

# **BIG BLAZE ON HIGH ST**

## **Five Alarms at Rice Building.**

### **Burditt & Williams Burned Out.**

Three alarms in quick succession after 1 o'clock this morning from box 1431 (old 52) called the firemen to the Rice Building, 4 to 12 High st, corner of Summer, for one of the fiercest fires that they have faced in years. At 1:55 a fourth alarm was found necessary.

At 2:45 an alarm was sounded from Box 1422, High st and High-st pl, which acted

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# BIG BLAZE ON HIGH ST.

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substantially as a fifth alarm. The fire had then reached the fourth floor.

In the next hour the fire spread up through the building to the roof, and shortly before 4 o'clock the roof fell. The flames spread from the section of the building occupied by the Burditt & Williams Company, in whose quarters the fire had originated, to the other or eastern section.

The high wind carried sparks far and wide, causing a number of awning fires and threatening roofs along Federal, Purchase and High sts and Atlantic av. Chemical engines were sent to watch for these smaller fires.

Fires were set in awnings on the Weld Building at 176 Federal st, on the Riker-Jaynes store at Summer and South sts and elsewhere, but were soon extinguished.

Tons of water pouring into the completed section of the new Dorchester subway on Summer st threatened to wreck this work by causing a cave-in.

Sergt Clark of Station 2, going down into the subway to investigate, saw the seriousness of the condition and ordered

the men working on the adjacent section about Dewey sq to leave the excavations. Although the Hugh Nawn Company, in charge of this part of the work, did not do the Summer-st section, it sent a large crew of men to try and save it.

All available policemen were called in to guard the vicinity, and Capt J. C. Sullivan of Station 2 took personal charge. The fire, hidden before the roof fell, thereafter became highly spectacular, even by Fire Department standards, the flames leaping 150 feet high in air.

At 4:15 the firemen thought they had the blaze under control.

The fire started in the basement of the store of the Burditt & Williams Company, hardware, cutlery, paints and oils, which occupies the first three floors of the building, and before its discovery had made a furnace of the basement with its large stock of highly inflammable materials.

Mr Burditt said his stock was valued at \$50,000.

Capt Avery Howard and members of the crew of Engine 26, and Lieut Maurice Galvin and hoseman McDevitt, Mulo, Crowley and Owen Murphy of Engine 6, who had lines in the basement, were caught in a burst of flame and their faces and hands were scorched.

Laddermen Steve King and John Angell of Ladder 8 and hoseman Harry O'Leary of Engine 31 (fireboat), detailed to that ladder, who were working on an 55-foot ladder, also suffered scorched faces from a spurt of flames from a window. All the men were given first-aid treatment on the street and returned to work.

The basement and first floor were all ablaze before the firemen had their first line laid, and so black and stifling were the clouds of smoke that it could not be told how much farther the flames had spread. Fighting it mostly from Milton pl in the rear with tower and wagon guns, the firemen worked hard to save the upper floors, but after an hour's work they seemed to have made little progress.

## Forced to Leave Lines.

Chief McDonough directed the fight in Milton pl with a battery of wagon guns and Tower 2. Short ladders had been raised to the fire escapes and men sent up with hose lines, but the smoke forced the firemen to leave and abandon the lines strapped to the escapes.

The building is a six-story brick structure, owned by John D. Hardy et al, trustees, and valued at \$70,000. Above the Burditt & Williams store, the fourth and fifth floors were occupied by the American Steam Packing Company, and on the sixth floor were offices. The Shedd Leather Company had quarters at 8 High st on the lower floor.

The fire had started from unknown causes some time before it was discovered. Smoke was smelled by persons on High, Purchase and Federal sts, but patrolmen Michael Sullivan and Clarence Gleason of Station 2 hunted for it for a considerable time through these streets and the adjoining alleys, High-st pl, Federal ct and Milton pl, before finding it.

## In Fear of Explosion.

The first alarm was given at 1:05, followed by a second at 1:11 and a third at 1:17. More than half an hour then passed before the effect of the smoke and the fierceness of the flames convinced Chief McDonough that a fourth alarm was needed to call more men and apparatus.

The fear of explosions from the paints and oils deterred the men at first from approaching the fire closely. Engine 7 was the first piece of apparatus to take position in Milton pl and get to work.

Through the center of the building runs an airshaft, and Chief McDonough tried to flood this with water and make it a water curtain to save the upper floors.

The greatest difficulty was in getting at the heart of the fire. On the Milton-pl side the fire shutters were up, and the streams directed at them would not extinguish the flames inside, while from the High-st front it was almost impossible to get at the fire.

About 2 o'clock the trolley wires on Summer st were cut, making possible the operation of water towers on that side. At that time in the rear the flames were between the second and third floors and up to the second floor in front.

## Searchlights Used.

The smoke, too, was so thick that the men could not live on the long ladders raised in the hope of opening the shutters, and those at the deck and wagon guns could not see to direct their

streams at the windows that were open. To pierce this smoke acetylene gas searchlights were erected, as more effective than the electric lights.

During all the fire there was a succession of small explosions, probably the bursting of paint and oil cans, which caused no injuries but probably spread the flames.

After the first alarms had been given, the arrival of apparatus from South Boston was delayed by the slow passage of a Union Freight Railroad train through Dewey sq.

## Other Occupants.

Among the occupants of the Rice Building, as given in the latest business directory, are: G. Edwin Alden, rubber; C. F. Clark, scrap leather; Combusto Sales Corporation; Commercial Code Company, telegraph; A. W. Ellis Company, advertising; The Felters Company, felt manufacturers; E. L. Foote, designer; Grandberg Brothers, paper hangings; A. A. Greenlaw, commercial photographer; John D. Hardy, real estate; Edward A. Hare, designer; Holophane works of General Electric Company, electric goods; George R. King, photographer; King Prints Company, photograph publishers; Edward R. Ladew Estate, belting; A. E. Lothrop, wool; E. W. Manter Company, electrical engineers; W. L. Montgomery & Co, hides and skins; A. C. Needham, commission merchant; Puritan Molding Company, William B. Rice estate, Roanoke Manufacturing Company, Horace Ayers, industrial engineer; C. J. Southwick & Co, Inc, hides and wool; Varney & Puech Company, hides, skins and wool; T. B. Wales Jr.