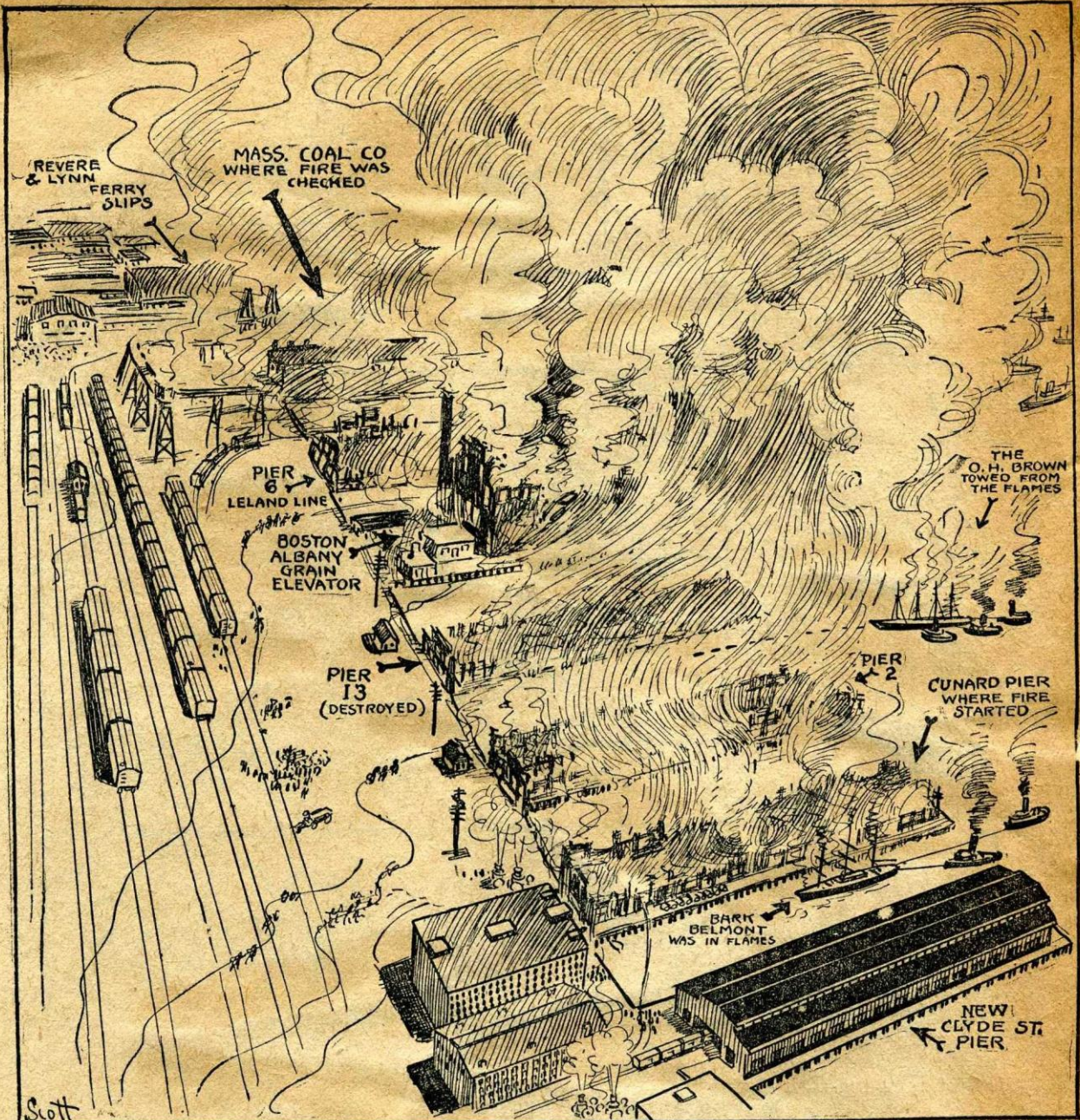


Cunard Pier Fire, July 8, 1908,
Marginal & Clyde Streets, East Boston.

