

# LOSS \$75,000 IN HIGH-ST FIRE

## Firemen Driven From Ladders by Flames and Several Explosions.

### New Ladder Truck and Fort Hill-Sq Headquarters Threatened.

Four alarms following an automatic alarm were given early yesterday morning for a dangerous fire in the six-story building 221 High st, corner of Purchase st, which caused a loss estimated at \$75,000.

The building for a number of years was occupied as a brush manufactory of John L. Whiting & Son and is owned by the J. L. Whiting real estate trust. The damage to building will be at least \$15,000.

The building is occupied on the first floor and basement by Wild & Stevens, manufacturers of printers' rollers; the second by Charles L. Ireson, dealer in leather belting for mills and factories; the third by the Brooks manufactory company, makers of jewelers' cases and novelties; on the fourth by the Poole printing company; on the fifth by the Crown shoe manufacturing company, owned by the King corporation of Lynn, and on the top floor by the Burbank engraving company a A. J. Morse & Son, makers of diving apparatus and fire department supplies.

The fire started on the second floor and quickly burned up through the building and in half an hour broke out through the roof. Within a minute after the automatic alarm was sounded the crews of engine 25, ladder 14 and ladder 8 were on the scene the firehouse being separated from the burning building only by Washington ct, a narrow passageway.

Deputy Chief Grady went along with the men and immediately sent in an alarm from box 47 at 3:25, following it with a second alarm in less than 10 minutes.

The building is considered a dangerous one by the firemen, as they know the floors are loaded with heavy stock and machinery and were afraid of the walls buckling and falling out.

#### Mullen Orders Extra Alarms.

They gave their attention immediately to ventilating the building, Capt McDonald of ladder 13 and his men going around to the southerly side of the building and opening up the iron shutters with which the building is equipped. The firemen had the advantage of being able to attack the fire from all sides.

The building is bounded by High st, Purchase st, Belcher lane and Washington ct. Both of the latter are so narrow that the men found it difficult to work in them, and more than once they were forced to give up owing to the heavy smoke and the danger of the building collapsing.

Chief Mullen ordered a third alarm rung at 3:44 and when the flames burst out menading the fire house and the big six-story building across on the other side of Belcher lane he sent in a fourth alarm, calling out every piece of apparatus in the city proper and many from the suburbs.

With the additional apparatus towers 1 and 3 were run up in front of the building on High st and did effective service in drowning out the flames. The building itself is divided by a fire wall which runs back from High st, there being entrances on each floor. This was to the advantage of the firemen as it enabled them to keep the fire in the portion of the building abutting Washington ct.

This side of the building is used generally for manufacturing and storage, the other section being given up more to offices for the display of goods.

#### Teehan's Crew In Hot Place.

Although there were several slight explosions, the firemen stuck to their task, especially the men of engine 7 under command of Lieut Teehan. The company had a line on the fire escape on Purchase st and held their places through all the smoke. Lieut Teehan was complimented for his efficient work. Around in Belcher lane the men of ladders 8 and 14 had a hard time of it. They were working lines from ladders which they had thrown up but were finally forced back when the flames burst through the windows, licking at the ladders and nearly the building across the lane.

The men got their lines down and

shifted the ladders to the other side and then carried the lines up and fought the fire from the windows and roof there. The smoke was so dense that nothing could be seen and their position was extremely hazardous. In Washington ct, between the burning building and the three-story fire house in Fort Hill sq, Capt Richardson of engine 15 and the men of engine 4 had an extremely hard time.

They also were driven out when the flames burst through and then rushed into the firehouse and took up a position in the hay loft. Lines were lowered by Capt Richardson and he made an effort to get some hose attached but he had to wait several minutes owing to the confusion of lines. When the lines of hose were finally hauled up very effective work was done.

In this case the firemen fought to save their own home as it was threatened by the flames, and Chief Mullen was fearful lest the flames cross the court. He instructed his men to get a line and the building was wet down,

#### Firemen Ordered From Building.

While the fire was hidden for some time, when it did break out the situation became serious. Ladder 14, a new ladder recently purchased, was up on the Purchase-st front and the flames when they burst through caught the ladder. It was hastily gotten out of the way.

