

# SCHULTE & ASSOCIATES

Building Code Consultants  
880D Forest Avenue  
Evanston, IL 60202  
fpeschulte@aol.com  
847/866-7479

## **FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 65: 1909 (13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NFPA MEETING/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT)**

By Richard Schulte

The 13<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) was held in the Assembly Room of the New York Board of Fire Underwriters in late May, 1909. Following the president's address, the Executive Committee Report was presented. The following is the text of the Executive Committee Report:

*"The President: Mr. Goddard, presiding.*

*The Chair: The next item upon the program is the report of the Executive Committee, of which Mr. Phillips is chairman.*

*Mr. Phillips: Mr. President, Gentlemen – I have the following report to offer:*

### **REPORT OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

*To the National Fire Protection Association:*

*During the past year your committee has held four regular meetings, in addition to which the officers have conferred on many occasions.*

*The minutes of the August, November, and February meetings were printed in the Quarterly so that all members might be kept in close touch with the work of your committee.*

*The following details are submitted, however, covering the more important subjects considered:*

### **SPECIAL COMMITTEES.**

*The usual committees on special subjects were appointed, in addition to which several new committees were selected, and reports from practically all of these committees will be presented at the meeting.*

### **INDEX.**

*A complete index covering the status of the work of special committees and also giving full information regarding all printed matter which has been issued by our association was prepared and distributed to all members during the year.*

## HOSE FOR FIRE DEPARTMENT USE.

*At the Twelfth Annual Meeting the Hose Committee submitted no detailed report, but asked the privilege of a conference with hose manufacturers, the result of such conference to be referred to the Executive Committee with full power. The subject has received most careful and thoughtful consideration by your committee, and a large proportion of the November meeting was given over to the representatives of the hose manufacturers in order to afford them an opportunity to explain their views concerning the hose standard. As a result of this meeting, a special committee was appointed to represent our association in conference with the representative of the manufacturers, and much lengthy and detailed correspondence took place concerning the subject under discussion, as a result of which the following specifications for hose for fire department use have been adopted and will shortly be promulgated.*

### SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND CARE OF HOSE FOR FIRE DEPARTMENT USE.

[Text omitted]

### REPORT ON SAN FRANCISCO CONFLAGRATION.

*It may appear to many that there has been an unnecessary delay in preparing and submitting this report, but your committee is sure that this feeling will entirely vanish when the work is finally published, for the reason that it will contain among other things extremely valuable information with reference to the effect of fire on the different types of fire proof construction, as this subject will be covered in much detail. It is impossible for Mr. Robinson to drop his regular work and the preparation of the report is therefore taken up only at odd moments. We cannot guarantee that it will be printed during the coming year, but we know that when it is published it will cover the San Francisco conflagration more in detail, more exhaustively, and more authoritatively than any other report on that disaster.*

### THE QUARTERLY.

*The wisdom of publishing the Quarterly has been fully borne out the past year. This magazine is one of the features which attracts members to our association, and it is the means of disseminating valuable information through the membership.*

*Owing to a change in business, Mr. Henry A. Fiske, your editor, felt obliged to sever his connections with the publication and your committee accepted his resignation most reluctantly. Those of us who are not in the closest touch with the details and publication of the Quarterly little realize the amount of work connected with issuing our magazine. It requires much time and thought and painstaking care, and the sincere and hearty thanks of the association are due Mr. Fiske for the interest and enthusiasm which he has shown and for the good work which he has done.*

*Your committee, after casting about for a worthy successor, finally selected Mr. Franklin H. Wentworth and we confidently look forward to the continued popularity and ever increasing value of our Quarterly under his management.*

*It will be readily recalled that at the last annual meeting it was only after the most urgent solicitation that we were able to persuade our Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. Merrill, to continue the duties for another year, and arrangements were made to give him assistance in his work. This was accomplished by the appointment of Mr. Wentworth as assistant secretary.*

*It is the feeling of your committee that the position of Secretary-Treasurer and of Editor can be profitably combined under the direction of one man, and in selecting Mr. Wentworth for this position your committee feels that it has made a choice which will never be regretted as the work develops. We therefore recommend to the nominating committee that the name of Mr. Franklin H. Wentworth of Boston, be presented at this meeting for election as secretary-treasurer of our association.*

#### CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS.

*The proposed amendments to our constitution which have been submitted to the membership for action at this meeting were prepared with the special view of making a separate and distinct charge for our Quarterly so that the magazine would receive the benefit of the rates for second class postal matter.*

*After careful consideration, your committee is of the opinion that the time has not yet quite arrived for making this change, and therefore recommends that the amendments be not adopted.*

#### PUBLICITY.

*Upon the recommendation of President Goddard, your committee was pleased to appropriate funds for publishing articles upon various subjects connected with fire hazards, and the fire waste, and we are of the firm opinion that this work should be continued, not only to the extent of printing the articles in the daily papers as now, but that members as they are published from time to time in order that all members may be kept in the closest possible touch with the educational campaign of our association.*

#### DEATH OF MR. STONE.

*All of us were greatly shocked in the early part of September to learn of the sudden death of Mr. Alfred, Stone, who had been a member of this committee for a number of years. He was most active in all the work of the association both in the committees and on the floor of the conventions, and little did those of us who met with him at the committee meetings in August realize that he was soon to be taken from us; for he was young in thought, young in action, and young in association. His earnestness and activity, his patience with those whose experience had been less, his willingness to give counsel, and his kind and friendly disposition furnish an example we can with profit endeavor to imitate.*

*Our Association has surely suffered a severe blow, and suitable resolutions upon his death will be presented by a special committee at this meeting.*

#### *MEMBERSHIP.*

*We are very glad to be able to report that our active membership has made a considerable gain during the year, and we welcome to this convention those who are for the first time sharing our deliberations.*

*The total membership at the present time, however, is a little less than a year ago. This is the first time in the history of the association that the membership has shown a loss as compared with the preceding year; and, while the difference at the present time is very slight, it is a matter which is entitled to the most serious consideration of all connected with our organization. We do not apprehend that there is any appreciable lack of interest for we feel that on the whole much progress has been made during the past year; but perhaps now that the organization has become so large the members do not individually take the active and personal interest which they did a few years ago, but rather may leave the responsibility to someone else which is always the tendency in an organization of large membership.*

*In connection with the work which this association is endeavoring to perform it is absolutely necessary that our membership shall show a healthy growth each year. Our association is the only organization in this country which has for its prime object the reduction of the fire waste, and its membership comprising such a great diversity of interests is a guarantee that all insurance and rating considerations will be eliminated and that our entire attention will be devoted to the one object for which we were formed, as our association is absolutely non-commercial in character. The greatest opportunity is presented to our association for usefulness in safeguarding the lives and property of our citizens and we must all be on the alert at every opportunity that is presented to further the interests of our organization by increasing the membership, by interesting new organizations, by entering heartily into the campaign of education, and by each individual member doing everything he can to further the cause.*

*Let each member of our association take it upon himself to be a committee on membership and to feel that he has not performed his duty toward our organization and toward the community until he has secured at least one new subscriber for the coming year.*

*(Applause.)*

*Mr. Phillips: The following report was submitted to the Executive Committee and adopted at its meeting yesterday:*

*TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION:*

*At the August, 1908 meeting of the committee an appropriation of \$500 was made to be expended under the direction of the President in a publicity campaign. This work has been carried on with the assistance of Mr. F. H. Wentworth, who has furnished most of the matter contained in the bulletins, and I beg leave to make the following report:*

We first sent an article direct to the leading newspapers in the larger cities, urging them to make use of it in their papers. Copy of this article follows:

FIRST ARTICLE ISSUED BY PRESS BUREAU.

