

\$150,000 Blaze in So. Boston



(Photo by Herbert Siler, Traveler Staff Cameraman)

Striking view of South Boston fire today, showing the sweep of the blaze from A street, on the left, toward the right, indicating the block that

Fire Fighters Menaced By Hot Air Explosions

Spread by terrific hot-air explosions, a spectacular five-alarm fire swept the large wooden plant of the Boston Plate and Window Glass Company, covering a city block and facing on A street, South Boston, and caused loss of \$150,000 today.

Several firemen were injured in falls. The blaze was fought by practically the entire city's apparatus and men, battling against a stiff wind in low temperatures and against other odds to prevent a spread of the flames. The cause had not been determined. Most of the structure was levelled in a flash, flames and smoke pouring from the building like that from the crater of a volcano.

In quick succession one alarm after another was sounded, with engines and firemen dashing to the scene from every direction. Fire Chief Samuel A. Pope, recently promoted to head of the department,

was early on the scene. This was the second big fire he has had to fight since he was made chief, the other being in Charlestown several days ago.

The blaze, fanned by a strong northwesterly gale on one of the coldest mornings of the winter, spread a pall of dense, black smoke over the South Boston district. The

blaze was visible for miles. Within a short time after the fire was discovered, the flames burst through the roof and shot high in the air.

A severe traffic tieup occurred on Summer street, nearby. Oils, paints and putty and other highly inflammable materials fed the flames, which levelled the wooden structure in quick time.

The blazing building was located in the midst of a congested industrial and manufacturing district. A large warehouse on one side of the building was among the other structures menaced. Only rarely are five alarms sounded for a fire in Boston.

FIREMAN'S LEG BROKEN

Fireman Robert E. Roche of engine 21 suffered a broken leg when a hose line he was manning burst under the terrific pressure and hurled him into the street.

The fireboat Matthew Boyle found a point of vantage in Fort Point channel and directed its battery of heavy guns into the heart of the seething mass.

Almost immediately following the bursting of the hose which injured Fireman Roche, three additional lines cracked under the high pressure, slowing down the attack on the inferno while lines were uncoupled and new lengths added.

So intense was the heat that Chief Pope feared it would penetrate the brick walls of nearby structures, and he directed that water curtains be fashioned. Across the street are wooden buildings once occupied as tenements, but now given over to shops of various types.

District Chief John J. Kenney received a cut on the right hand and was given first aid by a fire department ambulance crew.

Fireman Fred Burns of Engine 6 was fighting the flames from within when he was struck and knocked down by the force of a stream from a water gun. He was being partially overcome by the choking fumes and the cold water served to revive him.

R. R. CARS SAVED

Several railroad cars in the yard in the rear were saved when they were pulled away by switching engines.

Patrolmen Daniel O'Hara and Robert Innis of the South Boston police station were drenched when a hose in the gutter along A street, near which they were standing, parted.

An interested spectator was Eugene C. Hultman, chairman of the metropolitan district commission, and former fire commissioner. He was passing with his aide, Walter F. Shaw, while the firemen were pouring millions of gallons of water onto the fire, and stopped to view the battle. He spoke to several of the men he knew while serving as commissioner.

The building, entirely of wood, covers a full acre of ground and extends from A street to the New Haven railroad tracks, where there are several wooden sheds which offered additional fuel to the flames.

When flames licked into the straw and hay used in the plant for packing there were renewed outbursts of flames to which were added the dry wood used for crating.

Hundreds of persons on their way to work stopped to watch the battle. Many left their cars on Summer and other nearby streets, and this caused a block-



Photo at left shows general view of five-alarm fire which swept building of Boston Plate and Window Glass Company at A

Company officials said that only a fire wall extending the full length of the building near the New Haven yards stopped the flames from sweeping through the entire structure, and on into the company sheds at the rear.

Blast Imperils Firemen

One of the first fire crews to reach the scene ran their ladders and hoses up to the roof on the A-st. front. They had scarcely organized their position when an explosion shot the flames towards and under them, and the men tumbled down from the roof in the nick of time. The clothes of the last men off were scorched and smoldering.

Meanwhile other hose crews set up their apparatus in the freight yards, along A st and on Wormwood st. Some worked their way into the interior of the building from the rear, while others scaled the roof from the rear and attacked the flames from there.

The numbing cold and the frozen water handicapped their efforts, as hose after hose flew out of control and sent their handlers flying to the cobblestones and pavement.

The fire beat off Matthew Boyle into Fort Point channel and directed a steady stream of water into the flames from that vantage point.

By 9 o'clock the fire was under control. It had wrecked the entire building, burned right up to the Anderson building along A st., and had been stopped less than 50 feet from the freight yards in the rear.

