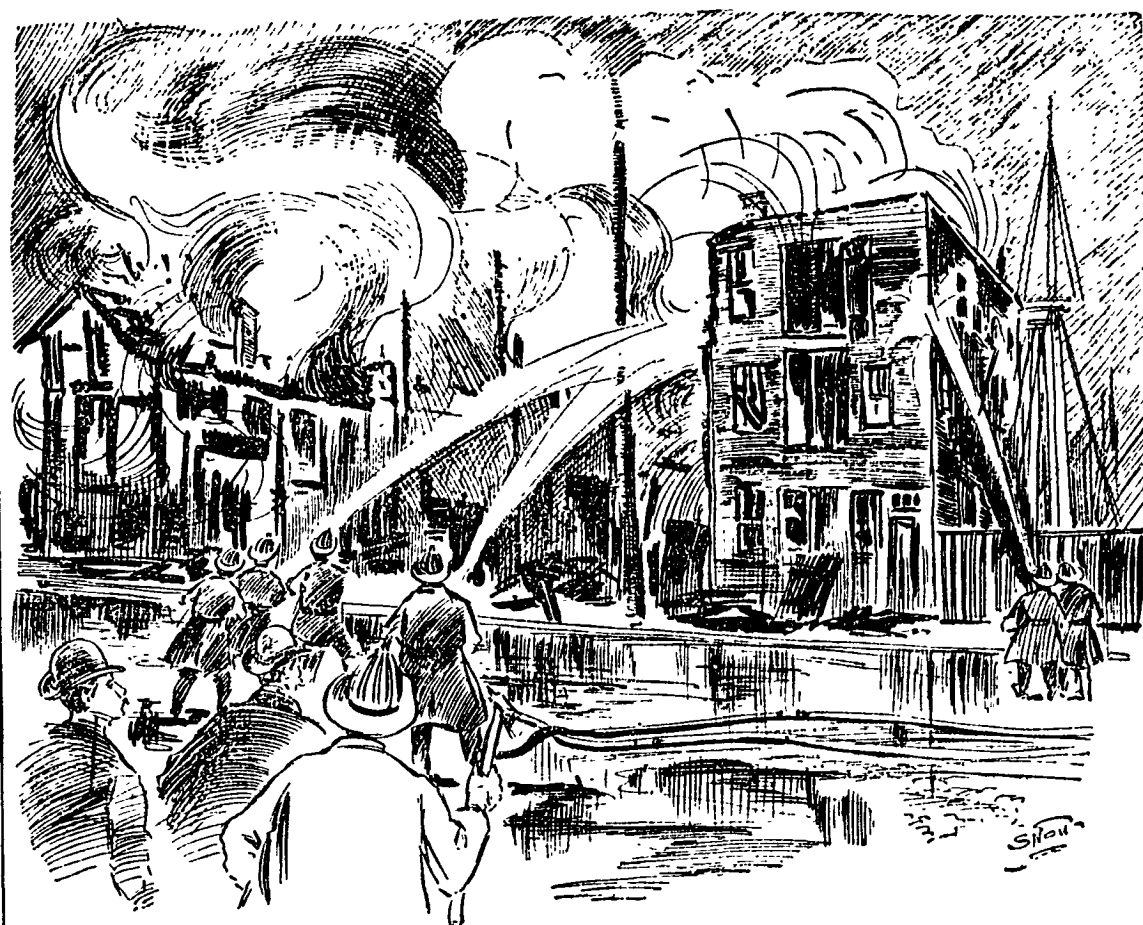


EAST BOSTON'S BIG SCARE.

District Upset by Fire and Continuous Clanging of Alarm Bells.



FIGHTING THE FLAMES ON BORDER ST.

Four Small Buildings Were Destroyed, But Many Others Had to Be Vacated—Many Women and Children Rescued From Tenement Houses—Sparks Ignited the Roofs of a Score of Structures—Freakish Play of Flames—Loss Not Above \$15,000—Fireman Breaks a Leg.

East Boston had a big fire scare yesterday afternoon. Four small wooden buildings on Border st were burned to the ground, five three-story tenement houses on that street were scorched so badly that the occupants had to abandon their homes temporarily and four dwelling houses on Meridian st were also touched by the fire. One of the Meridian st dwellings was that of John L. Bates, speaker of the house of representatives.

The loss by fire and water is comparatively small, the highest estimate being under \$15,000, but the scare was a big one. From 3.45 to 4.23 p m the fire bells were clanging constantly. People in the city proper thought the island was being burned up.

