

FIRE ENGINEERING

The Journal of the Fire Protection Profession Since 1877

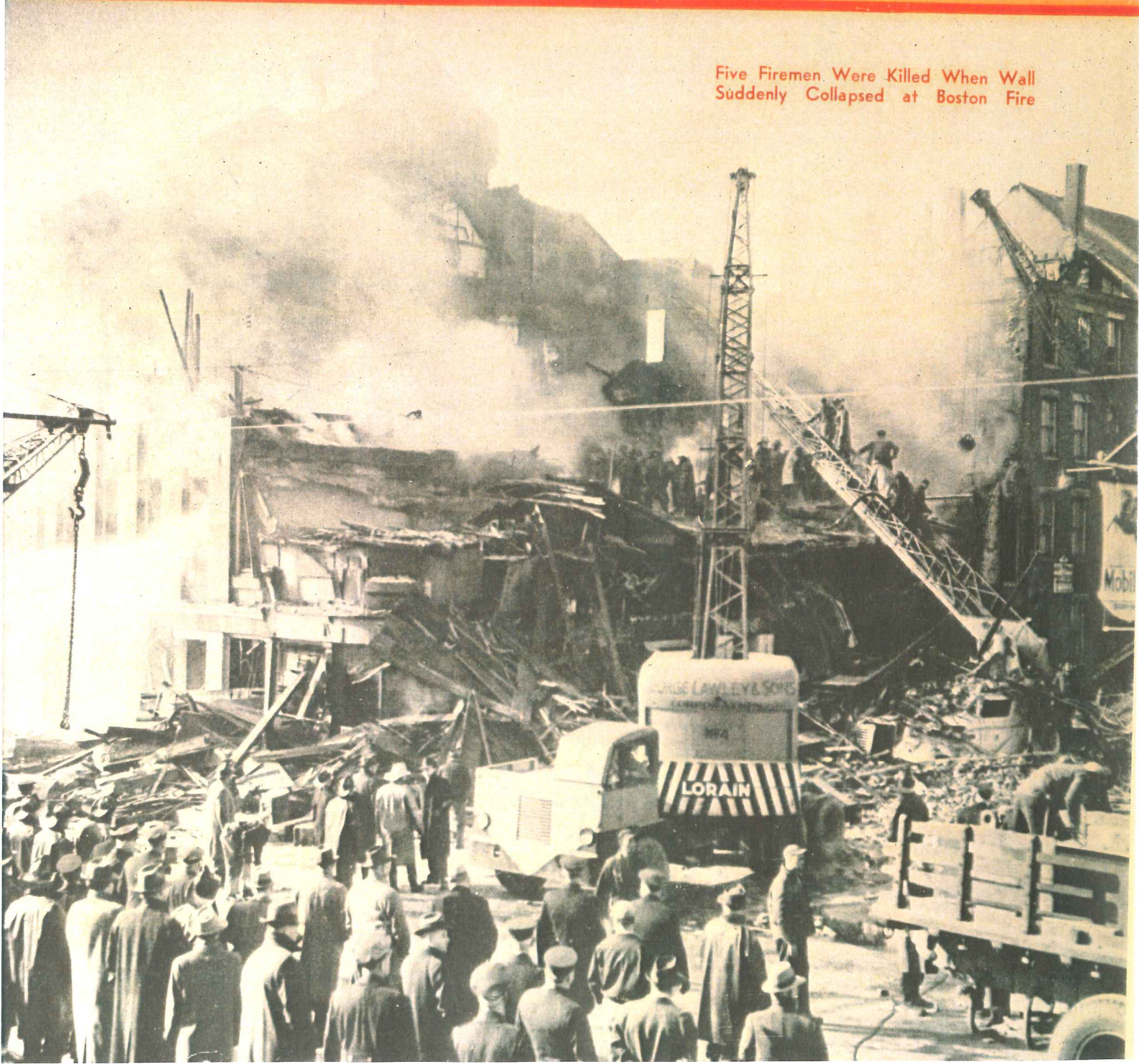
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Five Firemen Were Killed When Wall
Suddenly Collapsed at Boston Fire



be active mentally and physically, and not have to delegate his duties to the men under him. He must be able to withstand heat and smoke and the other conditions present at fires. This applies to the paid as well as the volunteer chief.

Is it likely that a fire chief, knowing that he is to be succeeded in a year or two by another man, will give his all to furthering the efficiency of his department? It is very unlikely that he will. All of us are human and consequently subject to human frailties. The weakness in this instance is the blanketing of enthusiasm and effort because of the innate knowledge that all of his activities are but for two years' duration. And perhaps even more important, the volunteer fire chief who is "bounced" will probably be returned to the rank of a private. Likened that, if you will to the army or navy. Can you imagine reducing an admiral or general to the ranks of apprentice seaman or private? Does not the same hold true in some measure for a fire chief?

The usual practice in volunteer fire departments, where they are made up of a number of companies, is to rotate the position of chief among the several companies, in order to give each company a chance to have one of its members a chief. While it might be an honor for each company to have one of its members serve in that capacity, honor is not a substitute for ability.