Fire Visible Miles Away

The building burned rapidly, sending huge clouds of smoke and flames into the air, which were plainly visible for miles around.

South Shore commuting traffic was tied up for more than an hour by the fire, as all traffic along A st and across the bridges by the South Station was halted. Automobiles were unable to cross at Congress st or Fort Point Channel.

Hundreds of curious sped to the scene as the smoke and flames were seen in the sky. They crowded around the fire lines and stretched along the Fort Point Channel.

Chief Samuel J. Pope was in charge of the fire fighters. When the fire had been brought under control, large piles of burned machinery were visible in the building. The general offices, at 287 A st., had been destroyed and but few of the records saved from there. The rear of the building was the only part of the structure still standing, and that was badly burned and scorched.

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Officials at South Boston Fire



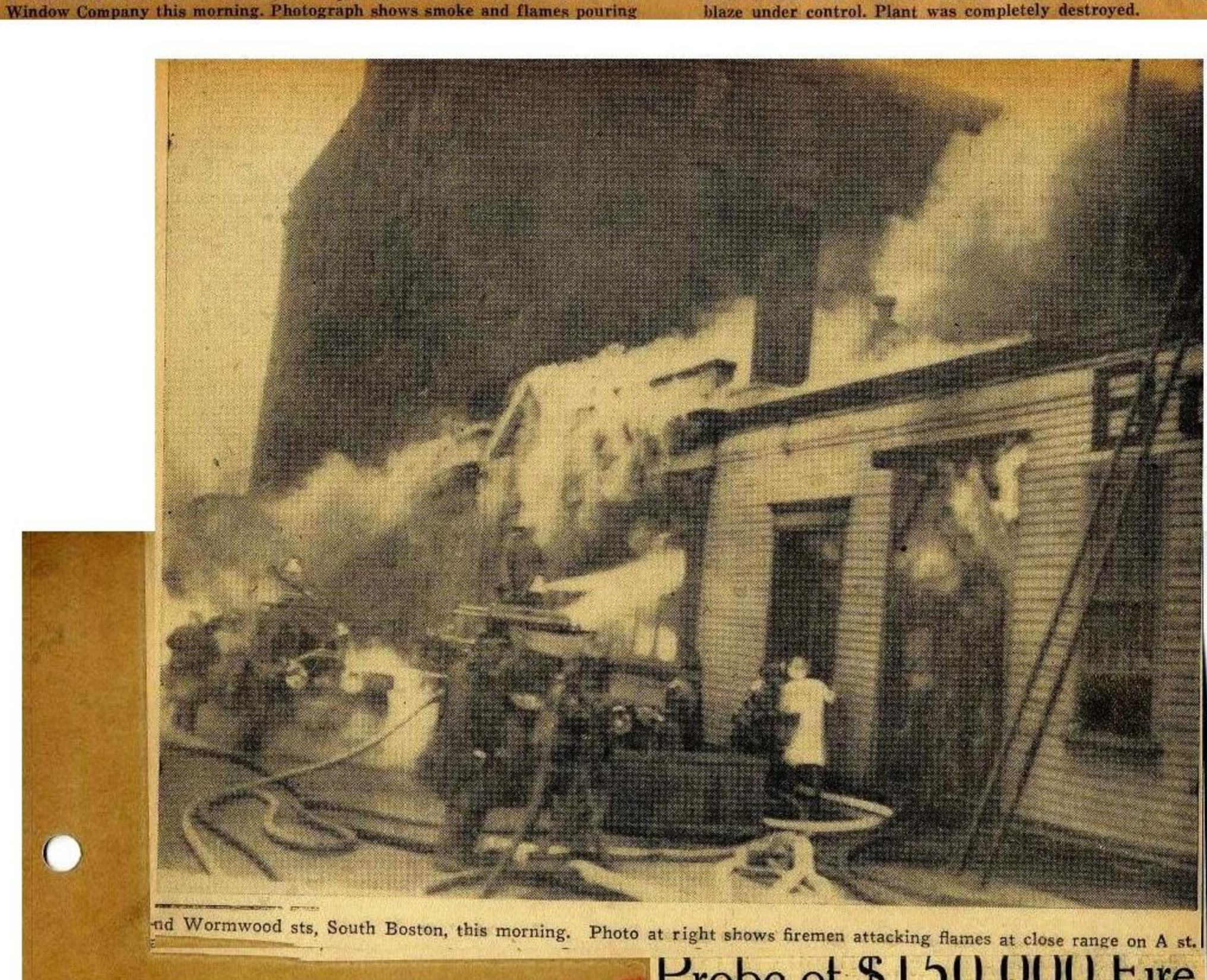
Left to Right—Fire Chief Samuel Pope, Fire Commissioner Edward F. McLaughlin and Alfred N. Miner, vice pres of Massachusetts Safety Council.

