

**From the Ashes**  
**Part II: 1895**

In the early hours of March 30, 1895 all was quiet in Summerside. Precisely as Constable Bradford Gough liked it. Shortly before 4:00 AM, his nightly route took him past the intersection of Water, Queen, and Central streets. Seeing nothing amiss, he continued on his way.

Not long after, Clerk of the Crown, W.A. Weeks, Jr., was asleep at the Clifton House Hotel at that very intersection. A commotion across the street, coupled with a fiery reflection on his window, roused him from his slumber. As he looked out, to his horror he saw flames licking away at the offices of the *Summerside Journal*.

Weeks quickly dressed and dashed across the street in a vain attempt to gain access to the *Journal*, but the intensity of the flames prevented any heroics. By now, others had awoken to the same reality. Bonaventure Arsenault, who lived nearby and had heard shouts of “fire!”, raced to the police station and rang the fire bell, shattering the silence and heralding the arrival of what would become Summerside’s worst blaze on record. And, for the second time in its history, the destruction of the *Journal*.

The culprit was believed to be the *Journal*’s own furnace. A favoured theory was that a small explosion occurred which kicked out live coals through its (inexplicably) open door. The coals quickly ignited the floor, and from there the rest of the building.

It took firemen nearly thirty minutes to make it to the scene with a horse-drawn rig and two hand engines. Valiant efforts were then exerted, but it was an uphill battle. First, a breeze set in. Next, engine tanks and wells ran dry. Mechanical issues followed. At one point, the hook and ladder company was left to battle the blaze on its own. After wreaking havoc for the better part of five hours, the inferno was finally subdued by 9 AM.

The fire of October 1884 had been considered the worst in Summerside’s history, and doubtless residents felt they’d seen the worst flames could do. Until now.

The monetary loss was calculated at a stunning \$45,000, with Brennan and the *Journal* again bearing the brunt. In 1884 he had been dealt a \$15,000 blow, yet had managed to rebuild his enterprise and even surpass his previous success in the industry. This time, however, reports placed his losses as high as \$20,000. Although he editorialized three days later that “not as much as a sheet of paper or a penholder [was] saved from the building”, not all had been lost: the *Journal*’s safe survived, in which Brennan found his books to be in perfectly good condition.

While a second blaze should have sealed the *Journal's* fate for good, it seems no fire was a match for Brennan's fortitude. By April 1 he had begun to fit out the former Pentz Bros. shop on Summer Street as a temporary office, and thanks to a surprising turn of kindness displayed by the *Pioneer*, Brennan was able to produce the *Journal* on time on April 3 - courtesy of his nemesis' resources! He also informed readers that, "owing to [his] very severe loss by fire", he would be selling off most of his farm stock and farm ("Parkside"). Evidently, the rebuilding of the *Journal* was his foremost priority.

And rebuild Brennan did. Bigger and better than ever before. In August, an official ceremony for the laying of a corner stone for a *brick* edifice was held, mostly completed by October of that same year. The location? At the confluence of Water, Queen, and Central where, 120 years later, it still stands.