

STEAMER ST. LOUIS BURNS AT HOBOKEN

American Line Vessel Was in
Shipyard, Being Converted
from Transport.

KROONLAND BARELY SAVED

450 Workmen Aboard St. Louis Es-
cape, but Two Are Overcome
—\$1,000,000 Loss.

The American Line steamship St. Louis, which served as the transport Louisville during the war, was seriously damaged by fire late yesterday afternoon while in the yard of the W. & A. Fletcher Marine Works at Hoboken. For weeks a gang of workmen have been busy in the interior of the vessel converting her from a troop ship into a modern passenger liner. When the fire was discovered the 450 men at work below decks had difficulty in getting out. Two were burned and overcome with smoke.

At midnight the ship took a bad list and settled against the Kroonland. But the boats standing nearby kept playing streams of water upon the Kroonland and she did not take fire, though her sides were scorched.

The seacocks were opened a short time before the ship listed against the Kroonland. The whole interior of the ship is gutted, and at the pier it was said the damage to the ship would be close to \$1,000,000.

The fire started in the main dining saloon, where a number of men were at work. It was said that an acetylene torch exploded, setting fire to the cabin fittings. The flames spread rapidly and the workmen sounded an alarm. This was relayed from man to man until it reached the gangs at work on the ship's bottom. By the time the last of them had fled from the smoke filled hull the flames were sweeping through the saloon and the superstructure. Ribbons of flame shot skyward and the glare of the fire attracted thousands of spectators.

Three alarms were sounded and the York City Department sent the fireboat Thomas B. Willett. The Lackawanna placed its fire-fighting equipment at the disposal of Hoboken and sent its fireboats, Washington, Newark, Orange, and Montclair. Alongside the St. Louis was the steamship Kroonland. For a time the firemen had to direct most of their efforts to prevent the fire spreading to her. As soon as it was seen she was in danger tugs got a line to the Kroonland, but it was found impossible to haul her out because of the low tide.

Even before the last man had scrambled off the burning vessel the yard authorities began the work of checking them up. It was reported late last night that a workman named Murdock had not been accounted for, but it was believed that he had escaped and gone home without turning in his time. Two plumbers who were working in the saloon when the fire was discovered were overcome by smoke. They were Edward Donaldson of 260 First Street, Hoboken, and Edward Downey of 237 Griffith Street, Jersey City. They were taken to Christ Hospital.

The St. Louis had been in the yard about six weeks. She had been practically stripped of her cabin accommodations in order to carry troops and the workmen who fled yesterday from the fire were engaged in refitting and re-decorating her. An official of the Fletcher Company said last night that it was impossible now to accurately estimate the damage. At the time he spoke it was thought that the fire was under control. Later it blazed up again and the fire fighters had to redouble their efforts. When the fire was finally controlled it did not look as though there was more than the shell of the liner left. It will not be until it has cooled off that the firemen can go into the interior.