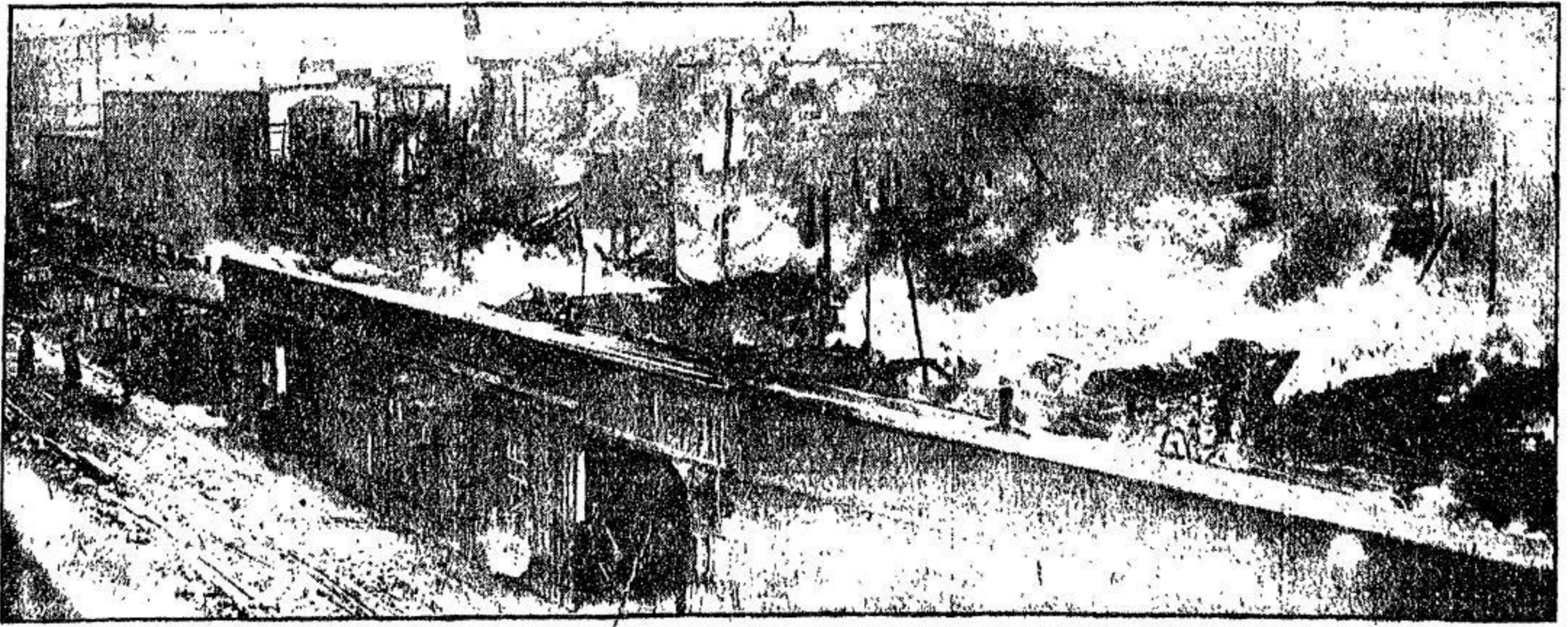


The Boston Daily Globe.

MONDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 25, 1911.

RUINS OF THE BOSTON MOLASSES COMPANY'S PLANT.



DESTRUCTIVE FIRE HARD TO FIGHT

Boston Molasses Company Plant Is Damaged \$300,000.

Distance From Hydrants and Low Pressure Contribute to Loss.

Nearly two million gallons of molasses were destroyed, more than as much more was saved, and a monetary loss of more than \$300,000 resulted from a four-alarm fire soon after 7 o'clock yesterday morning, at the plant of the Boston Molasses Company on Harvard st, in the rear of 670 Summer st, far out upon the Commonwealth flats, in South Boston.

Noticeable features of the fire were the short-handedness of the fire department, the extreme low pressure of the water supply and the lamentable lack of hydrants within a reasonable distance of the burning dock property.

