

20 HURT IN HOSTEL FIRE

Frantic Escapes by Migrants

More than 20 New Australians were injured in a fire which swept through a migrants' hostel in Francis-street, Brooklyn, at 2.50 a.m. yesterday.

Half the building, covering an area of a quarter of an acre, was razed in less than 20 minutes.

Walls made of a compressed cardboard substance and timber frames fed the flames, which at times leapt 100 feet high.

Sixty-six double rooms, complete with furniture, and the entire belongings of 100 occupants, were destroyed.

Only wall standing in the centre of the blaze was constructed of fibro cement.

More than 40 firemen from Eastern Hill, Footscray, Yarraville and North Melbourne, assisted by migrants, fought the fire for almost half an hour before bringing it under control.

Only a concrete wall, which divides the building, saved the whole building from being engulfed.

Sleepers Roused

A night watchman patrolling the corridors gave the alarm. After calling the brigade, he ran round the building arousing sleeping men, and shouting "Fire."

Men and women frantically smashed the windows of their rooms and leapt through to safety as flames swept along the corridors.

Many were cut about the face and arms by jagged edges of broken glass. Others kicked their way through the thin boarding, and bruised their feet.

Twelve of the injured were taken to hospital by ambulance. The remainder received first aid at the camp.

Owing to language difficulties, only the surnames of some of the injured could be obtained.

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The injured taken to the Royal Melbourne and St. Vincent's hospitals were:—

Admitted: Kaval, Kalubn, Orbrans, Stanisfow, Chovorowski.

Treated: Jenys, Kywolenko, Gutavaskas, Meloraeos, Kownski, Boleston Manur (33) and Marum Michalski (42).

The State Relief committee acted swiftly. Following a request from the Federal Department of Labor a complete set

of clothing and footwear was provided for 50 men and 10 women.

Two hundred and forty occupants of the building were moved at midday yesterday to Williamstown racecourse, where repairs had just been completed after recent floods.

Damage caused by the fire will not be accurately known for days, but is expected to be considerable.

Each of the 66 rooms destroyed contained two single beds, chest of drawers and wardrobe, as well as the personal effects of the occupants.

Twisted frames of bicycles and beds, charred mattresses and clothes, broken vases and picture frames, lying among ashes several inches deep, bore witness to the havoc.

Wept Over Loss

Disconsolate groups of all nationalities silently surveyed the wreckage. For many of them it was the second time in the past 10 years that they had lost everything.

As dawn broke they began their search for any item worth retrieving. Many openly wept when they found that not a single keepsake remained for

when they found that not a single keepsake remained for them to salvage.

August Marshall, a Hungarian, who has been in Australia only 12 months, broke down when he discovered that £129 in notes, which he had hidden in his bedding, had been burned to ashes.

The money represented his savings since he arrived from Europe.

Children Safe

Only children in the building when the fire broke out were two small girls and a boy, smuggled in by their mother for the night.

Children were not allowed in the building, she explained, but she had broken regulations to have her family together again.

With her blonde hair awry, and her face still begrimed with smoke, she described how she had pushed the children out of the window to safety.