

Postcards

Postcard

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Black & white postcard.

Accession Number 2013.30.05.599

Fabricant / Éditeur Unknown

Artiste / Auteur Unknown

Medium and Support ink, cardboard

Technique industrial process

Historical context

At around 11:30 p.m. on the night of January 20-21, 1888, flames were spotted in a furniture factory on rue Saint-James (or Saint-Jacques). The fire spread to other buildings and took several days to bring under control. The event left a lasting impression for several reasons. Firstly, the intense cold (-15 degrees Celsius) made firefighting more difficult, transforming the buildings into ice palaces. The water created a thick layer of ice in the street. Hoses are not used for very long, as the water freezes inside and renders them unusable. Several firefighters were injured by the cold: their noses, cheeks, hands and ears froze. It is even reported that steam had to be used to melt the ice from a firefighter's hands, which were literally stuck to the hose.

What's more, this event highlights the crying shortage of firefighters and equipment needed to make the fire brigade effective. So much so that insurers are threatening to raise rates immediately if measures are not put in place immediately. The insurers question Chief Patton's competence. He resigned in October of that year.