

FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 68: 1909 (13TH ANNUAL NFPA MEETING/SECRETARY'S REPORT)

By Richard Schulte

The 13th annual meeting of the National Fire Protection Association was held in late May, 1909. Following the President's address, the Executive Committee Report and the tribute to Alfred Stone, the Secretary's report was presented. The following is the text of the Secretary's report:

"The Chair: Next in order is the report of the Secretary, Mr. W. H. Merrill.

Mr. Merrill thereupon presented the following report:

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

To the members of the National Fire Protection Association.

Gentlemen:

I have the privilege of again addressing you on the everyday affairs of your association. At the last annual meeting I stated that my increased responsibilities in other directions would not permit me to give the attention to these affairs that their importance deserve.

The man upon whom I had depended to relieve me of the duties of secretary and treasurer after five years' continuous service unfortunately was confronted with a prospective change in his affairs at a time when it was too late to secure a substitute. This year we are much more favorably situated. As you have learned thru the QUARTERLY, and the report of the executive committee, Mr. Franklin H. Wentworth was elected Editor at the February meeting of the executive committee, and at the same time appointed assistant secretary. In the latter capacity, he has undertaken and successfully carried forward the greater part of the association work during the past three months. To the unanimous recommendation of the officers and the executive committee I wish to add my personal word in behalf, not only of Mr. Wentworth's character and attainments, which fifteen years of working association with him have taught me to value very highly; but also for that idea in connection with the association affairs which he embodies, viz., an executive to devote the time necessary to the proper conduct of the current business, to carry on with the necessary assistants the duties of secretary, treasurer, and editor, and to promote the welfare of the organization so that it may come to occupy the commanding position to which it is entitled among this great national engineering societies of America.

The National Fire Protection Association occupies a position of great advantage in that the organization comprising its active membership represent over twenty-five thousand (25,000) individuals. Its associate and subscribing memberships should be attractive not only to these individuals, but also to many thousands of other intelligent men who are coming to see more and more clearly the important part the fire waste plays in the question of conserving the resources of the world.

I am not among those who feel that with the compilation of detailed specifications of practical use in the business of insurance our duties are largely fulfilled. Important as this feature is, I believe we have a larger sphere in bringing our efforts directly to the attention of the property owner and the public.

As I anticipated, I am unable to report an increase in the memberships during the past association year. Instead of adding materially to the ranks as in former years, the record shows we have a net loss of nine members, the statement as of April 30, being:

Active members, 73, a gain of 10; associate members, 881, a loss of 15; subscribing members, 375, a loss of 5; honorary members, 3, a gain of one; total, 1332, a loss of 9.

Among the problems of the incoming administration will be that of keeping up the interest in our work and directing it along lines which will appeal to the individual as of value to him. That sufficient effort correctly directed will bring satisfactory returns in the association work as in any other, is evidenced by the results of the five previous years, during which the average net increase per year was 222, our ranks increasing five-fold and our income twelve-fold during the six-year period referred to in my last annual report.

To again continue this successful record, it is necessary, as I pointed out last year, to secure the services of a man who has the ability and who can devote the time to the business. In Mr. Wentworth I believe we have such a man, and it give me great pleasure to turn the Secretary's desk over to him during this meeting so that you may all become acquainted with him and each one may have an opportunity to form his opinion of the wisdom of the officers and the executive committee in nominating him for the person to carry forward the real work of the association for the ensuing year.

Respectfully submitted,

(Signed) W. H. Merrill, Secretary.

The Chair: Gentlemen, you have heard the report of the Secretary; what is your pleasure.

Move that the report be accepted and adopted and placed on file. Motion seconded and unanimously adopted."

Although there is nothing of earth-shaking consequence included in Mr. Merrill's report, one aspect of the report of note is Merrill's vision for the organization.

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