Pelham

Town in Communication With the City Again—Some Details of the Recent Storm.

(Special Correspondence.)

Pelham, N. H., Oct. 28.—Pelham is once more in telephonic communication with the outer world.

The New England company’s men who went out to repair the damage done by Wednesday’s electrical storm, which put all the telephones of both the New England and the Farmers’ exchange out of business were surprised to find that not only were the wires burned out, but that they were burned up. It was an all-day job to repair the damage.

The clock in Harry H. Atwood’s store still points to 4:48 o’clock, the time when the electrical bolt burst in the centre of the town, ripping up two buildings, Mr. Atwood’s residence, and his general grocery store, which is the only one in the town.

The total loss is set at about $1,800 covered by two insurance policies, but it would have been several thousand but for the prompt response of the townpeople, and the efficiency of the fire hose manned from the New Hampshire Traction Co. car barns.

The postoffice, located in the store, the telephone exchange, and the store are doing business again, but amidst so much debris that Mr. Atwood kept his lamps burning all day to avoid accident.

It is agreed by everybody in the centre of the town that the electrical disturbance as an unusual one, and extended beyond the limits of the two buildings that were damaged. Mr. Lane, who lives in the neighborhood, happened to be looking in the direction of the store at the time, and he says that it looked like a ball of fire exploding. Mrs. Berry felt the concussion of air at her house. Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Overlock were crossing a field in the storm, and Mrs. Overlock was thrown to the ground.

Mr. Atwood is of the opinion that the electrical bolt came down a tall tree that stands opposite the ell of his house, probably the tallest tree in that part of the town. The bark is partially stripped off, but when the level of the roof of the house was reached the electrical current jumped to the ell, tearing off boards and timbers as though a cyclone had struck them.

In this ell was a bedroom, which witnessed many freaks of the lightning. A cow tied in a closet had one eye shot off; a derby hat lost its top; a door unhinged; boards were splintered and split.

In another chamber the bolt entered through an open door, which was not disturbed, but a closet door was unhinged, and a hole was torn in the side of the building here as the electricity sought to reach the lower floor.

In the kitchen the casing was torn off, and everywhere windows were shattered. The concussion extinguished all the lamps in this room, where Mr. Atwood’s little daughter Marion was standing when the crash came. Members of the family who ran in to see whether she had been harmed were astonished and aghast to discover no trace of her. She was found later in a closet, where she had gone in her endeavor to escape by the kitchen door.

From the residence the bolt passed to the large building containing the store and its various rooms used for stock. It seemed to do some particular damage in every part of the building. In the cellar, for example, it blackened and tore the top off a great wooden tank filled to the brim with kerosene oil. The top of this tank was set on fire, but strange to say, the oil itself did not burn before the fire was extinguished.

In the main store the explosion appeared to be in front of the telephone, and Mr. Atwood, who was standing near it, escaped with only a slight shock.

The stairway leading to the floor above was ripped up, and the roof damaged above.

While the town has no fire department, the Centre is protected by a large water tank belonging to the street railway company, and the citizens have been trained to a

It was this fact that saved not only the buildings from fire, but the church, in all probability, as well. A line of hose was run from the car barns, men appeared upon the scene from all directions, and with the oil tank on fire and a great woodpile in the same cellar burning, the flames were nevertheless soon under control.

In the rear room of the store, over the oil tank, in a large trap-door. This was raised by the volunteers, upon their arrival, disclosing the fire raging below, and it was through this trap that Gus Lewis, a motorman, but an old fire-fighter in another town, dropped with the hose, and fought the flames until he conquered them.

Mr. Atwood still shows a tin pail of unbroken but boiled eggs. The water, passing through the flames and falling upon the eggs, boiled them in less than one minute.

Pelham Historical Society, Pelham, New Hampshire
William T. Hayes & Karen Genoter