OLD COLUMBIA A FOUR HOUSES BURN

More Than 300 Families Hurried Out in Cold Near Washington And Mott Sts-Elevated Trains Stop in Fire Zone And Scorched—Loss Estimated at \$300,000

Overhead Traffic Disrupted Crowds Storm the Great **Surface Stations**

Fear of Falling Walls Holds Up Running Past the Ruins **Until Declared Safe**

AID HURRIED FROM SUBURBAN TOWNS

Fire last night destroyed the historic six-story brick and stone building between Lovering st and Mott st on Washington st, the site of one of the first Catholic churches in this city, but in recent years that of the Columbia Theatre. Flames drove more than 300 families from their homes and completely paralyzed all The pecuniary loss was estimated at

How the fire began is still the subject of conjecture, but today will become the subject of State and city investigation. Witnesses stated last evening that the fire started on the second floor at 992 Washington st, known as the Grace Building, supposedly in the Lucas & Wallace tailoring establishment.

With lightning-like rapidity the flames spread from the tailoring shop on the second floor of this building to the roof of this building and thence leaped to the roof of the building at 978 Washington st, formerly the Columbia Theatre, now known as the South End Theatre, under reconstruction for Loew's Theatrical Syn-

From here the fire gradually ate its way back into dwelling houses in Mott and Lovering sts, in all gutting four dwellings and damaging others so that their inhabitants were not able to return to them after the fire.

Elevated Railway Hit

The flames also damaged the Elevated structure, but how badly could not be ascertained last night and will not be known until after a conference and investigation has been held this morning. It is certain, however, that no trains will be run over this part of the Elevated structure until it has been inspected today, which means that the structure will be out of service until

late this afternoon, at least. The fire was discovered at 5:55, when A. L. Donovan saw a flash on the second floor of the Grace Building, as he stood across the street awaiting a car. Just at that moment patrolman Albert J. Nott was warned by Mr Donovan and the policeman rang in an alarm. Before the first apparatus arrived the flames had jumped from the second floor to the roof, and the whole building was a blazing furnace. The first chief

on the scene ordered a second alarm, Continued on the Second Page.

HUGE TIEUP ON

Until a thorough investigation Building Commissioner O'Hearn of the walls of the burned buildings at the Columbia Theatre site no trains will be permitted to run over the Elevated structure between the Boylston-st station in the tunnel and the Dover-st station. This will entail the employment by the Elevated of a large number of surface cars, upon which patrons will betransported downtown from Dudley and traffic over the Elevated Railway. Northampton sts, to which stations trains will run from Dudley st.

At a late hour last night, Chief Me-Donough pronounced the walls of the old Columbia building as in a precarious . state. Should they fall, it is certain that the New Haven and perhaps the Boston & Albany Roads will be confronted with a tleup problem of their

While no big Boston fire within memory has hit the Elevated's minning schedule suck a staggering blow, it must in all justice be said that road officials; rearranged matters with all the celerity that was possible in such a tight situa-

Cars Impressed

Passengers from Forest Hills and Sullivan sq were promptly taken care of in surface cars, hundreds of which were hurriedly impressed for the emergency, each manned by a crew, many of whose numbers had been summoned to the job with equal haste.

Dudley st, being the nearest busy center to the fire, of course felt its offects first and worst. For the first hour there was a great deal of confusion there. Passengers inbound, most of them headed for theatres or intown entertainments of one kind or another, continued to arrive at the terminal in droves and for a few minutes the guards and other employes were lost in the maze of humanity, which ran hither and thither, seeking someone who could tell them what it was all about and direct them to their destina-

tions.
Each car bound out of the lower level was jammed within a few seconds of the time it was run in. Everybody was in tolerable good nature, but were anxious to know just what and where the trouble was. After the first hour the situation was well in hand. The homeward rush from the theatres was the next problem, but considering the press of work, things went smoothly enough through the latter half of the night.

Pulled Away From Flames According to a statement by the Blevated, power was shut off on the Ele-

Continued on the Second Page.

