

# ISCHUA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## FRANKLINVILLE CANNING FACTORY FIRE

Probably the most disastrous fire that had occurred in Franklinville in many years was that which destroyed the main buildings of the Franklinville Canning Company last Friday afternoon.

Shortly after one o'clock a gasoline pipe in the can making department burst, setting fire to the building. Although several employees were near, it was impossible to stop the progress of the fire and in a few minutes, the whole building was engulfed in flames.

After what little machinery and goods that could be saved had been removed from the burning building, the attention of all was turned to the warehouse, which by hard work was saved. Fortunately no one was injured, a fact which was somewhat remarkable when it was considered how many women and children were at work in the building. Thus was destroyed Franklinville's principal industry. Here women and children to the number of about 250 found employment, which they could not find elsewhere.

The payroll of the company had varied from \$500 to \$800 per week for the last three months, which was safe to say that at least three-fourths of this amount went into the different business places in town. Hence the loss was felt, not only to the employees, but by nearly all of the businessmen. The farmers too, were to be affected, for the total losses were as follows: on raw material - \$2,000; on cans and tins - \$5,600; on buildings - \$5,000 and on machinery - \$6,000.

Several meetings of the stockholders were held the following week with no definite action taken, although it was probable that they would rebuild. With their losses being so heavy, they were reluctant to rebuild a new building and start again. It was hoped they would decide to rebuild again.

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It was amazing that the factory employed so many children and women. If you look at the payroll and the number of employees, they were probably not receiving more than \$2.00 for a week's work. This was before any laws were passed on child labor and how many hours employees had to work. Of course, if men were employed they received more money. If the payroll included the officers of the company and salesmen, then the employees received less than \$2.00.

Submitted by: Bruce D. Fredrickson, Town of Franklinville Historian and President of the Ischua Valley Historical Society