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THE 1896 EDITION OF NBFU 13

By Richard Schulte

“The first model building code in the United States, the National Building Code, was published by the National Board of Fire Underwriters (NBFU) in 1905 in response to conflagrations which plagued major American cities in the late nineteenth century and which continued to occur in the first decade of the twentieth century. Subsequent to the development and publication of the National Building Code, three organizations of building code officials in various regions of the country developed their own model building codes intended not only to address the hazard of fire, but also to address specific building hazards unique to their regions. In the last decade of the twentieth century, the three organizations of building code officials in the United States agreed to merge and to develop a single model building code. The first edition of this new model building code, the International Building Code, was published in 2000.

Over the last 100 years, a vast amount of research on building fire safety has been conducted and literature on the subject of building fire safety is voluminous. Unfortunately, much of this work is scattered throughout the country and there is no single easily accessible repository for this literature. With the passage of time, much of the information used to develop building code provisions has become “lost” to newer participants in the code development process.

The purpose of the Building Code Resource Library website is to attempt to at least preserve some of this vast amount of literature and make it more accessible to new generations of both building code and building design professionals. It is only through a study of the past that new generations of code and design professionals will be able to develop enough of a well-rounded perspective on building safety to develop both rational and reasonable building code provisions.

Can rational and technically-based code provisions addressing the issue of building fire safety actually be developed? This website is intended to be a step in that direction.”

While many in the fire protection field have a cursory knowledge of the origins of the field, few are well-acquainted with the history of the field. That is about to change.

Coming soon to the Building Code Resource Library site, portions of documents on the origins of the fire protection field from the late 1800's will be posted on the website.

The documents provide a fascinating look at the field and some of the men who shaped the early developments in the field.

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