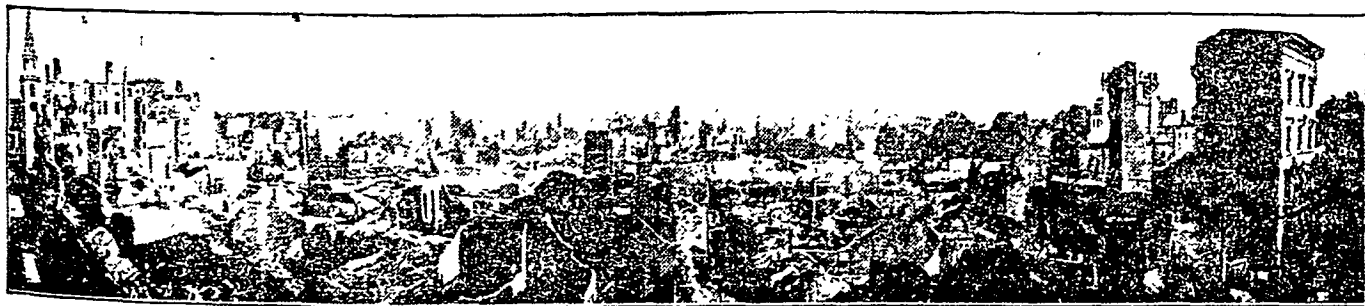


# NEARLY 100 FIRE COMPANIES FOUGHT THE GREAT BOSTON FIRE 30 YEARS AGO TODAY.

Boston Daily Globe (1872-1922); Nov 9, 1902;  
ProQuest Historical Newspapers Boston Globe (1872 - 1926)

pg. 29

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VIEW OF THE RUINS OF THE BOSTON FIRE NOV 9, 1872.

Thirty years ago today occurred Boston's great fire, the second largest on the continent. It started a few minutes

after 7 o'clock Saturday evening, Nov 9, 1872 from a cause never known, in a six-story granite business block on the southeast corner of Summer and Kingston sts, and before it was checked Sunday noon, Nov 10, it had swept through all that section bounded by Summer, Washington, Milk, Congress State, Kilby and Oliver sts, to the water, covering 65 acres, destroying 776 buildings, a total loss of about \$61,179,306 and 13 lives.

The largest conflagration in America was that at Chicago, Ill, Oct 8-10, 1871, which destroyed 17,450 buildings, covering 214 acres. The total loss was about \$195,672,600. About 200 lives were lost.

It required the fire departments of 29 cities and towns, 97 companies, 2148 enrolled firemen and hundreds of volunteers to check the Boston fire and extinguish the second large fire in the Shreve, Camp & Low building on the south corner of Washington and Summer sts, which occurred at midnight Sunday, Nov 10, from a gas explosion due to the big fire.

The story of the fire, of its rise and progress, has been published many times, but that of the work performed by the army of firemen, the serious obstacles they had to contend with, the inefficient apparatus they used when compared with that of the present time, has never been published except in fragmentary form in fire-service publications.

The Boston fire department at that time consisted of 21 steam fire engines, 10 hose, 7 ladder and 1 protective company, with two wagons carrying portable chemical fire extinguishers, manned by a force of 453 officers and men. The chief of department, drivers and engineers and stokers of engines were the only full-paid permanent men in the department. All the assistant engineers (now district chiefs), company officers and privates were call men.

All but three of the steam fire engines used were of the second-class, as they

are now rated. The first-class machines, all of the same size and pattern, were No. 6 of Boston, No. 4 of New Bedford and Wauregan of Norwich, Conn. Only No. 6 was in service at the fire until after its progress was checked.

There were no hose wagons then, and only a few horse hose carriages in the Boston department. Most of the engine companies had small two-wheel hose carts, or "jumpers," as they were called, which were attached to the rear of the engine. The hose was laid by hand.

The fire departments of many cities and towns were crippled at that time as never before or since with sick horses. Some two weeks before the fire a horse epidemic known as the "epizootic" made its appearance from Canada, which had prostrated nearly all the horses in and out of the fire departments, and fire apparatus as well as other vehicles were drawn by hand or cattle, except in very few instances.

The fire companies then in the city proper were: Engine 3, Washington st, near Dover; 4, Brattle sq; 6, Wall st; 7, East st; 8, Salem st; 10, Mt Vernon st; hose 1, Salem st; 2, Hudson st; 3, North Grove st; 4, Northampton st; 5, Shawmut av, and 8, Church st; ladder 1, Friend st, and 3, Harrison av and Wareham st; extinguisher wagons 1, North Grove st, and 2, Harrison av and Wareham st.

John S. Damrell was chief of the department. His assistants were W. A. Green (subsequently chief), J. S. Jacobs, John W. Regan, R. B. Farrar and G. W. Clark in city proper, Zenas E. Smith and L. W. Shaw, South End, Josepa Dunbar and Joseph Barnes, East Boston; George Brown, South Boston; E. S. Munroe, John Colligan and P. D. Allen, Roxbury, and S. H. Hubbard, Dorchester; John Kennard, superintendent of fire alarm telegraph.

