

# **SCHULTE & ASSOCIATES**

Building Code Consultants  
880D Forest Avenue  
Evanston, IL 60202  
fpeschulte@aol.com  
847/866-7479

## **FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 44: 1914 (NBFU MODEL BUILDING CODE FOR SMALL TOWNS AND VILLAGES)**

By Richard Schulte

The National Board of Fire Underwriters (NBFU) published its fire model building code in 1905. This code was intended to be utilized by large cities. In 1914, the NBFU/NFPA published a model building code for smaller communities.

The cover of the NBFU model code for small towns and villages is red with gold lettering and looks as follows:

**A SUGGESTED  
BUILDING ORDINANCE  
FOR  
SMALL TOWNS AND VILLAGES**

The first page of the NBFU model code is as follows:

**AN ORDINANCE**  
**PROVIDING FOR**  
**FIRE LIMITS**  
**AND THE**  
**CONSTRUCTION AND**  
**EQUIPMENT OF BUILDINGS**  
**IN**  
**SMALL TOWNS**  
**AND VILLAGES**

RECOMMENDED BY THE  
**NATIONAL BOARD OF FIRE UNDERWRITERS**  
**NEW YORK, N. Y.**

AND THE  
**NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION**  
**BOSTON, MASS.**

FIRST EDITION  
1914

The text of the forward to the NBFU/NFPA model code is as follows:

***“FOREWARD.***

*This suggested ordinance providing for fire limits and the construction and equipment for buildings is an abbreviation of modern requirements representing best practice in building construction. It has been compiled with special reference to the necessities of small towns. It is designed to arrest present hazardous practices and to serve as a **reasonable regulation** of ordinary building construction in communities where congestion of values is not abnormal.*

*Attention is directed to the fact that it does not constitute a Building Code in the sense that term is generally understood; therefore it should not be interpreted as a warrantable minimum standard by cities which by reason of their present size or rapid growth obviously require higher safeguards for public safety.*

*We do not claim that this Ordinance is either complete or perfect, for that would be practically impossible, but we have had the advice of numerous building experts in its preparation, and much labor has been devoted in an effort to make it as brief in text and as broad of scope as was consistent with the limitations of its title. We believe it will prove a reliable guide for safe building construction, and so recommend it.*

*C. G. Smith, Chairman*

*A. G. McIlwaine, Jr.  
N. S. Bartow,  
E. T. Cairns,*

*J. H. Kelly,  
J. H. Burger,  
J. H. Brewster.*

*Committee on Construction of Buildings  
National Board of Fire Underwriters.*

*Address correspondence to*

*IRA H. WOOLSON, Consulting Engineer,  
National Board of Fire Underwriters,  
135 William St., New York City."*

It is interesting to note that back in 1914 both the NBFU and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) thought that it was necessary to develop two separate model building codes, one code for large cities and another model code for smaller communities.

It is also of interest to note the name of Ira Woolson. As we shall see, Professor Woolson is an important figure in the development of building fire protection.

The text of the first edition of the NBFU/NFPA model code for smaller communities will follow in future installments of this series of articles.

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Richard C. Schulte