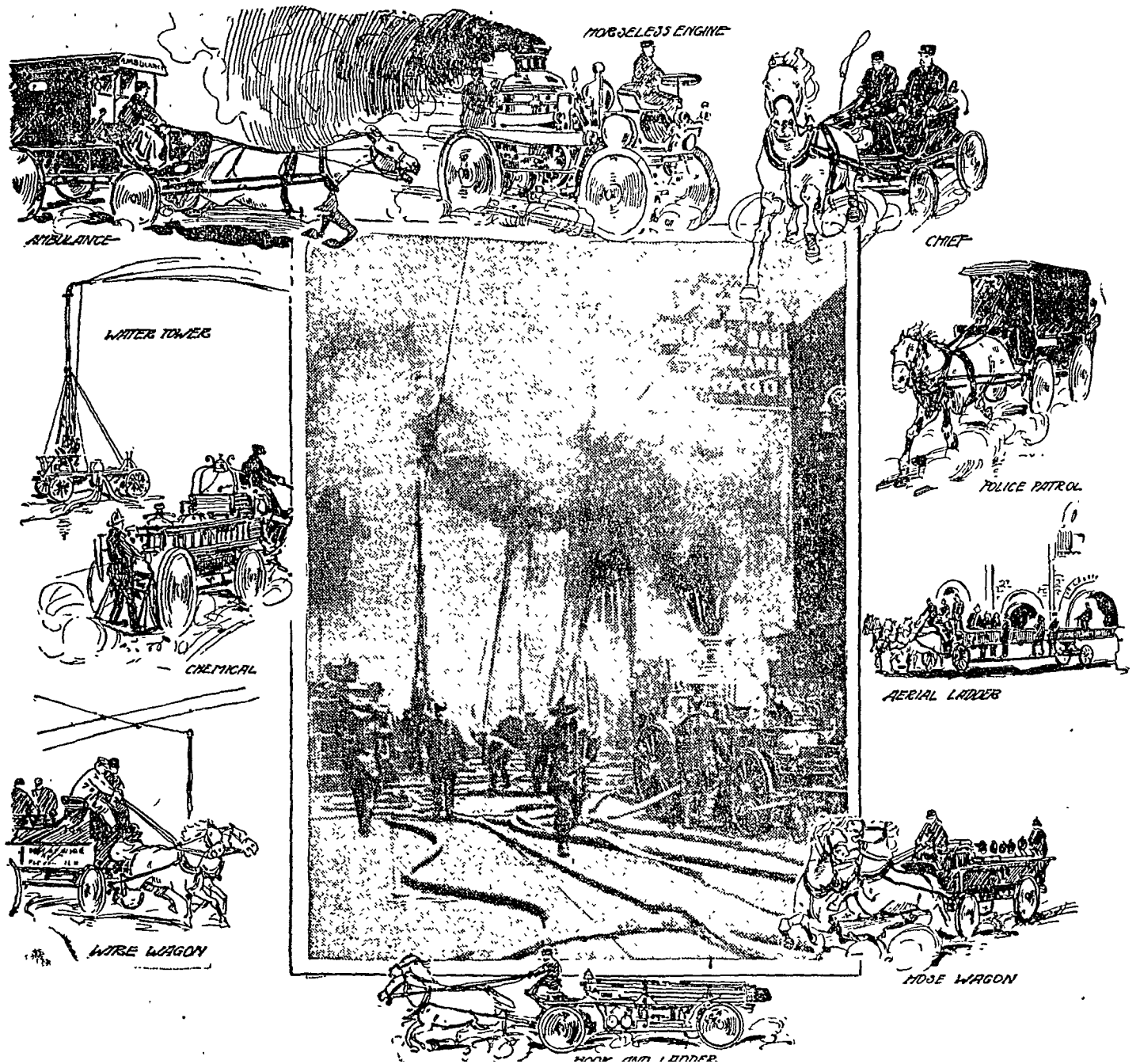


# WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE FIRE ALARM BELL RINGS.



There isn't a general appreciation of the interests and the people affected by a big fire in Boston. Most people, fortunately for the peace of mind of the police and the comfort of the firemen, don't go to fires, and so they don't realize what a big fire means to a great many people who do have to go.