*It is evident that after many decades of irresponsible indifference the American mind may at last become sensitive to the idea of waste. The forest fires of the past sixty days have not exceeded either in number or extent those of many previous years, but the accents of protest and alarm coming from all parts of the country are comparatively so unusual as to indicate a considerable crystallization of public sentiment against such unnecessary sacrifice of our natural resources.*

*It is singular that almost simultaneously the people of this country should be called upon to consider equally if not more startling statistics of fire waste in another direction.*

*Facts and comparisons recently given out by the National Fire Protection Association through its president at Boston covering the destruction of buildings and other insurable property by fire are of a nature serious enough to demand immediate consideration from those having the prosperity and welfare of the nation at heart. We quote the following: **The national debt at its highest point was a little over two and three-quarter billions; the property loss in the United States by fire during the last thirty-three years was four and one-half billions, or an average annual loss of one hundred and thirty-six millions.** This annual loss have been constantly increasing; for the first eleven years of the above period the average was eighty-two millions, for the second eleven years, one hundred and thirty millions, and for the last eleven years one hundred and ninety-five millions, with an average loss for the last five years of two hundred and fifty-two millions, or over thirty thousand dollars for each hour of the year."*

***One thousand two hundred and sixty million of dollars in the products of human toil swept out of existence in the brief space of five years is such stupendous waste as almost to atrophy the imagination.** This sum equals almost our customs revenues; it would more than pay the dividends of all the railroads; it exceeds the revenue of the national post office; it is greater than the production of gold or silver.*

*"It is speaking very conservatively when we say that more than fifty percent of the fire loss is due to what we technically call 'faults of management,' or what might better be known as carelessness; that is, easily preventable causes."*

*The annual number of fires in American cities averages forty for each ten thousand of population, as compared to eight, for each ten thousand of population in European cities. The annual per capita loss in Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland varies from 12 cents in Italy to 49 cents in Germany, with an average of 33 cents; in the United States the average is \$2.47. Berlin has a population of three million. Its annual fire loss is seldom more than \$150,000. Chicago, with its population of two million, burns up annually nearly \$5,000,000 of values. We destroy more property by fire than do any four nations in Europe. While Boston has suffered a fire loss of \$5,000,000 in the past few months, without unusual public comment, the city of Rome, almost as large as Boston, is deeply stirred by a loss of \$50,000 in a single year. In all of 1907 there were but thirty-five fires in Great Britain that averaged over \$50,000 damage, and not one that exceeded \$400,000 destruction. In January alone of the current year fire destroyed \$24,000,000 of property in the United States.*

*A fire in the congested value district of New York City, covering an area as large as that of the San Francisco conflagration, would put out of existence nearly every insurance company doing business in this country. One thousand companies, or more than three times the present number, have failed or retired since 1850. For the ten-year period of 1898 to 1907, inclusive, the insurance business shows an underwriting loss of four and one-half percent, and it is a significant fact that some of the European companies writing policies in this country are seriously considering withdrawal.*

*The arrant individualism of the American character assumes that the underwriting interests can look out for themselves, and raise premium rates to cover their losses, absolving the public from all responsibility save payment of the increased tax; but there is a limit beyond which honest companies will not go in such a gamble, and that limit must mean the disappearance of reliable insurance, and the consequent instability of credits. Reputable companies are already steadily narrowing the limits of their risks, while the constantly increasing hazard and loss operates to discourage capital from the business of underwriting.*

*Until recently, there was, outside of underwriters' boards and bureaus, no organized effort to combat the disgraceful fire waste of this country. In 1896, however, there was organized the National Fire Protection Association, which includes in its membership such associations as the American Institute of Architects, American Institute of Electrical Engineers, American Society of Heating and Ventilation Engineers, American Water Works Association, International Association of Fire Engineers, National Electric Light Association and others, besides such individuals as are desirous of exerting their influence to secure better building and check the fire waste. Its membership today includes sixty-three associations, and one thousand two hundred and seventy-eight individuals as associate and subscribing members. The articles of association state that "the objects of the association shall be to promote the science, and improve the methods of fire protection and prevention, to obtain and circulate information on these subjects, and to secure the co-operation of its members in establishing proper safeguards against loss of life and property by fire."*

