

# FOUR INJURED, BLOCK SHAKEN BY EXPLOSION

150 Driven from E. Boston Homes by Flames Following Mystery Blast

## THRILLING RESCUES MADE BY FIREMEN

Crowded Tenement District Periled—Police Probe Started

One man was killed when he jumped 45 feet from a fourth-story window, four persons were injured and 150 were driven from their flats when a three-alarm fire, following a mysterious explosion in a hat-cleaning shop, swept a block at 15-25 Meridian street, East Boston, and menaced a crowded tenement district at 4:35 o'clock yesterday afternoon. The damage was estimated at \$20,000.

Street car service to Chelsea and Revere from the East Boston tunnel was interrupted for two hours while the telephone service in the district was put out of commission.

As police battled to keep a crowd of 3000 persons at a safe distance from the blaze, firemen made a series of thrilling rescues.

### QUICK RESPONSE BY FIREMEN

Only the fact that a fire station is diagonally across the street and apparatus responded within a few moments prevented the flames from spreading to adjacent tenement blocks. Police arriving for roll-call at the police station on the next corner turned out without caps or blouses to assist in the rescue work.

Police Supt. Edward W. Fallon and Fire Supt. Edward F. McLaughlin took personal charge at the scene. It was Chief Samuel J. Pope's first big fire since his promotion.

Last night police were questioning George Katias of 13 Bowdoin street, Arlington, proprietor of the Meridian Hat and Shoe Shop at 17 Meridian street, where the explosion occurred. Although Chief Pope said a five-gallon naphtha can was found at the store, Katias said only about a quart of naphtha was there. Members of the police arson and homicide squads and fingerprint experts examined the building.

Les Forte, 23, of 15 Meridian street was asleep in his fourth-floor apartment when the explosion occurred in the hat shop directly beneath his flat. Startled, he ran to the window and was enveloped by flames which spread across the front of the building. Glass from the shattered window covered the street.

Panic-stricken, he climbed on the window sill. Frank Cambria of 18 Paris street, who was passing, shouted, "Stop! Stay there! Don't jump!" Forte stepped back into the room for an instant but returned

## FIGHTING EAST BOSTON FIRE



Thrilling ladder work by firemen marked the \$20,000 three-alarm fire in which one man jumped to his death at 15-25 Meridian street, East Boston, yesterday.

to the window when flames roared up the stairway inside the house.

Forte's brother, Nathaniel Forte of 80 Frankfort street, accompanied by two friends, ran out of a nearby restaurant and shouted to the young man to remain calm. Nathaniel Forte, accompanied by Michael Demeo, 40, of 675 Saratoga street, and Joseph Marion, 35, of 69 Gladstone street entered the building and started upstairs, but were driven back by the flames.

They went next door to No. 21, and met Angelina Cappola, 14, carrying out a baby. "Is there anybody else in this side of the house?" they asked.

"No," she answered. The three men ran upstairs, broke into an apartment, and reached the roof. They were too late. Leo Forte had just jumped.

### BODY NEARLY HITS TWO

Forte fell head first, his body almost striking Sergt. William J. Cripps and Cambria, Cripps, although cut by flying glass, helped Cambria lift Forte's body into a police car. Forte was hurried to East Boston relief hospital, where he died a short time later of a fractured skull.

In the Meridian Music and Tobacco Store at 19 Meridian street, Francis Ansalone, 51, of 732 Bennington street, was just handing a package of cigars to Carmillo Arvillo, 42, of 119 Trenton street, a customer, when the explosion occurred. Glass in a show case was shattered by the blast, both men receiving cuts. Arvillo was treated at the relief hospital.

About 100 telephones in the vicinity were put out of commission. Capt. William D. Donovan, unable to find a telephone in working order,

used the two-way police radio to call Benjamin Delano of Winthrop, treasurer of the East Boston Savings Bank across the street from the fire. Delano hurried to the bank to make sure the fire had not been set as a blind for a bank robbery. Capt. Donovan also notified officers of the Enterprise Co-operative Bank at 25 Meridian street, which is in the building where the fire occurred.

On the second floor at No. 21 was Mrs. Nannette Cappola, 35; her three children, Patsy, 3, and Salvatore and Ernest, twins, who celebrated their first birthday Saturday. Her husband, Anthony, was not at home.

"I smelled smoke, thought it was steam, and went to the kitchen," said Mrs. Cappola. "When I opened the door I smelled oil or gasoline. I picked up Patsy and ran downstairs."

### CRIES FOR BABIES

At the bottom of the stairs, she started to scream, "Oh, my babies! Some one, please save my babies!"

By a coincidence, her uncle, Salvatore Cappola, for whom one of the twins is named, and her niece, Angelina Cappola, 14, both of 4 Elbow street, were passing at the time. The uncle and a 15-year-old boy, known in the neighborhood as Joe, ran upstairs and each carried out a twin.

The boy handed baby Salvatore to Angelina, who was hurrying out of the house with it when she passed Nathaniel Forte and his two companions on the stairs. Still carrying Patsy, Mrs. Cappola became panic-stricken and started up the stairs again, but was held back by neighbors and the police.

### MAN'S \$500 SAVED

Vincent Anastasio, 40, who lives on the top floor at No. 21, frantically sought the aid of Patrolman Henry Martis who accompanied him to

his fourth-floor flat and helped Anastasio remove \$500 which he had hidden behind a bureau drawer. Both were nearly overcome by smoke. Mrs. Theresa Anastasio and her three children were not at home when the explosion occurred.