The longest lines of hose ever laid at a commercial district fire in New England were put down at this fire. The combined capacity of two hose companies was required to stretch one line from the nearest hydrant to the burning building, which was a distance of about 2000 feet, or more than a third of a mile. Several such lines were stretched from Summer st down Harvard st to the burning dock property, and 13 fire engines bunched in two nests in Summer st were strained to the utmost pumping water through these lines. Even then the pressure was weak.

Lack of Hose and Pressure.

Engines 41 and 47, the two fireboats, were made fast at either side of the molasses company's pier, out in the stream, and five of their lines were carried up the wharf, through sheds and runways to the fire. These were not able to maintain their customary efficiency because the tremendous pressure burst the hose repeatedly.

The fire was held in check by two brick party walls and practically burned itself out. The firemen with their limited water supply were able to keep the party walls wet down and did much toward preventing the flames from racing along the entire length of the sheds, which were stored with millions of gallons of molasses, to Summer st.

Fortunately the wind was blowing toward the Northeast, or it is possible that the two great coal wharves of the Metropolitan and the Staples companies, which are just west of the molasses

wharf, would have been consumed with their thousands of tons of coal.

Flood of Escaping Molasses.

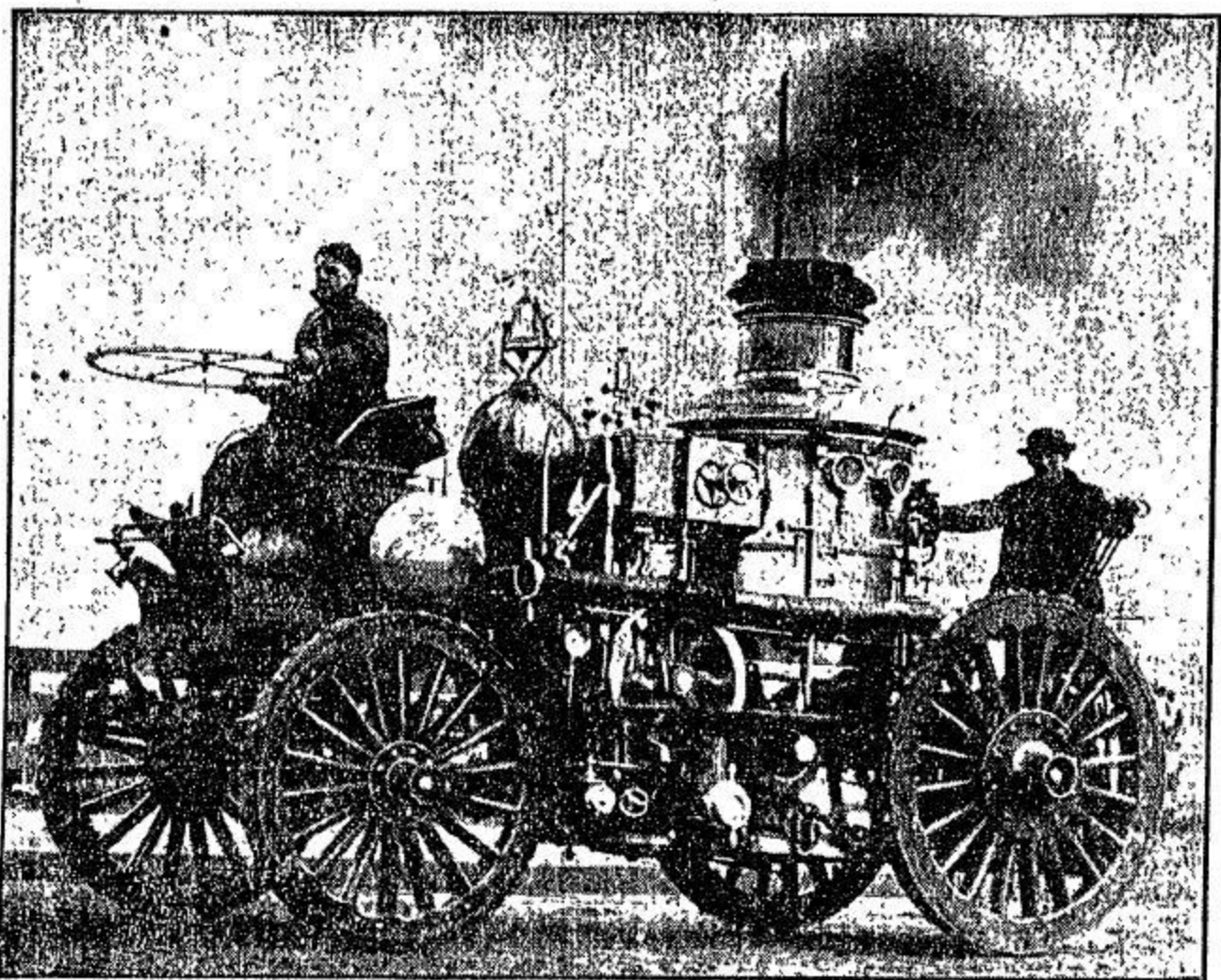
Unusual incidents made the fire interesting to the spectators. The immediate vicinity was flooded knee deep with the escaping molasses from the bursting barrels and tanks. The sewer was filled to choking and refused to carry away more. Ex-Fire Commissioner Benjamin F. Wells got a "sweetening" when he plunged knee deep into a molasses pool. Two firemen were slightly injured.

