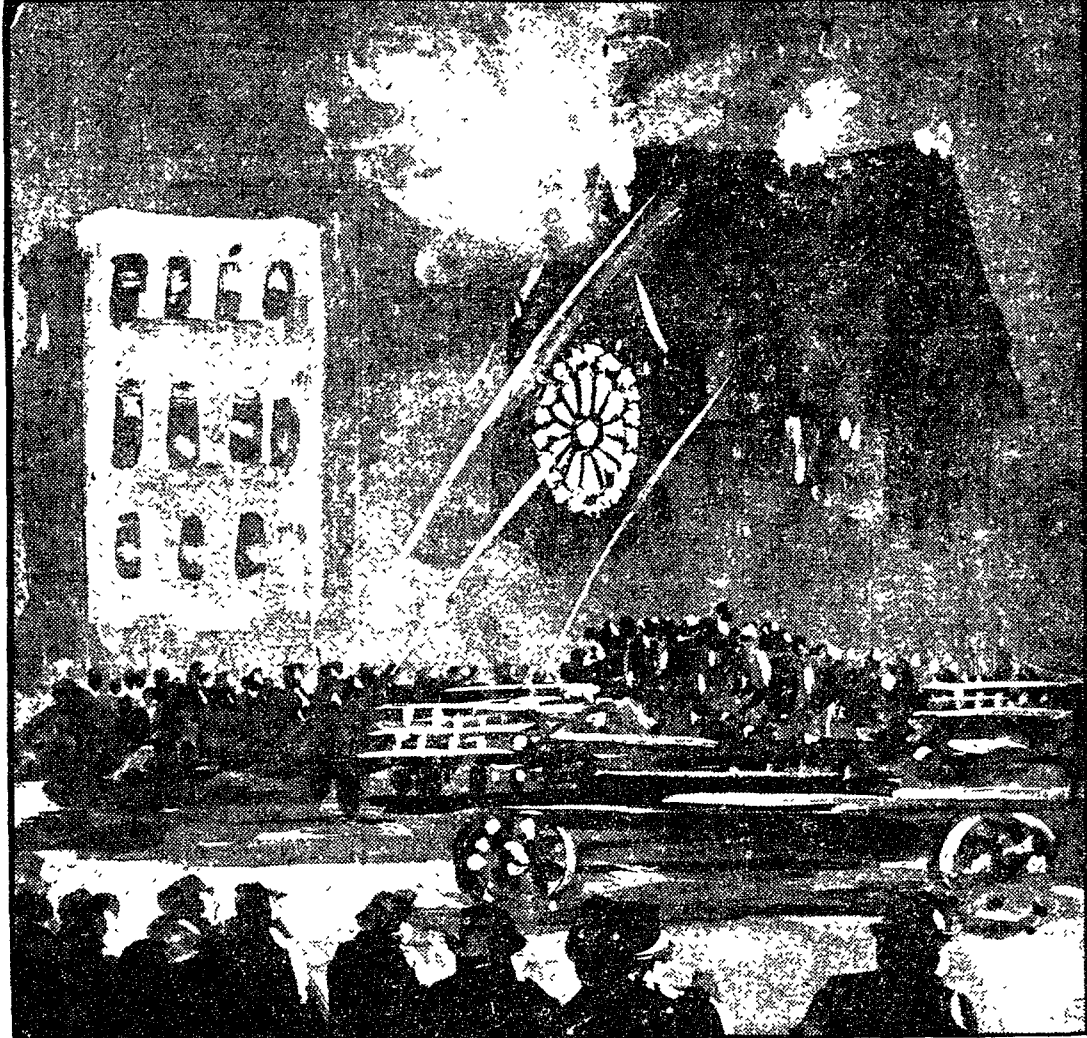


FIREMEN FIGHT FIERCE FIRE IN SOUTH END CHURCH

Clarendon-St Baptist Edifice Badly Damaged--- English High School Saved---Origin a Mystery.



FIGHTING THE FIRE IN THE CLARENDON-ST BAPTIST CHURCH AS SEEN FROM WARREN AV.

The Clarendon-st Baptist Church at the corner of Clarendon and Montgomery sts, South End, was gutted by fire, which broke out in the Clarendon-st front some time before 8:50 last night. The loss will probably be about \$50,000.

The greatest damage was done to the roof and the auditorium, which was practically destroyed. The loss is covered by insurance.

A meeting of the deacons of the church has been called for this forenoon, at which time arrangements will be made for the carrying on of services elsewhere.

The building is constructed of brick, with a slate roof and a massive brick square tower at the corner of Clarendon and Montgomery sts. The apex of the tower is slated.

The fire started in the rear balcony at the Clarendon-st front of the building and worked up to the roof, which soon gave way on the Montgomery-st side. The fire did not get down into the vestry, but there will be a total loss of there of furnishings from water.