Spectacular Scene Drew Big Crowds to the Water Front



Sketch by Post artist giving a birdseye view of the fire district

HUB'S FIREBOAT A "TUB"

Waterfront Damage Could Have Been Greatly Restricted with Proper Floating Fighters

"There was no need of the fire spreading beyond the elevator," said a leading member of the Boston fire department last night, "if we had even decent protection for the waterfront in the shape of fireboats. The facilities we have are poorer than those of any port in the country; poorer, in fact, than those of cities whose commerce and properties on the harbor are excellent when compared with Boston's.

"At the fire today we had the use of one fireboat, No. 31, which can be described only as a tub. It is out of date, almost worthless, and hardly repays the work of sending it to a fire. The other boat that we have, No. 44, while far better than 31, is old, and the one crying need of Boston today is at least two new boats that will be of some use in fighting fire. At the present time we are merely inviting conflagrations such as this.

"Time after time the department has urged fireboats. Fire after fire has shown that our entire water front is practically at the mercy of the flames and we get no response.

"Contrast our situation with that of New York, where there are 10 fireboats, three of them scarcely out of the builders' hands and fitted with all the latest contrivances for keeping down a dock fire. We have two boats, one of them perhaps to be considered fair and the other simply useless.

"What we need is at least two new boats with great boiler capacity, the newest developments in pumps and drawing about six or seven feet of water. Our harbor, on account of the river where fires are apt to occur, the great rise and fall of the tides, and the frequent mudholes, make it necessary to have boats drawing less water than those which can be used elsewhere.

Present Feeble Resources

"And look what we have. The one good boat, which we could not use today as it is undergoing repairs, draws 11 feet of water, while the other, while drawing only about six or seven feet, is worn out and simply serves as an object lesson to the men to show what we might do with decent boats.

"Boat 31, which was our only resource today, can throw only 5000 gallons a minute. No. 44 is better as she can throw 6500 gallons, and a 6000-gallon boat is classed as a good one. But the latest New York boats get as much as 9000 gallons a minute through their hose, so you see what an unenviable position we are in.

Two Small Boats Wanted

"The fire today was an object lesson, one might say. But we've had object lessons before time and time again, and what good did they ever do?

"Commissioner Parker is on the right track, I think, in his desire for two small boats instead of one large one, and it seems as though the blaze today would cause work to be started on them

at once, but we have had so many rebuffs in trying for more boats that we are not hoping any too much.

"Fireboat 31 is just a tub, nothing more. She is slow, so slow that a fire can get a tremendous headway before she arrives, and then skip from dock to dock long before she can shift fast enough to keep up with it.

"Then again, she is unwieldy, and where she will go when it is necessary to steer carefully and closely is always guesswork. She was built about 1889, so you can see how far back we are. There is time for a good many improvements in 18 years.

"Fireboat 44 was built a year earlier than 31 even, but she is fast, and her pumps are far more capable. When she comes from being repaired she will be a dependable boat, although far short of what she ought to be.

New York Better Fixed

"The two new boats that have just been delivered to the New York department and one that is about ready to go into commission are 131 feet long, of great boiler capacity and fast.

"Fireboat 31 is 125 feet long, and 44 is 110 feet long. But, as I have said, our peculiar needs in Boston are for boats not over 80 feet long. We need two, need them in the worst way. At present we have a couple of boats on the Boston side of the river, and you can see that good headway may be made by flames on the East Boston side before we can get across. We ought to have two boats on each side of the harbor at least, and three would be preferable.

Can't Fight From Land

"A lot of people think it is possible to fight a fire on the waterfront from the land side. It can't be done. The peculiar shape of docks, the long piers stretching into the water make the fire engines on land have to work through long lines where the pressure is lost, and all they can do in the case of a fire like that of today is to beat back the flames.

"They simply cannot put out the fire if it is a large one. They can hem it in to a certain area, but their availability ends there.

"A fireboat is supposed to get right into the fire between the docks and have her lines almost on the flames. If we could have had one more boat today we could have saved thousands of dollars worth of property. With two more boats we might have saved the elevator. I don't say that we could have saved that, but all these fine docks beyond need not be in ashes tonight if Boston had been adequately protected.

Criminal Negligence

"There is a certain sentiment against fireboats because people think that we are not apt to have water front fires often and that they are just so much money wasted. Why, if a fireboat puts out one good sized fire a year I figure that it has paid for itself. And when you take the combustible nature of docks and the millions of dollars invested in them right here in Boston it seems to me to be almost criminal that we leave them to the prey of fire."

