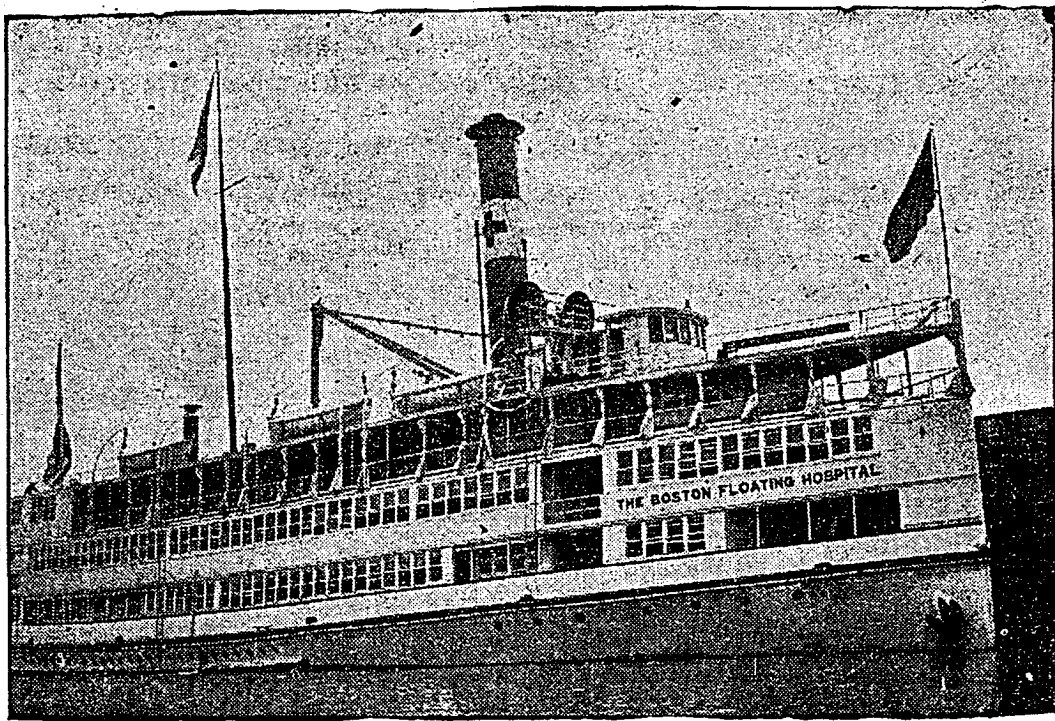


# FLOATING HOSPITAL IS DESTROYED BY FIRE

Captain Leaps Into Harbor, Climbs to Pier by Hawser  
—Three Escape in Rowboat—Fireman Knocked  
• Into Harbor, Saved by Lieutenant



BOSTON FLOATING HOSPITAL

## Four Alarms For Blaze—Damage \$200,000

Swept by flames which leaped to the sky and turned nighttime in Boston Harbor virtually into daylight, the Boston Floating Hospital, home of hundreds of sick Boston children during the Summer months, was destroyed by fire last night. The steamer was burned down to its steel hull, almost to the water's edge, causing a damage estimated at more than \$200,000.

Four members of the crew of the hospital ship, and two firemen, narrowly escaped death as a result of the blaze, which necessitated the sounding of four alarms in quick succession.

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# FLOATING HOSPITAL DESTROYED BY FIRE

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## Fire Spectacle

The flames, leaping into the clouds, could be seen for miles around and attracted thousands of sightseers, furnishing a fire spectacle that has not been equalled in Boston for 25 years.

Fortunately, the fire occurred before the hospital ship began its daily cruises down the harbor with its cargo of suffering children. Had the blaze started a month later, scores of children would have been imperilled.

For the past few weeks, the hospital has been undergoing repair and remodeling, in preparation for the coming Summer. It was planned to open the institution during the latter part of the month. When the

fire started last night, there were only four men aboard her, Capt William Grover, Eliot Myrick, and Ralph Renshaw, members of the crew, and Lawrence Penny, watchman.

## Captain Leaps Into Harbor

Capt Grover was the first to learn of the fire. He was asleep in the office on the main deck, starboard side, when he was awakened by the crackling of flames.



G. LORING BRIGGS.  
Manager of the Boston Floating Hospital.

Capt Grover leaped out of his bunk, opened the office door, and was met by a wall of fire. He slammed the door shut and turned on the emergency alarm to arouse the other three men, who were asleep on the day patients' deck, aft.

Capt Grover then jumped out of the office window into the harbor. He swam around in the dark until he found a steel hawser, and with the aid of this worked his way ashore.

But for Capt Grover's prompt act in sounding the alarm, Penny, Myrick and Renshaw might not have escaped from the ship, for there was no possible chance of the captain working his way to them.

## Three Escape in Rowboat

The other three men jumped from their bunks, upon hearing the alarm, and, releasing the after rowboat, got in, let themselves safely down into the harbor and rowed ashore.

Capt Grover and his companions were cared for by Sergt Hugh J. Marsten of the Harbor Police Station on Commercial st. Capt Grover was taken immediately to the boiler room where he was dried out. His three companions escaped from the ship with barely any clothing.