Antonio Carbone, his wife, Catherine, and their child, occupants of the third floor apartment at No. 21, were aided to the street while Arthur Ricupero, 16, of 202 Paris street, and Gregory Basilio, 15, of 35 Chelsea street, ran upstairs and carried down the Carbone child.

Lt. Egbert K. Murphy received burns on the right hand while assisting the rescuers. He was treated at the scene and returned to duty. Across the street in the Old Colony Trust Building, Thomas H. Malone, in the office of the East Boston Free Press, reported that the building was rocked during the explosion.

The New England Casket Company, which occupies a wooden addition on Elbow street at the rear of the burned building, reported considerable damage.

Mrs. Jennie Forte, mother of the dead man, and other members of the family were on an automobile ride to Lawrence when the explosion occurred. The other members of the family are Paul Forte, 27, James Forte, 25, Michael Forte, 22, Sally Forte, 20, and the two children of James Forte, Jennie, 6, and Angelina, 4.

### APPARATUS CLOGS STREET

All surface cars from the Maverick station of the East Boston tunnel were delayed two hours as fire apparatus from all parts of the city clogged busy Meridian street. A shuttle bus service was established between the tunnel and Central square, East Boston, via Border street.

Long after the blaze was under control, police fought to prevent spectators from entering the fire zone which was strewn with metal, ceiling material and broken glass. Lt. Harry Pierce and Sergt. Joseph Fallon of the homicide squad and Thomas McCusker, police stenographer, searched the building for possible victims.

The building is owned by the Angelo Capinegro estate.

Reuben Halpert, proprietor of the East Boston Smoke Shop at 9 Meridian street, said he ran outdoors the second he heard the explosion, and the front of the building was already black with smoke. Soon, huge flames leaped up the facade of the structure.

### THOUGHT STATION BLOWN UP

Police in the East Boston station 50 yards down the street said they thought the police station had blown up. The East Boston court house is between the burned building and the police station.

A haberdashery shop between the Kelly undertaking parlors and the burned structure was damaged by smoke.

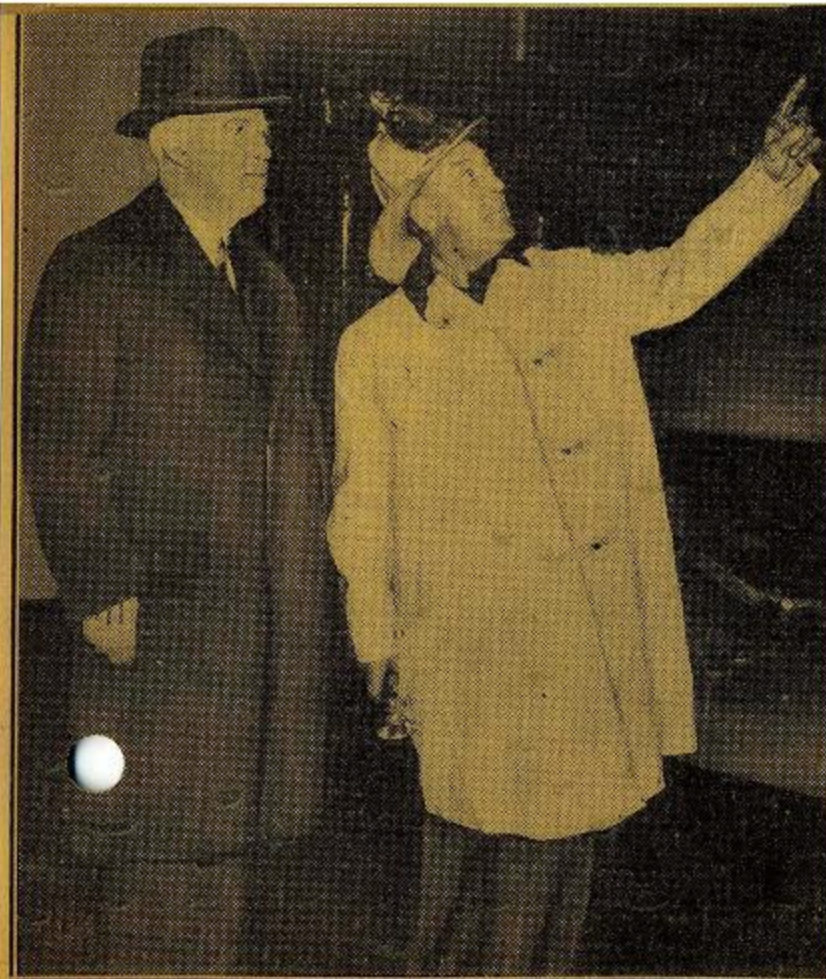
An altercation between Councilman Henry Selvitella and District Chief Napan Boutlier occurred when Selvitella charged Forte was on the window ledge five minutes after apparatus arrived and could have been rescued if a net had been spread. Chief Pope said he had already jumped when the first apparatus arrived.

Selvitella said he would present negligence charges in the city council today.

## FIGHTING FIRE AFTER EAST BOSTON EXPLOSION



WINDOW MARKED X FROM WHICH LEO FORTI MADE FATAL JUMP



### HIS FIRST FIRE AS CHIEF

Fire Chief Samuel Pope shown with Fire Commissioner McLaughlin last night at the Meridian street fire. It was his first fire as commander of the department.