

FIRE WIPES OUT 27 ASTORIA BLOCKS; LOSS IS ESTIMATED BETWEEN 10 AND 15 MILLIONS

ALL BUSINESS AREA IS OBLITERATED IN TERRIFYING FLAMES

Four Banks, Two Newspaper Plants, Both Telegraph Offices, Weinhard Hotel, Blue Mouse, Liberty and Star Theatres, in Addition to Odd Fellows, Elks and Red Men's Halls Razed; City Hall and Hospital Damaged; Patients Moved to Safety.

Astoria, Dec. 8.—Twenty-seven city blocks, including Astoria's choicest structures, are a mass of smouldering, smoking ruins today as a result of a fire which originated in a restaurant at 2:15 this morning and raged unchecked until 11 o'clock. The damage is estimated between \$10,000,000 and \$15,000,000.

Two lives were forfeited in the holocaust. Norris Staples, president of the Bank of Commerce, succumbed to heart disease, induced by excitement incident to his efforts to help save automobiles in a garage. This afternoon the body of George J. Smith, a logger, was found hanging from the dock. It is believed that Smith temporarily lost his mind in the turmoil of the flaming disaster and went to the waterfront and ended his life.

The Weinhard hotel, Hoefler's candy store, the newspaper plants of the Budget and the Morning Astorian, the American Railway Express company, the Postal and Western Union offices, First National, Astoria Savings & Trust company, Bank of Commerce, Astoria National, the Blue Mouse, Liberty and Star theatres, Elks' club, Odd Fellows' hall, Bee Hive department store and the Red Men's hall are among the structures which have been obliterated.

At 10 o'clock the Logan block, in which the Astoria Business college occupied the second floor, and the Nyquist Motor Car company and Prael-Eigner Auto company the main floor, was burning, with no hope that it would be saved.

The fire was halted after it had swept as far as the city hall and the Catholic hospital. For a time little hope was held for the saving of these buildings, but desperate efforts of weary firefighters at last triumphed. Patients had been moved from the hospital to places of safety.

FIGHTERS HAMPERED
One report has it that the fire department was considerably hampered in its early efforts by failure of the water supply. The street water supply will be in complete darkness tonight save for flashlights or oil lamps that may be used. Cable leaders to the power plant were burned out and the service cut off. L. M. Buck and H. P. Rosen, engineers for the telephone company, say they expect the city's phone communications to be restored shortly. The telephone office was saved, but the downtown exchange plant was destroyed.

DOCKS ARE SAVED
The fire was kept from the Sanborn docks on the waterfront. The construction of Commercial street was one of the main factors of the spread of the flames. The street was built on piling with a wooden floor, on which pavement had been laid. The open space under the street was a duct, spreading the flames in all directions, to buildings across, up and down the street.

Central headquarters of the Astoria fire department, directly across the street from the location of the latest blaze was damaged.

The courthouse, postoffice and telephone exchange are still standing, so far apparently out of reach of the flames.

The flames were fanned during the early hours of the fire by a strong north wind, which switched later to the south. A heavy rain fell during the morning hours.

SPREADS RAPIDLY
The rapid spread of the flames is considered due to the numerous frame buildings in the path of the conflagration. Dynamite was used in half a dozen places to raze buildings in an effort to check the flames. The long distance telephone offices were temporarily established in the city hall as an emergency. The only means of communication out of town for a time was by telephone, as both telegraph offices were destroyed.

Nineteen city blocks had been razed or were burned at 7:30 o'clock. The fire area extended from Astor to Duane, four blocks, and from Ninth to 14th streets. Three blocks between Eighth and Ninth streets and two between Exchange and Franklin streets were partially destroyed.

STARTS IN RESTAURANT
Cause of the fire had not been determined. The flames broke out in Thiel Brothers' restaurant and pool room on Commercial street, between 11th and 12th streets, across the street from Hoefler's. The blaze spread so rapidly that all efforts to check it were fruitless and appeals were sent out to nearby towns for help.

Guests at the Weinhard Astoria hotel were warned and left. Lodgers in the rooming houses were also warned and escaped. By 4 o'clock the block bounded by Commercial, Bond, 11th and 12th

General View of the Down-Town District of Astoria Destroyed by Today's Fire

THIS view, looking east, gives an excellent idea of the business district which has been destroyed. In the immediate foreground are the postoffice (No. 1) and the Clatsop county court-house (No. 2). These buildings are on Eighth street, which marks the westward boundary of the fire. The two structures were not burned, but practically everything east for six blocks is gone. The Weinhard-Astoria hotel (No. 3), at Twelfth and Duane streets, is among the prominent structures destroyed, as is the Spexarth building (No. 4). The docks on the waterfront were not destroyed. Arrow indicates where fire started, opposite Hoefler's restaurant, in Commercial street.



Buildings Destroyed

Astoria, Dec. 8.—Included in the buildings destroyed in today's fire are:

Temple of Astoria lodge of Elks together with its magnificent furnishings, valued at more than \$50,000.

