

FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 155: 1919 (WELCOME TO OTTAWA/MAYOR HAROLD FISHER)

By Richard Schulte

In the early days, the Annual Meetings of the National Fire Protection Association were held in either New York or Chicago, however, the meeting in 1917 was held in Washington D. C. Since the 1917 meeting, the NFPA began to move the site of their meetings to cities others than New York and Chicago. In 1919, the Annual Meeting was held in Ottawa, Canada, the first time the Annual Meeting was held in Canada. Among the introductory speeches at this meeting was a speech given Mayor Harold Fisher. The following is an excerpt from Mayor Fisher's speech:

"The President: His Worship, Harold Fisher, Mayor of Ottawa, is also here this morning to extend to us a few words of welcome on behalf of the City. I take great pleasure in presenting Mayor Fisher. (Applause.)"

Mayor Fisher:It used to be part of my duty when men came to Ottawa, visitors, to give them a word of warning, to tell them what to do and what not to do; but it is not necessary any longer. A short time ago some visitors from the United States came here and were very well entertained. They did not seem to know why, perhaps, but at any rate, before they left, their host told them a story which has probably traveled all around the country by this time, but which I will repeat. It is a story about a man in the highlands of Scotland who became very sick and he sent for a doctor. The doctor had to travel many miles to get to where this man was, and when he got there he found he was dying, found he could do nothing for him, but he thought he might as well wait for the end. While he was waiting he found a Bible, and he read something to the old gentleman; he read the story of the Prodigal Son, and when he was through the old man said, "Would you mind coming a little nearer and reading that story again?" He came a little nearer and read it again. After he had finished, the old man repeated the request. He said, "Will you please come a little nearer and read that once more?" And he came a little nearer and read it once more, and when he had finished the third time the doctor laid down the book and said, "Now I am very anxious to know what there is in that story that appeals to you. Is it the forgiveness of the father or is it the penitence of the son? I would like you to tell me just what it is in that story that appeals to you so." "Well," the old man said, "I'm a dying man and I will tell you no lie; it is not the forgiveness and it is not the penitence, but I ain't had a drop of whiskey for twelve weeks, and, man, your breath is fine." (Laughter and applause.) Ladies and gentlemen, I hope that you will

enjoy your stay amongst us. I am sure our welcome will not be dependent on anything such as is suggested by the story. (Laughter.) If in any way the city of Ottawa can assist in entertaining you, doing any more than we have planned, I am sure the local members of this Association will let us know and we will be very proud and very pleased to do everything that lies in our power. (Applause.)”

Preventing life and property loss by fire isn't all serious business. Once in a while, it is necessary to take a break from this serious business to read the Bible.

* * * * *

Copyright © 2013
Richard C. Schulte

Source: *“Proceedings of the Twenty-third Annual [NFPA] Meeting”*, Ottawa, Canada, 1919.