



NAVY'S LARGEST DIRIGIBLE BURNED WITH HANGAR.

BIGGEST NAVY BLIMP BURNS WITH 3 MORE

One Man Narrowly Misses Death When Dirigible Takes Fire in Rockaway Hangar.

DUE TO SAIL IN 20 MINUTES

Sparks From Workman's Hammer Believed to Have Ignited Es- caping Gasoline.

Twenty minutes before she was to have started for the hangar built at Lakehurst, N. J., for the ZR-2, the naval balloon D-6, the largest and newest non-rigid dirigible possessed by the navy, burned, with her hangar and three other balloons, at the Rockaway Point Naval Air Station yesterday morning.

No lives were lost, but Machinist's Mate Donald B. MacKay, in the car when the fire started, was severely burned. MacKay, his clothing in flames, escaped by climbing down a rope ladder to the floor of the hangar just as the fire began to lick up the sides of the huge envelope.

The D-6 was fully inflated and contained about 190,000 cubic feet of hydrogen gas. The other balloons, not inflated, were the kite balloon A-P and two small dirigibles, the C-10 and the H-1, which broke away from its moorings about two weeks ago and was found in Westchester County.

A board of investigation was immediately appointed by Commander F. H. Strong, and after a three-hour conference, in which all members of the crew of the D-6 were questioned, a report was forwarded to Admiral Moffett, in charge of the Bureau of Naval Aviation in Washington. Commander Strong would not make public the results of the investigation.

Gasoline Fumes Probably Ignited.

It was thought that gasoline fumes from a leaky fuel pipe may have been ignited by a spark from a hammer. A new tank had been installed and mechanics were busy connecting up the feed pipe.

Lieutenant Charles E. Bausch, who was to command the crew of seven men, had just ordered them to get their luggage when he saw flames shooting toward the gas bag. He ordered every man out of the hangar and turned in an alarm which brought all of the 250 men at the station.

The reserve hydrogen tank, containing about 50,000 cubic feet of gas, a steel structure of the cylindrical type, standing 100 feet from the hangar, was used as a vantage point from which the sailors turned streams on the burning hangar and nearby buildings, keeping the sides and top of the tank under two streams of water. Lieutenant Kloor, who was in command of the free balloon which drifted into Northern Canada last December, and Commander Strong led the sailors. Their forces were supplemented by fire companies from the Rockaway Park station, and soldiers hurried over from Fort Tilden.

The combined forces kept a water barrage going for more than an hour on all sides of the burning hangar. A stiff breeze was blowing off shore and threatened for a time to carry the fire to the barracks, the Naval Hospital and storehouses and across the dry grass to cottages along the shore.

Balloon Was Navy-Built.

The D-6 was 200 feet long and fifty feet in diameter fully inflated. She was propelled by two 125-horsepower Union type motors, and could make fifty-five miles an hour. She had a lifting power of about ten tons. The D-6 carried 200 gallons of gasoline and had a cruising radius of 1,000 miles. She was assembled at the Rockaway Point Station under the direction of Lieutenant Bausch.

The gondola and engines were built at the League Island Navy Yard in Philadelphia and the balloon was made at the navy balloon plant in Akron, Ohio. The D-6 was equipped with the limousine type of gondola, completely enclosed, which made it possible, the authorities believe, for the men in the hangar to escape before the balloon ignited. The trip to Lakehurst would have been her maiden voyage, although she had been taken for several short test spins over Jamaica Bay and Coney Island.

Before the ZR-2 disaster it had been planned to sail the D-6 to Lakehurst, where she would have been used as a training ship for the crews of the ZR-2. Her hangar was built in 1917. Its dimensions were 225 by 125 by 80 feet, built to house two ships the size of the D-6. Constructed of steel and glass, it was a total loss. The value of the D-6 was put at about \$100,000. No estimate was given of the value of the other balloons or the hangar.

Besides Lieutenant Bausch, those who have made the trip to Lakehurst were Lieutenant G. H. Carpenter, Lieutenant H. Roughley, Chief Radio Electrician Gahlor, and Machinists Donald B. MacKay, Sullivan, and Borgher.

The Navy Department has under way plans for several other ships of the D-6 type.