Troy laundry, one of the largest in Oregon outside of Portland, owned by John Troy, for many years a laundryman in the Rose City.

Home of the Young Women's Christian Association.

Old Astoria theatre, for many years the leading playhouse for road shows here.

Five-story Weinhard hotel, owned by the Weinhard estate of Portland and conducted by F. N. Whitman since 1914, is but a blackened shell of its once proud self.

Four banks, the Astoria National bank, which occupied a fine structure of two stories, white glazed brick and was just completing \$25,000 worth of alterations; the Bank of Commerce, the Astoria Savings bank, which occupied a fine five-story pressed brick building.

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WOMAN DENIES MURDER ATTEMPT

Detroit, Mich., Dec. 8.—(E. N. S.)—Mrs. May Ford, wife of Roy Ford, wealthy second cousin of Henry Ford, automobile king, broke down completely when arraigned today to answer a charge that she plotted to have her husband murdered.

Mrs. Ford became so hysterical she was led out. She recovered her composure, returned and pleaded not guilty in a firm voice. Judge Marsh fixed her bail at \$35,000 and ordered her examination for December 12.

Mrs. Ford was arrested last night by Detective Sergeant Ovid Strath as she was standing at Woodward and "gunman" who was to kill Ford, police charge.

Smythe's Condition Has Not Changed

Chicago, Dec. 8.—Physicians reported today that the condition of Dan P. Smythe of Bendleton, Or., was unchanged. No operation has yet been performed on the Oregon banker.

PORTLAND TO GIVE SUCCOR

Mayor Sends Board of Inquiry to Astoria; Pledges Fund; Many Bodies to Aid.

The sympathies of Portland and its great heart of generosity were deeply touched early this morning when the extent of the conflagration at Astoria became apparent. From widespread sources there began at once the formation of plans for immediate relief. The stricken city was assured, even while the fire was at its height, that its sister city of Portland would do all within its power to alleviate distress and help in this time of dire emergency.

That Astoria may depend upon ample supplies and whatever other service Portland as a city government and its citizens as individuals can furnish was made certain early when various agencies began to coordinate their efforts to prepare for the homeless Astorians.

The city government, the Red Cross, the American Legion, the Chamber of Commerce, the Portland Ad club and other organizations began early in the day to plan for assistance.

Mayor Baker tendered to the mayor of Astoria all available help, either in the way of police, guards or food supplies. On his own initiative he got in touch with Colonel Anderson at Vancouver barracks, and the colonel at once agreed to provide relief, supplies and men from that point, to train on one hour's notice, as soon as it could be definitely determined that Astoria should have to have outside help at once.

Colonel Anderson made arrangements to send in charge of Major King five officers and 75 men of Company K, Seventh regiment, with one medical officer and a staff of eight assistants, and supplies consisting of 15,000 rations, 1500 blankets, 500 coats, mattresses.

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Traffic Chief Goes To Aid of Astoria

Salem, Dec. 8.—T. A. Rafferty, chief of the state traffic bureau, with all state traffic men available, left today for Astoria to patrol the lower Columbia highway and aid in handling traffic in Astoria.

Equipment, Firemen Are Sent to Aid

A special train with firefighting apparatus, hose and firemen left here at 6 a. m. today to assist in fighting the conflagration sweeping over the business district of Astoria.

Fire Chief Young received word this forenoon that the firefighting equipment and men sent from Portland by special train arrived at Astoria at 10 o'clock and were able immediately to get into position to do some effective work.

The party was organized by Fire Chief John Young and Walter Long of the A. G. Long company, local representative of the American La France Fire Apparatus company. Two steamers, one pump, 6000 feet of hose and eight men were taken down on the special train. Long furnished the pump, which is the same one used at the Washington high school fire. It is kept on hand in the classroom of the A. G. Long company.

Chief Young received a call for assistance at 2:30 in the morning, and immediately after obtaining permission.

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ASTORIA TO BE REBUILT

"We Have Site for Finest City on Coast," Say Citizens; To Make Plans Today.

By Philip Farrish
Journal Staff Correspondent
Astoria, Dec. 8.—"We have the site for the finest city on the Pacific coast."

These words by a prominent Astoria business man indicate the spirit of optimism that pervades this stricken city following the most disastrous conflagration in the history of the Pacific northwest.

As did San Francisco, so will Astoria rebuild, the substantial citizens say, looking toward the future. The hopeful attitude with which they face the problem of reconstruction is typical of the entire city.

The business men are meeting this afternoon to lay plans for the future and to provide means of relief for the present. No food supplies are needed, according to R. H. Hoeking assistant to Astoria's mayor, as the three big food supply warehouses of Allen & Co.

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PRESIDENT TO FIGHT "WETS"

Harding Says in Message He Will Ask Governors to Enforce Prohibition.

