

BUILDING LAID WASTE BY FIRE AND BLAST



Wreckage in the wake of a fire which destroyed the warehouse of the Grasselli Chemical Company, 300 Congress street, South Boston, last night, injuring three firemen and causing damage of \$100,000.

Blast Hurls Engine Crew to Street; 3 Hurt at \$100,000 South Boston Fire

Spectacular Blaze Fought
By Fireboats—Fumes
Menace 10,000

CHEMICALS BURN IN MANY COLORS

Three firemen were injured as an explosion of acid during a spectacular four-alarm fire in the warehouse of the Grasselli Chemical Co. Ltd., 300 Congress street, South Boston, last night blew an entire engine company into the street. The fire caused loss estimated at \$100,000.

Capt. Edward Humphreys, 56, of Engine 39 and his crew of five men, the first to reach the fire, were hurled away from the building as they entered a door. Humphreys was taken to the Haymarket Relief Hospital suffering from severe burns about the hands and head. Fireman Jerome Lynch was burned on the face and ears and James Cody received cuts on the hands.

LADDERS DROP

A second explosion an instant later threw down two 30-foot ladders which had been raised against the front of the two-story wooden building, splintering them in their fall and narrowly missing firemen massed outside.

The warehouse and adjacent wharf contained thousands of carboys of nitric acid and vitriol and as the flames reached the chemicals a series of flashbacks endangered the lives of the firemen. Strangling fumes hung over nearby streets, driving back spectators.

Streams of liquid fire poured up as the metal carboys exploded and their contents ignited. Although the firemen donned gas masks, the situation became so dangerous that Chief Samuel Pope ordered his men

out of the building and left the work of controlling the blaze largely to fireboats.

The fire started from an undetermined cause in the warehouse which has a frontage of 100 feet on Congress street and stretches back 300 feet to the waterfront along a wharf which ends at the Congress street drawbridge. Daniel Sullivan, the regular night watchman, was at home ill, and his two sons, William and John, were taking his place.

William told Chief Pope that at 8 o'clock he made his rounds of the warehouse and found everything in order. At 9 o'clock, while making another tour of inspection, he smelled smoke and went down to the boiler room to see if there was a fire. While he was searching the firemen burst in announcing that the front of the building was ablaze, and he and his brother reached the street just ahead of the first explosion.

10,000 SEE BLAZE

More than 10,000 persons assembled on the Dorchester side of Fort Point channel to watch the brilliant display as the chemicals burned with many-colored flames. The roofs of buildings in the downtown district were also points of vantage for thousands of spectators. Police Superintendent Edward Fallon assigned a heavy police detail to keep the Congress street bridge clear and prevent a traffic jam.

The two fireboats Matthew Boyle and John Dowd, berthed a short distance from the warehouse, moved up to the warehouse pier and poured heavy streams of water on the fire at short range, bringing it under control. Because of the high tide the boats were near the pier level and their streams swept the entire front of the burning building.

Two freight cars loaded with chemicals on a siding on Sleeper street, adjoining the warehouse, were threatened until the fireboats spread a water curtain between them and the fire. A similar precaution prevented a spread of the flames to the six-story warehouse of the Atlas

Terminal Stores, across Sleeper street, which contained large stocks of wool and other materials.

The fire was discovered by District Chief William Donovan, who noticed the flames as he was driving across the Congress street bridge and turned in the first alarm.

Other offices in the building which were damaged were those of the Inter City Transportation Co., Joseph Lorenzetti, trucking, the Standard Transportation Co., Guy's Trucking, Reynolds Brothers Corporation, storage and twine, Augusta & Barry, trucking; Andrew K. Taylor, truckman; the Boston Forwarding & Transfer Co., Klein-Farris Co., foundry supplies, and the Atlas Terminal Stores Co., owners of the building.