The first alarm was sounded from box 638, at 3.45. The second alarm came in at 3.57, followed by a third at 4.03, and then came alarms from two other boxes, 637 at 4.06 and 639 at 4.23. Apparatus from all parts of the city hastened to the island via the ferry boats. For the first time the horseless engine was ferried across the harbor to answer an alarm. Aerial ladders and other big pieces of apparatus also crossed on the ferry.

It was amid great excitement that the firemen fought the fire. The flames were freaky. They leaped over buildings and set fire to dwellings two blocks away. Sparks flew fully three blocks distant and set fire to three dwellings in Harmony pl.

A feature of the fire was the rescue of women and children from tenement houses on Border st, directly across from the fire. C. H. Moberg of 123 Bennington st, Lewis Murphy of the grocery firm of Murphy Bros and Lewis McKie performed brave work. Some of the tenants were so frightened they had locked the doors of their homes, and it was necessary for the rescuers to force an entrance to the buildings to save the women and children from suffocation.

In less than half an hour after the fire started four buildings were blackened ruins. As near as could be learned by the firemen the fire started in a storehouse of John A. Smith, roofer, who occupied part of the building at 256 Border st, the storehouse being numbered 258. This building was owned by Geo. L. Sharkford. There were many barrels of tar, tarred paper and other roofing material in the storehouse.

There was considerable combustible material in the building, and there is no doubt in the minds of the firemen that the fire was caused by spontaneous combustion. Before the workmen who discovered it could get to the signal box to sound an alarm this building was enveloped in flames, and surrounding structures were then catching.

The storehouse where the fire started was a two-story frame structure of little value. No. 256 was a two-story frame building, which was occupied by W. U. McKie, carpenter and builder; John A. Smith, roofer, and William Staples, also a carpenter. There were a dozen workmen in this building when the flames reached it. All were forced to abandon the building without a chance to save any of the property. Five carpenters lost all their tools, each individual loss being about \$50. The storehouse was burned flat to the ground, and the building No 256 has only a front wall standing.

Women and Children Saved.

An alleyway separated the storehouse and the 3½-story building, 264 Border st, which was owned by John Sexton, a stevedore. The front part of the building was used as an office. The building extended from the street to the water front, and the rear portion was used as a stable. The stable was rented by William Wescott. The horses were gotten out.

This building was burned to the ground. The next building was a three-story frame structure, 270 Border st, owned by John A. McKie, shipwright.

The building, which was pretty well filled with ship chandlery stores, was gutted, the contents being destroyed.

John A. McKie's loss will be upward of \$5000. John A. Smith's place was damaged about \$1500, John Sexton's upward of \$2000 and the other losses will aggregate \$3000 or \$4000. With the exception of the carpenters all had insurance sufficient to cover the loss. The other losses are to owners of tenement and dwelling houses, the roofs of which were touched and the furniture of tenants wet down. The loss to the home of Speaker Bates is estimated at about \$1500.

The tar and tarred paper made an excellent fuel for the flames, and sent out great clouds of heavy, black smoke which enveloped the houses, causing much confusion and alarm. Nos. 257 to 265 were all set on fire by sparks and flames which leaped across the street. Three families occupied each building.

Moberg, Murphy and McKie rushed into the buildings and carried women and children through the clouds of smoke to a place of safety. In some of the flats women were sitting on the floor hugging their children to their breasts, overcome by fear and unable to help themselves. In most cases all their worldly possessions were in their homes and uninsured. As is often the case these people stood in their homes watching the fire get nearer and nearer and making no effort whatever to save their belongings.

The timely arrival of the fire apparatus prevented the utter destruction of these tenements. The district chief saw instantly that the buildings across the street were of little value and his attention was almost entirely devoted to the saving of surrounding property, letting the four small frame buildings burn. Of course there were streams of water played on the fire, but line after line of hose was stretched and streams of water poured on the roofs of the tenements and dwelling houses in the immediate vicinity.

In one or two of the flats directly across the street from the fire, doors and windows were broken and some of the furniture slightly wet down, but the damage to these buildings is trifling.

Great confusion was caused by the flying sparks, which descended upon the roofs of buildings blocks away and started fires. Box 638 is located upon the dyewood company's wharf, near the place of the origin of the fire. This box was sounded for the original fire. When sparks caused fires to start in

dwelling houses on Meridian st the owners became alarmed, and sounded an alarm from box 637, located at the corner of Meridian and Princeton sts. Property owners also sounded an alarm from box 639, located at the house of engine 5 on Marion st, to prevent the destruction of their property. The constant ringing of bells alarmed the chief fire fighters in the city proper as much as it did the citizens living on the island.