During the first part of the fire the ship's crew was unaccounted for and grave fears were felt for their safety. When G. Loring Briggs, manager of the hospital ship, arrived at the scene, he was greatly worried about the fate of the men.

It was at first understood that there were seven men on board the ship. As the hour advanced and there was no sign of the missing crew, Medical Examiner George B. Magrath stepped up to Mr Briggs and inquired in what part of the ship the men were supposed to have been sleeping.

Mr Briggs finally made his way to the Harbor Police Station and was greatly relieved to learn from Sergt Marsten that the crew were all accounted for and safe.

Mr Briggs then hurried down to the boiler room to congratulate the men upon their narrow escape. All four were none the worse for their experience.

Mr Briggs, who was at his home in Brookline when the first broke out, received the first notification of it from the Globe office. His son, Alden Briggs, took him to the scene of the fire in an automobile.

## Lieutenant Saves Fireman

Two firemen narrowly escaped death as a result of the fire. While manning a hose on the side of the southerly side of North End Pier, Thomas O'Brien of Fireboat 44 was washed overboard by a stream of water, misdirected by some of his mates. He fell into the harbor, but after him at once dove Lieut Dennis M. Condon of Ladder 1.

Condon waited only long enough to remove his rubber coat and boots. He aided O'Brien in supporting himself, the latter fireman being greatly hampered by his coat and boots. Other men threw ropes to them and the pair were quickly brought to shore. O'Brien was taken to the Haymarket Relief Hospital for treatment for immersion, while Condon insisted on returning to duty.

## Policeman Discovers Fire

The hospital ship was tied up at the southerly side of North End Pier, near the end of what is known throughout the North End district as "Lover's Lane." It was through the activity of patrolman Michael J. Rizzo of the Hanover-st Station in clearing the pier of "spooners" that the fire was discovered as soon as it was.

After clearing the pier of "lovers," Rizzo turned about to return to Commercial st. Chancing to glance back over his shoulder he caught a flicker of flame on the pier itself, nearly amidships of the boat. While he watched it for only an instant, the flame communicated itself to the boat and began to spread.

Rizzo ran to the nearest box and sounded the alarm. He then ran back to the ship, to find that the flames were leaping to the upper decks of the vessel. As he watched, Rizzo saw the men aboard the boat make their way on deck in the lurid glare of the flames and reach the rail. He then lost sight of them and was unable to tell whether they got off or not.

As soon as the first alarm apparatus reached the scene, the second was ordered. The first was sounded at 11:22; the second came three minutes later. The third was given at 11:26 and the fourth at 11:31. All within nine minutes of each other. So fast did the alarms come in that the tapper was sounding steadily from the first to fourth alarms.

## Flames Leap Up 300 Feet

Even with fireboats directing heavy lines of water on the burning ship from the water and with land fire forces fighting furiously to save the craft, it was evident from the first that the hospital was doomed. The flames spread to the upper decks at an almost incredible rate of speed, and the fire leaped fully 300 feet into the air.

The reflection in the sky could be seen for miles around. Automobiles swept into Commercial st in great numbers, and the entire North End turned out to witness the spectacle. The glare in the sky was seen as far as Salem, and so long did the ship burn that one automobilist made the

trip from that city and arrived in time to see the spectacle almost at its height.

The harbor, from Charlestown Bridge to the East Boston and South Boston shores, was as light as day. The flickering light of the flames was reflected from the neighboring buildings. Newspaper offices were besieged with telephone calls seeking information as to the whereabouts and extent of the fire.

## Excitement in North End

North End Pier and the park itself was filled with spectators. From the time the flames first leaped into the sky the streets were filled with people and automobiles, the excitement rivaling in extent the consternation that reigned during the great "molasses disaster" of a few years ago, almost at the same spot.

Although it was evident that the ship was doomed from the start, the firemen fought vigorously against the flames, and were at last able to extinguish them as they reached the hull. Chief Daniel F. Sennott was in charge of the battle, after the second alarm, and afterward complimented the men on their work.

The chief especially congratulated Lieut Condon on his rescue of O'Brien, saying that it was one of the outstanding pieces of work by a fireman in recent years.

## Fireboat Called by Radio

Just before the fire started Engine 47, one of the fireboats, received a telephone call to the effect that a four-masted schooner was ablaze off Spectacle Island. The boat made the trip to the island only to find that it was a false alarm, and the crew was about ready to give up the hunt when a radio message was received from Chief Sennott to return and aid in the fighting of the fire aboard the Floating Hospital. This is the first time that the recently-installed radio aboard the fireboats has been used to bring apparatus to a fire.

G. Loring Briggs, manager of the hospital, said after the fire that the ship itself is a total loss. The ship was valued at more than \$150,000, and this, coupled with the fact that new boilers had been installed throughout during the past few weeks at a cost of \$50,000, will bring the damage to \$200,000.

## "Spooners" May Have Set Fire

While the fire authorities are not yet certain, it is believed that the blaze may have been caused by a lighted cigarette butt, carelessly flicked on the pier by one of the "spooners" frequenting "Lovers' Lane."

During the height of the blaze the flames spread to Fiske Wharf nearby, causing slight damage to the pier. This was quickly extinguished, as was a slight blaze in a doorway across Commercial st, caused by falling embers.