The average citizen reading his Globe containing an account of a four or five-alarm fire in which a loss of \$100,000 or so has been suffered, and perhaps some lives lost, doesn't understand all that a four-alarm fire means, because the average citizen doesn't make himself familiar with similar situations.

There were four alarms last week for the fire in Portland st, and an outline of what happened when the alarms came in then will serve to show what happens at other big fires when a similar number of alarms have been sounded for a fire.

In the first place, every time an alarm of fire is sent in from any box in the city of Boston the alarm goes direct to fire headquarters in Bristol st, where, day and night, the year around, wide-awake and thoroughly alert operators are on duty to receive them.

Fulfilling the hook of an alarm box in the street doesn't convey the alarm to the engine houses, but goes only to fire-headquarters, where, instantaneously, the operator on duty transmits the alarm to the engine and ladder houses.

Every fire house in the city gets the alarm at the same moment, and the number is also struck off in police headquarters, the various police station houses, and there is another circuit which carries the alarm to the newspaper offices and to such fire insurance offices as may be subscribers to the system.

It also goes to the headquarters of the fire and police notification companies, and the instant the alarm is received there is great activity in a number of different directions.

In the first place, the engine, ladder and chemical companies which have to respond to that particular box hitch horses to the apparatus and hurry to the location of the box from which the alarm has come, while the rules of the fire department are that fire companies whose running cards show they will be called upon to make a run if a second alarm is sounded hitch up their horses and get all ready to start on the instant an additional alarm is sounded.

If the second alarm comes in the companies scheduled to respond to it on second alarm in Boston proper the

are on their way in two seconds, but if no second alarm comes the second alarm companies are required to keep their horses hitched and ready to go until the "all out" or signal that the fire is over has been sent by the chief or district chief who is at the fire.

On the first alarm, in the city proper, the alarm stirs up more people than the firemen who are supposed to go and put out the fire.

The captain or other officer in charge of the police station of the district in which the fire occurs is required by the rules to immediately dispatch the policemen on reserve in his patrol wagon to the fire, the reporters at police headquarters are expected to make for the scene of the fire without delay, the wagons of the protective department come clanging along the streets, and well up with them, generally, are the wire and repair wagons of the Boston elevated railway company, the latter being under orders to attend all fires so that if wires of the railway company are in the way of the firemen they can be removed, and if the wires are burned off or broken that they may be repaired immediately and traffic depending on the integrity of the feed wires be not delayed.

The notification companies also send their men to answer first alarms of fire, and James V. Dunn of the state fire marshal's bureau of the state police is also expected to go to all the fires, big and little.

If the first alarm comes from a box in the business district there will also shortly be on the scene a squad of fire underwriters anxious to see if they are interested in the property being destroyed. Even a first alarm of fire in the business district calls out a crowd of men who have some immediate official or semi-official business in connection with the blaze, and in addition to them there is always the miscellaneous crowd out looking for excitement.

It is when there are two or more alarms for a fire, however, that the largest number of people and interests are affected. It is a rule of the police department that on a second alarm of fire the commander of the station house of the district in which the fire is, shall, in addition to the patrol wagon and the reserves which have been sent on the first alarm, also dispatch to the scene the ambulance of his division. If the division has one, and that he must also send out all the available policemen, other than the first reserves, to the place to establish lines, keep the crowd's back and give the firemen a free hand to fight the blaze.

City hospital, either from the main hospital or the relief station at Haymarket sq, sends an ambulance to the fire, so that on two alarms there are sure to come a patrol wagon, a police ambulance and a hospital ambulance, ready to carry to hospitals anyone who may be injured. On alarms subsequent to the second one other ambulances are sent, and the police reserves from the nearest station houses are also rushed to the scene.

