

# DARK SECRET OF THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

Nov 1907

## Fort Erie Prepared for Glorious Celebration of Dazzling First Electrical Illumination and Something Dropped.

### EVERYBODY BLAMES THE AGED POSTMASTER

This is the history of the Light That Failed, or Why They Went to Bed in the Dark at Fort Erie.

Last night was to have been Electric Night in the village. The new electric light plant was to have been operated for the first time. The electric current was to have been turned on and Fort Erie was to have glowed.

But "was to" was all there was to it.

At eventide the inhabitants to the number of thousands or less gathered in the street or on their verandas, wrapped in fur caps and overcoats and cloaks, for the air was chilly and snow had been falling. The steamship Niagara was waiting for a wheelbarrow load of coal for a Lusitania-beating rush to the foot of Ferry street and back, the crew standing with a boat-hook on the starboard side to repel cakes of ice that might come down the river and damage the hull. The captain and purser were watching along with the landlubbers an arc lamp which hung in front of the postoffice and which constituted the hope of the illumination of the village. The police force, with its truncheon in hand, stood ready to prevent the populace from crowding too closely about the electric light pole.

It was understood that the light would be turned on at 5:30 o'clock, and 15 minutes before that the mixed choir of the village assembled to salute the inaugural glimmer with a program of vocal selections, including "Fading, Still Fading," "Watchman, Tell Us of the Night," "There's a Hot Time," "There's a Bright Day Coming" and "Bright O'er the Hills."

#### NOT A GLIMMER.

Five-thirty came and went, according to the average computation of the clocks in the village, but not a gleam came from the lamp. The hour of gladness was gone 15 minutes even by the Reeve's watch, which was slow, and still not a glimmer. The populace began a slow and solemn dance to keep their feet warm, and murmurs filled the air.

"There's always something happening to disappoint"—"Why don't they pay good wages and get a competent"—"Sometimes the lights don't start in Buffalo on time"—"Maybe it's off because it's moonlight"—"It's a Jonah old town, anyway"—"More likely the current's froze"—"Freeze your grandmother, the engineer's asleep at the switch"—these and other sarcastic quips floated around.

It was 6:30 o'clock when somebody came along and mingled with group after group, whispering something that produced indignant snorts.

"He did, did he?" "Ain't he the disappointing old Skeeexix!" "So, that's what we are standing around freezing to death for nothing!" "Just wait till I get to him!" "You might of known somebody would kick against Progress!" "Just like that old feller Zipp that they beat for office over in Buffalo!"

The assemblage melted away. The groups on the verandas disappeared indoors. The streets assumed their wonted after-dark solitude. The steamer Niagara came back with a rush, having scaled down the time of the return trip from 37 minutes to 36½, and the crew inspired by the brilliancy of the achievement, made a new record in laying the gang plank and unhooking the chain. It took only 11 minutes, instead of a quarter of an hour, as formerly.

#### AH, HA! THE SECRET'S OUT.

And seeking to learn why the beacon of progress did not flare as announced, the captain of the Niagara learned that it was the fault of Postmaster Baldwin. The postmaster is about 80 years old, and the electric light pole was put up on his land without his permission or any other consideration. It was fully two inches within his lot line. Anybody passing along might be hit by the deadly wire if it happened to fall just at the time, and the pole being on the postmaster's land, he might be constructively liable for negligence. The postmaster so stated in an application for a temporary injunction, which had been granted, and, therefore, the light that failed.

Disappointed citizens were going around today, saying that the postmaster might hear before long of "People who live in glass houses mustn't throw stones," coupled with the assertion that his veranda extends upon Niagara street three feet and has done so for 25 years. This and other matters will all be threshed out in the litigation which is bound to follow, beginning with an attempt to set aside the injunction, corpus delicti, fortiter in re, and God Save the King, as advised by the ablest village lawyers.

#### A CRITICISM

The Bridgeburg correspondent of the Welland Telegraph commented on a note we made last week when we asked in all seriousness what was the meaning of a resolution the Citizens' passed regarding the stringing of electric light lines in Bridgeburg. In spite of the pseudo-newspaperman's somewhat ponderous explanation we cannot yet understand the resolution. He also says that if we had quoted the full resolution it would have been clear. He might be interested to learn that the report of the meeting was supplied us by the Official Press Censor of the Bridgeburg Citizens Club, Mr. Garrett O'Connor, who is accurate, we understand, as a government report should be.

#### Live Wire Dangers.

Under this head last Tuesday the Telegraph's Bridgeburg and Fort Erie reporter endeavored to explain the action of the Citizen's Club in passing a resolution relative to live wires, etc., in answer to a comment made by a local paper. In the last edition of the local paper, instead of dealing with the question this paper remarks: "The pseudo newspaperman ponderously," etc., etc. It seems regrettable were it worth while considering, that the standard of local journalism has fallen to such a low pitch as to permit any person connected with it allowing himself to be the author of such an ignorant remark. Probably a dozen citizens have spoken to the writer, and their opinions as to the common civility of the author are not flattering. — J. B. R.