."

### Lost Her Home.

Mrs. W. S. Imber of Cochrane, with her year-old baby, saw her home swept up in an instant, and only managed to reach the railway station and safety in the nick of time. "We heard the fire bell first at 12.30," she said, "and by four in the afternoon the whole place seemed to be in flames. Our own home went up, and the other houses on Sixth avenue, all in about five minutes."

### All in a Moment.

The appalling suddenness with which the disaster leaped upon Cochrane was graphically described by Mr. Carl Wright of Cochrane, who lost everything he possessed in the conflagration. "I was working in a shop at 4.15 Saturday afternoon with several other men when suddenly, but not without warning, a dense wall of smoke came over the town. So dense was it, indeed, that it almost cut the eyes out of one's head; yet at this time we thought that only bush fires were burning, and we were not in any rush to leave. Some of our neighbors were panicky, and by this time I became panicky too. The flames were now burning over the business district in the town, and, like others, we did not stop to take anything more than we needed at the moment.

### Coaches Were Handy.

"Fortunately, coaches were standing on the railway siding, and to our advantage the trucks were sand ballasted, so that the flames did not cross. We left Cochrane on Monday evening at 6 o'clock, at which time part of the town was intact. A very strong wind was blowing at this time, and had it not subsided not a building could have been saved.

### Refugees Well Treated.

"On the route down from the north every possible thing was done for us at every station we stopped at; food and clothing were given freely to us, and the railway officials and others aided in making us as comfortable as they could. The Mayor of Cochrane himself paid for our railroad fares by giving us vouchers which were good for tickets. Meals and other accommodation were given to us, and we could not have been better treated.

### Matheson Wiped Out.

"The town of Matheson has been completely wiped off the map, and

there is nothing there at all but one weird scene of devastation. So quickly did the flames leap upon and destroy the town that I believe that the death toll in that place alone will amount to two hundred."

### Survivors From Cochrane.

Among the refugees who came in last night from the burned section of Northern Ontario were Mr. W. G. Sparling, a storekeeper from Cochrane, and his wife and two small children. After the first alarm of fire they left their store only when a dense pall of smoke and fire brought it home to them that the destruction of the town was inevitable.

"It was a terrible sight," said Mrs. Sparling. "I never want to see anything like it again, and worst of all were the heartrending scenes—motherless children, bereaved widows and those who had lost everything for which they had suffered and toiled."

### Toronto Survivors.

George Smith, 114 Sherbourne street.  
John Gregorieff, 61 Oxford street, from Cochrane.  
Miss Margaret Buchanan, 428 Montrose, from Cochrane.  
Mrs. F. E. Bevins, 261 Wellesley street, from Iroquois Falls.  
Mrs. S. A. Jones and Ernest Jones, 516 Delaware avenue, from Cochrane.  
Mr. and Mrs. James Barnes and five children, from Cochrane; going to the residence of Mrs. George Robinson, 8 Fisher street.  
W. J. Bishop, 321 Jarvis street, from Twin Falls.  
George H. Wright, Walker House, from New Liskeard.  
Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Peterson and Miss Peterson, 674 Ontario street.  
Mr. and Mrs. C. A. MacLeod and child, going to the residence of Mrs. George Clark, 29 Somerset avenue.  
James Brown, 87 Pape avenue.

### From Out of Town.

The survivors from out of town were:  
Jean Prevost, Twin Falls.  
Miss Beatrice Rae, Cochrane.  
Jean Baptiste, Valleyfield, Que.  
Andrew Brodeur, Quebec, from Matheson.  
Mrs. Mary Hunniford and two children, Galt, Ont., from Matheson.  
Mrs. Lewis Rattray and five children of Timmins.  
George Ibbitson, Priceville, Ont., from Cochrane.  
George Lalonde, Montreal, from Matheson.  
Mr. and Mrs. J. O. Watson, Galt, from Cochrane.  
Frank Measor and Arthur Wilkinson, Hamilton, were homesteading.  
C. M. Bushlen, Buffalo, N. Y., President of the Augurita Mine, South Porcupine, and his son, Clarence E. Bushlen.  
F. M. Campbell, Ridgeway, Pa.  
J. P. Conrick, Detroit, Mich., from South Porcupine, managing director of Augurita Mine.  
Mrs. Bessie Fekis and four children, Brantford, Ont., from Cochrane.  
Mrs. M. Berland and four children, Brantford, Ont., from Cochrane.  
George Slade, Carthage, N. Y., director at pulp mills at Porquis Jet.  
A. W. Marr of the Porcupine Mining Co., Timmins.  
F. C. McKenzie, New York, from Timmins.  
Mr. and Mrs. Kussner and three children, Brantford, from Cochrane.  
H. Tudor and Mike Borezu, from Lorworth Rock Falls, coming to Toronto temporarily.  
Among the others on board the

train was a party of 18 Austrians, alien enemies, released from Kapuskasing for mine work, under charge of Harry Smith.

### Bride Loses All.

A tragic story of the fire is told by Mrs. Frank Bevins, an Iroquois Falls bride of four weeks, who arrived in Toronto yesterday. Her new home at Iroquois Falls, with all its contents, was destroyed in the flames. All she managed to save was a few wedding presents. She and her husband had a difficult time escaping with their lives. They took refuge in the mill of the Abitibi Power & Paper Company, where they managed to protect themselves from the flames with great difficulty. Mrs. Bevins is staying with relatives at 261 Wellesley street.