

# **FIRE IN ESTES BLOCK, LOSS ABOUT \$100,000**

## **Firemen Cased in Ice.**

## **Four Alarms for An Ugly Blaze.**

## **Narrow Escapes from a Catastrophe.**

A fire which broke out in the Estes building, numbered 210 to 216 Summer st., caused four alarms from box 48 last evening, and resulted in a loss which will probably reach something like \$75,000 to \$100,000. No man can tell within \$10,000 of what the actual loss will be until a careful survey of the premises is had, but the estimates on it made by tenants who had suffered varied between the figures given above.

It wasn't a particularly spectacular fire, but it was a stubborn one to fight, and the firemen engaged in the battle fully earned their salaries for a full month in the several hours they were engaged on the building. The temperature was so low that the water which fell on the fire fighters froze as it struck

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# ESTES BLOCK FIRE

## LOSS \$100,000.

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them and coated them thickly. It hampered them in their movements, and had the effect of making the work of conquering the flames rather slow.

The building in which the fire was is really a double one. It is known as the Estes press building. In the center and running lengthwise of Summer st there is a heavy dividing wall, making the structure really two buildings, but under one roof. On the west it runs to Estes pl and on the east to Gilbert pl. In the rear of it is Aldine st, a narrow little thoroughfare which is scarcely more than an alley.

In the front part of the building are a number of wool companies; the rear part, where the fire broke out, and where it was confined, is occupied principally by bookbinders and by other people engaged in the printing trades, while across Aldine st are several wool warehouses, so that Chief Cheswell had good cause for apprehension when he arrived in response to the first alarm and saw that the fire had already secured an all too promising start on the upper floors of the rear building.

### Discovery of the Fire.

The fire was discovered by a man who was passing the building on Summer st and who noticed a strong smell of smoke. He went into Estes pl and saw smoke curling lazily out of the windows on the sixth and seventh floors at the corner of Aldine st and Estes pl, and ran to box 48 at Dewey sq, from which he sent the first alarm at 9:08.

There was more smoke, but no visible signs of a blaze when Chief Cheswell arrived, but he knew the character of the contents of the building and of those surrounding it, and he sent a second alarm at 9:17. The response of the apparatus was not as prompt as usual, for, although there were from three to six horses on each engine, the heavy snow prevented fast traveling, and then there was also some delay in getting at the hydrants and dragging the hose through the piled-up snow in the rear of the building and getting streams on.

An aerial ladder was raised from Aldine st and three ladders were run up against the building from Estes pl, and the firemen carried lines of hose, principally from chemical engines, up them at first and tried to get at the fire.

All the fire they could find at first was in the northwest corner of the sixth floor and it seemed to the firemen that they would easily master it with the force which had come on the second alarm, and they held off on throwing streams of water into the building for several minutes, anxious to prevent a water damage, which, from the nature of the business carried on in the building, must be serious if solid streams were thrown.

The fire was so deceptive that there was scarcely a warning of it when it burst, simultaneously it seemed, from all the windows on the sixth and seventh floors, not alone on the Aldine-st side and the Estes-pl end, but on the Gilbert-pl end as well. In fact the burst of flame came so suddenly that the firemen who were on the three ladders raised from Estes pl had to drop their lines of hose and slide down to the ground, while the flames drove the men off of the aerial ladder, and they pulled the lever and let that ladder drop with a clatter which could be heard a block away.

### Value of Iron Shutters Demonstrated

Chief Cheswell ordered his operator to send in a fourth alarm, omitting the third, as soon as the flames burst out, but before the first of the additional apparatus which had been summoned had arrived the flames were bursting through the roof, and, driven by a considerable breeze from the west, were licking against the side of the General Electric building.

At that time the wisdom which had provided the General Electric building with iron shutters for every window, and which had provided the Estes Press building with a solid dividing wall, became apparent, for if it had not been for the iron shutters of the Electric building, it would have been set afire on every floor from the fifth up, and the flames would have swept through the Estes building to Summer st. As it was, the firemen managed to keep the fire entirely confined to the rear section of the Estes building, but it was a desperate fight for more than two hours to do it.

With the coming of the reinforcements Chief Cheswell sent both water towers into Aldine st, and with six engines pumping into them he soon had powerful streams sweeping through the sixth and seventh floors, while he attacked the blaze from both the buildings which adjoined it.

The New England building is just across narrow Estes pl on the west of the Estes building, and at the sixth floor there is a bridge connecting them. From this bridge three streams were turned on the fire, and several other streams were also thrown from that side, the firemen directing them standing in the windows of the New England building.