The crews of engines 25, 33 and 39 went into the building and fought the fire at close range for a time, but when Chief Mullen saw that the fire was assuming large proportions he ordered the men out as he didn't want to take a chance on the floors giving way under the added weight of the water being poured in by the towers.

Hand lines were run from the two fireboats and did good work. In fact about 4:15 the blaze apparently had been sufficiently subdued to warrant the shutting down of the water towers. Hardly had this been done before the fire burst out with renewed force, sending showers of sparks and flames high in the air.

The chief at once gave orders for tower 1 to be connected up again and in less than five minutes its nozzle was reaching forth a heavy stream through the upper floor windows. The tower remained in action for nearly half an hour before Chief Mullen ordered it shut down for the second time.

The fire being under control shortly after 5 a number of engines were sent back to quarters, but it was not until 6:05 that the all out signal was sent in. Considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the apparatus to the fire, as a number of extra horses have been pressed into service owing to the heavy going.

This was especially true of the towers which weigh six or seven tons. The lead horses on tower 1 acted so badly on the way to the fire that they were taken off and sent back to quarters.

#### Chemical 1 Is Damaged.

Just as chemical 1 from Bulfinch st neared the scene of the fire the machine sludded and, striking against the curbing, threw the horses heavily against the pole, breaking it off short.

So much water was poured into the building that the damage from that source will probably be as heavy as from the fire, if not greater. The basement was flooded level with the street and Wild & Stevens, who occupy it and the first floor, will lose heavily.

Mr Ireson, who occupies the second floor, arrived at the fire when it was nearly out and said he could not estimate his loss, as his stock was always shifting. He carries a line of leather belting, which he said was easily damaged by water, for once it is wet and dries, the leather has a tendency to crack and is of little if any use afterward.

The Brooks manufacturing company on the third floor carried a heavy stock. The Poole printing company had a number of valuable presses and a large quantity of special type which it is believed were heavily damaged. The Crown shoe company on the fifth floor was also well stocked and the leather

stored there suffered considerable damage.

Four years ago yesterday there was a slight fire in the building and the building was slightly damaged by fire since that time. Chief Mullen said that but for the party wall the fire undoubtedly would have spread to the Purchase-st side of the building, causing a much heavier loss.

He also was pleased with the fire shutters with which the building is equipped, they all opening from the outside and quickly operated by the firemen giving them a chance to ventilate and lessening the chances of hot air explosions.

As it was, however, there were at least six explosions and each time a shower of burning embers were hurled through the windows and fell on the firemen working below.

#### Hotel Guests Aroused.

The clang of the fire bells and the shrieks of the engine whistles quickly aroused the guests at the hotel Rosemore, on the opposite side of Purchase st. A few of the guests left their rooms and went to the office. They were assured by the night clerk that there was no danger, and while some of them remained to see the firemen at work the majority of them went back to their rooms.

A big force of police was on hand to take care of the crowd, which it was expected would show up, but Sergt Mason of division 2 and his men had little to do, as not more than 100 men and boys were on hand. Commissioner Daly was an interested observer of the way the fire was handled and Ex-Commissioner Wells was on hand as usual.

The big fire house in Fort Hill sq resembled a livery stable for a time, being crowded with the outfits of the district chiefs. Word was passed around that Commissioner Daly had ordered coffee for his men but later it was learned that he was unable to get any much to the disappointment of the wet and chilled firemen.

Just about the time the fire broke out a long train of cars which was

being shifted from the Boston & Maine yards to the New Haven yards pulled down Atlantic av and was held up owing to the lines from the fireboat being across the tracks. After they had been taken up the train tried to proceed but it was with extreme difficulty and it took nearly half an hour to get the train entirely out of the way.

Chief Mullen when asked as to the cause of the fire said it was impossible to determine.