Commissioner Parker, after the fire was

under control, said that Boston undoubtedly needed better water front protection, but doubted whether the addition of another fireboat would have checked the fire yesterday.

"We had \$95,000 appropriated for fireboats recently," he said, "and I think that we will get them. That ought to pay for two small boats which I think are more necessary here than one large one. The value of the waterfront property certainly demands more fireboats and I hope to see them started now within a very short time."

Members of the crew of Fireboat 31 said after the fire that they were greatly handicapped by the slowness of the boat and her unwieldiness.

NO TRACE OF WATCHMAN

Daniel Sullivan, 68, and Crippled, Supposed to Have Been Near When Fire Started

Daniel Sullivan, the watchman, who is missing, and who is believed to have perished in the flames, was 68 years of age. He resided with his wife and son, Daniel, Jr., at 91A Webster street, East Boston.

Mr. Sullivan was somewhat of a cripple, having to use a cane at all times. It is thought that he must have been in the locality where the fire started, as his duties generally called him there at that time daily.

He had been employed about the wharf for nearly 30 years, the last six being in the capacity of watchman.

Mr. Sullivan was a prominent member of Williams Court, M. C. O. F.

It was reported that a man named James Crowley was missing.

No one could be found who knew of him. A search of boarding houses in that locality failed to furnish any clue to such a person. Several families of the name were visited, but none knew of him.

TALBOT'S BROADWAY

STORE FIRE LOSS \$5000

Investigation discloses the fact that the loss by fire at Talbot's Broadway, South Boston, store fire Monday, will exceed \$5000 instead of \$1500, as first reported. A large and extensive assortment of seasonable men's clothing and furnishings is carried at this store, and the loss by fire, smoke and water proved to be much more extensive than at first supposed.

FIRE ON BLOSSOM ST.

Shoe Store Damaged About \$150—Firemen Rouse Sleepers.

Fire in the shoe store of Woolf, at the corner of Blossom st. and Broadway, which box 24 was rung in at 2:10 this morning, damaged his place and stock about \$150, and caused some alarm among the tenants of the three upper floors. The fire started in the rear of the store, and had been smoldering for some time when it was discovered by a policeman on his way home. The smoke was

\$1,500,000 FIRE IN BOSTON HARBOR

Flames Sweep Quarter of a Mile
of East Boston Piers—Vessels
Narrowly Escape Destruction.

ONE LIFE MAY BE LOST

Four Piers, Three Warehouses, and a
Grain Elevator Are Destroyed—
Railroads Lose \$1,000,000.

BOSTON, July 8.—Fanned by a brisk north wind a fire believed to have been caused by spontaneous combustion or a locomotive spark swept nearly a quarter of a mile of the harbor front of East Boston late to-day, causing a property loss estimated at nearly \$1,500,000. Much of the loss falls upon the Boston & Albany Railroad.

Daniel Sullivan, a watchman at the Cunard Line pier, is reported missing and is thought to have perished.

To-day's fire was the most destructive and extensive that has started along the harbor front for many years. Within a half hour of the time the first burst of flame was discovered four piers, three warehouses, a grain elevator containing 30,000 bushels of grain, and many loaded freight cars had been destroyed.

The Devonian is Saved.

Several vessels and lighters narrowly escaped destruction. The big Leyland Line steamer *Devonian*, which arrived yesterday from Liverpool, was moored at one of the piers which was destroyed. The big craft was warped out into the stream without even having a square inch of paint blistered.

Less fortunate were the British bark *Belmont* of Yarmouth, N. S., and the schooners *Paul Palmer*, a five-masted craft, and the *O. H. Brown*, a four-masted. The *Belmont* was moored by steel cables to the pier where the fire started. So quickly did the flames envelop the wharf and warehouse that it was impossible to slip the cables from the mooring posts, and it was necessary to resort to the tedious process of cutting a half dozen or more of the great wire ropes.

By the time the *Belmont* was warped out into the stream the paint had been burned off her steel hull, her cabins had been practically destroyed, her lifeboats charred and ruined, and her spars, sails, and rigging so badly burned as to make a complete new equipment necessary.

