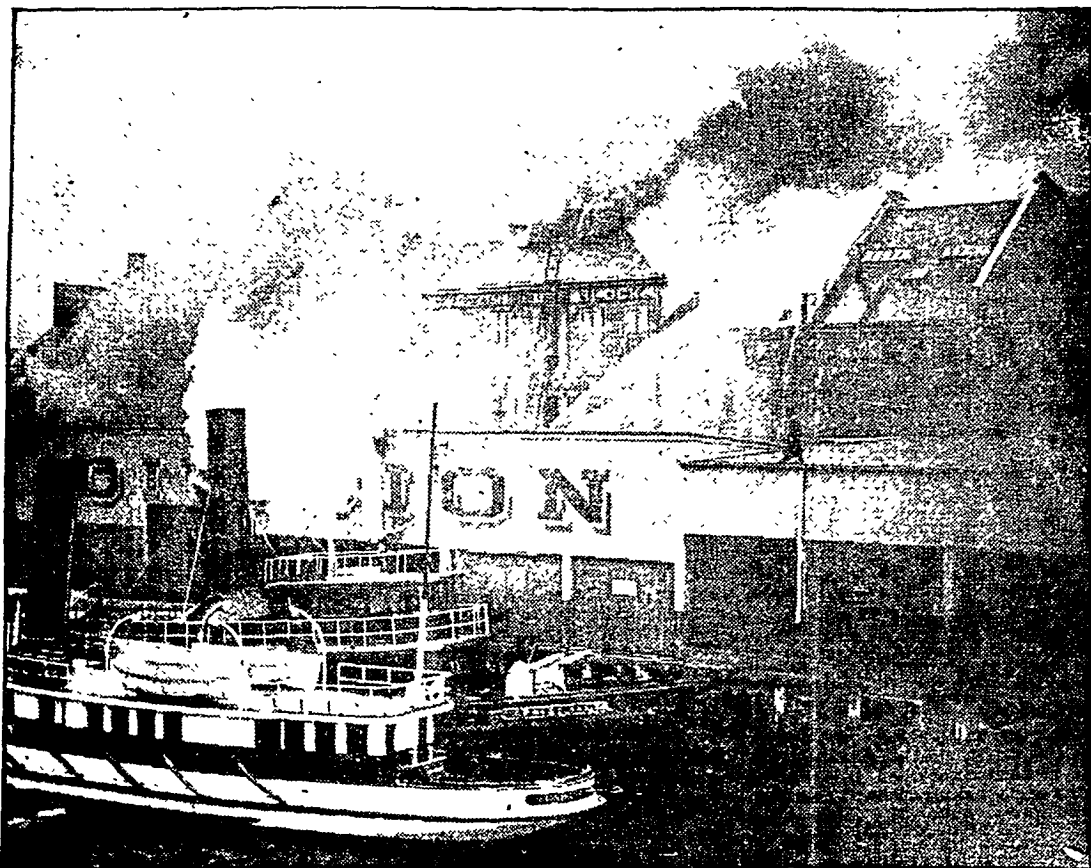


# SPECTACULAR BLAZE IN CUSTOM HOUSE BLOCK, LONG WHARF, YESTERDAY AFTERNOON



POLICE BOAT GUARDIAN AND ENGINE 44, THE FIREBOAT, IN THE FOREGROUND.

## WHARF BLAZE SPECTACULAR

### Immigrants in Danger, Taken on Tug.

### Firemen's Work Effective in Preventing Fire's Spread.

### Maximum Estimate of the Loss is \$10,000.

A fire which started about 3:40 yesterday afternoon on the third floor on the south side of the four-story granite building, 66 to 68 Long wharf, occupied by the Vacuum oil company of 49 Federal st as a warehouse, spread so rapidly to the upper floor and the north side of the building that District Fire Chief Joseph M. Garrity promptly ordered a second alarm, and a few minutes later a third.

The sounding of the additional alarms called out apparatus from East Boston, Charlestown and South Boston, as well as every section of the city proper. These companies were quickly placed to work by Chief Mullen, whose automobile came zipping down Long wharf just as the extra alarms were being recorded.

The plant of the Vacuum oil company is located in the structure known as the Customhouse block, and that it was not destroyed and that the flames were prevented from spreading to adjoining establishments and fishing schooners on the north side of the wharf was due to the efficient work of the firemen, who checked the flames at several points just as they were about to spread.

