

# WITH SKIRTS ABLAZE.

## Helen M. York With John Blanch Caught On Fourth Floor Fire Escape.



JOHN BLANCH  
WHO WAS RESCUED  
WITH MISS YORK.

THE RESCUE  
OF MISS  
YORK.

MISS HELEN M YORK  
THE RESCUED  
WOMAN

FIGHTING THE  
FIRE AT CLOSE  
QUARTERS IN  
MILTON PLACE

### Woman Remains Remarkably Cool and Helps Herself Down a Ladder That Firemen Provide—Four Alarms for Blaze at 5 and 7 Federal Ct—Loss About \$50,000—Cry of Fire in Lynn Theater Causes a Panic.

Members of the Boston fire department were called on early last evening to fight a somewhat stubborn fourth-alarm blaze in the building at 5 and 7 Federal ct.

The thrilling escape from the building and rescue from the fire escape landing of Helen M. York and John Blanch, two linotype operators, who had been at work on the fourth floor, was the feature of the fire.

For several minutes the man and woman coolly stood on the fire escape, with the angry flames darting about them, while the firemen brought a long ladder to replace the shorter one with which they had first attempted to rescue the couple.

During that awful wait the woman's skirts caught fire from the flames that were all about her, but never for an instant did she lose her presence of mind.

Unassisted she eventually made her way three-quarters of the distance to the ground before the up-rushing Lieut Dolan reached her and for the remainder of the descent aided her steps.

The magnificent courage shown by the woman in her trying danger was the admiration of all who witnessed the incident.

It was just 9:50 when the automatic alarm tappers throughout the city scounded a warning of fire in the building at 5 Federal ct. Five minutes later a second alarm from the same system showed the flames had reached another portion of the same structure. Almost immediately this was followed by an alarm from box 45 on the city alarm circuit. Two other alarms came in from the same box with only a couple of minutes separating them.

Then, after a lapse of 8 minutes, box 52, the firemen's terror, was rung in.

This latter was sounded by an order from Chief Cheswell, that the apparatus which had all been arriving on the Federal-st side of the fire might be distributed and a sufficient force placed on the Devonshire-st side of the building.

The basement and first and second floors were occupied by Stone & Forsyth, dealers in paper, twine and bags; one-half of the third floor was vacant and remainder of the space was used by Steward, Howland & Co as a place for storage of electric light fixtures and fittings. The top or fourth floor was occupied by Skinner, Kidder & Co, printers. The building itself is owned by Joseph P. Hamill. The damage to the building and contents will amount to about \$50,000.

#### Two People in Danger.

The first apparatus arriving at the scene went from Federal st up through Milton pl, and the firemen then saw that the fire was in the large four-story brick building. Great volumes of dense smoke were pouring from the third floor, with doors and everything gave promise of a bad fire.

In an instant the firemen had begun

the work of placing their ladders against the Federal-st side of the building.

While in the midst of this work a citizen called attention to the danger of a man and woman, who were on the fire escape on the fourth floor at the rear, or "Ding-Dong" alley side, of the structure.

Helen M. York and Blanch were both employed by the Skinner, Kidder concern. Placed in a position where many undoubtedly would have disregarded warnings of not to jump shouted to them by the firemen and horror-stricken spectators, this brave pair stood side by side with flames shooting about them on every side and anxiously awaited the coming of a ladder.

That assistance reached them none too soon was very evident to all who happened to be on the scene, for it was not more than several minutes at the outside from the time that both had descended the ladder that the fire escape on which they had taken refuge was fairly enveloped in flame.

The fact that the pluck exhibited by the woman was duly appreciated by firemen, police officers and every one in common was very evident by the prolonged cheers with which she was greeted as soon as she reached the ground.

When the first apparatus arrived on the scene it was placed so as to fight the fire from the Federal-st side of the building.

Startled by a man who rushed excitedly out and shouted that a man and woman had been seen on the fire escape on the other side of the building, the firemen dropped what they were doing and rushed around through Milton pl into what is known as Ding-Dong alley, and there saw the couple waving their hands and shouting for help. Orders were immediately given for ladders, and while a number of the firemen rushed off to secure them their companions remained where they were and shouted reassuring words to the couple.

#### Ladder Too Short.

The laddermen quickly put in an appearance with a ladder and willing hands quickly placed it in position against the building. To the dismay and consternation of all it was seen that this ladder fell some little distance short of what was required, and an immediate order was given for a 65-foot ladder.