Active Members Only Should Vote

Many volunteer departments are comprised of active and inactive members. The active members respond to fires and other emergencies while the inactive members attend dances, card games, annual dinners and elections. The point that is brought out here is that only those engaged actively in fighting fires and in performing fire prevention work should be eligible to select the chief of their department. They are the ones who know what the chief is capable of doing; not those who meet him socially on various occasions throughout the year. Voting privileges, where the selection or election of a chief is involved, should be confined to active members.

To sum up the discussion, the writer believes that where the present chief is doing a good job, he should be maintained in that position until such time as his work indicates that he is slipping (either mentally or physically). When such a man is relegated to the ranks, he should be asked to serve as a consultant to the

new chief because of his experience.

The age-old axiom never was more strikingly illustrated than in its relation to a fire department: "Fire departments do not stand still; they either advance or retrogress." The fire department whose chief does not demand progressive drills and conferences is not an efficient one. To do

this efficiently the chief must be assured of his continuance in office.

If all volunteer departments would give due thought and consideration to the problem of changing chiefs after short intervals of time, it is certain that much of the old "change the chief policy" would be relegated to the red shirt and hand drawn apparatus era.

FALLING WALLS CRUSH FIREMEN IN FIVE-ALARM BOSTON FIRE

**Six Killed and Forty-three Others Injured;
Trapped Men Saved by Heroic Work of Comrades**

CRUSHED beneath falling walls of brick and granite as they fought a five-alarm fire inside the blazing century-old Lyceum Hall at Maverick Square and Henry Street, East Boston, on November 15, six Boston firemen were killed and forty-three others were injured.

The fire itself was an ordinary two-alarm blaze. As they were bringing it under control, the Henry Street side of the age-weakened structure cracked and fell in, carrying many firemen with it in the deluge of blazing timbers, brick and mortar.

The firemen who were killed were on the second floor, working with hose lines. They were smothered under the avalanche.

Outside ten firemen playing water on the blaze from a fire escape were hurled into the street amid a rain of bricks and timbers. Three were left fifty feet in the air on an aerial ladder. Twenty others were on stairways and on the second floor. Still others were blown free from death from window sills. Some were hurled to the sidewalk through two

entrances by the force of the falling interior.

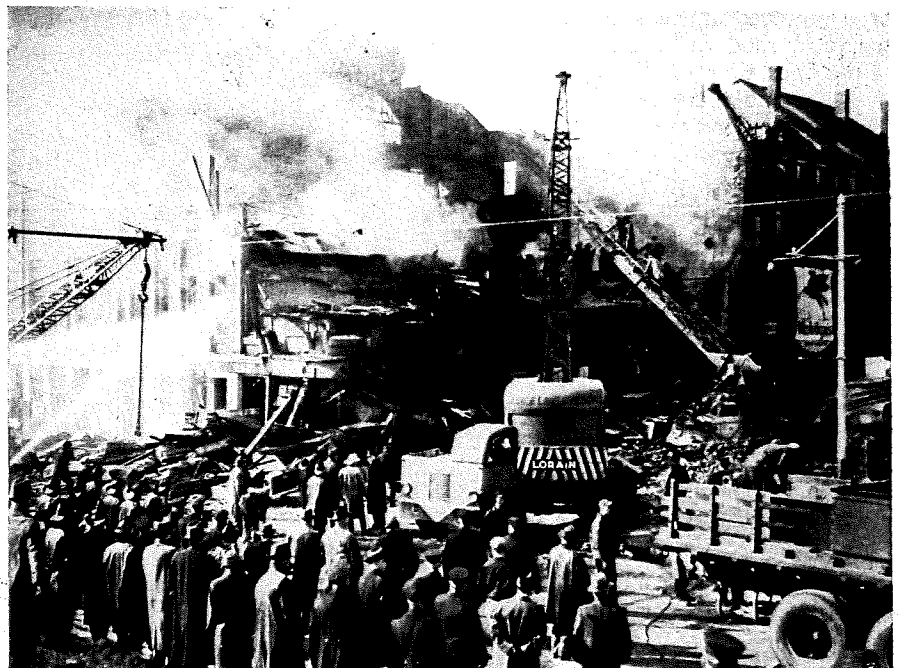
The Boston Fire Department's new aerial ladder truck was standing beside the wall. It was buried in the wreckage and severely damaged. However, it served as the means of escape of twenty-five firemen who were on the second floor of the building.

That more were not killed is due mostly to the gallant action of the firemen, who crawled into holes under the debris to pull injured fellow-firemen to safety.

As the rescue work was proceeding, the flames gained headway. The adjoining building on Henry Street caught fire and some fifty persons were forced to flee.

The fire started in the rear of a restaurant which is on the first floor of the building. An electric appliance caught fire and ignited grease nearby.

