

BIG COAL SHED FIRE

Five Alarms Sent Out.

Spectacular Scenes at North End.

Great Gasometers Were in Grave Danger.

Two Vessels Imperiled —Loss \$40,000.

A most spectacular fire broke out shortly after midnight in the coal sheds of the Consolidated gas company on Commercial st, North End. Five alarms were sounded in quick succession, calling not only all the apparatus of the city proper but the suburbs as well. The damage is estimated at about \$40,000.

Like a flash, the flames burst forth and even before the first alarm had ceased ringing the sky was aglow with the leaping tongues. So sudden was the illumination that many thought there had been an explosion, but nothing of that nature occurred.

All that was needed to carry the flames was the strong wind which was blowing and which made the work of the firemen all the harder. The flames made their way rapidly through the wooden structures, and the fact that rain was falling in torrents had no effect whatever on staying their progress.

The burned sheds were on Commercial st, at the foot of Charter st, and are directly between the wharf and storage buildings of the Great White Spirit company on the south and the Wetherbee lumber wharf on the north.

Continued on the Tenth Page.

BIG COAL SHED FIRE

Continued from the First Page.

The lumber wharf was separated from the gas works by only a narrow passageway.

Prevented Explosions.

Explosions were feared, and undoubtedly would have occurred but for the great work of the firemen, who held their dangerous position on the northerly side of the blaze and prevented the fire from reaching the gas retorts and gasometers which lay directly in its path.

So rapid was the spread of the flames that a two-masted schooner, the Gracie J., Capt Rice, which was lying at the foot of the gas company's wharf, had a narrow escape from destruction, as did also a barge.

The captain of the barge blew his whistle for assistance, but none reached him, and finally some of the crew carried a line up to the new Charlestown bridge and there some marines from the navy yard and a number of the crowd took hold and gave a strong pull, which finally got the barge moving out of danger. At last a tug hove in sight and towed the craft to safety.

The schooner Gracie J. had a narrow call. The crew were all asleep when they were aroused by the crackling of burning timbers. They hastened into their clothes and got on deck as fast as they could. Even then the fire was so hot they could hardly stand it and they were in imminent danger.

But for the timely arrival of a tug-boat, which moved them to another berth, the crew would have had to put off in the small boat. They were hardly out of the way before the fire crept down to where they had been and leaped far out over the water's edge.

Saw Buildings in Flames.

What started the fire no one knows. Patrick McDevitt, the night watchman, had just made his rounds of the plant, he said last night, and everything was all right. He was surprised when returning from the retort house to see the sheds in flames. He hurried to ring in the alarm, but found that some one had already turned in an alarm from box 9 on Commercial wharf.

Immediately upon the arrival of the first detachment of firemen a third alarm was sounded, and then in quick succession alarms were given from box 421 in City sq., Charlestown, and box 418, so as to bring the apparatus around to the northerly side of the fire.

The property burned consisted of two coal sheds and a coal run. One of the sheds was in the shape of an octagon, and it was in this that the fire probably started. It was entirely empty and as far as known there was nothing in it even that could have led to spontaneous combustion.

With marvelous rapidity the flames had this entire building in its grasp and then leaped to the larger structure, which adjoined. This latter was about 300 feet deep, running from the street down to the water front, 200 feet wide and 60 feet in height.

In this building were stored, it is said, about 500 tons of soft coal, and in addition a lot of valuable iron pipe and connections of various kinds and sizes. Both buildings were afire at the same time and the flames mounting high in the air and carried by a strong northeasterly wind threatened to reach to the Wetherbee lumber yard.

L. Trains Held Up.

The last couple of elevated trains on the Atlantic circuit were held up, as it was not considered wise to take the risk of running through the fire and smoke.

The fire licked at the elevated structure and the ties were burned in several places. Lines of hose were carried up onto the structure after the electric current had been turned off and from this vantage point the firemen held the flames from crossing Commercial st.