The auditorium is a total loss, as well as the pulpit platform, the organ and loft and the choir gallery which is at the right of the pulpit platform.

Close Call for English High.

The interior arrangement of the church was such that it provided a large seating capacity, with long balconies running from front to back. The fire did not materially damage these balconies, but they will need extensive repairs. The furnishings in the audi-

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FIREMEN FIGHT FIERCE FIRE

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torium were of black walnut and furnished excellent fuel.

Directly in the rear of the building, and separated only by the heavy walls, is the English High School. The section of the school abutting the church is occupied by the chemical laboratory and lecture rooms. It was feared the fire would spread to the school and the firemen bent every effort to prevent this spread.

At the time the fire started there was a meeting of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor being held in the vestry. There were about 30 persons in attendance, 20 of them being women.

Mrs Fred Leck is president of the society. Miss Cox was in charge of the meeting and Miss Nellie Dexter was playing a hymn at the piano. Paul H. Razoux of 5 Union-st, who was at the meeting, said that while a hymn was being sung several in the meeting saw the reflection of flames in the windows across the street, but did not think the church was ablaze above their heads.

Three Alarms in Five Minutes.

It appears that at the same time many persons on the outside walking along the street saw the church lit up, but did not realize that it was on fire.

It was not until there was a burst of flames through one of the small windows on the Montgomery-st side that those on the street knew the building was ablaze.

Asst Engineer Bernard Nolan of Engine Company 3 on Bristol st, who had been acting in a similar capacity at the house of Engine Company 22 on Warren av., was on his way back to his own station when he saw the fire.

He ran back to the engine house and ordered the floor man to pull the horses. Then Engine 22 and Ladder Company 13 swung out to the fire.

About the same time someone sent in an alarm from box 71 at the corner of Tremont and Berkeley sts. This had hardly stopped ringing on the tappers before a second alarm was sounded and four minutes later, when Chief Mullen arrived, the third alarm was sent in. The first alarm was sounded at 8:50 and the third at 8:55.

Firemen Driven Out.

Harry Phipps, an insurance agent, said that he was passing the church when he saw the smoke. He went to the vestry and quietly suggested to the men and women at the meeting that they had better leave. His efforts to prevent a panic proved of little value, for almost at the same time some excited person rushed in with the same information and instead of leaving as they might in a quiet manner all rushed out.

Mr Phipps said that he assisted to the street an old lady with defective eyesight, who was taken in charge by friends.

It was apparent that the fire had been burning for a long time before any one had an inkling of it. The flames, licking up the upholstery and other furnishings of the auditorium, rolled in billows from floor to apex of the big space. When the firemen arrived they tried to get their lines inside the building, but were driven out by the heat.

The plastering had started to warp and fall from the excessive heat and the men were in such extreme danger that they were ordered out of the building. In the meantime Ladder Company 13 had raised its big aerial truck on the Clarendon-st front and Ladder Company 17, in charge of Capt Dolan, put its big ladder on the Montgomery-st side.

Lines were sent up over both big ladders and held the fire in check until the firemen had an opportunity to put in lines to the deck guns.

Fox' Order Saves Lives.

The wagon of Engine Company 3 was placed in front of the church on Clarendon st and the wagons of Engines 15 and 26 on Montgomery st. As soon as the necessary connections could be made the deck guns on these wagons were put to work and did great service.

The fire had made great progress in the auditorium, and the men working on Ladder 17 on Montgomery st were ordered down by Dist Chief Henry Fox. His action probably saved the lives of three firemen, as hardly had they reached the street before the tip of the big ladder, that is, the part which is run up from the main ladder, broke off suddenly.

Just what caused it is not known, but it is believed that one of the streams from the deck guns of the hose wagons so weakened it that it was snapped off.

At this time the fire had reached such proportions that no man was allowed in the building and Ladder 3 was ordered taken from the Clarendon-st front. It was feared that the big tower would be so weakened by the heat and water that it would either collapse or fall into the street.

Like the death knell of the edifice the big bell in the tower suddenly rang out. It was a most uncanny sound for the firemen and police, but it was a warning that all who could possibly get out of the way obeyed.

The first stroke of the bell was at 9:56 o'clock and the bell struck intermittently for several minutes.

Reach Heart of Fire.

Like a big ball of fire the handsome rosette window of stained glass above the balcony in Clarendon st lighted up, revealing the flames inside. Suddenly the strong stream from the deck gun went smash through it and one by one the small sections of colored glass flickered out, while the stream carried on into the heart of the fire.

Firemen also had lines of hose at work in the private way on the westerly side of the building and later carried hose onto the roof of the big four-story apartment house, the Emerick, on Clarendon st.

For more than an hour dozens of streams were thrown into the building with no perceptible effect, as the fire licked up at the apex of the roof and broke out time and again.

