The Great Miramichi Fire

On October 7, 1865 over 6000 square miles was burned in eight hours during the Great Miramichi Fire. No one knows the real cause of the fire but the summer and fall of 1865 was hot, crops were bountiful, wooden barns were full and the conditions were just right for fire.

On the morning of October 7th, a fire broke out on the Northwest Miramichi that was travelling towards Miramichi at a speed of one mile per minute. It was helped by strong winds. Twenty-two people were killed along the way. A man named William Wright saw that the fire was becoming dangerous and tried to warn the people in the town of Newcastle of the fire coming by beating a drum, but nobody took him seriously. The town of Newcastle was burned to the ground in three hours. The fire continued to burn on the north side of the river all the way to Douglastown which also burned in an hour.

As the fire burned along the river many ships were also burned that were trying to get away. These ships carried the flames to the south side of the river. As well, the fire jumped the river in many places. The towns of Nelson and Chatham were not touched by the fire though and as a result almost 500 travelled to Chatham.

To get away from the fire many people stood in the river with water almost up to their heads. Animals as well stood in the water for the same reasons. Many farm animals were lost in the fire as they could not make their way to the river.

On October 8th it rained very hard which helped put out the fire. As well, most of the trees had burned so there was nowhere for the fire to go. One year later, the towns of Newcastle and Douglastown had been rebuilt.

1. When did the Great Miramichi Fire start?
2. How much land was burned? How long did it take?
3. How fast did the fire travel?
4. Who warned the town of Newcastle about the fire?
5. How long did it take for the town of Newcastle to burn?
6. Where did people and animals go to escape the fire?
7. How did the fire cross the river? Name two ways?
8. What helped put out the fire?
9. How long did it take for Newcastle and Douglastown to rebuild?