

FIERCE FIRE ON BROAD ST

Four Alarms---Loss Hundreds Of Thousands.

Firemen Cut Off by Flames Have a Thrilling Escape.

Place Was Full of Varnish, Oil and
Other Inflammable Material, and
the Firemen Were Fearful of an
Explosion—Seven Story Building
Entirely Guttred.

A fire, fiercer than any that has been seen in the down-town business district for many months, broke out at 1:30 this morning in the large seven-story brick building on Broad, Franklin and Batterymarch sts. The fire started in the basement of the building, occupied by the Murphy varnish company, which was full of varnish, oil and other inflammable material.

A patrolman of division 2 saw the fire early in its inception and sent an alarm from box 37. This alarm was followed in rapid succession by three more alarms, which brought about 20 steam fire engines, and a lot of other apparatus to the scene.

When the first engines arrived the fire had spread through all the floors to the roof, through which it was breaking, lighting up all the water front and the lower part of the city.

The loss will be several hundred thousand dollars.

Shortly after 2 o'clock half a dozen or more firemen, who were on ladders opposite the fifth floor, were cut off by the flames, which suddenly burst through the windows below them, and had to make a thrilling slide for life down the ladders.

The flames bursting through the windows were licking at the ladders, and the firemen were slightly scorched while coming down.

The building was practically cleaned out before 3 o'clock, for the fire was then not only sweeping widely above the roof, to which it had made a clean sweep, but was coming out of the windows on every floor on the three sides of the building, despite the many streams of water which a score of steam fire engines were throwing into the structure through the hose nozzles and through the water tower.

Was a Roaring Furnace.

The building is an old structure known as the Norton building. It was occupied by firms dealing in goods of a highly inflammable nature, for the most part.

The Murphy varnish company, which occupied the basement and the first and second floors of the building, had a large stock of varnish and oil stored there, and as the fire had started in these goods, and had a clean sweep clear to the roof through the elevator shaft, and found plenty of dry and greasy material to feed on, the entire building was a roaring furnace within a very few minutes.

Practically every occupant of the building was cleaned out by the fire, for it spread so rapidly, and there was so much smoke on the lower floors, and the apprehended danger of explosion was so great, that there was no chance to save anything from any of the offices or other rooms in the building.

Among the occupants of the building were A. E. Martin & Co, manufacturers of duplicate books; Brooks, Bonnell & Co, printers; the Hastings and Dixon press, McIndoe Bros, engravers; the North Shore express company, the Central express company, Boss, Ratcliffe & Co, the E. L. Patch company and James Donovan, manufacturer of slippers.

Police Commissioner Adams was on the scene a few minutes after the third alarm had been sent in and assumed a general oversight of the police detail, which was turned out after the third alarm.

Lieut Bodenschatz was in immediate charge of the police, and he had fully

150 men with him by 2:30 o'clock. All the reserves from divisions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were sent to the fire, most of them from the stations other than 2 coming in patrol wagons.

As a lot of ambulances were also sent on the last alarm in anticipation of possible accidents, the patrol wagons and ambulances took up all the room in the adjoining streets not occupied by the apparatus of the fire department.

Firemen Warned.

Up to 2:30 o'clock no one had been seriously injured during the progress of the fire, most of the firemen having been warned away from the Franklin-st side of the building, where it was feared the wall was going to fall.

At 2:45, while four men of ladder 17 were fighting the fire from an aerial ladder on the Franklin-st side of the building, there was something in the nature of an explosion on the third floor, and it was followed by a great burst of flame, which spread nearly across the street and licked the building on the other side.

The four ladder men were above the broad sheet of flame, which came from all the windows on that floor simultaneously, and they promptly let go of the lines of hose they were holding, clasped their legs about the sides of the ladder and started to slide to the street. They all got there safely except ladderman Wheeler of 17, who was overcome on his way down, partly by smoke and partly by fire.

He was carried to the building at 76 Batterymarch st, where he was laid out in the doorway and attended by a surgeon.

He was revived in a few minutes sufficiently to be ordered to his house by a district chief.

The burst of flame which drove the firemen down to the street and knocked out Wheeler set fire to the aerial ladder, which was drawn out of the danger zone by 100 firemen and policemen.

At 3:30 this morning, although 20 steam fire engines were throwing streams into the building, there was still fire on every floor, and there seemed to be a particularly large lot of it in the basement, from which suffocating clouds of smoke rolled out, frequently driving the men on the hose pipes back to Batterymarch and Broad sts.

The fire at that time was still burning fiercely, but it was pretty certain that it could be confined to the building.