Firemen Battle Flames and Ice



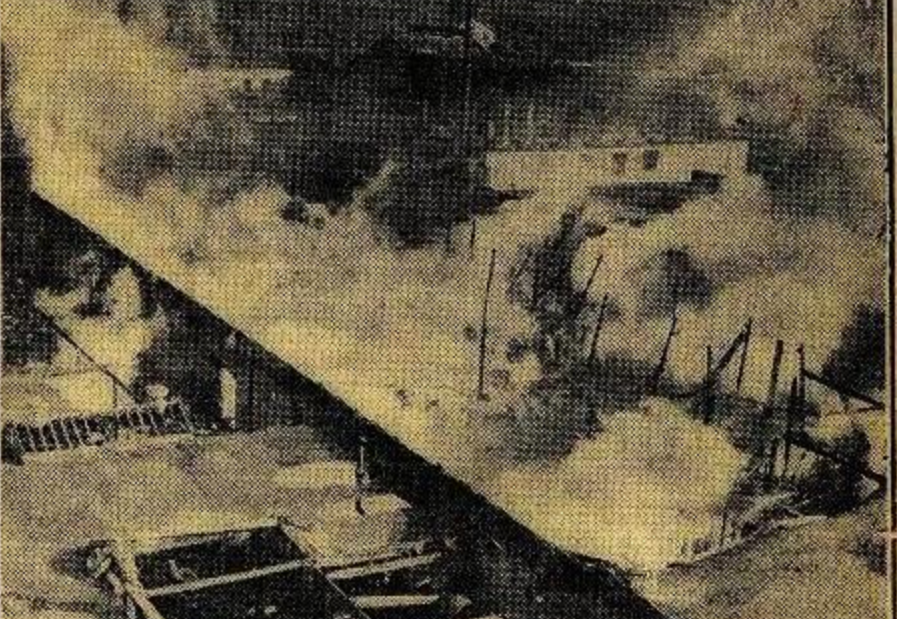
While low temperatures coated hose-lines and ladders with ice, firemen battled a five-alarm blaze in the South Boston plant of the Boston Plate Glass and Window Company this morning. Photograph shows smoke and flames pouring

from the roof of the building. Chilled onlookers watch progress of the blaze. Flames shot a hundred feet into the sky while firemen fought to bring the blaze under control. Plant was completely destroyed.



and Wormwood sts, South Boston, this morning. Photo at right shows firemen attacking flames at close range on A st.

Probe of \$150,000 Fire in South Boston Ordered



SOUTH BOSTON FIRE RUINS
A view of the smoking ruins left after a five-alarm fire had caused \$175,000 damage on A street, South Boston.

The same alarm had sounded at 3:30 in the morning, automatically, and firemen had gone to the building but reported that they could find no trace of a fire.

It is believed that the fire was smoldering in the basement or some secluded corner at that time and that it did not gain sufficient headway to cause a second alarm until three hours later.

Fire officials said that the automatic alarms are so sensitive that they sometimes go off without cause and that the 3:30 alarm was believed an instance of this.

Railroad officials were summoned to the scene with the second alarm, and four freight cars loaded with glassware were pulled away from the rear of the building to safety, as soon as an engine could be backed around there.

Besides Chief Pope, Fire Commissioner Edward W. McLaughlin, Superintendent of Police Edward W. Fallon, Police Capt. Joseph M. McKinnon, South Boston and Metropolitan District Commissioner Eugene C. Hultman, formerly fire and police commissioner, were all present at the fire.

McKinnon declared the traffic jam around the South Station the worst he could remember in recent years. Watchmen were in constant attendance at the building. The night man, Owen Hernon, was just going off duty and Fred Marshall, the day man, had just come to work when the alarm was rung in. Both men said they did not smell or notice any smoke or exceptional heat.

An investigation by police and fire officials into the cause of the five-alarm fire that swept through the one-story wooden structures of the Boston Plate and Window Glass Company at 287 A street, South Boston, was ordered yesterday after firemen brought the \$150,000 fire under control.

Fire Chief Samuel Pope said that the cause was undetermined. Investigators will also probe into the alarm system or the sensitive nature of the system caused that alarm, according to the investigation made at the scene.

Following the fire, however, it was stated by fire officials that a small smoldering fire may have been burning in some secluded spot and could not be found by the firemen.

The second five-alarm fire in the city was caused by a small fire in the rear of the building, which was caused by a hot-air explosion, which also sent the glass of several windows shattering into the street.

Deputy Chief John J. Kenney was treated at the scene for cuts on the hand received from flying glass and the loss of a tooth. Robert E. Roche of Engine 21 received a fracture of the leg when he slipped on the ice. Fireman Fred Burns was overcome by smoke but recovered at the scene of the fire.