

# FIREMEN STRANGLLED BY AMMONIA FUMES

**Twice Called to Bad Fire.**

**Men Drop From Deadly Gas.**

**Burning Chemicals Hard to Fight.**

**Chief Cheswell Injured by a Fall.**

**Union-St Blaze Will Cost \$60,000.**



*THE FIRE AT ITS HEIGHT.*



*OVERCOME BY THE SMOKE.*



*A LUNCH FOR HUNGRY FIREMEN.*

A fire broke out yesterday afternoon shortly before 2 o'clock in the basement of a store kept by Charles H. Badger at 73 Union st. where there were stored and kept for sale large quantities of chemicals, oils, paints and ammonia, and during the afternoon over a dozen firemen were taken to the relief hospital in police ambulances, completely overcome by smoke and the fumes of the chemicals, while nearly a hundred were treated at drug stores in the vicinity.

Chief Cheswell fell through the floor and injured his right hip and was taken home, but later returned, and his assistant, Chief Mullen, had also to be taken home, but he, too, came back

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# FIREMEN STRANGLER BY AMMONIA FUMES

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When the fire broke out in renewed fury, necessitating another alarm at 7 o'clock.

The fire started from some unknown cause in the basement and was discovered by an office boy. There was no time to save anything, even as much as hats and clothing, for the explosion of several carboys of ammonia and casks of inflammables started the whole place going at once, and the persons within had to get out quickly.

Fire soon spread up through the entire building, but was stopped on the upper floors before they were all burned through. It spread some into the building occupied by the Plimpton-Hervey company, furniture dealers, but most of the damage there was caused by smoke and water.

The entire damage is estimated at about \$60,000.

## Firemen Overcome.

The following were sent to the hospital and treated by doctors at the fire:

FRANK PATRICK, engine 25, overcome by smoke.

JOHN MURPHY, ladder 1, overcome by smoke.

DISTRICT CHIEF GARRITY, ammonia.

LIEUT DOLAN, ladder 8, ammonia.

PATRICK F. McLEAVEY, engine 4, smoke.

JAMES J. CONNOLLY, engine 4, smoke.

JAMES E. DOWNEY, engine 6, cut by glass.

THOMAS F. TOOMEY, ladder 8, cut by glass.

JAMES E. SHEA, engine 6, ammonia.

— CUSHING, protective 2, ammonia.

MICHAEL TEEHAN, engine 4, ammonia.

— DARROW, engine 6, smoke.

— WOOD, engine 6, smoke.

PATRICK WALL, engine 6, ammonia.

LIEUT GAVIN, engine 6, ammonia.

LIEUT KANE, engine 25, smoke.

## In Drug Store Hospital.

Engine 6 was left without a man except the engineer and the driver, and all of the other companies were sorely depleted.

In the drug store kept by Samuel F. Neill 65 men were treated. On several occasions there were at least a dozen men stretched out, apparently lifeless, on the floor of the store, while Neill and his men worked like Trojans to relieve them.

Some had to come back three or four times to be fixed up. The fumes of the chemicals completely overpowered them. During the early part of the fire carboys of ammonia were rolled out, but no sooner would the men get them farther than the sidewalk than they would burst, and every man would collapse from the fumes before he had time to get out of the way.

Men staggered from the building hardly knowing where they were going and lay down on the sidewalk, gasping and writhing in terrible pain.

Some crawled up on the top of hose wagons, others on the running board of ladders and lay there unable and many unwilling to ask for help, until they were found and attended to.

During the evening the men being more worn out were overcome more easily, but struggled to keep on their feet as long as they could. All the stores that were opened in the vicinity had coffee and sandwiches, and it was not an uncommon sight to see a fireman walking as if in his sleep bringing out a cup of coffee to a fellow firefighter who was lying helpless on the ground and encouraging him to drink a little and then help him to his feet and cheer him up.

## Chief Cheswell Falls.

During the afternoon Chief Cheswell fell through a hole in the floor and hurt his hip so that he couldn't walk, and as the fire seemed to be fairly on the way to be soon under control he was taken home.

Soon afterward Asst Chief Mullen, who had stood the terrible fumes all afternoon, was almost out of his head, and he had to leave for home. Then Asst Chief Hussey assumed control, and at 6 o'clock everything seemed to be done and not a spark could be found anywhere. Some of the apparatus was dismised, engine 6 and ladder 1 being kept there.

To make sure that it was all out Asst Chief Hussey had axman Howard of the ladder company rip up holes here and there in the floor and when he did so a great volume of flame flashed up through and soon the whole place was afire again. Another alarm was pulled to bring back the apparatus, and as the "all out" hadn't been sounded this served as a second alarm.

Then the fight began all over again.