Deputy Chief Taber burned both his hands painfully, though not seriously, and hoseman Anthony E. Nelson of Engine 3 severely strained his back by a fall. Both were treated at the Grace Hospital and sent to their homes.

The plant of the Boston Molasses Company, having offices at 24 and 26 Broad st, is the largest molasses distilling plant in the world. It extends from Summer st, along Harvard st—a private thoroughfare, across the Commonwealth flats—to the water's edge, a distance of two-thirds of a mile. For more than half a mile the buildings are the customary one-story wooden wharf storage houses filled with thousands of barrels of molasses. Adjoining and beyond are the offices, engine and boiler rooms, receiving tanks holding several million gallons of molasses, and still further along are the cooperage shops, other storehouses and the landing wharf, where are several thousand barrels of molasses in long rows. One of the receiving tanks holds 7,000,000 gallons of molasses, two others hold 600,000 gallons each and there were five

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ONE OF BOSTON'S HORSELESS ENGINES ON WAY TO SOUTH BOSTON FIRE YESTERDAY



DESTRUCTIVE FIRE HARD TO FIGHT

Continued From the First Page.

smaller ones. All of these were filled to capacity.

This is the busiest season of the year in the molasses trade and the Louisiana crop had only recently been stored in the tanks and in barrels. The Barbados crop was also well stored.

Fire Discovered in a Closet.

The cause of the fire is yet a mystery, but John Dolan, night watchman for the company, who discovered the flames, found them in a closet between the office and the boiler room. About 7:40 o'clock Dolan was upstairs in the office building, which is the first of the series of two-story wooden and brick structures at the lower end of the wharf, making his rounds. When he went down stairs he discovered the fire, and when he attempted to extinguish it the flames seemed to jump along a well-defined line toward Summer st. Dolan ran the length of Harvard st to Summer st, where he called to John W. Curtis, watchman for the Staples Coal Company, who lives at the head of the wharf, and to George Dalton, watchman for the Metropolitan Coal Company, and these two men ran to box 118 and sent in an alarm which sounded at 7:45 a. m. The three watchmen then telephoned for their employers and later took out the horses which were in the coal companies' stables and led them to a safe place.

Four Alarms in a Hurry.

When District Chief Perkins arrived he saw at once that there was lack of water pressure and he sent in a second alarm at 7:52. By this time the flames were burning through the roof and high in air and racing toward Summer st. Deputy Chief John Grady sent in a third alarm upon his arrival at 8:02 and when Chief Mullen arrived at 8:15 he sent in the fourth alarm.