All this time the fire was gaining headway, and as people gazed upward feared for the safety of those standing over this furnace with every avenue of escape cut off but this one which the firemen were doing all in their power to make possible.

When the longer ladder was raised and pushed against the railing of the platform of the fire escape the woman, unassisted, carefully climbed onto it and started for the ground.

Although Lieut Dolan had started from the bottom to render her assistance in the perilous descent, she did not

hesitate, but came down fully three-quarters of the distance alone.

At the time she first stepped onto this ladder the people below could plainly see that the bottom of her skirts had just begun to catch fire, and it was feared that the remainder of her clothing would ignite before she could reach the ground.

Fortunately, this did not prove to be the case, and the sparks in her skirt were easily and quickly extinguished before any injury was done to her.

While the woman was making her descent, Blanch remained patiently on the fire escape, and, notwithstanding the fact that the flames kept coming nearer and nearer, he did not attempt to leave the platform until he saw that the woman had safely reached the bottom.

As soon as Miss York had reached the ground it appeared as if she was about to faint, but she quickly pulled herself together and walked to a store on Federal st.

After resting a few minutes she said that she guessed she would be all right in a few minutes and would go to her home. The only injury she received was a slight burn on the wrist of her right hand.

Miss York and Blanch at the time the fire broke out had just started in on their duties. Their hours, it was said, were from 6 p m until 2 a m.

#### Only One Escape.

In talking with a Globe reporter Mr Blanch said that the first intimation he had of anything wrong was when his companion said she thought she smelled burning paper. Dropping what he was doing Mr Blanch explained that he immediately started to make an investigation, with the result that on going out into the hall he was almost suffocated.

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with smoke, which came pouring up the narrow staircase.

Rushing back he informed Miss York that the building was on fire, and they made an attempt to leave by the staircase.

Finding that this was impossible owing to the volume of smoke, which was simply blinding, he said that they rushed back and forth and finally got out on the platform of the fire escape.

Here they stood culling for help, but, as has been explained, the members of the department were all around on the opposite side of the building at the time, and it began to look as if they must jump or be roasted alive.

Finally, their cries were heard, and realizing that their only chance for escape lay in remaining where they were until ladders could be raised they decided on this action.

Miss York took the precaution as soon as she realized that the building was on fire to put on a heavy storm skirt. She had been attired in a skirt which she wears during working hours, of light material and had this caught fire she would have been terribly burned.

On reaching the street Miss York discovered that she had left a cape and a bag containing her week's wages behind. Later in the evening this bag with the money intact was found by Chief Cheswell and returned to its owner.

By the time Miss York and Blanch had been rescued from their perilous position more apparatus began to arrive and soon the courts and alleys which surround the building were choked with firemen placing ladders and laying hose.

The firemen were pretty well acquainted with the locality, as this was said to be the fifth fire to have started in that vicinity in a comparatively short time. But although they were well acquainted with the nest of alleys and courts which surround the building, this did not greatly lessen the difficulty they found in throwing their ladders and getting to work with rapidity and to the best advantage.

Several lengths of hose were carried from Devonshire st through Milton pl to the rear of the building, and several more hose streams were taken over the roofs of the Devonshire-st buildings and directed against the flames on the same side. From the Federal-st side lines of hose were carried in through Milton pl and from Federal ct.

## Great Burst of Flame.

Only once during the progress of the fire did the flames make their appearance through the windows of the Federal-ct side of the building. That was about a half hour after the fire started, and then there came a grand burst from the third story windows, which drove back the firemen and made bright with their lurid rays the depths of the court.

Slowly the great amount of water pouring into the building began to tell, and the appearance of tongues of flame within the upper stories to grow less frequent, but it was not until 9:15 that the "all out" signal was given.

From the stories of those who first appeared at the scene of the fire it would appear that the flames originated toward the rear and center of the second story. How it started or the cause of its origin no one could tell last night.

The fire ate its way rapidly to the third story, and traveled all over that floor and eventually reached the fourth story. There the fire did little damage, and almost the entire loss on that floor was due to the great amount of water used by the firemen to quell the flames.

The building was divided into three sections, each separated by a heavy brick party wall. The two sections at the western end of the structure, and which the fire did not injure, are owned by the Boston university corporation. Joseph P. Hamlin, the owner of the section burned, will suffer a damage of probably \$5000. Stone & Forsyth, who occupied the basement and first and second floors, carried a heavy stock of paper, twine and bags. Mr Stone said his firm carried stock valued at \$45,000, and was fully insured through the N. A. Knapp agency. The loss to Stone & Forsyth will amount to fully \$30,000.

