



BOSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION

ARSON SQUAD REPORT

John J. Kenney,

Deputy Chief in Charge

WILLIAM ARTHUR REILLY
FIRE COMMISSIONER

Date Report Filed: December 4, 1942.

Final Report Filed:

Location: 11-17 Piedmont St. 61-65 Broadway. 2-14 Shawmut Street. Dist. #7.

Investigators: Cohen-Roycroft.

To: Deputy Chief John J. Kenney,

Sir:

At 10.20 P.M. Saturday, November 28, 1942, an alarm was received from Box 1521, followed by a 3rd alarm at 10.23 P.M. 4th alarm at 10.24 P.M. and a 5th alarm at 11.02 P.M. for a fire at the above location.

District Chief Mahoney, who responded in charge of the apparatus, reported the cause as "UNDETERMINED"

Construction: 2nd class, 1 story and basement. (11-17 Piedmont St)
" " : 2nd class, 2 and 3 stories. (61-65 Broadway)
" " : 2nd class, 1 and 3 stories. (2-14 Shawmut St.)

Owner: Jennie Welansky, 453 Washington St. Brookline.

Occupant: New Cocoanut Grove Inc. Barnett Welansky, 1691 Commonwealth Ave., Allston, President and Treasurer. Katharine F. Welch, 5 Pleasant St. Dorchester. Clerk. Jennie Welansky, 453 Washington St. Brookline. Director.

Nature of Occupancy: Night Club.

Origin of fire: In basement (Melody Lounge) adjacent to Piedmont St. end of building, fire extended to decorations, bar, tables, chairs, walls, ceiling, to 1st floor, to walls, decorations, ceiling, bar, tables, chairs, fire extended to new cocktail bar (61-65 Broadway, to 2-14 Shawmut St) Fire also extended to entire structure of a 3 story dwelling, occupied by Leslie J. Tracey, 4 Shawmut St.

Sections of decorations removed from melody lounge and 1st floor, by Arson Squad, and submitted to Department Chemist Waterhouse, for analysis.

Insurance on building at 11-17 Piedmont St, and 2-14 Shawmut St. \$80,000.
Insurance on contents of main building at 11-17 Piedmont St. \$60,000.
Insurance on contents and improvements in building at 61-65 Broadway \$25,000.
Insurance on building at 61-65 Broadway, \$7,500.

Statement of James Welansky, (same taken at Police Hdqtrs, at about 3.A.M. Sunday, November 29, 1942)

"I am the manager of the cocoanut Grove Inc. I live at 869 West Roxbury Park Way, at about 10.P.M. Saturday, November 28, 1942, I was in the new lounge room, I heard some one shout fire, I went towards the direction where the shouting came from in the main dining room, I then saw smoke and flames on the Piedmont St., end of building, and people



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shoving each other and shouting, I was shoved towards the Broadway entrance, when I reached the street, I shouted to some one to sound the fire alarm, there was about 125 persons in the new lounge room at the time, the electric lights were still on when I left the building."

Statement of William C. Payne, (same taken at Police Hdqtrs. at about 2.30 A.M. Sunday, November 29, 1942)

"I live at 89 Park Drive, I am a professional entertainer, employed at the Cocoanut Grove, on Saturday, November 28, 1942 I went to work at 7.p.m. at about 10.P.M. I was standing in the middle of the dining room talking to some one, and waiting for the floor show, there was about 400 people in the main dining room, I then heard some people shouting, I was facing Piedmont St, I thought at first it was fight, I looked again and saw a bright light near the main entrance, people then started to shout , run and jump, I then saw a flash of fire near the switch for the lights, near the two telephone booths at the main entrance, I ran towards the fire, but the people kept pushing me back, I shouted to the people to go towards the Shawmut St. end of the building exit, the fire was gaining headway, the next I knew, I was being pushed towards the Shawmut St., exit, smoke filled the building, I shouted to the people to follow me to the basement kitchen, when I reached the basement kitchen I found the service door, leading from the kitchen to the street, locked, there was a few people with me, so we all layed on the floor, until the fire department broke down the door, then we all went to the street."

Statement of Stanley Tomaszewski,

"I live at 17 Erie Street, Dorchester, I am employed at the Cocoanut Grove, as a bar boy, I was working in the melody lounge in the basement, I heard some one shout fire, I looked and I saw fire near the ceiling, I got some water and tried to put the fire out, but the fire kept getting bigger, so I ran to the street".

Statement of Leo Givonette,

Captain "I live 45 Quincy St. Medford, I am employed as a head waiter at the Cocoanut Grove. I was at the front door, inside at Piedmont's St. I saw a confusion in the front lobby, at first I thought It was a fight, when I looked again, I saw fire, so I ran to the street."

Statement of Nicholas Cookonis,

"I live at 27 Oneida St. City, I am a waiter at the Cocoanut Grove, I was working in the Melody Lounge, I saw fire near the ceiling, I started towards the fire, to try to put it out, but I could get near the fire because the people blocked me, I found the doors in the



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basement locked with a key."

Statement of Edward Pierce,

" I am a professional entertainer, my wife Dorothy, and I were playing at the cocoanut Grove This week, we were in our dressing room on the 2nd floor, waiting for the show to start, when the head waiter came to our room, and shouted fire, we broke a window and left the building by the roof." I live at 222-12 Fairbury Ave. Queens Village, Long Island, N.Y. my Boston home is LaSalle Hotel."

Miriam Johnson

Miriam Johnson, 32 Franklin St. Auburn, Mass. a professional entertainer also stated she was on the 2nd floor dressing room, and she left by the roof, with Mr. and Mrs. Pierce.

Statement of Irving Soroko,

"I live at 72 Tremont St. Malden, on Saturday, November 28, 1942, I was sitting at the cocktail bar, Cocoonut Grove, with my wife, Civy Rosenblat, my brother in-law and his girl friend, I heard some one shout fire, I looked up and I saw a blaze coming from the main dining room, Piedmont St, I took my wife to the street, I then returned to the door, draged some people out, but the smoke got too heavy so I had to run away, all the people were jamed in the doorway."

We also talked with Rocco Fannele, 19 Oneida St. City, and Anthony Puzyn, 27 Newtown Court, Cambridge, both waiters at the cocoonut grove, but they could not give us any information that would aid in the investigation.

This is all the information we have been able to obtain up to the present time. If further investigation discloses any new developments, we will report at once.

Respectfully submitted,

Louis Chen
Richard F. Royoff
Arson Squad.