

FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 80: 1913 (SPRINKLER PROTECTION/FIRE RESISTIVE CONSTRUCTION)

By Richard Schulte

Among the papers presented at the National Fire Prevention Convention held in Philadelphia in 1913 was a paper titled “*Physical Phases of Exposure Hazard*” authored by Walter F. Ballinger, an architect/engineer from Philadelphia. An excerpt from Mr. Ballinger’s paper addresses both sprinkler protection and fire resistive construction:

“Probably the best safeguard against fire gaining headway is the automatic sprinkler. A building properly equipped with automatic sprinklers and having an ample water supply from at least two sources, with sufficient pressure, is regarded as a fairly safe risk; in fact, the contents of a non-fire-resistant building, sprinklered, are usually regarded as a better risk than those of fire-resistant building not sprinklered. A fire-resistant building with inflammable contents cannot be expected to be any better than a stove; that is, to remain uninjured while the contents are consumed, unless means of extinguishing the fire are provided, but it can be so arranged as to confine the fire in the room in which it originates.”

Even in 1913, architects and engineers understood the value of providing sprinkler protection in buildings. Almost a century ago, it was well-understood that fire-resistive building construction is not a substitute for sprinkler protection.

Source: “Official Record of the First American National Fire Prevention Convention”, Powell Evans, Editor, pages 34-39, 1914.

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