

FIREMEN OF TWO CITIES FOUGHT A HALF-MILLION-DOLLAR BLAZE



FRONT STREET—SHOWING SIDE OF BURNING BUILDING

VICTOR TALKING MACHINE COMPANY'S PLANT IN CAMDEN DESTROYED --- FOUR PHILADELPHIA FIRE COMPANIES AIDED ENTIRE LOCAL DEPARTMENT WHICH WAS CALLED OUT

A fire which destroyed the large four-story building of the Victor Talking Machine Company, at Front street, above Market, Camden, causing a loss of more than \$500,000, threatened for an hour or more yesterday afternoon to create a general conflagration in the heart of the South Jersey metropolis.

Philadelphia fire ladders went once more to the aid of a sister city in distress, and crossed the river to Camden, where they assisted in saving thousands of dollars' worth of property from being consumed by the flames.

The six fire engine companies of the Camden department had been endeavoring for an hour to subdue the flames, but were working against odds. Taking time by the forelock, Mayor Joseph L. Nowrey and Dr. Frank Neill Robinson, chairman of the Fire Committee of the Camden Council, after a discussion, telephoned to the Electrical Bureau in the Philadelphia City Hall for assistance.

In the course of a very few minutes four companies were on their way to Market street ferry to cross the Delaware.

Companies That Crossed River

The companies sent were No. 21, from Poplar and New Market streets; No. 23, from Seventh and Berks streets; No. 13, from Twenty-first and Market streets, and No. 48, from Seventh and Carpenter streets. The Philadelphia detachment of firemen were under the charge of District Engineer John Meekil. Dr. John Da Costa went with the men to render medical aid had any been necessary.

The fire tugs Stokley and Ashbridge also crossed to the Camden river front to protect the establishments and ships about the wharves.

Immediately after reaching the scene a complete change in the manner of fighting the flames was brought about. With the same gallant and almost headlong display of nerve that won them countless shouts of applause at Baltimore the Quaker City lads fought the flames "from the front," as they aptly express.

With their customary endurance they kept up their dare-devil fight until the

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MEN OF TWO CITIES FOUGHT BIG BLAZE



WHERE THE FIRE STARTED

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danger of the fire spreading and the possibility of a general conflagration was removed inside of half an hour after their arrival. Another half hour's fight and the flames were so well under control that they were able to leave for home.

Camden Firemen Work Hard

It was one of the fiercest fires the Camden department had to cope with in years. The local fire-fighters, who are justly proud of their department, worked heroically and were praised by the Philadelphia firemen.

The origin of the fire is as yet unknown, but the authorities are making an investigation. The flames were discovered about noon issuing from a stable in the rear of the carriage works of Joseph C. Collings, which adjoins the Victor Company's establishment on Front street. William Wallace and George Early, employes of the machine shop of Lambert & Todd, which adjoined the stable, discovered the flames. Wallace rushed to give the alarm. Early at the same time went to the assistance of a horse that was tied to his stall in the stable. As he opened the stable door, however, the fire beat about his face in such a manner that it was impossible for him to enter the place, and the animal was burned to death.

Before the fire engines reached the scene the flames had leaped, in some unexplainable manner, to the building of the Victor Talking Machine Company, and in a few minutes the third and second floors of the huge plant were all ablaze. In a short time the entire building was aflame, and the danger of a general conflagration was extremely imminent. The entire department of Camden struggled in an uphill fight against the spread of the flames, but to no avail. It was only when it was seen that the aid of the Philadelphia firemen was necessary to prevent a great loss of property that Mayor Nowrey and Dr. Robinson decided to send for aid.

Estimates on the loss sustained by the company vary by the hundreds of thou-

sands, but \$500,000 is regarded by the Camden authorities as a conservative figure. The officials of the concern have so far not given any definite estimate. The chief loss is that of the thousands of talking machine and gutta percha records which were stored prior to shipping upon the fourth floor of the building. Assistant Superintendent Atkinson stated that there were 80,000 records alone destroyed by the fire. While no figures could be obtained from him it is said that 50 per cent. of these records were reproductions of the now almost classic Bedelia and Hiawatha, while the rest were for the most part of the rag time variety.

The building destroyed had a frontage of more than 100 feet on Front street, and had a depth of nearly 300 feet. Nothing was saved in the structure. The insurance on the building and stock amounted to about \$250,000, placed by Stokes & Pacher. This insurance was carried by seventy-eight different companies throughout the country.

The destruction of the Victor plant throws over 500 persons out of employment. The company had enough orders on hand to keep this number of employes fully employed until way into July. The plant had a capacity of 3500 talking machines a week, an outlay valued by the company at \$70,000.

While hard at work fighting the flames, Joseph James, of Engine Company No. 2, of Camden, was accidentally struck over the head by the nozzle of a hose handled by one of his colleagues. He received painful lacerations of the head and was taken to the Cooper Hospital.

Edward Shlerth, a young Camdenite, was passing along North Second street, above Cooper, when he discovered a young girl lying on the step of one of the houses in an almost unconscious condition. He hastily carried her away from the smoke, which had overcome her, and she quickly revived. Shlerth did not succeed in learning her name.

Policeman Edward Johnson turned fireman when the danger of a general conflagration became imminent. He cast aside his blue coat and helmet, and joined the Camden firemen in their work of getting the hose into action.