The water service was inadequate. This was the principal cause of the fire becoming a conflagration. Had there been a sufficient supply of water the fire would probably have been confined to the section in which it originated, and possibly prevented from crossing Summer st. The water main in that street was small, and its water passage much

corroded by long service. It could supply only a few engines. Some engines had to relocate when in readiness to work because of insufficient water.

John M. Page, a policeman sent in the first alarm at 7:24 o'clock from box 52 at the corner of Bedford and Lincoln sts. He also sent in the second at 7:29 o'clock, in accordance with general orders for policemen to send in a second without orders from a fire department official, as now, whenever they discovered a fire of any magnitude above the second floor. The third he also sent in by order of Assistant Engineer John W. Regan.

The fourth, or general alarm, at 7:45 o'clock, was by order of Chief Damrell, who soon after ordered a fifth, and two alarms from box 123 at Broadway and Dorchester av, South Boston, at 8:17 and 8:21. The fifth and subsequent alarms were to call companies from suburban cities and towns.

All alarms were struck on many tower bells throughout the city, which were heard in suburban sections. There was also an alarm from box 48 at the foot of Summer st at 10:00 o'clock, a total of eight alarms.

Union hose company 2, which was located in the Quincy schoolyard in Hudson st, was the first to start for the fire and the first to get water on. It started before the alarm was given some of its members having seen the light. It had reached Harvard st when the first blow of the fire alarm was struck on the Quincy school bell.

Engine 7, then as now in East st, with protective company 1, then located in the same station and the nearest apparatus to the fire, also started on a still alarm, and had just cleared the door when the first blow on the station gong was struck. It left its station when hose 2 reached Harvard st.

Engine 7 was the first to reach the fire, but delay in getting to work lost it the honors of first water. The order to "Play away!" was given simultaneously by both these companies, but the water of hose 2 came first by a few seconds. Both played into the basement of the building where the fire originated.

The first out of town apparatus to arrive was engine 3 of East Cambridge at 8:12 o'clock, followed by hose 3 of Charlestown three minutes later. From that time until 10:30 o'clock Sunday evening, when engine 2 of New Haven, Conn, the last to arrive, reached the city, apparatus was constantly arriving.

When the fire crossed Summer st the water supply became inadequate to supply the engines located in that vicinity, and the fire had reached too great a magnitude for the Boston department to handle. Within an hour of its commencement, Chief Damrell sent telegraph messages to many cities and towns within 50 miles of Boston for assistance.

There were no telephones then, and many of the telegraph offices outside of Boston closed at 8 o'clock. Several attempts to get a message to the chief at Lowell were unsuccessful, and no assistance came from that city. The two hand engine companies of Wakefield, the Yale and Cyrus Wakefield, came in over the road, drawn by hand, a distance of 12 miles. They were two hours on route. Chief A. D. Drew of Watertown walked six miles to the fire to tender the service of his department.

The longest continuous service rendered by an out-of-town company was by the first engine of Lawrence—from 11:30 o'clock Saturday night until 5 o'clock Monday morning.

Chief W. E. Delano of Charlestown was the first commander of a department outside of Boston to tender assistance, which he did in person to Chief Damrell in Summer st, a few minutes before 8 o'clock and within 40 minutes of the discovery of the fire. Many tenders of assistance came from chiefs throughout New England on Sunday when the fire became known, but they were not accepted. The last to be accepted was that from Chief A. C. Hendrick of New Haven, Conn, at 10:30 o'clock Sunday forenoon. The apparatus of this department traveled the longest distance of any at the fire, 160 miles.

In all 97 different fire companies of Boston and elsewhere responded to the numerous alarms and calls for assistance. The list of companies with their location and time of arrival, recently compiled, is as follows:

### SATURDAY, NOV 9, P M

Engine 7, East st.....	7:23
Hose 2, Hudson st.....	7:27
Protective wagon 1, Cambridgeport.....	7:28
Engine 4, Brattle sq.....	7:30
Ladder 1, Friend st.....	7:31
Extinguisher wagon 1, North Grove st.....	7:31
Hose 1, Salem st.....	7:32
Hose 8, Church st.....	7:32
Hose 5, Shawmut av.....	7:35
Ladder 3, Washington st.....	7:37
Extinguisher wagon 2, Wareham st.....	7:37
Engine 8, Salem st.....	7:38
Engine 10, River st.....	7:38
Engine 6, Wall st.....	7:41
Hose 3, North Grove st.....	7:44
Engine 3, Washington and Dover sts.....	7:45
Hose 7, Fremont st.....	7:47
Engine 9, East Boston.....	7:58
Ladder 4, Euclid st.....	7:50
Hose 9, B st.....	7:53
Engine 11, East Boston.....	7:55
Ladder 5, South Boston.....	7:56
Engine 1, South Boston.....	7:57
Hose 4, Northampton st.....	7:57
Hose 10, Washington Village.....	7:57
Engine 14, Cabot st.....	7:58
Engine 14, Center st.....	7:58
Engine 21, Uphams Corner.....	8:00
Engine 12, Dudley st.....	8:01
Engine 15, Dorchester av.....	8:05
Engine 3, East Cambridge.....	8:12
Hose 3, Charlestown.....	8:15
Engine 2, South Boston.....	8:15
Engine 17, Meeting House Hill.....	8:15
Ladder 7, Meeting House Hill.....	8:15