Pastor Leaves Sick Bed for Scene.

Rev Dr Francis, pastor of the church, who lives at 61 St Botolph st, left a sick bed when he heard of the fire and insisted upon going to the scene. Arriving at the fire he, made his way into the vestry in the hope of saving some valu-

ables there and was directed to leave by the firemen, who saw he was in danger.

Mrs George A. Gordon, widow of the ex-pastor of the church and founder of the Gordon Training School, visited the fire in the automobile of H. Gordon McDougal, one of the deacons.

James A. Floyd of 58 Stratford road, West Roxbury, a deacon, went into the burning building at great risk and brought out an old picture of Rev Dr Hague, an ex-pastor. The picture was hanging in the pastor's study.

At the time Mr Floyd went into the church broken slates were falling in showers from the roof, and just as he started to leave hundreds crashed down before him.

Mr Floyd also rescued some record cards and valuable papers.

In the basement or vestry of the church was hanging a portrait of the late Dr Gordon, but as this was enclosed in a case with a glass covering it is thought it escaped damage.

Cannot Explain Fire.

The firemen were absolutely at a loss to account for the start of the fire. At the place where it originated there was nothing, so far as known, that would start a blaze. Some time ago, carpenters were employed in reconstructing the organ gallery, but nothing was done at the point where the fire is said to have broken out.

George W. Tyree is the janitor of the church, but he was not in the church when the fire started. The building is lighted by electricity.

Mayor Fitzgerald arrived at the scene shortly after the third alarm was sounded. He was recognized by many in the crowd and cheered.

The police service at the fire was excellent. The men were in charge of Capt Driscoll of the East Dedham-st Station and he had a large force to keep the crowd back. Details of men were sent to him from all the intown stations.

On the way to the fire District Chief Kennedy of Roxbury, who was acting as deputy chief owing to the absence of Deputy Chief McDonough, met with a mishap at Washington and Thorndike sts. His automobile went wrong and he was finally compelled to proceed to the fire on street cars.

Late in Getting "All-Out."

The National Theatre on Tremont st is but a short distance in town from the burned church and the large audience was quickly assured there was no danger.

As soon as possible Chief Mullen sent his men into the building lines being carried up onto the balconies and then also ladders were raised on the inside from which the firemen drowned out the last remaining sparks. The all-out signal was sent in shortly before 12:30 this morning.

Among the sightseers at the fire were four members of the Gold Coast Fire Brigade of Harvard. They were W. T. Mandell, G. H. Whitney, B. P. Clark and Eben Spalding. They arrived in an automobile and were equipped with badges.

The quartet were much pleased with the work of the firemen, and said they had received valuable pointers, which they would use to good effect the next time they are called upon to fight a college blaze.

SOUTH END LANDMARK.

Believed That Clarendon-St Baptist Society Will Begin at Once to Rebuild Edifice.

As a landmark in the South End of Boston and the home of the Gordon Theological School, a training school for missionaries which have left this city for all parts of the country, the Clarendon-st Baptist Church has been well known for years. It is owned by the Clarendon-st Baptist Church Society.

The vicissitudes of the church society in regard to their church property have been many. In 1872 the church which stood on the present site was destroyed by fire and the present edifice was built.

More than three years ago the society was put to the expense of having the church practically equipped with a new roof as the old slating fell off during high winds and endangered the public.

More than a year ago a large section of the tower, which is constructed of brick as is the church, became affected by the frost and one morning tumbled into the street, a number of persons narrowly escaping death.

It is probable that the church authorities will immediately begin the work of reconstruction as the church is a potent force in the South End and has a large following.

Two of the deacons of the church and the pastor, Rev Dr James A. Francis were seen at the fire last night but they could not forecast the action of the society in the matter of rebuilding.

The church property is valued at about \$150,000 and Chief Mullen, who was in charge of the fire last night, said that in his opinion the loss would be fully one-third of the valuation.

The Clarendon-st Baptist Church was one of the most prosperous in the city, and was free of debt. As an instance of its stability, a sum of \$5000 was raised in 35 minutes a year ago to wipe out an indebtedness of \$1300 from previous years, and it started the present year with a surplus.

The church has had some notable pastors, chief amongst whom was Rev Adoniram Judson Gordon, who was the first pastor of the present church, accepting the call in 1869, on Dec 9 of which year the edifice was dedicated.

The church society was formed in 1827, when there were three Baptist churches in Boston. Federal and Milk sts was selected as a site for the new house of worship.

In 1847 the Federal-st Baptist Church removed to Rowe st (now Chauncy st) and in 1869 the present site was occupied. Some of the pastors of the church were Rev Howard Malcolm, Rev George B. Ide, Rev Handel G. Nott, Rev William Hague, Rev Baron Stow, Rev Dr A. J. Gordon, Rev John A. McElwain and Rev Dr James M. Gray.