

FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 81: 1913 (THEATER FIRE SAFETY INSPECTION PROGRAM)

By Richard Schulte

Included in the appendix of “Official Record of the First American National Fire Prevention Convention” is a report issued by the Philadelphia Fire Marshal dated January 1, 1914. Part of the Fire Marshal’s report includes a section addressing the inspection of theaters. The following is an excerpt of this section of the Fire Marshal’s report:

“As a result of an investigation this Spring of the irregular and inadequate inspection of theaters a system was inaugurated that will increase the efficiency and furnish equal service to all.

*There are in Philadelphia at present 38 theaters and 237 moving-picture parlors, besides numerous dance halls, boxing clubs and other places of public assembly, which are inspected by the fire marshal, who certifies to the issuance of the licenses. Twelve million patrons visit the theaters each year and 350 million visit the moving-picture theaters and lesser vaudeville shows each year, subjecting some person on each of these occasions to the fire hazard of the property visited once per annum. **During the year past these places were subjected to a total of 6000 inspections by the fire marshal’s corps, independent of the work of the theater patrol.***

*The theater patrol was inaugurated October 6, 1913, and consists of six uniformed firemen under the command of a captain. **The direct purpose was to create uniform, efficient and properly supervised playhouse inspections by the Bureau of Fire in cooperation with the fire marshal, upon whom power is conferred by law to safeguard life and property in these places.***”

Source: “Official Record of the First American National Fire Prevention Convention”, Powell Evans, Editor, pages 381-437, 1914.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=bwIOAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=inauthor:%22American+National+Fire+Prevention+Convention.+1st,+Philadelphia,+1913%22&hl=en&sa=X&ei=-RnLUJqkFefdyAGkxoHwBw&ved=0CD4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false>

* * * * *