GOING BY RADIO
Washington, Dec. 8.—(U. P.)—For the first time in history the words of a president as he appears before congress with his annual message will be heard in distant parts of the country. President Harding, when he appears before congress today, will speak directly into a radio transmitter. His words will be broadcast through the naval air station at Anacostia. It is expected that the president will be heard as far west as the Rocky mountains.

By David Lawrence
Copyright, 1922, by The Journal
Washington, Dec. 8.—President Harding has taken complete cognizance in his message to congress today of the labor problems which made the electorate so restless this year and brought such a confused result in the elections just a month ago.

The president says something on nearly every subject which might have had anything to do with the balloting or which might affect the course of affairs in the national referendum in 1924. Members of both parties will agree that irrespective of the merit of Mr. Harding's proposals, whether they constitute a cure for the ills of a plea in avoidance, the president has nevertheless by his recitation of problems given a comprehensive account of "the state of the Union."

Much of what Mr. Harding has recommended does not come as a surprise.

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Guard Troops to Rush Assistance To Fire Refugees

LANDSLIDE DRIVES TOWNSPEOPLE OUT

Modena, Italy, Dec. 8.—(U. P.)—Six hundred persons escaped today from the little town of Blandocall, where a hundred houses already have collapsed in a landslide, and complete destruction is threatened. The towns have been deserted and its inhabitants are homeless.

Astoria Is Oldest City Of Oregon

Astoria, the oldest city not only in Oregon but the entire Northwest, rose to distinction in the early days when it was the center of the quarrel between the United States and Great Britain over suzerainty of the Northwest territory.

The first American visitor to the site of Astoria was Captain Robert Gray of Boston who visited the Columbia river in 1792 in his ship, the Columbia. Lewis and Clark, on their memorable expedition through the Northwest, passed Astoria in 1806 and won the friendship of the Indians, which later proved a valuable asset to the American expedition sent out by John Jacob Astor.

ASTOR FURNISHES FUNDS
This expedition was organized at the request of President Jefferson to found a trading post. Astor furnished funds, amounting to \$400,000 for the expedition which left New York, September 8, 1810.

Six other men accompanied Astor as chiefs of the expedition. They were Duncan McDougal, Donald McKensie, Alex McKay, Wilson Price Hunt, Robert Stuart and Captain Jonathan Thorne, master of the Tonquin. These men later proved the undoing of the expedition and resulted in the seizure of the trading post by the British.

On March 22, 1811, the Tonquin with the expedition aboard, arrived off the Columbia river. A site half way between Tongue Point and Point George was chosen as the location for the post that is now Astoria. The town was founded.

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Guard Troops to Rush Assistance To Fire Refugees

Preparations of the Oregon National Guard to transport tents, field kitchens, coats and blankets to Astoria—enough to care for 2000 persons—were begun about noon at Clackamas, where a small detachment of men started loading the equipment on special cars.

The action was taken on orders of Adjutant General George A. White while it was still doubtful whether the residence district would be destroyed. General White arrived ready to go to Astoria with a detachment of 100 men to transport the equipment, in case it is necessary.

FIRE LINES BLOCK TRAIN

Passenger Coaches Bound From Seaside to Portland Stopped by Astoria Fire.

To avoid cutting the lines of fire hose stretched across the tracks the morning train of the S. P. & S. between Seaside and Portland was abandoned on the western outskirts of Astoria at 8 o'clock this morning and another complete train was made up at the station on the east end of the town, according to R. O. Burgess, brakeman of the train, who arrived here at 1:30 on the train which brought the first eye witnesses of the fire.

Burgess said it was necessary to transfer all mail and baggage back behind the hill around the city to the station at the east end of the town. The transfer delayed the train over an hour.

SUSPECT FIREBUG
Burgess and passengers on the train gave a graphic description of the fire, which was at its height when the train left Astoria shortly after 9 o'clock.

"I talked with the chief of the fire department, and from what he told me there seems to be little doubt that the fire was of incendiary origin," said Burgess.

"Witnesses who saw the fire in its early stages all agreed that it apparently started in three or four different places simultaneously," Burgess continued.

The time of the starting of the fire was about 2:20, according to what Burgess was told in Astoria.

The breaking of fire mains about 7:45 in several sections of the city temporarily put the fighting apparatus out of commission until the firemen were able to rig up pumps near the waterfront and pump water up from the bay.

TRAIN ABANDONED
The hose placed across the S. P. & S. tracks along the waterfront to the pumps, which were down as close as possible to the waterfront, made it necessary for the train to be abandoned. Burgess said there was some fire along the tracks all the way around the edge of the city, but that they would have been able to get it under control.

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The text of President Harding's message will be found on Page 6.

LLOYD GEORGE TO WRITE FOR THE SUNDAY JOURNAL

THE JOURNAL has secured the services of Britain's former premier for a series of articles on current affairs of world moment, the first of which will be published next Sunday. These cable dispatches will contain his views on international topics. Watch for this super-feature by one of world's master statesmen.