

# LIGHTNING STARTS FIRES, HITS TREES, STUNS THREE BOYS

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## Costly Blazes in Camden—Youths Under Awning Badly Shocked

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## Sudden Torrent of Rain, High Wind and Bolts Cause Widespread Damage

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Sudden and furious was the electrical storm which yesterday afternoon took Philadelphia, Camden and nearby towns by surprise. Fires were started by lightning in many sections, rain fell in torrents and the wind rose suddenly and played wide-spread havoc.

Camden was the centre of the disturbance and suffered the heaviest damage. Three boys were severely shocked there and the total damage from fires mounted to the \$50,000 mark. Bolts in Ardmore felled trees across many roads, split a flag pole in front of the Ardmore public school and tumbled a chimney off the building.

Between 2.45 and 3.15 in the afternoon the thermometer dropped twenty degrees, from 85 to 65, a southwesterly wind rising at the same time to a velocity of thirty miles an hour. Typical of summer thunderstorms was the unheralded start of the downpour and its brief duration. The precipitation from 3.12 to 3.35 in the afternoon, the time during which the rain fell, was only .45 of an inch, but the greater part of this poured down in ten minutes' time.

### Many Fires in Camden

Every piece of apparatus in the Camden Fire Department was pressed into service at one and the same time, only quick response to the alarms averting disastrous blazes in two instances.

Out along the Main Line little damage was done. The house of A. J. Francis, at the junction of Grandview and Argyle roads, Ardmore, was struck by lightning and the roads themselves were blockaded by uprooted trees which forced motorists to go slow to avoid collisions with the obstructions.

The three Camden boys who were shocked, A. Goldberg, 15 years old; Richard Noon, 14 years old, and Howard Robbins, 9 years old, living at 310, 336 and 330 North Tenth street respectively, were all taken to the Cooper Hospital. Only one of the trio, Goldberg, is still in a serious condition. All were paralyzed when admitted to the hospital.

### Boys Hurled to Pavement

When the storm made itself manifest with vivid flashes of lightning and reverberating thunder, the boys sought shelter beneath an awning at Tenth and Penn streets. Goldberg was leaning against an iron pole with his companions nearby. There was a blinding flash and the next instant the three boys were hurled to the pavement.

Others beneath the awning went to their assistance, although several were slightly affected by the bolt also. The boys were apparently dead when placed in the auto ambulance, but after several hours of work at the hospital, the youthful victims were revived. They said it looked like a great greenish white ball which descended from the darkened skies.

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and which apparently struck the pole against which Goldberg was leaning.

Within five minutes four alarms of fire had been turned into the Camden Electrical Bureau. One, was from the Parkside school at Wildwood and Princess avenues, another from the elevated bridge of the Pennsylvania Railroad at Third and Bridge avenue, the third from the department store of Toone & Hollinshed, at Broadway and Kaighn avenue, and the fourth from the Camden Curtain Rod Factory, Broadway and Jackson streets. In each instance it was a bolt of lightning that struck electric wires that caused the blaze.

At the Toone & Hollinshed store, one of the largest in Camden, and which is located in a three-story building, the fire had its origin in the basement. There were large quantities of men's and boys' furnishing and duplicate supplies of dry goods stored there ready for display. This material was excellent food for the flames, and for a time they threatened to mount up through the stairway of the main floors, but the quick work of the firemen averted such a contingency.

## Woman Saves Firm's Books

At the height of the blaze, which raged fiercely in the basement, Miss Anna Brennan, chief bookkeeper, mounted a fire escape to the second floor. Standing by a window from which the smoke issued in thick volumes, she superintended the rescuing of the firm's books. Not until all had been taken out did she leave her post. Fireman John McTaggart, of Chemical Company No. 1, rescued the books.

There was such thick, pungent smoke issuing from the windows that several firemen were temporarily overcome, but they were revived and went back to work. Harry Green, of Engine Company No. 1, was badly cut about the hands by falling glass.

It was stated by Thomas Hollinshed, a member of the firm, that the damage to the store and stock would total at least \$25,000. This was due not only to the blaze, but also to the smoke which permeated all parts of the three-story building.

It was in the southwest corner of the building of the Camden Curtain Rod Company that the fire had its origin. It spread with great rapidity and for a time it was feared the entire three-story structure would fall prey to the flames. The fire fighters confined the blaze to the first floor however. The tons of water coupled with the fire caused damage estimated at \$25,000, fully covered by insurance.

At the Parkside School it was found that the fire had caused but little damage and the railroad bridge at Third and Bridge avenue was only scorched. There was something of a furore at the latter place because over the structure were passing many seashore trains laden with passengers for Camden and this city.

The storm was one of the most intense Camden has experienced this summer, although it was less than half an hour in duration. Throughout the city trees and fences were leveled and on the surround-

ing roads, especially the White Horse pike, hundreds of autoists were forced to seek shelter. Some of the thoroughfares in the lower sections were converted into veritable torrents, so great was the rainfall.

## Pole Ablaze From Bolt

In the northeastern section of this city the most serious havoc played by the storm was in the district running four blocks each way from the corner of Delaware avenue and Orthodox street. Lightning struck a transforming pole at that point, putting out all the lights in the neighborhood and leading the watchman of a nearby mill to turn in an alarm of fire when he saw the pole ablaze. Trees were blown down in several of the parks in Frankford and a few wires also fell.

On the Delaware River several craft, especially sailing vessels which were becalmed just before the almost instantaneous rising of the wind, had narrow escapes in getting to shore.

Lightning struck a junction box of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company on the southwest corner of Eighth and Parrish streets during the most violent part of the storm. The damage done was slight, but the flash and the crackle of electricity frightened the passengers on a passing trolley, who feared that the current would jump to the trolley pole and set the car on fire.

During the height of the storm several trees were blown down in the southern section of the city and a northbound Thirteenth street car narrowly missed being caught under one of the falling trees, which blew to the ground shortly after it had passed.

Telephone and telegraph wires were blown about and badly entangled, causing considerable inconvenience and in some cases endangering the lives of pedestrians, who were not aware of the imminent danger from the highly charged wires. Truck farmers in the vicinity of the Navy Yard suffered considerable loss from the heavy downpour of rain, which in many cases practically washed and flooded the plants out of the ground.

Owing to the slippery pavements, Thomas Lynch, 47 years old, of 5518 Lancaster avenue, was thrown off his bicycle against a tree and received a broken right arm and a dislocated left shoulder. Lynch was riding north on Fifty-sixth street and when he tried to turn into Arch street his tires skidded with disastrous results. The driver of a passing automobile picked the unconscious man from the asphalt and carried him to the West Philadelphia Homeopathic Hospital, where he is out of danger.

## Halts Tent Service

The open air services planned by the Union Evangelical Church at Hunting Park were cut short by the storm, the greater number of the intended congregation making for shelter when the thunder and lightning began. When Rev. S. Howard Chubb, who was to conduct the services, arrived at the park, soaked through with rain, he found it deserted.

Gorras Park fared rather better, the services there, held by Rev. W. B. Forney, of Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Manayunk, proceeding despite the rain.