Quick work was necessary on all sides and Asst Chief Mullen placed his men at the most advantageous points. Out in the stream the crew of the fire-boat were making their best endeavors to drown out the flames, while on the three sides firemen with lines of hose sent strong streams in through the openings made by the burning away of the sides of the structures.

Great fear was felt lest an explosion of gas should occur and the crowd that quickly gathered was kept at a safe distance. The Charlestown bridge was the best vantage point from which to see the blaze and it was crowded from one end to the other with men and women who stood there despite the rain which fell in torrents.

Very close to the burning buildings were several small gasometers at which the firemen looked askance, but they were told there was no gas in them and that no fear need be felt.

It was different, however, across the narrow driveway which separates the burned buildings from the retorts. In the retorts and the gasometers connecting were stored enough gas to have blown up the entire city and in that narrow passageway firemen with their hose, from which came thin streams of water, stood and valiantly fought to keep back the fire which every minute seemed to threaten their position the more and to make their work the more hazardous.

Great Danger Passed.

So dangerous was the position felt that no one not actually engaged in the fighting of the fire was permitted to go down on the wharf from that point, and the firemen themselves breathed easier when they saw that the flames were subsiding and that at last they were the victors in the struggle.

Much concern was felt for the Wetherbee lumber yard and men were stationed there to prevent any possible outbreak of fire among the thousands of feet of lumber. Sparks fell on all sides and big pieces of charred boards and timbers were carried high in the air by the wind, falling on the lumber wharf and far over onto the bridge.

It was fortunate that a heavy rain was falling at the time and that the roofs of the wooden structures in the vicinity were well wet down. As it was they were in grave danger.

Judging by the throng that gathered in the streets the entire population of the North End had turned out to witness the spectacle. The reflection was seen for miles and hundreds of calls came to this city seeking information.

The loss will probably not be more than \$10,000 at the most and will not reach that figure unless the flames reach the coal stored in the big shed. Both the burned buildings are old and are not in use much at present.

Night watchman McDevitt said last night he had no idea of the cause of the fire. There was no sign of it and he didn't even smell smoke when he made his usual rounds, not more than 10 minutes before the fire burst out.

But few patrons of the elevated road were inconvenienced. The trains that were held up were sent back and completed their trips by way of the subway.

Big Details of Police There.

Little more than half an hour previous to the sounding of the first alarm the firemen had responded to an alarm from the same box, 9, for a slight fire at 418 Commercial st and at that time there was no evidence of a fire at the gas company's plant.

As quickly as possible details of patrolmen from other intown stations were sent to the scene to assist the men of division 1. Commercial st was roped off and the crowd was kept back as far as possible.

Fire commissioner Wells and Col Cole, chairman of the police board, drove to the scene in a carriage and remained until it was assured that there was no danger of the fire spreading.

HORSES ALL TAKEN OUT.

Patrolman Gould and Others Saved Many Animals from Burning Stable in Charlestown.

A fierce fire which threatened the destruction of a large two-story wooden stable owned by the P. O'Riorden estate at 50 Chelsea st, Charlestown, broke out at 9:40 last night in the hayloft in the second story and had it not been for patrolman Everett Gould and Patrick Riorden, foreman of the stable, 35 head of horses would have been burned to death.

Smoke was seen issuing from the windows and roof by a woman who told patrolman Gould. He sent in an alarm from box 423. He returned to the stable, went through the office door, unbarred the stable door and untying two fine chestnut work horses led them to a place of safety.

Returning to the stable Gould untied several of the halters from the stalls and the horses were run out of the stable to Amsden row, directly opposite the scene of the fire. Two cows were then taken out with much difficulty. Several harnesses were saved.

Among those who aided in getting out the animals were hoseman John Hogan of engine 10, who was off duty, Patrick Doyle, foreman Patrick Riorden, David and Edward Riorden, James Duffy, William Fitzgerald and John J. Haley, night watchman at the stable.

The fire was confined to the rear and upper portion of the stable. At first it appeared as if the structure would be totally destroyed, the flames sweeping almost across the street from the hayloft.

The damage to the building and contents was estimated at about \$2000.