

FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 107: 1925

(U. C. Crosby, Charles Hexamer and F. J. T. Stewart)

By Richard Schulte

The twenty-ninth Annual Meeting of the National Fire Protection Association convened on the morning of Tuesday, May 12th 1925 in the Gold Room of the Congress Hotel in Chicago. Among the presentations that morning included tributes to three members of the Association. The following is the text of the tributes:

“Memorials to Deceased Members.

Uberto C. Crosby.

Uberto C. Crosby died at his home in Brookline, Mass., on October 4, 1924, in his 79th year. To few men is it given to reach such an age with undiminished faculties and active interests and with a background of over half a century of notable contribution to a great business, insurance, and to a great cause, fire prevention and protection. During his prime he served first as President of the New Hampshire Fire Insurance Company and later as U. S. Manager of the Royal Exchange Assurance Corporation. That gave him a continent-wide acquaintance and a great circle of friends. His signal ability, his rock-ribbed integrity, his modesty, and kindness served to endear him to the insurance fraternity; he stood in the front rank of the men who have given insurance its present splendid position.

*But it was because of his early interest in fire prevention and protection that our Association feels warranted in taking more than fleeting notice of the passing of this old school New England gentleman. In the mind of Uberto C. Crosby originated the idea out of which the N.F.P.A. developed. **He called in 1896 the first meeting of a little group of men who saw the necessity of combating what already had become a serious economic menace to the nation.** The vision that came to him of co-operative, intelligent fight against the fire menace has been fulfilled to a considerable degree in the work which the N. F. P. A. has been able to do. Mr. Crosby persuaded Mr. C. C. Little to accept the Presidency of the newly formed association. When Mr. Little unexpectedly died, Mr. Crosby had to step into the Presidential chair. In the following years, although Mr. Crosby kept as much as possible in the background, he was a tower of strength in the cause to which we are dedicated, and it must have been a source of gratification to him during his later years to see the cause he advocated enlist an ever-widening support.*

Mr. Crosby was notable for a fine, gentle nature and showed the possibilities of such a character in influencing the daily affairs of a great business. The host of his business associates in our ranks have benefited greatly by his friendship and his fine spirit will live on in us.

H. W. Forster.

Charles A. Hexamer.

In the death of Charles A. Hexamer, Secretary and Treasurer of the Philadelphia Fire Underwriters' Association, which occurred on March 9th, we have lost one of highest standing from the field of Fire Prevention and Fire Protection Engineering.

Mr. Hexamer was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, 73 years ago, and graduated from the New York University as a civil engineer in 1871. He engaged in railroad engineering, then entered the map and survey publishing business, and in 1883 he became an inspector for the Home, Hartford, and North British Insurance Companies, later doing work only for the Hartford where he remained until 1890, when he became a member of the firm of Henry W. Brown & Company. In 1894, he was elected secretary of the Philadelphia Board of Fire Underwriters, holding this position until 1896, when he resigned to accept the position of Philadelphia Manager of the Hartford Fire Insurance Company. A short time later he resigned, when he was elected secretary of the Philadelphia Fire Underwriters' Association, which position he held at the time of his death.

As a member of the National Fire Protection Association, Mr. Hexamer was ever active and helpful. He served as its vice-president from 1897 to 1900 and was seven times elected president over the period from 1900 to 1907. He was made an honorary life member of the Association in 1919. He was chairman of the Committee of Consulting Engineers of the National Board of Fire Underwriters for a number of years and a member of the Board of Managers of the Franklin Institute.

Mr. Hexamer was generally recognized as a leader in schedule rating thought in the East; ripe in judgment, kindly and far-seeing, forceful, logical and fair-minded his passing brings a sense of real and personal bereavement to his hosts of friends and associates.

J. Sanderson Trump.

Fenwick J. T. Stewart.

Few members in the history of the Association have equalled, and none have surpassed, the long and devoted service of Fenwick Stewart, who passed away at his home in Summit, N. J., on August 6, 1924. We find him first associated with our work in 1901. As his first official connection he served upon our Committees on Automatic Sprinklers and Fireproof Construction, to which he was appointed in 1902. In 1902 he was elected also to our Executive Committee and in 1911 was selected as its chairman, serving in that piece until 1918, a period of eight years. In 1918 he was elected president and held that office during the most trying period of the World War, maintaining an admirable poise amid the eruptions of hysteria from which even our own Association was not wholly free. Mr. Stewart's outstanding characteristics were constancy, industry, and urbanity. Among all the men who have contributed the best that was in them to the success and upbuilding of the National Fire Protection Association he held no second place. Patient, kindly, untiring, competent, Mr. Stewart served the Association early and late with unwavering devotion. No hours were too long, no task too arduous to turn him from his accomplishments. He finished the jobs he tackled even if he had to finish them alone. He was always a mediator; his qualities of heart made this service natural to him. No one, however much he might feel disappointed at its result, ever went from a business or engineering conference conducted by Mr. Stewart with any feeling of slight or resentment. He was eminently reasonable and fair. Time and again in conventions of the Association, when a member, through timidity or inexperience in speaking, had failed to make clear the idea he was endeavoring to present, Mr. Stewart would rise to his feet before the chairman was permitted to dispose of the matter and in his slow and deliberate speech clarify and commend the thought of the timid speaker. These were generous and loving acts that men will remember even when his competent engineering contributions are forgotten. He will be remembered; he cannot be replaced.

Franklin H. Wentworth.”

The names Crosby, Hexamer and Stewart are unfamiliar to most in the fire protection field today, but the contributions of these three men, along with many others, were quite important in the early days of the field. Without the efforts of these pioneers in the field, life in the United States and across the world would certainly be different.

* * * * *

Source: “*Proceedings of the Twenty-ninth Annual [NFPA] Meeting*”, Chicago, Illinois, 1925.