

FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 132: 1905 (FIRE PROTECTION ISSUES CIRCA 1905)

By Richard Schulte

The ninth Annual Meeting of the National Fire Protection Association was held in New York City in late May 1905. As was the custom at these meetings, the Executive Committee provided a report on its activities to the Association. The following is an excerpt of the transcript of the Executive Committee's report:

"REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Mr. E. U. Crosby, Chairman of the Executive Committee, presented the following report:

[TEXT OMITTED]

All evidence points to this country being on the threshold of a serious investigation of fire causes, and many trade and manufacturers' associations are awake to the need of giving attention to this subject. All are beginning to appreciate that, to accomplish the desired ends, work must be begun at home and the unnecessary defects and hazards of individual fire risks eliminated or reduced to a minimum. No form of insurance constitutes a panacea for such ills. The individual or the trade or manufacturers' association has not the experience on which to develop the best fire protection engineering or fire statistics. Our Association, however, with its organized membership in all parts of the country constantly studying this problem, should be able to provide just the information desired.

[TEXT OMITTED]

We are pleased to report that the National Board of Fire Underwriters, who are themselves—with a large corps of engineers—undertaking an investigation of city fire protection which must prove of importance to the public and is receiving the sanction of the United States government, also continue to endorse our work, as indicated at their last week's annual meeting.

[TEXT OMITTED]

Referring particularly to the recommendation of the Device and Material Committee, that a channel be established through which the results of its own and the Laboratory's work could be put more promptly and in greater detail before all of our active members. We have assurance that the card cabinet system, devised for this purpose, has been well received. This is shown in the fact that the number of cases originally estimated as likely to be required had to be increased 100 per cent.

[TEXT OMITTED]

Beside the continuation of most important special committees, the following subjects have been assigned, which are just now of particular interest:

[Railroad and Trolley] Car Barns.

It is generally felt that scant consideration has been given to this class of property from a fire protection viewpoint. Not only is it important for us to consider the newly proposed system of placing additional sprinklers at a low level in the alleys between cars, but the entire subject of car storage house construction, hazards and occupancy demands precise investigation.

Standard Thread for Fire Hose Coupling.

This old subject, but brand new for us, is taken up with the enthusiasm of youth, and with the hope that, in spite of past experiences, something practicable can be accomplished in the way of the adoption of a national standard hose thread.

Private Fire Service Connections to Public Water Supplies.

Much discussion has taken place outside our ranks in relation to this matter . We believe that the Committee having it in hand are confident or reporting solutions satisfactory to all interests.

High Pressure Systems for Fire Service.

Many of our members are now seeking information as to such systems, what they are intended to accomplish, and the means to be employed. It is proper that the functions of a high pressure service be reviewed in a report to be laid before this Association.

Hose and Hydrants.

Linen hose is a branch of this subject which has never received a detailed investigation by us, and the Committee is now offering specifications to supply this need.

Centrifugal Fire Pumps.

This type of pump has not in the past been regarded by the fire protectionists or the pump people as suitable for fire duty. However, such pumps, in revised form, are now called to our notice as supplying all our wants for fire service, and in some respects, in a manner superior to other types. It is proposed to equip the two large high pressure fire pumping stations about to be erected in Manhattan with pumps of this type. This Committee has a most interesting and important subject In hand.

Cement for Building Construction.

This is a subject very much discussed at the present time. Nevertheless, we believe that most of the investigation and discus[s]ion overlooks the fire protection viewpoint; hence, the need of this Committee.

While, therefore, our growth and work during the past year may be regarded with fair satisfaction, we wish to point out that we are as yet at the beginning of our labors. Unlimited fields of usefulness spread out before us. Fire protection in its broadest sense means something to every one, and all interests should here in our Association find common meeting place for united effort where we are not disturbed by the conflicting influences of commercialism.

Perhaps, the most important of the issues being considered and addressed by the National Fire Protection Association in 1905 was the design and use of high pressure municipal distribution systems to assist structural fire fighting and prevent future conflagrations. Given the history of conflagrations occurring in American cities occurring in the last 30 years of the 19th century, the fact that high pressure municipal distribution systems would be considered as necessary at this point in time is entirely logical. It wouldn't be too long, however, that horse-drawn fire apparatus would become obsolete and that motorized fire apparatus would also render high pressure municipal water supply systems obsolete.

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