The loss to the stock stored on the third floor by Steward, Howland & Co will be nominal. On the top floor everything was water soaked. Skinner, Kidder & Co carried a big stock of paper and had much valuable machinery there as well. The loss of that firm will run up to about \$15,000.

## Hose Wagon Horse Hurt.

At one time during the fire it was thought that the building on Federal st, occupied by Hosmer, Coddling & Co, was also on fire. This building is connected with the burned structure by a covered bridge across Federal ct. In some unknown manner the smoke traveled through this covered bridge into the building fronting on Federal st, and the firemen at one time took a line of hose into it. They found there was no fire there and retired.

The building numbered 272 Devonshire st and occupied by the W. A. Pryor company, wholesale boot and shoe dealers, was partially flooded by water, as was also the store of Johnson, Moody & Co, one door removed. Their stocks were covered by the men from the protective department, but it is understood they suffered some damage.

While responding to the first alarm from box 45, the hose wagon of engine 25 while making the turn from Franklin st into Devonshire st met with an accident. Driver P. F. Towle was on the lookout for a vacant hydrant, and when he made the turn from one street into the other his horse slid and before he could bring him up had crashed into the building 216 Devonshire st.

The first story of the building is occupied by the American national bank.

The head of the horse struck the heavy plate glass of a window in the bank with force sufficient to crack the pane badly. The two basement windows were broken from the sashes. The basement is occupied by the Wilson mineral spring water company and some water jars in the store were also broken by the falling glass.

The horse had the collar torn from its body and that article of harness was so damaged that it was abandoned in the street. Veterinary surgeon George W. Stinson, who always responds to big fires, dressed a nasty wound in a hind leg of the horse.

The police detail at the fire was in charge of Lieut Frohock and Sergts Cassidy and Dobbins of division 2. They brought a detail of 15 men from that station house and later by orders of Capt Dawson, two extra sergeants and 29 patrolmen from divisions 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 were sent to assist them. They kept the crowd from the courts and alleys about the fire and the firemen were unimpeded in their work.

## RAISED CRY OF "FIRE."

Shout of Small Boy Causes a Panic in a Lynn Theatre—No One Seriously Injured.

LYNN, Jan 18—The cry of fire in the Lynn theatre tonight brought 1800 people to their feet, and a wild rush for the doors immediately followed.

Women fainted, and the cries of children and men were heard some distance away. It is considered miraculous that many were not trampled to death.

The panic was all over in a few moments, but while it lasted dresses were torn from women, hats smashed and people knocked aside in the mad scramble for the main entrance.

The audience was stenzied with the first cry of alarm, and the ushers and others who tried to calm the crowd were pushed aside.

When half the audience had reached the street and it was finally made known that there was no fire the people returned to their seats and the play was resumed. Many, however, were overcome and went to their homes.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin" was on the boards and the theatre was packed by an audience of old people and children. It was in the scene where Eva dies and the audience were wrought to a high pitch of sympathy.

A disturbance started in the gallery and the policeman on duty started to eject a man. A small boy stood in his seat to watch the encounter between the policeman and the man and he said the one word "flight."

He wanted to attract the attention of his companions to the row, but his remark had an entirely different result.

Another boy heard the word and he excitedly yelled "fire." With this word ringing in their ears, the audience leaped to their feet and started for the doors.

The actors and actresses stepped to the front of the stage, but try as they might they could not stem the tide.

The orchestra played and the ushers called out that there was no fire and everything was all right, but the crowd did not understand.

The aisles were packed with people making for the exits, and the ushers, who stood near the doors and tried to hold back the crowd, were simply swept off their feet and carried into the street.

Once on the outside and seeing there was no danger from a conflagration, the people began to regain their composure and assisted the employes of the theatre in restoring order.

Little children who had accompanied their parents were lost in the rush, and for five minutes after the excitement had abated and it was certain the theatre was not on fire, mothers and children were seeking each other.

The garments of men and women were sadly disarranged and torn, while one woman among the foremost in the dash for the door had nothing but the rim of what was a costly bonnet after the excitement had ended.

While people were crushed and were thrown down there were no serious accidents. It was a miraculous escape from a terrible panic, with lives crushed out and other attendant horrors.