

"Fireboat Gets Balky At Critical Moment During Bridge Fire"

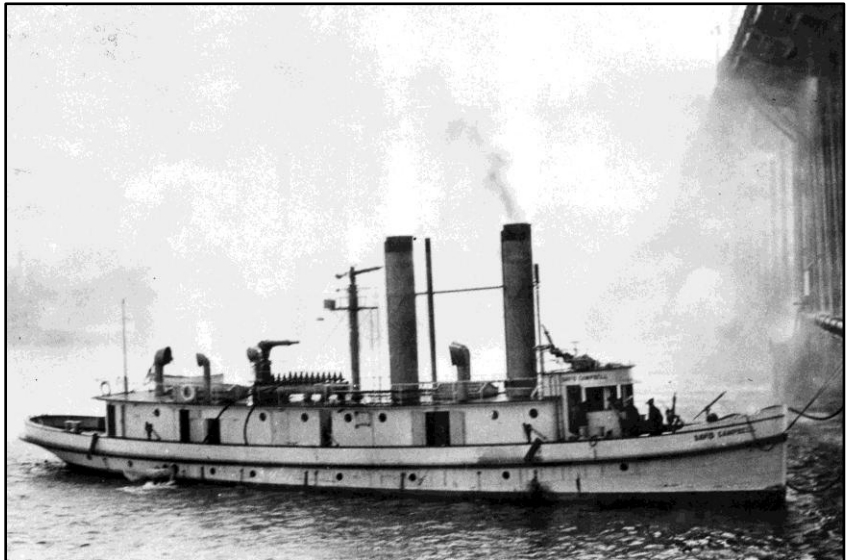
Source - Oregon Journal Evening Edition
July 31, 1913

Work of Craft Unsatisfactory Generally - Chief Explains Craft is Undermanned

Becoming balky at a critical moment at yesterday's bridge fire, Portland's new \$125,000 fireboat, the *David Campbell*, swerved into the railroad span of the burning structure, and the large forward bridge 8 inch nozzle, the big searchlight, and some minor brasses were crushed in as a result of the collision.

The broken parts are being untangled this morning and set aside for repairs. Captain Johnson says that the real efficiency of the boat is not affected in any extent, there being an emergency nozzle and connections to make up for the loss.

The *David Campbell* did not perform very satisfactorily at yesterday's fire, and in fact, she has not at any time performed in action as she did at her trial tests made last June just prior to the city's official acceptance of the craft. Though she made a rapid run yesterday from her berth at the foot of East Washington Street to the railroad bridge, there was some delay in getting water through the nozzles, and when it did come, the flow was intermittent. There was much the same trouble at the recent Fisher & Thorsen paint store fire at Morrison and Front Streets, and though the *Campbell* did good work there, those in command could not get action as quickly as desired.



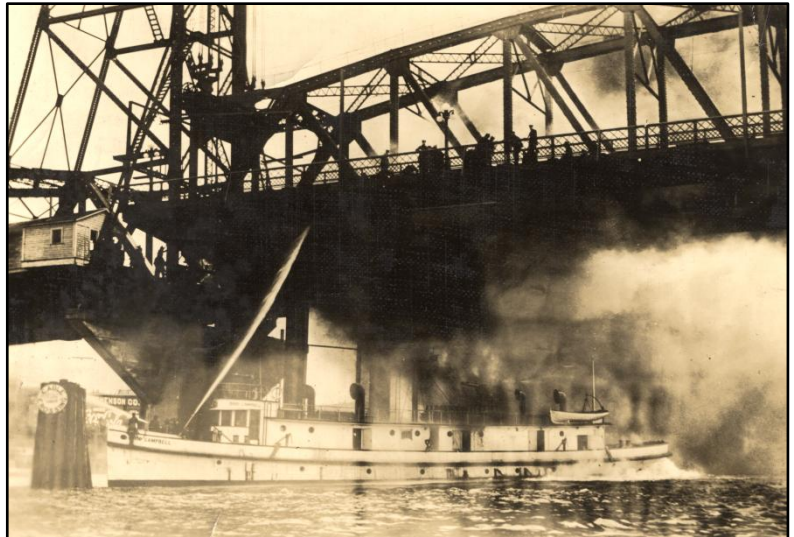
Crew Declared Insufficient

Lack of sufficient crew is assigned as the reason of the unsatisfactory showing of the new boat.