HUGE TIEUP ON **ELEVATED ROAD**

Continued From the First Page.

vated structure at 6:59, three minutes after the alarm was sounded at their

after the alarm was sounded at their powerhouses. This stalled five trains between Boylston st, in the tube and Dudley st, two of which were within the reach of the fiames. One was south and the other north-bound.

Through some source the road officials were instantly informed of the location of these two stalled trains. At 7:01 the juice was again shot through the third rail to these trains. Their motormen were, of course, notified of this when the car lights resumed their duties. So both turned their levers and drove their trains ahead for what distance they could during the minute of time that the power was kept on.

This took them safely out of the fire zone.

Although paint was scorched on some cars and some windows damaged by the flames. Elevated officials asserted later that they had no fear for the safety of the passengers, because both trains were made up of compressed steel cars.

Stopped in Fire Zone At 7, power was shut off on all surface

lines in a zone within a mile of the fire. This left one outbound Norfolk-st-Franklin-st car, carrying 35 passengers, right in the heat of the flames, as it stood at Mott and Washington sts. Just beyond the rallroad bridge there, and right under the burning building. Every passenger realized the situation and made a hurried, but orderly exit. Few stopped even to request transfers. Most of them walked up to loover st, where they boarded other cars homeward bound.

Meanwhile conductors and guards on

cars homeward bound.

Meanwhile conductors and guards on the Elevated trains overhead were requesting those of their passengers who wished to leave the trains and risk walking to the nearest station to do so. This was done mostly upon trains near the Dover-st and Northampton-st stations, both in and outbound.

After a brief intermission, trains were steadily operated from Sullivan sq to the Loylston-st station, and from the same terminal to the Beach-st station via the Atlantic-av circuit. This provided quite normal service for residents north of Boston who wished to get in to theatres or to the North and South Terminals to take trains for holiday excursions. After 9:50 good service was furnished on both these lines and on the Elevated from Dudley st to Forest Hills Terminal.

The regular inbound cars over Wosh-

Elevated from Dudley st to Forest Hills Terminal.

The regular inbound cars over Washington st, as well as all the extras, were diverted past the fire via Massachusetts av westward, coming in Shawmut av, Tremont st, Columbus av or Boylston st. Many were rerouted into the Pleasant-st and Park-st subways.

Elevated Rahway men made a partial investigation last night and said the structure was practically unharmed. It may be noontime today, however, before the condition of the walls of the gutted building can be safely determined.

Forest Hills

The confusion at Forest Hills caused several passengers to be lost in Jamaica Plain. Many inbound from Walpole, Dedham, East Walpole and Needham, became mixed in their sense of di-rection and nearly a score of the luck-less men and women, unfamiliar with the intricacles of the Jamaica Plain prepayment station took cars for home by mistake.

A heavy guard of motorcome

by mistake.

A heavy guard of motormen and conductors was found necessary to impress many with the fact that the Etrains were not running, even though the stairways were blockaded with chains, Many passengers were on their way to spend, the "holiday" with out of town relatives and became unreasonably indignant when their passages was checked, even going so far as attempt to jostle the guards aside.

There was a great crush of traffic at

both upper and lower levels of the ter, with a large corps of assistants, kept the ears moving out as fast as it was possible to do so. All the car lines were transferred from the upper level passing through the station to Scollay sq and return, with the exception of the Woburn, Spot Pond and Davis-sq lines. Sullivan-sq Terminal station. Supt Sen-

lines.

Many extra cars were pressed into service and long lines of cars kept standing outside the station. Cars were run irregularly, being pushed through, loaded with passengers, as speedily as possible with safety.

At 10 p m the elevated train service started between Sollivan sq and the Boylston-st Station, just beyond which is a switch over to the outbound track by which the return trip was made. By 10:15 p m most of the cars resumed their trips an schedule time.

AID HURRIED FROM SUBURBAN TOWNS

Continued From the First Page.

and Chief McDonough soon ordered a third alarm. The fourth and fifth were sent in within a few minutes, calling practically every company in the city to the scene, and calling on outside cities and towns for apparatus to take care of any other alarms which might come in. The outrof-town apparatus filled in at the empty houses.

