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This image depicts part of a mural at the [Peshtigo Fire Museum](#) in Peshtigo, Wisconsin. It reflects an artist's conception of the frightening scenes which occurred at Peshtigo during its Great Fire of 1871.

Sadly, not everyone made it to the river's edge. Even mothers who thought their children were close by were mistaken. Father Pernin:

At the moment I was entering the river, another woman, terrified and breathless reached its bank. She was leading one child by the hand and held pressed to her breast what appeared to be another, enveloped in a roll of disordered linen, evidently caught up in haste. Oh horror! On opening these wraps to look on the face of her child - it was not there.

The river [scene](#) itself was no less appalling:

It was about ten o'clock when we entered into the river ... Once in water up to our necks, I thought we would at least be safe from the fire, but it was not so; the flames darted over the river as they did over the land, the air was full of them, or rather the air itself was on fire.

No one was sure [what was happening](#). People [fled](#) by foot. Where would they be safe? Even in outlying areas, like [Sugar Bush](#), families were [trapped](#) (as depicted in this [painting](#) by Mel Kishner).



Father Pernin writes (scroll down 80%):

The greater number seemed to have no idea of taking any steps to procure their safety, imagining, as many afterwards acknowledged to me, that the end of the world had arrived and that there was nothing for them but silent submission to their fate.

The inferno had become a spreading holocaust.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/DEATH-IN-PESHTIGO-Great-Fire-of-1871>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/DEATH-IN-PESHTIGO-Great-Fire-of-1871>

Questions 2 Ponder

Does Advance Planning for a Disaster Minimize Loss of Life?

No one could have imagined a fire on the massive scale of Peshtigo's 1871 conflagration, but would some kind of advanced planning have helped to minimize the tragedy? Explain your answer.

What could we do today, to prepare for such an event?

Is it even possible to prepare for something as horrifying as the Peshtigo fire? Explain your answer.

Media Stream



1871 Sugar Bush Fire in Wisconsin

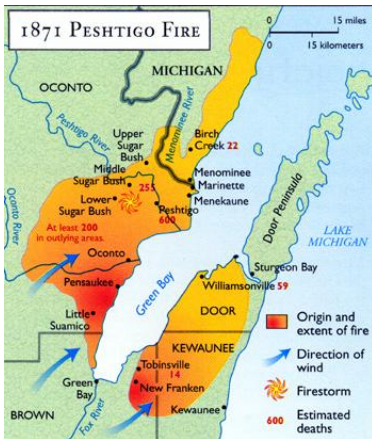
View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>



Peshtigo - Fleeing the Fire

Image from Harper's Weekly, 1871, online courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Peshtigo-Fleeing-the-Fire>



Peshtigo Fire - Area of Impact

Map of areas impacted by the Peshtigo fire, online courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Peshtigo-Fire-Area-of-Impact>



This painting by Mel Kiskadee graphically illustrates the plight of victims trapped in such outlying areas as the Sugar Bushes.

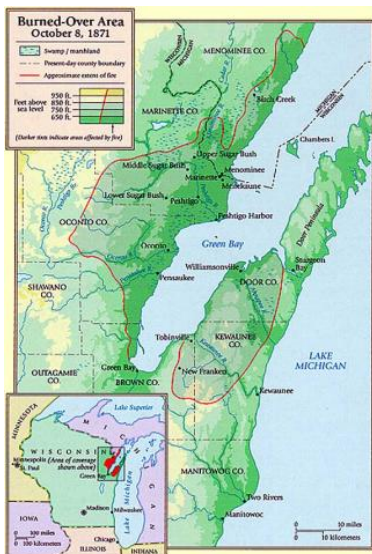
Victims Trapped in Outlying Areas

Image online from a reprint of Father Pernin's book *-The Great Peshtigo Fire: An Eyewitness Account*

- from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (1971). Copyright, 1971, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, all rights reserved. Image provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Victims-Trapped-in-Outlying-Areas>



Peshtigo - Map Depicting the Burnt-Over Areas

Map online, courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Peshtigo-Map-Depicting-the-Burnt-Over-Areas>



DEATH IN PESHTIGO

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Great Fire of 1871 - Peshtigo Burns

Clip online, courtesy The Weather Channel.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Great-Fire-of-1871-Peshtigo-Burns>