

FROM THE SCRAPBOOK
A Fire at the Davis Store, Harvey, 1931
by Dr. William Randall
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Property fires have always been a major concern in any small community, and in earlier times there was very little mechanical fire fighting equipment, so, when the Davis store was threatened in the early morning of 1931, the Village of Harvey reacted heroically. The Davis Store, now Black's Grocery & Cafe was very much in the center of the Village and unless fire could be contained could destroy a number of buildings. I have an eyewitness report of some of the excitement. I'll try to write it as Austin Pollock told me about it...

"John Henry was staying in the old McCann house, that one out back of Walter Jewett's (Acton) and he got up in the night to see how his two boys were doing and he saw the flames in the sky. He went over to Gerald Holland's and woke him up and then came over to our place and woke up my father Fred and me. Gerald had a driving horse of Charlie Robisons called skip and we run the horse in the kwagon up to where Howard Robison lived (where Richard Phillips now lives). We went down to the fire and there was some oil barrels sitting near the store and the heat had caused them to swell up just like ice cream cones and there was a gasoline barrel that was in Frank Coburn's barn and that blew up and scattered lumber and shingles through the air and they blew down in back of what would be Frank Halford's Dance Hall. Jane Davis pushed the car out of the garage, she couldn't find the keys. It was quite a heavy Dodge car in those days, before the 30's. She got burnt on the arms with hot tar from the roof. They carried water from the C.P.R. tank house on them baggage wagons at the train station, and they pumped water from the well at Davis' store. I pumped quite awhile and the wood pile caught fire between the store and where the feed shed burnt and the horse barn. (It seems as though the fire must have started in the feed shed) Herb Swan and Travis Dougan were up on the roof of the Davis Store. They used mats and blankets to absorb some of the water over the projection. There was a crew of linemen that were stringing wires for the Telegraph Company and they climbed up and helped too."

Lloyd and Laura Wood were living in the Johnny Taylor house which was close enough to be severely threatened by the fire, and Laura took the children up to Lizzie Coffey's. Lloyd has a little hen house out back but they got Frank Halford's team and hauled it out of the way. In this operation Willis Swan almost got caught between two buildings but it just knocked his glasses off.

Lloyd and Laura lost a baby sleigh and a few other minor household articles - plus when they tried to remove Lloyd's barber chair it over-turned and spilled the hydraulic fluid, but generally speaking the property loss was not great, except for the barn and feed shed.

Dr. Dougan lived just across the road in the big white house now owned by Earl Grieve, and it is said that with an amazingly loud voice he was able to assist in the direction of the activities of the volunteer fighters.

According to what information I can gather, John Pagan was the first person to build on that property, buying it from Tom Robison. It is not certain what structures Pagan built on the property but he sold the property to Samuel Black Hunter in 1886. A house and a store, which had been two separate buildings were joined together and Samuel Hunter operated the Store as S.B. Hunter for 26 years. Jocenean Hall provides this newspaper clipping.

“The Undersigned has this 5th day of April 1916., sold and transferred his stock of General Merchandise to his successor, Richard Davis, at Harvey Station, York County, N.S. He takes this opportunity to thank his many customers for their very liberal patronage extended to him during the twenty-six years he was in the General Store business at Harvey Station, and trusts that his successor will receive the same good will of the people that was extended to him. He also wishes to notify all who have outstanding accounts with him, that they must be settled either by cash or approved notes within two months from this date.

SAMUEL HUNTER

Dated at Harvey Station, York Co., N.B., April 5th, 1916"

The business was operated under the name R.Davis and Son. The store was operated by son Willard, his sisters Inez and Mary Jane until they closed the business in 1967. The property and contents were bought by Vernon Fraser and Danny Cameron in 1977, though they did not operate it as a business, but sold it to Gerry Piercy in 1980. Gerry opened the store for business and added a wing for a Hardware Store. In 1990 Gerry sold his business to Rodney Black and Rodney converted the Hardware Store into a Cafe. When you are in the Cafe take a look at some of the historic pictures we've helped procure.