*This association has already accomplished most valuable work in the compilation of standard requirements for the construction of buildings, based upon the experience and observation of fire experts and leading architects, which requirements take the form of model building codes for adoption by municipalities. They are furnished free of expense, and represent the combined experience of the very best experts to be obtained. Such public-spirited efforts as these of the National Fire Protection Association must remain ineffective, however, if confronted by continued public indifference. Only an aroused and active interest in our stupendous national folly will cause the public use of the valuable information referred to. The experience of the city of Chelsea make this fact clear. The conflagration-breeding character of the "rag district" of that city was a matter of public knowledge made clear to the city authorities a year before the fire in a report of the mayor which read: "When we consider that at any time with a high wind prevailing, a fire might gain such headway as to get beyond control, and would destroy property worth many thousands of dollars, we realize that the cost does not enter into question as much as the protection of the property." Here was open acknowledgment, but it did not result in an endeavor to improve the situation; and the conflagration was largely due to inadequate and poorly enforced building restrictions, and the sufferance of an unsupervised and dangerous "rag district." Such condition as these referred to in Chelsea are to be found to a greater or less extent in every town and city of the country. The National Fire Protection Association can point out the hazards, but it remains for the American municipalities themselves to say if our present disgraceful and profligate national fire waste is to continue.*

*The success of this effort is somewhat uncertain, but as far as we could judge it was not satisfactory.*

*It was then decided to establish our own press bureau, and letters were sent to about a hundred of our members, selecting one in each of the larger cities, asking them if they would act in the capacity of correspondents. A list of those who replied in the affirmative is here given:*

*Members Acting as Correspondents of Press Bureau.*

*Daniel F. Ancona, 539 Court St., Reading, Pa.  
E. S. Anderson, Special Agt., 35 Exchange St., Portland, Me.  
A. G. Beeson, Inspector, McCogue Bldg., Omaha, Neb.  
W. W. Boomer, Kenyon Bldg., Louisville, Ky.  
Chas. P. Brant, Inspector, 510 Peyton Bldg., Spokane, Wash.  
J. A. Brant, Engineer, N. Y. Life Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn.  
S. O. Breed, Inspector, 145 Munroe St., Lynn, Mass.  
J. E. Brown, Inspector, Schmulbach Bldg., Wheeling, W. Va.  
J. L. Brown, 5 Broad St. Utica, N. Y.  
D. W. Canfield, Inspector, Rocky Mt. Fire Underwriters, Denver, Colo.  
Edwin J. Carter, Special Agent, Box 382, Fort Smith, Ark.  
E. F. Chapman, 36 Congress St., West, Detroit, Mich.  
Geo. W. Cleveland, Mgr., 1st National Bank Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.  
J. E. Curtis, Inspector, Und. Assoc. of N. Y. State, Syracuse, N. Y.  
A. W. Damon, Pres., Springfield Fire & Marine Ins. Co., Springfield, Massachusetts.  
P. L. Davis, Special Agent, Vicksburg, Miss.  
Calvert R. Dey, Special Agent, 112 Plume St., Norfolk, Va.  
Wm. Deans, State Agent, Corbett Bldg., Portland, Oregon.*