Routed Out by Police

When the first firemen arrived flames were darting across Lovering st, and grasping hungrily at the windows of the 10-story fireproof Jaynes Building. The fire was also stretched halfway across Washington st toward the Wells Memorial Building and backward toward the trick dwellings on both Mott and Lovering sts. As the Jaynes Building was known to

be the best modern type of construction and therefore practically safe from fire, the firemen paid little attention to it at first. When the fire was over, however, it was found that some of the tenants of this big structure had lost heavily, chiefly through water damage.

Coincident with the third alarm, came the summoning out of the police re-serves who, under "Bill" Carey, patroled the district and established fire lines. One of their first cares was to join with the firemen of routing the occupants of all the houses on Mott and Lovering sts from their homes

Feared Falling Walls

these dwellings would all be consumed by the flames. Not only that, but during the hight of the fire, there seemed

ing the hight of the fire, there seemed to be danger every moment that the walls of the blazing building would fall. The firemen, fighting on every side of the fire, were in expectation of iosing their lives.

Chief McDonough gave the police emphatic orders to drive every one else from the danger zone, and this was done. Even newspapermen and others equipped with badges supposed to admit them within fires lines were hustled out of the way of the tottering walls.

While these measures for their safety did not always meet with the approval of those safeguarded, that they were wise is shown by the fact that a few seconds later part of the coping of the theatre came crashing down, showering the firemen on the L structure and those in the street below with burning wood and sparks.

From whatever cause they started the flames had great headway on the firemen. By the time the bulk of the apparatus got into play both the Grace Bullding and the Columbia Building were masses of flame, burning so fast and brilliantly that the best the men could do was to try and confine the blaze to them.

Even this was impossible, however, for the this was impossible, however,

could do was to try and confine the blaze to them.
Even this was impossible, however, for the fire went on briskly in spite of the tons of water poured upon it. Early in the fire the flames had burst through the windows of the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth floors of the Jaynes Building, smashing in the windows.

Army Stores in Danger The ninth floor is occupied by the

United States Army quartermaster's depot for stores. Fortunately the building was built to withstand flames, or some \$500,000 worth of army stores, including blankets, tents, shoes and uniforms would have been destroyed. As it was, the flames completely gutted the private office of Lieut Col George McKay Williamson, in charge of the depot. The window frames were burned, his desk charred, and the interior of the office wrecked. The general office of the depot was also damaged, although a telephone exchange situated there remained in commission during the fire. The stores in the other rooms of the depot were heavily damaged by water.

The attention of night watchman Henry of the depot was first called to the fire by the sounding of the automatic gongs, which began to sound on several floors of the building at the same time as the fire pentrated it. He rushed to the private office and grabbed a number of valuable papers on Col Williamson was able to state last evening, the fire did not destroy any official papers. ing was built to withstand flames, or

Firms Damaged

The other firms occupying this building, all of whom suffered more or less damage either from water or fire, were the Ricker-Jaynes Company, first and second floors; Farnsworth & Hoyt Company, shee linings, fourth and fifth floors; Barren, Anderson Company, deals ers in men's garments, third, sixth and seventh floors; Bell Shirt and Waist Company, eighth floor.

The Grace Building and the old Columbia Building were both unoccupied save for the tailoring establishment on the second floor of the Grace Building, where the fire began. The Losw Theatrical Syndicate, which owned both structures, was reconstructing them. This, it was stated last night, is what made the loss so big, inasmuch as considerable work had been done on the interior of the theatre.

Those conversant with the situation stated that the theatre was in fact just a shell of outer walls, filled with stagings and mechanics implements. The old Columbia closed last July and but for the fire the South End Theatre would have been opened here next April.

May Wreck the Structure

Building Commissioner Patrick O'Hearn stated last night during the fire that the walls of both buildings were so unsafe that they must be taken down at once. As the headquarters of the Loew agents are in New York and Chicago, and he was not able last night to get in touch with them, he was unable to have the ruins taken down during the night. Acting Mayor James J. Storrow had numerous conferences with Building Acting Mayor James J. Sterrow and numerous conferences with Building Commissioner O'Hearn during the fire, but would make no statement. A con-ference will be held this morning relalive to wrecking the structures.