Thousands of people crossed the ferry to watch the fire. Acting superintendent Rurrill sent out a general alarm from police headquarters to all stations, which caused every available policeman to start for the fire. Deputy superintendent Pierce went to the scene, and, with Capt Irish, directed the police arrangements.

Fireman Breaks a Leg.

Thomas J. Sullivan, 31, of 5 Wallace st Charlestown, a fireman on ladder 8, while jumping off his truck, fractured his leg and received lacerations of the ligaments of the joint of the knee. His leg was put in a plaster cast at the emergency hospital, after which he was sent home.

Wire commissioner Flood sent a dozen or more men to the fire to look after the wires. Harmony pl is about 300 feet southwest of Border st, and there are about two dozen dwelling houses in the place. The smoke came over in thick black volumes, hiding the sparks.

The roof of No. 9 was found to be on fire. George Adams notified the family occupying the first floor and then rushed upstairs to the roof and tried to extinguish the flames by stamping on them, but was unsuccessful, and called for water. After throwing considerable water on the blaze he put it out with but very little damage.

A blaze was then noticed on the roof of the house occupied by Mrs Lord on the opposite side and it was extinguished by George Lavish with very little damage. The roof of the house of J. Kirk, opposite Harmony pl, on Lexington st, also took fire. It was discovered by a man who happened to be on his way to the big fire and he notified Mrs Kirk. A ladder was secured and several men put out the blaze before much damage was done.

As soon as the fire reached the tar in the roofing establishment of John Smith on Border st, huge flames leaped high into the air. The wind being slightly westerly, the sheets of flame shot com-

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EAST BOSTON'S BIG SCARE.

the Hathaway house and the third story of the Favour building. This building is owned by the Twenty Associates of East Boston.

There were many houses in and around Meridian st that were threatened and even had slight blazes, but the loss in all these cases will be nominal.

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pletely over the tenement houses on Border st and began to endanger the long line of dwelling houses on Meridian st, which is east of Border st and parallel to it.

The cinders fell thick and fast on account of the long period of dry weather; every bit of wood was ready to ignite and a dozen roofs were on fire in a few minutes. Then it was that the third and fourth alarms were deemed expedient, and the property owners and occupants of houses in that vicinity began to be apprehensive of a sweeping conflagration. The arrival of enough fire apparatus to constitute a Fourth of July parade, together with prompt and effective work, caused the alarm to subside.

Rubber Blankets Used.

There are four separate two-story wooden dwelling houses on the west side of Meridian st that were damaged. These were numbered from 280 to 294 inclusive and all suffered in about the same respect. The roofs of each were burned through and the household furniture in the upper stories badly damaged. On the floors below, the damage is almost entirely confined to the action of the water.

The loss to Speaker Bates' house and to the others would undoubtedly have been very much heavier but for the excellent work done by the protective department. In every one of the four damaged buildings, rubber blankets were thrown over the furniture which was grouped in the center of each room. In some cases the water dripped through the ceilings, but there was little unprotected property to be damaged.

The other half of the house occupied by Speaker Bates was occupied by Mrs Phoebe Atkins, who had the second floor, the first floor being vacant. Mrs Atkins sustained quite a loss from water.

A narrow escape for one of her roomers furnished quite a little excitement on the street. Mr Augustus Barnes, 60 years old and a cripple from rheumatism, had to be carried out of the house in his wheel chair. His attendant, a colored man named Gabriel Alexander, scouted the help of a few bystanders and he was taken directly across the street to a restaurant.

But Mr Barnes was not entirely safe here, as this building caught fire. By the liveliest hustling the fire was subdued, and Mr Barnes breathed easier. He is a brother of Gen Joseph H. Barnes.

Rev L. B. Bates, father of Speaker Bates, was a prominent figure on Meridian st during the excitement. His own house was flooded and required a good deal of his attention but after the worst seemed to have passed he went about directing the distribution of ice-cold lemonade to the hard-working firemen.

The house numbered 294 Meridian st was owned and occupied by Mr and Mrs John Hathaway. When the fire reached their residence they left the house, leaving the firemen to do the best they could. A 4-year-old little girl was carried out of this house by the firemen.

Closely joining the Hathaway house was a small three-story frame building. The first floor is occupied by James Favour. He keeps a cigar and tobacco store in the front of the building, and in the rear there is a large room devoted to pool. He suffered a small loss, as the protective department took good care of his property. Upstairs Mrs Wilson had several rooms which were rented to lodgers. Again the protective department did excellent work and saved most all the furniture.

The fire was very stubborn between