The basement by this time was full of water almost to the level of the floor and on the water there floated the turpentine and other inflammables all ablaze. There were two bulkheads in the sidewalk opening into the cellar and from these the flames leaped up and almost licked the faces of the men holding the hose. Several times the water overflowed the sidewalk bringing with it the flaming oils and the tongues of flame swept up and around the hosemen and drove them back.

But by determined efforts and dogged grit on the part of the firemen the flames were inch by inch fought back, and by 9 o'clock they seemed to be all conquered once more, when suddenly, through another hole in the floor, they burst forth again.

This time the men didn't budge an inch, but stood the heat and smoke and kept the flames down, and in a few minutes had them out again. But during the greater part of the night little tongues of flame kept alive in some of the inflammable liquid floating on top of the water, and every now and then they broke out again, but not again did the fire get the better of the men.

## Ugly Fire to Fight.

When the fire broke out in the afternoon and the office boy in Mr Badger's place gave the alarm, the latter's bookkeeper, Miss Harwood, grabbed the books of the concern and what money she could get hold of and threw them into the safe. Then she tried to pick up other things of value and put them in the safe, but before she could do so she collapsed. Mr Badger picked her up and carried her out, not having time to lock the safe or even shut the door, so that its contents were destroyed. A few hours later, when the fire was subdued somewhat, Mr Badger went in and brought out the cash register, which contained considerable money.

It was withal one of the ugliest fires that the department has ever had to contend with. Several doctors volunteered their services in helping out the fire department surgeon, Dr E. W. Groll, who stuck to his post until midnight.

Just what caused the fire is something that Mr Badger and his clerks who were in the store at the time say they cannot tell. There was no one in the basement at the time, and the first that Mr Badger and his employes knew of the fire was when clouds of sickening smoke came up out of the basement.

Capt Kimball of police division 1 was passing the store at the moment the first bulkhead of smoke came up through the bulkheads into the street, and he started on a run for box 16 at North Market st and Merchants row, but one of Badger's clerks beat him to it and sent the alarm.

Chief Cheswell came on the first alarm, but did not order a second alarm, although inside of five minutes his men began going down under the influence of the poisonous smoke and gases which came out of the basement, and length after length of hose burst under the pressure from the engines.

## Adjoining Stores Damaged.

Before the first of the firemen to arrive had begun work the fire had eaten its way up to the first floor of the Badger store, the chemicals and oils and paints were blazing and some of the chemicals exploded, blowing out the plate glass front of the store. The firemen could not enter the basement of the store because the fumes from the chemicals were overcoming them even on the side-

walk, and for an hour the several streams which were directed into the basement from cellar pipes attached to the lines of hose had no appreciable effect on the fire.

Various colored clouds of smokes, all of them dense and voluminous, and varying in color from a deep black to a light pink tint, according to the nature of the chemicals which the flames were reaching, belched out into Union st, and the first thing that the 30 odd employes of the Plimpton-Hervey company house furnishing store, which occupies all the four-story block running to the corner of North st and down that thoroughfare for three numbers, knew, their store was so filled with smoke that they had to run for safety.

Directly over the Badger store was the carpet and upholstering rooms of the Plimpton-Hervey company and the fire got into that floor and cleaned it practically all out before the firemen conquered it.

In addition to the damage the fire did to the Plimpton-Hervey company's stock, the suffocating clouds of smoke which penetrated every inch of the big store caused more loss, and before it was all over the tons of water which the firemen poured into the basement of the Badger store flooded the Plimpton-Hervey basement to the depth of about four feet, which proved disastrous to the furniture, carpets and bedding stored there.

Next door, north of Badger's store, is the drug store of C. S. Cheney & Co. and the smoke drove out proprietors, clerks and customers and did a lot of damage to the stock. The water which flooded the goods stored in the basement did a great deal more, and the loss there will amount to several hundred dollars.

## Badger's Loss Total.

After the fire was under control H. B. Scofield, manager of the Plimpton-Hervey company, told a Globe reporter that he couldn't accurately estimate the loss his firm had suffered, but, speaking of what he thought would be the approximate loss, he said that the firm carried a stock, at the present time, of about \$75,000 and he thought from what he had been able to see that it was safe to figure on a loss of 30 percent on that amount, which would be \$22,500. He said that the loss was covered by insurance, whatever it might be.

Mr Badger said his stock was valued at \$25,000 and that he was fully protected by insurance. Badger's loss will be practically total, although there may be a salvage of \$3000 or so.

The damage to the building is not extensive. The building is owned by the Boston real estate trust, which is protected by insurance.

The fire drew a big crowd, and Capt Kimball, who had been on the scene from the start, sent to his station house for the reserves, who were held there on account of the primaries, and soon drove the crowds back so that the firemen had a chance to work unhampered. The frequent bursting of lengths of hose also helped to keep the sight-seers back out of the way.