Engine 1, Charlestown.....	8:17
Hose 4, Charlestown.....	8:22
Engine 2, Cambridgeport.....	8:25
Engine 1, Chelsea.....	8:10
Engine 18, Dorchester.....	8:40
Hose 3, Chelsea.....	8:55
Engine 16, Dorchester.....	8:55
Engine 10, South Boston.....	8:55
Hose 3, Chelsea.....	8:55
Engine 1, Somerville.....	9:00
Engine 4, North Cambridge.....	9:00
Engine 5, East Boston.....	9:12
Engine 19, Mattapan.....	9:30
Loaf, Osborn tugboat.....	9:30
Engine 1, Medford.....	9:30
Engine 1, Jamaica Plain.....	9:40
Engine 2, Jamaica Plain.....	9:40
Ladder 1, Jamaica Plain.....	9:40
Ladder 1, Cambridge.....	9:45
Contingent engine, navy yard.....	10:15
Hand engine 1, Brookline.....	10:30
Hose 1, Brookline.....	10:30
Ladder 1, Prospect.....	10:30
Engine 1, Malden.....	10:45
Hose 6, East Boston.....	10:45
Ladder 2, East Boston.....	11:20
Hand engine 4, Reading.....	11:30
Hose 1, Hyde Park.....	11:30
Engine 1, Newton.....	11:30
Hose 6, Malden.....	11:30
Hand engine 1, Wakefield.....	11:45
Hand engine 2, Wakefield.....	11:45
Engine 3, Lawrence.....	11:50
Engine 2, West Newton.....	11:55
Engine 1, Hyde Park.....	11:55

### SUNDAY, NOV 10, A M

Engine 1, Lynn.....	12:00
Engine 2, Lynn.....	12:00
Engine 1, Salem.....	12:00
Engine 2, Salem.....	12:00
Hose 5, Salem.....	12:00
Monitor engine, navy yard.....	12:35
Engine 1, Worcester.....	12:35
Engine 3, Worcester.....	12:35
Engine 1, Providence.....	12:40
Engine 4, Providence.....	12:40
Hose 3, Worcester.....	3:30
Engine 1, Watertown.....	4:30
Engine 2, Portsmouth, N H.....	5:15
Hose 2, Boston.....	8:00
Union engine, Watertown arsenal.....	9:30
Engine 1, Waltham.....	10:15
Engine 1, Stoneham.....	10:30

### SUNDAY, NOV 10, P M

Engine 6, Providence.....	3:05
Engine 1, Manchester, N H.....	4:45
Horseless engine, Manchester, N H.....	4:45
Hose 1, Manchester, N H.....	4:45
Engine 4, Fall River.....	5:06
Engine 1, New Bedford.....	6:06
Hose 2, Biddeford, Me.....	10:15
Engine 1, Norwich, Conn.....	10:15
Hose 1, Norwich, Conn.....	10:15
Engine 2, New Haven, Conn.....	10:30

Ladder 6 of Dorchester was the only company in the Boston department not in service at the fire.

The tugboat Louis Osborn of East Boston, possessing a fire pump, was sent for by Chief Damrell for duty along the wharves, where it rendered much valuable service. The fireboat W. M. Fitzgerald, the first in America, which went into service Jan 1, 1873, was then in process of construction until its progress was checked at noon Sunday, 50 steam fire engines, four hand engines, 19 hose and nine ladder companies with apparatus were in service, a total of 82 of the 97 companies that responded.

Thirteen lives were lost during the fire. Capt William Farry and assistant Daniel Cochrane of ladder 4 of Roxbury, who were buried beneath falling walls on Washington st; Henry Rogers, a volunteer of engine 6; Michael Fitzgerald, a citizen of Boston; Lewis P. and Albert C. Abbott of Charlestown, former members of Red Jacket hose company. Lewis was buried beneath the walls of Wright & Potter building on Washington st, and Albert died the following month from injuries received

by falling from a ladder in the rear of the old postoffice, State st.

Martin Trumbull of hose 3, Charlestown, died the following March, of injuries received from falling down stairs in Franklin st. Frank D. Olmstead, 18 years of age, a volunteer with engine 1, Cambridge, was killed by falling walls at Walker's carriage bazaar in Federal st, while endeavoring to warn some firemen of danger.

William Frazer, a former Bangor, Me, fireman, a volunteer with ladder 1 of Cambridge, lost his life while endeavoring to save others at the Weeks & Potter building in Washington st. John Connelly of ladder 1, Jamaica Plain, was suffocated in the Weeks & Potter building. W. S. Twombly of hose 2, Malden, while attempting to save others was killed by falling walls on Washington st, opposite Bromfield st. Thomas Maloney of ladder 2 and L. C. Thompson, a volunteer, both of Worcester, died of injuries received from falling walls in Milk st.

Of the 47 officers and men in the department at the time of the fire, 52 of that number are in the service at the present time.