When the alarms begin piling up on the tape, the fire engines begin converging to the scene of the fire, most of them going to the fire direct to work on getting it out, and a few of the pieces of apparatus coming in to take the place of the apparatus that has already reached the fire.

This latter arrangement is called "covering," and the engines, trucks, etc., are to stand ready to go to any other fire that may break out in the district left unprotected or "uncovered" by the apparatus already in service at the fire.

In a big fire like the four-alarm one in Portland st, Wednesday, there are, in addition to the pieces of fire apparatus, several ambulances and patrol wagons, the wagons of the protective department and the elevated railway repair wagons.

Among the persons other than the firemen and the policemen who were detailed there, there were at that fire, as there are at every big fire, a number of reporters from each of the newspapers, staff photographers and sketch artists, notification company men, insurance men figuring on their losses and sharply critical of the work of the firemen, real estate men, some of them interested in the property being destroyed and others wide awake to their opportunities trying to rent to the people being burned out quarters in other parts of the city.

Then there are also men from the water department awaiting instructions from the chief of the fire department if he should want the water pressure changed, gas men with their tools to shut off the gas from the mains when required, electric light men to cut live wires or cut off the current, or even to make repairs as occasion may demand, and there are also there the "buits," as men, and boys who have as their hobby making friends with the firemen, who delight to chase the engines and watch fires, and who are proud and happy if the firemen will let them hold the horses or help them with the hose.

What happened last Wednesday at the Portland-st fire is substantially what happens at every fire of equal importance, although a lesser number of

apparatus may respond than did to this box, 412, which is in the heart of a dangerous district.

When the first alarm was sounded engines 4, 5, 8 and 10, ladder companies 1, 8 and 14, and chemical engine 1 responded.

On the second alarm there went to the fire engine 25, 35 and 27, combination ladder 8 and truck 1. Engine 39 went to the house of engine 25, engine 33 went to engine 4's house, engine 37 went to engine 33's house, engine 9 went to 8's house, 15 to 7's, and 43 to 15's.

The third alarm brought these additional pieces of apparatus to the fire: Engines 9, 33, 26, 36, 39, ladder 17, chemical engine 2 and truck 2. When these pieces of apparatus went to the fire, engine 23 went to the house of 26, 22 went to 4, 37 to 25, 41 to 33, 38 to 25, 1 to 39, 21 to 43, 40 to 8, 11 to 9, 24 to 23, combination wagon 2 to engine 1, ladder 3 to ladder 8, ladder 4 to 3.

The fourth alarm brought to the fire engines 22, 23, 38 and 40 and ladder 13. When this alarm came in engine 12 moved to the house of engine 26, 37 went to 4, 13 to 22, 14 to 13, 42 to 14, 18 to 12, 19 to 18, 15 to 25, 43 to 7, 21 to 15, 41 to 10, 34 to 33.

On the first alarm Capt Kimball of division 1 sent the reserves then in the station house to the fire, and when the second alarm came in the captain went himself and took charge of the detail.

When the third and fourth alarms came in the reserves from stations 2, 3, 4 and 5 were ordered to the fire, and all the inspectors at headquarters who were not actually engaged in court or in other important work were also sent there so that shortly after the last piece of fire-fighting apparatus to respond to the four alarms had reached the fire Capt Kimball had 100 policemen with him, ropes were stretched and the crowd was kept back out of danger and the way of the firemen.

When the fire was under control Chief Cheswell began sending the apparatus and the men who handled it back to quarters, the engines from the outlying stations going first, and by a little after noon all the firemen and their own apparatus were back in their own houses, the police had taken down their ropes and gone back to their ordinary duties, the reporters had their accounts of the fire written and the papers were on the streets accompanied by the pictures the photographers had taken, and the business men who had been burned out or otherwise damaged by the fire were busy figuring up their losses, and the insurance adjusters and underwriters were also figuring.