

At the direction of the board of health the fire department, on Saturday, Jan. 20, started to burn part of what is known as block 15, in the infected district of Chinatown. This was six blocks from the water front, and two blocks from the Nuuanu river. Adjoining it was the Kaunakapili church, a native edifice, containing the finest pipe organ, the finest cathedral window and the only chime of bells in the city. It was built largely through the efforts of King Kalakaua.

The area to be burned was about two ordinary city blocks. Early in the course of the fire one of the spires of the church became ignited from flying sparks, and the flames were carried to a Chinese joss house on the other side, nearer the stream. This started a blaze in a region from which the population had not been removed. Engines of the department were instantly devoted to stopping the fire here, and in consequence that in the church gained ground.

An effort was made to save the church, when the flames broke from it with the suddenness of an explosion. Firemen had to flee for their lives, and the fire engine was destroyed. The wind grew stronger and fire broke out here and there on the shingle roofs. Panic seized the people within the quarantine limits. Burning alive seemed their fate.

On the Nuuanu river side of the district frenzied mobs charged the guards in the attempt to break through. The national guards were re-enforced by the reserves, by police and by hundreds of citizens who rushed to the scene armed with axes and pack-knives which they took from the hardware stores on their way. They soon had the Hawaiians under control.

Honolulu fire

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