*Wm. F. Dunbar, Sec'y, 9 Madison St., Memphis, Tenn.*  
*Chas. E. Eldridge, Mgr. 701 Jackson St., Topeka, Kansas.*  
*F. J. Fetter, Inspector, American Bank Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.*  
*H. A. Fletcher, Treas., 25 Maple St., Pawtucket, R. I.*  
*B. P. Flint, Jr., Inspector, Commercial Block, Salt Lake City, Utah.*  
*W. J. Frederick, Mgr., Dun Bldg., Buffalo, N. Y.*  
*Frank J. Grube, Inspector, 507 Provident Bldg., Tacoma, Wash.*  
*William S. Gunnison, Stamp Clerk, Keenan Bldg., Troy, N. Y.*  
*Frank C. Hatfield, Special Agent, P. O. Drawer J., Little Rock, Ark.*  
*F. O. Hawkins, Special Agent, Montgomery, Ala.*  
*H. C. Henley, Chief Inspector, 735 Pierce Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.*  
*C. A. Hexamer, Secy. 135-141 S. 4th St., Philadelphia, Penn.*  
*J. P. Hitchcock, 421 Spruce St., Scranton, Pa.*  
*John M. Hughes, 701-7 Union Bldg. Newark, N. J.*  
*C. T. Ingalls, Mngr., Oklahoma City, Okla.*  
*W. N. Johnson, Chairman, care of Ins. Co. of N. A., Erie, Pa.*  
*John Kramer, Special Agent, Union Trust Bldg., Harrisburg, Pa.*  
*Arthur Lewis, Electrical Inspector, Box 108, Wilkesbarre, Pa.*  
*C. B. MacKinney, 17 Custom House St., Providence, R. I.*  
*F. E. MacKnight, Chief Insp. & Engineer, 545 Equitable Bldg., Augusta, Georgia.*  
*W. D. McGill, Sec'y, Commonwealth Bldg., Pittsburg, Pa.*  
*Wm. H. Merrill, Mgr. 382 Ohio St., Chicago, Ill.*  
*R. A. Myers, Inspector, 426 Hamilton Bldg., Akron, Ohio*  
*A. M. Paddon, Engineer, 434 State St., Schenectady, N. Y.*  
*G. H. Parker, W. Va. Insp. Bureau, Charleston, W. Va.*  
*C. H. Patton, Mgr., Park Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.*  
*Morris D. Pierce, Engineer, 809 Hibernia Bldg., New Orleans, La.*  
*F. E. Potter, Engineer, 414 Robinson Bldg., Elmira, N. Y.*  
*F. H. Porter, Chief Inspector, Mercantile Exchange Bldg., San Francisco, California.*  
*H. L. Phillips, Mgr., 5 Haynes St., Hartford, Conn.*  
*Victor Roth, Sec'y, New Haven, Conn.*  
*C. B. Roulet, Sec'y, Wison Bldg., Dallas, Texas.*  
*Frank W. Sargeant, Pres., N. H. Fire Ins. Co., Manchester, N. H.*  
*E. M. Sellars, Sec'y, 1012 Lemcke Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind.*  
*T. B. Sellers, Mgr., Outlook Bldg., Columbus, Ohio*  
*Louis Sherwood, 15 Exchange Place, Jersey City, N. J.*  
*Walter E. Smith, Mgr. 203 East State St., Trenton, N. J.*  
*C. J. Stewart, Mgr., Cedar Rapids, Iowa.*  
*I. W. Story, Inspector 1166 Broadway, Oakland, California.*  
*R. R. Strong, Asst. Mgr., 204 Central Block, Pueblo, Colo.*  
*F. L. Tritle, Inspector, Rockford, Ill.*  
*Kelsey L. Walling, Supt., Spitzer Bldg., Toledo, Ohio.*  
*Clem. E. Wheeler, Mgr., 1218-1225 Stahlman Bldg., Nashville, Tenn.*  
*C. T. Manwaring, Sec'y, 318 Security Bldg., Los Angeles, California.*  
*Lee McKenzie, P. O. Box 1906, Seattle, Washington.*

*Thirteen bulletins in all have been sent out in three different lots, and correspondents were requested to forward copies of papers containing any of the matter.*

*On receipt of the first copy of each paper publishing any of the bulletins, your President wrote a personal letter to the editor expressing the appreciation of our association on account of the question of unnecessary fire waste being taken up.*



*The work on the part of our correspondents has been greatly appreciated. In almost every instance they have taken up the matter enthusiastically and successfully, in many cases having supplemented our bulletins with additional matter of their own; and I desire to express my hearty thanks to each of the these correspondents for co-operation in our efforts along the line of publicity.*

*The total expense of this work has not, I think, reach half of the amount appropriated; and considering the fact that, as nearly as I can estimate from the returns, we have had matter published in about one hundred papers located in fifty to sixty different cities and towns, amounting in all to between six and even hundred newspaper columns, it would seem that the results will be worth all that has been expended.*

*I trust that the incoming executive committee will arrange for the continuance and very considerable expansion of this line of work.*

*(Signed) C. M. Goddard, President.*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*H. L. Phillips, Chairman,  
Albert Blauvelt,  
E. B. Creighton,  
G. W. Cleveland,  
W. J. Fredrick,  
C. A. Hague,  
H. E. Hess,  
C. A. Hexamer,  
F. E. Macknight,  
W. G. Sanderson,  
James McFall,  
H. K. Miller,  
C. H. Phinney,  
M. D. Pierce,  
Executive Committee.*

While most of the Executive Committee Report deals with rather mundane subjects associated with the operation of the NFPA, of particular interest are the fire statistics included in the report. The comparison of fire losses between Chicago and Berlin and between Boston and Rome are rather interesting and provide a clear perspective on fire safety in the United States at the time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Copyright © 2011  
Richard C. Schulte