

Diamond Drill

Out of the Past

September 5, 1896

Ontonagon, on the shore of Lake Superior, was completely wiped out by a forest fire. The total losses amounting to over \$3 million with the Diamond Match Company having a \$500 thousand dollar insurance policy and the rest of the village about the same distributed among the other businesses. The fire, which had been smoldering for weeks, was driven into the village by a terrific gale of wind which ignited the Diamond Match Company's mill and lumber yards and from there sweeping over the rest of the village destroying every house with only the water and electric power house saved. Incredibly, the loss of life was limited to three persons. Residents were evacuated, some to the beach, others out to Rockland and Greenland. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when the town took fire and at six o'clock not a building was left standing. Many acts of quiet heroism were witnessed but when open barrels of liquor were taken from the saloons and left standing in the streets some area men got crazy drunk leaving behind their wives and children to fend for themselves.