

FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 219: 1912 (MOTORIZED FIRE APPARATUS)

By Richard Schulte

The sixteenth Annual Meeting of the National Fire Protection Association was held in Chicago in mid-May 1912. Among the last subjects discussed at this meeting was a motion to form a technical committee on motorized fire apparatus. The following is a transcript of this brief discussion:

Mr. Evans: *Mr. President, I am very hungry and a little game is a good deal to me, and I will put that motion in any form in order to get some action. If it is simply to refer it to the Executive Committee for a vote next year, I will be glad to accept that amendment.*

The Chair: *It is a very important question, gentlemen, and the suggestion of Mr. Crosby is a very wise one, and Mr. Evans has accepted it. Is there any further discussion? Any further new business?*

Chief Loller: *If I may be permitted at this time, I would like to ask this Association for consideration of **motor-driven apparatus in fire departments**. At the present time there are discussions going on all over the country in regard to this motor-driven apparatus, and it has also been taken up by my own Association, the **International Association of Fire Engineers**. They have heartily endorsed it. If it is possible, I would like to have an expression from this Association in regard to motor-driven apparatus, and in order to get it before the Association **I would move that this matter be referred to the incoming Executive Committee.***

The Chair: *You have heard the motion.*

Mr. Stewart: *I would like to second that motion. It may not be looking too far ahead to point out that the future of the public fire department fire-fighting equipment will perhaps develop along the lines of high pressure—high pressure fire line districts in the congested portions of our cities, and in the outlying districts perhaps the development will come along the line of portable pumps which will be capable of being carried very quickly to scattered points in those districts, and in connection with the consideration of the development of the self-driven apparatus I think perhaps that thought might well be kept in mind, that **the portable steamer or portable pumps for***

the congested district is a very inefficient and very uneconomical device. However, you will probably have to depend on it in the outlying districts for many years to come, and for that reason I think the development should perhaps be along the line, as I say, of a light, quick-moving apparatus.

The Chair: *The motion is that the matter of motor-driven apparatus be referred to the incoming Executive Committee.*

The motion was adopted.”

It seemed obvious, even in 1912, that motorized fire apparatus was destined to replace the horse-drawn “steamer” for fire fighting purposes, just as the automobile replaced the horse as a mode of transportation. Motorized fire apparatus, together with improved water supplies in large cities and the development and enforcement of building and fire prevention codes, was about to bring to an end the “Era of the Great Fires” in North America. The “romantic age” of horse-drawn steamers racing through city streets enroute to a fire was coming to a close.

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