The *Palmer* escaped with slight damage to her foretopsail and fore rigging, while the rigging, sails, and spars on the forward part of the *Brown* were badly charred. Several lighters were towed to places of safety before the flames could reach them.

The burned area includes Piers 1 and 2 of the Grand Junction Docks, and the pier on which stood the big grain elevator, all owned by the Boston & Albany Railroad Company and used by the steamers of the Cunard Line, and Pier 6, owned by the Leyland Line. This property extends in a southeasterly direction along the water front, from the foot of Lewis Street to the wharf of the Massachusetts Coal Company, which latter pier adjoins the East Boston ferry slip of the Boston, Revere Beach & Lynn Railroad, known as the "Narrow Gauge."

The piers destroyed were each about 800 feet long and from 200 to 300 feet wide. Piers 1, 2, and 6 were covered each by a large warehouse extending the entire length and breadth of the wharves. Between Piers 2 and 6 was the pier upon which the elevator stood.

Laborers Run for Their Lives.

The fire started at 4:15 P. M. in the warehouse of Pier 1, Grand Junction Docks. In this warehouse was stored an immense quantity of combustible material, including wool, Egyptian cotton, grease, and oil. First, a slight burst of flame was seen, then a cry was raised, and three minutes later the entire warehouse from end to end was a mass of flames. At the time the fire was discovered there were 100 laborers at work on the pier, and with all of them it was a race for life.

Within a few minutes from the time the fire started the flames and blazing embers jumped across the slip and communicated with the warehouse on Pier 2. A few moments later the grain elevator burst into flames, and then the fire jumped across to Pier 6 of the Leyland Line.

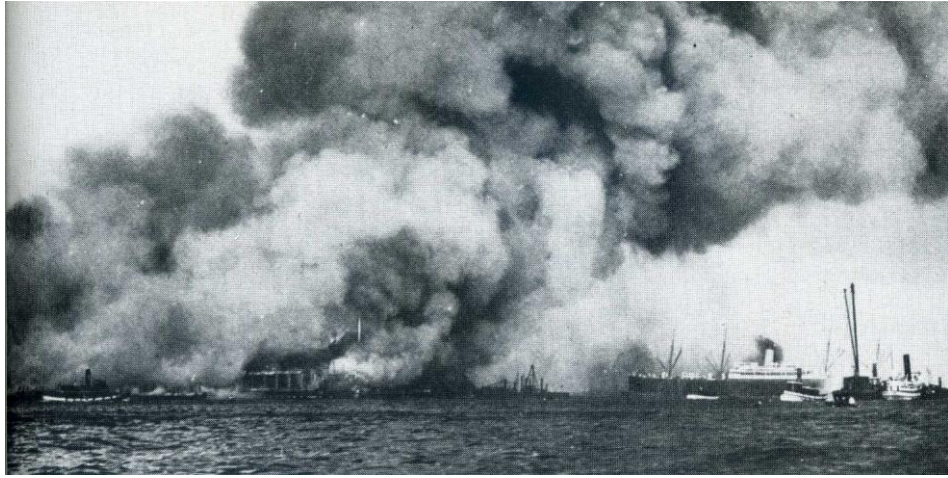
In each of the warehouses destroyed there were many cars loaded with freight for export. All of these cars, with their contents, were destroyed.

Between Pier 6 and the pier to the eastward, that of the Massachusetts Coal Company, a wide stretch of water intervened, and it was here that the fire was checked. Streams from the fireboats, harbor tugs, and practically the entire strength of the Boston and Chelsea Fire Departments were concentrated.

Fortunately the wind was blowing off shore and the flames did not work back from the water front.

On account of the proximity of the fire to its East Boston ferry slips the ferryboats of the "Narrow Gauge" road suspended operations completely, making it impossible for thousands of suburbanites living in Winthrop, Revere, and Lynn to reach their homes, while thousands of others who had been enjoying a day's outing at the beach resorts were unable to return to the city until a late hour to-night.

The Boston & Albany Railroad, New York Central, and Hudson River Railroad, lessee, are the greatest losers by the fire. It is estimated that the railroads' loss is \$1,000,000, covered by blanket insurance. The loss of freight and grain burned is placed at fully \$400,000. Practically all of it was insured.



The Cunard Pier Fire, East Boston, May 1, 1908