

11 GIRLS AND A MAN DIE IN NEWARK FIRE

Others, Hemmed In by Flames, Injured by Jumping from Factory Windows.

MANY TRAMPLED IN PANIC

Bodies of Victims Found Behind Heap of Debris, Which Blocked Exits.

In the worst fire from which Newark has suffered since 1910 eleven girls and one man lost their lives and more than a dozen were injured in flames that swept through the factory of the American Button Company on Morris Avenue, between New and Hartford Streets, yesterday afternoon. As soon as the flames were discovered there was a panic among the 200 employes, and before nine of them could reach the fire escape or either to the two stairways they were overcome by the smoke and fumes, and when found were burned beyond recognition. Four girls jumped from the third-story window, three of them dying later. Those injured by burns or by being trampled in the wild rush to escape were taken to the City Hospital, and most of them are expected to die.

The probable cause of the fire was the ignition of highly explosive lacquer stored in cans resting on a floor through which there had been run defective wiring. The resulting explosion and the rapid spread of inflammable gases set the entire building afire within only a few seconds, so that flames were leaping from every window of the three-story building before the first alarm was sent in.

Those whose bodies have thus far been identified are:

The Dead.

BALL, CAMILLIE, 17 years old, of 42 Hecker Street; burned to death in the building. Identified by her father by means of a ring.

SEILER, MARIE, 17 years old, of 51 Jones Street; jumped from window on fourth floor and died in City Hospital from a fractured skull.

PEARL, LILLIAN, 22 years old, of 328 North Fifth Street; burned to death in building and identified at the Morgue.

The remaining bodies are at Mullin's Morgue. They are so badly burned that identification can only be made by pieces of clothing remaining on the bodies, by rings, or by the teeth.

The Injured.

The girls in the City Hospital who are expected to die and who have so far been identified, are:

POUTILLIER, GERTRUDE, no address.

WOLANG, JULIA, 16 years old, of 81 Hartford Street; suffering from a fractured skull and a fracture of both legs; jumped from the fourth floor to the street while attempting to go down the fire escape.

ONISIEWICZ, ELEANORE, 17 years old, of 16 Lillie Street; burned about arms, right leg, and neck, and lacerated about the body; burned while making her way down the fire escape.

LOTT, LEPNA, 17 years old, of 25 First Street; scalded about legs and face.

SCHICH, ROSE, 19 years old, of 593 South Nineteenth Street; fractured left leg and shoulder.

DOLIVER, SUSSIE, 15 years old, of 324 Fifteenth Avenue; both legs fractured and burned about eyes and face.

The building is a three-story brick structure occupying the middle of the block on Morris Avenue between Hartford and New Streets. On each side, extending the full front of the block, are inclosed yards in which the inflammables are stored. Extending along the front of the building is an extremely narrow fire escape. The first floor was used for storing materials, while the second and third contained the stamping apparatus and also the equipment for lacquering. The firm was using every available inch of space, for they were occupied in making buttons for army uniforms. It was on the second floor that the fire originated, and quickly shut off each of the two stairways that led down from the third floor. Thus all the thirty-five girls working on the third floor were dependent upon the fire escape for their safety.

Two alarms were sent in at 2:30 P. M., but before the firemen could reach the scene the flames had melted the glass windows, were reaching toward the frame dwellings on every side, and the heat was so intense that it was with difficulty that the firemen approached the building. The girls had come streaming down the fire escape, and most of them were taken in a hysterical condition into the homes across the street before the arrival of the ambulances. Every available ambulance in the city was then called, and those who had been burned and trampled upon were taken to the hospital. Superintendent Gourdes was the last to leave. He ran up the fire escape to the top floor and was there met by a dense smoke. He kept calling loudly so as to guide any who were still inside to the door, but as he heard no answer, and as by that time he could stand the heat and smoke no longer, he ran down to safety.

Debris Blocked Stairway.

When the Fire Chief McDermot and Battalion Chief Fisher entered the building after the flames had been put out, they found the interior entirely burned out, nothing but the skeletons of the machines and heaps of blackened buttons remaining. At the northwest corner of the top floor they found a pile of charred bodies. The stairway was only ten feet distant, but a mass of debris had blocked this exit. The flames had cut off access to the fire escape, so the eight girls and the one man who were working there in a little room in which the buttons were wrapped were trapped. The bodies were so badly charred that except for the Earl, Seiler, and Ball girl, they had not been identified at an early hour this morning, although fifty people were at the morgue looking for their missing relatives.

The first person to see the fire was a girl worker on the second floor. Winifred Caulfield of 22 Hartford Street. She saw the flames and screamed to her companions, but her calls were unheeded. She ran out of the building and to her home to assure her mother she was safe. Returning, she said she saw a girl jump from a third-floor window and crash to the ground. About thirty girls were employed on this floor.

The property loss will total \$50,000, all of which is covered by insurance. Charles H. Wright of East Orange, N. J., is the President of the company, and Frederick Gourdes, also of East Orange, is Secretary and Superintendent.

Stairways Unprotected.

Mayor Gillen of Newark issued the following statement last night:

"I deeply sympathize with the families of the dead. I inspected the building after the fire with Commissioner Archibald, Fire Commissioner Connelly, and Deputy Chief McDermott. We found only one fire escape, inside stairways unprotected, and one corner of the second floor partitioned off by screens instead of walls of masonry. I have commenced a rigid and sweeping investigation into the condition of all factories of Newark. The investigation will not cease until a complete inspection is made. If there are any death

traps in the city I will drive them out. I have called a meeting of the City Commissioner, City Council, police, fire, and health officials to discuss fully the Morris Avenue catastrophe and to consider carefully all reports made by the fire and police officials. I will also ask the Grand Jury and Prosecutor to investigate the fire fully."

The fire yesterday recalls the fire of Nov. 26, 1910, which occurred in the four-story loft building at 216 High Street, Newark. Twenty-six girls were killed, nearly all dying as the result of jumping from windows. In the same year occurred the Triangle fire in this city, in which 145 persons were killed, many of them by jumping into the street from the upper floors of the building.