"I believe that the *Campbell* is all right," said Chief Dowell this morning. "But as a matter of fact, we have been trying to operate the boat with the same crew that handled the *Williams*, and we find that it can't be done. The *Campbell* is a larger boat, the pumps, engines, and equipment are different and require more attention than the old *Williams*. I believe that lack of sufficient men in the engine room was responsible for any fault that might be found with the boat. Yesterday's fire demonstrated one thing certain, however, and that is that there should be another fireboat below all bridges. Three boats at least are necessary to properly protect the waterfront."

Boat Requires Big Crew

The Campbell made a splendid showing on her trial trips and tests, throwing great streams of water two thirds of the way across the river at Stark Street and averaging 16 $\frac{3}{10}$ miles an hour on a speed test, but on these tests, she was manned by a full crew, probably three or four times as many men in the engine room as the two who attempted to handle the boat yesterday.



"We made a splendid get-away," said Captain Johnson, "and we arrived at the bridge at practically the same moment that Chief Stevens arrived from City Hall. We had water on the blaze in fairly good time too, but because our crew is short we couldn't keep it up. On the Williams, one man could handle two engines nicely, but on the Campbell, equipped with the newest style of engines and pumps, such is not the case."

Firemen Worked Nobly

"Men never worked harder than did the men on the Campbell yesterday, and we did good work when we got around so that we could get tied on the east side and fight the flames from that direction."

"The current in the river made it necessary to keep the propeller going to maintain position, and to offset the back pressure from the streams. We bumped into the bridge yesterday when the water cut off unexpectedly, and the accident was unavoidable."



Captain Johnson is not altogether pleased with the behavior of the Campbell, and is satisfied that a larger crew of men must be carried if the full efficiency of the boat is to be realized.

"Steel Beams Are Warped By Heat Of Bridge Blaze"

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For three hours yesterday afternoon a stubborn fire raged on the upper roadway of the OWR&N Company's \$12,000,000 bridge across the Willamette River (Steel Bridge). As a result of the fire, river navigation was closed. When the fire was extinguished a force of workmen began to repair the damage caused by the fire and early this morning trains began crossing the lower bridge span.

It is the expectation to have the two lift spans restored tomorrow so that river navigation and street car traffic may be resumed. The bridge will be closed to pedestrians and vehicles for several days. The street car lines that crossed the bridge are being routed today over the Burnside Bridge.

The origin of the fire is believed to have been a lighted cigar or cigarette butt. The point of origin was in the southwest corner of the lift span.



Monetary Damage \$15,000

George W. Boschke, Chief Engineer of the OWR&N Company said this morning that the monetary damage would probably be in the neighborhood of \$15,000. "With the exception of the burning away

of eight end cables of the lower lift, the bridge is intact," said he. Mr. Boschke estimated the area of pavement burned on the upper deck at 12,000 square feet. The upper roadway of the bridge has, for its own base, heavy creosoted planking. On this is a layer of tarred paper upon which the paving blocks are set. The interstices were filled with tar rendering the whole roadway highly inflammable. The fire burned rapidly and produced great heat, extending throughout a great part of the roadway on the lift span.

Steamers Announce Fire

The fire was first observed at 3 pm and an alarm was turned in by river steamers. Soon a general alarm followed and within half an hour, 11 steam (fire) engines and 1 chemical (fire) engine were on the ground. To these were soon added four extra hose wagons, four ladder trucks, and the new Fireboat David Campbell.

The west half of the structure was enveloped in thick black smoke swept back by the northwest breeze. Around the steel pillars the flames wrapped themselves and consumed the paint. Owing to the danger from smoke and flying embers, all navigation on the river was ordered stopped. While Patrolman Ed Burke was keeping the crowd back from the danger line, he stumbled over a section of hose and fell to the ground, striking his head on a railroad tie, cutting a deep gash in his head.

Three of the small weights piled on the upper deck of the bridge plunged through the weakened timbers and dropped on the lower deck of the bridge within a few feet of where firemen were at work. The weight of the weights was 300 pounds each.

