

# BACK BAY FIRE LOSS \$250,000

## Sparks Ignite Homes on Beacon St.

## Thomas Factory, 60 Autos and Hundreds of Vehicles Burned.

## Flames Trap 25 Laborers on Third Floor.

Sixty automobiles were destroyed and a loss of more than \$250,000 was caused by a furious fire which swept through the building of Chauncey Thomas & Co., Inc., carriage makers and automobile repairers at 101-103 Chestnut st., near the Charles River Esplanade, shortly after 9 o'clock yesterday morning. Four alarms were sounded and for a time the residential section of the West End, adjoining the Back Bay and the Esplanade, was menaced.

Sixty workmen tried to combat the flames with extinguishers shortly after the blaze was discovered, and about 25 of them, with Pres L. B. Nichols, were

trapped on the third floor and forced to escape down ladders raised by the firemen.

The flames spread quickly through the inflammable contents on the six floors of the tall brick building, and volumes of heavy black smoke and burning sparks and cinders were carried by the high wind down over residences on Charles and Brimmer sts.

Residents of Otis pl., at the rear of the building, feared for the safety of their homes, and many packed up silver and other valuables which they took to the home of Mrs Glendower Evans at 12 Otis pl.

The fire, however, was confined to the Thomas Company's building by the excellent work of the Fire Department, assisted by the fact that immediately adjoining the burning structure were one and two-story stables and garages at 95, 97 and 99 Chestnut st.

### Valuables Taken to Evans Home.

In the block at 6, 7 and 8 Otis st, directly in back of the Thomas, live Louis D. Brandels, Miss Louis Wells and Charles G. Loring Jr, son-in-law of Ambassador Page. It was chiefly from these homes that the valuables were taken to Mrs Evans' place.

On the Esplanade side is the handsome white residence owned by Miss Grace Nichols and occupied by her and Mr and Mrs Edward Wigglesworth. Directly opposite it is the new palace of Mrs Susan Thayer Briggs. Both residences were kept out of danger by the wind which blew in from the Charles River.

Flying sparks traveled as far away as 67, 69 and 70 Beacon st and small fires, quickly extinguished, broke out at these places during the three hours that the big fire lasted.

The fire was discovered by "Billy" Morrill, shipper in the Chauncey Thomas Company factory, on the first floor toward the rear. The workmen had been at work an hour and a half but had not noticed the fire until Morrill saw it.

### Mr Schildbach's Estimate.

Vice Pres Oscar H. Schildbach grabbed an extinguisher and rushed out into the hall, telling two women in the office to hurry out. Mr Schildbach drove out Pres Nichols' car through the smoke to Chestnut st. This and only one other car were removed from the building, the flames raced through the structure so quickly.

All the destroyed autos were in various stages of repair. One of the lost cars belonged to Eben D. Jordan and another to Mrs Jackson of the Back Bay. In addition to the autos destroyed the employes estimated that 200 carriages in process of manufacture and 140 sleighs, mostly owned by people of the Back Bay and Brookline districts, were also destroyed.

Mr Schildbach estimated that the loss on buildings and contents will be \$250,000, of which \$100,000 will cover the company's loss on stock, with perhaps \$60,000 on the building, which is owned by Mrs Chauncey Thomas of Roxbury. He estimates that the loss on customers' automobiles may approach \$100,000.

### Some Narrow Escapes.

Directly after the outbreak of the fire there were two minor explosions in the building, probably caused by paint or white lead being ignited by the flames. There was no gasoline in the building, except in a buried tank in the basement, but several of the gasoline tanks in the cars had been filled in preparation for delivery.

A Henry, the blacksmith who conducted the shop at the rear of the first floor, had an exciting escape to the street through the very densest part of the smoke. Mr Henry stated that upon hearing a woman cry "Fire" somewhere on Otis pl he opened the door to the repository and was met by a powerful rush of smoke that veritably drove him back into the middle of the room.

His first natural move was to close the door, but on second thought he realized that he must drive straight through the smoke in order to reach safety. He did it, but he was much the worse when he reached the street and nearly collapsed.

In the stable next to the factory Frank Robbins, coachman of Mrs W. Scott Fitz of 70 Beacon st, was having his hands full trying to lead out two horses of Mrs Fitz' and to care for his wife and 5-year-old boy, Henry. With the aid of Thomas Campbell he led the horses to safety, though spraining his wrist by falling in the darkness. His

wife and child, choked by smoke, had to be helped to safety.

### Pussy Comes Down Hose.

Almost the first thing the firemen saw come from the building was an ordinary mongrel cat, owned by night watchman H. J. Danby, who had quit work at 7:30 a m. Pussy came out on a window sill of the third floor, sighted a hose that had been stretched up to fight the fire, and picked her way carefully down its body to the street.

A considerate neighbor lifted the kitty from amid the maze of hose lines and the swirling waters and took her into one of the stables for protection.

As the interior of the building fell a prey to flames there was increasing danger, and the firemen were constantly on their guard lest the tottering bricks tumble under the alternating attacks of water and wind.

In spite of the danger, the men of Water Tower 2 kept their hose playing persistently against the front wall in the face of danger, until finally Chief McDonough ordered this and other wagons out of the danger zone.

When this order came, Ladder 13 was stuck so fast in the crushed stone on the street that it took braces, ropes and the help of 20 bystanders to pull it out toward the boulevard, where Metropolitan Park police and Boston police summoned by request of Capt Peabody of Station 3 were keeping the crowd roped off.

### SAVES CHILD FROM TRUCK.

#### William Milton Risks Life of Baby and Self to Grab Little Girl at Chestnut-St Fire.

William Milton, proprietor of a store at Charles and Cambridge sts, rescued a 3-year-old girl from certain death under an approaching fire engine at the Chestnut-st fire yesterday.

A woman with two little children started to cross the street in front of the apparatus, when one of the children stumbled and fell flat on her face. Mr Milton, who was standing on the sidewalk with his own 18-months-old baby in his arms, dashed into the street, seized the little girl and dragged her almost from under the wheels of the heavy vehicle.

The act was loudly applauded by a large number of onlookers, for Mr Milton risked the life of his child, as well as his own, in his daring rescue.