

# GRAND JURY SEES NEWARK FIRE RUIN

## Investigation of the Disaster Begins to Fix the Responsibility for the Loss of Life.

### INSURANCE AT HIGH RATES

#### Records Show That It Was Listed as an Extremely Hazardous Risk—Another Body Found.

The Essex County Grand Jury began an investigation of the Newark fire horror yesterday. After a conference with Chief Justice William S. Gummere of the New Jersey Supreme Court, the jurors, in charge of Foreman Thomas J. D. Smith, went to the scene of the fire and spent several hours inspecting the ruins of the factory in which more than a score of women and girls lost their lives. After the inspection the jurors returned to the Court House to fix, if possible, the responsibility for the disaster.

While the Grand Jury was in session, Dr. Edward Steiner, the Coroner, for the first time in seven years, swore in a Coroner's Jury of six members, which will make an investigation of the fire. The jury was sworn in over the body of Carrie Robrecht of 19 Hampden Street, one of the victims of the fire. The jury consists of C. William Heilman of 22 William Street, George W. Jagle of 30 East Kinney Street, Charles E. Cameron of East Orange, William J. Hughes of 136 Littleton Avenue, Phillip Lindeman, a commission merchant, and J. Martin Roll, a contractor, of South Orange. Mr. Heilman was Foreman of the Coroner's Jury that investigated the Clifton Avenue railroad disaster in 1903, which was the last time a Coroner's Jury was drawn in Essex County prior to that of yesterday. All of the jurors are well known citizens of Essex County.

After a conference the jury adjourned for ten days, when it will again meet to take evidence relating to the fire and the resulting loss of life. The responsibility for the fire, if any, will be left to the jury to determine.

Another body was identified yesterday as that of Mrs. Teresina Tartaglia, and with its identification the last of the victims that were recovered was claimed. Mrs. Tartaglia was the wife of Frank Tartaglia of Rochester, N. Y., from whom she was separated, and was a sister of Mrs. Mary Damiano, one of those who were injured in escaping from the burning factory. She leaves three small children, and worked in the factory to support them.

The number of dead is now twenty-four, for firemen found beneath a pile of debris yesterday the bones of another victim. The body may be that of an aged widow named Reynolds, who lived alone, and is believed to have been at work on the fourth floor at the time of the fire. She has not been seen since the fire, and inquiries along Central Avenue, where she was known, have failed to disclose any trace of her.

From the records of the Newark Fire Exchange it was revealed that the dangerous condition of the building was widely known. It was carried on the exchange's list as an especially hazardous fire risk. The dangerous features of the old structure, which is known to be old by the fact that the original model of the ironclad Monitor was designed in it, were listed as the open elevator shaft, non-standard floors, large area of rooms, and the height. The insurance rates on the building ranged from 100 to nearly 150 per cent. in excess of the standard rates for the same class of building.

While the firemen were searching in the ruins for his body, Roy Davidson, 18 years old, of 17 Brintnall Place, turned up at the scene of the fire yesterday and told Roundsman James Fitch, who was in charge of the squad of police guarding the ruins, that he was overcome with horror at the sight he witnessed and ran home.

One of the most important witnesses to appear before the Coroner will be Deputy

Factory Inspector William Schlachter, in whose district the factory building was situated. Speaking of the disaster he said:

"I can't understand it," said Schlachter yesterday. "It doesn't seem possible under conditions as I found them at the time of my last visit to the factory that under any circumstances would there have been any trouble in getting out of the place."

Several funerals of the fire victims were held yesterday morning and afternoon. The three Gottlieb sisters, Dora, Minnie, and Tillie, daughters of Morris Gottlieb of 74 South Sixteenth Street, East Orange, were buried together. A simple Jewish religious service was conducted by the undertaker, while the aged father, the surviving four sisters, and one brother, stood in a mournful group.

Following an examination made in Trenton yesterday of factory department records relative to the fire, Gen. Lewis T. Bryant, State Labor Commissioner, and several Newark inspectors asserted that the fire protection was adequate, so far as the State law was concerned, and if it could be proved that additional protection might have saved life there, the fault would be with the law itself rather than with the administration of it.

### INSANE YOUTH ADRIFT.

#### His Oarless Boat Was Awash When Police Boat Discovered Him.

Searchlights of the Harbor police boats along the East River last night, flashed in response to an alarm sent by Supt. William Mabon of the Manhattan State Hospital for the insane on Ward's Island for an inmate who escaped from there at noon, brought to view a flat-bottomed rowboat, half swamped and without rudder or oars. The boat, just west of Little Hell Gate was rocking in a heavy swell from the Sound steamers which just had passed. As the swell subsided there arose from it an athletic young man in a brown uniform. He climbed into the rocking boat, aimlessly drifting toward the Sound, and with arms akimbo, sat down on the swamped bottom.

When the police reached the boat, the young man tried to explain his brown uniform, which is the regulation garb of the patients at the Insane Asylum, by saying he was an orderly of a Long Island sanitarium on his way back after a shopping tour in the city. Later, however, he confessed with evident pride to a string of wrong-doings, to Lieut. Darcy.

He said he was Benjamin Sam of 39 West 118th Street, the eighteen-year-old son of Mrs. Augusta Sam. On Sept. 5, he said, he tried to rob a house in Brooklyn, but after he had removed his shoes was surprised by the family and fled barefoot into the street. Immediately, he said, he entered and robbed the house adjoining. While in that house he donned a woman's gown he found in one of the rooms, and made his way out. On the street, however, he was surprised, and after a struggle was captured. He said he gave the name of Gus Edwards when he was brought to trial.

"My people had influence and kept me from going to Elmira," he said. "They had me adjudged insane and sent to the asylum instead. I acted as if insane and thought it a great joke. While I was at the hospital I pulled off another little job by robbing one of the attendants of \$3."

At the Manhattan State Hospital for the Insane it was said last night that Sam was committed to the King's Park Hospital on Sept. 9 and transferred to the main hospital on Oct. 23.

Sam said he got tired of playing insane at the asylum, and while rummaging yesterday morning in the paint shed discovered a small rowboat with no oars. He put the boat under a wooden extension that runs into the river and concealed himself in it until dark. He then pushed off, he said, using the rudder as a paddle. He intended to hug the shore till he reached the northern end of the island and then push across to Long Island, trusting to get to Boston, where he had worked several years ago as a page in a hotel. He said he would have escaped if the swell from the steamers had not swamped his boat, compelling him to jump overboard, abandoning his rudder-blade.

The police sent him back to the insane asylum.