The General Electric building also furnished the firemen with a good vantage point from which to fight the blaze, for the firemen dragged several streams of hose into that structure, and when the water was already on they swung open the iron shutters, and with the shutters as shields against the terrible heat turned the streams directly into the blazing upper floors of the burning building.

### Damage Mostly by Water.

The powerful streams from the two water towers in the rear of the building and the several streams which were reaching the seat of the fire from the two ends of it made no appreciable impression on the blaze for almost an hour, but finally the deluge of water began to tell, and at 11:30 it was pretty definitely determined that the fire was under control, although it was not out. The "all-out" signal was not sounded until early this morning.

The two top floors which were occupied by E. Fleming & Co. bookbinders, were completely burned out, and most of the roof was burned off. There was some fire damage on the fifth floor, but the

loss which the fire itself occasioned was confined wholly to those upper floors.

It is probable that the greater part of the total damage was caused by water, for tons upon tons of it were poured into the upper stories of the building and simply soaked and flooded every floor below, including the basement, which was filled to overflowing.

After the basement filled up the water began running out into Aldine st, and the two alleys alongside, and in the course of an hour or so it was knee deep, and the firemen who had to wade through it had an unhappy time. It was so cold, too, that a skim of ice formed on top of it while the firemen were still at work, but the fire-fighters stuck faithfully to their posts.

One of the hosemen who was equipped with hip boots and a heavy rubber coat was trying to move a line of hose when he slipped, and falling down went clear under the water, which soaked him to the skin, and then froze his clothing stiff, but he stuck to his job.

The stoker and engineer of engine 39 had the toughest experience of any of the engine men. Their engine was sent to a hydrant directly in the rear of the burning building, and they not only got the benefit of vagrant streams of water which came over them from the top of the building, but when the basement had become flooded and Aldine st got afloat they were soon up to their knees in the icy water and trying to keep their engine at work.

### Firemen Escaped a Falling Wall.

Finally the water got so high that it ran into the firebox of the engine, and in a short time, although a detail of firemen were sent there to try to open the drains into the sewers, it had put out the fire and engine 39 was what the firemen called a "dead one." When the fire was drowned out and the engine was out of steam an extra effort to open the drains was made, and after a little while the water about the engine was lowered enough to render starting a new fire possible, and engine 39 renewed its activities at the old stand.

There were very few accidents and none of them were serious. A little boy who wouldn't give his name was struck in the back by a brick that a stream from one of the water towers knocked out of the wall; but he said he guessed he wasn't hurt very much, and refused to let an ambulance surgeon look at him. He said he was going home and limped away.

Shortly after 11 o'clock a section of the wall where the roof had been burned away on the seventh floor of the Aldine-st side fell with a crash directly toward a part of the crew of ladder who were working on the ground. Other firemen saw the wall coming down and shouted a warning and the laddermen ran for their lives. All of them got away in safety except ladderman Frank A. Taylor of ladder 1. A brick hit him on the left wrist and hand and cut a long gash in both. He had his wound dressed by an ambulance surgeon from the City hospital, who was waiting in Summer st, and then Taylor went back to work.

There were about 75 policemen on hand, under command of Lieut Frohock of division 2. Details of patrolmen were sent to him from stations 1, 3, 4 and 5. Police Commissioner Adams came down on the fourth alarm, and stood around a while.

### The Occupants.

The occupants of the Estes Press building, in the rear, where the fire was, were:

Basement, E. Fleming & Co. stock-room; Puritan Press; second floor, Puritan Press; third floor, George E. Scott & Sons, electrotypers; fourth floor, MacDonald & Allen, bookbinders, and MacDonald & Son, bookbinders; fifth floor, MacDonald & Sons; sixth and seventh floors, E. Fleming & Co.

The Fleming concern includes Charles T. Baker, Charles B. and Samuel N. Fleming. They are bookbinders.

The front of the building, which is entered at both 212 and 214 Summer st, is occupied by the following: Dobson & Wilde, wool; Salter Bros & Co, wool; George Harrington, wool; the Follet wool company; Otis E. White & Co, wool; Williams & Smith, wool; Puritan press, Pinkham press, U S specialty company, Francis A. Nicholls & Co, publishers; H. M. Caldwell company, publishers; Dana Estes & Co, Melsterschaft publishing company, H. W. Caldwell publishing company, treasurer's office; Ludwig Gerhard, real estate agent; John A. Andrews, engraver.