Firemen Assisted By Volunteers

The work of fighting the fire was under the personal supervision of Fire Chief Dowell and the firemen were assisted by volunteers by the railroad yards. Gradually the flames were brought under control and by 6 o'clock a gang of track builders were at work.

At 6 o'clock this morning, the fast mail over the OWR&N Company crossed the bridge. Before this train crossed, however, Chief Engineer Boschke ordered a precautionary test, a train of 20 cars of coal hauled across the structure.

An inspection of the upper deck of the bridge today showed that the lift span of the bridge at the west end is three or four inches out of alignment. The guide wheels on the runway of the lift were off their track. A number of bolts holding the big girders had been sheared off. The southwest supporting post had buckled from the heat three inches at least and the steel girder underneath appeared to have warped. All the electrical connections were virtually out of commission.

Draw Lift Cables Part

The soldered joints and insulation had burned away. Eight of the steel cables of the lower lift were broken. All the sidewalk on the south side, save a short space in the center, was a charred mass. On the roadway where holes had been cut the wooden beams beneath were seen to be charred, also. There were similar conditions on the north side, but the fire was much less in intensity here, owing to the fact

that the breeze blew the fire southward. Between the roadway and the sidewalk for 50 feet on the west side of the lift, and for a distance of 30 feet on the other side, the flooring had burned away, exposing the steel work.

The big east side gas main of the Portland Gas & Coke Co. escaped with a slight scorching. One joint near the power house on the west side that lifts the draw showed a severe strain.

In the middle of the draw under some debris was noticed a badly burned coal oil stove whose presence was not explained.

In fighting the fire, the new Fireboat David Campbell met with a mishap which resulted in the smashing in of the forward turret. The boat, manned by a shorthanded crew, was maneuvering for a position and the pilot, blinded by the thick smoke, collided with the bridge. The boat was able to direct streams from the after and side nozzles.

Due to the fact that the lower span could not be operated it was not possible to run the boat to the north side of the burning structure where the blaze could have been fought to much greater advantage.

In this connection, numbers of people who watched the Campbell's performance have since suggested that it would be a good idea to station one fireboat north of the Broadway Bridge hereafter.

Steamer Traffic Impeded

Luckily for river traffic, virtually all the river craft were in the lower harbor when the fire put the bridge spans out of business. The only vessels caught above the bridge were the fireboats, two schooners, a barkentine, and a British tramp steamer, none of which are scheduled to sail for several days at least.

All the river boats from upper and lower Columbia points tied up at the Ainsworth and the North Bank dock, where they discharged their passengers and freight. Those making the Ainsworth dock their landing place at present are the *Potter*, *Ione*, *Anna Cummins*, *Lurine*, *Woodland*, *Hassalo*, *Harvest Queen*, and the river steamer *Beaver*. The *Joseph Kellogg* was scheduled to tie up there today also.

At the North Bank dock, the *Dalles City* and the *Bailey Gatsert* tied up last night, and sailed from there today. Cargoes were being transported to the temporary landing places from the regular docks by auto truck.

Streetcar Service Disrupted

The closing of the Steel Bridge in consequence of the fire threatened to result seriously for the local street railway system. It so happened that the Burnside Bridge was undergoing repairs by the county, and the Morrison Bridge was the only one remaining open with the narrow gauge tracks upon it.

The Burnside Bridge had been closed for several weeks and it was estimated that it would take another week before streetcar services could be resumed over it. The only alternative was to create a temporary terminal on the east side and take the passengers across the structure.

Realizing that approximately 100,000 people are served by the affected lines, President Griffith of the Portland Railway, Light, and Power Company sent Superintendent C.J. Franklin to the city and county officials and the Company offered to place all of the bridge workers and track experts upon the Burnside Bridge. The offer was accepted. Under the direction of Thomas Pumfrey, Chief of Maintenance, every available man was put on the rush job and by working all night, had the tracks ready for traffic at 5:30 this morning.

The car lines affected by the closing of the Steel Bridge are the Woodlawn, Alberta, Williams Avenue, Williams Avenue, Mississippi Avenue, Irvington Avenue, St. Johns, and Vancouver lines. They are now being routed over the Burnside Bridge and will continue to travel this route until the Steel bridge is reopened.