Train Stalled Just as the fire broke through the roof of the old Columbia Building a seven-car Elevated train came rushing plong the structure bound south. As it

seven-car Elevated train came rushing along the structure bound south. As it came directly in front of the blaze the "juice" gave out and it stopped. There were some 200 passengers aboard and as the flames cracked the windows and scarred the sides of the steel cars the patrons became frightened.

The guard sang out for "just a bit more juice," and the motorman started the train onwards. Meantime, however, the third and fourth cars had caught aftre. When the train again came to a stop, just beyond the reach of the flames, the train crew extinguished this. In the interim the crew had gone through the cars at breakneck speed, calming the excited passengers. One woman, who had fainted, was revived by fellow-passengers. Officials of the road and the crew assisted the passengers of this and several other trains stalled at various points along the L to the tracks.

The passengers of each train, assisted by L employes then walked to the nearest station and descended to the street.

Traffic over the entire L system was

Street.

Traffic over the entire L system was suspended for a time, and it will not be resumed over this particular portion until an engineer of the road has made a survey today.

Only Rudge in the Building The only person in the building, so

far as could be definitely learned last night, when the fire started was George night, when the lire started was George Rudge, the janitor of the Columbia Eufiding. He was at the rear of the stage when he heard engines going by. "An engine rushing past doesn't mean much to me" he said, "so at first I paid no attention to them. Then I heard gome more come, and I thought I would find out where the fire was. So I ran out the back door. There was the whole place going!"

Rudge said he believed there might have been somebody in the tailoring place on the second floor of the Grace

dould not be verified; however, and firemen said they did not believe there was
any one save Rudge in the place when
the fire began. There were people, however, in the old brick dwellings of Mott
st and Lovering st.

In the attic of 12 Lovering st lived Mrs
Levenson, while in other portions of the
house lived Mrs Alice Richardson, 89
years old, her daughter, Mrs Clara
Graves, Mrs Catherine Ricker and her
three children, and a couple of little
children.

Homes Burned Out Spectators dashed into this house soon after the fire began and tried to arouse

spectators dashed into this house soon after the fire began and tried to arouse the occupants. Number 8 Lovering st is unoccupied, and the peril of these persons, next door practically to the burning theatre seemed great. Three men carried the aged Mrs Richardson and her daughter to the street, while others assisted out Mrs Levenson and the family of Mrs Catherine Rioker.

The story of the two little children, rescued by Max Bikosky of Harrison av was particularly sad. It appears that their father has been out of work for a long time. Their mother is sick, a patient at the City Hospital. Their four brothers and sisters have been taken from the house by charitable institutions and the little tots were left to the care of kindly neighbors, who; for a week, have been providing them with foed. They were carried out by Bikosky and taken to a neighbor's home. Then home, such as it was, was among the total losses of the fire.

Both 8 and 12 Lovering at were destroyed by the fire. While, the other houses of the street were not damaged, their occupants, chiefly poor Jewish residents, will sustain water and other damages. They were unable to return to their homes up to a late hour last night, and sought shelter in nearby stores.

Checker Players Indifferent Two houses in Mott st were also dam-

aged by the flames, and here also the families were driven out and forced to seek refuge from the cold in neighboring homes and stores.

ing homes and stores.

Directly opposite the Grace Building is the Wells Memorial Building, where over a score of labor meetings were to be held. Although the fire prevented all but one meeting from being held, some 30 checker players continued all through the fire to move their wooden pieces as though all were serene without. As a matter of fact they were in no great danger, but had the front wall of either the Grace Building or the Columbia Building fallen, as was momentarily expected, they might have been injured.

When the fire was sighted by railroad officials, there was a string of freight cars proceeding slowly along the tracks under the Washington-st railroad bridge. There seemed to be some danger that these cars might catch fire. They were got past the fire and then stopped. Later they were shoved onto a side track, freeing the tracks for local and distance trains.

Spectacular Fire

Fire breaking through the roofs of the two structures and reddening the sky, firemen fighting the blaze from roof of the structure at the corner of

sky, firemen fighting the blaze from roof of the structure at the corner of Ricker Jaynes Building and from the roof of the structur at the corner of Washington and Castle sts; spray turning into ice as it struck the pavements, and a wealth of engines, ladders, chemicals and firemen, made the fire one of the most spectacular ever seen in this city.

