

ANOTHER BOSTON FIRE.

**Large Conflagration in the Highland District—
Five Tenement Houses Burned—Narrow Escape of the Inmates.**

[From the Boston Evening Transcript, July 27.]

At 8:50 A. M. to-day three alarms in quick succession were given from box 231, followed immediately by another from box 82, for the purpose of drawing every available fire engine to the Highland District. The experience of Monday led many to think that danger threatened a large and inflammable district, and thousands of persons wended their hasty way southward to view what a dense smoke promised—an extensive fire. They were by no means disappointed, as what follows will show, and an opportunity was afforded in addition of witnessing the heroism of the firemen, which has never been displayed to better advantage since the fire department was organized.

The fire first appeared in the centre of a long wooden building situated on Hunneman street, running parallel with a row of wooden tenement houses facing on the east side of Harrison avenue. The building was formerly known as Webber's Ropewalk, and was occupied by Joseph Nickerson & Co., shipchandlers, for the manufacture of cordage. There was a great deal of tarred material in the structure, which is supposed to have become ignited by friction in the machinery.

The flames spread to both ends of the slightly built structure with lightning-like rapidity, and the inflammable nature of the stock fed them at a rate that put all idea of checking beyond human comprehension. To add to the dismay of the inhabitants and the crowds who gathered at the first alarm, the entire neighborhood—every building being of wood and of cheap construction—even to Washington street, seemed doomed, as a strong easterly breeze sent the flames in an almost horizontal direction towards them.

Every family to the leeward of the burning mass at once turned their attention to the removal of their effects, and the streets and vacant lots in every direction were soon filled with every conceivable article of household furniture, which were surrounded by hundreds of men and women and children in every stage of frantic excitement.

Such was the condition in which the firemen found the neighborhood when the first engine arrived upon the scene. The ropewalk was almost entirely consumed, and the fire had firm hold upon the tenement houses that separated it from the avenue.

The first companies to arrive placed their apparatus directly in the face of the fire, on Harrison avenue, and though the heat was intense, by the display of great fortitude under every difficulty bravely maintained their positions and battled the flames with almost unexampled energy. They evidently had East Boston in their minds, and knew that what was to be done must be done quickly.

Their exertions for the time, however, were unavailing. The five tenement houses—three of which belonged to Dennis Mullane, one to James Ryan, of Jamaica Plain, and one to Thomas Noonan, who resides near—were quickly consumed and the flames several times caught the block belonging to Mr. Mullane, on the opposite side of the avenue, corner of Hunneman street.

The safety of this block was mainly due to the activity and heroic conduct of the company attached to Eagle Engine No. 3, who maintained their stand at the corner of Hunneman street, despite the roaring flames and enveloping smoke that hovered over and about them. The hosemen alternated their stream between the fire and their engine, first playing upon one and then on the other to keep the machinery from overheating, the engineer during the time being compelled to use his cotton waste in order to handle his valves.

At this juncture the department was heavily reinforced from South Boston, Dorchester, East Boston and the city proper, and long lines of hose were soon laid to bear upon the fire from every direction. In fact, in travelling over the district, it seemed as if the hose that tripped the pedestrian at every step formed a complete network, so frequently did the lines cross at every conceivable angle.

But even the most strenuous endeavors of this large force were unequal to the task of saving the large stone building on the opposite side of Hunneman street, on the southeast corner of Harrison avenue. It belonged to Nickerson & Co., and it was well known by all in the vicinity that it had been recently refitted with much valuable machinery, besides being heavily stocked with hemp and other similar material.

Every stream that could be spared from the work of preventing the spread of the flames to the hundred or more wooden buildings lying between Harrison avenue and Washington street were directed to save this structure, with its valuable contents.

The roof, from exposure to the hot sun for days and even weeks, was in the best condition for quick combustion, and the fire soon made it a complete wreck, despite the large volumes of water that were poured upon it. It fell in with a crash, carrying the crackling flames to the hemp on the upper floor.

At this stage of the fire, it having then burned less than half an hour, the engineers felt assured that they had effectually checked the flames from again crossing the wide avenue, and the whole force at their disposal was directed to the stone building.

But the hemp was well on fire, which soon worked its way through the floor. Not many minutes elapsed before the floor fell through, and the red hot mass of hemp and burning timbers were mingled with the costly machinery, which had been but a short time before in full operation in the manufacture of material similar to that in the room above.

All the water that could be obtained—and the supply was by no means short—continued to be poured in upon the fiery heap; but all hope of saving the engine and numerous machines from total disablement was gone.

Another hour's hard work sufficed to extinguish the smouldering ruins, during which time the hook men were busily engaged in tearing down the few wooden walls that kept their perpendicular and overhauling the debris that showed signs of rekindling.

Nearly all—landlords, tenants and spectators—breathed sighs of relief when they became aware that the danger was over and realized the narrow escape the neighborhood had had from what appeared at first certain annihilation. Praises of the Fire Department for their promptitude, good judgment and efficiency were heard from every lip, and the mutual congratulations among the fortunate and commiseration with the unfortunate denizens of the vicinity were numerous and heartfelt.

The losses cannot amount to much less in the aggregate than \$75,000, of which about \$65,000 will fall upon the cordage company. They have recently put in a large amount of the latest improved machinery, which, together with that on hand previously, is worth \$30,000. The new stock of hemp, the principal portion of which was stored in the stone building, was valued at between \$15,000 and \$20,000.

The stone structure was of considerable value. The walls are standing in good condition, but the rebuilding of the interior will probably cost \$10,000. The long rope-walk was of comparatively slight value—the highest estimate placing it at \$1,000. Nickerson & Co. are insured for about \$40,000, divided among the Hide and Leather, Independent, Tremont, Firemen's and New England offices of Boston, Sun, of Cleveland, Merchants', of Chicago, Fame, of Philadelphia, and others, in various amounts. The loss falls severely upon the firm, as it stops their work in the busiest season.

Mr. Dennis Mullane's loss on his three tenement houses is not much less than \$8,000, and his insurance will not more than half cover it. They were occupied by eight families besides his own, including those of Michael Barrett, Michael Fitzgerald, Jeremiah Flynn, Hans Gotlieb, James Sullivan and Patrick Murphy. The two houses next north, owned by Messrs. Ryan and Noonan, were valued at about \$2,000 each, and were partially insured. They were occupied by six families, who, with those in Mr. Mullane's houses, lost all their effects.

Many other families, even those located several blocks away, experienced more or less damage to furniture, which was generally removed from their houses at the first alarm.

A rumor that three children were left in the tenement house first burned can be traced to no trustworthy source.

A centenarian—an old man named Duffy, said to be 100 years of age—was taken from one of the burning buildings in an insensible state and conveyed to a place of safety.