A worker in the restaurant ran into the street and called two citizens, who attempted to extinguish the fire. Someone telephoned fire headquarters at 2:26



Collapsing Wall Killed Six Firemen and Covered Ladder Truck

a. m. At 2:27 a. m. the alarm was sounded. Members of the East Boston fire station, only a few blocks away, arrived and quickly laid hose lines.

Included in the rescue squads which arrived to lend assistance were 250 auxiliary policemen, 150 auxiliary firemen, thirty-six members of the Metropolitan

sponded on a special call signal. The second alarm at 10:50 A.M. brought in Engines 4, 7 and Truck Company 6.

Six thousand seven hundred feet of 2½ inch hose and 1,600 feet of 1½ inch hose were in service. Recall was at 2:48 P.M. 150 firemen battled the flames under the direction of Chief Martin J. Hayden and Asst. Chiefs Arthur T. Platt, Thomas J. O'Leary, Elmer V. FitzGerald and Stanley Sherwood.

"The lives of many residents of our city are imperiled by fire hazards, and the blaze that gutted the over-age Sturdevant and Franklin Buildings is only a sample of what may happen next," declared Fire Chief Hayden in an interview with a newspaperman following the fire.

Fire Department Undermanned

Chief Hayden brought to light conditions known to few localities that have created an increasingly menacing problem when he pointed out:

1.—Other buildings at various points in the city, which also are crumbling fire-traps.

2.—An undermanned Fire Department, decimated by draft boards and by experienced men leaving for better jobs in war industries.

3.—The refusal of the War Production Board to permit purchase by this great munitions center of vital equipment necessary for adequate fire protection.

Chief Hayden, in his talk, expressed grave concern over the plight of some localities which are not sufficiently protected against fire hazards. He pointed out that the 5,300 apartments in the housing projects are in jeopardy, for in many instances the nearest fire alarm box is more than a mile away.

"I have tried to get more fire boxes and wire from Washington," Chief Hayden declared, "and appealed to everyone short of the President, but no luck." The Chief added that he experienced much woe and considerable trouble obtaining fire hydrants of which there is still quite a shortage.

Nine Killed in Explosion

Eight women and a man burned to death in an explosion and fire at the Rochester Fireworks Company near East Rochester, N. Y., recently. Ten other persons were badly burned.

The explosion which started the fire was comparatively light, but the powdered fire swept so rapidly through the long one-story building that only one or two of the more than twenty employees working at the time managed to escape without burns. Seven were burned to death while trapped in the building with no chance to escape.

The building was equipped with fourteen escape doors and the presence of these doors is believed to have prevented a much higher death list.

The explosion was caused shortly after 4:30 p.m., when a tray of powder being carried was either dropped or set down hard enough to cause a friction spark. The explosion was hardly more than a dull sounding puff, but the resultant fire flashed through the building instantaneously. The fire was confined to the one building, but the ruins were not cooled sufficiently to permit removal of the bodies until three hours later.



Firemen Bring Bodies Down Ladder from Ruins of Lyceum Hall in East Boston

The second alarm was sounded at 3:04 a. m., when the fire seemed to be gaining headway. At 3:24 a. m., the third alarm was sounded and at 4:20 a. m., five minutes after the wall collapsed, the fourth alarm sounded. The fifth alarm was sounded to bring help to aid in the rescue of the trapped firemen.

Chapter of the American Red Cross, a civilian defense demolition squad, and a number of Coast Guardsmen.

Fire underwriters discovered charred timbers from previous fires within the ruins, and it developed that the building has been twice swept by serious fires, and structurally weakened by alterations

BRIDGEPORT FIRE DEMONSTRATES NEED FOR MORE FIRE EQUIPMENT

**Failure to Obtain Vital Equipment and
Draft Jeopardize Effective Fire Fighting**

By Captain Thomas F. Magner

SEVEN firemen were overcome from smoke and damage figured approximately at \$200,000 resulted from a two-alarm blaze that swept the four-story municipally owned Sturdevant and Franklin Buildings, both of brick construction, at Main and State Streets, Bridgeport, Conn., on November 24.

Feeding on stocks of inflammable carpeting and linoleum in the basement of the store occupied by the Laywell Carpet Company, the fire ate through the walls of the Sturdevant Building into the adjoining Franklin Building, an 80 year old structure housing several city offices, which necessitated the sounding of a second alarm by Fire Chief Martin J. Hayden.

As flames consumed household furnishings in the storage cellar of the Laywell Carpet Company, thick, chok-

ing smoke spread rapidly throughout the entire building, forcing city workers to flee to the street. Lack of fire stops handicapped the firemen in their work and allowed the flames to spread into the adjoining building.

The interior of the Franklin Block was gutted by flames above the first floor which enveloped the roof. Remodeling of this structure into a two-story building is being planned. Six engine companies were required to combat the fire.

The first alarm was sent in at 8:06 A.M. by a janitor at the Franklin Building who discovered smoke coming from the Laywell Company's cellar. The alarm was received from Box 13, Main and Bank Streets. Engines 1, 3 and 5 with Truck Company 5 and Squad 5, responded. At 8:18 A.M. Engine 2 re-