

# SCHULTE & ASSOCIATES

Building Code Consultants  
880D Forest Avenue  
Evanston, IL 60202  
fpeschulte@aol.com  
504/644-8900

## **FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 7: THE THIRD ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NFPA (1899)**

By Richard Schulte

The 3<sup>rd</sup> annual meeting of the National Fire Protection Association, held at the New England Insurance Exchange in Boston on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 1899, opened with an address by the President of the Association. A transcript of this address is included in the 1897-1900 Volume of *NFPA Proceedings*.

### **“ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT U. C. CROSBY.**

*GENTLEMEN: --*

*It gives me great pleasure to extend to you all a cordial welcome and hearty greeting from the members of the Factory Improvement Committee and to offer the hospitalities of the New England Insurance Exchange.*

*We meet together for business and to improve and advance the interests for which we are working, but in addition, hope we may interest and entertain you with the several attractions of this city and its environs, not least among them, a plate of Boston baked beans.*

*I know from personal experiences the advantages obtained by conference with fellow workers in other fields, and I trust that this coming together may be of mutual advantage. To those of you who come personally in contact with the difficulties and the perplexities of underwriting, competition in rates, inequality in agents' commission, hostile legislation and general unsatisfactory conditions of the business, the objects and the discussions of our Association present a most attractive field. Here we can meet on a common ground where the interests of the insuring public and the underwriters are mutual; free from the jealousies and conflicting conditions prevalent in many sections and branches of underwriting.*

*It is well understood by you, and not necessary to repeat, except to emphasize the fact, which is clearly stated in our Articles of Association, that we have not to do with rates or agency commission, nor do we intend to interfere in any way with the prerogatives of our companies. It is the object of this Association to consider means for reducing the fire waste, to eliminate the causes of fire, to provide for its control and extinguishment. We, therefore, bring together the experts and practical men who are especially interested in these questions in different sections of this country for the interchange of mutual ideas and experience and for the dissemination of our conclusion to all the members of our Association.*

*The attention of Insurance Companies has been called to the many and often conflicting conditions connected with the forms of construction and means of protection adopted by local underwriting associations and bureaus. They have recently given expression through a prominent company organization of their intention to centralize this work, and if possible, make it more uniform and consistent and less expensive. This would seem to be an occasion for calling particular attention to our work and the scope of our Association.*

*Years ago, insurance representation in various section of our territory, studying numerous and perplexing questions in connection with protection against fire, particularly as to automatic sprinkler protection, felt the need of conference with those interested in the same problem, but working in different fields. They noted the different conditions and consequent confusion and embarrassment to companies and property owners. The first attempts resulted in little except to arouse interest and call attention to the value and necessity of interchange of ideas and more uniform regulations. From small beginning has grown the National Fire Protection Association which includes in its membership practically all of the Boards and Bureaus having to do with these practical questions.*

*The first work accomplished was in bringing about more uniform regulations governing the installation of automatic sprinklers. With slight modifications required by local conditions, they are now practically the same throughout the United States and Canada. This work alone is worth all the Association has cost.*

*Numerous other subjects have been discussed and standards recommended for hose, thermo-electric fire alarms, inspection blanks, cast iron pipe and fire doors and shutters. Our members who have put the most time into this investigation, I am very sure, have the feeling that our work has just begun and that new and even more interesting problems will be presented in the future.*

*One thing has been clearly demonstrated to those who have attended the various meetings of our Committees and of the Association, viz: that not all the ability or knowledge on any of the subjects is centred in any one organization or individual. We must all admit value received for all we have given. I take the liberty of suggesting to you and perhaps through you to our companies that there may be in our Association the material and machinery for proper consideration of apparatus, rules, regulations and conditions in connection with fire protection. The Boards and Bureaus, Members of and forming our Association, are all organized by and their expenses paid by the Stock Fire Insurance Companies. The individual representatives, delegates of said organizations, are practical men who have made such careful and intelligent study into the various questions involved in the objects of our Association as to entitle them to be considered experts, they are familiar with local conditions, a no mean consideration.*

*If our members will, after conference, come to a mutual understanding and agreement, there would be little difficulty in putting their conclusions into effect throughout the entire field. The fact that they had to do with the making of the standards and were familiar with the details would make them in sympathy with their proper enforcement. Why cannot the National Fire Protection Association be used as the working body and the Association of companies as the medium for promulgation, securing with their authority the prompt adoption of all rules and regulations agreed upon. I think it is not presuming to suggest that sometimes company organizations do not attain the success desired because they are too far removed from the practical working conditions, consequently, there may be in our organization a useful suggestion to our Companies.*

*I take pleasure in calling your attention to the topics for discussion as arranged by the Executive Committee. They are all practical and worthy of careful consideration.*

*Permit me to again express to you the pleasure I feel in meeting you here in my own home, the hope that your sojourn with us will be both pleasant and profitable, and that you will carry with you upon departure pleasant recollections of the old "Cradle of Liberty" and your friends in New England.*

With the success of the development of a sprinkler system installation standard "under their belts", the president of the NFPA suggests here that the Association turn its attention to other technical subjects relating to fire protection. In other words, the NFPA president is suggesting that the scope of the Association's technical work be expanded beyond the issues already addressed.

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Richard C. Schulte