The fire was discovered by Alfred Taylor, an employe of the oil company. He saw the flames licking their way along the floor among barrels of crude

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# WHARF BLAZE SPECTACULAR

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oil and he rushed downstairs warning other employes. Beside Taylor, there were in the building John F. Deaney, William Cooper, William Geary, John Latham, William Johnson and John Donovan, coopers and laborers. They quickly fled and Capt Hicks, the wharf watchman, who saw the flames shooting from the windows, ran down to Atlantic av and gave an alarm from box 25.

The immigration station on Long wharf was threatened by the fire and for a time the 15 detained immigrants were almost in a state of panic.

Col George B. Billings, immigration commissioner, saw the fire from his window and he immediately recognized the peril of the immigrants and the danger to the government property. The customhouse tug Winnisimmet was moored on the north side of the pier and he decided at once that it was the best means of saving his charges.

With Deputy Inspector Jeremiah J. Hurley and six inspectors the commissioner rushed through the corridor to the detention quarters, which was separated by a passageway about 25 feet wide from the burning building. Mrs Collins, the matron at the station, and Michael J. Kelley, the government caterer, were trying to calm the frightened immigrants. The women and children were crying hysterically and the men were running about in a frenzy of fear. The smoke was pouring into the room and they thought the building was on fire.

Col Billings and his men went among them and told them in half a dozen languages there was no danger. Then they were formed in line and, led by Inspector Orion L. Root, started out of the rear exit. Although terribly frightened they maintained order while being led out of the building. When they reached the pier the flames were bursting from the next building.

Boatswain Emil Christensen and deckhand Hjelmar Ruup, of the Winnisimmet, were waiting at the door of the building and they picked up the children and carried them in their arms down the wharf, where a plank was placed from the upper deck to the caplog.

Pilot Thatcher, acting under orders from Lieut Harry Boyd, in command of the Winnisimmet, held the tug up to the wharf despite the shouts of the tugboat skippers who were trying to tow a number of fishing vessels out of the danger zone. When all the immigrants were safely on board the Winnisimmet, Pilot Thatcher backed the boat out into the harbor and lay there until danger was past.

While all was excitement in the immigration quarters Deputy Surveyor Edgerly and a force of customs inspectors had gotten out the emergency fire apparatus and had laid a line of hose through the rooms, which are located on the southerly side of the building. Col Billings had most of his papers placed on the Winnisimmet.

With the breaking out of the fire a fleet of harbor tugs hurried to the scene and then ran into the basins to assist vessels in danger. A score of fishing vessels in the basin between Long wharf and T wharf were threatened and the tugs pulled many of them out into the stream. The schooners Flora S. Nickerson, Mary Santos and Morning Star were moved to places of safety. At the masthead of each vessel fishermen were stationed with buckets of water, ready to quench any blaze that might start.

The United fruit company's steamer Esparta, which came in Monday afternoon from Port Limon, was moored on the south side of the pier, landing the last of her cargo of bananas. The tug Leader got a line to the steamer's stern and stood by, ready to pull her out into the harbor.

Three tugs and the police boat Juardian remained close by the big fruiter, ready to assist in the work of saving her if the fire should spread.

The fight that the firemen made is one that is not likely to be forgotten by those who saw it. Chief Mullen had water tower 1 raised on the south side of the building and two companies connected their hose lines to the machine, rendering effective service. Engines 4 and 25 formed a siamese on the south of the building, the crew carrying their lines up stairways and over ladders to the fire. From a shed directly opposite the fire the crew of the fireboat directed their line into the upper floors, while around on the north of the building engines 7, 8 and 39 made a great fight. 7's crew fighting the flames in a loft on the fourth floor. Engines 6, 9 and 27 did effective work.

When the crews were making up, the representatives of the Vacuum oil company said that they were much pleased with the manner that Chief Mullen handled the fire and, addressing the reporters, one official said: "Boys, you

cannot praise the fire department enough for its work today." Inside the building were stored 6300 barrels of crude oil, each barrel containing 50 gallons. Most of this was saved, and it was stated by the firemen that the damage was mostly to the interior of the building, the flames having pierced the roof and spread back as far as the north side of the building, burning partitions and ceilings. The representatives of the company were unable to give an estimate of the loss. The general opinion was that the damage would be between \$500 and \$10,000. The cause of the fire is not known.

The fire was one of the most spectacular that has been witnessed along the water front in years. Thousands gathered on the wharves, many climbing aboard tugs and fishing schooners off T wharf, while many others more daring climbed up the rigging of the schooners. Sheds were black with people, while out in the harbor all work was at a standstill.

Inside of an hour the fire was out, but the crowd still lingered and in the fading twilight a few could be seen on the rigging of the fishing schooners talking it over.

Fire Commissioner Parker and Ex-Fire Commissioner Wells were both present.