Tower 2, which early in the fire was near Washington st, was pulled out later in the night because of the extreme danger of the Mott-st wall falling. This wall bulged out during the latter part of the fire.

Lovering st was blocked with ladder trucks, chemicals and engines, even as Mott st was choked with towers and engines. From every possible vantage point the army of Chief McDonough waged war on the blaze. In Harrison av, among a half dozen others was Engine 14, the mightiest machine of the department, shooting three linesful of water—850 gallons a minute—into the very heart of the blaze.

The vitality of the fire was amazing. For an hour the gigantic streams fired at it from every angle seemed to make no impression. Suddenly there was a crush and a rumble. The stagings inside the theatre and whatever there was of flooring had collapsed.

Loss \$300,000

Loss \$300,000 But the fire battled on, finding fuel, on

what nobody seemed to know. It was just before 7 o'clock when the first alarm was sounded. At 10 the dull red glare inside the building was as ruddy

Battling with intense cold as well as the flames, the men stood their ground on every side, only pausing now and then to let someone else take a line while they gulped down a cup of coffee. The Box 52 Association, headed by Dr Googins was "on the job," distributing

Googins was "on the job," distributing coffee.

When the fire lost its grip the question of resuming Elevated traffic was taken up, and it was quickly decided that the least jar might cause the tottering walls to come down. It was, therefore, decided to forbid any L traffic until late today. In estimating the damage at \$300,000, officials said they were taking into account the fact that repairs had been made in the theatre, and that losses were not confined to the burned structures. Before the remodeling of the buildings began they were assessed at \$19,000, the old Columbia Building being valued at \$75,000 and the Grace Building at \$44000.

During the fire the police discovered three alleged pickpockets in the crowd. Sergt "Bill" Irwin, who was in plain clothes, captured one, a young negro, and uniformed officers took the others into custody.

THEATRE'S VARIED CAREER

Opened in 1891. With First-Class

Productions-Intended to Be Thoroughly Fireproof The Columbia Theatre has had a varied career. Built by the late James

J. Grace of this city at a cost of \$275,000. J. Grace of this city at a cost of \$275,000, it was opened Oct 5, 1891, by William Harris and Charles F. Atkinson, lessees, with high-class productions. Charles Frohman's New York company opened the beautiful new playhouse with "Men and Women," and in the cast were many who achieved great success in later years, including Froderick DeBellville, Orrin Johnson, Cyril Scott, Maude Adams, William Morris and Odette Tyler. This play ran five weeks.

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When the Columbia was opened it was understood to be as nearly fireproof as any structure in the country. It was the first theatre built covered entirely on the inside with terra cotta. For a time the theatre met with great success. Harry Harris, who was lost on the Titanic, was the first treasurer, and Thomas Lothian, now manager of the Colonial Theatre, was assistant treasurer. Harry E. Dixey played the theatre for two weeks following the production of "Jane," in which appeared Johnstone

of "Jane," in which appeared Johnstone
Bennett, and then was presented for the
first time on any stage, "Lost Paradise," which ran for 12 weeks and numbered among its players John Kellerd,
Howard Hansel, Walter Perkins and
Nannette Comstock, all of whom have
become stays singe.

Namette Comstock, all of whom have become stars singe.

Mr Atkinson retired from the management of the theatre in about a year to start the Bowdoin Square Theatre, which he had built. The season of 1895 saw a remarkable change in the policy of the Columbia Theatre, which was remodeled in the interior along London dance hall lines. Refreshments were served and the big musical companies played there drew big crowds nightly.

The opening of the clevated rall-way marked the end of the history as a first-class house, the noise of the trains making it difficult to hear what was said on the stage. In more recent years the house has been the home of burlesque, vaudeville and moving pictures.

James J. Grade, the owner, secured a verdict of \$61,907.50, including interest, as damages against the Elevated Rail way for damages to his theatre, which was one of the largest verdicts returned against the road following its building of the clevated.