The 13 engines were clustered at out two lines of the Summer st. Lines of hose were laid down Harvard st and then it was discovered that the firemen were facing an unusual emergency in the lack of both hose and pressure. Commissioner Daly, who came to the fire in his automobile, passed firemen, on day off and breakfast relief, walking to the fire and he sent his automobile back and had them hurried to the scene in his car.

Hose wagons were driven down Harvard st through the dense smoke and the flood of molasses and it was discovered that the combined supply of two hose wagons was required to stretch one line from the hydrant to the burning building. Deputy Chief John Grady, with a battalion of firemen, took a stand at the street doors in the brick party wall between floors 7 and 8 of the big sheds and fought the flames back, finally confining them to the big storehouse, engine and boiler rooms and offices between them and the six cooperage shops.

Metropolitan Property Saved.

Lines were stretched the length of the Metropolitan Coal Wharf and this property was well protected, but despite the efforts of the firemen the flames reached the shops where the wagons and automobiles of this company are repaired and painted and some small damage was done here. The wagons and automobiles were not damaged, but the building was charred. Other lines were carried out across the flats, beyond the burning building, but because of the low pressure these were practically useless. The two fireboats did effective work from the water side, although their five lines burst repeatedly. One long line, a section of which was under water, burst and sent a salt water and molasses geyser high in air. John Pierre, night fireman, had banked his fire a considerable time before the flames were discovered by watchman Dolan, and he also had filled the boilers to their capacity before leaving. Engineer John J. Powers came at 8 o'clock, bringing his luncheon, and was prepared to go to work upon some defective steam pipes. He found the plant in flames.

It was an unusually hot fire and the molasses burned much as spirits do. Five small tanks containing several hundred barrels of molasses collapsed

and a torrent of black and sticky fluid surrounded by a yellow froth spread over the ground knee deep in places. The firemen wallowed through this mess and with great difficulty did their work.

Tall Smoke Pipe Falls With Crash.

The flames crackled, a great cloud of smoke swept out to sea, and thousands of feet of area were rapidly burned over leaving behind a charred mass covered with the twisted and entwined iron barrel hoops which looked like writhing serpents, for they were white and red with heat.

Three big tanks, containing about 2,000,000 gallons of molasses, were not touched by the flames and their contents were not damaged by the smoke or heat. In some places the flames boiled the barreled molasses into candy kisses—and then, alas, burned them up. The great iron smokepipe above the boiler rooms swayed for an hour and the firemen watched it closely to avoid being injured when it fell. At 8:45 o'clock it toppled over with a crash and tore through a section of the roof of the cooperage shops. A shower of sparks and flame and clouds of smoke filled the air. No one was injured.

The offices were completely destroyed. All of the papers, books and documents are in the safe and it will be hours yet before the safe is sufficiently cooled so that its contents may be examined. There are duplicates of most of these documents in the safe at the Broad-st offices.

Loss Estimated at \$300,000.

Felix Taussig, president of the Boston Molasses Company, was summoned from his home at 181 Naples road, Brookline, and he told a Globe reporter that he was unable to ascertain the cause of the fire. He said that it is the busiest season of the year in his business and that, while the loss is fully covered by insurance, the business of distributing the last crop, or winter supply, of molasses by his concern will be delayed. Arrangements will be made at once for continuing the business, and there is a sufficient supply which was saved from the flames to prevent a shortage in the molasses market.

Supt. Clarence H. Heath of the plant was called from his home in Dedham, and he was unable to explain the origin of the fire or to tell approximately what the loss will be. It was roughly estimated that about 20,000 barrels of molasses, valued at upward of \$15 a barrel, had been destroyed, besides the damage to the buildings, engine, boilers, tanks, other equipment and the offices.

The East bridge has been closed to traffic several days for repairs and this delayed the fire apparatus from City Point in reaching the fire, for it was obliged to go around Broadway and through 12 st.

Capt. Hugh Lee of Station 6, South Boston, and Sgt. Hazlett and 29 patrolmen on the scene and the police estimate of the damage was \$200,000. The all out was sent in at 11:21 yesterday forenoon.